



# Comment on suggestion 3

Benjamin Chesler

15 pages

Comments on Suggestions:  
ACT Federal Redistribution

Benjamin Chesler

To the Committee,

I ask that you accept my suggestions on comments made regarding the Redistribution of the Federal Electorate of the ACT.

As an independent person, I do not speak for a political party or organisation, instead opting to assist in the redistribution out of interest and a sense of civic duty.

I believe it is prudent to disclose that while I am not currently residing in the ACT, I have strong familial and cultural ties to Canberra.

I send my sincerest regards for the challenge ahead.

## Comments on Boundary Changes/Additions

### Introduction

As the names for the divisions largely depend on their geographic location, I will consider the boundaries first. To reduce confusion, the divisions will be referred to as "North", "Central" and "South", depending on the proposal.

I have commented on the following suggestions:

- S1 - Martin Gordon
- S2 - Simon France
- S3 - Rohan Goyne
- S5 - Jeff Waddell
- S8 - ACT Labor
- S9 - David Walsh
- S11 - Dr Mark Mulcair
- S12 - Josh Wyndham-Kidd
- S14 - Kim Fischer and Stephen Bounds
- S15 - Darren McSweeney
- S16 - Canberra Liberals

## **S1 – Martin Gordon**

I noted that Martin Gordon's submission featured a design similar to many other proposals: basing the new electorate around the Civic Centre and the Inner Suburbs. This is an approach that I believe is essential in accounting for population growth while retaining a sense of community, and I wholeheartedly agree with this design. The proposed boundary between the Central and Southern Divisions is also well thought-out, using the strong line of Hindmarsh Drive. However, while I realise that the splitting of the Woden Valley is unavoidable (but unlikely to harm the sense of community), I believe that the entirety of Weston Creek can be kept together in the Southern Division by drawing the boundary up Tuggeranong Parkway and North-West along the Molonglo River and thus to the NSW border, which I believe provides a more substantial geographic boundary.

In regards to the boundary between the Central and North Electorates, I also largely believe that the plan is appropriate. However, I believe the boundary between Coulter Drive and Kingsford Smith Drive can be extended north so as the Central Division is bounded by Southern Cross Drive (instead of Belconnen Way), thus transferring the suburbs of Scullin and Page into the Central Division. This will help mitigate any losses that will result from the transfer of the Weston Creek Area into the Southern Division, as well as offset any population gains in the Northern Division due to new developments in the Lawson and Gungahlin areas. Overall, Martin Gordon's design has substantial merit.

## **S2 – Simon France**

I agree that developments on the borders of the ACT have implications in the redistribution of its divisions. However, the border between NSW and the ACT is one of the strongest geographical delineators available, and while it may not yet prove necessary to cross state/territory borders in drawing divisions, I strongly advise to take precautions if considering such a bold move.

## **S3 – Rohan Goyne**

I agree that Belconnen's growth must be taken into account when planning for the new electoral divisions; however, this rising population can be managed

by (unavoidably) dividing up Belconnen along existing local boundaries into the North and Central Divisions, as proposed in many other submissions (i.e. S1, S8, S12 etc.), with a new electorate in the South. I believe this will help sustainably manage the population growth for years to come.

### **S5 – Jeff Waddell**

While I am impressed at the unique approach and careful quota calculations proposed, I have deep concerns about the effect that splitting several satellite cities will have on local communities. I believe that basing the fundamental design of the divisions on the former division of Namadgi is mistaken, given recent population trends and new developments since the 90's. While I agree with using the Molonglo River as the westernmost boundary between divisions, the splitting of the Woden Valley via several roads is confusing and not in line with community expectations.

Similarly, by splitting the suburbs of the Inner City, as well as the Northern city of Gungahlin, the well-accustomed community boundaries will be broken, as Canberra and Fenner will change substantially in size and shape to accommodate Namadgi. Overall, I believe (in light of recent growth and developments) that retaining the fundamental designs of Canberra and Fenner while adding a third division centred on the inner suburbs is necessary, as oppose to restoring Namadgi. However, I agree that the Jervis Bay Territory should be kept as part of Fenner.

### **S8 – ACT Labor**

ACT Labor's proposal is another design that believes in creating a division around the inner city of Canberra, and one I thoroughly agree with. The border between the Central and Southern Divisions is very well thought out, using both the strong borders of the Molonglo River, Tuggeranong Parkway and Hindmarsh Drive to delineate communities that hold much in common. However, I believe that Philip can continue to be split along Hindmarsh Drive with little community impact, due to the definite boundary the road creates. Otherwise, this boundary generally seems to reflect the consensus view.

