



Objection 463

Matthew Lucas

6 pages

June 28th 2024

Tom Rogers
Australian Electoral Commissioner
Australian Electoral Commission
10 Mort St
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Tom

Re: Submission in Opposition to the Victorian Redistribution Draft (June 2024) that would abolish the Federal division of Higgins.

I write to make a formal submission objecting to the Victorian Redistribution Draft (June 2024).

As a constituent of Higgins, I am deeply concerned about the impact that the proposed abolition of Higgins and the movement of other district boundaries would have on my community.

I will outline several reasons for my objection to this draft below:

Part 1: The community within the City of Stonnington is a significant Community of Interest and should be treated as such. The current draft would significantly and unfairly diminish this community's representation.

In this section, I will provide evidence that a significant, integrated, and contiguous community of interest exists within the boundaries of the City of Stonnington, all of which is contained within the district of Higgins, and that should the draft redistribution go forward that it will unjustly have its representation diminished.

The community of interest within Stonnington is:

1. Bound by natural, demographic and man-made barriers

Stonnington's boundaries lead to forming a community and make for sensible places to draw boundaries.

- To the north lies the Yarra River and the Monash Freeway
- To the south lies Dandenong Road
- To the east lies an area surrounded by the Monash Freeway, Warrigal Road and the Princess Highway, with Chadstone Shopping Centre occupying the convergence.
- To the west lies Punt Road (and shortly beyond Fawkner Park and the Royal Botanic Gardens).

and

2. Naturally grouped by government-defined boundaries:

Several government-defined boundaries have solidified Stonnington as a community of interest.

- The boundaries of the City of Stonnington that follow the natural, man-made and demographic boundaries above
- Except for a small part of South Yarra and a larger area of Glen Iris, suburb and postcode boundaries follow the above-described barriers.
- The primary school zones, defined by the Victorian Government, define 80% of local primary school catchments within Stonnington (with the exception of Malvern Primary)
- The area has just two Victorian Parliamentary Districts.
- The location of access points to Services Victoria and Services Australia promotes residents to remain in the community.
- Public transport routes promote residents to shop, live and thrive within Stonnington.
- Planning zones have seen High Street, Chapel Street, Toorak Road, Malvern Road, Glenferrie Road and Wattletree Road all developing significant commercial strips within Stonnington.

In line with these boundaries, activity demonstrates the significance of community in the area. These include:

1. Access to Community Amenities

Traffic patterns show residents of these areas' connection to its leisure, shopping, aged care, hospital, and educational services – there is a distinct pattern of residents travelling to access venues and facilities within Stonnington, using the City of Stonnington when the same service, provided by adjacent councils is not utilised. For example, residents are much more likely to use the Harold Holt Swim Centre, than the pool facilities in the City of Yarra.

2. Access to Health Care

The catchment of Cabrini Hospital (a 508-bed hospital) would be divided into three Divisions, making it much harder for the significant non-profit health provider to have a voice representative of its importance in Canberra – a particularly poignant issue given the dire state of the Victorian public health system has led many residents to become reliant on Cabrini. The Alfred Hospital's catchment is currently in two Divisions and would be split into at least three.

3. Access to Aged Care

Many aged care facilities, including several Arcare facilities in the east, Mecwacare in Malvern Central, and others, are within and largely serve the community.

- This is evidenced by services such as the Stonnington Community Transport network, which links aged care facilities with shopping and other facilities within Stonnington.
- Arcare's Resident Bus services transport residents to shopping strips within Stonnington.
- Many aged care residents resided in Stonnington immediately before moving into these facilities.

4. Access to Transport

Public transport routes promote a contiguous community. Major public transport routes connecting the community include:

- The route 58 (along Toorak Road), 72 (along Malvern Road) and 6 (along High Street) trams, all of which dissect the district east-west connection South Yarra and Toorak, Glen Iris, Malvern and Prahran and Malvern, Toorak, Prahran and Windsor. The Route 58 and Route 6 trams terminate within Higgins, connecting it only to the CBD outside the area.
- The Route 78 and 16 trams that dissect Higgins on a north-south axis
- The Frankston and Sandringham train lines both connect stations within the area
- The Route 604, 605, and 624 buses connects the community, so much so that the 624 bus loops the community in the southeast

While there are strong public transport links to Melbourne's CBD, few direct links exist to suburbs such as Wheelers Hill, Kew, Mont Albert, Carlton, etc.

