



Comment on suggestion 37

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11 pages

COMMENTS ON SUGGESTIONS FOR 2020 VICTORIAN FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION

(DR MARK MULCAIR)

INTRODUCTION

Suggestions for redrawing the whole state have come from both the political parties and other individuals. It is particularly pleasing to see so many whole-state contributions from interested people like myself, who are not affiliated with any political party.

There are too many suggestions, and too little time, to go into each submission in detail. Most of my comments will focus on highlighting the similarities and differences between each submission. I have also tried to discuss some of the specific Divisions or parts of the state where there are a number of different options proposed.

For the most part, there is a lot of agreement between the suggestions at the high-level. There are differences in the specifics, but most suggestions support:

- Corangamite to contract up to urban Geelong, and donate electors to top-up the rural seats.
- Ballarat and Bendigo to lose areas closer to metropolitan Melbourne
- Relatively minor change in the rural north and in Gippsland.
- A new seat to be created in the northern or western suburbs, using the existing surplus plus the donations from Ballarat and Bendigo.
- The south-eastern Divisions to contract, pulling all of the eastern suburban Divisions southwards.

Naming

As at previous recent redistributions, there seem to be a number of organised campaigns to push forward certain names for addition or elimination. Many of the submissions are of the form-letter type that advocate for renaming specific seats.

Given that five new names appeared on the Victorian electoral map in 2018 (Fraser, Nicholls, Macnamara, Cooper, and Monash) I would recommend that name changes be kept to a minimum this time, to avoid voter confusion or disengagement.

I note that almost every submission recommends 'Hawke' as the name for either the new seat or one of Wills/Maribyrnong. I would recommend this to the Committee.

REGIONAL VICTORIA

CORIO AND CORANGAMITE

Most other suggestions leave Corio unchanged. Since it is within tolerance, this is certainly a viable option.

However, I think for community of interest reasons, the Committee should at least look at making an adjustment between Corio and Corangamite. There was considerable objection to some of the changes last time, so the opportunity could be taken to reverse at least some of them.

I have provided a way for Corio to move mostly north of the Barwon River, with Corangamite regaining most of the territory that it lost last time. I think this results in very clear boundaries and a strong community of interest, with well-defined 'Northern Geelong' and 'Southern Geelong' Divisions.

Bannockburn

Whatever arrangement the Committee decides for Corio and Corangamite, I think that Bannockburn fits best in Corio. This area lies 'north' of Geelong and is closest to the northern suburbs currently in Corio, and has good links back along the Midland Highway.

Many other submissions place it in either Corangamite, Wannon or Ballarat, but I think these are less ideal arrangements. Leaving Bannockburn in Corangamite results in an oddly-shaped Division, whereas the other two options leave the Divisions stretched from either Ballarat or the SA border to the fringes of Geelong.

I understand that there is some logic in trying to unite Golden Plains Shire (e.g. by transferring Bannockburn to Ballarat), but this LGA largely lends itself to be split between Divisions; it takes in areas close to Ballarat and Geelong, plus the rural area in between. I think splitting its different communities of interest up between different seats honestly makes more sense than trying to unite it.

WANNON, MALLEE, BALLARAT AND BENDIGO

These seems general broad agreement between the suggestions for:

- **Wannon** to gain the western parts of Corangamite (the balance of Colac/Otway, Winchelsea, and the Great Ocean Road communities)
- **Ballarat** to gain those parts of Golden Plains Shire closest to urban Ballarat, and shed large parts of Moorabool Shire (Bacchus Marsh and surrounds)
- **Bendigo** to shed all or part of its share of Macedon Ranges Shire.

However, there are some differences, especially involving Central Goldfields Shire. A number of suggestions propose moving this to either Bendigo or Ballarat.

Central Goldfields

Central Goldfields Shire, including Maryborough and surrounds, has good links to both Ballarat and Bendigo, and also with the southern parts of the existing Mallee such as Avoca and St Arnaud. It would fit well in any of the Divisions of Mallee, Ballarat or Bendigo.

