

**AUSCRIPT PTY LTD**

ABN 76 082 664 220

Level 10, 15 Adelaide St BRISBANE Qld 4000  
(PO Box 13038 George Street Post Shop Brisbane Qld 4003)  
Tel:(07)3229-5957 Fax:(07)3229-5996



## **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

---

### **AUGMENTED AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR QUEENSLAND**

**MR T. MORLING, Chairman**

**MR A. BECKER**

**MR D. TREWIN**

**MS A. BRIGHT**

**MR G. RUSH**

**MR L. SCANLAN**

### **PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO OBJECTIONS TO THE 2003 PROPOSED REDISTRIBUTION OF QUEENSLAND INTO ELECTORAL DIVISIONS**

**BRISBANE**

**9.32 AM, THURSDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2003**

CHAIRMAN: This public inquiry by the augmented Electoral Commission for Queensland is being held in accordance with section 72 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act (1918). The inquiry is into the objections received against the redistribution of Federal electoral boundaries in Queensland, as proposed by the Redistribution Committee for Queensland. In addition to the written suggestions, comments and objections received to date, this inquiry will assist the augmented Commission in its deliberations.

10 Firstly, I'd like to introduce the members of the augmented Electoral Commission for Queensland. I am Trevor Morling. I'm the Chairman of the Australian Electoral Commission and of the augmented Electoral Commission for Queensland. Mr Andy Becker, who is second on my right, is the Australian Electoral Commissioner. Mr Denis Trewin, who is second on my left, is the non-judicial member of the Australian Electoral Commission and is also the Australian Statistician. Ms Anne Bright, who is immediately on my right, is the Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland. Mr Graham Rush, who is immediately on my left, is the General Manager, Land Management and Use in the Department of Natural Resources and Mines of this State. Mr Len Scanlan, who is on my far right, is the Queensland Auditor-General.

The Redistribution Committee for Queensland was required to produce a proposed redistribution which was based only on the criteria listed in the Act. There are no political outcome requirements in the Act, and none were contemplated in the formulation of the proposals. Any comment to the contrary can lead to an incorrect perception that the outcome in any Federal redistribution is somehow predetermined or influenced by political considerations. This is not the case and certainly will not be the case in the present redistribution.

Now, we have received some information from people who are likely to want to address us today. Can I first say that if there is anybody in the room who would want to address us who has some time problem and has a particular reason for wanting to get away early, if they'd like to indicate his or her position and we'll I'm sure try to accommodate his or her convenience. I should say I know that today's sitting is quite inconvenient to Mr Bevis, who has made a very helpful and detailed submission, and we're very sorry not to be able to accommodate his desire that we not hear him today but for various reasons, Mr Bevis, which are very really compelling we simply weren't able to do that.

Now, my understanding is, and it may be proved wrong, it is Mr Bevis, the Queensland Division of the Labor Party and Queensland Division of the National Party, who are the only three interests who have

indicated their willingness to address us today. Is there anybody else in the room apart from people in those groups who - well, it's a matter of no materiality to us. I don't know whether the National Party, for instance, has any particular interest in Mr Bevis's objection. If that's the case and they wanted to go first, then it might be sensible if we hear from them first but it's immaterial to us.

I should say that, as in past hearings of this kind, we like to keep these proceedings as informal as possible. The fact that we're sitting in this room which looks a bit like a courtroom is only a matter of convenience. We're grateful to the Commonwealth for making this accommodation available to us today, but this is an informal but important meeting so there are no rules about who can go first and speak first and last and so on. Would the Queensland Nationals like to say something to us if that's convenient to them? Of course, anybody is more than welcome to hear what any other objector says. Yes, Mr Neville?

MR NEVILLE: Mr Chairman, augmented Commissioners, members of the gallery, I've been asked to present the National Party's submission in respect of Hinkler and, to a lesser extent, Capricornia and Wide Bay, as they have been the subject of some comment in objections from other parties and individuals.

Mr Chairman, talking in the past to the Commissioners informally after hearings, they've said that in Queensland when you come down from the Gulf of Carpentaria, in from north-west Queensland, up from Coolangatta, and in from south-west Queensland, after you've sorted out the Brisbane variants there has to be pushing and shoving in Central Queensland between the Sunshine Coast and Mackay because that is where the gravitas all moves as you tidy up the seats. And so for that reason, there has been a fair degree of movement over the years in the seats of Maranoa, Capricornia, Hinkler and Wide Bay, and that's understandable.

