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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

O/N 148006

HEARING OF THE AUGMENTED ELECTORAL COMMISSION

MR P. HEEREY QC, Chair

MR E. KILLESTEYN

MR B. PINK

MR J. TULLOCH

MR D. PEARSON

MRS J. McMULLAN

IN THE MATTER OF:

**REDISTRIBUTION OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES IN THE STATE OF
VICTORIA**

CONDUCTED AT 481 WYNDHAM STREET, SHEPPARTON

1.03 PM, THURSDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2010

MR P. HEEREY QC: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this hearing of the augmented Electoral Commission. My name is Peter Heerey. I am the chair of the augmented Electoral Commission. The other members of the Australian Electoral Commission present are Mr Ed Killesteyn on my right, who is the Electoral Commissioner, and on his right, Mr Brian Pink, the Australian Statistician. The other members who make up the augmented Electoral Commission are Mr John Tulloch, the Surveyor-General of Victoria, on the far left; Des Pearson, the Auditor-General of Victoria on the far right, and moderately in the centre, Mrs Jenni McMullan, who is the Australian Electoral Officer for Victoria.

The Redistribution Committee has prepared a proposal for the redistribution of Victoria into 37 federal electoral divisions. That's the same number of divisions, although, as you're probably aware, a major part of the proposal involves the abolition of the seat of Murray and the creation of the new seat of Burke. The proposal was released at the end of July. Objections were invited, and also comments on those objections were received. We have to consider all objections lodged, and today is the opportunity for members of the public to make oral submissions about those objections.

Redistributions are governed by the Commonwealth Electoral Act. There has to be a redistribution at least every seven years, and the primary consideration is that, within a certain tolerance, electorates – divisions should have the same number of electors. The arithmetic of that in Victoria is that the three and a half per cent either way from the average means that there's a maximum of about 105,000 and a minimum of about 98,000 which can constitute any one division. And those figures are based on the projected enrolments as at June 2014.

Now, subject to a division satisfying those numbers, we have to give regard to communities of interest. That's economic, social and regional interest. We have to have regard to means of communication and travel, and physical features and areas. And also the boundaries of existing electorates, although that is of lesser importance. Because boundaries may change, often there has to be compensating adjustments to make sure the divisions are within those number limits.

Now, the inquiry today will be recorded, and transcripts of proceedings will be available, and will be on the Australian Electoral Commission website. We would ask people making submissions to come to the table in front and please state their name before they commence their presentation. After our consideration of the matter, we have to complete our – announce our decision by 9 November. The first people we have listed – I'm not sure if she's present. Danielle Green?

MS D.L. GREEN: Yes.

MR HEEREY: Good. All right. Ms Green, would you like to go to the table, please?

MS GREEN: Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity. My name is Danielle Louise Green. I'm the State Member of Parliament for Yan Yean, an electoral district that covers the northern areas of the Shire of Nillumbik and the City of Whittlesea. And I did – I'm wanting to speak further to the objection that I made to the draft boundaries that were proposed by yourselves. And I want to say at the outset, I think it's a very important part of our democratic process that the community does have the opportunity to make these submissions, and obviously, as someone representing the area in the Victorian Parliament that has grown the most significantly since our last redivision, it's something that I am very familiar with.

But the reason for my proposing an objection, the primary reason was, I have a strong disagreement with the methodology in relation to where the boundaries have struck. I agree entirely with the commission using local government boundaries in regional areas, but I think the methodology that has been used in the Melbourne statistical district is in error in the way it has divided communities, and particularly the communities that I have the privilege to represent. And it gives me great pleasure to come to Shepparton today, and I note that my local government colleague, the mayor of Nillumbik has made the trip to Shepparton today. But I note that we're able to do that with the only loss for the mayor and I is the loss of our time, and the loss of time spent with our communities.

And we do so in a taxpayer-funded vehicle and a ratepayer-funded vehicle. But I would make a plea, if the proposed division of McEwen stands as the way the draft boundaries are, I really fear for the ability for communities that I represent to get decent representation. I'd ask you to contemplate the plight of a bushfire-affected family in Christmas Hills, a bushfire-affected family in St Andrews, a bushfire-affected family in Strathewen, or Kinglake West. With the difficulties that they have had to deal with, to then ask them to, if they were to have future issues that they would need dealt with by their federal member, and have access to their federal member, I really think it's a very big ask to subject them to have to make the trip that the mayor and I have made today.

And I am in the State Parliament. I do represent communities. I have more split postcodes than anyone else. So I think I'm in a very informed position to know what that means in terms of representation. It increases costs. It has a lot of misunderstandings for the community, in knowing who their representative is. However, I think some of these can be balanced in a smaller state district. Because of the geography being smaller, my electorate is 750 square kilometres, and still, that is combined within two – only two local government areas. In my submission, I refer to the plight of Diamond Creek, having a boundary down the centre of its shopping district. And so I think that is a difficulty. It's a great community that looks after itself.

The Hurstbridge, being divided in three, I think myself, the mayor, Mr Lord from Wattle Glen and Ms Geradts, in her supporting comments – Ms Geradts is a Hurstbridge resident – Ms Geradts referred in particular to the previous municipal boundaries that were in existence until the mid-90s, which actually had Hurstbridge

in three different municipalities. And that created enormous difficulties. There were different standards. And I think locals have really welcomed the fact that they're no longer – that that community is now treated like one community, and it is not, no longer in what was the Shire of Whittlesea, the Shire of Diamond Valley and the Shire of Eltham. And so I would really make a plea, I'm not here to suggest where these communities should go, but I think that Hurstbridge and the hinterland, all of the 3099 postcode, really should be in the one district.

I would move on to the community of Panton Hill. That also has a road going down it, and I will quote – the figures that I will quote from today are obviously derived from the Victorian electoral rolls. So they might – that might be a reason why they're at slight variance to the ones that the AEC may be working on. But the community of Panton Hill has 775 people currently on the roll. It's a country community that has country values. A country football club that has, I think, about 60 per cent of that community is connected to that football club. It is in the Northern Football League, which is a metropolitan division, but it would have the highest proportion of its local area involved in any of the football clubs in the three divisions of the Northern Football League. So I would really put in a plea on behalf of Panton Hill that they be considered as one community.

Moving further down, the Kangaroo Ground, St Andrews, Kinglake Road, we have the community of Smiths Gully. There's a boundary between the proposed division of McEwen and Jagajaga, an urban division which completely bisects that community. And that abuts the bushfire-affected areas. I mean, it is one community. And then, if you keep going down Clintons Road and meeting up with Eltham-Yarra Glen Road, I just think it's a tragedy for the community of Christmas Hills, which is around 200 electors, that is split up between the divisions of Casey, Jagajaga and McEwen.

And I mean, please keep in mind, this is a fire-affected community. And there's seven fire-affected families that – and I know there's seven fire-affected individuals that, in your proposed division, go from the Shire of Nillumbik, the old McEwen, into the division of Casey. I just see – there's just no rationale for doing that. And that community, at the moment, is bisected by a municipal boundary at the moment, and a state boundary. So they deal with enough of those boundary issues, but fortunately, with a smaller, as I mentioned before, state district, you're able to get around that a little bit. But I think, you know, it really does put an additional impost on very, very stressed people in terms of that connectedness.

In my submission, I did, I think, make the suggestion that, looking at local government boundaries, and trying to keep the administrative heart of a particular local government, and the fire-affected areas in particular, in the one division will really help. In the next five to 10 years, the representation that those communities have, and the big, you know, rebuilding, emotional, psychological, economic that is still before them, and the issues that they need to deal with, I really think that it is a fairer thing to do to keep them in cohesive districts.

And it – I think I referred in my submission, as well, that the whole of my electorate, the Yan Yean district, bar a few – I think one or two square kilometres – is covered by the Country Fire Authority. And they're all volunteer fire brigades. So the rate of volunteering in the community, and whether it's in fire services, whether it's in
5 football clubs, service clubs, it does show community connectedness that I think is not reflected in the commission's understanding, which is embodied in the draft boundaries.

