



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NORTHERN TERRITORY**

Suggestion 3

Darren McSweeney

20 pages

Suggestion

Redistribution of Commonwealth Electoral Divisions

Darren McSweeney



Northern Territory 2024

Uluru, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Petermann

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This Public Suggestion was lodged 23 May 2024 by
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<http://mcsw.ee>

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I live and write, the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

Every effort has been made to ensure data and calculations in this submission are accurate, however unintended errors or omissions of data or calculations still may occur. The author has not attempted to mislead readers by way of errors or omissions in the data presented herein.

References and data sources

This product (submission) incorporates data that is © Commonwealth of Australia ([Australian Electoral Commission](#)) 2024

Division spatial data are derived from the digital datasets provided by the Australian Electoral Commission. Original data files in .shp format were edited for mapping and converted to .kml format within [QGIS](#) and .GeoJSON format for presentation in maps.

Other spatial data, including Local Government Areas, are provided by Australian Bureau of Statistics [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#), under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](#) licencing.

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Political disclaimer

The views, opinions, arguments and recommendations presented in this Suggestion to the redistribution of electoral divisions of Northern Territory are the author's own and in no way reflect the views of Services Australia, the Australian Public Service or Australian Government.

My right to hold and express views as an Australian Citizen is [protected under Australian law](#).

Exercising this right to participate in public and political debate by lodging this public submission in no way affects my capacity to fulfill my duties in a professional, impartial, and apolitical manner.

This submission complies with conditions of employment in the Australian Public Service (APS) in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*, the [APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles](#), and [Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies](#)

I hold no interest in, and do not stand to receive any benefit or advantage resulting from the outcome of this redistribution. I have written this submission as a private citizen taking a personal interest in psephology and the electoral redistribution process. I am not now, nor at any time in the past been a member of any political party or similar associated organisation.

This submission is lodged claiming political neutrality. No political bias or partiality is implied within this submission and none should be inferred. This submission is lodged in accordance with [guidelines for making public submissions to a redistribution](#). The political implications – if any – of the recommendations have not formed part of the recommendation and should not be inferred.

Division names – including any suggested new names– comply with [guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions](#). Suggested names are based on the individual's merit and contribution to Australian society, and do not imply any political bias towards the eponymous persons. Proposals to abolish or rename a division – if any – do not reflect the performance or character of the current member of Parliament representing that division or the eponymous person, unless specified.

Criticism of submissions or decisions taken as part of this redistribution is based solely on the merit of the arguments and recommendations presented therein and serves solely to improve electoral representation for the people of Northern Territory. It is not in any way a reflection upon the character or abilities of any individual, government or community group or organisation participating in this process, nor any member of a Redistribution Committee, augmented Electoral Commission, any other member of the APS, the Australian Electoral Commission, any other Australian Government entity, agency, department or any current or past member of Parliament.

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Synopsis

This is a written suggestion under subsection 64(1)(a) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 for the redistribution of the Northern Territory. This suggestion covers both the names and boundaries of both divisions within the Northern Territory.

Every redistribution is an opportunity to evaluate community of interests and provide some scope for improvement. Likewise, the names of existing divisions should be examined at every redistribution to ensure that they continue to recognise the contributions of worthy Australians, and that those honoured exhibited values and deeds that reflect modern Australian society.

This suggestion can be viewed as an online map at:

https://api.mapbox.com/styles/v1/dmcsw/clwiltk3u00hw01pp2xs46hcz/draft.html?title=copy&access_token=pk.eyJ1ljoizG1jc3ciLCJhJjoiY2poa21kaGs4Mm95YjM2bzFzMmNkYmJnaCJ9.xhKyqTaibNsU01LzeWpjkw&zoomwheel=true&fresh=true#7.77/-12.448/130.785

In determining the division boundaries and names, I consider the [Guidelines for making public submissions to a redistribution](#) and the [Guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions](#). I apply principles in relation to increasing diversity of representation if names of divisions are to be created, renamed or retired.

I propose the division of **SOLOMON** be extended to include all of Palmerston.

I do not propose any changes to the names of either the division of **SOLOMON** or **LINGIARI**.

