



Comment on objections 38

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COMMENTS ON OBJECTIONS TO THE VICTORIAN REDISTRIBUTION 2017-18

(DR MARK MULCAIR)

There are a large number of Objections to this redistribution, however most of them can be broken down into a small number of groups:

- Objections to the boundaries of Corio, Corangamite/Cox, and Wannon.
- Objections to the boundaries in south-eastern Melbourne, especially around Dandenong and Westernport.
- Objections to placing Flemington and/or Travancore within Maribyrnong, and to some of the other boundaries of Melbourne, Batman, and Wills.
- Objections to the splitting of Point Cook between Gellibrand and Lalor.
- Objections to the placement of Maryborough in the Division of Mallee.
- Smaller Objections involving minor tidy-ups or correcting apparent errors.

I will deal with each of these groups of Objections, as well as with the ‘whole-state’ Objections of the major parties and individuals separately.

OBJECTIONS TO THE BOUNDARIES OF CORANGAMITE/COX

There are a wide range of different Objections for the Division currently known as Corangamite. These Objections raise a number of competing and contradictory issues involving the boundaries of this seat:

- Whether Colac should remain here or move to Wannon.
- If a split of Colac-Otway is necessary, where this split should be made.
- Whether the southern suburbs of Geelong should be returned to this Division.
- Which Division Leopold should be in.
- Whether the Bellarine Peninsula should be united in a single seat.
- Whether Golden Plains Shire should be united, or split, and in which seat(s).

By their very nature, not all of these competing proposals can be adopted. Corangamite/Cox is currently over quota, and it cannot make any gains without compensating losses elsewhere. For example, it is virtually impossible to include all of the Peninsula, southern Geelong suburbs, and Colac in the same seat.

What sort of seat is Corangamite/Cox?

I think the main issue to be determined is what sort of Division Corangamite/Cox is going to be. There is no point making extensive changes to this seat if they are simply going to be reversed in the very near future.

In my opinion, it seems inevitable that Corangamite/Cox will become a predominantly urban South Geelong and Surf Coast seat, with perhaps a small rural area to make up the numbers. The stagnant population in rural Victoria combined with the strong growth around Geelong means that Corangamite/Cox will continue to be pulled eastwards and gradually lose its rural territory.

Colac

For this reason, and despite the Objections of locals, I support the removal of Colac from this seat. Colac is a rural Western Districts town that has good links westwards towards Camperdown and Warrnambool that are currently in Wannon. While the split of Colac-Otway shire is not ideal, it seems likely that the remaining Otway area could be united in Wannon in the next redistribution.

Highton and Belmont areas

Similarly, I think that at least part of the southern suburbs of Geelong should be returned to Corangamite/Cox. If we assume that this seat will continue to drift towards Geelong and become more urban, then the Highton/Belmont area will likely just have to be removed from

Corio again at a future redistribution. So it seems sensible to leave as much of this area as possible in Corangamite, and have Corio make up any deficit elsewhere.

Golden Plains

Golden Plains by its very nature lends itself to being split between Divisions. It encroaches on the outer parts of both Ballarat and Geelong, while taking in a wide swathe of rural territory in between. Uniting all of this shire in a single seat is difficult, since it would require a seat to straddle both Greater Geelong and Ballarat. In particular, I would not support placing the southern parts of Golden Plains in Wannon, as this would create a Division stretching from outer Geelong to the South Australian border. The proposed split between ‘North’ and ‘South’ seems reasonable to me, so the only question is which seat these areas should go.

Bellarine Peninsula and Leopold

I support the decision to unite the Bellarine Peninsula in a single seat. There may be some differences between the bayside communities of Drysdale and Portarlington, and the Surf Coast towns such as Ocean Grove, but I don’t think this outweighs the benefit of uniting this area. Leopold occupies something of a transitional area between Geelong and the Peninsula, and in my mind would fit equally well in either Corio or Corangamite/Cox.

‘COMPROMISE’ PROPOSAL

In order to deal with most of these, I have come up with what is essentially a compromise proposal. This is not a perfect arrangement, and cannot satisfy all of the different Objections, but I think it would provide fairly clear boundaries now, and also set up a sensible arrangement for the future.

