



# Comment on objections 31

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I am a Jewish person who has lived within the Macnamara area for almost 30 years. I have had lengthy associations with a number of Jewish organisations, including schools, youth movements, the Jewish Museum of Australia and numerous other Jewish community organisations.

I firmly believe that electoral divisions should be based on population density and not confected in an attempt to enclose particular cultural or religious groups. The notion that changing the boundaries would equate to 'dividing' the Jewish community by effectively moving particular areas of higher Jewish density into another division is a misnomer. Melbourne's Jewish community is diverse and many Jewish people live outside of areas of higher Jewish population density. Significant proportions of the Jewish community live in other electorates outside of Macnamara and Higgins.

Furthermore, I find the argument that 'dividing' the Jewish community is tantamount to conjuring stereotypes, in that it suggests that all Jewish people are unified in their beliefs, attitudes, values and pursuits, and that by preventing us from voting as a particular block is disenfranchising. Indeed, to preference a particular portion of the voting public through electoral boundaries is definitively gerrymandering. As reported by the ABC, "When thinking about Australian electoral and voting practices, it's worth making the comparison to the United States. In that country, it's common that parties which hold government use that power to rig electoral practices in their favour. In fact, in the lead-up to the most recent mid-term elections, there was widespread reporting of Republican electoral authorities engaging in voter suppression strategies."<sup>1</sup> While this was written in 2014, it can be argued that this is still the case today.

I would suggest that this is precisely the motivations of some Jewish individuals and organisations. It has nothing to do with a supposed disenfranchisement of a particular community and much more to do with attempting to maintain and entrench a political status quo.

Another concern are arguments stated by Zionism Victoria and Labor suggesting Jewish religious convictions and practises would be disunited and diluted by the proposed changes. This suggests that all people identifying as Jewish engage in formal, if not orthodox, religious practice. Again, the stereotype does not hold true. Members of the Jewish community of Melbourne – and indeed Australia – interpret their cultural identities in myriad ways, often without engagement in formal or orthodox practice.

I support the proposed electoral boundary changes as they definitively reflect the ever-changing densities of certain areas and do not consider cultural or religious affiliations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-14/firth-gerrymandering-has-no-place-in-australia/5891592>