Introduction

About this suggestion

This redistribution commenced in accordance with subsection 59(2)(c) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (the Electoral Act) as seven years has passed since the last redistribution was determined.

Every redistribution is an opportunity to evaluate the existing boundaries to determine the extent that they meet the community of interests grounds of subsection 66(3)(b) of the Electoral Act. In most cases, existing divisions ultimately contain deficiencies in community of interests grounds resulting from the numerical restraints imposed in subsection 66(3)(a) of the Electoral Act. As such, there will almost always be some scope for improvement.

In the case of redistributions within the Northern Territory, as there are only two electoral divisions, any change to either division will demand the exact opposite adjustment to the boundary in the other division, therefore, this scope is severely limited.

Enrolment data

In order to comply with the numerical requirements of the Electoral Act, the number of electors enrolled in each division must not vary by more than 10 per cent from the redistribution quota. The Electoral Commissioner has determined the redistribution quota for Western Australia on 12 March 2024 to be 76,699 electors. This means that no division can contain more than 84,368, or less than 69,030 electors.

The projected number of electors must, as far as practicable, be within 3.5 percent of the projected quota of 83,419 on the projection date of 4 September 2028, meaning divisions must contain between 80,500 and 86,338 electors. The numerical tolerances under subsections 66(3)(a) and 66(3)(b) of the Electoral Act are the only mandatory criteria, so these figures supersede any other community of interests factors and the numerical tolerance must be maintained.

Methodology

Determining boundaries

In drafting this suggestion, I have endeavoured to comply with the requirements of subsection 66(3)(b) of the Electoral Act, taking into account:

- i. community of interests, including economic, social and regional interests;
- ii. means of communication and travel;
- iv. the physical features and area; and
- v. the boundaries of existing divisions within the State.

I attempt to use clear boundaries wherever possible to ensure that electors can easily identify the division in which they live. I will split SA1 areas where a geographic feature makes for a more logical division boundary. In these cases, I aim to ensure that either division could afford the entire SA1 population within the numerical threshold.

In order to obtain the best communities of interests, I intend to allow divisions that make use of the tolerance of the enrolment quota, meaning both divisions could be close to the threshold. I believe that the threshold under subsection 66(3)(a) exists for a reason, and should be used to the full extent where its use makes sense and achieves better representation for electors. This impact is somewhat limited in the Northern Territory as the any departure from the quota will always be reflected equally in both divisions.

Unless explicitly specified, references to elector numbers refer to projected enrolment figures, as this is generally the stricter criterion used in determining electoral boundaries.

Usually, I undertake a redistribution as a cascading process, starting with an “anchor” division, shifting electors in a cascading manner from one division to the next until all divisions are updated. As the Northern Territory only contains one single division boundary (excluding the state borders), this process is unnecessary and I will examine both divisions simultaneously.

Boundary of existing divisions

I intend to use the existing divisions as building blocks of my suggested divisions. However, in doing so, I note that under section 66(3A) of the Electoral Act, the existing boundaries are considered subordinate to the other criteria. Hence, the existing boundaries should always yield to community of interests grounds where the existing boundary would otherwise divide a united community and the numerical tolerance allows. This is somewhat limited in the Northern Territory as both divisions follow the same boundary between them.

Community of interests

Defining a community of interests can be ambiguous and is often the subject of debate within suggestions and objections. For the most part, a single community of interests is nothing more than a group of residents. These residents will naturally share similar amenities, socialise or organise themselves into communities, share similar socio-economic demographics, live close by to one another, or otherwise identify as a community. It is highly unlikely that an electoral

division will contain only one community of interests. In most cases, a division shall comprise several similar or interrelated communities.

Local government areas can be a good indicator of communities of interests, particularly in rural, regional and remote areas. Often townships share amenities across government areas and residents share similar professions, socio-economic or cultural demographics. Indigenous Communities often include surrounding areas, and sometimes extend up to hundreds or thousands of square kilometres.

Suburb or locality boundaries can often be arbitrarily defined or unclear, especially in less populated or remote areas. They frequently make use of lines of sight, arbitrary lines on maps, or ambiguous property boundaries. However, it is apparent that previous Committees have seen the usefulness in using them as division boundaries. As such, I will use suburb and locality boundaries but only in cases where it is appropriate to do so.