Currently, this area is in Mallee, a low-growth Division that needs to keep up its elector numbers. If Central Goldfields and its ~10,000 electors is removed from Mallee, the Division will then have to find electors elsewhere. This in turn causes impacts to neighbouring seats such as Wannon or Nicholls.

Also, both Ballarat and Bendigo are over quota, so adding an extra ~10,000 electors means that greater changes will be needed to balance out the gain. Again, this seems to cause too many flow-on effects, such as splitting the Daylesford area, to be worth the trouble.

If Central Goldfields is left in Mallee, then a simple transfer of Stawell is all that is needed. This neatly balances the numbers between Mallee and Wannon, with no need to make disruptive changes elsewhere.

NICHOLLS AND INDI

There is universal agreement to leave these two seats largely unchanged.

Since the numbers allow it, I think it makes sense to re-unite Strathbogie Shire in Nicholls. The growth patterns show a greater projected increase for Indi than Nicholls, so I think this transfer helps balance the numbers better between the two seats.

NORTH-WESTERN MELBOURNE

LALOR AND GELLIBRAND

With a couple of exceptions such as the Liberal Party, there seems general agreement for Lalor to shed the balance of Point Cook plus a small part of Truganina to Gellibrand. This is a simple and logical way to balance the numbers in Lalor, and unites the Point Cook area in a single seat.

There also then seems general agreement for Gellibrand to shed large parts of its Maribyrnong LGA component in the north, to consolidate as a somewhat more coastal Division based more clearly on Hobsons Bay and eastern Wyndham. Any of Somerville Road, Francis Street, or even the freeway would be suitable boundaries in this area.

FRASER, MARIBYRNONG, GORTON AND THE NEW SEAT

There are some differences in the specific boundaries of seats in the western suburbs, but most submissions have a general arrangement of:

- One seat based on the Footscray – Sunshine axis
- One seat based on Keilor, Sydenham, Deer Park, and Caroline Springs
- One seat based on Melton, Bacchus Marsh, and some of the growth areas around Rockbank.

Footscray

It seems very logical to me for the Footscray/Seddon/Tottenham area to be united in a single seat. At present, this general area is split three ways between Fraser, Gellibrand, and Maribyrnong.

Several suggestions, including my own, allow for all of Footscray to be united in Fraser, which allows Gellibrand and Maribyrnong to expand fairly naturally outwards. This arrangement also allows for Gorton to establish firmly on Brimbank council, and for all of the Melton area to be united in a single seat. I believe this is the best and most effective way for the western suburbs seats to be drawn, allowing them to deal with the strong population growth while still retaining their basic identity.

Other options such as uniting the area in Maribyrnong are workable, but I think it makes more sense to confine Maribyrnong predominantly east of the river. Footscray would seem to have more in common with the remainder of Fraser than with the suburbs on the other side of the river.

Division of Maribyrnong

There are several different arrangements for Maribyrnong. Some suggestions expand it further into Footscray, some push it south into Kensington, and others expand it northwards into Calwell.

I personally think that the latter is the best arrangement, as it allows Maribyrnong to consolidate between the Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek, both strong natural boundaries in this part of Melbourne. My suggestion simply expands Maribyrnong in between these two natural features to gain areas around the airport. This arrangement also allows for Calwell to be left without major change.

Melton

A number of suggestions split the Melton area between two seats.

Mostly, this seems to be an unfortunate consequence of decisions in other parts of the state. In particular, those suggestions that try to put Craigieburn into McEwen, or place the Macedon Ranges in a Melton-based seat, run into this problem. There are simply too many electors for Sunbury, Melton, Bacchus Marsh, and the Macedon Ranges to be all united in one seat.

Melton is a distinct area, still partly separated from the rest of the western suburbs, and forms a strong independent community of interest. Splitting this area should be a last resort, and I would not support it at this redistribution, since there are other arrangements that would allow it to remain united.

