



Comment on objections 48

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4 pages

Comments on objections to the proposed redistribution – Victorian federal redistribution.

Macnamara

Communities of interest.

LGBTIQ+

Reading the objections gives the impression there is only one significant community of interest which will be affected by the proposed changes. There is another significant sizeable un-mentioned community of interest – the LGBTIQ+ community – which will positively benefit from the proposed changes.

LGBTIQ+ people still experience significant stigma from the broader community and thus many seek to live and socialise in the inner suburbs of Melbourne which, comparatively, are more progressive, supportive and accepting.

One of the largest concentrations of LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria live in the suburbs of St Kilda, parts of St Kilda East, Elwood, Ripponlea, Windsor, Prahran and South Yarra. This has been the case for many decades and that community now spans the generations from LGBTIQ+ elders through to younger LGBTIQ+ people, and, more recently, LGBTIQ+ families.

They choose to live there for a range of reasons.

There is a large variety of accommodation in these suburbs, including comparatively low cost apartment living which makes it possible for younger LGBTOQ+ people to rent in these areas, the increase of apartment stock enhances the capacity for LGBTIQ+ people to buy in the area, the supportive environment is seen as safer for LGBTIQ+ people to raise and school their children in the area.

The most prominent reason for LGTIQ+ people living in these suburbs is being able to live amongst others in their community.

St Kilda has long been seen as the centre for LGBTIQ+ life in Melbourne as indicated by the hugely popular Pride March and Party held on Fitzroy St each year.

The imminent opening of the Pride Centre in Fitzroy St, St Kilda, will further consolidate the LGBTIQ+ community and act as a centre for that community. Whilst it will provide for the entire state, it is natural that those living closest will find it easier to access and thus frequent more often. The centre will be a home for a large number of LGBTIQ+ community organisations and have services delivered by a range of leading LBGTIQ+ community health and welfare organisations. It will be a community hub.

Evidence of the presence and size of the LGBTIQ+ community is demonstrated by the fact that two of Melbourne's largest LGBTIQ+ general practice health services are located in St Kilda and Prahran. Thorne Harbour Health's Centre Clinic is in Fitzroy St, St Kilda and the Prahran Market Clinic is in Commercial Rd, Prahran. These are large general practices with a large client base servicing the LGBTIQ+ community.

A central feature of LGBTIQ+ community life has always been social venues. For some years Commercial Rd was a thriving strip of LGBTIQ+ cafes, bars and nightclubs. Whilst economic and real estate factors have caused a recent decline in these venues their existence shows the size and vitality of the LGBTIQ+ community in the area. Currently the popular venues include: Chasers Nightclub [Poof Doof], Sth Yarra [also holding events at the St Kilda Bowling Club]; Railway Hotel, Windsor; Prince of Wales Hotel, St Kilda; Revolver Nightclub, Prahran and the Newmarket Hotel, St Kilda.

There are a number of LGBTIQ+ sporting clubs and groups which use facilities across the existing Macnamara electorate and in Prahran and South Yarra. Examples of these include: the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre, Albert Park Lake and ovals, and the Prahran Pool.

Thus, the inclusion of South Yarra and Prahran will strengthen the LGBTIQ+ community of interest within the Macnamara electorate. The proposed shifting of St Kilda East east of Hotham St into Higgins will not have a significant impact as there is not such a large population of LGBTIQ+ people in that area. Most of them live on the western side of Hotham St.

Public Housing

Some of the objection submissions failed to adequately detail and analyse the community of interest of those who live in public or community housing in both the existing Macnamara electorate and the Sth Yarra and Prahran neighbourhoods. These submissions gave an incorrect and low impression of the number of residents in this community of interest. The submissions referred mainly to the Public Housing Towers – which do exist - and notably some in Prahran and Sth Yarra that would add to those currently in Macnamara. However, there are also a large number in this community who do not live in those towers and thus are not so visible. There are a large number of people living in low rise or single level public housing estates. There are also a large number living in stand-alone public housing [e.g. housing and apartment stock purchased by the government] and a large number living in properties operated by community housing groups.