In terms of where I reside myself, my family and I, we reside in roughly the
10 geographic centre of the Yan Yean district, in the suburb of Doreen, which has had rapid growth, but has a very, very strong sense of community and connectedness to the rest of its postcode, which is Mernda. But unfortunately, you know, we've built a beautiful new bridge between all those new housing estates, which has merged very well with the existing farming community, and there's been a, you know, a great
15 bridge put through there, but we now have a boundary that goes down, in the proposed area. You know, we're all involved in the same football club, in the Mernda Football Club. That's where people lean to. And to cross that river that I can see from my place, we'll be going into a different division. Where I would stand on the top of my hill at the back of where I live, in Doreen, I will be able to, yes, look
20 over the river into the division of Burke, and then about five or six kilometres away, I'll be looking to the locality of Wollert, which is actually – and that's due west – which will be in the division of Scullin. So I really think that my community – I know that the Shire of Nillumbik has made a submission in support of my objection, as has, along similar lines, the City of Whittlesea. And the other individuals that
25 have made those recommendations as well, and identifying those. I think there are a lot of reasons why we can demonstrate the community of interest, but none more than the bushfire survivors that reside in the northern part of the City of Whittlesea and the Shire of Nillumbik. We still need to look after them a lot.

30 MR HEEREY: Thank you very much. Thank you.

MS GREEN: There's no need for questions?

MR E. KILLESTEYN: I might just pick up – Ms Green, thank you for that. I think,
35 perhaps just by way of explanation, and you'll probably – this will be a consistent theme throughout all of the presentations, so it may be worth talking about it just at this point, in the context of your submissions, but it has equal application to all of the other submissions and objections. One of the things that the – both the
40 Redistribution Committee and the augmented Commission that's before you now have to try and do is deal with a redistribution in the context of the way the Act is framed, and we don't have a lot of – well, we don't have any discretion, in fact, in that.

45 And the Act is quite clear in that it sets out that the primary criteria must be the numerical criteria that each electorate has to have roughly the same number of electors in the state. And there is a tolerance that applies, plus or minus three and a half per cent. So while I think the committees will accept, and generally do accept the very cogent arguments that you've put about the communities of interest, in

accepting that, there always has to be an alternative. And so you start, as you move around, to adjust boundaries, to pick up the communities of interest, then we need to consider what the alternatives are that actually fit the numerical criteria.

5 And so I think the committee would be asking, indeed, for anyone that makes a presentation, what is the alternative? What other options do we have? And of course, those options then blossom out across the whole state. So sometimes it's a bit hard to get a whole series of options that fit the numerical criteria right across the state. So – I mean, in your case, I think all of the arguments that you've put are well
10 accepted, but it would require a range of other balancing adjustments to boundaries, which might then also affect other communities of interest. So - - -

MS GREEN: I absolutely respect all of that, sir, and I think maybe, in the outset – you know, in representing an area that has had the most significant growth of any
15 electoral district out of the 88 in the Victorian Parliament, I fully understand the dilemma that you face, and – but I suppose I was mindful, being a Member of Parliament, and allowing maybe to others to suggest – I suppose, I didn't want to be saying where you should put particular communities, I suppose, just - - -

20 MR HEEREY: We would welcome that.

MS GREEN: Well, I might draw your attention – I think, really, on page 17 and page 18, points 56 and 57 are just saying that, you know, local government
25 boundaries were less significant. I would, I suppose, compare – question that underpinning, because I think that they have become more significant, and, I mean, if it were – I would really like to see that there would be more attention paid to that. I think fundamentally that's where we're at, and I even think Mr Lord, in his proposal, talked about ward boundaries, and maybe that's something that's not unreasonable, although we know that that can be subject to change just like state ones, but I
30 suppose if there's more of a uniformity of change in a similar time period it's easier for people.

But one of the objectors' submissions that I did read was Mr Colebatch's where he referred to, you know, trying to keep things along in – and, I mean, I represent an
35 interface area – you know, the urban and rural interface, and I don't envy your task in having to draw the boundaries, but I think when he talked about the major highways and continuing the urban and rural – the seats that are rural and urban interface, that going along major highways and rail lines at least allowing that freedom of travel and movement. And I suppose when I said at the outset today of,
40 you know, Councillor King and I having access to ratepayer and taxpayer funded vehicles, you know – and particularly post-fire, some of our disadvantaged people that just don't have access to that. So the tyranny of distance, I think, is a very large impost on them.

45 And I think the other comments that I found instructive with Mr Colebatch's submission was saying that one in six electors across the state are being shifted divisions in this proposal, which is quite a significant number, and that – and I think

his contention is with the way Victoria is growing, and particularly in the growth corridor areas, two of which I represent, that really the next redistribution could potentially be as aggressive as this one has been, and I suppose, as a representative, you know, I mean, I'm not ever going to feel I have to take responsibility for that as being a member of government, but it is something that my community do raise as a difficulty as knowing who to go to, when to get help.

And I think at the moment, too, I would put on the record that, for state and local government representatives, I think boundaries like this will mean that we will not be able to turn people away when they come to us with federal issues, which we prefer not to refer – I mean, yes, we like to work collaboratively across the tiers of government, but we prefer not necessarily having the expertise with migration or federal taxation and things like that, but I and my staff, I think, will have an increased work load and it will make it more difficult, and they won't be able to turn people away if you have a community like Hurstbridge or Panton Hill, or Christmas Hills or Paton Hill being split up in the way that's proposed. It's likely that they will have no one really taking responsibility for them aside from their local government representatives and their state representatives.

MR HEEREY: Thank you very much, Ms Green.

MS GREEN: Thank you very much, and I appreciate the opportunity and - - -

MR HEEREY: Yes, I thank you for coming.

MS GREEN: - - - it's lovely to be here in Shepparton.

MR HEEREY: Thank you. Mr Ken King, just – Mr King, just before you commence, we have had a request from the Shepparton News for permission to take some photographs here. I think we're happy with that. Unless anybody in the audience has a strong objection, we'll say that's okay. Thank you.

MR K. KING: Good. Thank you very much. My name is Ken King. I am a Nillumbik councillor – the Sugarloaf ward, which is one of the rural wards of Nillumbik. I'm currently the mayor. I reside in a lovely part of the world. Well, Nillumbik is lovely a part of the world. I reside in Kangaroo Ground where I – my wife and myself run the local post office, so we're really in touch with our community through that. I grow grapes and I make wine, which is a bit of an evolution for an engineer. So there we go. Nillumbik – the Shire of Nillumbik is one of the – one of Melbourne's interface councils. That means it's on the fringe of Melbourne. So Nillumbik has an urban area, and there's certainly some well-known townships, Eltham being the primary one that I'm sure you have all heard of, because that's where Monsalvat, the great artist colony, is as well.

So we have got main activity centres of Eltham and Diamond Creek, and there's other smaller townships that Ms Green was mentioning of Panton Hill, St. Andrews and localities as we move more in to the rural part of the shire. Localities such as

Arthurs Creek, Nutfield and Strathewen. And Strathewen, of course, took a big hit in the fires, and I'm sure we're all aware of. Some of the characteristics of Nillumbik. Strong characteristics is actually the communities and the people, and these go way back into history, because it's close-knit community is primarily based around art and heritage. So there's lots of painters and potters, and a new wave of artisan producers in the green wedge parts of our shire.

So what started off many years ago as respect for the environment and strong community effort ethic is still there and needs to be protected, and it's, in fact, an integral part of our future economic direction in Nillumbik. I might add, too, that I chair the Nillumbik Tourism Association which has 120 loyal members that make their living out – primarily out of the green wedge part of the shire. The key messages that I want to deliver in my 10 minutes is, firstly, that the – and this is supported by a resolution of council – that the proposed boundaries need to be redrawn to ensure that Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge remain within a single federal division.

And the second point, which has come through from my farming colleagues and the economic development that we're looking at for the shire and the whole northern region of Melbourne, is that the productive and historic farmlands that run through the Shire of Nillumbik through into Whittlesea be certainly considered when you're looking at any changes to the boundaries, because if we're charged with confronting peak oil and doing the right thing by climate change, we want food production and food miles to be a particularly important part of where we're heading around Melbourne. Just coming back to the proposed boundaries and Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge, we're seeing that the proposed boundaries will be dividing Diamond Creek between two divisions, Scullin and Jagajaga, and Hurstbridge divided into three, Scullin, Jagajaga and McEwen.

