



Comment on suggestions 67

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I would like to provide feedback on the ongoing Victorian redistribution and the suggestions made on electoral boundaries, focusing particularly on the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

As I discuss later, there is much discussion of the projected population figures and the need for revision of those projections to ensure an equitable redistribution.

Given what we know about the future growth of the state as confirmed by the Victorian Government in the recent publication 'Victoria in Future', the rapid growth of outer metropolitan areas will be significant. I strongly believe outer metropolitan areas should be pivotal in this redistribution, representing the North (McEwen), East (Casey and Latrobe), and West (Hawke, Gorton Lalor) separately.

The data underscores the consistently uneven trajectory of population growth in Melbourne, highlighting that certain well-established and well-serviced regions are expected to undergo moderate growth in the coming years.

As per the 'Victoria in Future' report's projections, they anticipate an additional **845,000 people** to inhabit the municipalities of Wyndham, Melton, Hume, Whittlesea, and Casey, along with the peri-urban shires of Mitchell and Cardinia by the year **2036**, or in 12 years time. Hardly areas we should be abolishing electorates.

The outer suburban and semi-regional areas are less well serviced and, where the population is booming, need of strong local representation.

Further it should be noted, the majority of municipalities with lower projected growth rates are situated in Melbourne's middle ring.

The outer metro eastern and western regions of Melbourne currently encompass more than one electorate, reflecting sustained and robust growth in these areas. In contrast, the northern region has traditionally been represented by a single seat, which has become more concentrated along the northern fringe of Melbourne. Its focal point is Wallan and Whittlesea, emphasizing the peri-urban growth corridors along Hume Freeway and Plenty Road.

Metropolitan Regions

I also note that the Yarra River has been used as a natural boundary, although electorates have occasionally crossed it at different points. When considering representation, it's equally crucial to acknowledge the arrangement of Local Government in Victoria.

Local Government is organised by geographical area definitions governing outlined in six Metropolitan Regions. These regions encompass entire Local Government Areas (LGAs), with the exception of Mitchell Shire. The southern part of Mitchell

Shire, situated within Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary, falls under the Northern Region, while the remaining part is within the Goulburn Regional Partnership.

The Northern LGAs include:

- Banyule
- Hume
- Darebin
- Merri-bek
- Mitchell (part)
- Nillumbik
- Whittlesea

The Eastern Region comprises:

- Knox
- Manningham
- Maroondah
- Monash
- Whitehorse
- Yarra Ranges

The Western LGAs include:

- Brimbank
- Hobsons Bay
- Maribyrnong
- Melton
- Moonee Valley
- Wyndham

As a Victorian, these areas make sense to me as communities of interest. I believe when making electorate boundaries it should be fully reflective of these regions.

In light of these considerations, I offer my comments.

Proposals to abolish McEwen or move it further east.

S25, S22, S42, S45, S49, S57, and S61 all share a common theme: a proposal to abolish either McEwen or Casey, and either move McEwen eastward or rename Casey as McEwen.

S57, presented by the Labor Party, advocates for the abolition of Casey and the relocation of McEwen to the east.

S61, proposed by the Greens Party, calls for the elimination of McEwen.

Subsequent submissions (**S25, S22, S42, S45, S49**) follow a similar pattern.

Broadly these submissions reflect an interest in *maintaining the status quo* in the ring of middle to inner metropolitan seats without giving due consideration the rapidly

growing outer north of Melbourne. They also do not appropriately reflect the communities of interest I have discussed above. It is also noteworthy that these suggestions are supported by the left leaning political parties.

Labor's Proposal for McEwen

The proposed McEwen by Labor essentially constitutes a redrawn version of the existing Casey, with the former McEwen being abolished.

In this submission, changes are suggested to McEwen, such as merging the northern suburbs of Doreen and Mill Park while integrating more sections of Nillumbik Shire. The electoral boundary then extends across the Yarra River, covering the entire upper Yarra region and reaching eastward to Warburton as well as adding parts of the Dandenong's as well as part of Narre Warren. The result is an incoherent eastern seat filled with disconnected communities.

While the submission recommends removing split Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the west of McEwen, such as Macedon and Mitchell Shire, it paradoxically reintroduces these splits in the electorates of Hawke and Scullin. Further divisions occur in the east of the new McEwen, creating a geographically puzzling configuration.

Separating Mernda from Doreen could be likened to separating twins. These suburbs run parallel and share an intricate connection in every aspect, including sharing the same postcode.

The suggestion to retain Doreen in McEwen while excluding its adjacent southern suburb, South Morang, and including the more distant suburb of Mill Park is curious and less than practical.

The rationale behind disrupting Whittlesea Council in such an incoherent manner is difficult to understand. While Scullin gains Mernda and Whittlesea, Mill Park and Doreen are excluded, placed in an electorate that navigates a green wedge and an escarpment to connect with the Yarra Valley, such as Warburton, and far-reaching eastern suburbs like Narre Warren east.

This proposed "McEwen" seat moves 90,000 electors, dispersing them to divisions that, at the next redistribution, would only have to be **radically changed again**. That is not fair on these electors.

Since its inception in 1984 McEwen has been home to the residents of - Kilmore, Whittlesea, Willowmavin, Wallan, Beveridge, Eden Park, Yan Yean, Humevale, Bylands, Wollert, Mernda, Doreen, Arthurs Creek, Wandong, Heathcote Junction and Upper Plenty.

Retaining McEwen in the outer north ensures that the residents of this area continue to have dedicated representation that understands the specific needs and challenges of their outer metro communities. Redrawing the boundaries extensively, as proposed in both the Labor and Greens submissions, risks diluting the local representation in the fastest growing area of Melbourne.

Proposals to make McEwen a more coherent outer norther seat.

In my submission I argued that McEwen needed to run more north south to better represent the outer north. I also note **S35, S36, S41, S44, S56, S60 and S63** all concur achieving a similar result in different ways.

Poor Projections

I would like to lend my support to **S35, S41, S58 and S63**. These submissions all show just how inaccurate the AEC enrolment projections are (and have been). **S35** also makes the point that McEwen has always outperformed the AEC projections in growth and is currently on course to smash the current projections.

Yarra River

Whilst it might be more palatable for some to cross the Yarra up stream, the issues this would create in Melbourne's growth areas would be more profound than removing a division where Melbourne has more stagnant growth.

I find **S60, S41** proposal for addressing the Yarra River crossing dilemma to be the most practical. It involves transferring the Southbank area from Macnamara to Melbourne and relocating North Warrandyte from Menzies to Jagajaga. These adjustments are modest and serve to reunite Southbank with the Melbourne Council, a move that aligns with the majority of the area.

As **S41** also notes Melbourne City council is the only council that crosses the Yarra, there are plenty of roads/bridges in the area that cross the Yarra and the class divide is similar on both sides. It is the area in which most people cross the Yarra every day without even noticing.

Summary

I wish to emphasise that there will be submissions of discontent regarding inner-city boundaries, with concerns about communities only 11 kilometres apart that should not be amalgamated. It is noteworthy that the same submissions and individuals expressing such concerns will not hesitate to be less than considerate of electors in the outer suburbs by creating electorates that lack connection.

If drastic adjustments were necessary in the outer metropolitan areas, a more logical approach would involve combining Casey and its neighbouring electorate, Latrobe. Both are situated in the east, these areas share greater commonalities than those in the north and east, making such a pairing more sensible.

Retaining McEwen in the outer north ensures that the residents of this area continue to have dedicated representation that understands the specific needs and challenges of their rapidly growing community.

Thank you for your consideration of this reponse.

