Comment Number One on Public Objections

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5 pages

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11 October 2002

Australian Electoral Commission,
% Australian Electoral Officer for Victoria,
Level 22, Casselden Place,
2 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE, Vic. 3000

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to present comments on the objections received to the Redistribution Committee's proposed new federal electoral boundaries for Victoria. I enclose for your consideration a set of comments, which I have arranged roughly in descending order of importance. I hope the Augmented Committee might find them helpful.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Richardson

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FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION 2002: VICTORIA

COMMENTS on the OBJECTIONS received to the PROPOSED REDISTRIBUTION of VICTORIA into ELECTORAL DIVISIONS

From CHARLES RICHARDSON

A. *La Trobe Valley / South Gippsland*

A number of objections (1 - 7, 32, 43) argue against the splitting of the Shire of La Trobe and transfer of Traralgon from **McMillan** to **Gippsland**; the ALP makes the same argument, suggesting that **Gippsland** should instead embrace the whole of the Shire of Bass Coast. The Liberal Party argues, as I had done, the other way: that Morwell as well as Traralgon should be transferred to **Gippsland**, so that **McMillan** could include the whole of the Shire of South Gippsland.

The Committee's proposal is in effect a compromise between the ALP approach and the Liberal Party approach, and could be said to combine the worst features of both: it divides the La Trobe valley, but still leaves **Gippsland** stretching as far west as Wonthaggi. Other things being equal it would certainly be desirable for the La Trobe Valley to be united in one division. The ALP's suggestion has the merit of doing this, but the price to be paid is the extreme elongation of **Gippsland**, as far as Phillip Island, and consequent disruption of **Flinders**.

I remain convinced that my suggestion, with which the Liberal Party is in substantial agreement, is the best option.

B. *Mansfield*

Five objections (10, 25, 33, 35, 42) argue against the inclusion of the Mansfield area in **Indi**. They offer no alternative way for **McEwen** to stay within the enrolment constraints, but objection 38 and the Liberal Party both do by suggesting the transfer of Seymour to **Indi** instead. There is certainly a good case for Mansfield's links with other parts of **McEwen**, particularly the Shire of Murrindindi, but it is pointless to consider them in isolation: the question is which of the two, Mansfield or Seymour, is a better candidate for transfer to **Indi**.

On that comparison, it seems reasonably clear to me that Seymour's links with the rest of **McEwen** are a good deal stronger, and its links with the heartland of **Indi** correspondingly weaker. It is much closer to Melbourne than Mansfield is, and it is the natural service centre for towns like Kilmore, Broadford and Yea. Mansfield, by contrast, is much closer and better linked to Benalla and Wangaratta than Seymour; its separation from the Shire of Delatite, much emphasised in the objections, strikes me as a poor argument against including it in a division containing all or part of seven other municipalities.

C. ***Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges***

Objections 34, 36 and 41 argue against dividing the Shire of Macedon Ranges, and suggest a plan by which it could be united within the division of **McEwen**. The problem with that plan is that it would exaggerate further the east-west stretch involved in **McEwen**; it would remove from it the only major route, via Yea and Alexandra, by which its eastern parts connect with its western parts without going through Melbourne.

For reasons given in my objection, with which the ALP in this respect substantially agrees, I consider that **McEwen** should retain the Craigieburn area rather than acquire any of the Shire of Macedon Ranges. This would also meet the concern raised in objection number 15, that Sunbury's community of interest ties it to Gisborne and Macedon rather than to Craigieburn.

D. ***Shire of Gannawarra***

A large number of objections (8, 9, 11 - 14, 16 - 18, 27, 29 - 31, 37, 40) argue against the transfer of the Shire of Gannawarra from **Murray** to **Mallee**. None of them, however, suggests an alternative way for **Mallee** to reach the required enrolment. There are realistically only three population centres of sufficient size available – Stawell, Maryborough and Kerang – and the choice of Kerang seems defensible on community of interest grounds as well as causing the least disruption among neighboring divisions.