These residents compose a community of interest for socio economic reasons. These residents across both the existing Macnamara and Sth Yarra/Prahran neighbourhoods have a large amount in common and notably some very relevant points of distinction with those residing in the surrounding streets.

These public housing residents are renters on a low income or government benefit. However, the areas surrounding these properties contain amongst the most expensive real estate in Melbourne and are populated by high income middle and upper middle class people.

Some generalisations can also be made. Public Housing tenants probably have a proportionally higher reliance upon and use of government income and services than others in the electorate. Their experience of disadvantage, stigma and marginalisation is similarly likely to be higher than for others in the electorate.

Comments that the absence of any organising across the public housing community of interest is an indication of the absence of community and commonality are incorrect. Such an absence does not indicate the lack of commonality, it simply indicates that such organising has not occurred. The reasons for this could lie in the lack of a significant capacity to organise, and this could be directly linked to the shared experience of disempowerment and marginalisation common to many in public

housing. This does not contradict that residents might be active in community activities within their own setting or in the broader community.

Thus, the inclusion of Sth Yarra and Prahran into Macnamara will see the consolidation of a large number of public and community housing tenants in one electorate. This will enhance their capacity to have a political influence and voice.

Transport.

Some of the comments made in objections about travel behaviour and the proposed boundaries can be questioned.

There is a large amount of easy and convenient travel across and within the eastern section of the current Macnamara and the proposed South Yarra and Prahran and it is common for residents to move around and across those neighbourhoods for social, recreational, and shopping purposes.

Some objections stated that Dandenong Rd is a barrier between suburbs above and below it. This is not correct. It is a busy road, but mainly used to transit through these suburbs, and for residents it is common practice to move across it at will and without considering it a significant obstacle. Similarly, comments were made that Chapel St and Hotham St/Williams Rd are not major thoroughfares, which is also incorrect for, whilst they might not have high a high volume of traffic, a significant proportion of usage is local residents travelling up and down the strip from Sth Yarra to Elwood.

This movement across this strip is further assisted by the excellent range and frequency of public transport options. The tram grid across this area provides the base for easy movement and access. Trams run off St Kilda Rd in an east/west direction down Toorak Rd, Commercial Rd, High St, Dandenong Rd, Carlisle St, and St Kilda Rd [Nepean Highway]. Then there are a range of north/south options which either intersect or link with those routes and thus expanding travel options and scope: the Chapel St tram intersects with all those tram routes, the 603 Bus travels from The Alfred Hospital, Commercial Rd, Prahran along Williams Rd/Hotham St all the way down to Elwood. The 246 Bus travels along Punt Rd into Barkly St and thus directly links Sth Yarra and Prahran with St Kilda and Elwood. Added to this is the Sandringham Line train with stops at Sth Yarra, Prahran, Windsor, Balaclava and Ripponlea – which gives the option of travel to any of those stations as well as then linking with other branches of the public transport sector.

Adjacent to the above set of public transport options is the ability to use them to travel in an east/west direction across the Macnamara electorate by using them to get to the light rail in St Kilda or the 106 tram from Acland St both of which travel through the centre of the electorate.

Added to this is popular and low cost use of services such as Uber which make travel within these areas manageable and common.

Further, there is increasing use of bicycle to travel within these neighbourhoods as can be seen in the popularity of both peak-hour work related cycling and local purpose cycling. This is reflected in calls by bicycle lobby groups for dedicated bike lanes linking access from the Yarra River [Sth Yarra] down into St Kilda, St Kilda East and Elwood.

This demonstrates that there is an excellent public transport network that assists the ease of movement between the existing eastern part of Macnamara and the proposed neighbourhoods of Prahran and Sth Yarra.