These are not suburbs, these are townships, and they have carried with them from the past strong community bonds. And if we're diving these townships up, it's going to be very, very difficult for those communities to have a – they haven't got a single point of federal representation. So these small communities are going to find it very difficult, I believe, to take forward development into the future. We have got Traders Association meeting this morning in Diamond Creek. And these are small vibrant communities, and let's make sure that they continue. And our belief is that a single federal division across Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge is essential.

Our council resolution that was back on 7 September is that the – that council generally supports the submission on the federal electoral redistribution in Victoria to the AEC by the State Member for Yan Yean, Danielle Green, MP. So we're right behind what Danielle has just presented to you and her submission. We also resolve to reiterate, in particular, Ms Green's concerns about splitting the activity centre townships of Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge into two and three federal divisions respectively, and that's what I just spoke to. And we also resolved, and we have done so, is prepared a submission to the Australian Electoral Commission, and that was submitted by the deadline of Friday, 10 September.

The second point that I was wanting to make is about the economic future based around agribusiness and the importance of trying to keep the farmlands as a contiguous area represented, hopefully, by one federal division. This large report here is a report that's been commissioned by the Parliament of Victoria. It's an inquiry into sustainable development of agribusiness in outer suburban Melbourne. There's many recommendations in this report that suggest a cohesive approach to what we do with agriculture and agribusiness, and the economic development in and around Melbourne. So I use that as part of my support for what I was just mentioning about how we want to try – would be nice to see if we could keep the productive farmlands.

We're now moving ahead in a new way with value add and new methods of small block farming. To have a single federal – to have our farmlands within a single federal division would be appreciated. Now, if you're looking – I just looked at the maps here before, and the – to keep those farmlands in a contiguous area would mean looking at the southern part of McEwen and dropping it back down to essentially what's the urban growth boundary. We're not talking about a lot of land, but it does talk – it does put our farmlands into one federal division. I guess, seeing as I'm in the chair, I would like to say that our shire was somewhat disappointed in not being directly contacted with regard to this redistribution process. I appreciate that it was gazetted and it was in newspapers, but when there's something so significant, direct contact to council would have been appreciated.

So, as a wrap-up, the vibrant communities of Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek should not be divided, but remain in a single federal division, and the Nillumbik farmlands, because of their economic future, need to be contiguous into one federal division. I think I have done my 10 minutes. So thank you very much.

MR HEEREY: Thank you. Any questions?

MR KILLESTEYN: Mr King – and perhaps this might be something that Ms Green also wants to look at – but you have both mentioned Diamond Creek as one of the issues. So just a couple of questions around that. As we understand it, Diamond Creek is currently split between McEwen and Scullin, so you're proposing a further shift that all of Diamond Creek should be within the one division. So it's a further progression, in a sense, that the committee's proposals haven't – is just another form of splitting what is already split. So, you know, that may or may not be able to be addressed. The question, of course, is are there preferences that you have in particular communities, because it may be that the committee can do some things, but not all things, within the numerical tolerances, and that may be a difficult question, because it's asking you to, sort of, set out some priorities in relation to the communities that you have most concern about. Would either of you care to address that, or - - -

MR KING: I think it - - -

MS GREEN: On the Diamond Creek point - - -

MR KILLESTEYN: Yes.

MS GREEN: - - - I did take up that point and recognise that Diamond Creek has an existing boundary between the division of Scullin and McEwen, and I would note
5 that that part of Diamond Creek was settled later and has probably a bit more in common with St Helena and other localities that are immediately nearby. So I think what I was saying in mine was that the existing boundary is not too much of a problem, but to have the boundary moved down to the main road and cut the more established longer settled part of Diamond Creek is a problem, and I'm trying to find
10 the - - -

MR KILLESTEYN: So can I interpret that, that if the existing boundary remains, that is obviously better than, in your view, than what is proposed?

MS GREEN: Yes, because I think that the more recently settled part, in terms of
15 Diamond Creek, that it orients more to the activity centre of St Helena and down into Greensborough. It certainly does orient its way, you know, back towards the city, whereas the rest of Diamond Creek would see as its activity centre as that shopping centre. So it's more – and it's sort of up on a hill – cheek by jowl with St. Helena
20 and Greensborough which are all in the division of Scullin, or there's that – yes, that boundary there. So – and I don't think they have, sort of, as much – they're more suburban and urban in their outlook, that part of the community.

And, demographically, I would say they're probably higher income, and I think
25 probably the census, if examining those census collector districts, would indicate that, and that's certainly my understanding of that. And there was the second part of your question to Councillor King.

MR KILLESTEYN: Well, I might just go on. Another question – there's an
30 objection by the ALP in its submission that the Sugarloaf ward should be included in Casey. How would the Nillumbik Shire feel about that?

MR KING: Well, the Sugarloaf ward is the – I think it's the largest ward - - -

MR KILLESTEYN: Yes.

MR KING: - - - we have got in Nillumbik. So we're talking about a big chunk of
land here. That is to the west of a natural divide between Nillumbik and Yarra
40 Ranges, and there's a ridgetop high enough for snow. So if you're talking about – there's a suggestion that Sugarloaf goes to Casey, there's a ridge in the middle that actually is a divide – it divides communities currently, and I think that would still remain as a division. It's a division between the Shire of Yarra Ranges and Nillumbik.

I think it would make it very difficult for the people of Sugarloaf to relate closely to
45 their nearby wards at Bunjil. All the communities in Sugarloaf integrate very closely

with the communities that are in the Bunjil ward. There's not as much connection to the other side of that ridge that I was talking about that's the Shire of Yarra Ranges.

MR KILLESTEYN: Thank you.

5

MS GREEN: I think there was one additional point maybe that is pertinent to the Shire of Nillumbik is that I think Ken and I were having a bit of joke this morning that soon, with the number of elected representatives in the Shire of Nillumbik, when there is a citizenship ceremony that there might need to be more chairs on the stage than there would be people in the audience because currently there are three state districts. I mean, it is mostly my electorate of Yan Yean, and I think around 50 per cent of the district of Eltham, and then a small part of the division of Seymour. And the VEC, in its – well, Parliament in its wisdom when it changed the Upper House boundaries put those three districts in three different Upper House divisions which means that the Shire of Nillumbik has 15 Upper House representatives, the three Assembly members, and I think there is – is it three or four it is going to be? I know there will be five federal divisions in what is my Yan Yean electorate – no, four, so
- - -

20 MR KING: Well, it certainly results in a lot of Christmas cards.

MS GREEN: From people you don't know.

MR HEEREY: It sounds like a growth industry. All right. Nothing else? No.
25 Thank you very much. Mr Steven Graham?

MS GREEN: Thank you again.

MR S. GRAHAM: Steven Graham, I am representing the Shepparton and district
30 branch of the Australian Labor Party. I live in Tongala which is in the Shire of Campaspe, and I can understand where the commission is coming from. I am talking about this end of the electorate, right, the new electorate of McEwen. And I can understand that Mallee, because of the limited population that it has or growth that it has, has to move sort of east or south. Indi has to move west or south. And if
35 Murray still existed, it would have to move sort of south, too, towards Melbourne, the outer areas of Melbourne.

I actually think the biggest priority is the number of electors in the seats and it takes precedence. Today I wish to concentrate mainly on the positive aspects of what I
40 consider is happening up at this end of the electorate, of the new electorate of McEwen. Under the redistribution, under the plan, I think it is excellent that the boundaries are governed by the shire boundaries; that is each of the shire of Campaspe are put into one electorate and not hived off, or little towns hived off to certain interest groups. The Shire of Campaspe fits into the Mallee in terms of its
45 rural base and its tourism potential. And state-wise, education in the Campaspe Shire is actually in the Loddon-Mallee education group, so it fits into that area.