I'd like to commence by saying that I think the Commission did a very good job on this particular redistribution. Having represented the previous seat for six years, it was a difficult seat to represent. It was a very thin - it's shown there in the shaded area - it was a very thin coastal seat going up the coast. One of the great difficulties was it contained part of the Fitzroy shire and Mt Morgan which had no empathy with Gladstone or Bundaberg. It was very difficult to service because it involved a 310 kilometre journey to Mt Morgan. You might ask why didn't you use your charter allowance; well, there is no air strip in Mt Morgan so it required driving all the time.

By comparison, Mt Morgan was a bit over half an hour from Rockhampton, as was this part of the Fitzroy shire. So, in some respects, it was a very difficult electorate to service. The original  
5 Hinkler, which was carved out of Capricornia and Wide Bay in 1983 in anticipation of the 1984 election, contained the Port Curtis area, which is Gladstone, Calliope and the northern half of Miriam Vale, and the northern half of the Wide Bay Burnett statistical region which centres on Bundaberg, and that was namely Bundaberg, Burnett, Biggenden,  
10 Gayndah, Mundubbera, Eidsvold, Monto, Perry and Kolan and the southern half of Miriam Vale.

So what the Commission had back - and there was also a small part of the Banana Shire put in - but what the Commission had done  
15 originally, and that was the original rationale for Hinkler, was an electorate that represented the Port Curtis and northern Wide Bay Burnett regions of Queensland centring on Bundaberg and Gladstone. I think it got out of kilter over the years, and I think the Commission in this redistribution has done a very good job.

20 Having said that, let me explain why. Here again is the old electorate up here. This part has been removed, Mt Morgan and a part of Fitzroy, and what the Commission has suggested to you is that having removed this area here and having been under quota, it should take in the areas of - exclude Biggenden but take in Gayndah, Mundubbera,  
25 Eidsvold, Monto, Perry and Kolan; Gin Gin being the principal town in Kolan.

30 What that does is put - going back to this map it puts together the shires of the north Burnett and the central Burnett in with Bundaberg which is the community of interest, and maintains the Port Curtis group also in the same electorate. I think that was masterful. I concede that Biggenden has some commonality with Maryborough being  
35 equally distant from Bundaberg and Maryborough, so I don't contest - even though Biggenden is normally part of that conglomeration, I concede why the Commission may not have included Biggenden.

40 What this does, essentially, is having talked broadly then on the geography, we have to look at the other things that the Commission was asked to look at, and that's the road and rail systems. This is the Bruce Highway going through here. In the old electorate it was somewhat of an anomaly that this part here was in Wide Bay, so when you travelled from one side of the electorate to the other, you didn't  
45 actually - you were actually outside your electorate quite a bit of the time. Under this arrangement, the Bruce Highway becomes the major

artery from one end of the electorate to the other.

5 In the hinterland the Isis and Burnett Highways, which is this one, are all linked up. This is sometimes known loosely as the Burnett circle: Bundaberg-Childers, Biggenden-Gayndah, Mundubbera-Eidsvold-Monto, Calliope-Gladstone back to Bundaberg; a circuit. That's for industry and tourism purposes but from electoral purposes that would be a much better electorate to service.

10 The other thing that is interesting is that Monto, as well being administered by most departments through Bundaberg, Monto also has some affinity with Gladstone and Calliope and it's interesting that this train line here, the last part of the Burnett train line, is being considered at present for coal and ilmenite reserves out of Monto to go  
15 out through the Port of Gladstone. So putting Monto back into this electorate has relevance both to Bundaberg and to Gladstone.

20 So from that point of view from the road and rail systems it's also a much better electorate. I make those comments now - you might say, "Why do you keep reinforcing it?" - because some of the criticisms - some of the criticisms that have been made tend to argue against that. Now, I'm not going to criticise my Labor Party and Democrat colleagues. They have a point of view, but I'd just like to deal with a few factual inaccuracies. The basis of the ALP objection to Gayndah  
25 and Mundubbera being in Hinkler is on - and Eidsvold and Monto is that by putting them back into this Hinkler there has been disruption.

30 I think putting the Central and North Burnett back together with Bundaberg which is its wider community of interest and its traditional community of interest more than compensates for any minor disruption of those shires coming out of Wide Bay. Interestingly too, and you will have records of this, a number of shires including Kolan, that is, Gin Gin, Mount Perry, and, I understand, Monto, had asked to be returned to Hinkler. So from the point of view of staying in Wide  
35 Bay that generally didn't resonate in the community anyhow as those councils requested that they come back into Hinkler.

40 So that was the major objection of the ALP to these boundaries. The Australian Democrats contested it on a number of grounds saying that to get over here to Monto that you have to travel 262 kilometres. That's not correct. This road here, the Gin Gin, Mount Perry to Langley Flat to Monto, is the road that most people use. It's the road I use when I drive that way, I don't go round this way. At all but 30-odd  
45 kilometres there is now sealed, so most people from Monto and Eidsvold use this road to come to Bundaberg. They don't use this

circuitous route around the outside.

