



Comment on objections 108

Harmick Singh

7 pages

AEC: Victorian Redistribution Committee

11/07/2024

Dear Committee,

I am writing in my personal capacity to express my disagreement with some of the objections that have made problematic suggestions around the eastern and southern borders of Menzies.

Specifically, I take issue with objections that propose two things:

1. The eastern border of Menzies should be Springvale Road
2. The southern border of Menzies should be the Burwood Highway

These are both extremely problematic proposals, to the point that I feel obliged to write to the AEC and explain exactly why this is the case.

Problem Proposal (1): The boundary of Menzies and Deakin in Whitehorse should be Springvale Rd, not Blackburn Rd.

My Proposal (1): The boundary of Menzies and Deakin in Whitehorse should be Middleborough Rd.

The problematic line of reasoning proposes that Blackburn Road is a poor boundary between Deakin and Menzies, and that Springvale Road is a better division boundary.

I accept that Blackburn Road is a problematic boundary between the divisions of Menzies and Deakin, but Springvale Road is an even more problematic alternative. The boundary which makes the most sense by far is Middleborough Rd.

The below map makes this clear.

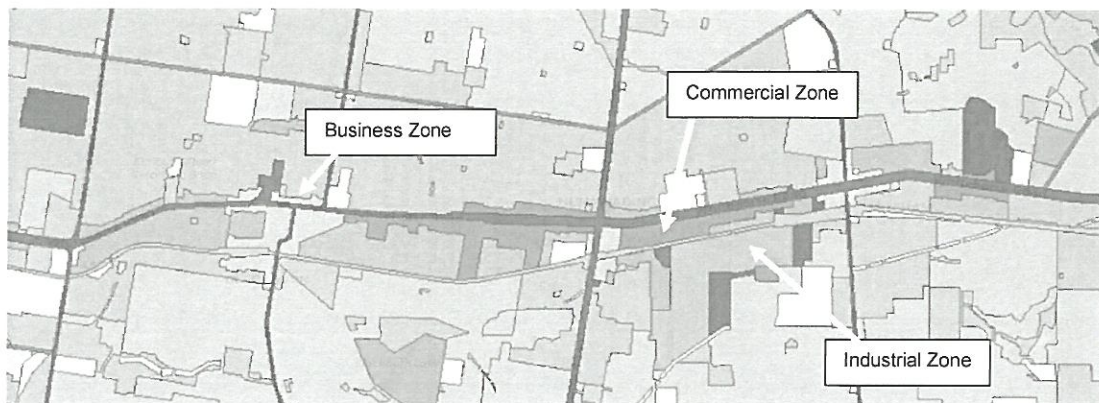


Map 1: The three proposed boundaries between Menzies and Deakin on a satellite map of the area.

The map shows that there is a large continuous section of highly developed retail and industrial areas along Whitehorse Rd between Blackburn and Ringwood, with a small gap between eastern Ringwood and Mitcham. The map makes it clear that there is a large gap in highly built-up area between the western section of this Blackburn-Ringwood Axis, and Box Hill. They are two separate communities.

Middleborough Rd clearly divides these two separate communities, as the map shows. In contrast, using Springvale Rd as a boundary would cut this retail/industrial Blackburn/Ringwood axis in half, while the current border proposed by the AEC cuts the Blackburn activity centre in half.

Zoning maps support the point I am making here. As you can see, using Springvale Rd as a boundary would cut the continuous area of commercial and industrial zones in half, while the current boundary cuts the Blackburn Business Zone half. In contrast, Middleborough Rd does not divide any major zone types in half.



Map 2: Victorian zoning map from digital twin Victoria

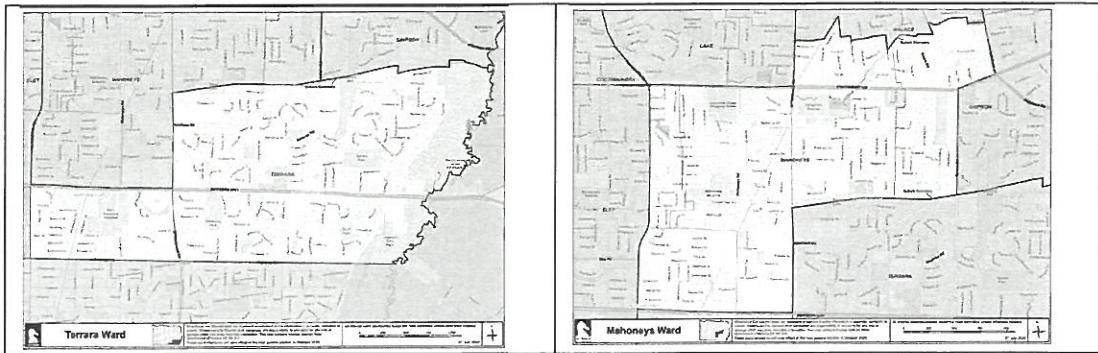
The importance of Middleborough Rd as a boundary between the communities of Blackburn-Nunawading-Mitcham, and Box Hill, has been recognised by most other forms of administrative division.