Communication and travel

Means of communication and travel must be considered when determining boundaries for electoral divisions. Where separate communities need to be combined into a single division, it is always preferable that this occur along transport corridors such as highways, main roads or railways. Creating divisions that are only contiguous on a map, but not connected with transport or communication corridors inevitably leads to some electors feeling disconnected from the rest of their community and, indeed often their local representative.

While major roads, railways or rivers can be used as boundaries to a great extent, care must be taken to ensure that a boundary is not drawn down a road or railway that actually unites communities. More common in rural areas, sometimes a railway station or major road will become a community hub with electors and residents from either side accessing the facilities.

Physical features and area

Physical features can often be used to determine boundaries. Often they impose severe barriers on communication and serve as natural boundaries. Rivers, bays, mountains, large desert, rainforest or bushland areas lend themselves to creating natural and convenient boundaries.

Inevitably at some point, the boundary will be drawn where it, in fact, divides a community of interests. There will be residents that live either side of a given boundary that share a greater affinity with those on the other side of the line than with those that further afield within the division they have been assigned. This cannot be completely avoided, as the very nature of a redistribution means that a line must be drawn on a map somewhere. I strive to ensure that where a line is drawn, it is generally recognised as a local boundary, or logically could sensibly be interpreted to be one.

Political fairness

I determine electoral division boundaries in a wholly impartial manner. As far as I consider, this means disregarding potential political implications for divisions or for members representing these divisions. I do not attempt to make myself aware of voting patterns at particular booths or within specific localities to avoid this bias influencing my decisions. Political support or affiliation is not included as a criterion within section 66 of the Electoral Act, and I believe this omission was deliberate. I do not believe political support should form any part of the consideration of electoral boundaries. Any idea of fairness should be interpreted to mean without regard to political implications, rather than adding a complication of balancing ever-changing political ideologies among voters.

Division Names

Divisions named for colonial-era persons

Every redistribution provides an opportunity to ensure that divisions not only reflect communities of interests in drawing boundaries, but also that the names of the divisions reflect standards that are acceptable to contemporary society and the community. According to the [Guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions](#), in the main, divisions should be named after deceased Australians who have rendered outstanding service to their country.

I have advocated for the removal of divisions named for colonial-era politicians and explorers, settlers and pioneers and will continue to do so in future redistributions. It has been heartening to see a genuine attempt to address the diversity imbalance in current electoral division names with recent divisions being named for women, families that include women or indigenous persons. Some effort could still be made toward other people of non-European ethnicities, however I am hopeful this will come with time as these groups become more prevalent in Australian society.

Increased diversity of division names should be encouraged to continue. When renaming or abolishing divisions, we should look to remove divisions named for colonial-era men of European descent over divisions named for more contemporary or diverse individuals. Additionally, we have seen several divisions renamed when the conduct of those for whom the division is named has been called into question. In these cases, we should use the opportunity of a redistribution to rename divisions where it comes to be known that such individual conducted themselves in a way not deserving the honour of a division name. This is the case, to varying extent, with the former divisions of **BATMAN**, **McMILLAN**, **STIRLING**, **WAKEFIELD** and **DENISON**.

Federation divisions

Federation divisions continue to pose problems. However, the area of the Northern Territory was, at first, part of the at-large **SOUTH AUSTRALIA** electoral division in 1901. Later, the area of the Northern Territory became part of the division of **GREY** from 1903. This means there are no federation divisions within the Northern Territory and the arguments around federation divisions are not relevant to this redistribution.

Division names in the Northern Territory

The two existing divisions are both named for individuals. The division of **SOLOMON** was named for a member of the Constitutional Conventions and member of Parliament for the area representing the Northern Territory. **LINGIARI** is named for an indigenous stockman and land rights leader.

Divisions proposed to be abolished or renamed

While it could be considered that **SOLOMON** is named after a colonial-era politician, I am generally favourable to those politicians who were active members of the Constitutional Conventions and therefore considered one of the fathers of federation. These men played an important part in shaping modern Australia and the electoral systems we currently enjoy. So there is no requirement to consider whether Solomon should be renamed. As **LINGIARI** is named after an indigenous man, there is no need to consider renaming **LINGIARI**.

