

Electoral Newsfile

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2003 Redistribution Process Commences

A redistribution of federal electoral boundaries will be undertaken in Queensland and South Australia (SA) this year. This edition of Electoral Newsfile examines the redistribution process.

The Electoral Commissioner has announced that, as a result of changes in population, the Parliamentary representation entitlements of Queensland, South Australia (SA) and the Northern Territory (NT) will change.

The Electoral Commissioner made the determination of the number of representatives to which each State and Territory is entitled on 19 February 2003, based on figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other sources. These figures confirmed that Queensland will gain an extra seat in the House of Representatives whilst South Australia and the Northern Territory will each lose one seat.

The Australian Electoral Commission met on 12 March 2003, to direct the commencement of redistributions in Queensland and South Australia. The Northern Territory will not undergo redistribution as it reverts to being a single electoral division as a result of the determination made on 19 February 2003. Notice of the redistributions in Queensland and South Australia was published in the *Commonwealth Gazette* on 12 March 2003.

How was the determination made?

The determination was made by dividing the total population figure for all the States, excluding the Territories, by twice the number of Senators for the States to obtain a quota. Each State and Territory population was then divided by the quota, rounding the result to the nearest whole number to determine the entitlement (see page 3 for detailed explanation of the calculations).

The determination of representation entitlements was made under sections 46 and 48 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (CEA) which require the Electoral Commissioner to ascertain the population of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories during the thirteenth month after the first meeting of the newly elected House of Representatives and to then determine each State and Territory's representation entitlements at the next general election.

Changes to entitlements in a State or Territory trigger a redistribution of electoral boundaries.

A Redistribution Committee for a State consists of the Electoral Commissioner, the Australian Electoral Officer for the State, the Surveyor-General (or equivalent) for the State and the State Auditor-General. If the Surveyor General or Auditor General are not available, their deputies or, failing that, senior officers of the Australian Public Service from that State are appointed.

What causes a redistribution?

There are three triggers as defined in the CEA (s.59) that can cause a redistribution to be held. A redistribution is held:

- a) when the number of parliamentary representatives to which a State or the ACT is entitled has changed;
- b) when the number of electors in more than one third of the Divisions in a State or in one of the Divisions in the ACT deviates from the

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- average Divisional enrolment by more than 10 per cent in three consecutive months; or
- c) if seven years has elapsed since the last redistribution.

When were redistributions last held?

Redistributions were last held in:

Queensland	10 December 1997
South Australia	20 August 1999

Can people have a say in the process?

After the redistribution commences the Electoral Commissioner invites public suggestions as to how the new boundaries should be drawn and suggested names of the electoral Divisions. Following this period the suggestions are available for public comment for a further 14 days. The Redistribution Committee then develops a redistribution proposal and publishes and exhibits maps showing proposed boundaries and names. The public then has 28 days to lodge objections to the proposals.

An augmented Electoral Commission for a State or a Territory then has 60 days in which to consider the objections (including initial and any further objections). The augmented Electoral Commission for a State or Territory consists of the members of the Redistribution Committee for that State or Territory, plus the Chairperson of the Australian Electoral Commission and the non-Judicial Commissioner (the Australian Statistician).

If the augmented Electoral Commission proposes to set boundaries that are significantly different from those proposed by the Redistribution Committee, further objections may be lodged. The augmented Electoral Commission may hold public hearings to consider objections before making a final determination of boundaries and names of the electoral divisions.

What is considered by the Committee?

In developing its proposal, a Redistribution Committee must take into consideration:

- community of interests, including economic, social and regional interests;
- means of communication and travel;

- physical features and area;
- boundaries of existing Divisions; and
- enrolment (both current enrolment and 'projected' enrolment three and a half years after the redistribution).

What is the three and a half year rule?

Boundaries are drawn with the aim that three and a half years after the redistribution, the enrolment in each electoral Division should not vary from the State or Territory average by more than three and a half per cent.

How will an election affect the redistribution?

The new boundaries do not come into effect until the next general election. Any by-election held prior to the next general election would be conducted on existing boundaries.

If a general election is called before the redistribution has been completed a mini-redistribution must be held. This takes place as follows:

Where a State or Territory is entitled to one more Member than the number of existing Divisions, the two adjacent Divisions with the highest combined enrolment are split into three Divisions. The newly-created Division is given a hyphenated name, a combination of the names of the two Divisions from which it was created.

For example, if Brisbane and Griffith had the highest combined enrolment in Queensland, the newly created Division would be called Brisbane-Griffith.

Similarly, when a State or Territory is entitled to one less Member than it has Divisions, the pair of adjacent Divisions with the lowest combined enrolment will be redistributed to create one Division where there had been two. The name of the newly-created Division would be a combination of the two Divisional names. For example, if Hindmarsh and Port Adelaide had the lowest combined enrolment in South Australia, the newly created Division would be called Hindmarsh-Port Adelaide.

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The Quota

The quota is calculated by dividing the number of people of the Commonwealth by twice the number of Senators for the States:

$$\frac{19\ 205\ 190}{72 \times 2 = 144} = 133\ 369.375$$

The Population

<i>State/Territory¹</i>	<i>Number of people</i>
New South Wales	6 657 478
Victoria	4 888 243
Queensland	3 729 123
Western Australia	1 934 508
South Australia	1 522 467
Tasmania	473 371
The Commonwealth ²	19 205 190
The Australian Capital Territory ³	322 871
Northern Territory ⁴	199 760

The Entitlement

The number of Members of the House of Representatives to be chosen in each State and Territory is determined by dividing the number of people in each State and Territory by the quota, and rounding the result to the nearest whole number.

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Quota</i>	<i>Number of members to be chosen</i>	<i>Change</i>
New South Wales	49.9176	50	
Victoria	36.6519	37	
Queensland	27.9609	28	+1
Western Australia	14.5049	15	
South Australia	11.4154	11	-1
Tasmania ⁵	3.5493	5	
Australian Capital Territory	2.4209	2	
Northern Territory	1.4978	1	-1
Total		149	

- 1 Under section 38A of the CEA, the Territory of Norfolk Island is not taken to be a Territory for the purposes of this determination, but certain Norfolk Island residents are included in the State and ACT population figures.*
- 2 Under section 45 of the CEA, the total number of the people of the Commonwealth does not include the numbers of people of the Territories.*
- 3 Under section 4 of the CEA the population figure for the ACT includes Jervis Bay for the purposes of this determination.*
- 4 Under section 48 (2C) of the CEA the population figure of the Northern Territory includes Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island for the purposes of this determination.*
- 5 Under section 24 of the Constitution Tasmania is guaranteed a minimum of five Members.**

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The redistribution timetable