In regards to the boundary between the Central and Northern Divisions, I agree with the submission on all but one front: the inclusion of Kaleen to the exclusion of Belconnen in the Central division. I believe that as Bruce, Brindabella and Page all lie within the same Territory electorate (Ginninderra), but Kaleen is in an entirely separate electorate (Yerrabi), that Kaleen should not be part of the Central division, and Belconnen should be transferred instead. The current submission has the suburb of Page jutting out of an otherwise steady line of inner-suburbs. By including the close-knit community of Belconnen instead of Kaleen, both divisions will have a more clearly distinguished shape and community. Otherwise, the submission is highly commendable.

### **S9 – David Walsh**

I also largely agree with David Walsh's submission. The border between the Central and Southern Division is almost flawless, and, unlike S8, does not needlessly skirt around Philips. It also utilises the strong delineator of the Molonglo River effectively, and provides appropriate community boundaries. However, while minor, the proposal splits Symonston, specifically the triangle bordered by Hindmarsh Dr, Canberra Av and the Monaro Highway. This does not follow the community boundaries, and I believe the proposal would be stronger if it includes Symonston in its entirety for the Southern electorate, as other proposals promise.

I also note that the submission includes Beard and Oaks Estate in the Southern Division, not the Central. This is a shrewd decision, albeit one with little impact (due to low populations), as the light industrial economy of these intertwined townships fits more closely with the southernmost suburbs of the ACT and neighbouring Queanbeyan as oppose to the suburbs of the Inner City. I expect that upon development of Symonston, the parallels will become more obvious. However, due to their distance from other suburbs, inclusion in either the Central or Southern Divisions would be suitable for the time being, depending on the Committee's beliefs.

In regards to the border between the Central and Northern Divisions, I also wholeheartedly agree with the recommendation. The inclusion of Belconnen in the Central Division was necessary, and the inclusion of Scullin is also a wise choice in regards to neatness. I thoroughly commend David Walsh for his submission.

### **S9 – Dr Mark Mulcair**

Another submission that has taken future growth into account and has produced a wise recommendation. The boundary between the Central and the Southern Divisions is flawless, as it utilises the strong boundaries of the Molonglo River and Hindmarsh Drive with a neat boundary. I recommend including the aforementioned Beard and Oaks Estate in the Southern Division so as to more adequately meet its quota and unite alike communities. The border between the Central and Northern Divisions is also similar to other proposals, and as such I commend it. However, I believe that in light of increased urban growth in the Northern Division, the entirety of Lyneham, including North Lyneham, should be included in the Central Division to allow for further growth in the North.

### **S12 – Josh Wyndham-Kidd**

While the Southern/Central border bears many impressive and shrewd similarities to other proposals (i.e. Molonglo River, Hindmarsh Drive), I am curious as to the drawing of the border southwards along the Monaro Highway as oppose to the consensus of eastwards along Canberra Avenue. The only significant population included would be those residing at HMAS Harman and potential future developments in Symonston, people I believe who would feel a stronger sense of community being in the Southern electorate than the Inner Suburbs contained in the Central Division.

Otherwise, The Central/Northern border is commendable, although I believe Scullin should be included for neatness and efficiency, particularly if the expansive area of Symonston is transferred to the South electorate. I also agree that the Central Division should retain the whole of Lyneham, which is a preferable choice than splitting Lyneham between the North and Central Divisions.

### **S14 – Kim Fischer and Stephen Bounds**

The Y-Shape proposal is a unique, but not suitable, approach for planning divisional boundaries. The geography of the ACT requires that the new division be located around the Civic Centre and extend to the culturally linked inner suburbs, rather than splitting the current residents of Fenner into two distinct electorates.

In regards to the new “North-West” electorate, I believe it is, frankly, a mistake to group Weston River communities with Belconnen, and even some Gungahlin suburbs. Not are these communities separated by current local and federal divisional boundaries, but they are geographically separate by the Molonglo River, National Arboretum and Mount Stromlo. The suburb of Whitlam can easily be incorporated with the rest of the suburbs of the Inner City and Belconnen. I strongly advise against grouping the geographically and culturally distinct suburbs of Weston River and Belconnen together.

The “North-East” electorate, aside from its barely permissible low quota for the next few years and splitting of the Gungahlin suburbs of Kaleen, Nicholls and surrounds, also groups together some very distinct communities: the Inner City/Civic Centre and the outer suburbs. Despite the justification being the light rail route, I fail to find any reason why the two otherwise distinct cities, both in culture and previous divisional boundaries, should be incorporated together. I doubt this follows the preference of locals.