I propose that: The names of both the division of **SOLOMON** and the division of **LINGIARI** be retained.

Analysis of existing divisions

Geographic arrangement of divisions

Because of the population density of the Northern Territory, the boundary between the electoral divisions has always lay in the outskirts of the Darwin metropolitan area. Currently the division boundary intersects the City of Palmerston, while including all of the City of Darwin and the unincorporated area between the two cities. Just under one fifth of the population of the City of Palmerston is currently included in **LINGIARI**. In the past, the division of **SOLOMON** has included all parts of the City of Palmerston and some parts of the Litchfield Council. Within Palmerston, major roads are used as the main boundaries.

Both existing divisions are within the current threshold although they both fall outside the projected threshold.

Suggested divisions

Usually, the only determination is how far from Darwin does the division of **SOLOMON** need to extend. To meet the numeric requirements of the projected electoral quota, the division of **SOLOMON** needs to gain electors and the division of **LINGIARI** needs to lose electors. To maintain that balance, while ensuring strong boundaries and include like community of interests, I propose that all of the City of Palmerston be transferred from **LINGIARI** to **SOLOMON**. This includes the transfer of the SA2 of Palmerston – North and Palmerston – South as well as a single SA1 of Howard Springs.

This results in both divisions being relatively close to the quota on actual enrolments, but both divisions being close to the threshold on projected numbers. **SOLOMON** moves to 85,350 electors, while **LINGIARI** is expected to have 81,488 electors. Ideally, both divisions would be closer to the projected quota. However, the clear and strong division boundary following the City of Palmerston boundary indicates this proposal would certainly be preferred over further breaking up suburbs in Palmerston or scraping additional electors from Litchfield Council.

I propose that: The Redistribution Committee adopt boundaries described above for electoral divisions in the Northern Territory.

Enrolment data for each electoral division

Each division is listed separately with a table outlining the actual and projected enrolment, by SA2 names. Each table in order, lists all electors retained in the division, and then describes the transfer into the division by alphabetical order of existing division name, and then out of the division in alphabetical order by new division name.

A description of the changes to the division boundary follows both tables, proceeding in a clockwise manner using geographic features or infrastructure to describe the boundary where possible.

This suggestion can be viewed as an online map at:

https://api.mapbox.com/styles/v1/dmcsw/clwiltk3u00hw01pp2xs46hcz/draft.html?title=copy&access_token=pk.eyJ1IjoiZG1jc3ciLCJhIjoiY2poa21kaGs4Mm95YjM2bzFzMmNkYmJnaCJ9.xhKyqTaibNsU01LzeWpjkw&zoomwheel=true&fresh=true#7.77/-12.448/130.785

Lingiari

SA2 Name	Actual Enrolment	Projected Enrolment	Num of SA1s
From LINGIARI	76,104	81,488	357
Alligator	2,576	2,745	15
Anindilyakwa	1,495	1,708	9
Barkly	1,671	1,696	10
Berrimah	299	363	2
Charles	2,926	2,879	14
Christmas Island	606	739	5
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	399	487	3
Daly	1,132	1,227	8
East Arnhem	6,280	6,151	17
East Side	3,736	4,311	15
Eley	1,489	1,539	10
Flynn (NT)	2,937	3,251	10
Gulf	2,875	3,087	14
Howard Springs	3,029	3,590	15
Humpty Doo	5,723	6,410	21
Katherine	6,764	7,117	26
Koolpinyah	6	6	1
Larapinta	3,294	3,546	17
Mount Johns	2,068	2,422	12
Nhulunbuy	1,812	2,074	12
Petermann - Simpson	1,340	1,329	11
Ross	1,642	1,725	10
Sandover - Plenty	2,445	2,367	16
Tanami	2,135	2,185	14
Tennant Creek	1,914	1,949	13
Thamarrurr	1,717	1,733	2
Tiwi Islands	1,813	1,947	5
Victoria River	1,763	1,853	12
Virginia	2,117	2,421	8
Weddell	2,680	2,922	12
West Arnhem	3,772	4,056	8
Yuendumu - Anmatjere	1,649	1,653	10
To SOLOMON	5,015	7,463	21
Howard Springs	54	58	1
Palmerston - North	1,050	1,148	5
Palmerston - South	3,911	6,257	15
LINGIARI	76,104	81,488	357

Boundary Description

From the exiting division boundary on the Timor Sea, follow:

- East Arm
- Elizabeth River
- Palmerston LGA boundary

To the existing boundary with **SOLOMON**.