They also say, and I don't know if it was a typographical error, that Mount Morgan is close to Bundaberg. Well, clearly it's not. Mount  
5 Morgan is 310 kilometres from Bundaberg and in the old electorate they are almost at diametrically opposite corners. It says that Monto has close links to Biloela. It is true there are links between Monto and Biloela but there are much stronger links between Monto and Bundaberg, which is at State and Federal Government Administrative  
10 Centre and Gladstone. Prior to a larger conglomeration being put together, this area here was known as the Central and North Burnett Local Government Association.

It didn't include Biloela but it included Monto in this group. The  
15 Democrats argue that there is a different dynamic west of the range. I don't concede that. I think that most of these people in Monto, Eidsvold, Mundubbera, Gayndah, for things like accountants, medical specialists, interaction with government offices and the like come to Bundaberg. I don't think there is any dichotomy there at all. Just a few  
20 other points of interest to confirm that. All these shires here: Bundaberg and Burnett; Isis; Biggenden; Gayndah; Mundubbera; Eidsvold; Monto, Perry, Kolan and Miriam Vale are in the area of the Bundaberg District Tourism and Development Boards.

25 So for tourism and industry information - this group considers themselves part of Bundaberg and up here, Gladstone, Calliope, and the northern half of Miriam Vale are parts of the Gladstone area Promotion and Development Limited which is there development board. So with the exception of Biggenden, which we've talked about  
30 earlier, every one of those shires is in the sphere of tourism and business interest of Bundaberg and Gladstone. The Democrats also say that Mount Morgan shares a coastal plane aspect with Calliope.

35 That is not correct. Mount Morgan, for those who have been there, is up on the top of a mountain ridge. To describe Mount Morgan - it's like a rocky - a rocky plateau, well up from Rockhampton and you have to get up there - you have to go up a very circuitous route up the side of the range. Why it is like that is that it was a mining area and it - the mines were located in the hills so it doesn't have any connection  
40 here with Calliope. And I just wanted to contest those few points. Talking briefly about Capricornia and Wide Bay, I think this arrangement in respect of the three electorates: Capricornia, Hinkler and Wide Bay is much tidier than it was before.

45 We haven't got it on the map but you have taken the old Capricornia or

the Electoral Commission has taken Capricornia which used to be a very awkward east-west electorate and made it a tighter north-south electorate. And in that respect there is some relevance in Biloela and Mount Morgan: this being the Burnett Highway going down in to Rockhampton. There is some relevance in that area being in Capricornia rather than in Wide Bay, Hinkler or Maranoa. This is the main part - Biloela people can shop in Rockhampton as do Mount Morgan people.

Down this other end, by taking this area here out of Wide Bay you have replaced it with Gympie - Gympie and Cooloola - and that makes the Wide Bay electorate which now goes east-west also a much tidier electorate. Under the old arrangements the member for Wide Bay had to service this whole area right up through here - right up to Biloela, right up to the northern boundary of Biloela almost to Mount Morgan, whereas the member for Hinkler also had a long, thin, untidy electorate that ran all the way up the coast also but actually in to Mount Morgan. Now, you get this community of interest here based on Bundaberg, Gladstone and you get Maryborough, Hervey Bay and Gympie and the eastern half of the South-Burnett area making up Wide Bay. I think, quite frankly, augmented Commissioners, that the original Commissioners did a very good job and brought the communities of interest back together again. I'll just give another illustration of that community of interest. What we have here are the canegrowing and small crop growing areas around Bundaberg.

That's the Burnett Shire. This is the Isis Shire, based on Childers and this is the Kolan Shire based on Gin Gin, which was previously Wide Bay. Now, all of this area is canegrowing and the canegrowing area sent its cane into here - in towards Bundaberg to a place call Bingara. Similarly, this is a canegrowing area at Childers and Isis. It made no sense having canegrowing here outside the Hinkler electorate because canegrowing is a very tight community with a lot of common interests and it was always a complaint - and you would have picked this up in the letter from the Kolan Shire Council - that from the point of view of agriculture that Kolan was not part of Hinkler.

This new boundary brings all those canegrowers and fruit and vegetable growing areas back together. Similarly, most of the citrus which is grown, which is one of the other major crops, is in Burnett, Biggenden, Gayndah, Mundubbera and Eidsvold. So again, with the exception of that small variation for Biggenden, it brings all the citrus growing areas back in to Hinkler as well. So I think from a whole range of areas, from the point of view of geography, road systems, rail, tourism and industry promotion and agriculture, the Commissioners

have done a very good job. They have returned the electorate almost to the original rationale when Hinkler was created back in 1983. And I feel that the criticisms of that particular part of the redistribution are unwarranted. Thank you.

