



Comment on objections 86

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3 pages

Redistribution Secretariat for Victoria
Australian
N Electoral Commission
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Dear Secretariat,

Comment on Electoral Boundary Submissions for the proposed Seat of Cox

I write to respectfully comment on a number of responses to the AEC's proposed electoral boundaries relating to the proposed Seat of Cox. In particular I will be commenting on:

1. Objection 228 G21 Geelong Regional Alliance and
2. Objection 329 Colac Otway Shire.

1. G21 Geelong Regional Alliance - Objection 228

The G21 Alliance - a collaborative alliance made up of five Councils - Golden Plains Shire, Colac Otway Shire, the Borough of Queenscliff, City of Greater Geelong and the Surf Coast Shire - appears to advocate for one Council in direct contradiction with two other Councils that form part of the alliance.

This contradiction is confounding, highlighting a lack of consensus among the five Councils and a lack of recognition for contentions put forward in AEC submissions by Queenscliff Borough and Golden Plains municipalities, each supporting the AEC draft boundaries in the new Seat of Cox.

The notion that Colac remain in the Seat of Cox while not removing other townships from the proposed Seat of Cox, is not cognisant of the changing populations. It makes sense for Colac to move into Wannon. Colac naturally fits with Wannon - its reliance on agribusiness to drive the economy, its links with the Great South Coast Alliance and its mutual challenges around year 12 retention, youth unemployment, isolation., need for greater public transport and reliance on tourism trade generated by the 12 Apostles and the Great Ocean Road are strong connectors with Wannon. Freight, rail and arterial road links are also unifying factors.

2. Colac Otway Shire Objection 329

Colac Otway Shire states it has strong community interests with Geelong. It may have but the Shire has also a very strong affinity with Wannon, and the Great South Coast. This affinity is born of proximity, like-minded businesses and access to local services and tourism on the coast.

Further dot points for your consideration.

The Corangamite electorate's population at the 2016 poll was already over the threshold mark, with 10,000 more voters than Wannon. Strong growth around Armstrong Creek, Torquay, Bannockburn and Ocean Grove, coupled with static or declining populations in centres in the neighbouring seat of Wannon, have contributed to the trend and suggest an influential redistribution.

In the face of such fluctuations, Colac and the Colac Otway Shire's hinterland should be removed from the Corangamite electorate and incorporated into the Wannon electorate while the whole of Bellarine should be incorporated into the new seat of Cox

This proposal aligns with the AEC criteria for redistribution which considers:

1. Common community interests including social, economic and regional interests;
2. Means of communication and travel within the proposed electoral division; and
3. Physical features and areas of the proposed electoral division.

In regard to point one, the economic, social and regional interests of those living in Colac and the surrounding district, correlates far more closely with the electorate of Wannon than Corangamite.

Both Colac and the electorate of Wannon are located in rural settings and are heavily reliant on the agricultural industry for jobs and trade.

Both rely on the same arterial link road - the Princes Highway and the Warrnambool rail line - for freight, for commuting and for access to services.

Colac does have a strong connection with G21 but has a stronger and more likeminded relationship with the Great South Coast with mutual concerns regarding coastal visitation to the 12 Apostles and significant agribusiness needs which are key economic and employment drivers. The Seat of Wannon, Colac and surrounds also have significant social issues relating to youth unemployment and access to education and health services.

Bannockburn and Golden Plains Shire, in contrast, has stronger links with the G21 Regional Alliance and Geelong due to geographic proximity and mutual economic, educational, health and services needs. Students travel from Bannockburn to Geelong for education and sport for example. In regard to communication and travel, statistics reveal that Wannon and Colac have many challenges in common including low retention rates through to year 12, above average youth unemployment, reduced health outcomes and some difficulties accessing services, education and training due to distance and limited public transport..

In regard to communications, the South West, including Wannon and the Colac area, has significant challenges regarding accessible, affordable reliable telecommunications services. Accessibility to work, study and services can also be challenging. Rail services on the Warrnambool line perpetuate these challenges.

Geographically, Colac and the Wannon electorate are also similar in nature, incorporating the hinterland and lush farm land. There is much that is mutually shared and much that requires joint advocacy. A particular example, is the issue regarding the Murray Goulburn Co-op and dairy farmers. This issue is a mutual community interest for Wannon and Colac farmers.

In contrast, the remainder of Corangamite is less rural, more coastal, more urbane with many significant pockets of rapid population growth, supported increasingly by greater access to Geelong's services, education and health.

There is a strong community interest/attitude among the residents who live along the coast and in growing Corangamite/Cox communities, who believe do not receive support for infrastructure. They also have increasing concerns re climate change and the environment .

Putting this region together will enable a more efficient and effective response to these heartfelt and real concerns, particularly relating to new infrastructure to serve growing communities, resolving tourism pressures along the coast as highlighted by the Great Ocean Road Taskforce, arterial road and rail links connecting communities of Armstrong Creek, Torquay and Bellarine to Geelong and Melbourne for commuting and access to services, education and social connectivity.

There is also a dynamic workforce that commutes to Geelong or Melbourne for work. However, there is a growing number of startup and home-based businesses that create local employment. Tourism and construction in the new seat of Cox electorate also provides a significant boost to the local economy.

In conclusion, it makes sense to remove Colac and the Colac Otway Shire hinterland from the Seat of Cox and incorporate it into Wannon while keeping the entirety of Golden Plains Shire and the Bellarine into the new seat of Cox.

Like-minded communities do better together.

Lloyd Fletcher

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