Solomon

SA2 Name	Actual Enrolment	Projected Enrolment	Num of SA1s
From SOLOMON	72,278	77,887	276
Alawa	1,368	1,500	6
Anula	1,655	1,686	5
Bakewell	2,137	2,359	6
Berrimah	653	1,096	6
Brinkin - Nakara	1,893	2,023	7
Buffalo Creek	-	-	1
Charles Darwin	1	1	1
Coconut Grove	1,876	2,020	7
Darwin Airport	3	3	1
Darwin City	3,442	3,838	21
Driver	1,986	1,931	6
Durack - Marlow Lagoon	3,074	3,498	15
East Arm	22	21	1
East Point	2	1	1
Fannie Bay - The Gardens	2,429	2,512	6
Gray	2,430	2,584	7
Jingili	1,301	1,192	4
Karama	3,272	3,445	12
Larrakeyah	2,304	2,633	8
Leanyer	3,167	3,450	8
Ludmilla - The Narrows	1,856	2,016	8
Lyons (NT)	3,444	4,065	12
Malak - Marrara	3,220	3,500	13
Millner	1,641	1,732	5
Moil	1,400	1,526	5
Moulden	2,359	2,307	6
Nightcliff	2,545	2,749	10
Palmerston - North	1,794	1,831	8
Palmerston - South	3	4	1
Parap	1,883	1,848	6
Rapid Creek	2,076	2,214	9
Rosebery - Bellamack	4,124	4,437	16
Stuart Park	2,631	2,985	9
Tiwi	1,537	1,618	7
Wagaman	1,335	1,400	5
Wanguri	1,388	1,495	4
Woodroffe	2,403	2,518	7
Woolner - Bayview - Winnellie	1,912	1,973	9
Wulagi	1,712	1,876	7

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From LINGIARI	5,015	7,463	21
Howard Springs	54	58	1
Palmerston - North	1,050	1,148	5
Palmerston - South	3,911	6,257	15
SOLOMON	77,293	85,350	297

Boundary Description

From existing division boundary with **LINGIARI**, follow

- Palmerston LGA boundary
- Elizabeth River
- East Arm

To the existing boundary on the Timor Sea.

