



Objection 74

Canberra Liberals

4 pages

ACT Redistribution Committee

Australian Electoral Commission

To the Redistribution Committee for the ACT,

Overview

The Canberra Liberals strongly object to the electoral division boundaries for the ACT proposed by the Redistribution Committee on 6 April 2018. The Canberra Liberals consider that the proposed boundaries, which closely follow those proposed by the Australian Labor Party, do not give due weight and consideration to the requirements of section 66(3)(b) (i) and (iv) of the *Electoral Act 1918* concerning community of interests within the proposed electoral division, including economic, social and regional interests.

The central flaw of the proposed boundaries is that it divides distinct communities of interest by locating parts of Belconnen in both Fenner and Canberra and parts of Woden in both Canberra and Bean. Canberra has 4 main town centres, outside of the City Centre – Gungahlin, Belconnen, Woden and Tuggeranong. These are very specific areas that are economic and social communities. Out town centres are vital to the character of the ACT and ACT residents' value and identify with the distinct communities centred on them. It is the belief of the Canberra Liberals that the Redistribution Committee should give these communities of interest the upmost consideration when determining the final boundaries. In the draft released by on 6 April 2018, 2 of the 4 core centres are split and it needs to be avoided.

The Canberra Liberals welcome, however, the proposal to name the electorate in which Tuggeranong homestead is located after Charles Bean, noting his outstanding service to recording and preserving Australia's military history.

Requirements of *Electoral Act 1918*

The Canberra Liberals note the Electoral Act Redistribution Committee is required by paragraph 66(3)(b) of the *Electoral Act 1918* to give due consideration to:

- i. community of interests within the proposed electoral division, including economic, social and regional interests,
- ii. means of communication and travel within the proposed electoral division,
- iv. the physical features and area of the proposed electoral division, and
- v. the boundaries of existing electoral divisions in the Australian Capital Territory, with this factor being subordinate to the consideration of i, ii and iv.

The Redistribution Committee is also required to locate the Jervis Bay Territory and Norfolk Island in different electoral divisions in the Australian Capital Territory.

Canberra Communities of Interest

Town centres are vital to the character of the ACT, and ACT residents value these distinct communities centred around the Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Woden and Gungahlin town centres. These town centres are also at the heart of Canberra's largest seven official districts as detailed in the map below.

It should be noted that these divisions are not merely administrative or geographical. Rather they are central to the identity and experiences of Canberra residents. There is a clear and consistent sense of community and belonging specifically centred around the town centres. Residents usually identify as living in a specific town centre or district and public policy decisions are made with these regions in mind. Furthermore, the ACT's infrastructure, including main arterial roads and public transport, are designed around these centres.

It is commonplace to have parliamentary representatives in both the Territory and Commonwealth Parliaments centre policy debates around how they affect the town centres. In colloquial terms, ACT representatives often talk of how they are "fighting for Woden" or "getting better roads for Belconnen" and most of the town centres and districts have formal community councils that represent their particular interests. Therefore, a proposal for electorate boundaries that divides town centres not only undermines the design of Canberra, it does not reflect that nature of everyday life in the Canberra community. And, importantly, undermines the way in which communities can represent their interests to their future local members of parliament.

Proposed Boundaries

As we have seen in the proposed electoral division boundaries that have been released, the proposed redistribution places the Woden suburbs of O'Malley, Isaacs, Chifley, Pearce and Mawson in Canberra while the remaining suburbs are placed in Bean. Likewise for Belconnen the suburbs of Hawker, Macquarie, Cook, Aranda, Bruce, Kaleen, Lawson and Giralang are placed in Canberra with the remaining suburbs of Belconnen placed in Canberra.

These are significant splits to the core centres that our city is built around.

Basis of objection

The Canberra Liberals consider that the proposed boundary for the Division of Canberra divides town centres and their resulting communities in several sections, notably in its north-western section where boundaries contiguous with the Division of Canberra and of Fenner are drawn through and between the suburbs of Belconnen, dividing this town centre and in the South where boundaries contiguous with the Division of Canberra and of Bean are drawn through and between the suburbs of Woden. In drawing these boundaries and dividing these communities of interest the Redistribution Committee has not given due weight and consideration to the requirements of section 66(3)(b) (i) and (iv) of the *Electoral Act 1918*.

Of particular concern the proposed redistribution divides suburbs of Woden with some to be represented with the Inner South and others to be represented with the suburbs of Tuggeranong, Weston Creek and Molonglo. Equally the proposed redistribution divides suburbs of Belconnen with some to be represented with the suburbs of the Inner North and others to be represented with the suburbs of Gungahlin.