5

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Neville. I understand that Mr Milner wants to say something. Now, it's a matter entirely for you and Mr Bevis as to which person goes first. Let me say, we're very relaxed about this. And if somebody who has spoken once wants to say something later, we don't have any time constraints so it doesn't really matter who goes first. Mr Milner, would you like to go first?

10

MR MILNER: You're comfortable if I address from here?

15

CHAIRMAN: Yes. Just provided you're near a microphone and that's all that matters.

20

MR MILNER: Well, thank you very much for the opportunity obviously to address our written submissions by this verbal address this morning. Obviously you would have seen from our written submissions our concern, and to a degree our consternation, in terms of the draft boundaries as put out by the independent Commissioners. And it's very simply this; that in terms of the redistribution process - and I've been involved on behalf of the ALP in a research capacity, in a writing capacity in local council, Brisbane City Council, in State redistributions and, indeed, in the last three Federal redistributions - I haven't in my memory recalled a redistribution that has so favoured one section of the political party process.

25

30

And by their own submissions and by their own statements not only in the media, but also in their written submissions described it as "masterful"; described it as "a great success"; described it as "We couldn't have asked for more" versus other political parties who actually do see some quite grave concerns and grave reasons for the submission needing modification to restore balance and to be a more justifiable redistribution for an independent set of Commissioners to sign off on. So I'll address you in three parts this morning. I'll address you in those general terms about the redistribution process.

35

40

I'll address you in terms of the rebuttal of some of the submissions that have been consequent to your own draft boundaries and address three areas that the ALP believes would restore balance and provide a far more justifiable reasoning in terms of redistribution of the 28 Queensland Federal electorates. In regards to the process this

45

morning, it speaks volumes that neither my National Party counterpart



nor my Liberal Party counterpart saw fit to address you this morning. In any of the redistributions I've presided over and been part of, both sides of the political process have found fault and have found considerable fault with the process.

5

It speaks volumes that we're here today making submissions not only in written form but verbally raising great concern about the range of decisions that were taken in regards to the boundaries for the Federal redistribution process. This needs to be an independent process. This needs to be a process in which all parties and, indeed, the electors of Queensland can actually have some trust in. Some belief that there is an independence to this process. Some belief that ultimately great judgments in this nature don't necessarily have any particular party being particularly happy.

15

The great judgments and great independence comes from a judgment that is taken with the view to looking at peoples submissions but with no one party or no one section of the community overwhelmingly pleased with the outcome. That is a great test for independence.

20

CHAIRMAN: Mr Milner, neither Mr Trewin or I had anything whatever to do with the deliberations of the Redistribution Committee for Queensland but I am and I'm sure he would be absolutely certain that they went about their job as they thought in compliance with the requirements cast upon them by the legislation and that they deliberately excluded - so far from having regard to any political considerations at all. And I think - it distresses me, frankly, that a major political party could even think otherwise.

25

MR MILNER: I am simply making the submission that at the end of this process there has to be confidence that the process is absolutely independent and I in no way cast any aspersions on the political or otherwise backgrounds of anyone else and I do believe that we do have, at the end of this process, the ability to - for everyone - to view this process as independent and justified. So that's simply in the context of the public comments made by certain sections of the political community about this redistribution and it simply reflects what has already been said by others.

35

And in terms of our submission today, we simply want to have confidence in the process that has been very, very good at local government level in Queensland and at a State Government level in Queensland and indeed in Federal redistributions also. We need to have confidence in the independence of the process. To that end, in terms of restoring the balance and I believe also giving justification to

45

the redistribution process, we do raise one general concern that in responding to the Independent Commissioner's draft boundaries there is less information than has previously been provided to the process.

