



# Objection 91

Isaac Gross

3 pages

Dear Redistribution Committee,

*This objection covers the boundaries of the following seats: Higgins, Melbourne, Kooyong, Chisholm, Menzies, Hotham, Deakin.*

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed elimination of the Higgins electorate and the resultant movement of South Yarra into the seat of Melbourne. As someone who has both lived and worked in this area, I have experienced firsthand the unique community connections that South Yarra has with the rest of Higgins that make this electorate a core constituency that should be preserved.

There are several reasons why I think this proposed redistribution could be improved by instead shifting parts of Hawthorn and Kew into Melbourne and abolishing a seat further east.

### Census says no

I submit that the best single objective measure of two communities' level of integration is the rate at which people move between them. A high migration rate suggests strong community ties, shared cultural and economic interests, and indicates that these regions should be combined into a single seat for better representation at the federal level.

Acknowledging the need to abolish a seat south of the river and redistribute some voters to a northern electorate, I analysed census data to determine the migration rate of southern suburbs to the north over the period 2016 to 2021, summarised in the table and attached excel. I present two migration measures: the overall migration rate (the percentage of households moving from the south to the north between censuses) and the migration rate conditional on moving (this adjusts for different overall levels of mobility in suburbs).

These calculations *clearly* show that South Yarra is not the best choice for combining with a north-of-the-river seat. Despite being geographically close South Yarra (South) is the 49th most interconnected SA2 with the North when conditioning the rate of moving! Even South Yarra (North) ranks only 38th!

SA2	Rank	Overall Migration Rate	Migration Rate Conditional on Moving	SA2	Rank	Overall Migration Rate	Migration Rate Conditional on Moving
Southbank (West) - South Wharf	1	14	51	Malvern East	26	3	17
Southbank - East	2	14	50	Ashburton (Vic.)	27	2	16
Hawthorn - North	3	10	40	Glen Iris - East	28	3	16
Kew - West	4	6	35	Blackburn South	29	2	16
Kew - South	5	7	33	Armadale	30	5	15
Hawthorn - South	6	8	31	Templestowe	31	2	15
South Melbourne	7	7	28	Bulleen	32	2	15
Hawthorn East	8	6	27	Elwood	33	5	15
Kew East	9	4	26	Hughesdale	34	2	14
Port Melbourne	10	5	26	Box Hill North	35	2	14
Prahran - Windsor	11	9	28	<b>South Yarra - North</b>	36	8	14
St Kilda - West	12	7	23	Doncaster	37	2	13
Surrey Hills (West) - Canterbury	13	4	22	Burwood East	38	1	12
Balwyn	14	4	22	Doncaster East - North	39	2	12
St Kilda - Central	15	8	22	Templestowe Lower	40	2	12
Blackburn	16	2	20	Murrumbeena	41	2	11
Albert Park	17	5	21	Carnegie	42	3	11
Camberwell	18	4	20	Caulfield - North	43	2	11
Toorak	19	5	22	<b>South Yarra - West</b>	44	6	11
Surrey Hills (East) - Mont Albert	20	4	19	Elsternwick	45	3	10
St Kilda East	21	6	19	Brighton (Vic.)	46	2	10
Balwyn North	22	3	18	<b>South Yarra - South</b>	47	6	10
Burwood (Vic.)	23	3	18	Ormond - Glen Huntly	48	2	8
Malvern - Glen Iris	24	4	18	Doncaster East - South	49	1	8
Box Hill	25	3	17	Sandringham - Black Rock	50	1	8

The most interconnected area, based on both measures, is South Bank. However, due to the natural corner boundary formed by the Yarra and the Bay, cutting across the river at this point might be undesirable. Excluding South Bank, Hawthorn and Kew exhibit much higher mobility rates with the seat of Melbourne than the areas currently proposed.

Hawthorn North, Hawthorn South, Kew South, and Kew West have exceptionally high levels of integration with Melbourne. As such I would strongly recommend that part of them be incorporated into the seat of Melbourne instead of South Yarra.

### **Local Links**

This result should not be surprising given the strong links between Hawthorn & Kew and Richmond & East Melbourne. South Yarra has a single, slow tram taking people north up Chapel Street and a train line that makes only one stop before entering the CBD. By contrast, Hawthorn and Kew have five tram lines, four suburban bridges, and a well-integrated train line with Richmond and other Northern suburbs.

Thus, it makes far more sense to include the eastern portions of Kooyong, such as Kew and Hawthorn, into the seat of Melbourne, rather than requiring Melbourne to incorporate South Yarra.

The close community connection of South Yarra with the rest of Chapel Street in Windsor and Prahran, as well as the south side of the city in general, cannot be overstated. South Yarra is an integral part of the vibrant and cohesive community along Chapel Street, where residents, businesses, and community organisations thrive on their shared identity. Disrupting this connection would undermine the strong social and economic ties that bind these neighbourhoods together.

Secondly, the City of Stonnington, which largely overlaps with Higgins, has a robust community network that would be significantly disrupted by the dissolution of the electorate. The residents of Stonnington benefit from cohesive local governance and community programs that rely on the continuity and stability provided by the current electoral boundaries. Disbanding Higgins would erode this well-established sense of community and continuity.

Crossing the river at South Yarra, a natural extension of eliminating Higgins, makes little sense from a community standpoint. Including Toorak in Kooyong similarly fails to reflect the lived realities and preferences of the residents. The census data shows that *residents of Toorak are 65% more likely to move to Macnamara than Kooyong*, highlighting the lack of a natural connection between these two areas.

## **The Bigger Picture**

Under this proposal which seat should be eliminated? If the natural communities of South Yarra, Toorak, and Armadale are kept within a largely retained Higgins and Hawthorn and/or Kew are shifted into Melbourne this would naturally lead Kooyong to shift eastward - instead of being forced to awkwardly cross the M1 into Tourak.

This suggests eliminating an eastern seat like Chisholm or Deakin, both of which are underweight, have several neighbouring seats in need of more electors and lack numerous natural boundaries. Without going through SA1 by SA1 it is clear that redistribution could be rejigged to accommodate these local concerns without affecting the rest of the state.

- Kooyong, having lost voters to Melbourne, would shift east taking in Box Hill and surrounds.
- Menzies would shift east instead of south.
- Hotham would shift north into Chisholm.
- Chisholm and Deakin would be largely combined, with naming to be determined.

In conclusion, the proposed elimination of the Higgins electorate would severely disrupt well-established community connections and fail to reflect the natural migration patterns and preferences of the residents. I urge the AEC to reconsider this proposal and to maintain the integrity and cohesion of the Higgins electorate.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

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