



Comment on suggestions 52

Australian Labor Party – Victorian Branch

10 pages

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
VICTORIAN BRANCH

Victorian
Labor

COMMENTS ON SUGGESTIONS



ALP Comments on Suggestions

Summary

In reviewing other suggestions and taking into account that there is a shortage of electors representing approximately half a Division on both sides of the Yarra River, we note that several, including nearly all statewide suggestions have, to achieve their preferred outcomes, engaged in various versions of malapportionment. That's leaving aside where the Yarra should be crossed.

Consequently, we start by examining the various degrees of malapportionment made by other suggestions (with a comparison with past practice by the Commissioners and the ALP suggestion). In that section the ALP will also comment on the several options proposed to make the crossing.

If the Commissioners think that crowding electors on one side (of the Yarra) when compared to the other side is unacceptable, then attempting to present a full-scale analysis of those suggestions becomes similar to trying to catch smoke. It's pointless to try.

However, the ALP's comments will also expand our comments to include a critique of the Liberal Party's proposed Divisions of Melbourne and Peacock, together with its proposed abolition of the Division of Maribyrnong.

We also acknowledge that the Liberal Party is fully entitled to include its originally prepared suggestion in this commentary phase. By publishing its intended suggestion on its website, the Liberal Party has also taken reasonable steps to allow others to comment.

How others have responded to the projections and the need to cross the Yarra River

Most suggestions have expressed great surprise concerning the projections released by the Redistribution Committee. Notwithstanding our own misgivings regarding the projections - we've requested the members of the Redistribution Committee to revise those - the ALP also accepts that we and all others are required to abide by the forecasts decided by the Committee.

In short, we are no more entitled to pretend that there are other than 38 Divisions for this redistribution than to refuse to accept your determination of projected enrolments.

That's relevant given that one suggestion (Charles Richardson) provides its own calculated projections and others such as Trent Wilson and suggestion 63 'solve' the perceived discrepancies between one side of the Yarra and the other by underweighting enrolments on the western side proposed Divisions and doing the opposite on the other side. Such a stance, perhaps emotionally satisfying, still amounts to malapportionment.

Similarly, the results of the suggestions of the Liberal Party and the Australian Greens which have both abolished a Division on the western side of Melbourne, respectively Maribyrnong and McEwen, also leave too many electors on the western side of the Yarra. The Greens suggestion is not fully fleshed out but we estimate that around 30,000 electors more than necessary at the projected date are contained west and the equivalent numbers off on the east.

On this point and before considering the different options of crossing the Yarra, let's scrutinise the Liberal Party suggestion.

At the last redistribution completed in 2021 and just considering east and west of the Yarra, the Augmented Commission achieved effectively a perfect score in the distribution of projected electors on either side. Taking the sub regions the ALP has given as part of its current suggestion, last time the Commission had no sub region varying by more than 5% of a single Division. Also, as was mentioned in our suggestion, the Commissioners had 19 Divisions with a variation from the projected quota of 1% or less with 26 Divisions or two thirds of the then quota having a variation of less than 2%.

The ALP suggestion has a difference between east and west of plus 3.6% (4,580 electors) of a single Division on the eastern side, parallel to minus 3.6% on the west. Half (19) of our projected Divisions have a variation from the projected quota of 1% or less with 32 of our suggested Divisions being at 2% or less from the projected quota.

In contrast, the Liberal Party suggestion, as can be clearly observed in the table below, has the eastern Divisions at 32.6% of a Division (41,500 electors) below the average for the projected date. All but one of the Divisions in the east are below the projected quota and no attempt has been made to balance the numbers in the sub regions.

Moreover, with such major numerical differences, the Liberal Party suggestion has made no attempt to balance the sub regions. Only seven of their proposed Divisions are within 1% of the projected quota and 26 of their proposed Divisions have a variation of more than 2% from the projected quota. That's a perfect example of what Shakespeare meant with the saying that the wish is father to the thought.

Crossing the Yarra

At the redistribution completed in 1989 Melbourne Ports (now Macnamara) lost the suburb of Richmond and was consolidated as entirely a Division east of the Yarra River. This is the sixth Victorian Federal Redistribution conducted since then. At the previous five Redistributions completed in 1994; 2003; 2010; 2018 and 2021 there were no significant proposals made either by the Commission or by suggestions received that envisaged a Division straddling both sides of the lower reaches of the River.

