



Objection 408

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FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION 2018: VICTORIA

OBJECTIONS to the PROPOSAL
of the VICTORIAN REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

From CHARLES RICHARDSON

GENERAL COMMENT

I am grateful for the opportunity to make objections to the proposal for the federal redistribution of Victoria, as released by the Redistribution Committee on 6 April 2018. It appears to me that the Committee has done an excellent job of satisfying the applicable criteria, and that most of its proposed boundaries are very sensible both in concept and in detail. I am pleased to see that several of my suggestions have been adopted, although of course some of them were put forward by others as well. It is particularly pleasing to see that the imbalance of voting strength between the northern and southern parts of the state has been addressed.

I have eight objections to make to the proposed redistribution, most of them quite minor. They are set out below in descending order of the number of electors affected. I then conclude with some thoughts on the naming of divisions.

A. HIGGINS / MACNAMARA

The Committee proposes to transfer the suburb of Windsor from *Higgins* to *Macnamara* (formerly called *Melbourne Ports*). On its configuration of divisions, this is necessary to keep *Higgins* within the permitted tolerance, but it is obviously suboptimal in terms of community of interest; clearly Windsor should ideally remain in the same division as Prahran.

There was considerable debate at the time of the last redistribution about the shape of *Melbourne Ports*. The Augmented Electoral Commission ultimately resolved to maintain its long eastward stretch, partly on the basis that its boundary with *Higgins*, along Punt Road and Dandenong Road, was particularly strong and should not be disturbed. Now that it is necessary to disturb this boundary anyway, it becomes, in my view, very difficult to justify keeping the Caulfield area in *Macnamara*.

I suggest that the Commission should restructure these two divisions to make them more

compact. I propose a boundary running from north to south down Williams Road, the railway, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Hotham Street; as compared to the proposed boundaries, this would transfer 26,137 projected electors from *Macnamara* to *Higgins* (in the level 2 statistical areas of Caulfield – North, Caulfield – South, Elsternwick, Ormond – Glenhuntly and part of St Kilda East) and 24,911 projected electors from *Higgins* to *Macnamara* (in the SA2s of Prahran – Windsor, South Yarra – East and a small portion of Toorak), leaving both divisions well within the prescribed tolerance.

It's possible that a neater solution could be reached by bringing *Goldstein* into the mix; it is proposed to be noticeably under the projected average enrolment (98.7%), while *Higgins* and *Macnamara* are both over. In addition, the current northern boundary of *Goldstein*, along Glen Huntly Road, is unsatisfactory, since it splits major shopping precincts in Elsternwick and Glen Huntly. But the Committee was persuaded by the attractions of leaving *Goldstein* untouched, so I have not attempted to change that.

B. CASEY / CHISHOLM / DEAKIN

A number of issues on the boundaries of these three divisions can be dealt with simultaneously. I shall review them from east to west.

The proposed boundaries transfer two distinct blocks of territory from *La Trobe* to *Casey*: a larger western section including Olinda, Upper Ferntree Gully and Belgrave, and a small eastern section consisting mostly of Macclesfield and also including small parts of Emerald and Yellingbo. In both cases the new boundary follows the municipal boundary, but in the eastern section the municipal boundary is a poor guide to community of interest. This was raised during the last redistribution, when the boundary was moved north following the final round of objections.

I propose that this area of Macclesfield and surrounds, totalling 974 projected electors (in Monbulk – Silvan, Emerald – Cockatoo and Yarra Valley SA2s), should remain in *La Trobe*, since its natural lines of communication are with Emerald rather than Monbulk or Woori Yallock. I would also add to *La Trobe* the locality of Menzies Creek (519 projected electors), since that brings the boundary to the edge of the built-up area.

Another anomaly in *Casey* is Upper Ferntree Gully, which is the only portion of the City of Knox not in *Aston*. A good case can be made either way in terms of the character of the area, but to my mind the convenience of making *Aston* coextensive with a single municipality is decisive, particularly since the change brings it closer to projected average enrolment. I would therefore shift those 1,810 projected electors into *Aston*.

