



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

Submission COB7

Anonymous 1

Molonglo Valley Contiguity and Connection to Canberra Central

Given their proximity there is undoubtedly some community of interest between the Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek. I nevertheless fear that the submissions that argue for Molonglo Valley to remain in Bean or be divided between Bean and any other division overstate the benefit of their proposals. It is my contention that Molonglo Valley should remain intact, but be redistributed from Bean into Canberra as proposed by the Commission.

The priority enrolment area for Canberra College is the only PEA that connects Wright and Coombs (and the rest of the Molonglo Valley) with other suburbs in Bean. PEAs for primary and high schools do not traverse the Molonglo Valley-Weston Creek boundary, including that for Charles Weston School.

External transport connections for these suburbs are fairly sparse, indeed, are sparse for all suburbs within the Molonglo Valley, which is a community of interest in itself. A single bus service connects Wright and Coombs (and Denman Prospect) to Bean - service 66, a half-hourly, non-direct local route through Duffy, Holder, Weston, Lyons (Canberra), and Phillip. The only rapid route servicing these suburbs, however, is the R10, connecting them with Canberra Central (in the Division of Canberra) in the north-east through Cotter Road/Adelaide Avenue. A third local route connects Denman Prospect and Whitlam to Belconnen in the north on an hourly schedule. Currently, the only arterial road servicing the Molonglo Valley is Cotter Road which, as noted earlier, is oriented towards Canberra Central. The expected completion of the Molonglo River Bridge extension in late 2026 will further interconnect Molonglo Valley suburbs and strengthen their connection with the rest of Canberra in the north. Further, significant, long-term development slated for the Molonglo Valley to improve internal and external connections such as the Molonglo Valley Town Centre and the Molonglo Parkway Drive Connection also represent a common community of interest for this district.

Using AEC data to quantify geographic connections

Most of the evidence offered in support of the preponderance of particular communities of interest in the ACT have been based on qualitative, and perhaps subjective, descriptions of the geography of the ACT. Without accusing anyone of bad-faith, this evidence, such as that which I present in my own submission, can lead to a biased case in favour of certain communities of interest. I was interested to see what data can be used to get a more objective, qualitative measure of the connectedness of electors within the ACT. This is not to assert the superiority of empirical/statistical knowledge in making determinations, however, since these can also be subject to their own biases and shortcomings. In lieu of any detailed, publicly available data on transport use, employment, enrolment, and consumer behaviour I have analysed some of the data collected by the AEC in recent elections on the geographic distribution of electors casting ballots at booths.¹

It should be noted that this data and analysis is blind to the distribution of votes towards particular candidates and only relates to information about which booth locations electors resident in particular SA1 geographies cast their votes.

¹ 'Votes by SA1' (Australian Electoral Commission), available online: <https://www.aec.gov.au/election/fe25/downloads-statistics.htm>

In the last two Federal elections a significant proportion (close to 40%) of ACT voters cast a ballot during pre-polling. These pre-polling booths were located in Canberra’s five town/city centres (Tuggeranong, Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin and Civic) in addition to Parkes, which also serves as a significant employment hub. From the ‘Votes by SA1’ AEC dataset I have quantified the distribution of ballots across these pre-polling centres and am interpreting these distributions as a proxy for the geographic tendency (i.e. where people tend to travel and spend time) of electors resident to the various locations across the ACT. I have constructed two types of visualisations for these pre-poll distributions. First, a basic clustered bar chart categorising votes by booth location and elector residence. Second, with the additional use of polling place location data², a geographic representation of the centroidal (i.e. centre of mass/gravity) pre-poll location of electors by elector residence. I will use these visualisations to analyse what I consider the most important redistribution put forward for the ACT.

