



THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
QUEENSLAND

Comment on objection number 3

Bob Richardson

16 pages

Bob Richardson



Phone



Monday, 23rd October, 2017

The Secretary
Electoral Commissioner
Australian Electoral Commission
7th Floor
488 Queen Street
BRISBANE 4000

Dear Secretary

Opening:-

Thank you for the opportunity to make 'Comments' on the 'objections' received to the proposed Federal Electoral boundaries in Queensland.

I have confined my specific 'comments' to the proposed 'country Divisions' i.e. from Leichhardt to Wide Bay, Maranoa and Groom.

I note:-

- The ALP, the Greens, and the Pirate Party, who all made contributions earlier in this Redistribution process have not lodged any 'objections'.

It is conjecture as to whether they are totally satisfied with the proposed boundaries or are 'tied up' with the State Election and did not get a chance to lodge any 'objections'.

- The residents of Moore Park who submitted a number of 'suggestions' wanting to be transferred from the existing Division of Flynn to the proposed Division of Hinkler did not lodge a single 'objection' even though the proposed boundaries leave them in Flynn.

Objection No.1 Michael Hedger

Mr Hedger 'objected' to the name 'Wide Bay'.

Like Capricornia, Wide Bay is a geographical name, but it is also one of the original Divisions of the Commonwealth of Australia and I believe every effort should be made to keep the original names of Divisions that still exist 117 years later.

For this reason I do not see a reason to change the name 'Wide Bay' as most of the proposed Division is still situated in the region known as 'Wide Bay' i.e. Bundaberg to Gympie.

Objection No. 5:- Jeff Waddell

Naming of contributors from outside Queensland:-

I do not believe that the Redistribution Committee's Report in naming those who made suggestions from outside Queensland in any way reflects adversely on their contributions.

This is the first Federal Redistribution in Queensland where the addresses of contributors have been 'blacked out'.

I believe this has been done for privacy reasons.

In the past the full address and contact details have been included for 'all to see'.

As I believe it is not a requirement under the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 to include these details the Australian Electoral Commission has decided to blank them out.

I believe the reason the Redistribution Committee ‘singled out’ the four (4) contributors from interstate was to show how ‘far and wide’ the interest in this redistribution extends.

I suggest that in future redistributions the AEC blank out the street address, box number, and contact details (phone number etc) and leave the town/suburb/city, and the State of the contributors so the interested persons can see the locality of the contributors, without giving enough details that could ‘fall into the wrong hands’.

I also suggest that the full details could be made available to other contributors on application to the AEC if they state a satisfactory reason (in the AEC’s view) for wanting such information, e.g. to discuss a specific proposal.

Number of Divisions in Queensland

I refer to Mr. Waddell’s statement 1st paragraph on pg 4; I guess we’ll have to wait for the next Redistribution (potentially triggered by a reduction to 29 in the number of Divisions to which Queensland is entitled to) before we propose a change of this magnitude again.

The number of Divisions each State is entitled to be determined twelve months after the return of the writs from the previous Federal Election, based on population.

If the current trend continued over a long period of time a reduction in the number of divisions in Queensland is possible, but on the AEC’s reckoning (by having a mid point of 3.5 years) it is not likely to occur during this seven (7) redistribution cycle.

Even if Queensland lost a division they have gained six (6) divisions since the Parliament was increased from ten (10) Senators in each State to twelve (12) in 1984 with a corresponding increase in the House of Representatives, while Victoria has had a net loss, so please don't 'gloat' about taking a Division from South Australia in the current entitlements.

Bias

Mr Waddell states on Page 4, 4th paragraph, second sentence; *Significant numbers of unchanged boundaries and Divisional boundaries drawn to provide an advantage to one side of politics over the other.*

Then on Page 11 he states;

Existing boundaries first' maintains the political imbalance

Another aspect in my original submission is that the existing boundaries marginally favour the ALP in the event of a 50-50 2PP State-wide vote. In such a situation, the ALP could expect to win not less than 16 of the 30 seats in Queensland at the next Federal election

By choosing to predominantly maintain the existing boundaries, the Redistribution Committee for Queensland is effectively supporting the continuation of this electoral imbalance.

