Objection Number 21

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4 pages

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Queensland Federal Redistribution 2017

Comments on Draft Redistribution

Prepared by Mark Yore

[redacted]

Introduction

This redistribution has been an interesting process. On the positive side the committee has attempted to answer the majority of individual submission element by theme, a welcome development contained in Appendix F. On the negative side this has been an extraordinarily timid redistribution which has mostly patched over major problems to take it to the next redistribution but has not addressed many systemic issues with current electorate boundaries.

Submissions

The Committee felt the need to twice comment on particular contributors, noting *"The following suggestions were submitted by individuals who were not residents of Queensland at the time of lodgement"*. As the Act doesn't specify a residence requirement for submissions, and as there is no benefit or detriment afforded to submissions lodged outside of the subject State, I am unsure of the purpose of this gratuitous need to group particular submissions. I note that submissions are not grouped by gender, occupation, ethnicity or other criteria.

Naming

I commend the Redistribution Committee for their decision to maintain existing electorate names. For future seats or name changes I suggest that the AEC be transparent and provide proposed names and commentary on an ongoing basis. This would allow the general public to have a much wider discussion about appropriate names instead of the opportunity to respond only after the Draft Redistribution is presented.

Compliance with the Act

The Redistribution Committee is also required by the Electoral Act to give due consideration to:

i. community of interests within the proposed electoral division, including economic, social and regional interests,

ii. means of communication and travel within the proposed electoral division,

iv. the physical features and area of the proposed electoral division, and

v. the boundaries of existing electoral divisions in Queensland, with this factor being ***subordinate*** *to the consideration of i, ii and iv.*

I do not believe the Redistribution Committee gave due consideration to the requirements of paragraph 66(3)(b) of the Electoral Act.

The Committee seems to be under the mistaken impression that the existing electoral boundaries are a community of interest. This becomes a circular argument when the argument is that existing boundaries shouldn't be changed because the existing boundaries are a community of interest … which shouldn't be changed.

In many cases the Committee has chosen to minimise changes by keeping the boundaries close to existing boundaries, even when that exacerbates communities of interest issues. The continued

accretion of the southern suburbs of Cairns into Kennedy is an example of sacrificing community of interest requirements for a quick fix.

Boundaries

The Draft Redistribution stated:

> *89. Following the modelling and analysis of submissions, the Redistribution Committee formed the opinion that attempts to unify regional cities in a single electoral division could not be achieved at this time. A combination of factors such as the variances in elector density, growth rates, and distribution of electors throughout Queensland results in significant electoral division boundary changes which would cause disruption to established communities of interest across most of regional and rural Queensland if this approach were adopted. For these reasons the Redistribution Committee has proposed boundary alterations that maintain the established communities of interest as reflected by the current electoral division boundaries.*

In essence the argument was that it was better to keep doing bad things because people were used to it than to try and fix it.

Electoral enrolment at the time of the 2016 Local Government elections was:

- Cairns Regional Council 99,479
- Townsville City Council 125,147
- Mackay Regional Council 76,756
- Rockhampton Regional Council 54,340
- Gladstone Regional Council 40,522
- Fraser Coast Regional Council (Maryborough and Hervey Bay) 73,185

For reference the population of similar South-East Queensland regional cities are:

- Ipswich City Council 116,169
- Toowoomba City Council 110,214
- Redland City Council 103,783

Ipswich City Council is split between the electorates of Wright, Blair and Oxley; Redland City Council is wholly within Bowman; while Toowoomba City Council is almost completely contained with the electorate of Groom.

In the majority of these cases a natural electorate based on the major population area within single or multiple Local Government areas could be easily drawn. This would also mean that seats such as Kennedy and Maranoa would pick up the lightly inhabited western regions in much the same way as other mainland states.

I note that the AEC maintains that it can't be "achieved at this time". I believe that it is important for the AEC to establish their position on when it can be done, and if building electorates in Queensland based of regional communities of interest is a priority under the Act.

Comment On Future Redistributions and Process

One issue with all redistributions lies with the inability to read the likely direction the Redistribution Committee will take towards submissions. This can potentially create disconnects when the Draft Redistribution is presented as a fait-accompli with very little room to argue for changes. This was

especially evident in the Queensland State redistribution, when major changes (including seat names) were created out of whole cloth by the QRC.

I suggest that the AEC should treat redistributions on an ongoing basis, calling for public comment as circumstances change. This would include ongoing suggestions for electorate names, large development applications, increasing state populations and other factors that may influence redistributions down the track.

Comments On Individual Changes

Ryan/Brisbane

I appreciate the "tidying up" along the common border and look forward to future efforts in this area. I urge the AEC to attempt to realign borders along SA2 boundaries and not just SA1.

Petrie/Bonner

I note that suggestions to include Moreton Island in Petrie weren't specifically addressed by the committee. At the moment this small community lies in three distinct and non-contiguous areas at a Federal, State and Local Government area. While it won't fix the council issue, aligning it in the same Federal area as the State seat of Redcliffe would be a start. With flights to Moreton Island from Redcliffe and the restart of ferry transport, Moreton Island is more closely linked to Petrie than any other electorate. http://www.couriermail.com.au/questnews/moreton/ferry-between-redcliffe-jetty-and-bulwer-on-moreton-island-will-be-trialled/news-story/081c71a37b84c323c3c17ec64d4464ff

Capricornia/Dawson

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.

Kennedy/Leichardt

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

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Kind regards,

Mark Yore