The “Southern” Division lacks strong delineation, using a series of various suburb boundaries and streets rather than the common view of Hindmarsh Drive. The skirting around Griffith is particularly concerning, and would not be necessary if not for the North-East division’s low quota. Ultimately, the transfer of the Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley suburbs to the North-West Division represents a significant loss for the community, given close ties between these suburbs and the rest of the Woden Valley. Ultimately, the design is hampered by the fundamental Y-shape, which fails to address changing demographics in Canberra.

I strongly advise against this proposal.

### **S15 – Darren McSweeney**

This was another unique, yet still unsuitable proposal with some merit. The grouping of the geographically and culturally distinct cities of Canberra and Gungahlin, and the partial splitting of the latter with the inner-city suburbs of Belconnen are not practical for serving the community interest in keeping communities together. Instead, the innermost suburbs of Belconnen should be incorporated with the inner city of Canberra, due to the shared identity of both (as other submissions propose, i.e. S1, S9, S12 etc.).

However, the boundary between the Southern and North-East divisions is well marked, utilising Hindmarsh Drive and Tuggeranong Parkway as strong delineators. However, I believe that the Molonglo River should be used as the Northern boundary of the Southern Electorate all the way to the NSW border, as other submissions propose (i.e. S8, S9 etc.). The splitting of the North Canberra suburbs is, however, unsuitable in ensuring that communities of interest remain together (see comments for S14)

Aside from the usage of Hindmarsh Drive as a boundary, I strongly advise against this proposal.

### **S16 – Canberra Liberals**

While I commend the approach focusing on retaining communities of interest, this is yet another unique design that merges such communities together in an inappropriate fashion. I disagree that Weston Creek communities are strongly linked to the Belconnen Suburbs, given geographical distance, separate PEAs (School Priority Enrolment Areas), and strong boundaries (i.e. Molonglo River, local electorate boundary between Murrumbidgee and Ginninderra). The development of Whitlam, being North of the Molonglo River and National Arboretum, will likely have more in common with Belconnen suburbs than Weston Creek. Thus, it is inappropriate to group the communities of Weston Creek and Belconnen together.

There are also two very fundamental concerns regarding the North-East electorate: the incorporation of both Civic Centre & Ginninderra, and the exclusion of vital landmarks that define Canberra. Regarding the former, I feel I could not say anything new in regard to putting the very separate areas of Ginninderra and Civic Centre together, taking into account current federal and territory divisional boundaries, separate suburban identities (see comments for S14). The North-East seat (called "Fenner") is vastly different to its predecessor's boundaries, encompassing parts of Canberra South of Lake Burley Griffin. It merges separate communities of interest, as I doubt the residents of Fyshwick would have significant links with residents of Hall.

In addition to this, the proposal splits the Parliamentary Triangle highly erratically, placing the Civic Centre and Parliament House in separate electorates, an otherwise unprecedented move. This is highly inappropriate, given the shared connection between the two monuments. The skirting around Old Parliament House and other significant buildings South of the lake

reveals both the inherent flaws with the proposal, and the necessity for a Central division to be located, encompassing both the significant structures and the communities of interest in Civic centre, Inner Belconnen, and the North Woden Valley (S1, S8, S9, S12 etc.).

I strongly advise against this proposal.

## **Conclusion**

Having reviewed all boundary submissions, I believe those submissions that propose a new Central Division are those with the most merit and greatest benefit for the community. I recommend the Committee consider S1, S8, S9 and S12 in depth, and use these as the basis for the new divisional boundaries for the ACT.

Personally, I believe that the border between the South and Central Divisions should consist of (West-East) Canberra Avenue (Oaks Estate and Beard can be retained in the Southern electorate), Hindmarsh Drive (skirting North around Symonston, but splitting Philip), Tuggeranong Parkway northwards, and finally following the Molonglo River North-West to the ACT/NSW border.

I also believe the border between the Central and North Divisions should consist of the Federal Highway, Barton Highway westerly, Gungahlin Drive southerly, Ginninderra Drive westerly, Coulter Drive southerly, Southern Cross Drive westerly, Kingsford Smith Drive southerly and following the Molonglo River north-westerly. Regional areas such as Kohen would thus be incorporated into the Central Electorate, as most submissions recommended. The suburbs of Page, Scullin and surrounds can be incorporated in or out of the Central Division at the Committee's leisure, although for neatness I would recommend incorporating them into the Central Division.

