



Objection 344

Committee for Maryborough

4 pages

Submission - redistribution of Victorian electoral divisions.

OBJECTION FOCUS:	Boundaries of Electoral divisions
FOCUS AREA:	Proposed change for Central Goldfields Shire – From Wannon to Mallee WANNON, MALLEE, BENDIGO and BALLARAT
OBJECTION SUBMITTED BY:	Committee for Maryborough – BOARD MEMBERS

Overview

The recently created Committee for Maryborough would like to express its thoughts on the recent recommendation by the AEC to relocate the Central Goldfields Shire to the Federal electorate of Mallee.

Over the past five years our community has been very successful in rebuilding the foundations for an environment which will allow all of our citizens to realise their social and economic potential.

The improvements that we have achieved to social cohesion, health services, education and children's services has been nothing short of spectacular. There is still a lot of work to be done to translate these developments into economic reality. Adequate and appropriate political representation is vital for this to occur and a move to such a geographically vast, economically and socially disparate electorate will do little to enhance this.

The Committee for Maryborough has as its vision to "lead Maryborough to become a centre for excellence for rural economic transformation and renewal". One of the key strategies in achieving this is to leverage our geographical proximity to two of the fastest growing growth areas in Australia in Bendigo and Ballarat. Our interdependence on these two areas for supply chain, logistics, transport, health, education and all of our Government services dictates a reliance on common political representations to these two areas. A move to the electorate of Mallee would inhibit such a vision.

Background

Central Goldfields Shire was originally included in the Bendigo Division. This alignment was logical and provided the strong links that we need to support the economy, education, health, tourism and social development.

Following the redistribution process of 2010, the Central Goldfields Shire was transferred to the Wannon Division. This move was made following an objection during the 2010 process, was never supported by the residents of the Central Goldfields Shire and there was no opportunity for recourse with this decision.

The Central Goldfields Shire has been identified as the most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria. Moving our LGA into the Mallee Division will do nothing to support the change in disadvantage. The Mallee is a vast area facing issues such as rural decline and ageing and is deeply entrenched in agriculture and horticulture activities along the irrigated areas of the Murray River. This does not align to our demographics and location within Victoria.



Community of interest

Residents of the Central Goldfields Shire (CGS) align strongly with the Regional Centres of Ballarat and Bendigo. Maryborough is located in the middle of both these communities which are only just over 60kms away in either direction. We have a passenger rail service that goes through Ballarat twice daily to support accessing local services for community members with transport difficulties.

We have an amazing health service and education facilities who are aligned with Ballarat and Bendigo including the ability for residents to participate in programs that are only available in regional centres.

Our emergency services and government departments align to State Government boundaries placing them in the Bendigo area. All service provisions come from this area and further demonstrate the need for the CGS to be returned to the Bendigo division. This will help improve consistency in decision making and enable voters to influence priority needs for our community.

It is only fair that we seek to have input into government decisions that are made in the locations where we access services. If all our business, social and support services are accessed in either Bendigo or Ballarat then we need to be given the opportunity to have a voice in decision making at these locations.

A move to Mallee will see our input restricted to the Regional locations of Mildura and Swan Hill, locations where none of our residents will ever access regional services. Locations where none of our businesses will seek to expand and develop. Locations whose priority needs do not align with our community needs. It is more than reasonable to suggest that a move to Mallee will take away our voters' rights to influence government decisions that have a direct impact our communities and our lives.

Opportunities that need to be explored

It is worth noting that number of electors in the Central Goldfields Shire is very limited. The expected transfer numbers to the Mallee are 10,163. This small number, we feel, provides opportunity to explore different opportunities that will support our communities in the inclusion of a division that is relevant and conducive of the growth and sustainability that we require being located in Central Victoria.

We also understand that any changes made will have flow on effects. We have noted below that there are opportunities to be explored but also acknowledge that we are not across all the impacts. The suggestions made below are to demonstrate what might be possible. We are aware that many of the earlier discussions may have looked these options but would like to highlight that the lay person does not often have the capacity to spend hours on end looking through all these reports and submissions.

1. Central Goldfields Shire (CGS) to transfer back to the Bendigo Division

Looking at the proposed redistribution there would be alternative configurations that could be considered that would enable CGS to move back into the Bendigo Division.



This would need to look at the ability to increase elector numbers in the Mallee Division to meet the quota as detailed in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

A key opportunity to explore would involve additional elector numbers being sourced by transferring all or some of the Campaspe Shire council from the Nicholls Division (previously Murray) into the Mallee Division to support an increase that is required.

This could also support opportunities to consider future growth rates in McEwen with the ability to take some of these electors out of that division and allocate across to Nicholls.

2. Central Goldfields Shire (CGS) to transfer to Ballarat Division

Looking at the proposed redistribution there would be alternative configurations that could be considered that would enable CGS to transfer to the Ballarat Division.

In the April Report the Redistribution Committee noted growing commonality between Bacchus Marsh and Melbourne's outer western metropolitan areas in the neighbouring Division of Gorton but did not deem any further changes to the Division of Ballarat to be beneficial or necessary at this time.¹ This would suggest there are opportunities to explore changes within the Ballarat Division that would better meet the needs of individual LGA's

These options would also need to look at the ability to increase elector numbers in the Mallee Division as detailed in point 1 above and the need to look at transferring electoral numbers out of the Ballarat division.

A key point to note is that the Corangamite division (neighbouring Ballarat and Wannon Divisions) is a key growth area and it is reasonable to expect that coastal areas will continue to flourish.

An option would be to transfer part of the Surf Coast Shire into the Wannon Division where there is a strong alignment of community of interest, business, economic development and tourism. This would relieve the growth in Corangamite, increase the electoral numbers in Wannon.

3. Central Goldfields Shire (CGS) to remain in Wannon Division

At the very least the Committee for Maryborough strongly objects to being transferred from Wannon to the Mallee.

In the last redistribution in 2010 the Central Goldfields Shire was removed from the Bendigo Division into the Wannon Division. This change was a difficult change that was never in a best interest. However, over the past several years we have built strong relationships within the Division that have and continue to support us in addressing the disadvantage that exists in our community.

¹ Chapter 2. No157. Proposed redistribution of Victoria into electoral divisions APRIL 2018 Report of the Redistribution Committee for Victoria



Key points of support to remain in Wannon:

- **Central Goldfields Shire transferred into the Wannon Division less than 8 years ago**
- **We have built strong relationships within this electorate since that time**
- **We feel consistency is a key to keep programs and activities progressing within our shire**
- **We require this stability to continue moving towards sustainable change in the areas of economic development, tourism and social development**
- **Wannon main hub is at Warrnambool some 200 kms from CGS. With Mallee main centres of Mildura and Swan hill being 400kms and 220kms respectively.**
- **Mallee area is facing issues of rural decline and ageing where our community is looking towards growth and diversity.**
- **The proposed area of Mallee would cover an area of 73,879 sq. km. With Wannon covering an area of 32,047 sq. km**

Recommendations:

- 1. Central Goldfields Shire will not be transferred in to the Mallee Division**
- 2. Consideration is given to revisit the opportunities for Central Goldfields Shire to join either Bendigo or Ballarat Divisions**
- 3. If Bendigo or Ballarat Divisions are deemed not a feasible option that Central Goldfields Shire remains in the Wannon Directorate.**