1.1 Council Borders:

Middleborough Rd alone forms the western border of Cootamundra and Eley Wards.

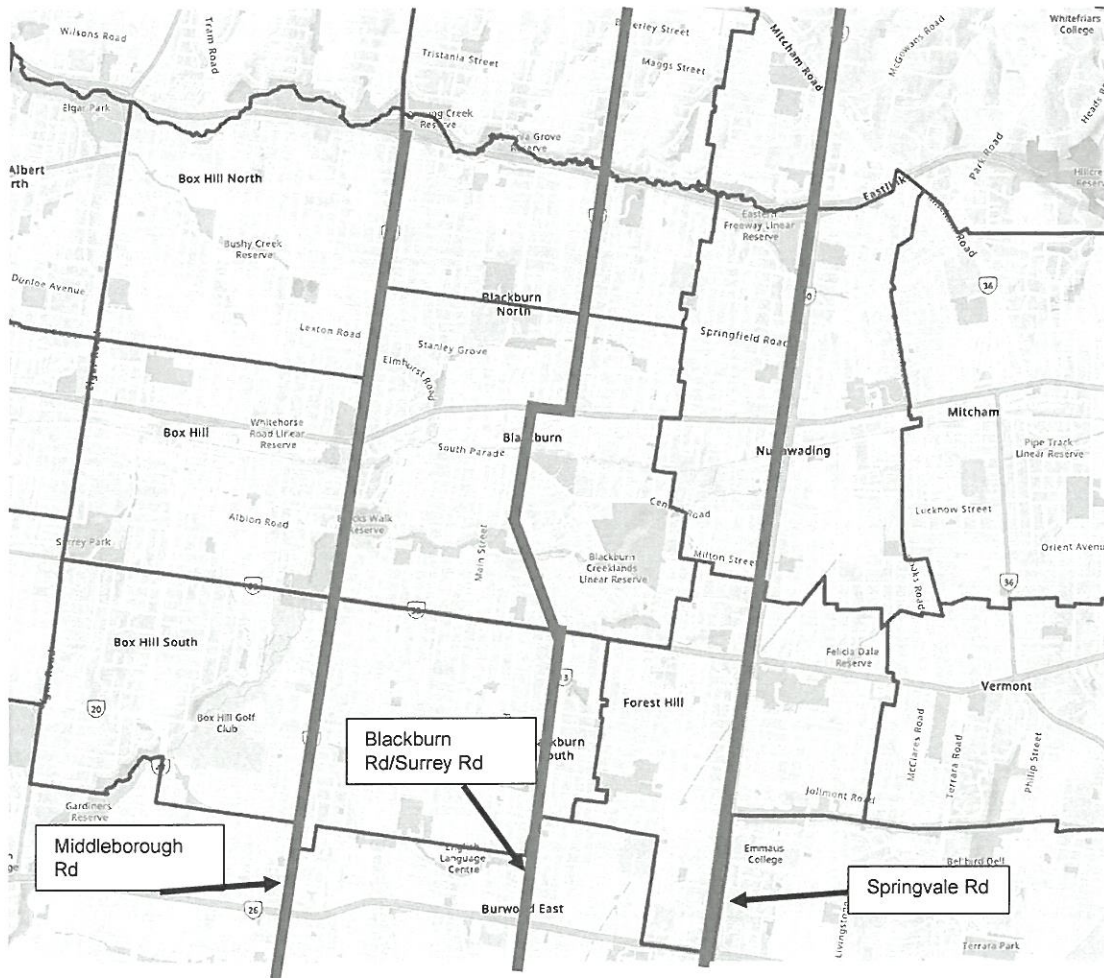


In contrast, a Springvale Rd division boundary would cut Mahoney's Ward and Terara Ward in half.



