



# Comment on objections 15

Alexandra Fein

4 pages

As a founder of a number of Jewish media projects (including high traffic news and opinion websites and social media groups comprising thousands of people), as an advocate for survivors of Jewish institutional abuse, as an Orthodox Rebbetzin (rabbinic consort) involved in pastoral care, as an alumna of the Jewish day school system and the Zionist youth movements, and as a resident of Caulfield, Caulfield North, and Elsternwick for 38 out of 45 years of my life, I have extensive experience and knowledge of the Melbourne Jewish community.

This knowledge and experience informs my strong belief that arguments for boundaries that reflect geographical contiguity regarding the Melbourne Jewish community are neither practicable, nor reflective of the reality of Jewish communal life. Such arguments also elide the considerable diversity of Melbourne Jewry, and the complexity inherent in self-identification regarding this ethno-religious grouping.

1. Contiguity arguments erase both established and emerging Jewish communities. There has been a considerable Jewish presence in and around the Doncaster area for many decades, while newer communities are emerging in the inner northern suburbs. These newer communities are often underrepresented in the organised Jewish community and its communications, due to ideological differences, with particular regard to Israel. Many young Jews within this cohort are also more likely to identify as Jews ethnically, but not religiously<sup>1</sup>, and would thus not be represented as adherents of Judaism in the census data. The disparity between Jewish identification and declaring adherence to Judaism on the census, is evident in a 2016 Monash University study into the Jewish population of Victoria.<sup>2</sup>
2. If, however, contiguity is indeed a pressing priority regarding the drawing of electoral boundaries, absorbing Caulfield and Elsternwick into Higgins would bring together large Jewish communities that had previously been separated. Toorak (with 9.3% of its population identifying as adhering to Judaism)<sup>3</sup>, Malvern (with 6% identifying)<sup>4</sup>, and Carnegie (with 6.5% identifying)<sup>5</sup> would join Elsternwick (with 17.8%

---

1

[https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@\\_nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/7E65A144540551D7CA258148000E2B85#:~:text=The%20results%20of%20the%20latest,next%20most%20common%20regions%20reported](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@_nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/7E65A144540551D7CA258148000E2B85#:~:text=The%20results%20of%20the%20latest,next%20most%20common%20regions%20reported).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.monash.edu/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/2516288/VIC-2016-Census-Report-FINAL-amended-Feb21-with-covers.pdf](https://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/2516288/VIC-2016-Census-Report-FINAL-amended-Feb21-with-covers.pdf)

3

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22534?opendocument](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22534?opendocument)

4

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC21576](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC21576)

5

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20495](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20495)

identifying)<sup>6</sup>, Caulfield (with 40% identifying)<sup>7</sup> and Caulfield North (with 41.1% identifying)<sup>8</sup>.

Indeed, Monash University's 2016 report into The Jewish Population of Victoria finds that -

- 74% of Victorian Jews live in just three neighbouring LGAs: 56% in Glen Eira, 10% in Stonnington and 8% in Port Phillip.
  - An estimated 54% of residents in Caulfield North are Jewish, 44% in Caulfield South
  - The suburbs that have seen the biggest increase (interpolated) in Jewish residents are Caulfield North (344), Elsternwick (219) and Bentleigh East (190).<sup>9</sup>
3. Caulfield South, however, (with 35.9% identifying)<sup>10</sup>, would remain in the electorate of Goldstein, together with other suburbs in which there are growing Jewish communities, as evidenced by the proliferation of synagogues and Jewish organisations, such as in Bentleigh, Bentleigh East, and Carnegie<sup>11 12 13 14 15 16</sup>.
  4. Socioeconomically, the Jewish residents of Caulfield, North Caulfield, and Elsternwick share far more in common with their co-religionists in Toorak and Malvern than they do with non-Jewish residents in suburbs such as St Kilda, Windsor, or Elwood.
  5. If geographical contiguity of the religiously-identifying Jewish community is indeed paramount, as is being argued by Zionism Victoria<sup>17</sup>, St Kilda Hebrew

---

6

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20858#:~:text=In%20the%202016%20Census%2C%20there,up%200.3%25%20of%20the%20population.&text=The%20median%20age%20of%20people,State%20Suburbs\)%20was%2037%20years.](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20858#:~:text=In%20the%202016%20Census%2C%20there,up%200.3%25%20of%20the%20population.&text=The%20median%20age%20of%20people,State%20Suburbs)%20was%2037%20years.)

7

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20518](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20518)

8

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/208021177](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/208021177)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.monash.edu/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/2516288/VIC-2016-Census-Report-FINAL-ammended-Feb21-with-covers.pdf](https://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/2516288/VIC-2016-Census-Report-FINAL-ammended-Feb21-with-covers.pdf)

10

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/208021178](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/208021178)

11

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20495](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC20495)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ujeb.org.au/program/jewish-life-jl-east-bentleigh-ps/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.chabadbentleigh.com/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://piv.org.au/our-community/progressive-movement-victoria>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.chabad.org/centers/default\\_cdo/aid/117778/jewish/Beis-Menachem-Community-Centre.htm](https://www.chabad.org/centers/default_cdo/aid/117778/jewish/Beis-Menachem-Community-Centre.htm)

<sup>16</sup> <https://mifgashcentre.org.au/en/bentleigh-synagogue/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Redistributions/2021/vic/files/objections/vic21-ob0054-zionism-victoria.pdf>

Congregation<sup>18</sup>, Jennifer Huppert<sup>19</sup>, and Dr Mark Baker<sup>20</sup>, separating Toorak and Malvern Jewry from Caulfield, North Caulfield, and Elsternwick Jewry is insupportable.

