



Objection Number 99

Michael Danby, Federal Member for Melbourne Ports

6 pages

From: Danby, Michael (MP) [Michael.Danby.MP@aph.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 27 August 2010 4:38 PM
To: VIC Redistribution
Subject: Redistribution submission: Melbourne Ports
Attachments: Melbports redistribution.pdf

Dear members of the Redistribution Committee

Please find attached my submission in regards to the federal seat of Melbourne Ports.

<<Melbports redistribution.pdf>>

Regards

Michael Danby

Federal Member for Melbourne Ports

Redistribution Secretariat
Level 8, Casselden Place
2 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE 3000

27 August 2010

Dear members of the Redistribution Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed redistribution of Victoria's federal electorates. As a sitting Member I have naturally taken a close interest in your work, and I acknowledge that the redistribution has been carried out with the efficiency I have come to expect from the AEC.

In lodging this objection to your proposed new boundaries for the Division of Melbourne Ports, my calculations show that the proposed new Division is better for me in party-political terms than the old Division. I acknowledge also that the proposed new Division is more geographically compact than the old Division.

I am also aware of the problem you face in needing to transfer voters from the fast-growing Divisions in the inner city area to Divisions further east which are growing less rapidly, and to accommodate the expected further rapid population growth in Melbourne Ports over the next five years.

I believe, however, that the boundaries you have proposed violate three of the criteria which according to the Act must govern your decisions – namely, “*community of interests within the proposed Electoral Division, including economic, social and regional interests*”, “*means of communication and travel*”, and “*the boundaries of the existing Divisions.*”

I acknowledge that these criteria are always subordinate to the need to create Divisions which meet the enrolment requirements set out in Section 66(3) (a) of the Act, and that it is therefore sometimes necessary to set these criteria aside. In this case, however, I do not believe that it was necessary to set these considerations aside in order to meet the (66(3) (a)) requirements of the Act.

Let me first address issues of **community of interest**. The suburbs within the current Division are in many ways diverse, but they have many things in common. This is

demonstrated by their patronage for the same shopping centres and local service providers, entertainment venues, schools, places of worship and community organisations.

You note in your report that the current Division consists of two parts, corresponding approximately to the City of Port Phillip to the west and part of the City of Glen Eira to the east. In the past these two areas were very different, with Port Melbourne and South Melbourne being largely working-class communities and Caulfield being a wealthy area. Today these differences are much less apparent.

The areas now covered by the City of Port Phillip have become much more affluent, while the Caulfield/Glen Eira has become increasingly diverse in its population. Both municipalities are now heavily populated by professional and business people. Both areas are increasingly multicultural, something which is welcomed across the whole area. Both areas have a strong focus on retail, the arts, hospitality, entertainment, education and high technology as sources of employment.

Furthermore, I know from my experience as the local member that both areas suffer similar problems of population growth, strained infrastructure, shortages of affordable housing, shortages of child care and aged care and traffic congestion.

I make a particular point about Melbourne's Jewish community, which has its centre in the suburbs of Caulfield, St Kilda, Elwood and East St Kilda. Jewish schools, synagogues and religious centres, community centres, community libraries and art centres, kosher shops and restaurants, and Jewish health and aged care services are concentrated across these suburbs. They serve the significant number of Jewish residents in both Port Phillip and Glen Eira. Further, there are strong family connections across these suburbs. Many Jewish families now living in Caulfield grew up in St Kilda, East St Kilda and Elwood, or first settled there when they came to Australia, and retain strong ties to these areas.

Currently all these areas are within the Division of Melbourne Ports. Your proposals would divide this community among three Divisions, with North Caulfield included in Higgins, South Caulfield and Elsternwick in Goldstein, and East St Kilda and Elwood in Melbourne Ports. This would be very unfortunate, particularly as there is only one other Division in Australia (Wentworth in NSW) in which the Jewish community is as strongly represented.

Relevant to this is the high number of pre-poll and postal ballots cast in Melbourne Ports. This is because of the many Jewish residents who for religious reasons cannot vote on Saturdays. Having the Jewish community largely located within one Division has enabled an appropriate level of planning and resourcing by the AEC in support of the high numbers of pre-poll and postal voters, as well as well understood and anticipated pre-poll locations for voters themselves.

In contrast, I would argue, there are few community, social or economic links across the areas south of Dandenong Road, in the Cities of Glen Eira and Port Phillip (currently with the

Division of Melbourne Ports) and north of Dandenong Road in the City of Stonnington (currently in the Division of Higgins). Dandenong Road is a major natural and traditional boundary, as well as a municipal boundary, and has been for many years. Although Prahran and South Yarra are closer to St Kilda than Caulfield is, they are oriented northwards to the city or eastwards to Toorak and Malvern, rather than southwards across Dandenong Rd to St Kilda or East St Kilda.

The inclusion of Prahran and South Yarra in Melbourne Ports would mean that Melbourne Ports would cover parts of four municipalities (Port Phillip, Glen Eira, Melbourne and Stonnington) instead of the current three. I do not think this is desirable. The City of Stonnington is based on Malvern and Toorak, which are very affluent areas and by-and-large do not share the attributes which unite the various communities currently in Melbourne Ports. On the current boundaries all of Stonnington is in the Division of Higgins, a Division which has a very different social and political character to Melbourne Ports, and a much more appropriate one for a representative of these areas.