- 5 The boundaries have been drafted with less justification and less written information providing the reasoning behind those draft boundaries. So in terms of the final submission, we would certainly make a general submission that it would help and assist for everyone in this process to have greater justification and greater written
- 10 justification not only under the guidelines of the legislation but also in terms of understanding deliberations of the Independent Commissioners in relation to the boundaries. That's our general comment.
- 15 In terms of the submissions made by a range of people, you would have seen our comments in relation to the rebuttle of the range of those comments. I will address those now. In relation to the comments about the boundary of Herbert: naturally enough, Herbert is a growing city in terms of Townsville and Thuringowa cities. The
- 20 population centre of Herbert has consistently been in those local government areas and it is not without surprise that as the population grows, the boundaries of Herbert would naturally shrink. And certainly in terms of the Commission's findings, the Commission's boundaries as proposed, that would seem to be the direction of which
- 25 it is heading.
- That certainly makes perfect sense to the ALP and certainly in our written submission we can see justification for that, however, I think part of the criticism that has come from perhaps some of the other
- 30 submissions, certainly from the Liberal Party, has been that as the population has shrunk towards Thuringowa and Townsville City discretely and shared population to Dawson and Kennedy respectively over the years, there has been more in the past justification written into the reasoning for that to occur.
- 35
- And certainly, I think in terms of the final submission, we make no recommendation for any changes to the proposed boundaries in relation to Herbert but certainly greater justification and written
- 40 justification I think would assist in the understanding of those boundaries. Also too, in terms of the boundaries in other electorates we have refined or confined our comments essentially to three key areas, and I'll leave the comments more generally to Arch Bevis in relation to the detail of the Brisbane boundaries.
- 45 In terms of one other submission from the Liberal Party, you would

5 have seen in their submission also that the boundary changes they propose to Longman and Fisher, though mathematically correct, do provide very clear breakups of established community links and indeed the Commission in their draft boundaries have perhaps better satisfied community of interest requirements and indeed a natural grouping of people in terms of transport routes and road and rail, between Landsborough and Beerwah than the proposal for the Liberal Party in terms of further changes to those boundaries.

10 We find that certainly in terms of the Commission's draft boundaries in relation to Fisher and Longman that they satisfy the criteria and we can see the justification for that. That said, it would assist I think in everyones reading the final boundaries - if further justification could be written in in terms of those final boundaries. You heard a submission  
15 from the member for Hinkler who described the redistribution process as - you just heard as - masterful in Hinkler. We have made a submission in relation to those boundaries that obviously follows what we think is also a fairly strong principle which is the fewer electors to be displaced in a redistribution the better the redistribution.

20 Certainly in terms of the mathematical equation, in terms of the redistribution process and indeed established communities within the existing electorate of Wide Bay, our submission in relation to areas such as Eidsvold, Gayndah and Monto remaining in Wide Bay satisfies  
25 the numerical criteria, satisfies the criteria of communities of interest and indeed Monto and Eidsvold and Gayndah do have a community of interest but they are also as connected to Maryborough as they are to a Bundaberg or to a Gladstone.

30 There is certainly in terms of transport routes and road and rail connected. Certainly in terms of the State electorates of Callide and Burnett seen as separate communities in terms of the geography of the area and indeed, obviously, are their own local government areas also.  
35 So in terms of looking for a solution that displaces fewer electors, we submit that our submission in relation to Wide Bay and Hinkler should be upheld in relation to the proposals as put forward by the Commission that you can actually displace fewer electors, there is less electoral disturbance, you satisfy all of the community of interest arguments required, you satisfy the numerical equations required.

40 We have made a small submission in relation to the boundaries in Bonner and Bowman also which we think is more about providing some clarity to the boundaries than anything to change large numbers of people but simply provides a more justifiable set of boundaries in  
45 light of which the local government boundaries are the State electoral

boundaries and other communities of interest would also be satisfied in relation to Burbank area in between Bonner and Bowman. My last comment will be this: in relation to Brisbane, I'll leave the comments to Arch Bevis to go into some detail on.

5

Needless to say though, areas such as Paddington to be returned to Brisbane, areas such as The Gap to be returned to Ryan are part of a broad approach that we would take which is the displacement of fewer electors is a desirable outcome in any redistribution process. And that works numerically, it certainly works in terms of reconnecting communities that for a very long time have been either in Ryan or Brisbane and indeed in terms of the submissions, as I said, Arch Bevis will deal with in greater detail.

10

15 It does go to essentially our broad submission which is: at the end of this process we have to have confidence that everything is justifiable that there has been independence in the process and to further the outcome there needs to be a restoring of the balance, we believe. We believe we made modest and reasonable submissions in broad terms, 20 in terms of what the Commission has already desired to do in a range of areas. And in terms of our submissions, I think enhances what has obviously been a very large task to balance the growing population needs of the Queensland electorate against the legislative requirements to redistribute that in to 28 equal electorates.

25

I'll close on that submission and I will be happy if you have any questions to address those to our written submissions but I thank each and every one of you for the opportunity to address you this morning.

30

CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr Milner.

35

MS BRIGHT: Mr Milner, I would just like to ask one question in regards to restoring the balance. We have listened to what you have said this morning but do you consider that there is a grave imbalance in what is proposed?