6. Contiguity concerns regarding the suburb of East St Kilda are similarly problematic. East St Kilda Jewry is concentrated within the area to be designated as Higgins, in the redistribution. Hotham Street acts as a boundary separating the largely Jewish residential area of East St Kilda (which would become part of Higgins and remain alongside the larger Jewish populations of Caulfield, North Caulfield, and Elsternwick) from the commercial area of Carlisle St (in which fewer Jewish people live).
7. Concerns raised by Adass Israel<sup>21</sup> regarding the Jewish-identifying population in Ripponlea must be contextualised in three ways:
  - a) The Jewish community of Ripponlea almost entirely comprises members of the Adass Israel sect - a sect which has no formal ties with the organised Jewish community based in Caulfield, North Caulfield, and Elsternwick; nor does it engage socially in any way with members of the Jewish community in these suburbs<sup>22</sup>.
  - b) Indeed the organised Jewish community was powerless to intervene in the Malka Leifer sex abuse case, having no standing within the Adass Israel community.  
Adass Israel's political interests differ considerably in many ways from the organised Jewish community. Of particular note is the non-Zionist nature of the Adass Israel community; indeed it has ties to groups that are openly anti-Zionist, putting it at odds with a central feature of organised Jewish life in Melbourne<sup>23</sup>.
  - c) Adass Israel residents comprise 15.2% of Ripponlea. The remaining 84.8% of Ripponlea residents share far more in common, culturally and socio-economically, with neighbouring St Kilda and Elwood than with Caulfield, Caulfield North, or Elsternwick<sup>24</sup>.

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Redistributions/2021/vic/files/objections/vic21-ob0058-st-kilda-hebrew-congregation.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Redistributions/2021/vic/files/objections/vic21-ob0053-jennifer-huppert.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Redistributions/2021/vic/files/objections/vic21-ob0042-mark-baker.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Redistributions/2021/vic/files/objections/vic21-ob0038-adass-israel-community.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-23/sisters-fight-for-justice-against-alleged-abuser-malka-leifer/9672550?nw=0>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/australian-jews-ties-to-israel-tested-by-drawn-out-saga-of-alleged-sex-abuser/>

<sup>24</sup>

[https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22167#:~:text=In%20the%202016%20Census%2C%20there,up%20.3%25%20of%20the%20population.&text=The%20median%20age%20of%20people,State%20Suburbs](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22167#:~:text=In%20the%202016%20Census%2C%20there,up%20.3%25%20of%20the%20population.&text=The%20median%20age%20of%20people,State%20Suburbs)

8. Such contiguity arguments are, however, inherently problematic, as demonstrated by the neighbouring electorate of Goldstein, comprising the suburbs of South Caulfield, Bentleigh, Bentleigh East, and Carnegie.
  
9. Labor's argument that, 'Every kosher restaurant and bakery in Melbourne is South of Dandenong Road, and where north of Glen Huntly Road, they are largely concentrated on Balaclava Rd, including for example the iconic institutions of Glicks,' is simply false.  
Glenferrie Road in Malvern is home to a number of Jewish businesses, including Continental Kosher Butcher and a branch of Glick's Bakeries. Indeed, the Glenferrie Road shopping strip, together with Toorak Rd, Toorak, have for decades been host to Jewish social life. The significant Jewish presence north of Dandenong Road is reflected by the large kosher sections in the major supermarkets in Malvern and even as far as Tooronga Rd, Hawthorn.  
This argument also neglects the considerable number of such restaurants and shops existing within the electorate of Goldstein.
  
10. Victorian Labor's<sup>25</sup> argument that, 'Further evidence to this point is found in the 'eruv.' An eruv is a ritual wire enclosure that permits Jews to engage in many activities that are otherwise prohibited on the Sabbath (which occurs every week from Friday to Saturday),' elides -
  - a) The eruv stretching well into Goldstein and through to Isaacs<sup>26</sup>
  - b) Extant plans that have been in place for many years by the Council of Orthodox Synagogues (COSV) of Victoria to extend the Eruv through Malvern and Prahran<sup>27</sup>. That this eruv extension has not materialised is not a reflection of the Jewish population in these suburbs or their commitment to Judaism, but rather a result of organisational issues within the COSV.

---

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Redistributions/2021/vic/files/objections/vic21-ob0063-victorian-labor.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/cable-loop-lets-melbournes-orthodox-jews-feel-at-home-20111120-1npdn.html>

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.rambam.org.au/templates/articlecco\\_cdo/aid/1485581/jewish/Melbourne-Eruv.htm](https://www.rambam.org.au/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/1485581/jewish/Melbourne-Eruv.htm)