The Augmented Committee may however be able to satisfy some of these objections by retaining the Cohuna area in **Murray**, and transferring instead the Boort-Wedderburn area to **Mallee**. This would involve a greater departure from municipal boundaries, but may nonetheless better reflect community of interest.

E. ***Jagajaga / McEwen / Scullin***

The Liberal Party objects, as I had, to the proposed boundary between **Jagajaga** and **McEwen**. They make a similar objection to the proposed **McEwen/Scullin** boundary in South Morang, in which I think they are also correct. They do not however draw the further conclusion that this would enable rectification of the **Jagajaga/Scullin** boundary in the Greensborough area.

F. ***Altona Meadows***

Three objections from the same household (22 - 24) argue that the Altona Meadows area should be with Werribee (in **Lalor**) rather than with Williamstown (in **Gellibrand**). This would be achieved by the suggestion I made for rearrangement of the western metropolitan divisions, but is difficult to achieve without some such large-scale change. The Labor Party appears to also sympathise with this objection, referring to the linkage of Melton and Werribee as "strange", but they do not suggest any particular remedy.

G. ***Deakin / Menzies***

The City of Maroondah (objection 21) and both major parties all concur with my objection to the proposed boundary between **Deakin** and **Menzies**. The Liberal Party also makes the related point concerning the **Aston/Deakin** boundary in Forest Hill.

H. ***Dunkley / Flinders***

The ALP makes the same objection I had to the proposed boundary between **Dunkley** and **Flinders**.

I. ***Alphington***

The Liberal Party objects to the transfer of the Alphington area from **Batman** to **Melbourne**, following the new municipal boundary. Although I proposed this transfer in my original submission, on reflection I think that it is unnecessary, given the other proposed boundaries in this region, and I agree that the boundary should be moved back to Merri Creek.

J. ***Brooklyn***

The Liberal Party suggests the transfer of **Maribyrnong**'s share of the suburb of Brooklyn back to **Gellibrand**. Absent more substantial change in this area, this seems a sensible suggestion, although it depends upon how much importance the Augmented Committee attaches to municipal boundaries.

K. ***Bruce / Isaacs***

The ALP draws attention, as I had, to the anomaly in the Dandenong area on the proposed **Bruce/Isaacs** boundary.

L. ***Dergholm area***

Objection number 26 argues that the area around Dergholm, which it is proposed to transfer from **Wannon** to **Mallee**, should remain in **Wannon**. This would mean departing from the municipal boundary, but the objection suggests, with some cogency, that the new municipal boundary in this area fails to reflect community of interest.

As it happens, there is already an anomaly in **Wannon** in relation to municipal boundaries: the proposed boundaries leave a small portion of the Shire of Colac-Otway around Swan Marsh in **Wannon** although the rest of the shire is in **Corangamite**. It is impossible to exclude both these areas from **Wannon**, since that would put it below the projected tolerance; however, if the Dergholm area were to be retained in **Wannon**, the Swan Marsh area could then be transferred to **Corangamite**.

As an aside in relation to the **Corangamite/Wannon** border area, the Augmented Committee should note that the towns labelled on the map as Simpson and Port Campbell are in fact Timboon and Peterborough, respectively.

M. ***Berwick campus, Monash***

Objection number 20, with which the Liberal Party agrees, suggests that the **Holt/La Trobe** boundary in Berwick should run along the Princes Freeway, so as to keep the Berwick campus of Monash University together with neighboring institutions in **La Trobe**. This seems an entirely reasonable suggestion.

N. ***Lake Corangamite***

The Liberal Party proposes the return of Lake Corangamite to **Corangamite**. They have a valid point, but it is not clear to me that the symbolic effect of it outweighs the convenience of following the municipal boundary.

O. ***"McMillan"***

Objection number 39 makes a good case for changing the name of **McMillan**; I suggest that the Augmented Committee should give this serious consideration.