



# Suggestion 52

Andrew Boatman

2 pages

## **AEC - Victoria Redistribution Submission - Electorate of Ballarat**

This submission to the AEC's Redistribution deliberations for the State of Victoria focusses on the Division of Ballarat.

I note the AEC's stated considerations when undertaking redistributions:

- community interests within the proposed electoral division, including economic, social and regional interests
- means of communication and travel within the proposed electoral division
- physical features and area of the proposed electoral division, and
- existing boundaries of divisions in the state or territory.

When taking these considerations into account, I submit that the changes made to the Division of Ballarat should be minimal, and continue to ensure that the regional towns and villages which are included within the division are those which have a clear connection to the 'hub' city of Ballarat.

The Division of Ballarat currently includes the (local government) areas of Hepburn Shire and the City of Ballarat in their entirety, along with parts of Moorabool Shire and a large portion of Golden Plains Shire.

The connecting backbone of the division, as it currently exists, is the Midland Highway. From Lethbridge in the southeast of the electorate, through Meredith, Elaine and Buninyong to Ballarat itself; and then from Ballarat to Creswick, Daylesford and Trentham. The majority of residents 'connect to' Ballarat by this 'arterial' road. This aligns with the AEC's consideration (preference?) regarding means of travel and ought be maintained.

The areas currently within the Division of Ballarat are of broadly similar geography, with rolling hills and open plains south of the Great Dividing Range. This aligns with the AEC's consideration of physical features and buttress an argument for minimal boundary change.

The areas within the Division of Ballarat largely make up a community of social and economic interest. Ballarat is the main shopping and economic centre for the entirety of Hepburn Shire, along with a significant portion of Golden Plains. Adults from across Hepburn and Golden Plains shires commute to work in Ballarat (and generally have their health service needs met in Ballarat), while children in the shires travel into Ballarat for secondary schooling. This integral connection with Ballarat ought be maintained.

The Central Highlands Football League – the regional league centred on Ballarat – demonstrates the community of interest around Ballarat. It includes teams from Daylesford, Hepburn, Clunes and

Creswick. This shows that the current borders align with the AEC's consideration of communities of interest.

Acknowledging that the Division of Ballarat is currently below quota, I submit that growth should come from the incorporation of those areas of Golden Plains Shire that are not currently within the electorate, i.e. the Bannockburn area. While these southern areas of Golden Plains may have a lesser connection with the city of Ballarat itself, they do have an existing connection with areas included within the Division of Ballarat, particularly those along the Midland Highway and the Bannockburn-Shelford Road. Adding Bannockburn to the Division of Ballarat would have the added benefit of including the entirety of Golden Plains Shire within the one electorate.

With the Bannockburn population estimated at roughly 8,000, this should bring the Division of Ballarat close to the appropriate quota following this redistribution.

My opinion is that the AEC has consistently done a good job of maintaining a Division of Ballarat that accords with its stated objectives. I encourage the AEC to maintain that approach by adding the minimum electors necessary to maintain the division within quota, thus avoiding any wholesale changes that undermine communities of interest.

An alternative option to those advocated here might be to include larger parts of Moorabool Shire within the division. While communities like Ballan and Blackwood do share a community of interest with Ballarat and could be included without changing the character of the division, my view is that Bacchus Marsh and Darley (the larger population centres) are, increasingly, peri-urban centres that look towards Melbourne. The needs and concerns of these communities on Melbourne's outer fringe are inherently different to those of Ballarat and immediate surrounds. Additionally, the strong growth of these areas would increase the likelihood of further changes having to be made by the AEC at a redistribution in the next boundary review cycle.

Given that the Division of Ballarat underwent significant change at the last redistribution, bringing in high growth areas like Bacchus Marsh would not only constitute significant change again, but would also increase the likelihood that significant changes are required at the next redistribution as well.

Thank you for inviting submissions into the Electoral boundary review.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Boatman