40

MR MILNER: Certainly in terms of the submission we have made, we obviously believe that in broad terms there has been a redistribution of the 28 electorates, as I said at the closing comments, in a very difficult set of circumstances in terms of population bases with very high growth projections. So in general terms, in terms of the quite large displacement of electors that is going to be a natural outcome and has been, in fact, the history of Queensland Federal redistributions for the last two or three redistributions as we have had to accommodate that population growth in terms of Queensland.

45

In terms of restoring the balance I would like to be able to have the same sort of belief that at the end of this redistribution process that not only would the National Party, who aren't here today, the Liberal Party, who aren't here today, but also the Labor Party would be able to say at the end of the process that we believe that it has been a masterful redistribution. That it has been a redistribution that has been justifiable and independent and worthwhile and we have confidence in the process. What we have suggested are modest and reasonable and justifiable changes and amendments to your draft boundaries. At the end of that process we believe, through the submissions we've made, if they were to be taken into account, if modifications were made in general terms along those lines, then you would have the anonymity of support in terms of the outcome in terms of our public comments about this process.

MS BRIGHT: I suppose where I'm coming from is that the proposal actually identifies some 390,000 persons of 2 million-odd electors in Queensland, and, in fact, the ratio of people that have had to be moved to accommodate the proposal is 1 in 6, which, in fact, is significantly less than what it has been in the past. That's all. But thank you for your view.

CHAIRMAN: What you say is that the Redistribution Committee and this Committee is bound by legislation. The criteria are there, and once you go down the track of trying to produce a, so to speak, a politically satisfactory result, you get into a hopeless situation.

MR MILNER: I'm not submitting that we make anything else other than what is required in the legislation, and our submission is completely justifiable under all the criteria that the independent Commissioners have got to consider.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you, Mr Milner. Mr Bevis. Can I say on behalf of all the members of this Committee that we have - and I really mean this - very carefully read your objection. That is not to discourage you at all from speaking to it, but we have read it. I have, myself, particularly noted your criticism of the absence of reasons, and I think you can fairly assume that whatever the decision is that is made by this augmented Commission about the ..... boundaries of Brisbane will be accompanied by reasons, which anybody might or might not agree with, but they will be transparent. So thank you for your submission, and we would all like to hear from you, and again, we regret that we have taken you away from what you may regard as more important parliamentary business in Canberra, but we just had to

do it. We would like to hear from you, and if you would feel more comfortable sitting down, that is the best thing to do.

5 MR BEVIS: Thank you, and I will take you up on that offer and remain seated, and I do appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I should in fairness point out that my colleague Paul Neville and I were on the same flight up from Canberra today, and it is one of the matters that you commented on in the introduction, and I think for the record I should say that whilst I do appreciate that there are considerations that  
10 require today's meeting to be held today, I think, as a practice, it is desirable that hearing of the augmented Commission in matters of this kind be held at times that don't conflict with sittings of the Federal Parliament. But, at the outset, let me thank you for the opportunity to be here. It is important. These hearings enable an exchange of views  
15 between objectors and the Commission that is qualitatively different to the process of written objections, and written comments, and published reports.

20 At the outset, I would also like to make some remarks on the comments received by the Commission about the objections, and I acknowledge also your advice that my fairly detailed original objection has been read, so I don't propose to go through it in great detail, although I do intend just to say a couple of things about the key points in it, but, before I do, I would like to make some comment about the  
25 comments received in response to the objections.

I note that only the Liberal Party have raised any objections in their comments to my proposal to my objections. I think importantly, Mr Kumar, who is the President of People for Paddington has supported  
30 my objection in relation to Paddington. Mr Ansell has made comments, broadly endorsing my objection. Mr Paul Kidd has also expressed similar comments to mine in relation to Paddington, Milton, Bardon, and the Gap. After two weeks of scrutiny, the Liberal Party have raised four points of dispute with my objection. Only one has  
35 any factual basis, that relating to Brisbane and Griffith having the highest contiguous voter population, and that one has been misused.

I want to address each of their claims in turn. Firstly, the Liberals claim that my objection removes "a substantial amount of the newly  
40 proposed Griffith." The facts are that I propose the retention in Brisbane of 1775 voters who would otherwise be removed and placed in Griffith. If the Liberals regard 1775 voters as "a substantial amount" they might like to describe what they think of dislocating 30,863 voters as the Committee proposes in relation to Brisbane.  
45

5 In fact, the Liberal Party proposes changes in the Griffith/Moreton boundary, but they chose not to quantify the number of electors affected. When you recall the extremely detailed original suggestions they submitted, this omission is clearly not due to an inability to quantify those affected. If they think 1775 is significant enough to criticise my objection, I wonder where they make the cutoff. Frankly, I think that comment lacks any credibility.

