



**THE FEDERAL  
REDISTRIBUTION  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

# Submission OB20

ACT Greens

# 2025-26 ACT Federal Redistribution

*Reflections on the proposed redistribution of the federal electorates in the ACT  
by the Australian Electoral Commission's Redistribution Committee.*

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## Foreword and Summary of Conclusions

The Greens respectfully acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region. We acknowledge their deep and continuing connection to Country and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge that other people and families also have a traditional connection to the lands of the ACT and region and we respect this connection to Country.

The ACT Greens welcome this opportunity to contribute to the 2025-26 redistribution of federal electorates in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The ACT Greens did not originally make a submission to the redistribution committee, on the assumption that this would very likely be a minor rather than a substantial redistribution. The Redistribution Committee's report on the proposed redistribution instead demonstrates a very significant alternation to the electoral boundaries. For this reason, the ACT Greens see it as prudent to draw potential issues and concerns to the Committee's attention.

The ACT Greens do not support the redistribution as it currently stands. The available data is insufficiently reliable and too speculative to support such a significant redistribution. The proposed boundaries also fracture more communities of interest than they restore. We encourage the Committee to reconsider the available evidence from first principles with a view to a simpler proposal.

## Enrollment projections in the ACT are unreliable

There is a building base of evidence that the methods employed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to project populations, and by extension enrollments, result in poor quality estimates in the context of the ACT. The ACT Greens would not describe them as decision-grade. We recommend that the Committee examine the ACT Government's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport's inquiry into local government funding and fiscal sustainability.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the ACT Government highlights that at the last census, the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) was found to have been underestimated by 5.1%, the largest of any jurisdiction. This problem is a source of persistent difficulty for the ACT Government. Although we understand that the ABS is taking steps to improve its estimates, the issues nonetheless persist, and this close to the 2026 census, the projections being utilised for this redistribution are likely to be more pronounced than at other times.

The impacts of the poor-quality population and enrollment estimates are also apparent in ACT electorates during Territory redistributions, which draw upon the same datasets and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=c9f0148f-8cda-4717-9391-dc8901aa65c1&subId=785662>

methodologies. The below table shows enrollment levels at each of the Territory elections since the current 5x5 electorate structure was established for the 2016 election.

Enrollment	Brindabella	Ginninderra	Kurrajong	Murrumbidgee	Yerrabi
2015 Redistribution start	52,868	53,848	56,713	54,909	53,975
2015 Projection of 2016	54,576	56,637	57,937	55,587	55,108
2016 Election Enrollment	53,614	54,585	59,010	57,058	58,895
2019 Redistribution start	60,846	61,743	55,680	57,173	56,869
2019 Projection of 2020	59,247	62,426	57,009	59,150	61,249
2020 Election	62,217	63,844	59,422	59,934	60,583
2023 Redistribution start	66,834	64,804	58,224	62,090	62,472
2023 Projection of 2024	64,327	64,838	61,340	61,577	62,848
2024 Election	67,536	65,833	59,904	64,479	63,969

Source: [elections.act.gov.au](https://elections.act.gov.au)

The historic projections have demonstrated limited accuracy in identifying where growth in enrollment is likely to occur over a two-year period. We have had electorates which were projected to shrink, but have instead grown meaningfully. We can apply this understanding to question some of the expectations of the current projections used in the proposed redistribution.

In the redistribution report, Figures E-G show heat maps of projected elector growth. Some of the localities projecting growth in electors make sense, such as through the Molonglo Valley, the Town Centres of Tuggernong, Woden and Gungahlin, the Ginninderry development in West Belconnen, and the outer suburbs of Gungahlin.

At the same time, some of the hotspots do not align with our expectations. Of particular note is the strong growth projected through the Inner South suburbs of Narrabundah and Red Hill. While some growth in Griffith is likely, we have not seen the sort of development activity as would justify marking these localities for significant growth. Similarly on the north side of the lake, while some uplift in electors is expected associated with development around ANZAC Parade, it does not make sense for such significant growth in electors to extend throughout the complete suburbs of Reid, Campbell and Russell (the Duntroon military academy). In West Belconnen, while growth associated with the Ginninderry development is expected, it's not clear why growth should also be expected through the southern parts of Holt and Higgins.

We can also identify some pockets of growth that have been missed. For example, where new apartment towers are being constructed in the northern parts of the Belconnen Town Centre, and a new retirement living precinct to the north of Curtin.

Against a backdrop of data that is of questionable quality, the Committee should be cautious in making significant changes that could prove to require reversal in subsequent redistributions. Clean lines and existing boundaries should be supported wherever possible pending improvements in data quality.

## Fracturing communities of interest

The proposed redistribution fractures three communities of interest, while only restoring one.

