



The Federal Redistribution 2008
Northern Territory



Public Suggestion Number 2

**Australian Labor Party
Northern Territory Branch**

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AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

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Redistribution Committee for the
Northern Territory
Level 7, TCG Centre
80 Mitchell Street
DARWIN NT 0800

Attention Mr Iain Loganathon

Dear Mr Loganathon

As per your advertisement of 3 March 2008 calling for comments on the submissions lodged on the redistribution of the Federal Divisions within the Northern Territory pursuant to The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 please find attached a response from the Australian Labor Party (Northern Territory) Branch.

If you have any questions regarding these suggestions please contact myself on 8981 3801.

Yours sincerely

George Addison
Branch Secretary

28th March 2008

Submission lodged by the Australian Labor Party (Northern Territory) Branch in relation to the 2008 redistribution under *The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*

In response to the media release dated 3 March 2008 calling for submissions on electoral boundaries to the Redistribution Committee pursuant to *The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* the Australian Labor Party (Northern Territory) Branch puts forward the following submission.

Summary

The ALP Northern Territory Branch:

- Supports the current boundaries for the federal electorates of Solomon and Lingiari remaining as they were in the 2007 general election.
- Believes that the long-term interests of both Solomon and Lingiari, and the distinct communities that reside within them, are best protected by this position.
- Believes that current enrolment projections do not support any change to enrolments and that the population growth in both areas is high enough to support the current boundary arrangements.

1. Projected enrolment and quota

- 1.1 The ALP Northern Territory Branch notes that the current enrolment in the seats of Solomon and Lingiari sits at 119,359. The AEC projects that this will increase by fewer than 11,000 voters to 130,149.
- 1.2 The AEC enrolment projection sets the current quota at for both seats at 59,680 and the projected quota in 2012 at 65,075. Using the 10% variation permitted by the AEC, the projected enrolment for each seat must not fall below 53,712 under the current figures or 62,797 under the projected figures.
- 1.3 Most importantly, the ALP notes that the seat of Solomon is projected to sit at 64,696 voters in 2012, more than 2,101 voters above the quota minimum requirements only 0.58% variation from the set quota.
- 1.4 The ABS has also projected that growth in Solomon, particularly in new suburban developments in Palmerston, will see that electorate grow by 11.23% over the period, as opposed to the much smaller growth in Lingiari which is only projected to grow at 6.96%. This figure reflects the current high and growing population levels of Darwin and Palmerston.
- 1.5 The ALP believes that this growth figure is largely accurate; however, it does not potentially take into account longer term growth in the Palmerston area, as with further land releases foreshadowed.
- 1.6 The ALP believes that growth in Solomon could in fact be even larger than that predicted by the AEC when these developments come on line.
- 1.7 Additionally, the AEC projected enrolment for Lingiari indicate that in 2012 it will be only 378 voters above the ideal quota, and well within the 10% quota variation allowed for the redistribution.
- 1.8 Using the figures provided by the AEC and ABS it is difficult to see that any boundary change is justified, particularly given the existing communities of interest which are protected under the current boundaries.
- 1.9 As a result the ALP strongly opposes any changes to the current boundary between Lingiari and Solomon.

2. Community of interest

- 2.1 The boundary between Solomon and the rest of the Territory (Lingiari) reflects an obvious community of interest. The township of Palmerston is the “second centre” of the seat after Darwin and the boundaries of Solomon do not currently extend beyond the Palmerston Statistical Local Area in the growing southern areas of the electorate. This boundary is the best reflection of the natural divide between the suburban Palmerston and the semi-rural blocks in the areas beyond.
- 2.2 There is a distinct community difference between Palmerston and the rural blocks in neighbouring areas. Palmerston is an outer-metropolitan suburban growth area, with standard sized blocks and a commuting population to Darwin. In work, leisure and community participation, Palmerston residents have a distinct community, as do residents in the rural block areas.
- 2.3 Additionally, the obvious point for residents on the rural blocks is that they share a community of interest which should not be broken through a change to the boundary. These residents deserve representation as a whole, not to have parts of their community moved into Solomon.
- 2.4 The differences between the two communities are reinforced by looking at social data from the census, reinforcing the fact that Palmerston and the rural blocks are distinct communities of interest.
- 2.5 Home ownership patterns are starkly different between the two areas. In Palmerston units and rental properties are a large proportion of the area. Mortgage holders are also a large part of Palmerston. In areas like Howard Springs in Lingiari however, a large proportion of houses are fully owned (32.9%) compared to relatively low numbers in Palmerston (7.4%). The contrast is even starker in looking at rental property levels, with 39.7% of Palmerston residents renting as opposed to only 10.9 % of residents in Howard Springs. These housing characteristics flow through to other characteristics such as household type and composition.
- 2.6 In reality, areas like Howard Springs have a strong community of interest with neighbouring areas to the east and south, such as Humpty Doo. A look at some of the census characteristics of these areas confirms that in family, home and household composition, the rural block areas have a closer affinity and community of interest with each other than they do with either Palmerston or Darwin. This confirms the strong opinion on the ground that these areas represent a distinct community, entirely separate from Palmerston and Darwin.

3. Summary of position

- 3.1 The ALP does not believe that any variation to the boundary between Solomon and Lingiari is justified at this time. The ALP believes it is not justified on the basis of the projection figures generated by the AEC, and also not justified on needing to maintain distinct communities of interest within each seat.
- 3.2 The ALP believes it is not justified on the basis of the projection figures generated by the AEC and ABS, and also not justified on needing to maintain distinct communities of interest within each seat.
- 3.3 If the AEC were to insist on a boundary change, the ALP believes any variation to the boundary should be small, and have the effect of correcting an anomaly only.
- 3.4 This would see the small area west of Taylor Road and North of the Stuart Highway moved into Solomon. The ALP does not believe that even this change is necessary, however, and supports a “status quo” ruling from the AEC.