Many of the differences between submissions (i.e. incorporation of Beard and Oaks Estate) are of little consequence, and I recommend the Committee look at all options for their incorporation. I also recommend that Norfolk Island be retained in the Central Division, and the Jervis Bay Territory remain in the Northern Division. I wish the Committee well with their deliberations.

## **Comments on Divisional Names**

## Introduction

I based the names on the general consensus that the three electorates roughly cover the North, Central and South areas of Canberra.

I have commented on the following suggestions:

- S1 - Martin Gordon
- S2 - Simon France
- S3 - Rohan Goyne
- S4 - Ronald Salt
- S5 - Jeff Waddell
- S6 - Dr Michael Hedger
- S7 - Stephen Wilks
- S8 - ACT Labor
- S9 - David Walsh
- S10 - Paul Meyer
- S11 - Dr Mark Mulcair
- S12 - Josh Wyndham-Kidd
- S13 - Brian Cox
- S14 - Kim Fischer and Stephen Bounds
- S15 - Darren McSweeney
- S16 - Canberra Liberals

### **S1 – Martin Gordon**

While I recognise the lasting positive contribution made by the Griffins to Australian architecture and design, I believe naming the Central Division of the ACT after them is not the best option. Firstly, the name “Griffin” is extremely similar to the name of the Queensland Electorate “Griffith”, which also shares its name with a NSW and ACT town, not to mention a university. I believe that diversity, not similarity, should be sought after when considering names. Secondly, naming the Central Division Griffin as oppose to Canberra may create confusion, given the exclusion of the city centre from Canberra’s boundaries. However, I believe that the Griffins should be honoured for their profound work, and though recognition may not come through an electorate name, I hope a memorial or monument will be constructed in their memory. Retaining the name of Fenner for the Northern electorate is a shrewd recommendation.

## **S2 – Simon France**

While not explicitly referring to division names, I believe that should an electorate's boundaries extend beyond territory or state lines (which I recommend against), further consideration should be made so as its name reflects the culture and location of the communities of both states.

## **S3 – Rohan Goyne**

I strongly disagree that any electorate encompassing Belconnen or part thereof should be called "Brindabella". While I recognise the significance of the mountain range, there is already a territory electorate called "Brindabella", located in the South of the territory around Tuggeranong. Naming a division in the inner North-West suburbs "Brindabella" may create confusion between the two, and I advise the Committee against it.

## **S4 – Ronald Salt**

While I disagree with his proposal, I commend Ronald Salt's submission for originality. I believe that if a new electorate were to be named after Robert Campbell, it should be located in New South Wales, given his contributions were mostly limited to the Colony of Sydney and the Rum Rebellion. As such, I believe "Campbell" is an inappropriate, albeit an original, name for the new Division.

## **S5 – Jeff Waddell**

The use of the name "Namadgi" for the Southern Division is a proposal I wholeheartedly agree with. The strong connection locals in the South of the ACT have with the name (being the name of both the former division and a close National Park), as well as the Aboriginal heritage of "Namadgi" give this idea a sure footing and community support. Many locals remember the former Division and are fond of the National Park, and naming it after both would be in the interest of the community. Retaining Canberra for the Civic Centre area and Fenner for the Northern suburbs is also a perceptive choice.

I strongly recommend that the Southern Division be named "Namadgi".

## **S6 – Dr Michael Hedger**

While I have commented on the potential name of "Griffin" in regards to S1, I believe that if a division were to be named "Griffin", it would best be the one

located in the South or the North of the Territory. The Southern and Northern suburbs of Canberra feature much of the impressive satellite city planning that has come to define Griffin's vision for Canberra. In particular, the geometric designs of Woden Valley and Weston Creek would make the name Griffin suitable for the Southern electorate. The name "Canberra" should be retained for the civic centre, reflecting the trend of naming capital-based divisions after themselves i.e. the divisions of Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra. Having a division named "Canberra" that is not located at the heart of Canberra will create confusion. If the name "Griffin" is chosen, I believe it should be located in the North or South Division (not the Central division), which contain the satellite visions Sir Walter Burley Griffin envisioned, and have come to define our city.

### **S7 – Stephen Wilks**

Keith Hancock was certainly an extraordinary Australian, and I recommend it also be considered as a potential name for the Southern Division, as the North is already named "Fenner" and the Central Division would appropriately be called "Canberra". Also, Hancock's work protecting the hills can be realised by having the Southern electorate named after him, which cover many of the territory's National Parks, recognising his longstanding commitment to the environment. Naming the Central Division after him may be inappropriate, given his longstanding opposition to the Telstra Tower on Black Mountain, which is encompassed in the Central division.

