Comment on objections 61

Louise Crawford

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Dear Redistribution Committee,

I welcome the opportunity to make a comment on the objections put forward to the proposed Division of Macnamara.

I am a councillor for the City of Port Phillip and have served 8 years as a Councillor. I live in Elwood and have worked in the municipality for over 20 years. To be clear I write this submission in a personal capacity which is informed by my deep and long-term involvement in this municipality.

Firstly, I wish to thank the Redistribution Committee and express my full agreement with the proposed division of Macnamara. The proposal put forward by the committee appropriately considers the communities of interest within the City of Port Phillip and the existing division of Macnamara, the means of local travel, and the physical features of the electorate orienting around Albert Park.

I agree with the redistribution committee that St Kilda Road is a strong boundary. In my view, the communities of South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Fishermans Bend and Southbank are strongly united and they travel north-south either on or to the west of St Kilda Road with various tram lines, bus routes and bike tracks.

As a local councillor I have worked very closely with the community across Port Phillip and it is for this reason that I reject the objections put forward by the Liberal Party of Victoria and a number of other submissions suggesting changes to the proposed boundaries between the Division of Macnamara and the Division of Melbourne.

Firstly, these objections falsely assume that the communities of Port Melbourne and Fishermans Bend are distinct just because the West Gate Freeway runs through them. These communities are united. The West Gate Freeway is not a feature of the suburbs it goes through and is in no ways an obvious natural boundary or divider. The residents of these communities do not use the Freeway to travel locally. The Freeway is above ground with the suburbs spread out on either side.

All of the sporting facilities and grounds in Port Melbourne are being used by the growing communities in Southbank and Fishermans Bend. The City of Port Phillip recently bought the Australia Post site as a future grounds for these communities to use. The long term planning for Fishermans Bend to 2050 has all been centred around the premise that facilities and community infrastructure such as libraries, sports and arts centres, ovals will be shared by Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Southbank and Fishermans Bend. All the residential demands are in the half of Fishermans Bend that is designated to Port Phillip and seen and designed as a connected community.

In fact, most people do not know where Fishermans Bend starts and Southbank and Port Melbourne finishes – and often use those terms interchangeably. Fishermans Bend is to Port Melbourne as Balaclava is St Kilda East as Cremorne is to Richmond– no one quite knows that they are technically different areas because they share the same postcode and part and parcel of the local area.

Additionally, families who live in Southbank and Fishermans Bend send their children to primary and secondary schools in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne. Residents congregate in the same shopping districts in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne. And when the time came to naming the schools, there was debate of what names to give them as

they were so interchangeable. There is no connection to the school communities across the river in Docklands whatsoever.

These communities do not convene in the CBD, they orient towards our community in Port Phillip. In fact, it hardly makes sense that the industrial side of Fishermans Bend is governed under the City of Melbourne given the huge geographical barrier of the Yarra River.
It cannot be argued that an above ground freeway, an arterial road to move people through the centre of Melbourne, that flies over the municipality and is not a local road, is more of a barrier than a river. The only time people locally use the freeway is to go leave the municipality.

I cannot think of any reason to divide the electorates with the West Gate Freeway as a boundary. I acknowledge that the Local Government Areas place Southbank, South Wharf and parts of Fishermans Bend into the City of Melbourne, but in my experience the community of these localities feel they are better represented as an inner south neighbourhood and not as an extension of the CBD. I know the commission crosses LGA boundaries when there is a clear community of interest and a physical barrier, and I strongly agree with the commission that in these circumstances that is most definitely the case.

As a long-time local resident, I also want to comment on the suggestions by the Liberal Party of Australia (Victoria) division and a number of other submissions that South Yarra south of Toorak Road has more in common with the proposed division of Macnamara than it does the proposed division of Melbourne. In my experience, this is undoubtedly false. The communities on the west of St Kilda Road orient around Albert Park and follow the bay. To travel from Middle Park to South Yarra you need to change trams along St Kilda Road. Locals in our community do not convene on the other side of St Kilda Road. They gather in the shopping districts of St Kilda, Elwood, Port Melbourne, Elsternwick and South Melbourne. Toorak Road offers no real boundary in contrast with St Kilda Road which clearly distinguishes between two communities on either side. In my view, Toorak Road is a main precinct for the community of South Yarra; it is not a boundary, and Chapel St connects up into Church St in Richmond, clearly connecting residents across the Yarra.

In summary, I strongly support the redistribution committees' proposal for the Division of Macnamara as it keeps the community united and reflects the realities of life living in the suburbs of from Caulfield to Elwood to St Kilda to Albert Park to Fishermans Bend. We are mostly bounded by the bay, the river, St Kilda Road, even Dandenong Road in part.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.