These changes are based on the Committee’s original proposals, so assuming that Colac and surrounds are removed from Corangamite/Cox and placed into Wannon.

1) Adopt Belle Vue Avenue, Fryers Road, Reynolds Road, High Street, Settlement Road and Breakwater Road as the new boundary through southern Geelong

This returns all of Highton plus a part of Belmont to the Division of Cox. While not as strong as a complete return to the Barwon River, I submit that this is still a fairly clear boundary. Breakwater Road and the High Street/Settlement Road corridor are major roads, and Belle Vue Avenue essentially follows the Highton suburb boundary.

2) *Return the suburb of Leopold to Corio*

While Leopold bills itself as ‘Gateway to the Peninsula’, it is increasingly an outer eastern suburb of Geelong, and would fit well with Newcomb and Moolap in the Division of Corio. This change would leave the Bellarine Peninsula itself united, with all of the Drysdale and Portarlington areas remaining in Cox.

3) *Transfer all of Golden Plains-South (including Bannockburn) to Corio*

This helps balance the numbers between Corio and Cox, but also makes sense from a community of interest point of view. Bannockburn, like Leopold, is increasingly becoming an outer suburb of Geelong, so would not be out of place in Corio. While the remainder of Golden Plains is rural, Corio already contains similar areas such as Anakie, and it makes sense to include all of the areas generally ‘north’ of Geelong in the northern Geelong seat.

OBJECTIONS FOR THE DIVISIONS IN THE OUTER SOUTH-EAST AND WESTERNPORT

A number of Objections, such as from Jeff Waddell, have proposed an anti-clockwise rotation of Flinders, Holt, Latrobe, Bruce, Isaacs and Dunkley. This results in a number of improvements such as:

- The rural southern parts of Casey Council being placed in the semi-rural Flinders instead of the heavily urban Holt.
- Greater use of the strong boundary of Princes Highway between Holt and Latrobe, providing a neater split of Narre Warren.
- Transferring Narre Warren North to Latrobe, which is in line with my Objection 8.
- Using the Dandenong Bypass as the southern boundary for Bruce, uniting almost all of Dandenong and Keysborough in one seat. This provides a neater way to change to Kirkham Road boundary than my Objection 5.

The proposal to remove Moorabbin from Isaacs, and return Carrum Downs and Seaford, are reasonable enough. I don't have a particularly strong view either way on these changes.

The main drawback of this approach is that it requires Mornington to be split. The Committee's proposals unite Mornington in Flinders, and also place it in the same seat as Mount Martha, with which it forms essentially a single urban area. Having said that, the boundaries proposed by Jeff Waddell in particular are fairly clear and strong, using major roads and keeping the majority of Mornington in one seat (Dunkley).

In all, I think the benefits of this arrangement probably outweigh the disadvantage of splitting Mornington. Flinders, Holt, Bruce and Latrobe in particular would have stronger boundaries, and the changes to Isaacs would at least mean that it does not need to extend so far in a north-south direction.

Perhaps the Committee could seek further comments or Objections from local residents, to determine whether or not the split of Mornington is worth the beneficial changes elsewhere.

OBJECTIONS OF THE ALP:

Cox and Wannon

Uniting all of Golden Plains in Cox/Corangamite was something I had considered, but in the end I rejected this because:

- It would bring a Geelong-based Division to the fringes of the Ballarat urban area.
- It would give Cox an unusual and elongated shape, stretching from the Peninsula right around the south of Geelong and then as far north as Smythesdale.
- The east-west connections along the Glenelg Highway are strong, and most of this corridor is already in Wannon.
- In contrast, there is no clear north-south connection between Smythesdale and the majority of Cox. The Midland Highway is the main link between Ballarat and Geelong, but this goes through the Divisions of Ballarat and Corio, with only part of the highway running through Cox.

In the end, there are simply too many problems for this arrangement to be satisfactory. Even if the Committee wanted to change the Wannon/Cox boundary, I think Smythesdale should be left in Wannon.

