



Submission S14

Australian Labor Party
(South Australian Branch)

SUBMISSION TO THE REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA
BY THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH)

The Redistribution Committee for South Australia has the task of drawing ten electoral divisions for the state in this redistribution. South Australian Labor acknowledges the criteria within subsections (2), (3) and (4) of section 66 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (the Act)* and believes that the criteria can be met easily with relatively minimalistic changes.

In particular, notwithstanding minor changes within these categories, SA Labor submits that the current division of the state between seven metropolitan seats and three rural seats accurately reflects the very different communities of interest within those two categories, and that no transfer of electors should occur between these two categories.

As we submitted during the last South Australian distribution in 2018, we believe that the construction of divisions that contain a mixture of urban fringes and rural towns and land should be avoided, for risk of diluting the interests of those populations. We would further submit that there is a significant community of interest difference between a small primarily agricultural town in the outer Adelaide Hills, and large growing satellite cities such as Mount Barker, Murray Bridge, Gawler and Aldinga.

Our proposed minimalistic approach, which would retain the existing boundaries of Adelaide, Boothby, Hindmarsh, Kingston and Sturt, is aided by the fact that only four seats would trigger the provisions of subsection (3)(a) of section 66 of the Act, and that those four seats border each other.

Our submission is to pair the seats of Makin and Spence, and the seats of Barker and Mayo, and to primarily only make changes within those seats to satisfy the elector average criteria of the Act, enabling the Committee to maintain the existing boundaries for all other seats but for a relatively minor change in Grey.

This would ensure that almost all rural portions of the State are appropriately in majority rural seats, without being excessively diluted by otherwise metropolitan populations. It would also align obvious communities of interest in Adelaide's Northern suburbs, using natural geographic boundaries. Importantly, it would tweak the seat of Mayo to appropriately reflect the growth of cities around Adelaide, which share similar cultures and service needs, given their similar proximity to the State's capital and shared transit infrastructure.

Makin and Spence

The division of Makin is projected to fall nearly 8% below the average projected enrolment, where the division of Spence is projected to be over 12% over the projection.

Our proposal is that this can be easily rectified by a simple transfer of electors from Spence to Makin, without necessitating the expansion of Makin into the distinctly different communities of the Adelaide Hills, or without pushing both seats further north, which would result in Spence capturing rural parts of the State.

On current boundaries, the northern boundary of Makin follows the Little Para River, but for a deviation along Kings Road and Main North Road, which allows Spence to take the suburbs of Salisbury, Salisbury Downs, Salisbury South, Salisbury Park, Salisbury Plain and Brahma Lodge.

Our submission would be to remove this deviation and hold the Little Para River as the natural boundary between Spence and Makin, and bring the aforementioned suburbs into Makin.

Not only would this resolve the population distribution inequity, but it would consolidate most of the Salisbury community within a single seat.

The area between the Little Para River, Kings Road and Main North Road house a great deal of central services, including shopping and hospitality precincts, healthcare and educational facilities, and other community facilities. For a great deal of Makin residents, these would be the closest and most convenient facilities to access. The border, as it stands, is an unnatural place to divide the broader Salisbury community.

This proposed boundary also creates greater alignment with the Local Government Boundaries, insofar as a portion of the LGA boundary also follows the Little Para River.

Not only does SA Labor submit this is a logical and simple solution to the potential distribution problem posed by the projection, but it avoids any sub-optimal outcomes from extending the Makin borders in other directions.

Grand Junction Road has long been a clear boundary recognised by previous Committees, and SA Labor submits it does serve as a demarcation between Adelaide's Eastern suburbs and the North and North East. Bringing Makin further south would not only break that boundary, and create the sub-optimal outcome of diluting the only explicitly North Eastern electorate, but it would risk a significant impact on the number of electors in either Adelaide or Sturt, in such a way that would create a need for further changes to the boundaries of those seats.

Pushing Makin further east to lift its number of electors would necessarily require the seat taking in a significant geographic portion of the northern Adelaide Hills. The North Eastern suburbs are a distinct community, with a great deal of population travelling to and working in the CBD, with suburban blocks and unique infrastructure needs. The Adelaide Hills, particularly the portion immediately to the east of Makin, is significantly less population dense, far more agricultural and with its own distinct economies and services. This is reflected in that the current eastern boundary of Makin is also the boundary between the City of Tee Tree Gully and the Adelaide Hills Council.

Mayo and Barker

Rapid population growth in Mount Barker and the Fleurieu have pushed Mayo outside of the permissible population deviation on projections. This is being driven, in part, by significant investment in housing in Mount Barker, and around Victor Harbor. These are growing regional cities, with unique needs and demands because of that growth.

Murray Bridge is a city with similar characteristics and challenges. Like Mount Barker, it is connected to Adelaide by the South Eastern Freeway, sitting just under an hour away – a feasible commuting distance. Recent developments have seen that region rapidly grow, also.