These transfers out of *Casey* create the scope for shifting its boundary with *Deakin* to the west, thereby preventing the latter division from extending into the Shire of Yarra Ranges. The Committee's proposed boundary is perfectly sensible, but it would be neater to use the municipal boundary, transferring 6,999 projected electors (almost all from Kilsyth SA2, with a few from Montrose) back into *Casey*.

Deakin in turn has an anomaly at its other end, and now that it needs to gain electors it is possible for it to keep the whole of the suburb of Vermont South rather than splitting it with *Chisholm*. Moving the boundary back south from the Burwood Highway to Highbury Road, which is also the municipal boundary, would transfer 3,179 projected electors and take *Deakin* to 99.1% of projected average enrolment.

Although this last move improves *Chisholm's* boundaries, it leaves it below the tolerance, so it needs to gain compensating territory. There are a couple of options, but I recommend

reducing the size of the area transferred to *Kooyong* by moving the boundary north from Riversdale Road to Canterbury Road. That would involve 2,928 projected electors in Surrey Hills (East) – Mont Albert SA2.

While the above changes may seem extensive, even in aggregate they do not involve a large number of electors, yet I believe they combine to significantly improve the boundaries of the divisions concerned. They also leave most of them closer to projected average enrolment than under the Committee's proposal.

C. WANNON / BALLARAT

There are two problems with the proposed division of *Wannon*. At 102.2% of average projected enrolment it is uncomfortably large, and although it is a rural division it strays into the suburbs of Ballarat. Neither problem on its own would be serious enough to warrant change, but I think the conjunction of the two is. *Wannon* itself is easily fixed: Smythes Creek SA2, with its 2,982 projected electors, can be transferred to *Ballarat*, aligning the boundary with the level 3 statistical area.

That transfer would put *Ballarat* above the limit, but a series of small adjustments can feed the excess elector numbers through to *McEwen*, which is well below average. I suggest the following as one way of doing this:

- Move the northern and eastern parts of Daylesford SA2 from *Ballarat* to *Bendigo* (3,050 projected electors).
- Move most of Bendigo Region – North SA2 (Raywood, Elmore and Goornong) from *Bendigo* to *Nicholls* (2,186 projected electors).
- Move the balance of Kilmore – Broadford SA2, except for SA1 #2105601 (High Camp), from *Nicholls* to *McEwen* (3,432 projected electors).

None of those changes, in my view, would create major problems; Trentham fits with Kyneton and Woodend at least as well as with Ballan and Daylesford, while Elmore belongs with Rochester and Broadford with Kilmore. *Bendigo* and *Nicholls* would both assume a more compact shape. There is admittedly less correspondence with municipal boundaries than under the Committee's proposal, but I submit that this is a price worth paying.

D. JAGAJAGA

Jagajaga's proposed eastern boundary cuts into Eltham for no good reason. It looks nice and straight on a map, but Ryans Road south of Progress Road is not a major thoroughfare; it would be much better to follow the municipal boundary, putting the whole of Eltham into *Menzies*. *Menzies* can easily absorb the extra 1,597 projected electors; in fact, the addition would take it closer to projected average enrolment than under the proposed boundaries.

Jagajaga, however, which has been set at 97.9% of projected average enrolment, would then be below the permitted tolerance. Fortunately, it is easy for it to gain territory in its west, with at least arguably an improvement in community of interest. The Darebin/Banyule municipal boundary, although an existing boundary, is not very satisfactory; it slices through the suburbs of Bundoora and Macleod along a series of small roads and reserves. Moving it westward to Plenty Road would transfer 2,848 projected electors from *Batman*, bringing *Jagajaga* to a comfortable 109,341.

The loss of electors from *Batman* would make it possible (although not necessary) to

reverse the Committee's proposed transfer of a small area of Clifton Hill, with 1,211 projected electors, from *Batman* to *Melbourne*. Ideally the boundary should run along Merri Creek, putting the whole of Clifton Hill in *Melbourne*, but since this does not seem to be practicable then it would be better to maintain the existing boundary and avoid splitting the suburb. This would leave both *Batman* and *Melbourne* closer to projected average enrolment than was proposed.

