



Comment on objections 99

Charles Richardson

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From: Charles Richardson
To: [FedRedistribution - VIC](#)
Subject: Comments on objections
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Attachments: [RE18FCO1.pdf](#)

Dear friends -

Please find attached a set of comments on the objections to the Redistribution Committee's proposal for Victoria. Do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

All the best,
Charles

Charles Richardson, Philosopher



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FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION 2018: VICTORIA

COMMENTS on the OBJECTIONS RECEIVED to the PROPOSAL of the VICTORIAN REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

From CHARLES RICHARDSON

I congratulate the Redistribution Committee on the degree of public engagement with its redistribution proposals for Victoria, as evidenced by the 413 objections received. As usual, the majority of the objections have clearly been promoted by those with political interests to serve, although it does not necessarily follow that their complaints are without merit. A number of objections echo points that I have made, so I shall not bother noting them again. What follows are some comments on the other issues most commonly raised, taking them roughly from west to east across the state.

My comments all deal with boundaries; I have nothing to add to my earlier remarks about naming of divisions.

1. STAWELL: MALLEE / WANNON

Some objectors argue that Stawell and its surrounds belong with the rest of the Shire of Northern Grampians in *Mallee* rather than in *Wannon*. I disagree; I think the advantage of having Stawell and Ararat together, and of having Halls Gap with the rest of the Grampians, outweighs the significance of the municipal boundary. But the question is purely academic, since *Wannon* needs the additional electors, and the only other plausible way of getting them would be for it to keep Maryborough – which on anyone's story is much less connected to the main part of *Wannon* than Stawell is.

2. COLAC OTWAY SHIRE: COX / WANNON

A large number of objections, many of them obviously co-ordinated, object to the proposed move of Colac and its surrounds from *Corangamite* (the new *Cox*) into *Wannon*. Most of them fail to suggest an alternative, which renders their arguments irrelevant; the question is not

whether Colac ideally belongs with the Geelong area or with the Western District, but whether there is a better option available for delivering the required electors into *Wannon*.

My view is that there is not. To give *Wannon* most or all of the rest of the Shire of Golden Plains, as some objectors suggest, strikes me as absurd: if Colac is insufficiently connected with the Western District, how much more is that true of Lethbridge, Meredith and Bannockburn? Clearly that area has much greater claims to stay with a Geelong-based division.

I suggest that the Commission would be better advised to go in the other direction, and consider swapping the rest of the Shire of Colac Otway (the Birregurra area and Otway SA2) for the western part of the Shire of Golden Plains, thus uniting those shires in *Wannon* and *Cox* respectively (apart from Smythes Creek SA2, which as I have argued before should stay in *Ballarat*). Mark Mulcair (#118) proposes a more limited version of the same idea, which also has merit.

3. MARYBOROUGH: BENDIGO / MALLEE

Another substantial group of objections argues that Maryborough and its surrounds (basically the Shire of Central Goldfields) would be better placed in *Bendigo* than in *Mallee*. Of course they are right, if only the numbers could be made to work that way. I don't believe they can, except by laying up worse problems elsewhere.

One day, I expect, *Mallee* will have to stretch further down the Murray to take most or all of the Shire of Campaspe, creating space for *Ballarat* and/or *Bendigo* to expand outwards. The Committee has laid the groundwork for that by renaming *Murray* as *Nicholls*, foreshadowing a future in which it would become more a central Victorian division. But that does nothing to help Maryborough this time around.

I should, however, express some scepticism about the line of argument that stresses the distance to be travelled to an MP's office. Offices are not fixed; when divisions move, electorate offices can move with them, or subsidiary ones can be established. If (as will be the case on the proposed boundaries) the majority of voters are closer to a south-eastern location than to Mildura, they need to make that clear to their MP.

4. McEWEN

Several submissions amount to a plea to fix *McEwen* in some way, pointing to the unsatisfactory nature of its stretch from the Macedon Ranges in the west to Mernda, Doreen and Hurstbridge in the east. They are quite right, but *McEwen* has always been something of a residual division, containing bits that would not fit anywhere else. I think the Committee has improved its coherence by taking out Craigieburn – I have little sympathy with the objectors who criticise this move without offering a comprehensive alternative. It would be nice to do more, but it is not easy.

One small step that could and should be taken is suggested by Stephen Coughlan (#250), namely reuniting the township of Bulla, the Wildwood area and the detached eastern part of Diggers Rest with Sunbury, now in *McEwen*. The number of electors involved is very small, but it would make a contribution to geographical coherence.