Molonglo Valley/North Woden Transfer

The most radical and contentious redistribution proposed by the AEC is the transfer of the population of the Molonglo Valley (Whitlam, Denman Prospect, Wright, Coombs) currently in Bean and the ‘North Woden’ suburbs (Lyons, Curtin, Hughes, Garran) currently in Canberra between the two divisions. I nevertheless support this redistribution, agree with the arguments made by the committee and the other supporters for this change, and have arguments of my own that I have laid out earlier. This proposal has attracted objections by a range of respondents who also make some fair arguments, and who put forward various counter-proposals. Below I will show the outcome of my analysis which I believe supports the current proposal. In Fig. 1 below I present the distribution of pre-poll votes for these populations.

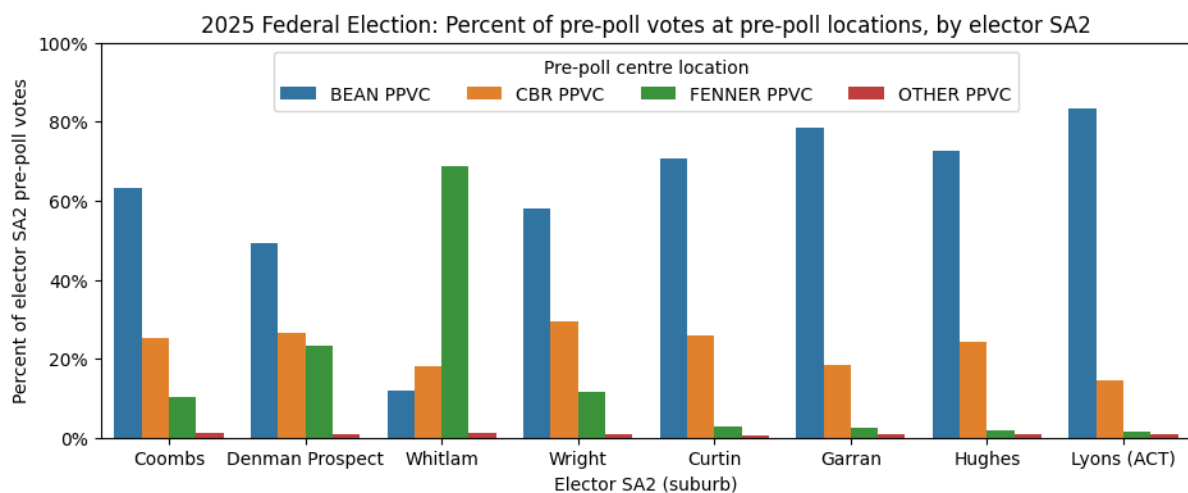


Figure 1. 2025 Federal election pre-poll location distribution by SA2 (Molonglo Valley and North Woden)³

² ‘Polling places’ (Australian Electoral Commission) available online:

<https://results.aec.gov.au/31496/Website/HouseDownloadsMenu-31496-Csv.htm>

³ Note that the legend for pre-poll centre location categories is an aggregation of pre-poll locations:

BEAN PPVC = Woden and Tuggeranong centres,
 CBR PPVC = City, City North, Parkes, and EAV centres,
 FENNER PPVC = Gungahlin and Belconnen centres,
 OTHER PPVC = Queanbeyan and Norfolk Island centres.

I carried out this analysis also for the 2022 election data and got a similar result, although there were no votes from Whitlam at this election (see Fig.2).