E. LA TROBE / MONASH

The proposed new boundary between *La Trobe* and *Monash* runs down the Princes Freeway, splitting off the towns of Tynong, Garfield and Bunyip (which remain in *Monash*) from their hinterland north of the freeway (transferred to *La Trobe*). I can see no good reason for this; I suggest keeping the whole of Garfield – Bunyip SA2 in *Monash*, a difference of 2,599 projected electors.

Both divisions would then still be within the tolerance, although *La Trobe* would be quite low; this would be partly remedied by my suggestion in point B above relating to its boundary with *Casey*. But if this is not adopted and the 2,599 proposed electors are too many, the boundary should at least keep Tynong North, Garfield North, Tonimbuk and Bunyip North in *Monash*, running the boundary just east of Maryknoll. This would represent a difference of just 784 projected electors from the proposed boundaries, which is easily accommodated on both sides.

F. BRUCE / HOTHAM

In shifting the division of *Bruce* to the south and east, the proposal swaps most of its Springvale territory with *Hotham*: the northern part of the SA2, previously in *Bruce*, moves to *Hotham*, while the portion of the southern part east of Springvale Road, previously in *Hotham*, moves to *Bruce*. But there is an anomaly in the swap; instead of using the old boundary, the Dandenong railway, to divide north from south, the Committee has constructed a new boundary along Virginia Street.

The effect is that a small area, bounded by Virginia Street, Racecourse Drive, the railway and Springvale Road, with 629 projected electors, remains in *Bruce*, while the neighboring territory north of the railway moves to *Hotham*. I see no reason for this anomaly. (Sandown Racecourse and Springvale Cemetery also remain in *Bruce*; I would move them to *Hotham* as well, but since they contain no electors the question is largely academic.) Virginia Street is a small suburban street, residential on both sides, while the railway is an obvious dividing line, already used as a boundary.

The number of electors involved is so small as to not be much of a consideration, but if it was desired to keep more electors in *Bruce*, I suggest the boundary could be moved north to Mile Creek, which clearly separates two residential areas much more than does Victoria Street.

G. CASEY / MENZIES

There is a small residential district at the southern end of Wonga Park that is split by the municipal boundary along Brushy Park Road, also used as the boundary between *Casey* and *Menzies*. It would make more sense for it to be united in one division or the other – the numbers are too small to make much difference either way. I suggest following the SA2 boundary, effectively along Brushy Creek, thus transferring SA1 #2126220 with its 252 projected electors from *Casey* to *Menzies*.

H. ASTON / BRUCE

The Committee's proposals have truncated a salient at the south-western end of *Aston* by following the Police Road alignment instead of the municipal boundary, thereby transferring Tirhatuan Lakes Golf Course and Rowville Recreation Reserve to *Bruce*. This produces a nice straight line but otherwise makes no sense: Dandenong Creek is the natural boundary, and the area belongs with the rest of Rowville.

No electors are involved, but I would reverse the change and return the area to *Aston*.

NAMES

I claim no particular expertise when it comes to division names, but I confess to some scepticism about the renaming project that the Committee has embarked upon. There is much to be said in the abstract for naming federal divisions exclusively after people, leaving geographic names to state districts. But there are so many geographic names, most of them of long standing, that making the move is highly disruptive. The Committee has made a start, but it is only a start; by my count, there are ten geographic names remaining among the 38 divisions (a couple of cases are debatable).

I suggest that before going any further in this project – and perhaps even before going this far (and there seems little sense in going this far unless it is intended to complete the job at some point) – the Commission should conduct a broad consultation process to ascertain the views of its various stakeholders about how divisions should be named.

In any reform, a priority should be the cases where federal names duplicate state ones, since this is fertile ground for confusion. Victoria has two such cases, *Flinders* and *Melbourne*, although the state namesake of the former is in South Australia. I suggest that there be some federal-state dialogue to resolve these questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Richardson
4 May 2018