Bruce, Hotham and Isaacs

Labor is proposing a partial reversal of the Committee's changes, with Wheelers Hill going back into Bruce, and the Springvale/Noble Park area going back into Hotham and Isaacs.

I grew up in Wantirna South, just across the border in Aston, so I am quite familiar with the community of interest in this part of Melbourne. I strongly support the Committee's proposed changes to these three seats (with minor exceptions), and therefore I do not at all agree with Labor's proposed changes.

Labor's main justification is essentially "that's the way things have been for a long time". But the existing Divisions of Bruce and Isaacs, and the state seat of Mulgrave, are not good examples of strong boundaries and communities of interest.

- The existing Bruce joins established affluent residential areas around Glen Waverley and Wheelers Hill, with strongly working class and industrial/commercial areas around Greater Dandenong. There is very little community of interest between these two areas, and apart from Springvale Road, few direct communication links between them. The majority of major roads and railways in this part of Melbourne run east-west, not north-south.

- Similarly, the existing Isaacs consists of coastal residential suburbs, before crossing unpopulated parklands and industrial areas to take in parts of southern Dandenong. Again, there is very little communication and community of interest between these two distinct areas.
- While railways can make good boundaries at times, the Pakenham railway line runs right through the middle of major centres such as Oakleigh, Clayton, Springvale, Noble Park, and Dandenong. All of these communities are split in half by the current boundaries, which is a poor community of interest outcome.

The Committee's proposals go a long way towards rectifying this problem. Bruce would unite most of the Greater Dandenong area in a single seat, whereas Isaacs would become almost entirely coastal, with only a small inland appendage. Hotham also becomes more coherent by uniting all of Oakleigh and Clayton in a single seat. Labor's changes would undo all of this good work.

Labor discuss the prospects at future redistributions, and claim that their changes will help prevent reversals next time. However, if Bruce needs to move further south, the logical place to gain electors would be the balance of Dandenong that remains in Isaacs. So from a 'future-proofing' point of view, it would actually be more sensible to do the opposite of what Labor suggests, and place all of the Keysborough and Dandenong area in Bruce now.

While I agree that Wheelers Hill is an odd fit in Hotham, it is no better suited to being placed in a Dandenong-based Bruce either. Wheelers Hill's community of interest lies with Gen Waverley in Chisholm, and ideally would be placed there. It's just that quota requirement make this impossible at the present time.

I agree with Labor's Objection to using Kirkham Road as a boundary; however, there are easier and better ways to address this. My Objection 5 would utilise Dandenong Creek for more of the boundary, or alternatively, Jeff Waddell's Objection shifts the boundary to the very strong and clear Dandenong Bypass.

Higgins, Hotham, Kooyong, Chisholm

Again, Labor proposes a series of cascading changes that don't seem to improve on the Committee's boundaries. I agree that Hughesdale and Murrumbeena would fit well in Hotham, but this certainly not worth the extensive disruption that occurs elsewhere.

And again, the entire justification for all of this seems to be what might happen at future redistributions. But as I have said in my previous comment, if Chisholm needs to move southwards in the future, there is a much more obvious gain it could make: **Wheelers Hill.** There are much greater connections between the Waverley area and Wheelers Hill than there is with the Chadstone-Oakleigh area. So again, it would actually seem more sensible to do the opposite of what Labor is suggesting here.

Possibly Labor's changes would work numerically if Wheelers Hill instead of Chadstone were included in Chisholm. This would be a much better outcome, but I still don't think it's worth all the trouble.

Melbourne northern/western suburbs

Once again, we have a series of cascading changes that result in worse boundaries than the Committee's proposals. In particular, I would strongly oppose:

- Strathmore Heights returning to Wills. This area is part of Moonee Valley Council and is largely cut off from the rest of Wills by Moonee Ponds Creek. It is a far better fit in Maribyrnong.
- Craigieburn being placed in McEwen. The Committee has made a clear determination, which I strongly support, to remove most of the urban component of McEwen. Craigieburn is in Hume Council, and it makes a great deal of sense to place this area with Broadmeadows and Roxburgh Park in Calwell.

