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Australian Electoral Commission

To the Commission,

I am a resident of the suburb of Elsternwick, currently located within the electorate of Macnamara.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit an objection to the proposed redistribution of our electorate. This submission covers your proposal to relocate our suburb from Macnamara into Higgins. I am writing this submission after having a range of conversations with other residents of Elsternwick.

I make this objection on the grounds that it will inappropriately place the Elsternwick community in an electorate with which we have far less in common as a community in Higgins than we did in Macnamara.

I refer to the **community of interest** criterion for the drawing of boundaries and also the **means of communication and travel** criterion.

I argue that the proposed redistributed Divisions of Macnamara and Higgins divides us from areas we have more in common with that encompass our community.

Firstly, as a community, we have all voted in Macnamara (or Melbourne Ports as it was formerly known) for over 20 years. We identify very strongly with this electorate. We are a tight-knit community and we have been well represented by having continuity of representation within this electorate.

Secondly, we are a community of interest with strong connections, shared shopping and dining precincts and common transport links with our surrounding suburbs, especially Elwood, Ripponlea, Balaclava, St Kilda/St Kilda East and Caulfield. Dividing Elsternwick, Caulfield and part of St Kilda East from the rest of St Kilda East, as well as Elwood, Ripponlea, Balaclava and even St Kilda itself is wrong to us.

We do not believe Hotham Street is an appropriate boundary to draw – it is not a significant main road that divides any distinct communities. For example, we share a common postcode (3185) with Ripponlea, which is west of Hotham Street. Further north, St Kilda East/Balaclava (postcode 3183) goes on both sides of Hotham Street. We cross this street many times a day. Our friends, family and neighbours live on either side of it. We do not feel any cultural or other distinction between the east or west of it.

All of these suburbs share common shopping strips such as Glen Eira Road and Glenhuntly Road. We share supermarkets, bakeries, butchers and other retail shops. We are all locals who congregate at the same restaurants, cafes and bars. Ripponlea for example is a tiny suburb which shares our postcode – but it is very closely linked with Elwood and Balaclava as well as us in Elsternwick. We share the school zones of Ripponlea Primary, St Kilda Primary and Elwood Primary.

All of our suburbs have a slightly suburban but still cosmopolitan, inner-city feel to them. We have a large number of trendy cafes and other eateries and boutique stores and shops. We also have many cultural institutions, such as the Jewish precinct in Elsternwick covering the Sholem Aleichem College, the Jewish Holocaust Centre, the Kadimah Centre and the Habonim Dror youth movement – all of these organisations and centres attract Jewish community members from across Caulfield, St Kilda East, Elsternwick, Balaclava, Ripponlea and indeed Elwood and St Kilda.

The Classic Cinema, one of Australia's oldest and most beloved independent cinemas, is also in Elsternwick and similarly is *the* local cinema for all of these suburbs.

Elsternwick and Elwood are particularly well connected – our names are similar, our postcodes are adjacent (3184 and 3185) and often venues and facilities within our suburbs are interchangeable – for example, Elsternwick Park is located in Elwood; as is the Elsternwick Hotel. We share Glenhuntly Road as our most significant main roads and shopping strips. Glenhuntly Road stretches from the end of Elwood through all of Elsternwick and beyond to Caulfield and has many dozens of shops, restaurants, cafes, bars, grocery and produce stores and many other businesses. These are frequented by locals of Elwood, Elsternwick and all the other aforementioned suburbs. It is one of the busiest and most vibrant inner-suburban shopping strips in Melbourne.

Similarly, Glen Eira Road, which connects Elsternwick, Ripponlea and Caulfield, also has a number of shopping strips which offer dining, retail and grocery options. Elwood has no large supermarkets (Coles or Woolworths) but just over the Elsternwick side of Glenhuntly Road, Elsternwick has one of Australia's busiest in Coles Elsternwick; and Balaclava also has busy nearby Coles and Woolworths. It's also notable that the historic Rippon Lea Estate, from which Ripponlea gets its name, is actually located in Elsternwick.

In terms of transport links, we also share the same transport links – Elwood locals use Elsternwick and Ripponlea Railway Stations as there is no rail line through Elwood. The 67 tram which goes down Brighton Road from St Kilda Road and then across Glenhuntly Road services both Elwood and Elsternwick. These public transport services are the major forms of PT which locals of all of these suburbs use. Indeed, Elwood's limited forms of public transport contribute to the connectedness our shared "Elster" community has.

All of this goes to say that I do not believe, as do many others in Elsternwick, that there is any sense in dividing Elsternwick from Elwood, Balaclava and Ripponlea. Our most straightforward request as residents of Elsternwick is that you leave us in Macnamara united with these suburbs. We are all a stronger, more connected community of interest than the proposed Division of Higgins would be.

The proposed Division of Higgins puts us on the complete edge of this electorate – we all spend significant time in St Kilda, Elwood, Balaclava and Ripponlea. We rarely cross north of Dandenong Road or east of the Caulfield Racecourse/Grange Road. These are far more significant boundaries and dividers between communities than the proposed Hotham Street boundary. Certainly, to put us in an electorate centred around Toorak, Armadale, Malvern,

Malvern East, Glen Iris and Ashburton is to put us in an electorate with which we have very little in common, share no means of travel or communication and no community of interest. We recognise that the Commission must make a slight adjustment to the boundary of Macnamara to take it back within an acceptable quota – we would submit that this is possible to do in a less disruptive and more appropriate way. We understand that only a few hundred voters are required to be moved to achieve this.

One such way would be to return us to the pre-2019 boundaries of Melbourne Ports where Windsor is reunited with the rest of the City of Stonnington in the Division of Higgins and Elsternwick remains together with Elwood, St Kilda, St Kilda East, Balaclava, Ripponlea and Caulfield inside Macnamara. Other scenarios may be obvious to the Commission.

Either way, I ask of you as a resident of Elsternwick – we have spent decades in this electorate. We feel engaged by our local politics and united with the community that surrounds us. Please don't move us out of Macnamara and into Higgins.

Yours sincerely

Julia Nelson