Outside of these population centres, however, are a series of small rural and agricultural communities that are significantly dissimilar in culture and lifestyle to the larger satellite cities.

The current boundary between Mayo and Barker separates the satellite cities, placing Murray Bridge in Barker, whilst keeping Mount Barker and Victor Harbor in Mayo. It equally separates smaller peri-urban communities such as Birdwood and Lobethal from Mount Pleasant, despite the obvious commonalities and shared identities in that part of the northern Adelaide Hills.

Our proposal would be to correct for Mayo's high population deviation by shifting a portion of the communities north of the South Eastern Freeway and east of the existing Makin boundary to the electorate of Barker.

This would create Barker as a predominately rural seat, with Mount Gambier and the Riverland as the population centres – neither of which could be described as satellites of Adelaide.

Importantly, it would also consolidate the interests and populations of Adelaide satellite cities of Victor Harbor, Mount Barker, Aldinga and Murray Bridge into the

seat of Mayo, affirming the identity of that seat as one of high-growth, high-density population centres, without the dilution of the peri-urban areas north of the Freeway.

Our proposal for the new division of Mayo would see the existing boundary along the coastline maintained, including Kangaroo Island, before following the existing boundary with Kingston and Boothby along the edge of Adelaide's suburbs. This existing boundary would be followed as far north as the South Eastern Freeway, before the boundary of Mayo diverts to follow that significant roadway. The boundary would follow the freeway, but for inclusions of communities directly connecting with the freeway, where the Mayo boundary would move north to include the communities of Crafers, Hahndorf, Littlehampton and Callington. The boundary of Mayo would follow continue to follow the Freeway, before diverting along the Adelaide to Melbourne Standard Gauge line at Monarto, off Jaensch Road. The boundary would then follow the rail line to meet the Murray River, before following the River south into Lake Alexandrina before meeting again with the existing boundary. This would have the effect of bringing Murray Bridge into the electorate of Mayo.

Barker would then shift into the area north of this new northern border of Mayo, taking in communities such as Birdwood, Lobethal, Mount Torrens, Gumeracha, Woodside and Nairne. These communities are strong tourist draw cards, and substantially support surrounding agricultural areas. They are significantly smaller than the satellite towns based around the Freeway itself. In this way, these communities have far more in common with some of the communities in the northern part of Barker, such as Mount Pleasant and Williamstown, or Barossa communities like Nuriootpa or Tanunda. These are communities with significant agricultural and tourist cultures. They are smaller, and far less dense, and are broadly more similar to the regional and rural nature of Barker, than they are the increasingly dense large communities of Mount Barker, Aldinga, Victor Harbor and Murray Bridge.

A clear demonstration of the different characteristics of these communities can be seen in the relative population growth of the councils. Adelaide Hills Council, which would be predominately shifted into Barker under this proposal, had an annual growth rate in 2023-2024 of 1.24%, similar to that of the Barossa Council at 1.21%. Both Murray Bridge and Mount Barker have growth rates higher than this, Mount Barker nearly three times as much at 3.12%. It follows that the lifestyle and population distribution of the northern portion of the Adelaide Hills is far more similar to that of the neighbouring Barossa, which is in Barker.

This proposed redistribution would be of particular benefit to the community of Murray Bridge. As it stands, Murray Bridge shares an electorate with Mount Gambier, a community nearly four hours away by road. Despite being in the same electorate, Murray Bridge shares TV networks, predominately, with Adelaide – not Mount Gambier. Murray Bridge does not share newspapers with Mount Gambier. But for effectively statewide competitions, there are no shared sporting leagues between

Mount Gambier and Murray Bridge. Indeed, the two large population centres that currently make up Barker, unfortunately, are effectively at opposite ends of the electorate to one another. As much as this would still be the case with the smaller communities north of the Freeway under our boundary proposal, those communities are of a similar size to the many fantastic small, country communities throughout the remainder of Barker, and thus likely face challenges in a similar way.

Grey and Barker

Should the commission choose to adopt the aforementioned approach, the Committee may be inclined to facilitate a transfer of electors between Grey and Barker. Whilst Grey is not currently projected to be beyond the permissible threshold below the average population per electorate, it will have the lowest population of any electorate within the permissible threshold. If the above changes were adopted, it would be the seat with the lowest population.

We propose this is rectified through the shifting of the Kapunda and Freeling communities from Barker, into Grey.

Not only would this provide greater consistency of populations between South Australian electorates, but it would also rectify the current split of the Light Regional Council between Grey and Barker, by shifting all of the major population centres into Grey.

To the extent there may be shared service centres that now would be split across Grey and Barker, we would submit this is of negligible practical effect given the nearest large service centre that is frequented by communities in the region is Gawler anyway.

The alignment of the Light Regional Council into Grey would ensure that the communities that surround Gawler, such as Hamley's Bridge, Wasleys, Freeling and Kapunda that unified within a single seat, whilst leaving the distinctly Barossa Valley population centres unified within the electorate of Barker.