The LNP on page 1, under *Comments* of its submission says; *it is the Party's view that the proposed electoral divisions are largely fair and balanced in the context of community dislocations kept to a minimum where possible.*

They would have not used the words 'fair and balanced' if they believed there was a 'bias' towards the ALP.

It would be nearly impossible to draw divisions as Mr Waddell suggests if there was such a requirement was in the electoral act.

Currently no such requirement exists in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

It is a 'fact of life' that in close elections the party forming government (with the most seats in the House of Representatives) may receive fewer votes than the opposition (in two party preferred terms).

If my memory serves me well it has happened twice with the Federal Government in the last thirty years, however it is no where as bad as in the United States of America where one candidate received three million votes more than her opponent and yet did not receive enough electoral college votes to become President.

Analysis of Divisions in Alpha sequence

While it may be easier for those contributors not familiar with Queensland Divisions to have the analysis of the Divisions north south or in reverse, I had no problem working out how they 'fitted in'.

The 'north/south' line would be easy along the Queensland coast, but become complicated in the Brisbane with an 'east/west' spread as well as a 'north/south'.

Submissions from Individuals/Political Parties

I do not believe that individuals have less input into the redistribution process than political parties.

I have been a contributor in Federal Redistributions since 1984 doing the 'leg work' for my friend Mr John Gayler when he was the Member for Leichhardt (1983 1993) and more recently as a private citizen.

I have always found the Electoral Commission, their staff, Redistribution Committees, and Augmented Commissions to be very helpful fair, and 'straight down the line' with regard to the Australian Electoral Act, 1918.

During the 2009 Redistribution the LNP submitted two (2) submissions, one for the public and one private for the Redistribution Committee.

After with discussions with the Secretary of the Redistribution Committee, I convinced the AEC they had to release the private submission in accordance with the Act.

At the same redistribution I objected to the locality of Kuranda being taken out of the Division of Leichhardt and being placed in the Division of Kennedy.

I also objected to the long established boundary (the Mitchell River) between Leichhardt/Kennedy being shifted north to the Mareeba/Cook Shire boundary.

The Augmented Commission came to Cairns and heard my arguments together a lady from Kuranda.

They accepted our submissions and returned Kuranda to Leichhardt.

The Augmented Commission not only kept the Mitchell River as the boundary, 'strengthened it' by using a tributary, the McLeod River, from its mouth upstream to the eastern boundary of the Mareeba Shire.

The Member for Kennedy, Mr. Bob Katter, M.P. also gave evidence, but as the transcripts in the full report will show, his was of a general nature and not confined to the matters I objected to.

For you Victorians, the Division of Leichhardt is nearly the size of the State of Victoria, and the Division of Kennedy is over double, so to include both their rural areas in one Division it would create a Division of approximately three (3) times the size of the State of Victoria.

Not only that, the means of travel from Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait Islands is predominately by air through the Cairns Airport.

If they had to travel outside Cairns (to Innisfail or Mareeba) to visit the office of their local member it would be an expensive 'nightmare' as there is very little public transport between Cairns and those towns.

Living in Gordonvale practically all my life (born there) I was in the Division of Leichhardt to the 1998 Federal Redistribution when I was transferred to the Division of Kennedy.

While I still have an interest in what happens in the Division of Leichhardt, I receive good service from my local Member, Mr Bob Katter, and would never want to be transferred back into Leichhardt, if it meant denying the residents of Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands access to their local Member in Cairns when required to visit Cairns, for example medical treatment.

Augmented Electoral Commission

I object to Mr. Waddell's comments, last paragraph Page 12;
But when two-thirds of the membership of the Augmented Electoral Commission comprised the Redistribution Committee for Queensland which proposed these boundaries in the first place – I have no faith whatsoever that my objection is going to be given any credence.

The way this system of Federal Redistributions was setup in the in 1983 by the 'Klugman Report' (Dr. Dick Klugman MHR Member for Prospect, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral matters) was to give continuity to the Electoral Redistribution process by the Chair person of Commission of sit on all Augmented Commissions during his/her term of office, as well, the Australian Electoral Commissioner, chair all the Redistribution Committees and be a member of the Augmented Commission to give continuity to all redistributions.