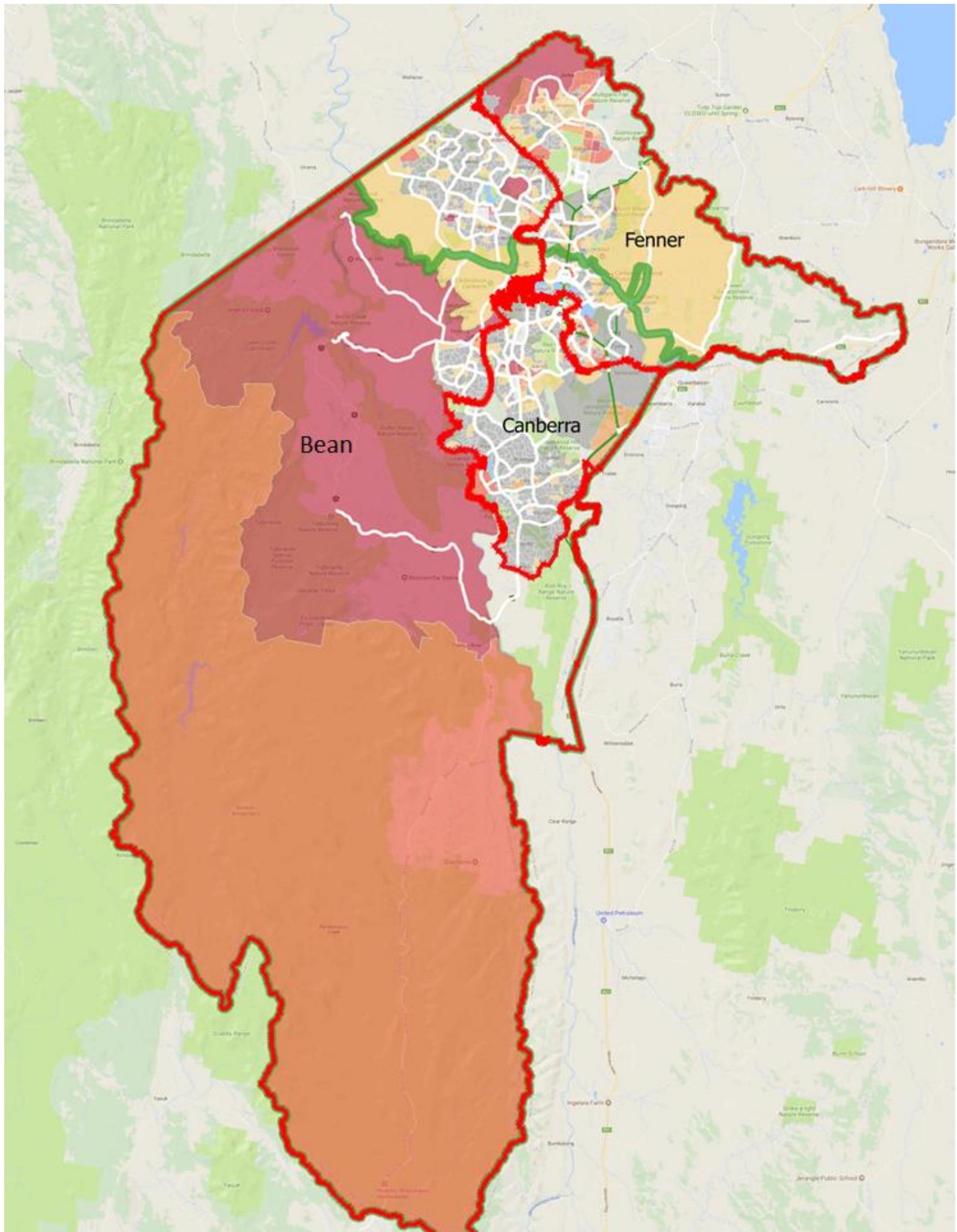
The Committee's proposed redistribution also calls for the newly developing suburb of Whitlam to be represented with the Tuggeranong and Weston town centres some distance away in the south of the ACT. The Canberra Liberals consider that this is particularly unreflective of the town centres to Whitlam will most strongly identify with.

Reconsideration

The Canberra Liberals urge the Redistribution Committee to note that town centres and the districts that surround them are a key feature of the ACT, which were crucial to the early design of the ACT and remain at the heart of the communities which have grown and continue to thrive in the nation's capital today. These significant communities of interest should not be split amongst Federal Electorates.

Naming of Electoral Divisions

The Canberra Liberals welcome the naming of an electorate in commemoration of Charles Bean, noting his outstanding service to recording and preserving Australia's military history and continuing the legacy of the original ANZACs. The Canberra Liberals fully support the proposal to name the electorate in which Tuggeranong homestead is located after Charles Bean. The Canberra Liberals also support the retention of the names Fenner and Canberra for the other two electoral divisions.



Bean

Canberra

Fenner