Sunbury is also an outer urban area, but it is permanently separated from Melbourne's suburban sprawl by Melbourne Airport. This still gives Sunbury more of an independent satellite-community feel, which makes it a better fit in McEwen than the heavily suburban Craigieburn.

- Yarrambat going into Scullin. This area is completely cut off from the rest of Scullin by Plenty Gorge. Also, as a semi-rural community it fits much better with similar areas in McEwen, or even Jagajaga, than with the heavily suburban Epping and Mill Park.

There is some merit in removing Keilor from Fraser, as this area is quite different socio-economically from Sunshine and St Albans. However, I think Maribyrnong would be a better fit for Keilor than Calwell, since Maribyrnong already contains Keilor East, plus a number of middle class and affluent suburbs that are demographically similar to Keilor. If this change was made, then perhaps more of Braybrook-Maidstone and/or West Footscray could be transferred from Maribyrnong to Fraser. This would fit well with the rest of Fraser, and might help address Labor's concern about splitting this area between two seats.

I also agree with Labor that Bulla, at least, would fit well with Sunbury. But this could be achieved much more simply by just moving the McEwen/Calwell boundary. Similarly, if the Committee wanted to unite Sydenham, it could probably make a simple exchange between Fraser and Gorton in isolation.

These are all minor changes, which could address any alleged problems without the need for the extensive redrawing that Labor proposes.

OBJECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL PARTY

Apart from their Cox/Wannon Objection, the Nationals make a case for leaving Central Goldfields and Stawell in Wannon, and instead transfer areas around Hamilton to Mallee.

However, this arrangement would force Mallee to less than 100km from the coast at Hamilton, while still leaving parts of Wannon as far north as Bendigo. It seems far more sensible to place the northern parts of Wannon into Mallee, so that neither Division needs to stretch so far.

OBJECTIONS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

Rural Victoria

The Liberals propose to address the issues in the Division of Cox by making a series of changes throughout northern and western Victoria.

In isolation, their suggestion to place Golden Plains in Ballarat has some merit, although it would bring Ballarat very close to the Geelong urban area around Bannockburn. However, the flow on effects require part of Greater Bendigo to be removed from the Division of Bendigo, and for Nicholls/Murray to push into Macedon Ranges Shire. Even worse, it would force Horsham and West Wimmera to switch seats, which was objected to and overturned last time.

None of this seems worth the trouble, when other alternatives for Cox, Corio and Wannon exist.

South Eastern suburbs

The Liberals propose a variation on the ‘anti-clockwise rotation’ proposal that would return Mornington to Dunkley and southern Casey to Flinders. However, their suggestion is not as satisfactory as the proposals from Jeff Waddell, as it would result in Isaacs taking in more of Greater Dandenong (when it should take less), and make for some awkward boundaries around Frankston and Langwarrin.

In isolation, some of their ideas such as using the Patterson River as a boundary have merit, but once again there is too much unnecessary change for it to be worth the trouble.

OBJECTIONS OF CHARLES RICHARDSON

Dr Richardson makes a number of fairly minor adjustments, most of which I support:

- His proposed changes in the outer eastern suburbs (Casey, Latrobe, Deakin, Chisholm) are all quite logical. It seems sensible to remove Deakin's proposed share of Yarra Ranges, and to return Deakin's southern boundary to the municipal border along Highbury Road. While it would split Surrey Hills, I also agree that Canterbury Road is a better boundary than Riversdale Road in this area.
- Likewise, it seems sensible enough to move the Menzies/Jagajaga boundary to follow the municipal boundary, and for Jagajaga to gain the Latrobe University precinct. However, I don't agree with returning all of Clifton Hill to Batman; although it splits the suburb, Hoddle Street is a strong and clear boundary in the area.
- Re-uniting the rural areas east of Pakenham in Monash (or even Latrobe if the numbers worked).
- The small adjustments at Wonga Park and Rowville are also sensible, and I support them.

However, I do not agree to his proposals in rural Victoria. While Smythesdale probably is a better fit in Ballarat than in Wannon, the flow-on effects split Hepburn Shire and detach part of Greater Bendigo to Nicholls. I think that it makes enormous sense for all of Greater Bendigo to be in the Division named 'Bendigo'.