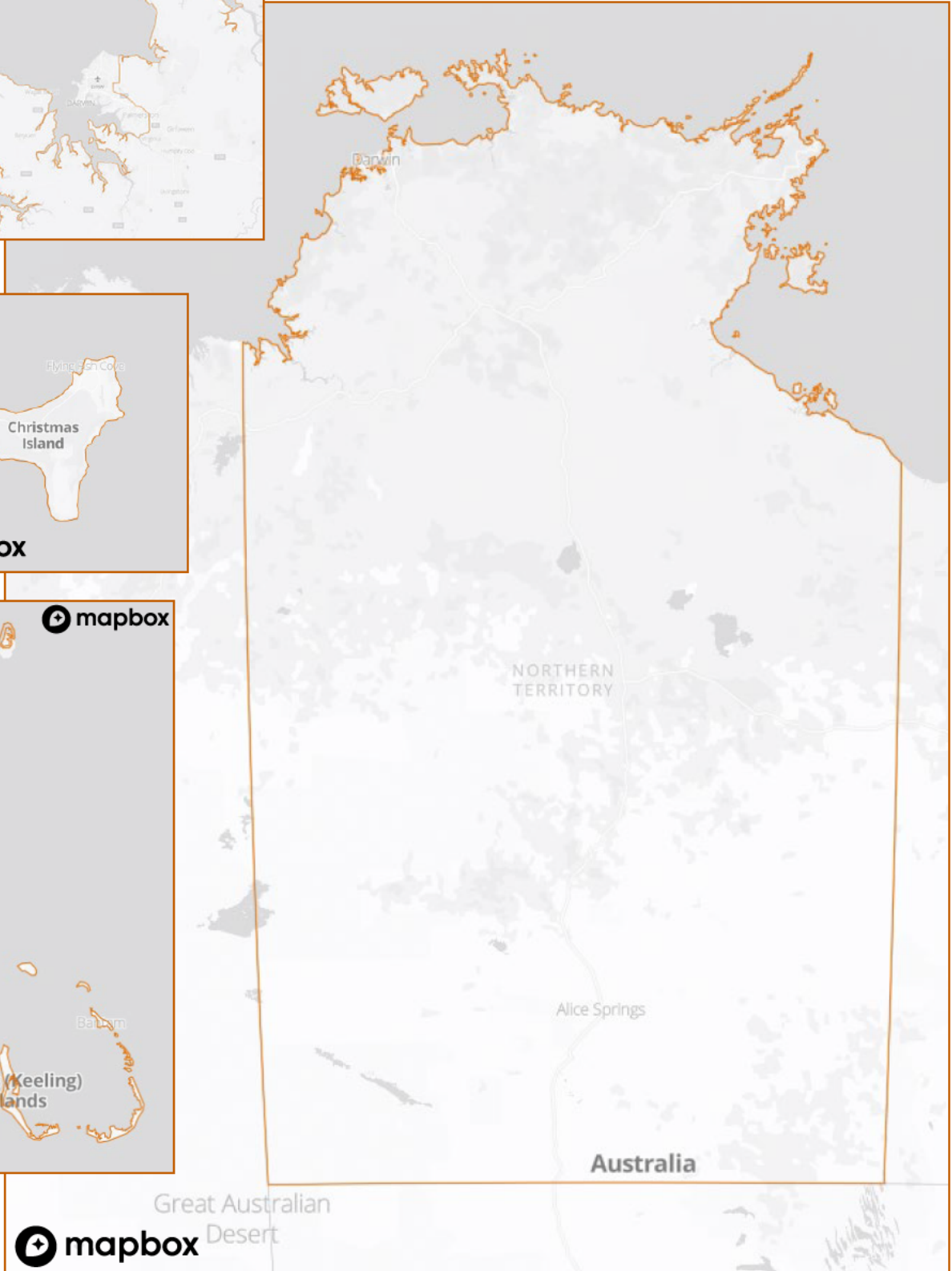
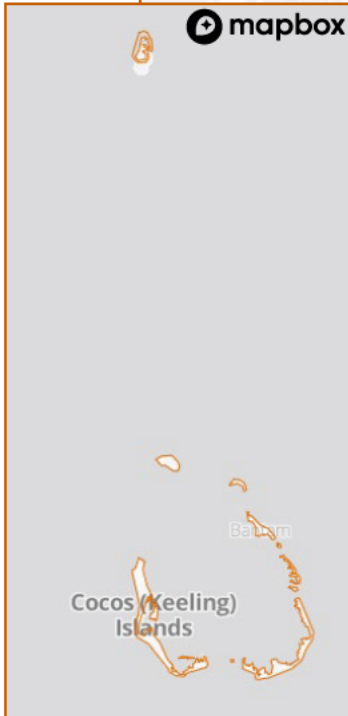
List of SA1 codes in new divisions

The following table is a list of all SA1 codes proposed to change divisions in this suggestion.

SA1 codes that are to be split appear with a hatched ochre background. This includes any SA1 where a proposed division boundary along a geographic feature or infrastructure (such as a road or motorway) does not align exactly with the SA1 boundary. This may therefore be a very minor split involving the transfer of no electors.

SA1 Code	Existing Division	Proposed Division
701031031 – Howard Springs		
70103103102	From Lingiari	To Solomon
701041041 – Palmerston - North		
70104104104	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104105	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104105	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104111	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104112	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104113	From Lingiari	To Solomon
701041042 – Palmerston - South		
70104104202	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104203	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104206	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104208	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104210	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104211	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104212	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104213	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104214	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104215	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104216	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104217	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104218	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104219	From Lingiari	To Solomon
70104104220	From Lingiari	To Solomon

Lingiari



Solomon

