



Objection 213

The Nationals, Stawell Branch

3 pages

To Australian Electoral Commission - Att: Redistribution Secretariat

RE: Objection to the 2018 Victorian Redistribution Committee's proposed electoral Divisions.

While acknowledging that "the Committee was faced with the task of inserting a new electoral division while also bringing all 38 divisions within the allowable quota numerical tolerance", on behalf of The Nationals' Stawell Branch, I wish to submit objections to moving the Northern Grampians Shire towns of Stawell and Hall's Gap, out of the Federal Electorate of Mallee, into the Federal Electorate of Wannon.

Our objections are as follows –

1 – The proposed realignment will split a community of interest. All but one small geographical area of the Northern Grampians Shire will remain in Mallee Electorate; the small area around the largest town, Stawell, will be split from the rest of NGS and moved into the Wannon Electorate. The Shire will be divided unevenly between two Federal Divisions, making it difficult to establish a strong relationship with two Federal representatives. Electors will have to consult with two federal MPs instead of one – one of which will represent a minute area of the Shire; the other MP will represent the bulk of the Shire but the largest town (Stawell) will be excluded from this part of the Shire. This will be unworkable in this rural location. Local Government areas should not be divided in rural areas. Administration, consultation on federal matters will be inefficient and ineffective, for both the people of the Shire itself and for the MPs themselves. The workload for all federal issues will be doubled up as constituents and the Shire have to liaise with two MPs and their offices, both MPs will have to liaise with the Shire people and then the MPs will have to liaise with the other over the same issue!

2 – If Stawell could remain in Mallee, and Maryborough could remain in Wannon, the effective overall population redistribution would be little different, but the disastrous impact of the current proposal on constituents and operations for both Northern Grampians and Central Goldfields Shires would be greatly eliminated. Instead of transferring electors, in this way, between these two Electorates, Wannon's electoral quota could be better adjusted if it was distributed more towards the population growth area of Geelong to the east.

Current enrolment quota for Victoria	106,954	
Permissible maximum number of electors in an electoral division (Current enrolment quota + 10%)		117,649
Permissible minimum number of electors in an electoral division (Current enrolment quota - 10%)		96,259
The determination of the current enrolment quota for the redistribution of Victoria was based on enrolment numbers as at Monday 4 September 2017, which is the date the redistribution commenced.		

3 – Community of interests represented by local government areas and localities should be kept together in one electorate especially in vast rural electorates. Due consideration should be given to Northern Grampians Shire, in its entirety (ie including Stawell/Hall's Gap), being best served by

remaining in Mallee with other localities with similar economic, social and regional interests and common means of communication, travel, tourism and physical features.

NGS shares an economic community of interest with other Mallee Electoral Division areas relating to the primary production industry, specifically broad-acre cereal farming and animal husbandry; common transport issues in moving goods and products over long distances to and from markets; common climate patterns; tertiary education at Federation University & TAFE College Horsham Campus & Longerenong Agricultural College; medical & ancillary health services provided by Wimmera Base Hospital in Horsham; provision of household goods and services in Horsham; not to mention machinery/livestock/agricultural products and services there.

Regionally the Northern Grampians Shire (Stawell) participates with its northern neighbours in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Transport Group; the Wimmera Development Association; State Regional Partnership group; Wimmera Catchment Management Authority; northwest transport, water and waste issues; geographically the land is flat and all water catchments run north towards the Mallee.

Common social community of interests include similar social support needs; high unemployment; low socioeconomic issues; lack of health services and GPs; lack of passenger public transport in the north west; footballers and netballers in Horsham & District Football/Netball, Wimmera Football/Netball League, North Central Football/Netball League; newspapers such as Horsham's *Wimmera Mail Times* & *The Weekly Advertiser* publishing local news /information/advertising; shared local radio stations to north west Victoria broadcasting information/news/entertainment specifically to northwest Victoria.

Stawell, in particular, and Northern Grampians Shire have no common community of interest with the 'western district' region of Victoria, which has its own strong networks and associations built on economic, social and regional interests.

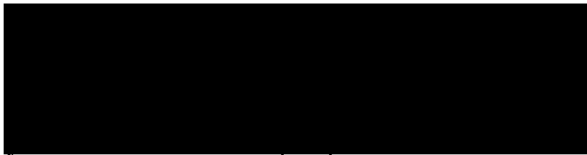
4 – Stawell has changed federal electorates at every single boundary redistribution of Victorian federal electorates since 1968, except 1994, as follows:

- 1968 Wimmera
- 1977 to Wannon
- 1984 to Bendigo
- 1989 to Ballarat
- **1994** Ballarat
- 2003 to Wannon
- 2010 to Mallee
- 2018 to Wannon (proposal)

Additionally, with State electoral boundary redistributions, Stawell has been in Wimmera, Bendigo, Lowan and now Ripon State electorates over a similar period! Stawell's redistribution history details that Stawell has been disproportionately impacted by the constantly-changing electoral boundaries in western Victoria and that a period of continuity (being retained in Mallee) is called for and is justified. People can be confused as to what electorate they are in and who is representing them!

Electorate NAME CHANGES

Although the recommended guidelines are to name electorates after outstanding community leaders who have rendered significant service to their country, this method defies logic for large rural electorates. Regional areas should retain names from the original federation divisions or names aligned with their major geographical features, as electorates of such vast proportions, comparatively to regional/metropolitan ones, are most easily identified in this manner.



Submitted by The Nationals Branch Secretary

on behalf of The Nationals, Stawell Branch