5. GOWANBRAE: CALWELL / MARIBYRNONG / WILLS

I am impressed with the objection from the Gowanbrae Residents Group (#299), which shows significant public support for the retention of Gowanbrae in *Wills* rather than its transfer to *Calwell*. At one level I agree wholeheartedly; *Calwell* is clearly the wrong place for Gowanbrae, which is isolated from the rest of the division by the Western Ring Road. I had argued for putting it in *Maribyrnong*, a notion that is supported by another resident, Mark Dal-Corobbo (#268).

The three proposed divisions are sufficiently close to average enrolment that the shift of Gowanbrae's 2,159 projected electors would not put either *Maribyrnong* or *Wills* over the limit, or *Calwell* under. It would, however, take them further from the average, introducing a distortion in representation. The question is whether the convenience of the Gowanbrae electors outweighs that admittedly fairly small distortion, and that is a judgement call that the Commission will need to make for itself.

6. KENSINGTON: MARIBYRNONG / MELBOURNE

A large number of objections complain about the separation of Kensington (staying in *Melbourne*) from Flemington (moving into *Maribyrnong*) by the proposed boundary along Smithfield and Racecourse Roads. I agree that there is some artificiality about the municipal boundary, but I don't think it is a major problem, and none of the suggestions for fixing it (once again, most of the objectors neglect to make any such suggestion) seem any better.

Andrew Gunter (#358) suggests going further, giving all of Kensington to *Maribyrnong* and then performing a rotation of territory among *Melbourne*, *Batman*, *Scullin*, *McEwen*, *Gorton* and *Fraser* to compensate. It looks great, but unfortunately the numbers don't add up. Clifton Hill and the southern part of Mernda are both smaller than his estimates, so *Scullin* would come out below the permitted tolerance and *Fraser*, *Gorton* and *Melbourne* would all be uncomfortably close to it.

Nonetheless, I think the idea is a sound one, and if the Commission can find a way to make it work I would encourage them to consider it. Such a plan might incidentally be able to deal with the previous point.

7. MORNINGTON: DUNKLEY / FLINDERS

Many objections argue against the transfer of Mornington into *Dunkley* and for its retention in *Flinders*. I regard this argument as utterly without merit. Yes, of course Mornington has good connections with Mount Eliza and Frankston, and yes, the Peninsula Link Freeway would form a convenient boundary. (Some of the objectors suggest continuing this boundary further south and putting some or all of Mount Martha into *Flinders* as well.) But the peninsula south-east of the freeway does not have enough electors for a division; the question is whether taking Mornington is better or worse than the other options.

To me it is obvious that it is better. Mornington and Mount Martha are both in the Shire of Mornington Peninsula, and keeping *Flinders* entirely within that shire is a significant gain for community of interest. Otherwise it would have to retain a large area to the north and east of Western Port, whose links with the rest of the division are tenuous at best, creating further problems for some or all of *Dunkley*, *Holt*, *La Trobe* and *Monash*. The Committee's proposal, by contrast, uses a good strong boundary between Mornington and Mount Eliza, and allows

Dunkley to expand neatly to the limits of the City of Frankston.

8. CROSSING THE YARRA: JAGAJAGA / MENZIES

Several objections argue that the former eastern half of *Jagajaga*, which the Committee proposes to transfer to *Menzies*, does not belong with a south-of-the-Yarra division. Ideally, the Yarra would be maintained as a boundary the whole way to beyond Christmas Hills, but the Committee (and most submissions that addressed the point) recognised that this was not feasible, and that the imbalance in numbers between the north and south of the state required some territory to be transferred from a “northern” to a “southern” division.

The question is where to do this, and although the Committee's choice is not what I had originally proposed, I think it works reasonably well. Unless the Commission is to undo a large part of this work, the only plausible alternative would be to take Ivanhoe and its surrounds instead. While an argument can certainly be made for this, I think on balance it is inferior to the Committee's proposal.

9. WARRANWOOD: CASEY / DEAKIN

The Maroondah City Council (#259) and the Maroondah Business Group (#263) support the transfer of Warranwood from *Menzies* to *Deakin*, arguing that it belongs with the rest of the City of Maroondah. No doubt they are right about that. But while *Deakin*, if it loses Kilsyth (as I and others argue it should), could accommodate the extra electors, *Menzies* cannot afford to lose them. It would have to make gains to its north from *Jagajaga* and/or *McEwen*, and they are both already well below the projected average enrolment.

So I fear Warranwood will have to stay where it is, although the Commission may be able to find a better answer.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Richardson

18 May 2018