On the other hand, the upper reaches of the Yarra have been crossed to accommodate the ebb and flow of enrolment numbers and projections. For example, until the 2013 election, the Division of McEwen sourced a significant number of electors from the Yarra Ranges. At the 2019 election, Menzies included Eltham and other parts on the western side of the River. Menzies currently has 2,338 electors on the other end (which we send to McEwen).

The pattern that we have had in Melbourne for more than a third of a century that the Yarra is not crossed at its lower reaches can also be observed in the capitals of other States. In Sydney, the Harbour is not crossed. The former Division of Lowe (now Reid) used to cross the lower reaches of the Parramatta River until 1977 (when it included Ryde) but not since. Similarly, at the 2009 Redistribution, the Brisbane River became a complete boundary for metropolitan Divisions north and south.

This time for Victoria, several suggestions propose that the Division of Macnamara and Melbourne send electors to the other side, in each case resulting in a seat straddling both sides. The justification

for such a move is that Melbourne City Council straddles both sides of the Yarra River anyway. However, all these proposals, with the exception of the Liberal Party (which, as we've noted above has wished away the numerical deficiencies of its suggestion) *also* make a crossing at the upper reaches of the River. In other words, there are not enough electors near Melbourne's CBD to justify a single crossing.

Hence, history and past practice support a crossing in one place at the northern end of Melbourne.

Our suggestion also would result in the least number of transfers of electors than any other option. Whereas the ALP suggestion leaves six Divisions (Calwell, Flinders, Gellibrand, Gippsland, Lalor and Macnamara) completely unchanged, there are a further 11 Divisions (Aston, Cooper, Corio, Dunkley, Goldstein, Higgins, Holt, Indi, Kooyong, Monash and Wills) where the ALP has retained all existing electors but has added others to bring those Divisions to quota.

In turn, aside from the requirement to bring Divisions to quota, the ALP suggestion concentrates its suggested movements of electors to those required to facilitate the establishment of a Division straddling both sides of the Yarra. That section of Macedon Ranges Shire currently in McEwen represents a strong community of interest. From Gisborne to Woodend, townships and communities rely on the same social and physical infrastructure. Local sports teams play in the same leagues, students from Woodend go to Gisborne for schooling and people from Gisborne, Macedon, Woodend and surrounds access and leverage each other's health services. Local economies in the area rely on one another and the entire region from Gisborne to Woodend regularly access Melbourne through the same transport corridor, whether it be by road or rail. These small connected towns not only have a strong sense of shared community, they also have a reliance on shared infrastructure. The commission should not seek to separate them from one another to ensure this region and its interests can be appropriately represented.

As noted in our submission, the Melton Township and surrounding suburbs have been shuffled across three electorates (Lalor, Gorton and Hawke) in just 10 years, creating a significant challenge in establishing continuity in advocacy for an area that is amongst the most disadvantaged in the state. The seat of Hawke was established with Melton, which is the fastest growing city in Australia, at its centre. This includes the surrounding suburbs such as Melton South, Cobblebank and Strathtulloh. It should therefore remain anchored in Melton and the surrounding suburbs to ensure that the area does not change electorates again in the foreseeable future. This is supported by the Liberal Party submission and the Greens submission, neither of which seek to move any parts of the City of Melton from Hawke. It is also supported by the submissions S9, S35 and S60.

VARIATION FROM THE PROJECTED QUOTA 17/04/28

38 Divisions Projected April, 2028 Quota = 127 238(38)

South Melb	2021 Comm	ALP Suggestion 4/28	Liberal Suggestion 4/28
1. MACNAMARA	(-0.7)	(-2.0)	(-3.4)Renamed Melbourne
2. HIGGINS	(-2.4)	(-1.7)	(-2.2)
3. KOOYONG	(2.4)	(-0.1)	(-2.2)
4. CHISHOLM	(-3.2)	(1.1)	(-1.7)
5. DEAKIN	(0.7)	(1.7)	(-2.6)
6. ASTON	(-1.4)	(0.7)	(-2.4)
7. MENZIES	(0.9)	(2.7)	(-2.9)
8. CASEY	(2.4)	abolished	(-2.0)

Totals	(-1.3)	(2.4)	(-19.4)
---------------	---------------	--------------	----------------

