



Comment on objections 44

Punjabi Club of Victoria

3 pages



We thank the Redistribution Committee for considering our input and the opportunity to present further Comments on Objections.

Section 66(3)(b)(v)

We acknowledge the Redistribution Committee's approach in taking a long term view of the electoral boundaries for Victoria in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. This acknowledges the need for stability in electoral boundaries for electors as is reflected in section 66 (3)(b)(v) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth) (the 'Act'). While this sub-paragraph is subordinate to the other considerations the Committee must take into account, it is evident in the work of previous Redistribution Committees and the current proposed boundaries create stability over the medium to longer term in the overall structure of different parts of Victoria while ensuring that the boundaries reflect the matters in subparagraphs (3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv).

This is most evident in rural and regional Victoria, where the work of previous Committees has ensured minimal changes are necessary to comply with the numerical requirements, while allowing for paragraph 3(b) matters to be maintained across multiple redistribution cycles.

It is also evident that the electors in Aston, Deakin, Menzies, and Casey have benefited from the foresight of previous Committees in creating a relatively stable structure for these Electoral Divisions that requires minimal or incremental change between the various divisions in subsequent redistributions. We commend the Committee's approach in this Redistribution to continue with this approach, with a mechanism to allow for future redistributions to maintain stability in an area of relatively lower population growth.

We strongly oppose and reject any argument, as some Objections have made, that the Committee has made s66(3)(b)(v) equal to or more important than the matters in subparagraphs (3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv). When the matters in subparagraphs (3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv) have been properly applied in previous redistributions, as has been the case in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, subparagraph (3)(b)(v) naturally follows and the boundaries of existing Divisions can be largely maintained.

Local Government Areas

Some objections have made reference to Local Government Areas being split by the Committee between Divisions. The two most contentious examples are the Stonnington and Manningham LGAs. While we acknowledge the Committee's approach to using LGA boundaries as building blocks for Divisions, especially in rural and regional areas, LGAs in metropolitan areas need to be treated as less definitive to ensure the Committee has the flexibility to create Divisions that meet the required elector numbers and other paragraph 3(b) matters in s66 of the Act.

To take the Manningham LGA as an example, it is an LGA that has a community of interest centred on the political structure of the municipality. However, it is also organised non-politically, around community activity centres and allows for the Committee to draw boundaries with electors that are centred within the various distinct areas of the LGA. This is the longstanding practice, especially as it would otherwise be impossible to meet the



required number of electors in a Division, and a democratic and equitable vote in our representative Parliament, if the Committee had to construct divisional boundaries solely on the basis of LGA boundaries.

The approach in the Manningham LGA by the Committee balances the various s66 requirements and creates a balanced and optimal outcome for the electors in the proposed divisions of Menzies, Deakin, Aston, and Casey.

Furthermore, the Committee's approach to Stonington is consistent with this manner of constructing Divisions as the Committee has clearly identified the various activity centres in the LGA and looked to link them with communities in surrounding Divisions where they are most optimally suited and linked through economic and social interests, physical features, and means of communication.

Inevitably, some LGAs will be split, some will be maintained. LGA boundaries are not determinative and LGA can be rightly split along economic and social community of interests, means of communication, and physical features, as they generally are composed of distinct communities and activity centres. The Committee's proposed boundaries get this balance right in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Maroondah Corridor

The Maroondah Corridor in the eastern suburbs is centred on the Maroondah Highway, an arterial road corridor that links many communities from the inner to the outer east of Melbourne. From the leafy streets of Balwyn and Mont Albert, through to the Dandenong Ranges in Lilydale (and beyond to Healesville and so on), the Maroondah Corridor demonstrates the diversity of Melbourne and our social fabric across many socio economic divides. It is a road that links communities, it also allows people to experience communities distinct from their own. However, there are much stronger communities of interest that go north-south within the corridor than they do along its entire east-west length.

Other roads, like the Eastern Freeway and Eastlink that run parallel and through the Corridor, shuttle commuters from the extreme ends of these communities into the Melbourne Central Business District and further afield in either direction. Arguing that the Eastern Freeway is a major boundary or barrier between divisions, while claiming its extension in Eastlink isn't, simply isn't credible. These roads are crossed by communities, as the previous Committee correctly recognised in linking Doncaster to Box Hill.

Previous Redistribution Committees have been presented with proposals to create a division along the length of the Marroondah Highway. Previous Redistribution Committees have correctly recognised that such divisions are suboptimal when considering the totality of s66(3). While such a division may have met the criteria earlier in the 20th century when Templestowe was orchards and outer eastern suburbs was merely a collection of sparsely populated townships, the current reality is that Balwyn, Mont Albert, and Box Hill have significant community links to Doncaster and Bulleen, and weak ties to Ringwood, let alone Croydon. Furthermore, Ringwood and Croydon have significant community links to Warrandyte and Wonga Park, and stronger still to Park Orchards and Warranwood.



Creating north-south oriented divisions within and along the Maroondah Corridor simply makes more sense when considering communities of interest and social and economic ties through the region. The proposed boundaries acknowledge this and correctly apply the criteria in s66(3) of the Act.

Labor Party's Objection

While most points relating the the Labor Party's Objection are addressed earlier, it is worth noting the Labor Party's false assertion that their proposed changes to Menzies and Deakin will only affect those two Divisions, and "...involves absolutely no impact on the broader statewide distribution of electorates".

It is simply not possible to maintain the Labor Party's assertion that moving the proposed boundaries in the southern parts of Deakin to incorporate Heathmont and Kilsyth, while reducing the number of electors in Aston would not require changes to Aston elsewhere, therefore impacting other surrounding divisions. Any such change would have an impact on at least one of the divisions neighbouring Aston, most likely Casey and/or Chisholm. This would require further cascading changes throughout metropolitan Melbourne. Similarly, any move to the western boundary of Deakin, especially as far as Mont Albert would lead to necessary changes to Kooyong and Chisholm and an ensuing further cascade of elector movements.

The Labor Party's gaslighting should rightly be called out and their submission on these boundaries rejected once again.

Conclusion

We congratulate the Redistribution Committee on their proposed boundaries in striking the right balance for political representation in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. It is a difficult task to meet the requirements of section 66 and the Committee has presented a considered approach to the boundaries.

Kind Regards

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