MELBOURNE, WILLS, AND COOPER

With the exception of the Liberal Party who completely redraw this area, there is general agreement to make only minimal changes to the inner north.

Some suggestions propose detaching the western part of Wills, which I strongly oppose. As a resident of Pascoe Vale, I can say that the existing boundary along Moonee Ponds Creek is extremely strong. Other options such as using Pascoe Vale Road or the railway would leave the western parts of Oak Park and Glenroy completely cut off from areas to their west. Other suggestions propose moving the northern parts of Wills into Calwell, which again is not necessary given Wills is within tolerance.

For the same reason, I would oppose Labor's suggestion to put Gowanbrae into Wills. There is no communication across Moonee Ponds Creek at all at this point.

In principle, I would strongly support the Greens' proposals to move the small parts of North Fitzroy and north-western Parkville into Wills, and for Flemington to be re-united with Kensington in Melbourne. However, they run into the problems described above in having to breach the strong northern and western boundaries of Wills.

Perhaps a variation on the Liberals' proposals could work, with Wills and Cooper being redrawn as east-west aligned seats. This might allow for the Greens' changes to be implemented without causing flow-on effects to Calwell (e.g. Cooper could lose all of its territory east of Darebin Creek).

Latrobe University

Many suggestions, including mine, propose the transfer of the Latrobe University precinct from Cooper to Jagajaga, using the strong boundaries of the creek and Plenty Road. Previous redistributions have seen submissions emphasising the strong connection between the University and suburbs such as Heidelberg, so it makes sense to unite these areas together since the numbers allow it.

CALWELL AND MCEWEN

There are two broad schools of thought for McEwen:

- Remove Sunbury, but keep the rest of the Division largely as is (with adjustments around Macedon and the Diamond Valley).
- Confine it to the outer north, by removing all of the Calder corridor and adding Craigieburn.

In principle, the second option is better, and it was something I explored when creating my proposals. The problem is that Craigieburn is too big to fit in McEwen without major undesirable changes elsewhere. Several submissions are forced to split Craigieburn along fairly arbitrary boundaries. Labor unites Craigieburn itself, but is forced to detach other Hume corridor communities such as Wallan. Labor's arrangement also ends up making a mess of their new Division of 'Hawke' and several other western suburban seats.

If Calwell loses Craigieburn, it is then forced to push southwards into Wills or Maribyrnong, which causes undesirable flow-on effects to these seats.

Another issue is that adding Craigieburn to McEwen would again result in all the Hume/Mitchell growth area being bottled up in one seat. The figures before the 2017 redistribution showed that this arrangement resulted in McEwen blowing out the enrolment well over quota. With continued strong growth in Mickleham, Donnybrook, Kalkallo, Beveridge, and Wallan, it seems untenable for these areas to remain together even in the short term.

In all, I think the first arrangement works much better. McEwen does remain a 'bits and pieces' seat, but it has always had something of a mixed nature, joining urban and rural areas around the northern fringe of Melbourne. This arrangement also has the following advantages:

- The northern growth belt would remain split between Calwell (Craigieburn, Mickleham, Donnybrook) and McEwen (Beveridge and Wallan).

- Calwell can simply shed its south-western ‘tail’ around the airport, with no need for disruptive impacts on Maribyrnong or Wills.
- Craigieburn would remain united and joined with surrounding suburbs with which it has a strong community of interest, rather than being split in half.
- The boundaries of surrounding seats such as Calwell, Scullin, Jagajaga, Bendigo, and the Sunbury/Melton based new Division, fall into place much more naturally.

JAGAJAGA

Most submissions propose that Jagajaga regain all or most of the area lost to Menzies at the last redistribution, and shed Diamond Creek and surrounding areas to McEwen. This largely reverts to the arrangement at previous redistributions, with the more urban parts of Nillumbik Council in Jagajaga, and more semi-rural communities in McEwen. The freeway reserve and Allandale Road is a fairly clear divide that has previously been used as the Jagajaga/McEwen boundary.