If you had a complete new membership of the Augmented Commission there would be no continuity and you could end up with a complete different sent of boundaries, with no 'objection' period or a continuous 'objection' period you would 'get nowhere'.

I would sooner the current 'set up' than the alternatives:-

- The Redistribution Committee as in Queensland where the same three (3) persons consider the 'objections' i.e. no outside membership from those who made the original proposals.
- Hand back the power to the Federal Parliament to reject a proposed redistribution as they had and did prior to changes to the Australian Electoral Act, 1918, in 1983/84.

Objection No. 6 Darren McSweeney:-

His views 'echo' Mr. Waddell's so there is no point going over them again.

Objection No. 8 Dr Mark Mulcair:-

His general position is the same as Mr. Waddell, and Mr. McSweeney's, however he did make some specific objections in the Divisions I have confined my 'comments' to:-

- *Kennedy/Dawson/Herbert*

I still think it is sensible to re-unite Burdekin Shire in Dawson, since only around 130 electors are involved.

I will discuss the Burdekin Shire when commenting on the LNP 'objection'.

In keeping with my original suggestion, the handful of electors in the Gumlow and Pinnacles areas seem to be completely cut off from the rest of Kennedy, and would fit better in the Division of Herbert.

I am unsure which areas Dr. Mulcair is referring to, however I suggest the Augmented Commission have a 'look at it' and if it would 'fit' better in the Division of Herbert, transfer it.

The same applies to the one (1) elector in SA2 Douglas.

Objection No. 9 Liberal National Party:-

I note:- The Party, in consultation with its sitting Members of Parliament and the membership, has examined thoroughly the report's contents for the purpose of participating in this phase of the redistribution process.

It is the Party's view that the proposed electoral divisions are largely fair and balanced in the context of community dislocations kept to a minimum where possible.

Specific Objections:-**Groom-Maranoa:-**

The LNP states: - *Recommended the AEC transfer the electors of Crows Nest and its vicinity from proposed Maranoa to Groom.*

Crows Nest is located only 43kms from the Toowoomba General Post Office (GPO).

I do not understand the reasoning for this 'objection'.

While Crows Nest is 43kms away from the Toowoomba GPO, Annandale is closer to the Townsville GPO and Paget is closer to the Mackay GPO, yet the LNP has not lodged 'objections' for these communities.

Maranoa and Groom are both safe LNP Divisions and I cannot see why they want the change.

Maranoa-Kennedy:-

The LNP states:- Representations have been received from the Boulia Shire Council seeking the transfer of this Local Government area from proposed Kennedy to proposed Maranoa to align with its Central Western shire neighbours as a member of the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD Group).

I expected a 'suggestion', a 'comment on suggestions', or an 'objection' from the Boulia Shire Council seeking a transfer to the Division of Maranoa as they did in the recent state Redistribution, Mount Isa (Traeger) to Gregory, however it appears they made their representation through the LNP which I consider is totally inappropriate for a Local Authority to do.

The Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who would be on a considerable salary, is there to guide councillors of the correct protocol, that is to make a submission to the Redistribution Committee/Augmented Commission, but no, they went through a political party.

I can see their reasoning for such a change and the numbers are insignificant, however unless the Council contacts the AEC through this final process in the redistribution cycle I suggest the boundary be left as is.

Dawson-Kennedy:-

The LNP states: - *Representations have been received raising the split community of interest that results with the Burdekin Shire Council being split between proposed Dawson and proposed Kennedy.*

It is recommended that the entirety of the Burdekin Shire Council area be included in the proposed Dawson. This would allow more effective representation for electors in the area of Dalberg and its surrounds

Again who made the representations to the LNP, individuals or the Shire Council?

This area was transferred to the Division of Kennedy in two (2) segments during the 2009 Redistribution.

The first part was included in the 'proposed boundaries' with a desire to include more but the numbers in the proposed Kennedy would not allow.

When the Augmented Commission left the town of Kuranda in the Division of Leichhardt they 'had room' to add more of the Burdekin Shire into the proposed Division of Kennedy, which they did.