38 Divisions Projected April, 2028 Quota = 127 238(38)

SE METRO2PP	2021 Comm	ALP Suggestion 4/28	Liberal Suggestion 4/28
1. GOLDSTEIN	(-1.1)	(0.9)	(-2.6)
2. HOTHAM	(2.9)	(-0.4)	(-2.0)
3. ISAACS	(0.3)	(1.3)	(-0.9)
4. BRUCE	(-0.7)	(-1.8)	(-2.7)
5. LA TROBE	(2.6)	(0.6)	(-2.5)
6. HOLT	(2.7)	(2.1)	(-0.3)
7. DUNKLEY	(-2.2)	(1.7)	(2.9)
8. FLINDERS	(0.2)	(-2.0)	(-2.0)

Totals	(4.7)	(2.4)	(-10.1)
---------------	--------------	--------------	----------------

38 Divisions Projected April, 2028 Quota = 127 238(38)

EAST RURAL	2021 Comm	ALP Suggestion 4/28	Liberal Suggestion 4/28
1. GIPPSLAND	(-0.7)	(-0.4)	(-0.2)
2. MONASH	(-3.2)	(-0.8)	(-2.9)

Totals	(-3.9)	(-1.2)	(-3.1)
---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------

GRAND TOTAL VIC EAST (18) (0.5) (3.6) (-32.6)

38 Divisions Projected April, 2028 Quota =

127 238(38)

INNER W+N	2021 Comm	ALP Suggestion 4/28	Liberal Suggestion 4/28
1. GELLIBRAND	(0.2)	(-2.5)	(2.2)
2. MARIBYRNONG	(-0.4)	(-0.8)	abolished
3. FRASER	(-0.6)	(0.4)	(3.4)
4. MELBOURNE	(2.2)	(-1.4)	(-2.5) Peacock
5. WILLS	(-0.2)	(-0.2)	(1.0)
6. COOPER	(-1.4)	(-0.3)	(-2.9)
7. JAGA JAGA	(1.2)	(-0.7)	(2.6)
8. HAWKE	(-)	(0.1)	(-0.3)
Totals	(1.0)	(-5.4)	(3.5)

38 Divisions Projected April, 2028 Quota =

127 238(38)

OUTER W+N Melb	2021 Comm	ALP Suggestion 4/28	Liberal Suggestion 4/28
1. LALOR	(-0.4)	(0.5)	(2.8)
2. GORTON	(-0.5)	(-1.1)	(2.5)
3. MCEWEN	(-0.2)	(-0.2)	(3.0)
4. SCULLIN	(-0.3)	(2.0)	(3.3)
5. CALWELL	(-0.1)	(-1.5)	(2.2)
Totals	(-1.5)	(-0.3)	(13.8)

38 Divisions Projected April, 2028 Quota =

127 238(38)

Geelong-W+N RURAL	2021 Comm	ALP Suggestion 4/28	Liberal Suggestion 4/28
1. CORIO	(0.2)	(-2.1)	(2.9)
2. CORANGAMITE	(3.4)	(0.1)	(3.4)
3. BALLARAT	(-1.2)	(2.9)	(3.1)
4. WANNON	(-2.7)	(-0.7)	(-1.4)
5. MALLEE	(1.3)	(-1.5)	(3.4)
6. NICHOLLS	(-2.1)	(0.9)	(-0.1)
7. BENDIGO	(0.6)	(0.9)	(3.0)
8. INDI	(1.4)	(1.6)	(1.0)
Totals	(0.9)	(2.1)	(15.3)
GRAND TOTALS VIC WEST (21)	(0.1)*	(-3.6)	(32.6)

***Differential due to rounding**

Liberal Party's proposed Melbourne and Macnamara

(The Liberal Party suggestion abolishes Maribyrnong; renames Macnamara to Melbourne and then renames Melbourne to Peacock)

Before examining the Liberal Party suggestion for these Divisions let's revisit what the ALP has suggested which also highlights the need for small transfers of electors to bring these Divisions to quota which, in turn is based on returning electors to these Divisions that had only been transferred out at the 2021 Redistribution.

The ALP Suggestion:

- *Leaves Macnamara unchanged. (Also supported by The Greens).*
- *Maribyrnong returns the suburb of Kensington (within Melbourne City Council) to Melbourne which reverses the change made in 2021. Additionally, Maribyrnong regains the entire suburbs of Maribyrnong and Maidstone, again suburbs that had been in that Division until the last Redistribution. Finally, Maribyrnong returns to Wills the SA2 of Gowanbrae which had been in Wills until 2019 and is entirely in Merri-bek City Council.*
- *Melbourne regains the entire suburb of Kensington and returns its 2021 gains being the balance of the suburb of Brunswick East to Wills and back to Cooper the suburb of Clifton.*

Let's now look at the detail of the Liberal Party suggestion for this area. We'll start with Maribyrnong, which, in the Liberal Party suggestion has been abolished

Maribyrnong

The Liberal Party suggests that Maribyrnong be abolished but then splits Moonee Valley LGA between its proposed Divisions of Fraser and Peacock. The latter Division would also include the Melbourne City Council suburbs of Parkville and North Melbourne, thus maintaining the split of the northern part of that Council in two Divisions instead of its north of the Yarra electors being just in a single Division.