10 Secondly, they claim my objection failed "to take into account enormous growth which has occurred in the areas of Brisbane and Griffith." The truth is I included a complete section on this very point at page 5 in my submission. I said in part, in that objection, and I quote from it:

15 *Reference to the large growth within the CBD is curious. The published enrolment projections by division show a growth rate for Brisbane of 13.07 per cent. The Gold Coast division and McPherson has more electors than Brisbane, and a growth rate of 19.3 per cent. The other Gold Coast division of Moncrieff has a growth rate of 18.67.*

20 Now, for completeness, although I didn't include it in my original objection, I note that Griffith's growth rate is 11.8 per cent. That is, both Griffith and Brisbane have dramatically lower growth rates than McPherson and Moncrieff.

25 The Liberals argue that high-growth areas are more likely to experience dislocation of voters. Let me say in so doing they support my objection. I said this:

30 *If large enrolments and/or growth rates are the basis for substantial changes of the sort proposed for Brisbane, the question that needs to be answered is why weren't greater dislocations required in that part of Queensland where the enrolment is higher, and the growth rate greater. McPherson loses 19,466 electors, yet Brisbane loses 30,863 from a smaller enrolment and with a lower growth rate. Every elector in the new McPherson is in the existing McPherson. That is a very desirable outcome. For the largest division in one of the fastest growing parts of the State, it is remarkable. It is in stark contrast to the Committee's approach to Brisbane.*

40 The third comment they raised was to refer to the one fact that they have advanced: that is, that Brisbane and Griffith are the adjoining electorates with the highest combined enrolment. At the time we all wrote our objections, the best enrolment data available, and upon this redistribution is based, is that published in the report. That shows

Brisbane and Griffith's combined enrolment at 188,461, whilst McPherson and Moncrieff had 188,381. In other words, Brisbane and Griffith have got just 80 more electors. 80 from a combined four electorates total of 376,842 electors. That is a tiny 0.002 per cent.

5

Yes, Brisbane/Griffith has more electors than Moncrieff/McPherson, but at just 80 electors, what is the point that they seek to make? In fact, over the last 12 months, those positions have been reversed. Earlier this year, McPherson and Moncrieff had more electors than

10 Brisbane/Griffith. Given their much higher growth rates, that would obviously be the future trend on current boundaries. Again I make the point, that the Liberals' view that growth rates are likely to produce voter dislocation simply adds weight to my objection, in particular, those parts of the objection that I've quoted to you today.

15

Finally, the Liberals acknowledge - indeed, they appreciate - my concern about dislocation of voters, but they then assert, and I quote from their comments:

20

*The Commission has achieved the result with the minimum possible dislocation of voters in an overall context. There is simply no way of avoiding voter dislocation and the submission by the Honourable Arch Bevis MP gives insufficient credence to this fact.*

25

I would have thought that even a cursory look at my objection would show the dislocation of voters was given very careful consideration by me. What is more, my objection unquestionably dislocates fewer voters in an overall context or any other context. Adoption of my objection means there are 12,420 fewer electors dislocated. If the Liberals regard 1775 as significant enough to raise concerns, then

30 reducing dislocations by 12,420 must surely be very substantial indeed.

30

Even leaving aside the Liberal scale of what is significant, the more important fact is that my objection results in 12½ thousand fewer

35 dislocations with all electorates in quota. Contrary to the assertion by the Liberals, it is possible to dislocate fewer voters, and to meet or exceed all other requirements, and my objection does it. What is more, it better meets the requirements of the Act than does the Committee's proposal, and it should be adopted.

40

There are a number of significant points in my objection that I intend just to highlight now. The process for redistribution embodies a number of steps that is designed to ensure the efficacy and probity of our electoral system. Transparency and public scrutiny are common

45 threads running through the entire process. The requirements of



5 Section 67, which you commented on in your opening comments, Mr  
Chairman, are essential to that process. My objection is critical of the  
failure of the Committee to set out reasons for substantial change that  
it has proposed. The test for that is not reference to other redistribution  
reports, but the Act itself. The omission of reasons is, I think, a serious  
error, and it represents a failure to comply with the Act.

10 I also object to the Committee's use of local government boundaries,  
particularly in metropolitan areas. My written objection sets out the  
details, and my arguments in relation to that. The Committee not only  
used them, but, by their own account, used them "to the greatest extent  
possible." And that is a major error. It is not open to the Committee to  
create its own criteria. As you correctly point out in your comments,  
15 the requirements are those laid down in the Act, and unlike some  
States, as my objection refers to, unlike some States, the  
Commonwealth does not require local government boundaries to be  
included; in fact, it is not in the list of criteria at all.