The reason for the original transfer was to bring the proposed Division of Dawson within quota as it had gained the locality of Annandale from the proposed Division of Herbert.

The reason for the second change was to make a clear boundary, the Burdekin River.

The Member for Kennedy, Mr. Bob Katter, MHR, in his 'suggestion', suggested that this area be returned to the proposed Division of Dawson.

As the numbers are small the transfer would have very little impact of the quota requirements of either proposed Division.

Objection No. 12 Anthony Rossiter:-

Mr Rossiter on Page 3 'objected' to the Dawson/Kennedy boundary in the Burdekin Shire.

I have discussed that issue in my 'Comments' on the LNP 'objection'.

On Page 4 he 'objects' to the Dawson/Maranoa boundary in the Boulia Shire. This should have been the Kennedy/Maranoa boundary.

I have again discussed that in my 'comments' on the LNP 'objection'.

Objection 21 Mark Yore:-

I do not know where Mr Yore comes from (his address was blanked out) however he appears to have very little grasp on the geography of Queensland.

He states on Page 4: Leichhardt/Kennedy

The principal issue with boundaries of Leichhardt is that it is only electorate to share a common border with just one other electorate-Kennedy. This creates problems with boundary adjustment as an electorate change in Leichhardt can only be offset with Kennedy. To maintain flexibility every electorate should share a boarder with at least two other electorates.

With the shape of Queensland, in particular Cape York Peninsula, and the present numbers in the House of Representatives it would be virtually impossible to have more than one Division having a common boundary with the Division of Leichhardt.

Also on Page 4, Capricornia/Dawson

He states: - I believe that the area of Collinsville in Whitsunday Regional Council has a much deeper community of interest with the Mackay based Dawson than the Rockhampton based Capricornia. The decision by the Committee to maintain this area within Capricornia completely ignores local community of interest guidelines.

While Collinsville is part of the Whitsunday Regional Council, its significance has been reduced from being the second biggest town (with Merinda) in the old Bowen Shire Council to a small town 'out west' in the larger Whitsunday Regional Council.

Its economy is based on grazing, and mining, while the on coast sugar, small crops, and tourism are the main industries.

It now has a rail connection to the other mining towns in the Bowen basin.

It has road connections to those towns and I believe it 'fits in' with the other rural communities in the existing and proposed Division of Capricornia.

The transfer of Collinsville to the proposed Division of Dawson would leave the proposed Division of Capricornia approximately 1,000 electors below the permissible minimum on projected enrolments as at 27/9/2021, so adjustments would have to be made elsewhere to bring the proposed Division of Capricornia back to the permissible projected enrolment at that date.

Collinsville has been in the Division of Capricornia for many years (at least two redistributions) and to my knowledge no 'objections' have been received from the local community wanting to be transferred back to the Division of Dawson.

I believe it should be left where it is, i.e. in the proposed Division of Capricornia.

The remainder of Mr. Yore 'objection' is a 'mirror' of Mr Waddell, Dr Mulcair, and Mr. McSweeney, 'objection' which I have already discussed earlier in this submission.

Conclusion:-

In a redistribution process you never receive all what you have suggested.

There are too many differing views and the Redistribution Committee/Augmented Commission has to try to accommodate these as well as conforming to the Australian Electoral Act, 1918.

My major concern was the proposals by the LNP and others to shift Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait Islands out of the Division of Leichhardt, for which I thank the Redistribution Committee for their proposal to leave that area in the Division of Leichhardt

As there has been no formal 'objections' to their proposal these areas appear 'safe' within the Division of Leichhardt until the next redistribution.

My major disappointment was the response (or lack of) by the residents of Moore Park by the Redistribution Committee's proposal not to be transferring them to the Division of Hinkler as they vocally requested in the 'suggestion' stage of this redistribution process.

I believe they had 'a case' and that was the reason I 'did the numbers' as outlined in my 'objection', however you can 'only lead a horse to water, you can't make it drink it'.

Finally, as this will probably be my last communication in this redistribution cycle I would like to thank the Commission staff for their assistance during the process, especially David Alanson and Sally Harris.

Yours faithfully



R.J. Richardson