



Suggestion 36

D.G. Clarke

3 pages

Submission for Consideration regards McEwen redistribution.

I would like to highlight long-standing issues that need to be addressed with the electorate of McEwen in order to ensure fair and representative electoral divisions.

McEwen as settled in the last redistribution is a peri urban to rural seat located in the outer north of Melbourne and has, since its inception, been anchored around the townships of Wallan and Whittlesea. It is named after Prime Minister John "Blackjack" McEwen is Australia's third-shortest serving Prime Minister who was Country Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister for nearly 13 years. The electorates of Page in NSW and Forde in Queensland are named for the first and second shortest serving Prime Ministers.

One of the common grievances from the last Victoria redistribution was the sprawling nature of the McEwen electorate. The current seat of McEwen stretches across four different corridors, encompassing areas from Gisborne and Woodend which are part of the Macedon Ranges Shire in the west to Panton Hill and Hurstbridge in the Yarra escarpment as part of the Nillumbik Green wedge, the escarpment is clearly a natural barrier that separates the north from the eastern communities of the Yarra Valley.

This geographical sprawl takes in parts of four Local Government areas.

When redrawing electoral boundaries in Victoria, the Redistribution Commission Should seriously consider various factors to ensure that the divisions reflect the principles of fairness and representational equity. Some of the key factors and considerations include:

Communities of Interest: This factor involves identifying and preserving communities that share common interests, such as economic, social, cultural, or historical ties. It aims to keep people with similar concerns and issues together within the same electoral division to ensure that their interests are adequately represented.

There are already good examples of these principles at play with other similar electorates in Victoria, for example the electorate of Hawke in the outer west primarily focuses on the Western Highway and Calder Freeway corridors these two corridors are interlinked giving their communities strong connections to each other. It is a similar story in the outer east with the seat of Casey which takes in the Yarra Valley and outer eastern suburbs it firmly represents the communities running along the interlinked Melba, Maroondah, and Warburton Highway corridors.

It is clear Melbourne's outer communities of interest run along transport corridors, the outer north communities of interest are no different running north-south along transport corridors yet McEwen stretches east west, there is no transport corridor that runs east west connecting these communities, the electorate only takes narrow parts of the Calder Freeway, Hume Highway and Plenty Valley Corridor communities, it then goes further east adding the hills of Nillumbik and stopping at the natural barrier of the Yarra Escarpment which clearly separates the east from the North .

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Compactness: another of the guiding principles in boundary redrawing is to create compact electoral divisions. Compactness means that the division's shape should be relatively regular and not overly elongated or irregular. This helps ensure that representatives can effectively serve their constituents. Again, unnaturally stretching east and west means McEwen does not meet these principles. It is not geographical accessible for constituents for the electoral offices or the ability of representatives to effectively serve their constituents should also be considered.

Using the information provided by the Australian Electoral Commission to develop suggestion about the boundaries it is clear the enrolment projections data is wrong.

The official Victorian state government projections of population and households released in September 2023 from Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning show that our population will soar from **4.9 million to 6.4 million** between 2021 and 2036, and that the trends for growth (54%) will be concentrated in the city's outer west, north and south-east.

The data confirms the uneven nature of population growth in Melbourne, with the city's more established and well-serviced regions tipped to grow modestly in coming years.

The Victorian Government predicts in its 'Victoria in Future' projections that by 2036, an extra 845,000 people will live in the cities of Wyndham, Melton, Hume, Whittlesea and Casey, and the peri-urban shires of Mitchell and Cardinia. McEwen borders Hume and takes in parts of Whittlesea and the Mitchell Shire.

Outer suburban and semi-regional municipalities that still have large tracts of undeveloped land have seven of the 10 highest population growth rates in greater Melbourne. The biggest of them all will be the Mitchell Shire in the centre of McEwen, which will grow by **141 per cent, by 2026**. Mitchell Shire will have a 36% increase and by 2031 over a 79% increase, the same report shows Melton is expected to grow by 93 per cent. This reinforces the importance of these outer metro electorates.

As previously mentioned, looking at the historical electoral division boundary maps back to the creation of McEwen it is clear the electorate has always centred on two areas Wallan and Whittlesea which are the Hume and Plenty Valley corridors located in Mitchell Shire and Whittlesea Council and it makes intuitive sense that McEwen remains representing these fast-growing communities.

While I understand the challenges associated with redrawing electoral boundaries, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of electoral divisions that reflect the interests and needs of the communities they serve. The current configuration of McEwen does not fully serve this purpose, and it is imperative that the issues surrounding its boundaries are addressed in the upcoming redistribution.

In exploring potential solutions to this problem, I have considered options to confine McEwen to either the Plenty Valley and Hume corridors.

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With McEwen taking back more stagnate growth areas such as Mernda South, reuniting that segregated community and the SA2 as well as returning the SA2 of South Morang to McEwen. This would allow Scullin which has more stagnate areas to take all the growth area of Wollert and reunite that community and open the seat to future growth. It would also allow Jagga Jagga to reclaim Diamond Creek and certain parts of the Nillumbik Shire.

I urge the Australian Electoral Commission to prioritise the creation of a more geographically coherent and community-focused electorate for McEwen. To maintain community of interest, respect historical and traditional boundaries, and ensure that McEwen is not overly stretched across different corridors that have no transport connection to each other.

I believe that addressing the common grievances associated with the McEwen electorate is essential to maintaining the principles of fairness and representational equity in our electoral system. I trust that the Commission will carefully consider these concerns and work towards a solution that better serves the interests of the residents and voters of McEwen.

I look forward to a fair redistribution process that results in improved electoral boundaries for McEwen.

Thank you for your attention to this submission,

D.G. Clarke

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