Next let me address briefly issues of **means of communication and travel**. The municipalities of Port Phillip and Glen Eira and their suburbs are linked by well-used public transport networks – trains, trams (No. 3 and No.67) and bus services, as well as contiguous local and main road infrastructure. The main traffic links – Dandenong Rd, Balaclava Rd, Glen Eira Rd and Glenhuntly Rd – all run east-west. The proposed new boundaries create an artificial border across these lines of communication, at Orrong Rd. This border does not correspond to any real division between communities.

By contrast, Dandenong Rd serves as a barrier between Port Phillip and Glen Eira, on the one hand, and Stonnington, on the other hand, and there is far less traffic in the north-south direction. The main retail and entertainment centre in Prahran-South Yarra is Chapel St, but south of Dandenong Rd its character changes to residential and the two parts have little in common.

Next let me consider the question of the **boundaries of existing Divisions**. I'm aware that this criterion is at the bottom of the list of criteria in the Act, but in this case I believe it deserves consideration. The current boundaries of Melbourne Ports have existed since the 1990 election. Melbourne Ports is the only Division in Australia whose boundaries have been unchanged over this period of time. Eight federal elections have been fought on these boundaries. Over that time, Melbourne Ports has become a distinct political community. Most of them know they live in Melbourne Ports. The majority of its residents share certain values that I believe are special to this area, making this a unique community and not necessarily shared by the surrounding Divisions.

I think it would be a great pity to break up this well-established political community when it is not absolutely necessary to do so. This is particularly so when it is proposed to transfer the eastern part of the Division into two other Divisions, neither of which share the affinities and attributes of Melbourne Ports, and in both of which the transferred voters will find

themselves a small minority on the edge of their new Divisions, rather than in the centre of one Division as at present.

In view of these factors, **I am asking you to reconsider the determination** for Melbourne Ports made in your initial report. I believe this can be done in a way that ensures that Melbourne Ports, Higgins and Goldstein all remain in the permissible range of 97,680 – 104,764 as projected as at June 2014. The boundaries I am proposing are based on easily recognised local main roads and in the case of the Dandenong Road, a widely recognised natural/traditional boundary. By minimising the number of electors affected by the redistribution, my proposal also has the great strength of maintaining electorate identification by a significantly greater number of electors than would be the case if the initial proposals were adopted.

First, I am proposing that the exchange of territory between Higgins and Melbourne Ports not go ahead. This would leave the 18,308 electors in the South Yarra – Prahran area in Higgins and the 11,174 electors in North Caulfield in Melbourne Ports.

Second, I am proposing that the area of Caulfield bounded by Glen Eira Rd and Glenhuntly Rd, with its strong community links to the rest of Caulfield as well as East St.Kilda and Balaclava, be retained in Melbourne Ports rather than be transferred to Goldstein. As at 2014 this area is projected as having 7,608 constituents.

These two changes would keep the bulk of Caulfield united and within the Division of Melbourne Ports, where it has been for 20 years. Glenhuntly Rd is a well known and primarily non-residential main road and is suitable as the boundary between the Divisions of Goldstein and Melbourne Ports. This argument is further enhanced by the fact that the areas of South Caulfield to the south of Glenhuntly Rd have a distinct suburban identity.

The retention of the part of Caulfield between Glen Eira Rd and Glenhuntly Rd in Melbourne Ports would of course leave Goldstein under quota. But the retention of South Yarra and Prahran in Higgins allows more territory at the eastern end of Higgins to be transferred to Goldstein, thus keeping all three Divisions within the limits required by the Act. I therefore propose that the area bounded by Grange Rd, North Rd, Koornang Rd and Neerim Rd – Railway Pde currently proposed for Higgins instead be retained by Goldstein. This has the advantage of keeping these electors in their current Division, and increasing the proportion of residents of the City of Glen Eira in the Division of Goldstein. As at 2014 this area is projected as having 5,115 constituents.

Thirdly, I would also propose that the area of Docklands be retained by the Division of Melbourne. I know this area well and I don't think there is any real community of interest between Docklands and South Melbourne. The Yarra is a major barrier, and there is no easy way to get from Docklands to the centre of Melbourne Ports – such as my electorate office in Fitzroy St, St Kilda. Docklands is an extension of Melbourne City and is oriented eastwards to the city, not southwards. Its public transport links all run east-west. Southbank, while in

geographic proximity, is oriented to St Kilda Rd. Despite their proximity these two areas really have little in common. As at 2014 this area is projected as having 2,394 electors and its retention in the Division of Melbourne would still leave that Division well within the permissible range.

I strongly believe that the solution I have proposed would result in creating a Division of Melbourne Ports with a stronger alignment to municipal boundaries, and with more consistency with natural shopping, education, religious, social, other community and transport connections (and therefore community of interests), while achieving an outcome in which each of the Divisions is well within the permissible range.

My proposal would also maximise the number of constituents in each of the Divisions of Melbourne Ports, Goldstein, Higgins and Melbourne undisturbed by the redistribution. In a period of political instability and of increasing and unwelcome informal voting, the ability of constituents to remain undistributed within electoral boundaries they have been familiar with for 20 years is a desirable outcome. I hope you will give my proposals your serious consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Danby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the name.

MICHAEL DANBY MHR
Federal Member for Melbourne Ports