



Objection 281

Suzette Miller

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AEC 2023-2024 Victorian Federal Redistribution – Proposed Abolishment of Higgins

Dear AEC Review Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit an objection to the AEC's Victorian federal redistribution.

I object to the abolishment of the Higgins electorate. The existing electorate has a strong community of interest. If you abolish Higgins you will abolish our community's representation in Canberra. This isn't fair.

I have lived in Ashburton for over twenty years and prior to that in Camberwell for ten years. My geographical community of interest consists of Ashburton, Glen Iris, Camberwell, Hartwell, Malvern East, Malvern and East Hawthorn. We live on the boundary of Ashburton, Glen Iris and Malvern East and I spend considerable time in Glen Iris, Camberwell and Malvern as well as using services in Hawthorn and Surrey Hills. This is the geographical area that I identify with. By contrast we have no connection with Mount Waverley, Glen Waverley or Wheelers Hill. These are middle-outer suburbs and a completely different demographic.

The voters of Higgins share common social and economic interests. All suburbs across Higgins are largely affluent with highly educated professionals. Socially, Higgins is a progressive electorate. In the Voice referendum, 61.6% of Higgins voted yes whilst Chisholm was split 50/50 between yes and no. In the 2017 Australian Marriage Law plebiscite, 78.3% of Higgins voted yes compared to 61.6% of Chisholm. You will be silencing our voice by redistributing us as a minority in the far more conservative Chisholm electorate.

The AEC redistribution report states that the redistribution process will result in electoral divisions that will retain or improve existing communities of interest. I strongly disagree that abolishing Higgins will achieve this outcome. The existing Higgins electorate contains the entire Stonnington LGA – surely there can't be a stronger community of interest than that? Under this proposal, Higgins will be split into different and disparate electorates and our representation will be divided between five Federal Members of Parliament.

The electorate of Hotham would be a more logical seat to abolish. Unlike Higgins which contains the entire Stonnington LGA, Hotham already covers four LGAs with very little cohesion. The electorate's suburbs could be cohesively redistributed. Hughesdale could easily fit into Higgins while Oakleigh and Clayton are a logical fit for Chisholm which already contains most of the Monash LGA. Clarinda and Clayton South could move into Isaacs with the rest of the Kingston LGA, and Noble Park and Springvale could move into Bruce.

I also wish to comment on the loss of a seat in Victoria. The basis for the redistribution was the net loss of population from Victoria at the last census which unfortunately was during the peak of the Covid pandemic. Victoria experienced extended lockdowns which saw movement of many Victorians inter-state along with a block on new arrivals. Since then the population has flooded back to the state and as mentioned in your report is increasing rapidly, particularly in contrast to the rest of Australia. I wonder what story the statistics would tell if they were captured in June 2024 rather than when reviewed as part of the update undertaken last year. This redistribution is likely already anachronistic. This is not fair – Victorians will likely be under-represented for a couple of election cycles.

Thank you for the opportunity to have our voices heard. I realise this is a difficult process and thank you for all your hard work. I hope that we will not be sub-divided into areas that do not represent our needs. Please let Higgins survive so that we can continue to feel properly represented in Canberra.

Yours sincerely,

Suzette Miller

Ashburton

Ph.