1.2 Suburb Borders:

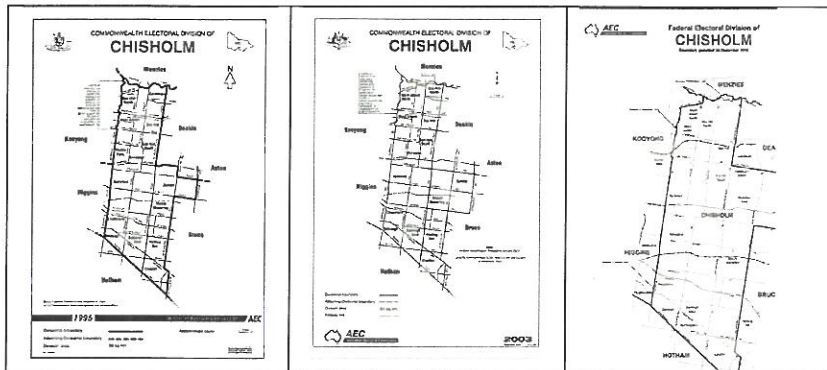
The western border of the suburbs of Blackburn, Blackburn South, and Blackburn North is Middleborough Rd.



Note how only Middleborough Rd does not cut any suburbs in half. The current boundary cuts Blackburn North, Blackburn South, and Blackburn in half, while using Springvale Rd would cut Nunawading and Forest Hill in half.

1.3: Federal Divisions

Historically, until 2019, Middleborough Rd formed the eastern boundary of Chisholm. It is a proven division boundary.



The only division boundary which respects the division between Box Hill and the Blackburn-Mitcham-Ringwood Axis is Middleborough Rd. This is why this boundary was used by many different types of administrative divisions past and present.

Failing this, the next best option is the proposed AEC draft boundary on Blackburn Rd. Using Springvale Rd as a division boundary is by far the worst option. It would split suburbs, council wards, and the continuous business area along Whitehorse Rd between Blackburn-Mitcham and Ringwood.

Problem Proposal (2): The boundary of Menzies and Deakin in Manningham should be Springvale Rd.

My Proposal (2): The boundary of Menzies and Deakin in the Manningham area should be the boundary of the municipality of Manningham.

Several objections proposed dividing the divisions of Menzies and Deakin along Springvale Road in the Manningham area as well. I strongly oppose this suggestion, on the following grounds.

2.1: Peri-Urban/Low Density areas

Using Springvale Road as the boundary between Menzies and Deakin in the Manningham area would cut Peri-Urban areas of Manningham in half, leaving Templestowe and western Donvale in Menzies, while placing the rest of the Peri-Urban suburbs of Manningham in Deakin. Peri-Urban areas have common interests that differ substantially from standard suburbs, they require common representation.

