



Suggestion 98

Adam Bandt MP

3 pages



ADAM BANDT MP

Redistribution Committee for Victoria
Australian Electoral Commission
Locked Bag 4007, Canberra ACT 2601.

Submission to the Victorian Redistribution

I wish to submit the following public suggestion for the consideration of the Redistribution Committee. As the Federal Member for Melbourne I have an intimate knowledge of the communities and electors in my seat and a keen interest in the outcome of the redistribution.

I note that this submission is also made in support of the Australian Greens Victoria submission.

I note that the seat of Melbourne is projected to have 119,787 electors by 2025 on existing boundaries. All seats must be within 3.5% of 117,107 by 2025, which is between 113,009 and 121,205 and therefore the numbers of electors alone do not require a change.

However there are strong reasons to make adjustments to the seat to return Flemington to the Federation electorate of Melbourne that it was in for almost 100 years and to restore the community of Flemington-Kensington, which was cut in two by the last redistribution, and to ensure that common public housing communities are able to be contained within one seat.

Therefore I propose that Flemington and Flemington Showgrounds are reintegrated into the seat of Melbourne which would shift 5470 projected voters into Melbourne.

This would make the 2025 count 125,257, more than 4000 voters above the quota, but this could then be offset by moving all of Fitzroy North north of Brunswick Rd (3,141 voters) and the corner of north west Parkville near Travancore (1,390 voters) into the seat of Wills. It is not my desire to have these areas removed from Melbourne, but I accept the legislation would require it.

I have been a longstanding resident of suburbs that are or were in the electorate of Melbourne and I was elected as the Federal Member for Melbourne in 2010.

I believe the experience of the last two years have reinforced concerns that I and the community expressed regarding the removal of Flemington from the seat of Melbourne prior to the last redistribution. We also raised concerns regarding the splitting of the public housing communities.

This redistribution is an opportunity to rectify this mistake.

Further information on Flemington & Kensington

Since 1922, a number of suburbs formed the core of the electorate of Melbourne, never having been outside it: Kensington, Flemington, North Melbourne, CBD, West Melbourne, East Melbourne and Carlton. Whilst other suburbs have come and gone as boundaries and the numbers of Victorian seats has changed, these suburbs have been the centre of gravity for this Federation seat.

However, for the first time in almost 100 years, the last redistribution removed Flemington from the electorate of Melbourne. There was widespread community opposition to this shift and no expressed community support for it.

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Flemington, like Kensington with which it shares a postcode, is an inner-city suburb with strong ties to neighbouring Kensington and North Melbourne. The ties to the suburbs to its south (Kensington and North Melbourne) are greater than the ties to suburbs to its north and west.

The electoral commission had long understood the strong community of interest that binds these inner-suburbs together and gives Melbourne its distinct identity. Whilst history isn't determinative of boundaries, I submit there is a strong case for restoring an established community of interest.

Flem/Ken

The splitting of Flemington from Kensington and the rest of Melbourne by the last redistribution broke up this community of interest.

The Flemington/Kensington community - which often goes under the shorthand 'Flem/Ken' - is well known to locals and has bound together historical communities of interest for many years, as exhibited by the following:

- The Flemington/Kensington News, a local community newspaper of four decades' standing that is very popular amongst residents sharing common communities;
- The Flemington/Kensington Legal Centre
- The Flemington & Kensington Bowling Club
- The Flemington/Kensington RSL
- The high school with Kensington in its catchment area, Mount Alexander college, is in Flemington
- The closest supermarket for most Kensington residents is located in Flemington

The two suburbs share a great deal of history, including their connection with the racecourse and stock trade. The common boundary along Racecourse Road is a hub of shops, services and community facilities that both Kensington and Flemington residents regularly use. The Moonee Valley Library on the south side of Racecourse Road, for example, is within walking distance for many residents in both suburbs and is the weekly location for education and interactive events for nearby parents and their children.

Kensington was correctly retained in Melbourne at the last redistribution, reflecting the fact that Kensington is also connected to the suburbs to its east. Kensington is very similar to North Melbourne, another suburb in the electorate since 1922. Further, the 'Arden Macaulay Structure Plan', which takes its name from two main roads in North Melbourne and Kensington respectively, is an initiative of the Melbourne City Council for urban redevelopment in the border-zone of these two suburbs. It is an initiative that the Kensington Association of residents, for example, has taken a significant interest in because of what it means for Kensington. The development will bind the two suburbs even closer together and strengthen communities of interest. By comparison, there is no such plan to tie Kensington in more closely with suburbs to the west, unsurprising given the river, industrial space and large distance between them.

Previous arguments in the 2018 redistribution claimed that Melbourne Metro will change the nature of transportation links in the Flemington and Kensington area, but such changes are a decade away and existing transport links, including buses, trams, trains and bike paths mean people in Flemington and Kensington are much more connected to the east than the west. In fact, the Melbourne Metro proposal will connect Footscray directly to North Melbourne, bypassing Flemington and Kensington altogether.

In short, Kensington is closely bound to North Melbourne, and Flemington is closely bound to both.

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Public housing

Melbourne is currently home to many public housing residents. The housing commission tower blocks that dot the inner-Melbourne skyline in Richmond, Carlton, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Flemington, North Melbourne and Kensington contribute to Melbourne having the highest number of public housing dwellings of any electorate. Approximately 10% of dwellings in the electorate are public housing. Many extended families live across estates, as government policies have seen groups from similar ethnic backgrounds co-located within close suburbs. Families from many Horn of Africa countries, and to a lesser extent Vietnam and China, are connected across the estates. There is also a very strong community of interest between public housing residents based on common need and experience.

By definition, public housing tenants are low-income and often have significant common needs with respect to the Federal government, in areas such as welfare, immigration and housing support. It has been our experience that a significant amount of Federal electorate staff time has been devoted to supporting the needs of public housing tenants, but also in strengthening connection between estates. There is a very strong argument of community of interest for keeping the 'public housing high rise' suburbs within the one electorate.

This has been particularly demonstrated during the events of the COVID-19 pandemic and the public housing "hard lockdown" that took place over winter in towers in Flemington and North Melbourne, towers that were very close to each other but split by an electoral boundary. My office spent many hours supporting these communities navigate a difficult situation and complex bureaucracies and one of the major challenges we faced was the fact that many extended families and communities lived between both the Flemington and North Melbourne towers. If Flemington had remained within the Division of Melbourne, this would have aided me and my team in better supporting these at-risk communities.

For these reasons I request the Committee to act on the proposal to maintain the century-long 'core' suburbs of this Federation electorate by restoring Flemington to the seat of Melbourne.

Yours faithfully,



Adam Bandt
Federal Member for Melbourne

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