Echuca Hospital is more aligned to the Bendigo health area than the Shepparton area so, again, it fits into that area of the state. At the present time I think McEwen has one of the largest enrolments. Is that correct? Right. And so, therefore, it is fundamental that somehow it be shifted or changed so that you split it into the two
5 electorates that you have decided to do into Burke and into McEwen. So and to do that, it really has, McEwen has to shift to the north.

Now, when you look at the McEwen, and there has been sort of a lot of complaints about the loss of Murray electorate, the name of the Murray electorate, but if you
10 look at where Shepparton situates in where you have placed the McEwen electorate, it goes through the Goulburn Valley Highway and down the Hume Highway, and it goes both sides of that. It incorporates the Goulburn River and the tributaries of the Goulburn River which I think connects it into one electorate. Right, and it is for
15 those reasons that I have just made that submission here today to sort of more than congratulate you people on how you have organised this part of the electorate.

MR HEEREY: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr Graham. Mr Keppel Turnour.

20 MR K.A. TURNOUR: Thank you, Mr Chairman and panel. My name is Keppel Arthur Turnour. I live at 7 Nixon Street, Shepparton in the present electorate of Murray. I am a retired builder and building consultant. I was born in Mooroopna which is across the Goulburn River from Shepparton. When a young boy, my family lived in Pyramid Hill which was in the Mallee electorate. I finished school and
25 commenced work in Melbourne where we lived in Canterbury, and in those days I believe that was part of the electorate of Kooyong. Apart from a couple of years in the RAAF, including a period in New Guinea, I have always lived in Victoria, and for the past 61 years in Shepparton.

30 I have travelled the whole state and I believe I know it fairly well, particularly the country areas from Corryong to Mildura, Portland to Mallacoota. Although I have presented this in the first person, my wife, Helen, joins me in this submission. She was also born in Mooroopna and has lived most of her life – apart from working, most of her life in this area, apart from working in Sydney and the Gold Coast for a
35 short time in her single years. We have been married for 47 years.

We believe there is a grave error in the proposed redistribution of Victoria electoral divisions in abolishing the Division of Murray. The Electoral Act requires the
40 Redistribution Committee, in making proposed redistribution, to follow certain guidelines as set out in section 66(3) and 66(3)(a) of the Electoral Act. We thank you for providing us with the booklet setting out the report of the Redistribution Committee. The material in the booklet and the maps, which you have displayed up here, are very helpful in considering the redistribution. We are not concerned about the number of electors estimated covering section 66(3)(a) of the Act. It is the
45 requirements under section 66(3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv) that concern us, and the abolition of the Division of Murray.

- If any electoral division fulfilled the requirements of the above section, it is the present Division of Murray. With a little adjustment around the edges, it would be perfect and yet the Redistribution Committee plan to abolish it and cut it up into three parts, placing each part into another division. This is a major mistake. Murray should not be abolished. Greater Shepparton, which under the committee's figures will have a projected enrolment of 40,500 on 17 June 2014, is currently the major centre in Murray and in the Redistribution Committee's proposal will be the northern part of McEwen.
- Greater Shepparton is the heart of the northern Victorian irrigation area, and the commercial centre of the area known as the "food bowl of northern Victoria." The present electoral division of Murray includes most of this very valuable and productive food bowl. This food bowl of Victoria deserves to have federal parliamentary representation by one member. It is interesting to note that the Murray-Darling Basin Commission held its first community consultation presenting the guide to the proposed basin plan in Shepparton on Tuesday of this week, indicating the importance of Greater Shepparton to northern Victoria irrigation area. In the two sessions over 1200 people attended.
- It is interesting to note that the Murray-Darling Basin area, southern boundary, ceases at the Great Dividing Range. The projected total enrolment on 17 June – sorry, I skipped a page. The planned revised division of McEwen is completely contrary to the requirements of the Act, section 63(3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv), and even contrary to the Redistribution Committee's own general strategy. And that is in note 54 and 55 on page 17 of the booklet. On page 18 clause 63, the committee acknowledges that a range of different legitimate options could be applied to achieve a redistribution outcome for Victoria. Therefore, as there is a major flaw in the report as presented, such as the proposed electoral division of McEwen, then a more legitimate option should be adopted.
- The flaw in McEwen is placing Greater Shepparton, at the heart of the food bowl, into a division that crosses that Great Dividing Range which is contrary to the committee's statement and into an area including Marysville, Nillumbik and Whittlesea that have absolutely no connection with Greater Shepparton. We suggest a far more legitimate option is to slightly alter seven country electorates. We have not carefully studied all of the city-centred electoral divisions, as shown on page 2 or sheet 2 of the two.
- The seven country divisions that we considered are Wannon, Mallee, Murray, Indi, McEwen, Bendigo or call it Burke, and Casey. And they are shown on map 1 of the two sheets. The proposed total enrolment on 17 June 2014 of these seven divisions is 709,523. Using figures of projected enrolments in the committee's report, I have adjusted these seven divisions as follows: Wannon, 101,718; Mallee, 103,528; Murray, 101,061; Indi, 98,778; McEwen, 101,639; Bendigo or Burke, 102,239; and Casey, 100,560. I am sure these figures are achievable and they total 709,523 electors.

It would appear in the Redistribution Committee's report the key themes were to abolish a country electoral division and create a new division that could be named Burke because it is 150 years since the Burke and Wills expedition, an expedition that was flawed. If it is important to recognise Burke and retain 37 electoral divisions, why not rename the Division of Bendigo? After all, I believe Burke was a police officer at Castlemaine at some time.

From the booklet it appears that from the beginning of the committee's planning, it was decided to abolish Murray. In the section proposed redistribution of Victoria by divisions, Murray does not get a mention. Some of the flaws in the proposed divisions, set out in the report, are: (1) Mallee, the east side includes the Shire of Campaspe which includes towns of Kyabram and Echuca. This area has no community of interest or other real connection with Mildura, Hopetoun, Warracknabeal, etcetera. The only connection along the north boundary is the Murray River, and the paddle steamers as means of transport ceased 120 to 125 years ago. Campaspe is very closely associated with Greater Shepparton. There are good highways between the centres of Shepparton, Kyabram, Rochester and Echuca, and the railway line branches from Tallamba, which is in the Greater Shepparton area, and that railway line goes via Kyabram to Echuca.

Indi, this is number 2, Indi, the west side of the Shire of Moira which includes the towns of Cobram, Nathalia and Numurkah, are far more closely associated with Greater Shepparton than with the centres within Indi. They are currently part of the Division of Murray. The eastern side of Moira perhaps is better placed in Indi as Yarrowonga is more closely connected to Wangaratta, Wodonga and Benalla, etcetera, with Indi. Road and rail connect these centres. Strathbogie, presently in Indi but proposed to be McEwen, is far more appropriate as part of Murray. Nagambie, in Strathbogie, is on the Goulburn River, Goulburn Valley Highway, the main railway line from Seymour to Tocumwal and Cobram, as is Shepparton, and is closely associated with Shepparton. Euroa, also in Strathbogie, is well connected with Shepparton and many residents of both Euroa and Nagambie work in Shepparton.

McEwen – this is number 3, McEwen, the southern part of the proposed McEwen, including Marysville, would be – as mentioned by earlier speakers, would be far more appropriately associated with Casey. If division names associated with people is important, McEwen is not appropriate as it never has included the farming property where Mr Jack McEwen MLA, former Deputy Prime Minister, lived. The chief figures of projected enrolments for the seven divisions, we have divided Bendigo. The eastern side into Mallee – and this is by local government areas – the eastern side to Mallee, northern area to Murray, the eastern to McEwen and the remainder – remains as Bendigo or could be the new seat or division of Burke, which closely follows the committee's proposal, except for the bottom part, which comes or remains part of McEwen.

If names are important the Division of Murray could be called McEwen because Black Jack McEwen's property was in Murray and he was the first federal member

for that division. Bendigo could become Burke and create a new name, perhaps Central Victoria for the area now named McEwen. Thank you very much.

5 MR HEEREY: Thank you. Any questions? Thank you very much. Dr Sharman Stone.

MR: If I may state that Dr Stone was told she would be on at 20 past 2.