Some submissions leave North Warrandyte in Menzies, citing the stronger links with Warrandyte than with Eltham and Research. This makes sense provided the numbers work, although the Yarra is also a very strong boundary in the area.

SOUTH AND EAST

MACNAMARA AND HIGGINS

There is significant agreement between the Liberals, Greens, and many of the independent submissions (including mine) for Macnamara to gain South Yarra and the balance of Prahran, and for Higgins to gain the Caulfield area.

I think this makes enormous sense from a community of interest point of view: South Yarra and Prahran are demographically closer to the inner city areas currently in Macnamara, whereas Caulfield fits better with the suburban areas in Higgins.

The previous redistribution Committee went part of the way towards achieving this with the transfer of Windsor to Macnamara, acknowledging its stronger links with the St Kilda area than with Malvern and Toorak. The transfer of Prahran and South Yarra is simply a logical extension of this.

North of Dandenong Road, most submissions agree that Williams Road (which serves as a suburb boundary for most of its length) is the most appropriate boundary. South of Dandenong Road, different submissions propose using Hotham St, Orrong Road, or the LGA boundary to divide Macnamara from Higgins. Any of these would be appropriate, although it would be a good idea to try to unite as much of Elsternwick and St Kilda East with Caulfield as possible, given the community of interest in the Jewish community in all these areas.

KOORYONG

Most submissions either leave Kooyong unchanged, or transfer a small remaining part of Surrey Hills.

Either of these are sensible options that result in clear boundaries; I personally would take the opportunity to boost Kooyong's numbers by adding Surrey Hills, but the option is there for the Division to be left unchanged.

I would not recommend Kooyong pushing south into Higgins, since Toorak Road is a strong boundary in the area, and none of the alternative boundaries work as well.

GOLDSTEIN

Most submissions agree to leave Goldstein unchanged.

The Liberals' proposal, which unites all of Bentleigh in the Division, has some merit in isolation, but they are forced to draw some messy boundaries for Hotham and Bruce. A better arrangement might be for Isaacs' share of Keysborough to be placed in Hotham instead of Bruce, which would prevent the need to re-arrange the Hotham/Bruce boundary, but I'm not sure if the numbers would work as cleanly.

MENZIES AND DEAKIN

Most submissions recommend that Menzies return to being a Division completely south of the Yarra River. Since the numbers permit, I think it makes enormous sense for the Yarra to be used as the boundary in this area.

There seem to be two schools of thought as to how Menzies should expand:

- Eastwards into Deakin, taking in parts of Ringwood and/or Croydon
- Southwards into Chisholm, taking in parts of Box Hill and Blackburn.

I supported the first option in my Suggestions, as the communication links in this part of Melbourne run mostly east-west. The Koonung Creek and Eastern Freeway also provide a strong boundary between the Doncaster area and Blackburn/Box Hill.

However, I do acknowledge that this option (with Box Hill going into Deakin) would leave Menzies and Deakin stretched quite thinly in an east-west direction. If the Committee was genuinely concerned about this, it would probably be possible to arrange these two seats in a logical north-south configuration:

- One seat containing Doncaster, Templestowe, northern Chisholm, and western Deakin
- One seat containing eastern Deakin plus Warrandyte and all of the Ringwood/Croydon area currently in Menzies.

The eastern Division in particular would be quite logical if it united all of the Ringwood, Croydon, and Warrandyte areas in a single seat.

In all, I think the east-west configuration works best, but I would not be hostile to an alternative arrangement as described above.

Splitting Box Hill

A number of Suggestions propose running the boundary through Box Hill along Whitehorse Road and the railway line. I would strongly oppose this, as these boundaries run right through the heart of central Box Hill, and would involve splitting the CBD of this significant suburb in half.

