



Comment on objections 49

Mark Dreyfus QC MP

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From: Dreyfus, Mark (MP)
To: [FedRedistribution - VIC](#)
Subject: Comment on objections to Victorian federal redistribution
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Dear Members of the Augmented Electoral Commission,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the objections to the Commission's proposed redistribution in relation to the electorates of Isaacs, Hotham and Bruce.

I understand the Commission's proposal regarding the electorate of Isaacs and understand the Commission's desire to unite the City of Frankston in the proposed electorate of Dunkley by transferring the suburbs of Carrum Downs, Skye and Sandhurst from my electorate of Isaacs to Dunkley.

My primary concern relates to the Commission's proposal for the northern end of Isaacs, where the Commission proposes very significant changes to the boundaries between Isaacs and Bruce and Hotham respectively, and I share the concerns of several of those objections to the Commission's proposal for the boundaries of Isaacs, Bruce and Hotham

While I appreciate the Commission's overarching logic, there are several changes that could be made that would make each of these electorates more coherent so far as improving boundaries and communities of interest. My proposal, which mirrors the objection of the Australian Labor Party, would also greatly decrease the number of electors required to move between electorates, which I understand is a key consideration for the Commission.

I strongly object to the Commission's proposal to draw the border between Isaacs and Bruce at Cheltenham Road and then, in Dandenong South, at Kirkham Road.

This boundary would greatly isolate the communities of Keysborough, south of Cheltenham Road, and Dandenong South, south of Kirkham Road, from their respective community infrastructure.

Keysborough boundary with Bruce

The community of Keysborough is a close-knit community. Most of the new housing in this community is south of Cheltenham Road, but nearly all of the key community infrastructure is north of it. Residents of Keysborough shop at Parkmore Shopping Centre or Douglas Street, Noble Park – both north of Cheltenham Road and south of the train line. There is no public school in Keysborough, south of Cheltenham Road. Children living south of Cheltenham Road largely attend schools north of Cheltenham Road, including Chandler Park Primary School, Wallarano Primary School, Noble Park Primary School, Resurrection Primary School, St Anthony's Primary School, Keysborough Primary School and Keysborough Secondary College – all of which are north of Cheltenham Road and south of the train line. CBD workers in Keysborough, of which there are many, commute to the City from Noble Park, Yarraman or Dandenong Train Station, all north of Cheltenham Road. Most sporting clubs and religious buildings used by Keysborough residents are also north of Cheltenham Road and south of the train line. The Frederick Wachter Reserve, for example, is north of Cheltenham Road, yet a great many of the athletes and spectators that use it come from Keysborough, south of Cheltenham Road. Moving the boundary from the long established Pakenham Train Line to Cheltenham Road would split this community and residents south of Cheltenham Road would be worse off for it. The Greater Dandenong community is geographically and socially split by the Pakenham Train Line. As noted in the ALP comment on objections, '*do you live north or south of the line?*' is a common question that reflects the social divide created by the train line. I have never heard anyone ask someone if they live north or south of Cheltenham Road.

Residents south of Cheltenham Road deserve to live in an electorate that shares their community of interest. For these residents, this community of interest is the area in the Greater Dandenong Local Government Area between Cheltenham Road and the Pakenham Train Line. I submit that this should remain the boundary between Isaacs and Bruce.

Dandenong South boundary with Bruce

I respectfully submit that the Commission's proposal to move the boundary between Bruce and Isaacs to Kirkham Road, Dandenong, is strongly misplaced.

Dandenong South is a tight-knit community with a large and established Albanian-Australian population. Kirkham Road is a one-lane each way suburban street and is a particularly weak boundary that splits this community in two, isolates those residents south of Kirkham Road from, not only the Dandenong Train Station and Parkmore Shopping Centre, but from the Albanian Mosque and Dandenong South Primary School, which are both proposed to be removed from Isaacs in the Commission's proposal.

Dandenong South is a strong and cohesive community within the broader southern Greater Dandenong community (the part of the Greater Dandenong Local Government Area south of the Pakenham Train Line). It would do significant damage to community cohesion in this suburb if it were split in two. This divide would split the electors south of Kirkham Road from the Albanian Mosque, Dandenong South Primary School and Parkmore Shopping Centre. I submit that it should be among the Commission's top priorities in the South-East to re-unite the entirety of Dandenong South in the Isaacs electorate.

The Pakenham Railway line

It is easy to understand why the Commission has for some time used the Pakenham Railway line as the boundary between Isaacs and Bruce. It is universally known in the Greater Dandenong community and provides both a geographic and social divide between electors in southern Greater Dandenong and electors in northern Greater Dandenong. This train line shapes the lives of many local residents. It influences commuter habits, school choices and shopping locations. There is no reasonable rationale to argue that Cheltenham Road, let alone Kirkham Road, has any of this influence.

Retaining the electorate of Bruce as the 'northern Greater Dandenong' electorate and Isaacs as the primary 'southern' one reflects the communities of interest in both areas and provides a much stronger boundary, without unnecessarily moving tens of thousands of electors.

I strongly agree with the objections that suggest that the Commission returns the boundary between Isaacs and Bruce to the Pakenham Train Line, that Isaacs sheds an equivalent number of electors that it was proposed to pick up from Hotham in the City of Kingston and that Bruce continue to represent the electors of Mulgrave and Wheelers Hill. I believe that this change would create more coherent communities within each electorate, provide stronger and better known boundaries and reduce the number of electors inconvenienced with a change in electorate.

Precedent

I note that in 1994 the Commission proposed similar boundaries for Bruce to what has been proposed in 2018. Many objectors, including the Liberal Party, argued against this proposal. The Liberal Party stated in its objection that the territory south of the railway line that was proposed to be added to Bruce was '*divorced from any community of interest within Bruce.*'

This community connection of the Greater Dandenong suburbs south of the train line has, if anything, strengthened in the intervening period, without gaining greater community of interest with the Greater Dandenong suburbs north of the train line.

The Commission accepted this argument, stating that '*the Commission considers that there is merit in revising the proposed boundaries in these areas to minimise the extent to which the electoral boundaries split the communities concerned*' and proposed to address this '*by moving all of Keysborough and areas of Noble Park and Springvale South into one electorate.*'

This principle should still stand.

Thank you for your consideration. I would like the opportunity to have my submission considered formally at the public hearings and respectfully request that time be allotted to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Dreyfus QC MP
Federal Member for Isaacs