



Comment on objections 1

Yaron Gottlieb

3 pages

I am writing to comment on the objections OB5, OB38, OB42, OB49, OB53, OB54, OB58 and OB63 regarding the redrawing of the electoral boundaries between Macnamara and Higgins.

I am an Orthodox rabbi and have been active in the community over a number of years. I have also been a resident of Caulfield North for over 40 years, and am very familiar with the area.

In an ideal world it would be great if electoral boundaries could be neat lines that fulfil all requirements. Unfortunately, it is not possible in a real world where things are not as neat as that. As I will demonstrate in my comments, the new boundaries do very little to change the current reality for the Jewish community. The new boundaries are fair and appropriate and should remain as drawn by the committee.

My response will be in two sections, first the question of geography and proximity, while the second will deal with the issues raised by the Jewish community.

1. Proximity

a. Nature of the suburbs

I have lived in both Caulfield and Glen Iris, and I have felt that the two are very similar in their natures, and the populations did not feel at all dissimilar. While I have never lived in the suburbs on the other side of St Kilda Rd, I have family that does live there, and the character of those suburbs are much closer to the character of Prahran and South Yarra. The cultural fit of the new boundaries seem fair.

b. Accessibility

One of the major objections is the ability to easily get public transport from Caulfield/Elsternwick to other areas in the electorate, with OB5 discussing the complexity of getting to Ashburton. However, to access Port Melbourne by public transport may have fewer transfers, but will likely take just as long.

From the area in question there are multiple ways to access the rest of Higgins, including:

- Tram 16 through Glenferrie Rd
- Tram 67 from Elsternwick to Carnegie
- Tram 3 or 3a to Malvern East
- Buses 624, 623, 605, 604

All of which travel through the areas in question and run through Higgins.

It is also not fair to suggest that it is easier to access parts of Macnamara from Caulfield/Elsternwick. Macnamara is right on the doorstep of the CBD and is a major hub for public transport. The argument of accessibility with public transport is likely to be accurate for many of the south-eastern suburbs, even in parts of Hotham, Isaacs, Kooyong or Chisolm.

By creating a more compact electorate, it is also making it easier to get around the electorate by car or bike.

c. Proximity to electoral infrastructure

I have voted in Melbourne Ports/Macnamara in every election since 1996 with one exception. As an Orthodox Jew, I have always voted early, usually at a pre-polling location. I always found it more convenient to use the infrastructure of Higgins rather than Melbourne Ports/Macnamara. The

electoral office is minutes away by car, and there was a large pre-poll centre in Malvern, just over Dandenong Rd.

By contrast the one time I used the St Kilda pre-poll, I found it difficult to access from my place, and the electoral office would be a more difficult commute from Caulfield relative to the Higgins offices.

d. Proximate neighbourhoods

The objections to the electorate crossing Dandenong Rd and the nature of the electorate ignores the presence of Murrumbeena and Carnegie that are already in the electorate of Higgins, and there is no one suggesting they should be moved because of the apparent difficulty of accessing East Malvern.

2. Jewish community

a. Location of communal institutions

The major Jewish institutions exist in the area that is in question, which means that all the major communal infrastructure will be re-labelled into a new electorate. There are some of the smaller schools that will be left behind in Macnamara, as will a few synagogues.

However, beyond the major communal institutions there already exists significant infrastructure in the surrounding electorates, including Kooyong, Chislm, Higgins, Hotham and Goldstein. This includes large schools, synagogues, child care centres and community centres.

The reality is that there are very few communities that will be significantly impacted by this change.

b. Personal circumstances

I live south of Glen Huntly Rd in Goldstein.

In order to attend my synagogue, drop off at the Jewish school, or attend almost any communal event, I am forced to cross the electoral boundary. This has had no material impact on me, and there is nothing that my community has been unable to achieve because part of their membership base lives in another electorate.

Walking the streets, I encounter many Jews whose lives are entirely unaffected by the presence of the electoral boundary through the community. Within 15 minutes walk from my house there are 5 synagogues, 3 in Goldstein and 2 in Macnamara. How do the people worried about the 'splitting of the community' plan to deal with that?

The school around the corner from me has still received federal funding for security despite its presence in Goldstein, and apparently being detached from the main body of the community.

When shopping on Glen Huntly Rd I will regularly go to a kosher bakery in Macnamara before crossing the street into Goldstein to attend other shops.

c. Considerations of the broader community

I do not object to considering the needs of the Jewish community, and these borders do that.

However as I listed in point 1, the new boundaries suit the non-Jewish community very well, and even if Caulfield North where the Jewish population is a plurality, it only makes up 40% of the population. Therefore the significant majority of the Caulfield/Elsternwick/East St Kilda region is not Jewish.

To expect the community at large to reject an adequate or even very good map for the Jewish community in favour of an ideal map to satisfy the Jewish community, is to my view not an acceptable state of affairs.

d. East St Kilda

While there still some Jews living on the western side of Hotham St, the reality is that most of the Jews living in East St Kilda live on the eastern side of Hotham St, and thus will be moved into Higgins. The overall impact of this change will not be significant for the residents.

Another objection is that Carlisle St will remain in Macnamara and not move into Higgins with the rest of the community. This is probably one of the largest Jewish shopping strips, but it is by no means the only major Jewish retail street.

There are significant Jewish shopping in Glenferrie Rd, Glen Huntly Rd and in other locations. I am not sure that having a shop outside of an electorate is of particular significance that demands it remain in the same electorate as the proprietor (most of whom would live east of Hotham St)

e. Carnegie and Malvern

This move would also in a way be a re-uniting of parts of the community, many of whom live in Carnegie, Malvern, and Toorak.

Therefore, as I have demonstrated, this move does not divide the influence of the community but rather moves it from Macnamara to Higgins. There is still an MP that will have broadly represent the Jewish community.

There are some communal institutions that will be re-united, some that will be moved to a new electorate, but to suggest that the community has been united in Macnamara is in many ways offensive to the many Jews who live in Elsternwick, Carnegie, Brighton, Bentleigh, Malvern and the many other surrounding suburbs that have never been represented by the Melbourne Ports/Macnamara MP.