10 MR HEEREY: Yes, that is true. Well, we will go to the next speaker on the list in the meantime, Ms Anne Howard. Thank you, Ms Howard. If you would just state your name.

15 MS A. HOWARD: Anne Howard, Shire of Campaspe, Acting Chief Executive Officer. So, firstly, on behalf of the Shire of Campaspe I would really like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak on this matter and I would just like a little bit of time to talk about three points that the council has made in our submission to the AEC. Those three points are just to talk about the Murray River group of councils, the Bendigo growth corridor and its relationship to the Shire of Campaspe and the importance of retaining the rural voice of the Murray Electorate or a rural voice. Our
20 submission has talked about the important linkages of the Shire of Campaspe with its sister councils along the Murray River group of council corridor. That's from Moira Shire through to the Mildura Rural City Council and while we recognise and have talked about the importance of those relationships, we have already established state and local frameworks within which to work together.

25 This electorate would bring those councils together, but in doing so leaves Campaspe at the tail end of an electorate and disconnects us from our other neighbouring municipalities which are of much more common interest in some ways to the Murray River group of council. So I just want to take the opportunity to clarify council's
30 submission in relation to that matter. We recognise the importance of that group. However, what binds us is the geography of the river and the commonalities of tourism. They are important, but not as strong as the shared economies that we have with Shepparton, Moira and Gannawarra and the proposed electorate would see that disconnection. Those important economies are obviously around primarily
35 agriculture and our manufacturing commonalities.

The other issue is that, while we have things in common, the communities themselves, the commonalities around heritage and culture and the geography of the river, the communities themselves very seldom actually pass day to day along the
40 east-west corridor, there's a lot of community migration north-south. And the electorate, as proposed, would not recognise that, while we have a shared heritage and a shared geography, in fact, we don't share as much interface as other communities might have. So Echuca, for example, on a Shire of Campaspe would migrate south through Bendigo.

45 The councils and communities at the other end of the proposed electorate would actually migrate south more likely than east-west. So we don't have a lot of overlap

in our communities, and we would be concerned, that that's not recognised. The second point that I just want to touch on is the Bendigo growth corridor. So Bendigo is recognised in the census and well recognised as a strong growth area, as is the Shire of Campaspe and Echuca, and there's a need for the well planned and shared services and facilities for that growth corridor, which is already supported by public transport, so we have a lot of rail and road linkages in place.

And because of the proximity to that growth corridor and our place in that, we see strong support from the provincial centre of Bendigo through education and health services and government services, as well as professional services. We would certainly express concern that we would not be able to get the same recognition in the Mallee electorate, as proposed. There's also quite a number of residents of both Bendigo and Shepparton and Campaspe that commute to and from work and retail, etcetera, and education, and, again, there is that disconnect with the proposed boundaries from those very important linkages in our communities in this region. And just a final comment that my council would like to share is that the Shire of Campaspe greatly values the rural voice that the Murray Electorate has provided, and expresses a concern about that change in balance between that rural voice and the metropolitan voice in the state. They were the three areas that I wished to share.

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MR HEEREY: Thank you, Ms Howard. Any questions?

MR KILLESTEYN: Ms Howard, the committee has looked at all of the objections and commentaries and has tried to model the impacts of suggestions. And perhaps, just again by way of explanation, one of the comments we made at the beginning of the session today was that the committee is trying to balance of a range of competing interests. And the primary criterion which it has to follow, according to the Act, is the numerical numbers. And that is, not only the first, but the primary criterion; all other criterion [sic], including communities of interest, are secondary. We cannot override the numerical criteria by allowing communities of interest issues.

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But in our analysis of the proposals in your submission, our understanding is that, including the Moira Shire in Mallee would transfer some 16,000 electors from Indi, and as a consequence, the numerical criteria that we're trying to follow would be violated quite considerably. And, similarly, with Campaspe Shire in Bendigo, that would transfer some 27,000 electors, and as a consequence, Bendigo would be violating the numerical criteria. And so, I guess, while we understand the issues that you put around communities of interest, we would be looking for what alternatives there might be that could deal with the numerical criteria, but at the same time satisfy some of those communities of interest. And that's our difficulty.

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MS HOWARD: I appreciate that it would be a very difficult balancing act. But there would also be communities that might be able to be looked at to balance if Moira was moved. There are municipalities in the Mallee area that may then also need to adjust, and they may end up having something more appropriate for them also. And in balancing, I can appreciate how complex it might be, but to see rural communities like Shepparton in with metro fringes is, it might balance the

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population, but how well does it serve the community is where we would be concerned.

MR KILLESTEYN: Thank you.

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MR HEEREY: Thank you, Ms Howard. Yes, Dr Stone. Thank you. Bill Baxter.

MR B. BAXTER: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Bill Baxter. I am appearing today on behalf of the Victorian Nationals. I'm the principal author of the Nationals' original submission and the objection that was subsequently lodged. I am a former State Member of Parliament for more than 30 years and a former Minister of the Crown. I want to say at the outset that the Nationals had a principal concern, and that was the abolition of a regional division. We are very disappointed in that, and particularly so in the committee's own booklet, which notes that there are 13 suburban divisions in a cluster, mainly in the eastern suburbs, that are seven per cent below.

And we would have thought there was an opportunity to at least amalgamate among those seven and take the pressure off Lalor, Gorton, Calwell and McEwen and by the creation of the new seat of Burke. It seems to us that to just abolish a rural regional division, when there seems to be ample scope of considerable rejigging, where it's already acknowledged that there are a large number of divisions in the metro area that we're under was not a particularly productive way to approach it in the first instance. But having got what we've got, our objection is that community of interest criteria, that when too broadly defined, or insufficiently considered – and I propose in a moment to deal with some of the comments that the commissioner made about what is the requirements of the Act, because I have to say, with respect, sir, I disagree with your comments.

Parliament has given a lot of attention to community of interest. If you look at Hansard, at the various times this Act has been amended, and particularly in the 1987 amendments, you will see that the Parliament considered that the thought, prior to those amendments, that the enrolment criteria, the projected enrolments out into the forward years was far too prescriptive and didn't allow community of interest to be sufficiently taken into account, and sometimes led to some very odd constructions. And the Parliament put in those amendments in 1987. And if you look at Hansard, you will see how much it was debated at the time. Now, page 8 of the committee's booklet, it says that community of interest is a secondary criteria, and the commissioner intimated that earlier to Ms Green and to Ms Howard.

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Well, I have to say, with respect, that that's not what the Act says. The Act says – and if you look at the quote of the relevant section, section 66, which is contained in page 6, it says, at paragraph (b):

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Shall give due consideration to community of interest.

It doesn't say it's secondary at all. Whereas, it does specifically say that existing federal boundaries are subservient when considering new boundaries. So I'm saying to you the Act says, and the Parliament said, you are, of course, to make sure that we don't have gerrymander, that we don't have mal apportionment, that is the number
5 one criteria. We wouldn't be having a democratic process if they were not so. But having said that, community of interest has to be given due consideration, and that's where I disagree with the commissioner. Now, if you turn - - -

10 MR HEEREY: But (b) is said to be subject to paragraph (a), which - - -

MR BAXTER: Yes, it does say that, sir. But that doesn't make it subservient, in my submission. It means, yes, you have to give consideration to making sure you're within the tolerances. But having said that, you have to take community of interest into account, and some of those other matters, one of which is specifically said to be
15 subservient. Now, if you go to page 2 of the committee's report, it says this – having sort of set out your modus operandi:

20 *This led to a series of consequential transfers throughout regional Victoria where supplementation was needed. The cumulative effect of this approach left the Division of Murray with no contact with the Murray River itself, and under numerical tolerance.*

Now, it seems to me that the committee, having done that, got around the state and ended up with that result, decided to abolish Murray before it even took community
25 of interest into consideration at all. That sentiment expressed there indicates to me that the maps were drawn, jiggled around, the CCDs were done in the commuter program, and you ended up with Murray having no connection with the river, and not enough people, so it goes, before you've even considered community of interest. Now, I don't think that's what the Act intends at all, if I might say so, with respect. I
30 think it's the wrong approach. I think all the issues have to be taken in tandem, or you get an unsatisfactory outcome, which is clearly what we've got at the moment.