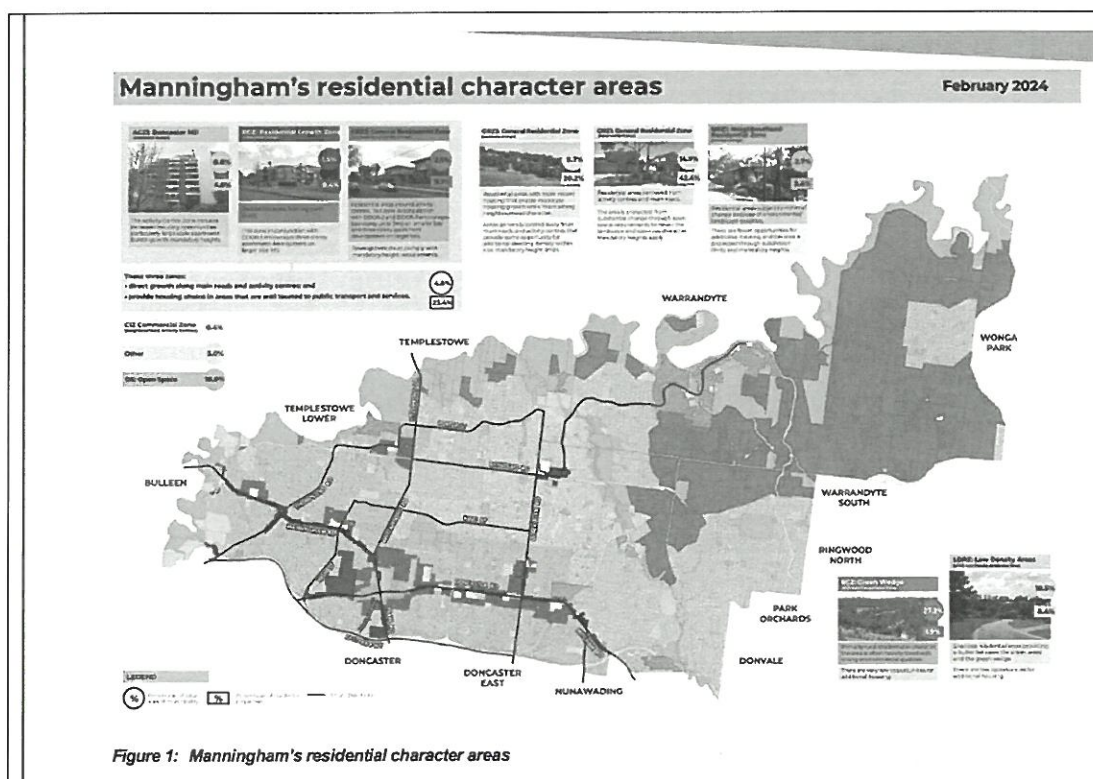


Figure 1: Manningham's residential character areas

2.2: How people travel

Dividing the Manningham section of Menzies at Springvale Road completely disregards how people in the area travel. The vast majority of travel is East-West. As Objections 456 and 440 highlighted, North-South travel almost never occurs for people in Mitcham, Nunawading, and other areas of Deakin. Objections 157, 160, 282, 298, 333, 370, 385 and probably others all explain how transport moves East-West in Manningham green wedge. I won't spend more time explaining it as these objections do a very good job already.

2.3: Existing boundaries

Dividing Menzies and Deakin at Springvale Road is needlessly disruptive to existing boundaries. Menzies has always been centred on Manningham, while Deakin has always been centred on Maroondah, putting half of Menzies in Deakin would disrupt both of those electorates and those LGAs, shifting a huge number of electors into new electorates. This is likely to be confusing and disruptive for residents and community groups, as Manningham Council explained in Objection 465.

2.4: Lack of community of Interest

Peri-Urban Manningham has nothing in common with the electorate of Deakin. It is zoned low density residential or rural conservation zone, is part of a CFA zone, has a low population density, a large Italian community, etc. In contrast, Deakin is a metropolitan electorate centred on more populous suburbs such as Ringwood and Croydon. Dividing Menzies at Springvale Road would force the Peri-Urban community into an electorate of Deakin it has nothing in common with.

The simple way to solve all these problems is not to use Springvale Rd as an electorate boundary for Menzies, and instead to keep the status quo.

Problem Proposal (3): The southern boundary of Menzies should move further south.

My Proposal (3): The southern boundary of Menzies should move up to Canterbury Rd.

A small number of objections suggested the southern border of Menzies should move further south to the Burwood Hwy. In reality, the opposite is correct, and the southern border of Menzies should move up to at least Canterbury Rd.

There are several reasons that using the Burwood Hwy as the Southern Border of Menzies would be a poor idea. Firstly, is the shape, Menzies would have an enormous skinny rectangle sticking out of it under this proposal, it would look gerrymandered.

A southern border at the Burwood Hwy would disrupt the Burwood community of interest, centred on Deakin University, splitting a major activity centre between two electorates. The AEC has succeeded in uniting the Box Hill activity centre in one electorate, it would be counterproductive to in the same redistribution then split another major activity centre in East Melbourne.

A southern boundary at the Burwood Hwy would also turn Menzies into even more of a North-South seat, despite the fact few people travel that way. After all, almost all major transport lines around Whitehorse City Council are east west, including the Burwood Hwy, Canterbury Rd, Whitehorse Rd, the Belgrave-Lilydale Line, and the Eastern Hwy.

The current border also has its issues. It is composed of Eley Rd, Station St, and Riversdale Rd. These are mostly normal suburban roads and are not sufficient enough of a boundary to constitute an electorate boundary.

The clear solution to this problem is Canterbury Rd, given that Burwood Hwy is not an appropriate Boundary. For one, Canterbury Rd is a major four lane road, large enough to be classified as a state route (32). Canterbury Rd also forms the southern boundaries of Cootamundra and Lake Wards, as above maps show. Canterbury Rd also clearly follows the suburb Borders of Blackburn and Box Hill.

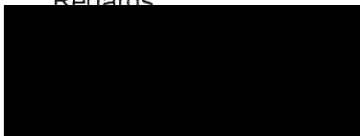
Summary:

The current southern and eastern borders of Menzies are problematic (Surrey Rd, Blackburn Rd, Eley Rd, Station St, Riversdale Rd, Springvale Rd, Old Warrandyte Rd). Some objections proposed alternative borders that were even worse (Springvale Rd, Burwood Hwy).

The best solution to the problematic current borders is clearly to use Middleborough Rd and the Manningham municipal boundary as the eastern border of Menzies, and Canterbury Rd as the southern boundary of Menzies. These boundaries best respect communities of interest, lines of transport, the urban landscape, and past and present administrative boundaries of various kinds.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to make this comment.

Regards



Harmick Singh