The core justification for the wholesale changes in this part of Melbourne is contained on page 18 of the Liberal Party suggestion concerning Peacock as follows:

"This suggestion creates a Division which is a natural community from Richmond to Ascot Vale, following what has informally been described as the "latte belt". These areas are a different density to the Melbourne CBD, containing low-rise apartments and terrace houses, in contrast to the high rise and business hubs of the CBD, Docklands, and Southbank. This proposal better aligns communities and reflects the changing nature of inner metropolitan Melbourne".

But the entire State of Victoria has a renowned reputation for a coffee culture. If the Committee were to establish Divisions based on 'Latte belts' it will still end up drawing 38 Victorian Divisions, each one proclaiming that it has places serving the best lattes, not only in Victoria but the nation.

As has been noted in other submissions, including our own, the division of Maribyrnong has a strong and unique identity. This is especially so in areas such as Essendon, Aberfeldie, Niddrie, Airport West, Strathmore, Moonee Ponds (which has mostly been in Maribyrnong for 117 years), East Keilor

and Avondale Heights. Many residents of Maribyrnong, particularly in the Moonee Valley City Council (entirely within the Division) have spent their entire lives living in the seat.

Maribyrnong is home to many public resources, including schools and community clubs that families and residents enjoy. The geography of the Maribyrnong River provides a connection to both sides of the seat. While there is a popular misconception that the River forms a community boundary, in practicality it is actually seen by the local community as a central point of activity for both sides of the riverbank. This is highlighted by the multiple walking bridges, running clubs, rowing clubs and social activity groups that connect both banks – as do many of the sporting clubs that exist along the river.

In order for the residents of Maribyrnong to commute in any direction other than to their west, they would need to utilise major traffic routes within the Maribyrnong electorate, such as Military Rd, Milleara Rd, Keilor Rd, Buckley St or Mount Alexander Rd. Furthermore, while many residents work in the CBD, travelling through the electorate to get to their place of employment, Moonee Ponds provides a commercial and transport hub within the division of Maribyrnong. This is buttressed by other major local hubs for employment and services including Essendon Fields, Airport West Shopping Centre, Highpoint and Tullamarine.

Establishment of the seat of Maribyrnong

The AEC has made a point of not abolishing seats that were established at Federation due to the historical significance they hold for being contested in Australia's first federal election. The only Federation seats situated in metropolitan Melbourne are Kooyong, Flinders and Melbourne. The division of Maribyrnong was created shortly after in 1906, and remains one of the oldest divisions in Victoria, giving it a comparable historical significance.

Please also note that the highest number of Victorian Divisions having an indigenous name was at Federation with 12 of the then 23 Victorian Divisions. Post Federation, Maribyrnong was the sole indigenous name adopted in Victoria until Jagajaga (1984).

Indigenous significance

The division of Maribyrnong has a long and enduring Indigenous history taking its name from ***"Murring-gnay-bir-nong"*** in the Woiwurrung language, which translates to ***"I can hear a ringtail possum"***. Maribyrnong is [one of only 24](#) federal electoral divisions named for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or word. It is also, having been established in 1906, one of the oldest Divisions named for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or word. The tribes and clans of the Kulin Nation, including the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung Bunurong Peoples have always gathered in the area.

The point at which the Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers meet is of special significance as it symbolises the point at which groups would meet as they travelled along the Maribyrnong River. The many unidentified sacred sites identified along this corridor are recorded in the Maribyrnong Aboriginal Heritage Study of December 1999.

Maribyrnong's indigenous history is well documented in both the [Maribyrnong City Council Reconciliation Action Plan](#) and the [Moonee Ponds City Council's Bagarru Bagarru Djerring Reconciliation Plan](#).

