



Objection Number 93

Luke O'Sullivan, State Director, The Nationals for Regional Victoria

5 pages

From: luke.osullivan@nationals.org.au
Sent: Friday, 27 August 2010 3:36 PM
To: VIC Redistribution
Subject: The Nationals objection submission
Attachments: 2010 FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION - Objection submission.pdf

The Australian Electoral Commission.

Please find attached, The Nationals submission with objections to the proposed electoral boundary changes.

Luke O'Sullivan

State Director

THE NATIONALS *for Regional Victoria*

Level 10, 140 Bourke St, Melbourne 3000

ph 03 9654 6588 fax 03 9650 2525 mob 0418 335 713

luke.osullivan@nationals.org.au www.vic.nationals.org.au

THE NATIONALS *for Regional Victoria*

Submission of objection to the draft boundaries of the Australian Electoral Commission.

From The National Party of Australia – Victoria

27 August 2010

The Nationals Victoria welcome this opportunity to respond to the proposed redistribution released on 30 July 2010.

In doing so, it needs to be noted that the publication of the proposals in the midst of a hotly contested Federal Election and a response date set for a few days following what has turned out to be an inconclusive poll result, has not been ideal in terms of the preparation of a detailed and comprehensive objection submission.

The Nationals acknowledge the difficulty confronting the Commissioners in determining a logical and coherent set of boundaries, bearing in mind the number of existing divisions outside the quota limits, the uneven population growth patterns in Victoria and the requirements of the Act to construct boundaries within the parameters set out in Section 66 in particular.

It is The Nationals firm opinion that the Commission has interpreted “community of interest” far too broadly. The narrative, especially paragraphs 55 and 56, seems to suggest that the community of interest test can be satisfied by merely separating metropolitan voters from those beyond. A perusal of Hansard when these sections of the Act have been the subject of legislative amendment makes it clear that Parliament had a much narrower definition of community of interest in mind.

For example, removing the grain growing centre of Horsham from the Mallee grain fields and placing it with the grazing interests with Wannon is clearly not maintaining a community of interest in the sense that Parliament intended. The proposal also severs the community of interest recently strengthened by the construction of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline.

Likewise, detaching districts just north of Shepparton such as Nathalia, Numurkah and Cobram from Shepparton severs a very definite community of interest. These towns are part of the regional community centred on Shepparton. They look to Shepparton for leadership, medical services, education, agricultural markets and supplies and sporting and social events. To infer that the Whittlesea and Nillumbik LGAs which form the southern part of the new McEwen have any community of interest with Shepparton, let alone an interest greater than the removed areas, is fanciful.

The southern portion of the new McEwen does not fit with the areas of the northern part of the new McEwen and The Nationals believe that the southern boundary of McEwen should be shifted further to the north. The proposed boundaries for the new McEwen include areas such as Whittlesea and Nillumbik, which have no community of interest with areas further to the north. The communities in the southern part of McEwen are largely commuting areas where residents work in the greater metropolitan areas.

Secondly, Mansfield traditionally has had a connection with Indi. Until recently it was in a LGA with Benalla. Removing Mansfield from Indi to the new McEwen breaks a long standing community connection.

While the Commission's comment that Echuca, because of its Murray River location, has a connection with downstream Murray River towns such as Swan Hill has some superficial geographical validity, Echuca is clearly part of the Goulburn Valley community in day to day business, industrial, social and recreational activities. Echuca residents simply do not connect west and north-west. They relate east and south and should definitely remain in the same electorate as Shepparton.

Moreover, it is incontestable that the major food producing Murray Valley and Central Goulburn Irrigation Districts which are widely acknowledged as the foodbowl of Australia should be placed in a single electorate and not split between three divisions as the Commission's proposal envisages.

The Nationals therefore believe that the Commission's proposals for regional Victoria can be realigned to more accurately reflect Parliament's intentions but at the same time not disturb to any significant extent Ballarat and Bendigo which are within quota or require more than minor adjustments to proposed metropolitan divisions.

While the Commission has drafted a set of boundaries that meet many of the criteria in terms of the new boundaries, The Nationals believe that in some instances, the commission has gone too far and has broken a basic principle of merging regional seats with urban seats.

The Nationals believe that people who choose to live outside of the metropolitan and suburban areas are entitled to be represented in the federal

parliament exclusively and not have their interests compromised by sometimes dominant issues in what is otherwise a regional electorate.

Issues that are specific to people who live in regional Victoria are unique and require specialised representation from a Member of Parliament who understands the uniqueness of regional living.

The Nationals under no circumstances subscribe to the theory that regional based seats should be abolished and recommend that every effort should be applied to ensure that the regional seats remain so that the unique regional issues receive a fair and reasonable voice in the federal parliament.

The inconclusive election result on 21 August will undoubtedly focus the spotlight more brightly on regional Australia. A redivision which clearly breaks strong community of interest links is not likely to be viewed favourably by the Parliament or rural and regional citizens.

The Nationals urge the Commission to undertake a revision of its proposals to achieve a set of boundaries which more closely reflect the intent of the Act and the common interests of the people.