



Further Objection Number 223

Charles Richardson

4 pages

From:
Sent: Monday, 1 November 2010 5:52 PM
To: VIC Redistribution
Subject: Objection to revised proposal
Attachments: AUGOBJ.docx

Dear friends -

Please find attached (as a Word document) a short set of objections to the revised proposal for the federal redistribution of Victoria, for the consideration of the augmented Electoral Commission. I trust you will contact me if you require any further information.

I would also like to seek leave to appear to make an oral submission to the inquiry into the objections on Monday 8 November.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) Charles Richardson

FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION 2010: VICTORIA
OBJECTIONS to the PROPOSALS
of the AUGMENTED ELECTORAL COMMISSION
From CHARLES RICHARDSON

I am grateful for the opportunity to make objections to the revised proposal for the federal redistribution of Victoria, as released by the Augmented Electoral Commission on 21 October 2010. I believe the Commission was correct in judging that the revised proposal was sufficiently different to require a further round of consultation, but I note that the period of eleven days allowed for objections seems unduly short, and I suggest that consideration should be given in future to extending the timetable at this point.

General comment

The main difference, of course, between the revised proposal and the original proposal of the Redistribution Committee is in the retention of Murray and consequent undoing of the proposed creation of a new division and major alterations to McEwen, Mallee, Wannon and Corangamite. I originally proposed the abolition of Murray and am still convinced that conceptually that was the best way to proceed (although I would have shifted Ballarat rather than Corangamite), but since the Commission has decided not to go down that path it would be pointless to revisit the issue now.

It is, however, very pleasing to see that the Commission has been able to improve on the proposed boundaries in a number of areas, including maintaining the northern boundary of Corio, remedying problems in the Pakenham area and putting Endeavour Hills back into Holt.

I have one substantial objection to make to the revised proposals, with ramifications over a number of divisions. I shall therefore outline it first, followed by a small number of minor objections that cover more limited areas.

North/South imbalance

The most serious problem as I see it with the revised proposal is the way that metropolitan electors north of the Yarra are under-represented compared to those to the south. The eleven proposed divisions in the northern and western suburbs (including McEwen) are in aggregate about 27% above the average projected enrolment (almost 2.5% per division), while the five divisions immediately south of the Yarra are all more than 2% above it (about 14.5% in aggregate).

Although the divisions concerned are all within the prescribed tolerances, I believe that this sort of systematic discrepancy undermines the credibility of the redistribution. The Commission should take care to avoid such a situation if at all possible.

The original proposal made some move to redress the imbalance by shifting the Docklands area from Melbourne to Melbourne Ports, but this has now been reversed and it was too small to make much difference in any case.

Fortunately, there is a remedy available in the form of the Shire of Murrindindi, which contains about 10,300 projected electors. The revised proposal places it in Indi, which is geographically very awkward; the southern parts of Murrindindi, around Kinglake and Toolangi, are far removed from the core areas of Indi, especially so since the most natural route of communication from there to the north-east, via Euroa, has been transferred to Murray.

I suggest that instead Murrindindi would fit well with the northern part of the Shire of Yarra Ranges, in the division of Casey. Although this involves crossing the Divide, there are good transport links from Yarra Glen to Yea and from Healesville to Marysville, Alexandra and Eildon, and it is submitted that community of interest is better served by placing them together than by having residents of the commuter belt in a division based on Wodonga and Wangaratta.

Once this move is made, adjustments to address the imbalance between northern and southern suburbs are relatively straightforward. Casey can lose most of its share of City of Maroondah; the part north of the highway and west of Yarra Road (about 2,000 projected electors) to Menzies, and the rest, apart from Kilsyth and Kilsyth South, to Deakin.

Deakin on the revised proposal is a sensible division, but shifting it east would allow more electors to go into Kooyong and Higgins, which have been underweighted: Chisholm could take the area north of Whitehorse Road and west of Surrey Road; Kooyong could take from Chisholm the area north of Whitehorse Road west of Elgar Road; and Higgins could retain some part of the area that the revised proposal has it losing to Kooyong.

In the north of the state, the loss of Murrindindi could be compensated by having Indi take most of the Shire of Moira, which fits much better with its existing territory. Leaving Numurkah, Nathalia and Barmah in Murray, but taking Yarrawonga, Cobram, Strathmerton, Katunga and Katamatite, would transfer about 12,900 projected electors.

Murray instead would take the Seymour area from McEwen, and McEwen would move a little further into the suburban fringe areas to its south – maybe Yarrambat or Hurstbridge (from Scullin) and parts of Craigieburn (from Calwell - remedying the unfortunate situation in the revised proposal where the boundary bisects the centre of Craigieburn).

Calwell could then take territory from Gorton (perhaps the sliver of the City of Brimbank west of Calder Park Drive) and Wills (Gowanbrae and Strathmore Heights, which are cut off from the rest of the division by Moonee Ponds Creek), while Wills could regain from Melbourne some or all of the latter's portion of the City of Moreland, at the southern end of Brunswick East (which happens to be where I live).

I have not attempted to specify precise boundaries or enrolment figures for these adjustments; I am sure the Commission will be able to do a much better job of that with the resources at its disposal. But I submit that some such set of adjustments would make an important contribution to the democratic goal of ensuring that everyone's vote is given equal weight, and that particular groups of voters are not systematically disadvantaged relative to others.

Other objections

(a) Casey/La Trobe boundary

While the revised proposal has delivered much improved boundaries at the south-eastern end of the metropolitan area – specifically the configuration of Aston, Holt, La Trobe and McMillan – there is one further anomaly that should be fixed. The original proposal transferred to La Trobe a small salient (888 actual electors, 901 projected) from Casey consisting mostly of the Macclesfield locality. This is one area where the local government boundaries are a poor guide to community of interest: although it is in the Shire of Yarra Ranges, Macclesfield's transport and community connections link it to Emerald and Cockatoo, while Woori Yallock and Cockatoo Creeks separate it from the neighboring parts of Yarra Ranges Shire.

Since the proposed Casey is towards the bottom end of the prescribed enrolment tolerance in any case, there is no reason why this change needs to be pursued, so I submit that the Macclesfield area should be returned to La Trobe.

(b) Corangamite/Wannon boundary

At the last redistribution it was necessary for Wannon to take a small area of the Shire of Colac Otway because it would otherwise have been below the prescribed tolerance. That reason no longer applies, so it would be logical for the area concerned – the Bungador locality (145 actual electors, 154 projected) – to be returned to Corangamite. If it were thought necessary for Wannon to gain some compensation, the northern end of the Shire of Golden Plains (around Linton) would be a better fit with the proposed Wannon.

(c) Dunkley/Flinders boundary

It was necessary for the division of Dunkley to gain electors in order to fit within the prescribed enrolment tolerance. However the solution adopted by both the Committee and the revised proposal results in the township of Baxter being split in half by the new boundary along the Baxter-Tooradin Road. I submit that instead the whole of Baxter, approximately another 800 electors, should move into Dunkley; this would also bring both Dunkley and Flinders closer to the average projected enrolment.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Richardson

1 November 2010