



THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
QUEENSLAND

Objection Number 6

Darren McSweeney

5 pages

Objection to the proposed redistribution of Queensland

Initial reaction

I have to say that I am bitterly disappointed, although not at all surprised, that that the Committee's proposed redistribution is merely tinkering to "make the numbers work". In my comments on suggestions, I concluded with the following paragraph:

I sincerely [hope] that the Redistribution Committee has the confidence to make real and necessary improvements to the existing divisions, rather than tweaking the edges.

Unfortunately, tweaking the edges is what we have got. Clearly the Committee have taken a softly, softly approach; only daring to make change where absolutely necessary. And then the Committee champions that lack of change as if it is something to be proud of, boldly declaring:

Overall, 33,604 electors enrolled in Queensland (or 1.09 per cent ...) will change their federal electoral division...

The Committee has clearly demonstrated that they value minimal change over genuinely striving to improve communities of interest for Queenslanders. However, when the existing divisions are deficient in representing the genuine communities of Queensland – and they most certainly are – this boasting is little to be proud of.

It is interesting to note that the Committee at least feigned an interest in the idea of improving rural communities of interest, however it is obvious that with the following statements:

The Redistribution Committee acknowledged and tested the [idea]... to unify regional cities... [D]ifferences in elector density across the state prevent this approach from being implemented.

Attempts to centre electoral divisions on regional cities could be achieved ... however ... adverse impacts occurred with other electoral divisions in a way that could not adequately satisfy ... the Electoral Act...

... As such, the Redistribution Committee has adopted an approach by which minimal alterations to electoral division boundaries are proposed.

that the Committee either avoided making significant changes to appease a small but vocal chorus that resists changes for whatever reasons; or that they genuinely believe that the existing divisions best represent the communities of interest for rural Queenslanders. I cannot fathom that the Committee is of the genuine belief that the Divisions of Leichhardt, Kennedy, Herbert, Dawson, Capricornia, Flynn, Hinkler and Wright are comprised of exactly the right areas and accurately reflect the distinct and varied communities of these area larger than some other states in Australia.

While the Committee determined that centring divisions on the regional centres led to

“...adverse impacts ... with other electoral divisions in a way that could not adequately satisfy ... the Electoral Act...”,

this is clearly not true, as my own submission, and that of several others, complied entirely with the requirements of the Electoral Act. Every division in my submission was within the numeric restraints – and – every division adhered to the community of interest criteria, while also recognising the existing divisions. While I acknowledge that all divisions cannot accommodate separate communities of interest and decisions need to be made where to draw any particular boundary, none of the suggestions that advocated wholesale change are surely any **worse** than the current alignment, in that they could be regarded to not satisfy the Electoral Act.

The arguments presented surrounding population densities and geographic spaces are fallacious at best if not outright fiction. It seems that the Committee noted the number of suggestions advocating significant changes, but in a desire for a pre-determined minimal approach, decided to pay lip service to these suggestions by immediately ruling them out and

“...adopted an approach by which minimal alterations to electoral division boundaries are proposed.”

This quote reveals the true intentions of the Committee, and demonstrates that absolutely no regard was given to making real changes. The Committee, armed with their pre-determined minimalist approach, decided that genuine representation for Queenslanders was not worth the effort.

I am sure that Mr Waddell will provide a comprehensive argument regarding the use of existing division boundaries as subordinate to the communities of interest criteria and while I will not repeat his arguments, I express here that I support and echo the sentiments he has previously and no doubt will outline.

Communities of interest should never suffer as a result of an existing boundary.

Outcasts?

Moreover, I felt the special recognition afforded those suggestions provided by individuals residing outside of Queensland, mine included, to be a rather curious oddity that I cannot understand.

I cannot help but infer from this special treatment, that the Committee has deemed the suggestion provided by me, and those provided by my counterparts, are less important as those submitted by Queenslanders; to be disregarded as outsiders who just cannot comprehend the unique Queensland psyche. At no redistribution in the past eighteen years has this special categorisation been specified and no justification or reasoning was provided by the Committee for singling us out.