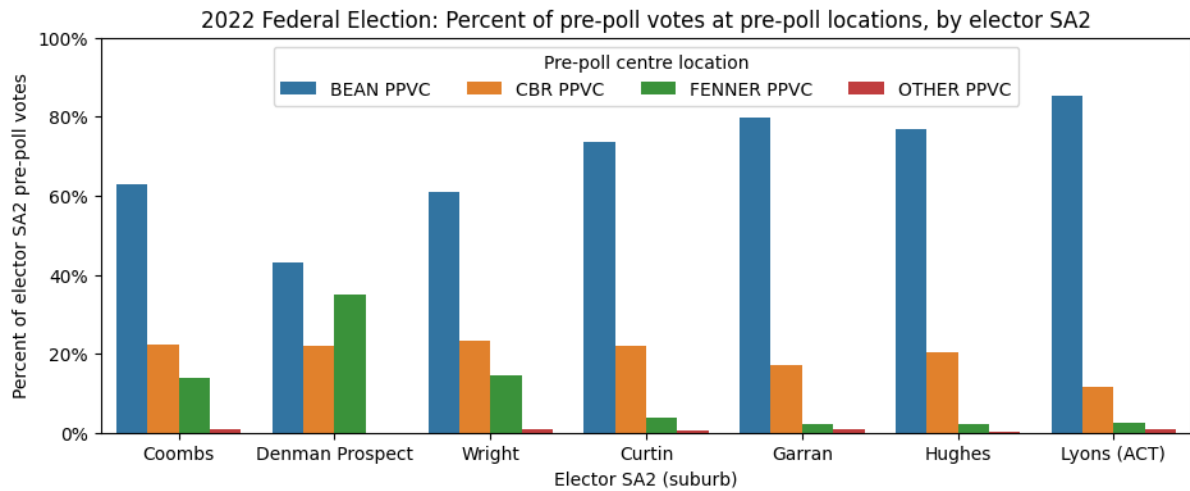
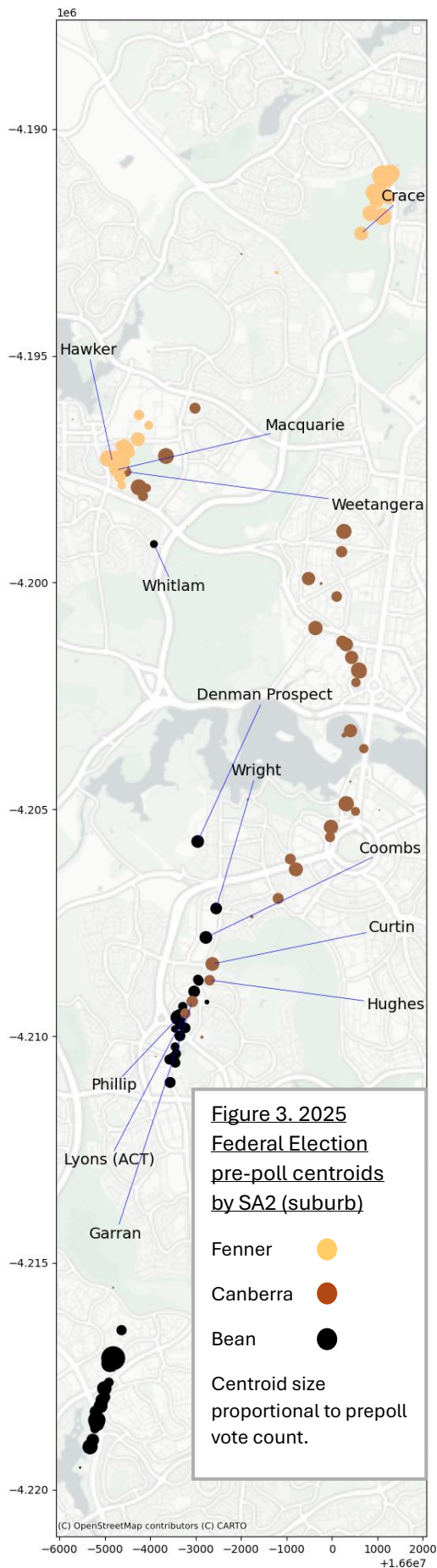


Figure 2. 2022 Federal election pre-poll location distribution by SA2 (Molonglo Valley and North Woden)

There are two conclusions I draw from these visualisations. First - that the north Woden suburbs have a greater connection than the Molonglo Valley suburbs to Bean. Second - that the Molonglo Valley, despite being slightly more Canberra-orientated than north Woden, is significantly more Fenner-orientated. In my view this supports the proposal to transfer the suburbs of north Woden into Bean, but is yet inconclusive as to whether the Molonglo Valley should be transferred from Bean into Canberra or from Bean into Fenner.