While I do agree that South Yarra and Prahran should be united in Macnamara, I don't support Dr Richardson's proposal to split Toorak. I think Williams Road and Hotham Street are clear boundaries, and any adjustment to Higgins should come at its eastern end with Hotham (or possibly Kooyong).

OBJECTIONS TO PLACING FLEMINGTON IN MARIBYRNONG

The Greens, Adam Bandt, and several local residents suggest retaining Flemington in the Division of Melbourne, with the areas in Fitzroy North being returned to Wills. This works numerically, although the suburb boundary of Flemington is not as strong as Racecourse Road. However, in isolation, the loss of Flemington would leave the Division of Maribyrnong under quota.

One option would be to leave Travancore in Maribyrnong, as suggested by the Greens' party proposal. Although this area has close connections to Flemington, it is somewhat different in character, being more residential and 'suburban'. This arrangement would also allow the use of the strong boundary of Mount Alexander Road for part of the way.

The second option would simply be to adopt my Objection 2. Transferring Gowanbrae to Maribyrnong would bring it within quota, without the need for any changes elsewhere.

OBJECTIONS TO SPLITTING POINT COOK

There are a number of Objections to the splitting of Point Cook between Gellibrand and Lalor. In principle, I agree that Point Cook should be united in a single seat, and that it fits better with similar coastal areas in Gellibrand. The problem is that the numbers don't work; transferring Point Cook to Gellibrand and returning all of Laverton/Williams Landing would leave Lalor under quota, and there is no other logical place for Lalor to make further gains.

Continued growth in Lalor, and the possibility of Victoria gaining a further seat, means that Point Cook will probably be able to be united in Gellibrand at the next redistribution.

OBJECTIONS TO PLACING MARYBOROUGH IN MALLEE

A number of local residents support placing Maryborough in the Division of Bendigo rather than Mallee.

In isolation, this is fine, but the flow-on effects to Mallee, Bendigo, and probably Nicholls are too great. The Division of Mallee is well under quota, so it needs to make a large gain from somewhere. If the ~10,000 electors in Central Goldfields Shire were removed, then Mallee would need to push either right down into outer Bendigo, or eastwards into Campaspe Shire. I think these are very undesirable outcomes.

OTHER OBJECTIONS AND COMMENTS

- A number of locals Object to having Gowanbrae placed in Calwell, although there is disagreement whether they want to be in Maribyrnong or Wills. I strongly recommend that Gowanbrae be placed in Maribyrnong, as it is completely cut off from Wills by parklands and Moonee Ponds Creek.
- A number of Objections point out the anomaly of the Aston/Bruce boundary where it runs along Police Road instead of Dandenong Creek. I agree that the boundary should be returned to the creek, which is also the municipal boundary.
- I am very surprised by the Objections from cultural groups such as the Indo-Chinese community, supporting a return to the former boundaries around Springvale and Noble Park. The Committee's changes unite much more of this area in Bruce, instead of splitting these suburbs between multiple seats as the current boundaries (and Labor's proposals) do.

Again, if the Committee decided that the Indo-Chinese community of interest in Springvale/Noble Park was so strong, it would actually make more sense to do the opposite of what these Objections want. Jeff Waddell's proposal allows almost all of Springvale plus the greater Dandenong area to be united in a single seat.

- Similarly, I am surprised at the Objections that want Craigieburn returned to McEwen, with Sunbury being placed in Calwell. I believe that Sunbury, being more of a satellite community, is a better fit in McEwen than Craigieburn. In particular, the Committee's changes place more of Macedon Ranges in McEwen, so the connection and community of interest in this area would be very strong.

From the tone of some of these Objections, it seems that the actual motive for wanting Sunbury placed in Calwell is to discourage the creation of a new Sunbury council. Apparently the idea is that forcing Sunbury into a Hume-based Division will somehow 'force' it to remain part of Hume City council. I actually support the idea of an independent Sunbury City, but even if I didn't, it is not the place of the AEC to draw boundaries based on an internal local council argument.