20 Moreover, at least in metropolitan areas, they are not only poor  
indicators of community of interest, but, as is the case in the Brisbane  
Pine Rivers boundary, they are misleading. My objection sets out in  
some detail reasons for Ferny Grove to remain in Dickson. I firmly  
believe this better complies with every criteria of the Act. I am happy  
to have this opportunity to support that, and answer any questions or  
25 respond to any alternative views that members of the augmented  
Commission may wish to present.

30 The decision of the Committee to dislocate Brisbane voters and place  
them in Ryan, at the same time as dislocating Ryan voters by putting  
them in Brisbane is extraordinary. There is no conceivable community  
of interest to justify it, precious little commentary, much less reasons  
supplied by the Committee in the report about it, and nothing that I  
can see to justify the change. Paddington/Milton, and part of Bardon,  
35 are able to be retained in Brisbane. I've detailed reasons why they  
should be. I also draw your attention to the comments of Mr Richard  
Kumar, and I also note Paul Kidd's support for that proposition.

40 I've acknowledged that the boundary may not include the entire SLAs  
of Paddington and Milton, although they can, and I've also proposed  
splitting ACCD at Bardon, although that is not absolutely necessary.  
Again, I am happy to have this opportunity to expand on the detail in  
relation to that matter and answer any questions or respond to any  
alternative views that members of the augmented Commission may  
45 have.

My objection in relation to Everton Park/Stafford will better meet community of interest and voter dislocation requirements of the Act, whilst complying with the quota. It also adopts a northern boundary for Brisbane that a previous Redistribution Committee used. In  
5 relation to South Brisbane/West End, I have set out reasons that substantiate the retention of this area in Brisbane. For the last 20 years, this area has been in the same division as the City, more often than not. In fact, for 17 of the last 20 years, that has been the case. In 2003, the links between these areas is even more pronounced. The case is  
10 stronger now for that than at any time in the last 20 years.

In conclusion, I want to repeat a comment that I made in my written submission.

15 *For any other proposal with greater dislocation of electors to be adopted, it is necessary that the case be made and accepted that the provisions of sub-section 66(3)(b)(i), (ii), or (iii), or (iv) are better met in that other proposal, thereby requiring the subordination of sub-*  
20 *section 66(3)(b)(v). No such case has been put in either suggestions to the Committee, or in the Committee's own report.*

And I would add here today, nor do I believe such a case exists. I would be concerned in terms of the transparency of the process if, at  
25 this late point in the process, a final report were all of a sudden to materialise with those sorts of arguments. These are the things that are meant to be in the process laid down in the Act set out at the beginning of the process, not at the end, when there are no further opportunities available for comment, appeals and objections.

30 I welcome your questions and comments on any aspect of my objections, which you think needs clarification, or which members may have disagreement with, and, after all, that is why we are here face to face in an oral hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to present, and  
35 if there are any questions, or comments, or views, I will do my best to respond.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Bevis.

40 MS BRIGHT: Mr Bevis, thank you. I am just interested - there seems to be - and I take your point, as the Chairman pointed out at the beginning, we have certainly all read your objection that you gave us, and you make note of the Friendship Bridge and many other means of transport which people can access north and south of the Brisbane River, but isn't it also fair to say that in Brisbane, there is quite a  
45 distinction in the community generally between which side of the river

you are on, and therefore, where your community of interests are?

5 MR BEVIS: I think there is a general view in the community about that, so people will talk about north side, south side, but if you actually  
10 look though at the people who live in the inner city area, that distinction doesn't exist. People who live at Newmarket or as Aspley, or at Yeronga, or at Mt Gravatt, will clearly have those views. People who live at West End on one side, and Milton or Paddington on the other, don't. So that the transmigration in those adjoining areas has  
15 always been significant. I guess the other thing that is worth contemplating is that if that is so overpowering as seems to be in the mind of some, then there have been a lot of errors made by previous Redistribution Committees in the last 20 years. In fact, as I pointed out, those areas have been joined in previous Federal redistributions - on  
20 every redistribution in the last 20 years bar one. And I think that is not just a factor of the quota requirements; that might explain one of them, or two of them, but not all bar one.

20 The simple fact is that every Redistribution Committee prior to this current proposal in the last 20 years has kept those adjoining suburbs together in the same Federal division as an inner city clutch. And that occurred, I might say, when Griffith crossed the river, and came over the - came from the south to the north and took in New Farm and part  
25 of the city area up to the Normanby. So this has been recognised when the Federal division - the bulk of the Federal division has been both on the north and the south side.

30 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Bevis, and everybody else. We value - greatly value these opportunities to listen to people who have made written submissions. You may all assume that we will carefully consider them, and we will issue our decision under section 72 as soon as we can. We will adjourn this meeting now.

35 **ADJOURNED**

**[10.29am]**