Now, I'm disappointed we don't have a very large map, which would help committee members to actually understand the geography, because it's all right for Ms Green
35 and others to be talking about Diamond Creek and places that we know nothing about up here. And, similarly, I'm going to talk about towns that Ms Green will know nothing about, and maybe the committee members know nothing about. But, clearly, one needs to get this into their geography. Now, the proposal for the new McEwen detaches from the City of Shepparton, Nathalia, Numurkah and Cobram, in
40 particular. Numurkah is 17 miles from here, Nathalia is 28 miles, Cobram is not much further. They're in the Shire of Moira.

Those districts are clearly part of Shepparton. They look to Shepparton for leadership. I used to be the shire president at Nathalia in the 1970s, and if I was in a
45 tight spot, who did I look for for leadership? The mayor of Shepparton, or the CEO of the then City of Shepparton. Those districts look to Shepparton for health, for education, for rural markets and supplies, for social and recreational outlets. It is

clearly heart of the greater Shepparton area, even though it's not in the LGA. Moreover, the proposal – and we've heard this from Mr Turnour, quite eloquently – the proposal splits the Great Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, presently in the one electorate, into three.

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Some of it goes into Mallee, some of it goes into Indi, and some of it goes into the new McEwen. Now, I think that is a crazy notion, if I might say so. And the 1000 people who turned up here at a meeting on Tuesday to argue the proposals currently before the Murray Darling Authority, I'm sure would share that sentiment as well. I think, in terms of food security, the future of the environment, irrigation and country towns are the great food bowl of the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District clearly should be in one federal division if community of interest has any skerrick of meaning at all. And perhaps on a more minor issue, but still a telling one, we've just had serious floods here a month ago.

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There is a flood structure here known as Lock Garry, which is opened and closed according to what the water level is in the Goulburn River in Shepparton. What your proposal is, that the victims of Lock Garry being opened and being flooded are going to be put in a different electorate from where the structure is, and, again, divorces their influence on whether they're going to get flooded out or not. And I think, again, an absolute community of interest is being breached by that proposal. And to suggest, as the report does, that Nillumbik and Whittlesea – and I'm very pleased that the mayor and local member are here today – have any community of interest with Greater Shepparton, let alone one superior to Nathalia, Numurkah and Cobram, for example, frankly, is just fanciful.

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I might give you some other examples. Mallee – to take Horsham out of Mallee, the grain growing areas connected to the Wimmera and the Mallee, the great bread basket of Victoria, and put that in with the wool growers and the tourists down in south-western Victoria, in Wannon, I think is not wise, and certainly breaches the community of interest. But, more particularly, in current day realities, it cuts across the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. We have just spent more than \$100 million installing the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, connecting all those towns together from Horsham to the north, right up almost to Mildura, and this proposal is going to snip it in two.

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Similarly, putting Echuca in with Mallee. Now, the committee, in its report, justifies that at one point by saying that Echuca is connected to Mallee because of the Murray River. Well, I think Ms Howard put paid to that a moment or two ago. But I would say to you that, geographically, superficially, yes, that is right, but the people of Echuca do not look north and westwards down the Murray at all. They don't have a connection with Swan Hill, let alone with Mildura, they look to Shepparton and to Bendigo. And, again, I think, apart from the fact that we'll be splitting the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, we would certainly be taking Echuca out of an area with which it's very comfortable, and putting it in an area where it will be very uncomfortable.

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If you look at Indi, the local government area of Mansfield is being transferred out of Indi into the new McEwen. Up until three or four years ago, Mansfield LGA was part of the Benalla LGA, always been in Indi. It seems to me, there is a clear community interest there. I don't see why it is being shifted. I'm saying that in terms of Mansfield to demonstrate that it is possible to adjust these boundaries, keep the numbers right, but get much more sensible community of interest. I think it's absolutely capable of rejigging. And I have to conclude, committee members, by saying, if it proceeds as it is, I think you have to say the community of interest has little application, that it's virtually worthless, and the Parliament wasted its time spending the length of time it did on debating community of interest.

Now, the commissioner asked before for alternatives. Well, there are numerous alternatives, and I refer the committee to the submission that I put in, or that the National Party put in. I don't contend for one moment that it's perfect, but it is certainly a superior proposal to that before us today, in that it maintains community of interest much more rigorously than the current proposal does. Thank you.

MR HEEREY: Thank you very much, Mr Baxter. Any questions? Thank you.

MR BAXTER: I was going to have a debate with the commissioner as to whose interpretation of the Act is correct.

MR HEEREY: Thank you. I think Dr Stone has arrived. Yes, thank you, Dr Stone.

DR STONE: Sorry. I was directed to the room down the end, so I was sitting down there for 15 minutes, and the sign has got the wrong place. Want me to start?

MR HEEREY: Yes, please.

DR S. STONE: Okay. So I'm Sharman Stone, I'm the current Federal Member for Murray, hopefully not the last. And what I want to say is not to do with me, personally, business as a Member of Parliament, but rather, of course, it's about this area, and the fact that it's been represented by three Members of Parliament since this election of Murray was formed in the 1948s. Each one of those Members of Parliament, not coincidentally, has been a farmer. I speak, of course, first about Sir John McEwen and then Mr Bruce Lloyd, and then myself. That's not surprising, because the people who represent this area need to know intimately the business of regional and rural agribusiness.

And this region, or the election of Murray, is unique in the galaxy of all rural and regional seats, in that it encapsulates the footprint of Goulburn Murray water, it's the Goulburn Murray Water Irrigation System. And you only had to be here on Tuesday this week, where over 1000 people in this community came to two sessions run by Murray Darling Basin Authority, to see that we need very critically Parliamentary representation to put the needs of this region on the map, to advocate for this region. And if you cut it up in the way that you're proposing, as the AEC, you lose one more rural regional voice in the Federal Parliament, and you fracture and completely

destroy the community of interest, which are those irrigation districts that have been in this area over 100 years, some of them, and they're unique interests.

5 This irrigation area is owned by the State Government, it's a state authority owned and managed system. So it doesn't like the systems in every other state of Australia, like the Coleamballys, MIAs, MILs in New South Wales, or Harvey in Western Australia and the, or the Queensland systems or the South Australian systems which are owned and operated and managed by the irrigators themselves. They, themselves, then develop up very quickly a voice, an agri-political voice, because
10 they manage and own their own systems, and they can advocate directly to government to their own voice. As I say, this system is owned by the state itself, so you therefore need very strong advocates.

15 The National Party does that very well, my ex-colleague, who has spoken just before me, knows only too well how you have to advocate, and half our irrigation areas in Victoria, as a member of Parliament, state or federal, because the state, quite self evidently, doesn't represent the consumers themselves when there's a problem in the way that we do. So I'm very concerned that what you're proposing. You're dividing Murray into three. You've got some of the most closely populated irrigation areas in
20 the Goulburn Murray system in the Shire of Campaspe, in the Rodney, in the area of Rochester, Kyabram, Tongala, Stanhope, they are old soldier settlement and densely populated areas.

25 You're tacking them on to the edge of a huge new electorate of Mallee, or new reconfigured area of Mallee, and so it's not as if you're just tacking on into Mallee some more sparsely populated cropping country – semi-arid, not irrigated cropping country. What you're tacking on in the far extreme east of your proposed Mallee is very densely populated small towns and intensive dairy – and some fruit-growing, but mostly dairy – cattle-raising, cropping agribusiness. It is going to be
30 extraordinarily hard for one Member of Parliament then to sue with that enormous new area proposed for Mallee.

35 I was just there this morning in Rochester – they're in despair; they're saying, "How are we going to relate to the new area of Mallee where, presumably, the focus in the future and now will always be Mildura? How many hours' drive is it for us to go and have personal discussion with our Member of Parliament, and how far will it, for our Member of Parliament, to get across from Mildura, or indeed, even Swan Hill, as is now the case where the member currently resides?"