Other submissions, such as my own, suggest using Canterbury Road, which I think is more sensible. Canterbury Road serves as the southern suburb boundary for both Box Hill and Blackburn, allowing all of those suburbs to be united in Deakin (or a Menzies that pushed south of Koonung Creek).

ASTON AND CASEY

Most suggestions propose minimal or no changes to either of these Divisions. Both of them have clear boundaries and are within tolerance, so I agree that they should remain essentially unchanged.

CHISHOLM

The strong growth in the south-east results in all of the suburban seats pushing southwards. Chisholm bears the brunt of this change; already under quota, it also needs to lose territory in the north to top up Menzies and Deakin.

With the exception of the Labor Party, suggestions agree that Chisholm should take in the balance of Mount Waverley and Glen Waverley, plus all of the Wheelers Hill area. In fact, many suggestions propose almost exactly the same boundaries, making use of Ferntree Gully Road and the Monash Freeway. These are both very strong and clear boundaries in the local area.

This arrangement allows Chisholm and Hotham to be drawn as east-west seats with very clear focus: Chisholm on the Waverley and Burwood area, and Hotham on Oakleigh, Clayton, and Springvale.

Labor's alternative to push Chisholm right down into Oakleigh and Clayton results in both Divisions being less coherent. Oakleigh, Clayton and the Glen Waverley area would be split, and the southern boundary would be far less regular. Labor's proposal also forces them to make disruptive changes further south, such as re-splitting Noble Park and Dandenong.

I would strongly recommend the Wheelers Hill approach for Chisholm, as the alternative is just too messy.

HOTHAM AND ISAACS

As much as possible, I would suggest making use of Eastlink as a clear eastern boundary for Hotham. This is a major freeway, and also serves as the suburb boundary between Springvale/Noble Park and the Dandenong area.

Assuming Chisholm is drawn as an east-west Division as described above, it seems to me that the numbers allow all of the Springvale and Noble Park area to be united in Hotham.

Some suggestions try to alter the boundary between Hotham and Isaacs. If possible, it would make sense to use as much of the Dandenong Bypass/Dingley Bypass corridor as possible as the boundary; this runs through a thinly-populated area and serves as an effective divide for most of its length.

Ideally, all of Keysborough would be united in Hotham, with the Bentleigh area going into Isaacs, but I don't think the numbers work this time.

DUNKLEY AND FLINDERS

All suggestions leave these two seats unchanged, or with only minor change.

I think Baxter would be a good fit in Dunkley, and it helps the numbers between these two seats balance better, but I have no issue with leaving both Divisions unchanged.

BRUCE, LATROBE AND HOLT

I noted in my own suggestions that the booming growth around Berwick and Cranbourne made it difficult to draw sensible boundaries in this part of Melbourne, and it seems many submissions have struggled with this.

Some suggestions propose completely re-drawing this area as a way to balance the numbers, but I don't think this level of change is necessary.

My suggestion was to transfer Koo Wee Rup and surrounding areas to Holt, and the rural areas along the Princes Highway to Latrobe. With this arrangement, both Divisions contain a mixture of high-growth suburban areas, and more stable rural communities. This helps keep the growth of both seats under some sort of control. This arrangement also allows Bruce to naturally expand eastwards to gain parts of Narre Warren, Berwick, and the Hampton Park area.

Leaving both Holt and Latrobe as mixed urban-rural Divisions is probably the best way to ensure longer-term stability for this area.

I would strongly recommend that as much of the Dandenong area as possible be united in Bruce. It is not necessary to detach parts of Dandenong off to Isaacs, Holt, or Hotham. Dandenong is a significant suburban centre, and should remain with its surrounding suburbs in a single seat.

MONASH AND GIPPSLAND

All suggestions agree that Monash should lose its share of Cardinia LGA (or most of it), and that Gippsland should remain essentially unchanged.

A few proposals recommend a small change to Gippsland around the Yallourn or Churchill areas. These seem workable enough if the numbers are low.