To further investigate the appropriateness of the Molonglo Valley transfer I will next present the second type of visualisation I generated from the AEC data. As noted earlier I have calculated and mapped the geographic centroid of these suburb-level pre-poll centre distributions. I have categorised these centroids (for every ACT suburb) by their current division, and have labelled the centroids of the contentious suburbs being considered for redistribution.

These divisionally named categories should not be confused with booth eligibility, e.g. the pre-poll location 'Tuggeranong FENNER PPVC' is categorised here as BEAN PPVC since it relates to votes by electors resident to Fenner that were cast at the Tuggeranong pre-polling centre, which is located in Bean.



We can see from this geographic centroid plot (Fig.3) that the north Woden suburbs (Lyons, Curtin, Hughes and Garran) are indeed more Bean-oriented than the Molonglo valley suburbs (Whitlam, Denman Prospect, Wright and Coombs) and are in close proximity/overlap with a cluster of Bean suburb centroids. The Molonglo Valley centroids on the other hand are more distant from the Bean clusters but also aren't particularly close to any other cluster on the map. I didn't have time to plot the overall, 'division-level' centroid for this analysis but if I did, I suspect that all of the Molonglo Valley centroids would be closer to a hypothetical 'Canberra Division' centroid than both a 'Bean Division' or 'Fenner Division' centroid.

I have also produced variations of this centroid visualisation (not included in this report) for the 2022 election as well, in addition to excluding the Parkes PPVC from the calculation, and still produce similar results.

The conclusions I draw from this visualisation is that it strongly supports the proposal to redistribute north Woden suburbs to Bean, and that, while there is no overwhelmingly obvious spatial connection for the Molonglo Valley suburbs they still have an orientation that supports redistribution into Canberra rather than any other division.

Norfolk Island Transfer

I finally want to address the matter of Norfolk Island being transferred from Bean into Canberra. The justification for this transfer appears to mostly be on the basis of balancing the enrolled population between Bean and Canberra to correct for the significant net transfer of electors as a result of the Molonglo Valley/North Woden redistribution. I note that arguments have been made that the location of the Canberra airport is also a reason for this transfer, which, like other respondents have argued, seems like a minor concern. It should be pointed out that, with the new proposed redistribution, the division of Bean will go from having the highest five-year growth in the enrolled population to the lowest five-year growth (see table 1). Furthermore, that even if Norfolk were to remain in Bean it would not lead to either Bean or Canberra falling above and below the respective maximum and minimum permissible number of electors (i.e. 118,861 and 110,823) even if it would be close (retaining Norfolk Island would result in a projected Bean elector population 118,157, and a projected Canberra elector population of 111,116). Since the new proposed Canberra electorate will contain a large swathe of high-growth, greenfield residential land (including the proposed new Molonglo Valley suburbs of Bandler and Sulman) it would make sense, for the sake of sustainability of these electoral boundaries, to provide a buffer in expectation of significant further growth in Canberra beyond the 5 year projection horizon.

	Enrolled population growth (2025-2030)	
	AEC Current	AEC Proposed
Bean	9,602	3,957
Canberra	6,573	12,231
Fenner	6,471	6,458

Table 1. Enrolled population growth (2025-2030)

Growth calculated as the difference between the actual enrolled population as of 12/08/2025 as reported by the AEC, and the projected enrolled population for 08/04/2030 as reported by the AEC.

I would also finally like to emphasise my strong agreement with the arguments made in OB15 in favour of retaining Norfolk Island in the division of Bean. It would be uniquely disruptive and politically disadvantageous for the people of Norfolk Island, as a highly remote territory, to have to deal with the disruption of entering a new political community it effectively has little in common with. Because of this and my previous argument I propose that the AEC reverse its proposal to redistribute the population of Norfolk Island, and keep it in the division of Bean.