40 So it isn't smart in the sense of the economy – the communities of interest – by putting the Shire of Moira across to Indi, again, you're cutting off part of the Goulburn Valley irrigation system, whose folks will then be across to Wodonga. That is of no interest to the people of Moira who have a focus absolutely in intensive irrigated agribusiness which is fruit-growing and dairy mostly. So it is a serious
45 problem for us. Now, I think you've ignored the community of interest. Someone told me that's okay. The AEC is more interested these days in the fact that we're no longer horse and buggy era; you can just pick up the phone, tap out some message

on the web, or use email or text message somebody; so the community interest is as important as it once was.

5 I'd suggest to you it's more important than it's ever been. We have older
populations now. We don't have good telecommunications in this part of the world.
Our hospital systems, our school-based systems echo the footprint of the irrigation –
irrigated agriculture, that's where they're clustered – and to have them not being able
to go to one advocate on their behalf is a serious problem. So I'd say your proposal
completely fractures the community of interest in this part of the world. You've also
10 talked about population loss. Well, yes, we've just gone through seven years of
drought. That's exacerbated population loss across the top of northern Victoria, from
the South Australian-Victorian border across, of course, right across the other side of
Indi.

15 We understand what depopulation occurs when you've got a very serious drought. If
you look out the window now, you'll see it has rained – in fact, it's flooded. We
expect our population decline to be arrested, and we expect to see our population,
therefore, not continue to decline as it did in the last seven years of drought. But
even if I acknowledge we have got a population issue in relation to rural perimeters
20 and what you have to meet in terms of every seven years the right tolerances of
numbers of population – numbers of voters over 18, you can achieve still that
outcome of having the appropriate tolerances by tinkering at the edges. You didn't
have to abolish Murray, swap it for an outer suburban seat of Burke; you simply had
to adjust all of the boundaries, and I am referring, of course, to many more
25 boundaries than Murray's, and add to Murray populations, for example, the City of
Benalla, and you could have come up with the right numbers and tolerances for the
next seven years.

30 And there were a number of submissions that talked about that, of course, and one in
particular I want to draw to your attention, which I thought was particularly good,
was Tim Colebatch and he describes, of course, the community of interest issue, the
population issue and I draw your attention again to that submission, where he
describes how you can do this. The task that you have to do, I understand, is seven
year adjustment, without destroying the potential for a very significant region to have
35 its own advocate because of its unique circumstances and simply cut it up and swap
it for a seat to be called Burke, you propose, which, of course, it is nice for outer
suburbia to have another seat, but does not have the unique challenges that we have
in this part of the world when our whole – the whole business of our future's
economy rests on this decision of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, this business
40 of removing irrigation water and so on.

So this is a food bowl. This is a food production area and it's also a centre of health
and education service, great air of commercial service. All of those interests are best
served, I shall say again, by keeping very much the boundaries we have currently
45 got, but I understand they need to be adjusted a little to add on a few more people.
You can do that, but you certainly shouldn't simply destroy those communities'
representation opportunity in Canberra.

MR HEEREY: Thank you, Dr Stone. Any questions or comments? No. Thank you very much. Mr Twomey.

MR P.L. TWOMEY: My name is Peter Louis Twomey. I was born in
5 Christchurch, New Zealand and after secondary school I joined – and some
university work, I joined the Broadcasting Service Engineering. In those days it was
all government broadcasting. I spent eight years doing that, during which I did a
number of transmission installation, high power stations and that sort of thing. In
10 1952 I decided to go to England, by ship in those days, and I got a job with Pye
Limited in Cambridge. Of course I had never seen a television picture before I
arrived in England, but in a matter of weeks I was employed as an engineer at Pye
Limited and I was involved in a team which colour television, a private session
because BBC were the only people allowed in the Abbey at the coronation, but we
15 did the coronation procession, which was shown to a number of hospitals, including
the big children's hospital and so on.

Anyway, from there I developed a – the Marconi company at Chelmsford – or during
which I was at Pye's I did the installation of the original Belgium Two television
20 service, one French and one Flemish. I was there for five months and I was in charge
of all that. We had employees doing the work from – that came down from the Bell
Telephone Company at Antwerp. Anyway, put aside that. I went to Marconi's and
the first thing when I arrived there they said, we have got a job for you, we have got
some contracts in Australia. I was a project engineer and I said, "I'm a New
25 Zealander, I'm not an Australian," and they said, that's all the same and it shows the
ignorance. But as one fellow told me, quite seriously, that the Sydney Harbour
Bridge went from Sydney to Auckland. That was the state. So I was given these
jobs of doing the engineering quotations for the Marconi company.

There were the two government ones, the ABC Sydney and Melbourne and also
30 Channel Seven Melbourne and Channel Seven ATM in Sydney and I was the
engineer to do all those quotations. Now, I decided – I was still single at that stage.
I decided not to stay in the UK. I didn't like the climate particularly; it was even
worse than New Zealand. So, Marconi's arranged for me to come out and do
installation of the Marconi equipment. So I arrived here in early 1956 and installed –
35 I was in charge of the installation of the studios at Dorcas Street for HSV7 and I
stayed with the company until 1961, during which time we did the 1956 Olympic
Games. In 1961 I decided Melbourne was too big for me and I came to Shepparton
because the first of the 13 country stations had just been announced and I became the
number two – I was the assistant manager/chief engineer and the station was opened
40 by Sir John McEwen in December 1961.

My manager, my boss, died of a heart attack in 1965 and I became the station
manager. During that time we were expanding the service with what we called
45 translators that were booster stations in areas. So I had to do a lot of work going
round the area negotiating with landowners, leasing sites, getting permission from
councils and so on to put up masts and that sort of thing, we did, and so I learnt a lot
about the topography of Victoria, particularly the northern area. We had places like

Alexandra, Eildon, Seymour. Then next round was Deniliquin and Jerilderie, then Yea and so on and so forth. So that's basically my background. Now, my submission that I put in, I have adjusted it slightly and I will leave copies of the amended one with you and I'll just read that as amended.

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As a resident of 49 years in the Goulburn Valley within the Northern Victorian food bowl I hereby state my objection to the proposed redistribution of the existing Division of Murray by obliterating it and dividing the area into the adjoining divisions of Mallee, McEwen and Indi. All of these three rural divisions have major differences between Murray in topography: rainfall, climate, transport and education, and with Murray having a higher percentage of post World War Two European, mainly Italian – the greatest workers I have ever seen, the way they settled and done well so much, in Shepparton in particular – but now we have got – if any of you have the time to be down the street when school children are there, you will find so many people of Afghan, Congolese, Sudanese, Sri Lanka's refugees who will become Australian citizens and a lot of them are unemployed and doing language training and that sort of thing, but they are growing a large number of children.

For instance, the local Goulbourn Valley Hospital was overloaded with births over the last three months. It just shows we're growing. We're not dropping the way that some projections are, because these projections that are being used are coming from councils, who really don't know, and each council wants to put itself on the list if it can get away with. Anyway, continuing. Shepparton is the central core of the northern food bowl which extends along the Murray River from Echuca to Cobram and down to Murchison in the south. The current shortage of voters in Shepparton could be solved by including the Nagambie district into Murray. At the moment they are part of the Shire of Strathbogie and they have problems with that over a bridge. The current shortage of – Indi could be compensated by restoring parts of its existing division, including Mansfield in the south.

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It is ludicrous to have towns such as Kyabram and Echuca shifted from Murray into Mallee – I couldn't believe it when I first heard it – and Cobram into Indi, whereas – and where there is no community links with public transport, shopping centres or education. Shepparton is very fortunate that we have got both the University of Melbourne, their rural health training people here in Graham Street in Shepparton and we have also got La Trobe University, a new building that is just about to be opened, and as I said, it is ludicrous. The proposed new boundary between Murray and Wannon should recognise that Wannon, which includes the towns of Hamilton, Warrnambool, Ararat, Port Fairy and Portland, will have more population growth than most Mallee towns.