### The district of Gungahlin

The proposed redistribution moves the suburb of Crace from Fenner into Canberra. While Mitchell and Kenny are also moved, these two suburbs are industrial precincts with negligible population and serve as a useful boundary between communities of interest in their own right. The net effect is to separate a single suburb from its district and community of interest. This should not be done unless absolutely necessary, and as the next section will demonstrate, is most certainly not necessary. This movement defies comprehension.

### The suburbs of Southern Belconnen

The proposed redistribution moves the suburbs of Hawker, Weetangera and Macquarie out of Canberra and into Fenner. Within the southern suburbs, three distinct community blocs separated by major roads can be conceptualised: Hawker and Weetangera; Macquarie and Cook; and Aranda.

First and foremost, the separation of Macquarie from Cook is highly confusing. If at all possible, these two suburbs which function as a single community should be kept together. Moreover, their separation would definitely not be necessary if Crace was sensibly retained with the rest of its district in the electorate of Fenner, thereby allowing both Cook and Macquarie to remain in Canberra.

More broadly, no change to the boundaries of Fenner is in fact necessary. Retaining Hawker and Weetangera (which would be the most sensible suburbs to move if required) in Canberra would maintain a clean boundary along Belconnen Way, while also ensuring that any future connection between these Southern Belconnen suburbs and the developing communities of the Northern Molonglo Valley are not presumed in advance. The committee's report describes a predicted connection between the Molonglo Valley and Central Canberra through the newly-gazetted suburbs of Bandler and Sulman, however these suburbs are unlikely to meaningfully develop in the next

decade, and decisions today should not prejudice how those communities choose to develop themselves.

## **Weston Creek and the Molonglo Valley**

The Molonglo Valley is a newly-established area, and its Town Centre is yet to be properly planned. It will emerge over coming decades, not years. In the present, the community of the Molonglo Valley, centred on Denman Prospect, largely interfaces with the Weston Creek District, including through public transport lines and the provision of other civic services. The proposed redistribution separates these two communities, and asks for the people of the Molonglo Valley to be represented together with the people of Central Canberra.

Additionally, the redistribution separates a small part of the Community of Duffy by placing the boundary along Warragamba Avenue and Dixon Drive, rather than retaining the clear suburban boundary of Cotter Road. Given the known importance of suburb identity in the ACT, this is confusing.

The Molonglo Valley is separated from Central Canberra by a river corridor, a major freeway, and the Arboretum. They are not remotely associated communities of interest. The redistribution relies upon future associations through future suburbs that are yet to be properly planned, let alone constructed. It remains to be seen if this avenue of connection emerges, or if the Molonglo River ends up becoming a meaningful boundary along which an electoral boundary could or should be drawn. This will take decades, and multiple future redistributions will occur during that time.

The predictions of the Committee might prove to be correct, but they may also prove to be very, very wrong, necessitating a significant unpicking and reworking of the electorates at a future redistribution.

## **A simpler option for now**

The Committee is correct to perceive that a major redistribution for the ACT will eventually be required, but it is premature to conduct that redistribution now. The risks of fracturing three communities of interest are not matched by the benefits of reuniting the Woden Valley district.

Hindmarsh Drive functions as an effective boundary through the Woden Valley district, and is well-recognised by the electorate as a reasonable boundary. This boundary can be consolidated by moving the Woden Town Centre within the suburb of Phillip from Bean into Canberra, which would conveniently satisfy the numerical requirements of the redistribution.

More substantial changes can wait until improvements to the methodology of population and elector projections can be enacted, and it becomes clearer how the Molonglo Valley is developing.

If the Committee insists on proceeding with the changes to Southern Canberra, the Greens would still posit that the changes impacting Macquarie and Crace are, at a minimum, entirely unnecessary and counterproductive.

## On Electorate Names

The name for the Electorate of *Bean* is largely meaningless to the people of Southern Canberra. The reality is that people are more likely to think of the legume than the person.

Charles Bean was a war historian who lived in the area for only six years, and he is also locally considered controversial for racist and antisemitic views. He is better honoured within the context of his lived experiences, at the Australian War Memorial in the electorate of Canberra, and not more broadly with an electorate named for him.

By contrast, the name *Namadgi* would be deeply meaningful to the people of Southern Canberra. Namadgi National Park dominates the southern reaches of the ACT. It is the local First Nations name for the Brindabella Ranges that backdrop the skyline of much of the Territory, and can be seen throughout the entirety of the electorate. There is also precedent, in that this name was previously used for a Southern ACT electorate that existed from 1996 to 1998.

The Greens recommend that the Division of Bean should be renamed as the Division of Namadgi, as it should have always been.