Moonee Ponds' Reconciliation Action Plan includes both a commitment to:

- ***“Collaborate with Traditional Owners to develop a vision and shape a Master Plan for the Maribyrnong River Precinct, recognising connection to Waterways, and implementing actions from the Waterways of the West Action Plan and Healthy Waterways Strategy”, and***
- ***“Collaborate with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and the Narrap team to deliver the Caring for Country Together Program”.***

Moonee Valley LGA

[The AEC states](#) that when developing a proposal the Redistribution Committee gives due consideration to ***“community interests within the proposed electoral division, including economic, social and regional interests”*** and the ***“existing boundaries of divisions in the state or territory.”*** The abolition of the division of Maribyrnong would result in the LGA of Moonee Valley, and the more than [120,000 people and 30,000 families](#) that reside within it, being split amongst multiple different electorates, as opposed to the current configuration which sees it largely fit within the division of Maribyrnong.

An additional consideration could also be made with regard to the different programs that are administered by State and Federal Governments. When a federal electorate is fragmented into many LGA's this can result in confusion for residents as to eligibility for state or federal payments, such as disaster payments.

The suburb of Maribyrnong

As Mark Mulcair's suggestion states:

“However, around Maribyrnong, the river loops back on itself, and the existing boundary removes one of the main communication lines between two communities on the eastern bank. I suggest it makes sense to transfer this area to the Division of Maribyrnong, to open up the Raleigh Road traffic corridor as a strong communication link between these two areas”.

To drive from Avondale Heights to Moonee Valley and Ascot Vale means taking Raleigh Road, that is, going through the suburb of Maribyrnong itself.

One way to remedy this would be to return the suburb of Maribyrnong to the division of Maribyrnong. By doing this it would also reinforce the strong community connection with the surrounding suburbs and enhance the proud history of the name by allowing the Maribyrnong River to traverse the length of the electorate. The suburb of Maribyrnong has, with the exception of the last 18-months, been in the Maribyrnong electorate since 1906.

Practically, the shopping centre at Highpoint in Maribyrnong is heavily used by the residents of surrounding suburbs in the current electorate of Maribyrnong. There has previously been commentary with regard to the confusion over the division's name also being utilised as the name of a suburb, LGA and river. This argument becomes moot when we accept that abolishing the division of Maribyrnong would not change the fact that there is already multiple duplication of the use of the name.

Conversely, and as addressed by our suggestion, moving the suburb of Kensington back into the division of Melbourne would reunify the northern end of the Melbourne City Council. Economically and culturally, the residents of Kensington share much more in common with the suburbs that sit within the City of Melbourne and the Division of Melbourne, making this course of action a sensible one.

Macnamara/Melbourne

The Liberal Party has proposed that the electoral name of Macnamara, (only adopted in 2019 and named after a significant medical researcher and doctor) be retired. It transfers 27,388 projected electors from Melbourne City Council within the Division of Melbourne to the 'new' Division but places the Melbourne City Council suburbs of North Melbourne and Parkville in its suggested Division of Peacock. Then Macnamara sheds to Higgins its entire share of the City of Glen Eira Council- 26,407 projected electors.

These Glen Eira electors are then expected to supply the entire shortfall within the 18 Divisions east of the Yarra. But, as we've seen in our section on malapportionment, the eastern end would still be approximately 40,000 electors short at the projected date.

In short, this aspect of the Liberal Party objection is a 'Magic Pudding' solution.

Our position is that the boundaries of Macnamara should be retained in their current form. The most recent decision of the Commission concerning Macnamara made in 2021 continues to stand as the appropriate application of the criteria that the Commission is obliged to consider.

First, there is no requirement for Macnamara to lose or add electors in line with its projected population growth to ensure that it approximates the average divisional enrolment of Victoria as required by section 66 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act.

Secondly, while the number of its projected electors does not necessitate a change to Macnamara's boundaries, nor do the other factors prescribed by section 66 of the Act. By contrast, the current boundaries for Macnamara give due consideration to its communities of interest, means of communication and travel, physical features and area, and the boundaries of the existing divisions in Victoria. For example, we refer to the matters we presented in our submission on 16 October 2020 to the Victorian Augmented Electoral Commission, and to the decision it made in section 164 of its July 2021 report, for further information.

By way of further example, Macnamara takes in two neighbouring municipalities, Port Philip and Glen Eira, which are linked by east-west transport routes such as Dandenong Road and Balaclava Road. Macnamara on its current boundaries also takes in the majority of Melbourne's Jewish community, which is centred in St Kilda East, Elwood and Caulfield. Jewish schools, synagogues, and religious centres, community centres, community libraries and art centres, kosher shops and restaurants and Jewish health and aged care services are concentrated across these suburbs. They serve the significant number of Jewish residents in both Port Philip and Glen Eira.