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And while the Electoral Commission must comply with the 1918 Commonwealth Electoral Act in any redistribution, there are important factors which require full consideration when the rural electorate division in Murray, centred on Victoria's fourth largest city, the City of Greater Shepparton – it is number four after Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo – is to be eliminated and then replaced by the new division of Burke. There has been no consultation with the residents of Murray previously. The

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5 population figures used in this proposal are based on the 2006 census. When there is going to be a new census next year, 2011, surely we should be looking at that, not what the figures that have been drafted – dreamed up in many cases – the 2006 census, with substituted adjustments, guesstimated and provided by local government.

10 Surely the resulting figures should not be used to eliminate existing division, but wait for the results of the 2011 census. With vast differences between the community values, lifestyles between the residents of the northern and southern sectors of the revised McEwen division, ethical and equities of values must rank as important in the final division of the decision of the Electoral Commission. Thank you. There is little more I could say.

15 MR HEEREY: Thank you, Mr Twomey. Any questions? Thank you very much, Mr Twomey.

20 MR PINK: I might make two comments if I can. The first one is that under the legislation we aren't in a position to wait for the results of the 2011 census. We have to work with the benchmark of the 2006 census and adjust that to estimate populations across Australia, based on births and deaths data, based on data provided by local authorities, etcetera, on changes that are occurring. But in the end your option of waiting for the 2011 census, in fact, isn't a legal option, so that – we have to rule that out. And I think that generally our experience has been that the estimates that my institution makes in terms of population growth over the intercensal period, whilst not perfect, is pretty close in most cases, and unless something very significant is occurring in the region here in a short period of time, which is recognised that we pick up births and deaths as an important part of the population estimates, there would have to be something else going on like major, major subdivisions that are filling up very quickly to in any way undermine the credibility of the population estimates that are used as the starting point for the work of the commission.

35 MR TWOMEY: Could I just add a postscript. I was staggered when I read again today this document that was sent out when the maps were sent out. On the third to bottom paragraph it says:

With the numerical framework, the committee took into consideration suggestions received from the public, community of interest, communication and transport links, physical features and the current federal boundaries when making this proposal.

40 I would love to know the person who wrote it. Thank you.

45 MR HEEREY: Thank you, Mr Twomey. The only other speaker that we have listed is Mr Price. Do you know about him? He is not due until quarter past 3. We can go down to the boardroom and have a chat. Well, we will adjourn this meeting until 25 past 3.

ADJOURNED

[2.38 pm]

RESUMED

[3.02 pm]

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MR HEEREY: Yes, all right, we will resume the hearing and call on the last person to address, Mr Ian Price. Thank you, Mr Price.

10 MR I. PRICE: Thank you very much. I presume I just give a straight out presentation and if you have any questions you will throw them at me.

MR HEEREY: Yes, that's absolutely right.

15 MR PRICE: On behalf of 378 members of the Numurkah Senior Citizens' Club, of which I am the president, I would like to express concern regarding the proposed new electoral boundaries. The regional community of interest to the Moira Shire is centred on Shepparton. In relation to health issues, senior - - -

20 MR HEEREY: How do you spell Moira?

MR PRICE: M-o-i-r-a.

MR HEEREY: Yes, thank you.

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MR PRICE: Numurkah is one of the centres of the Moira Shire and it is centred on Shepparton. In relation to health issues, senior citizens in the Moira Shire are within the catchment area of the Goulburn Valley Health Service. Senior citizens in Numurkah are, therefore, extremely reliant on the tertiary and specialist health services that are provided in Shepparton and vitally concerned in the further development of the Goulburn Valley Health Service and the facilities and specialist services it provides. The age structure of Moira Shire and Numurkah is skewed towards an older population. Nineteen per cent of the population is aged over 65, compared with 13.7 per cent of all of Victoria. The medium age of the Moira Shire is 42, compared with 37 for all of Victoria. Healthy years lost due to premature death is significantly higher for males, 158.6, compared with the state 143, and for females 140.4, compared with the state of 129.1.

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40 These figures indicate the Moira Shire has a poorer overall health status than the state average. This, combined with the population growth of an age structure skewed to the older age cohorts, means improvement in the provision of tertiary and specialist health services, access to these services, public transport, aged care accommodation, ambulance services are critical to Numurkah and other senior citizens in Moira Shire. All of these services need to be provided from Shepparton and political representation to ensure this happens will emanate from the electorate with which Shepparton in the regional centre. Numurkah needs to be in that electorate. The question needs to be asked, what priority would 70,000 voters in and

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around Wodonga and Wangaratta give to improving the health services provided by the Goulburn Valley Health Service in order to help some voters on the remote western boundary of Indi?

5 The proposed electoral redistribution is disempowering to senior citizens in the Moira Shire, as their particular needs will be swamped by the demographic, demography and health status of Wodonga and Wangaratta and cross-border arrangements with Albury. As a remote outreach of political influence of Wodonga and Wangaratta, the needs and health deficits of senior citizens in Numurkah will not
10 be effectively represented, as they would be if included in the same electorate as Shepparton, and as I have mentioned, they are already in deficit position. The interests of seniors in Numurkah are best served by political advocacy for improvement and provision of services in Shepparton. Public transport, road infrastructure and reintroduction of passenger rail services are also very important
15 issues for seniors in Numurkah. Other services which are vital to senior citizens include Centrelink and Medicare. These are provided in Shepparton and accessed by residents of the Moira Shire.

The question needs to be asked, what priority would 70,000 voters in the Indi
20 Electorate in and around Wodonga and Wangaratta give to improving the Goulburn Valley Highway, V/Line bus services to Shepparton and the reintroduction of the Melbourne to Cobram passenger rail service? The apple, pear and stone fruit industry in the Moira Shire are strongly linked to Shepparton for the processing and/or distribution of their production. What priority would the electors of Indi have
25 for advocating the issues confronted by orchardists? It is appropriate that Shepparton as a regional city should be the focus of a federal electorate, much as Ballarat and Bendigo and Wodonga/Wangaratta, but it should be strategically placed in the centre of the electorate or somewhere near it, but not – and to include all of its catchment and not on the boundary of the electorate, which is proposed and which excludes so
30 many communities which are reliant on the services, infrastructure and employment it provides to these communities.

The Moira Shire is clearly identified with the Murray-Goulburn catchment area, with Shepparton as the major urban centre of this region, which provides retail and
35 commercial services, secondary and tertiary education, as well as the health and community services previously mentioned. Effective political connection for the primary industry, students and senior citizens in the Moira Shire is best achieved by including the area in the electorate which includes Shepparton as the major regional centre. The political voice of the residents in the Moira Shire would be seriously
40 eroded by appending the shire to Indi and regional centres of Wangaratta and Wodonga, with which it has little community of interest and vice versa. Why be associated with the health services 150 kilometres away, when 30 or 40 kilometres down the road we have got a health service which should be being improved even
45 further?

The redistribution proposed, while arguably upholding the objective of the quality voters, and we understand you have got to try and get 90,000 voters here and 90,000

voters there, but it falls short of the requirement of equality of value. That's the point I'm trying to stress to you. You need equality of value for our vote. A unified political voice in the federal parliament for voters in the Goulburn Valley is needed and I think you are kicking against the trend when you think about all the regional interest which has been advocated and you are promoting an electoral distribution which is removing a regional vote. The proposed redistribution destroys the unified vote provided by the Murray electorate. Amendment to the proposed electoral boundaries to reflect the community of interest and political voice of the residents of the Moira Shire is strongly recommended.

10 MR HEEREY: Thank you, Mr Price.

MR PRICE: I have a spare copy of that if you need it.

15 MR HEEREY: Yes. Any questions or comments?

MR KILLESTEYN: Mr Price, your main concern is that Moira Shire needs to be connected to Shepparton?

20 MR PRICE: Yes.

MR KILLESTEYN: And in doing so, that does create issues around the numbers because Moira Shire - - -

25 MR PRICE: Yes, you might have to redistribute numbers down south, rather than up north.

MR KILLESTEYN: Yes.

30 MR PRICE: And you would probably have representations to that effect.

MR KILLESTEYN: Thank you.

35 MR HEEREY: All right. Good. Thank you, Mr Price. That concludes the hearing. Thank you, everybody, for attending and we will continue our deliberations.

HEARING CONCLUDED at 3.11 pm