5. Access to State Representation

The City of Stonnington is split into just two State Districts, Malvern and Prahran. These areas have been, therefore, recognised as needing a voice in the State Parliament.

6. Access to Education

Victorian Primary School zones are largely bounded by the geographic and demographic characteristics of the region.

Except for Malvern Primary, almost all government primary schools in Stonnington have 80% or greater catchments within Stonnington. The Victorian Department of Education's decisions, which carefully analyse demographic data, further support the hypothesis that a community of interest exists within Stonnington.

The community within Stonnington covers 25.63 square kilometres and is approximately 11 km along a southeasterly tangent. It is under 3 km at its widest point on a north-south tangent.

Under the current boundaries, the Stonnington community is completely within Higgins's boundaries, representing a significant proportion of Higgin's constituents.

Under the Draft Redistribution, the community would be split into four districts: Kooyong, Chislm, Melbourne, and Hotham. This will significantly dilute these communities' representation.

Should the proposed redistribution go ahead, to provide some examples, residents of:

- Windsor would need to be represented alongside those of Caulfield East and Port Melbourne
- South Yarra would be represented alongside Brunswick, Fitzroy, Parkville, and West Melbourne—areas that are separated from them by significant barriers, including the Yarra River, Melbourne CBD, and the Monash Freeway, and with which they have very limited transport and road connections.
- East Malvern, almost 20 km away, would be represented alongside Wheelers Hill, Glen Waverley, and Mulgrave.

Significant barriers to representation will be introduced under the draft redistribution. Take, for example, the distance and time an average constituent would need to travel to reach their Member of Parliament's electorate office:

Distance and travel times to the nearest Electorate Office from various areas in Stonnington:

Location	To the Higgins EO			To Proposed EO			
	Dist.	Travel Time		Dist.	Travel Time		
		Drive	PTV		Drive	PTV	
Windsor Railway Station	4.4 km	8 mins	16 mins	2.5 km	10 mins	19 mins	× Worse Off
Prahran Town Hall	5.3 km	10 mins	29 mins	7.3 km	40 mins	Over an hour.	× Worse Off
South Yarra Railway Station	6.5 km	14 mins	24 mins	5.8 km	35 mins	Over an hour.	× Worse Off
Armadale Railway Station	2.3 km	6 mins	15 mins	6.2 km	14 mins	34 mins	× Worse Off
Glen Iris Route 6 Tram Terminus	2.1 km	3 mins	14 mins	8.6 km	14 mins	18 mins	× Worse Off
Malvern Central Shopping Centre	1.1 km	3 mins	5 mins	6.2 km	14 mins	34 mins	× Worse Off
Central Park Malvern East	750 m	2 mins	7 mins	13.6 km	14 mins	39 mins	× Worse Off
Toorak Village	5.0 km	9 mins	37 mins	5.7 km	16 mins	48 mins	× Worse Off
Chadstone Shopping Centre	5.3 km	7 mins	41 mins	7.2 km	14 mins	33 mins	× Worse Off

Part 2: The Historical Significance of Higgins

The seat of Higgins has significant historic significance as outlined below:

1. The Seat should be retained for its Parliamentary and National Historic significance.

The Federal seat of Higgins in Australia holds historical significance. It is not only a prime ministerial seat, with two Prime Ministers—Harold Holt and Sir John Gorton—having been its representatives, but also two Treasurers of Australia—Harold Hold and Peter Costello.

Higgins would meet several of the National Heritage Criteria as published by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (the relevant department) should they be applied, including:

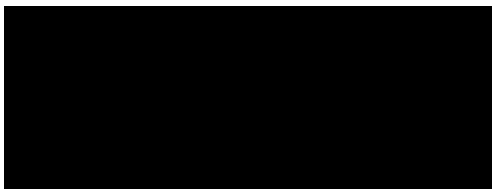
- a) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history
- b) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period and
- c) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history

2. The Higgins name has significance and should be retained.

The seat of Higgins is named after Justice Henry Bournes Higgins (1851-1929) – a prominent politician, judge, and social reformer who played a crucial role in the country's legal and social development. Not only was Higgins one of the few Members to see Victoria transition from colony to federation, but has a long history of social equality and equity – to eliminate a seat named after a true pioneer of Australian values but to leave one (Hotham) named for Sir Charles Hotham – a man whose name is mired in controversy for his contributions, as Governor of Victoria, to the deterioration of Indigenous and workers' rights.

I lodge this formal objection to the abolition of Higgins and thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards



Matthew Lucas
Resident of Higgins