### **S8 – ACT Labor**

While I agree with retaining the name "Fenner" for the Northern Division, I disagree with naming the Central Division "Molonglo" and the Southern Division "Canberra". Personally, I believe the names, if adopted, should be swapped, as the Southern division, not the Central division, encompasses the Molonglo Valley. Naming one electorate after a geographical feature in another will create confusion and potentially go against the view of the local communities.

I believe that between "Namadgi" and "Molonglo", most residents of the Southern Division will feel inclined to adopt the former, as many people have cultural and aesthetic connections to the National Park and mountain range.

### **S9 – David Walsh**

I strongly agree with naming the Northern Division “Fenner” and Civic/Central Division “Canberra”, names that most residents will agree with. Naming the Southern Division “Namadgi” is, as David Walsh points out, potentially undesirable due to it being a geographic name. However, I believe that it is perfectly suitable as a name for the Southern division, due to the link with the National Park and former electorate.

#### **S10 – Paul Meyer**

I commend Paul Meyer for his original choice; however, I do not believe that the Thwaites’ contribution to Canberra specifically matches that of other submissions. That said, their contribution to Australia should and must not be forgotten, and if an electorate is named after them, I recommend the Southern Division.

#### **S11 – Dr Mark Mulcair**

Naming “Fenner” for the North division, “Canberra” for the Central/Civic, and “Namadgi” for the Southern is a prudent choice that follows both the will of the people and the general consensus from many other submissions (see comments for S5).

I strongly agree with Dr Mark Mulcair’s recommendations.

#### **S12 – Josh Wyndham-Kidd**

I strongly agree with the rationale for naming the Northern electorate “Fenner” and the Central/Civic electorate “Canberra”, and recommend the Committee follow these principles in naming the new divisions. The name of “Namadgi” for the Southern electorate, as previously discussed, is a suitable choice (see comments for S5), though a name after a significant figure may be preferred.

I strongly agree with Josh Wyndham-Kidd’s recommendations.

#### **S13 – Brian Cox**

I strongly agree that the name “Nott” should be considered for the Southern Division, being the most malleable and susceptible to a name change. I need not reiterate Dr Nott’s contributions to the ACT and Canberra, but recommend that should the Southern electorate not be renamed “Namadgi”, it should gain the name of “Nott”.

I strongly agree with Brian Cox's recommendation.

#### **S14 – Kim Fischer and Stephen Bounds**

While no recommendations for names were made, I would like to point out the difficulty in choosing names if the Y-design (which I have advised strongly against) were to be chosen. In most designs, the Division of Fenner loses much of its shape, as does the Division of Canberra, and thus choosing which divisions retain the names and which one gains a new name becomes exponentially harder. Unlike the North-Central-South design otherwise recommended, which can easily be recognised as having the names "Fenner", "Canberra" and "New Name" respectively, the significant changes presented by the Y-design give rise to challenges that would possibly lead to naming controversy. As such, I will not recommend any names for this Y-design.

#### **S15 – Darren McSweeney**

While the names recommended are suitable (I commend the originality of naming a division after Arthur Shakespeare), I think the names are better suited to the North-Central-South Design rather than the Y-design of divisions. I agree that the Northern Division should be called "Fenner" and the Central division be called "Canberra", thus leaving the southernmost division for "Shakespeare", if the Committee so desires.

#### **S16 – Canberra Liberals**

As much as I like the name "Stromlo", I believe it is not the best choice for a new division, regardless of whether it is used in the Y-design or the North-Central-South. Not only is it a geographic name (which tend to be turned down in favour of names after significant figures), but also the name "Namadgi", which describes a similar area with equally significant connections, would generally be preferred due to it being the name of the former electorate. As such, while I agree "Fenner" and "Canberra" should be retained, albeit in the N-C-S design, I believe the name "Namadgi" is preferable to "Stromlo"

## Conclusion

Having reviewed all the potential names, I recommend the following based on submissions and the North-Central-South design:

Northern Division: **Fenner**

Central Division: **Canberra**

Southern Division: In order of preference:

- **Nott**
- **Hancock**
- **Griffin**
- **Namadgi**

While retaining the Northern and Central names is relatively uncontroversial, I realise the naming process for the new Southern Division is strongly contested, and thus I have produced a list based on the suggestions made, so as to smooth over any transition. I strongly believe that the Northern and Central Divisions need not change their names from “Fenner” and “Canberra” respectively, due to their already established identity in the Canberra political landscape.

## Final Comments

I wish the Committee well in its deliberations, and send my sincerest regards that the final design reflects the desires and needs of the people of the ACT.

Benjamin Chesler