As the Committee should well be aware, I along with Mr Gordon, Dr Mulcair and Mr Waddell have contributed to every federal redistribution since 2014, with Mr Gordon and Dr Mulcair providing suggestions for far longer. Including participation in various state and territory redistributions, I believe that all four of us have garnered a unique insight to the redistribution process, providing valuable and impartial input to this important process that single-issue submissions and partisan political submissions both overlook. It just seems so unnecessary to make this distinction without providing any explanation behind it.

Objection to specific boundaries

Coming now to the specific proposal by the Committee, and given that an extensive state-wide reassessment is merely a pipe dream, I have only a few specific minor adjustments to suggest.

I would like to suggest that the boundary between Blair and Ryan be altered slightly. As the Committee already sees fit for Blair to cross both the Brisbane River and into the Brisbane City LGA north of the River, it makes little sense to retain the sanctity of the LGA boundary through the panhandle between Lake Manchester and England Creek. Therefore, I propose that:

- *Total of 3 electors (and 3 proposed electors) in the SA1 of 127901 (Lake Manchester – England Creek SA2) be transferred from Ryan to Blair.*

Given that only 3 electors are involved, this should be able to be accommodated easily enough, and will unite England Creek and Banks Creek suburbs in Blair. It also provides a straighter boundary, and should the Brisbane City LGA not need to be respected further south, I see no reason to adhere to the arbitrary lines comprising the LGA boundary through this area.

Also within Ryan, but this time with the boundary in Brisbane, I suggest a minor adjustment to align the boundary along Enoggera Creek instead of along minor side streets. I propose that:

- *Total of up to 85 electors (and up to 87 proposed electors) in the SA1 of 113214D (SA2 of Ashgrove) be transferred from Ryan to Brisbane.*

This transfer splits the SA1 113214, however, as the SA1 is already split, it should not cause an issue. As such, I cannot determine the exact number of electors that would be transferred. Enoggera Creek is a clear boundary in this area and will ensure that all the residents of Yoku Rd and Otonga Rd are united within the one Division. I do recall seeing this transfer proposed in the suggestions, but I have not been able to confirm in which suggestion this was originally proposed.

A minor adjustment should also be made within the Gold Coast, which I proposed in my suggestion. This involves the transfer of a small number of electors in Oxenford to align the boundary along Saltwater creek. I propose that:

- *Total of 530 electors (and 569 proposed electors) in the SAI of 125604 and the SAI of 125610 (Oxenford – Maudsland SA2) be transferred from Wright to Fadden.*

This is by far the least that should be changed within the existing Division of Wright, but I know that there is no point suggesting more extensive changes at this point in the process.

Summary

Again, I am disappointed but hardly surprised that the Committee saw to only make very minor changes when so many divisions within the state are lacking cohesion.

I strongly believe that changes are still needed to the rural divisions, and that the major regional towns and cities of Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg deserve sufficient representation, with a division focussed on their unique and specific needs. I am dismayed that the Committee decided that providing truly representative divisions was either too hard, or would cause too many complaints to be bothered making a genuine assessment of the division within Queensland.

I am confounded as to why I, along with three others were singled out as “outsiders” where there is no precedent to apply this distinction, nor justification as to why this is distinction is relevant to the redistribution process.

I believe that submissions from the general public, and especially those with a keen interest in psephology, and a thorough understanding of the redistribution process is paramount to ensuring that reasonable divisions are created that genuinely represent the needs of those members of the community.

I look forward to continuing to participate in the redistribution process into the future and look forward to reading the objections of other parties.

Disclaimer: This objection is lodged by Darren McSweeney.

I provide this Objection to the proposed Redistribution of Queensland electoral divisions in a personal capacity as an Australian Citizen in order to assist the Redistribution Committee for Queensland to make an informed and well-reasoned decision in the redistribution process. No political partiality is implied within this submission and none should be inferred. My legal right to hold and express views as an Australian Citizen with an interest in psephology and in particular in the redistribution process, has no detriment to my abilities to carry out my duties as a professional and impartial member of the Australian Public Service (APS) in accordance with the APS Code of Conduct and this objection complies with the APS Code of Conduct and APS Commission's and my department's social media policies. Criticism contained within is solely directed to the decisions made in regard to this particular redistribution, and not a reflection upon the abilities or character of any member of an Australian Redistribution Committee, any member of the APS, any Australian Government agency or department, nor any member of Parliament.