



The Federal Redistribution 2003
QUEENSLAND



Comment Number Seven on Public Suggestions

**Cameron Thompson MP
Member for Blair**

6 pages



Cameron

Thompson MP

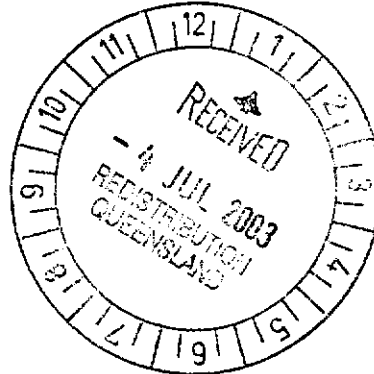
Federal Member
for Blair



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

4th July 2003

Redistribution Committee for Queensland
Level 7 - 488 Queen Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000



COMMENT

№ - - 7

Dear Committee Members

I write following receipt of your package of data on the various submissions relating to the Queensland redistribution. I want to make direct comment on those submissions that seek to impact on the electorate of Blair, for which I am the elected representative.

BACKGROUND

I strongly endorse the submission of the Liberal Party (Queensland Division) which is the only comprehensive proposal that recognises the character of the Blair electorate. Unlike others, who wrongly identify Blair as being completely dependent on or dominated by Ipswich, the Liberal submission extends the community of interest to the mutual benefit of those currently in Blair and those who would join.

While Blair links to Ipswich, the relationship between the various regions I represent is not driven or dominated by Ipswich city which has its own internal divisions and communities of interest.

People in the west of Ipswich and in the Laidley, Gatton, Esk, Nanango, Kilcoy, Crows Nest and Rosalie LGAs share the common concern of being dominated by, but divorced from, the heavily represented and powerful interests of those in the capital city - just a short distance away. So, the shared concerns relate to issues like public transport and road links beyond the focus of attention in Brisbane. Supporting youth and the elderly in regions lacking in infrastructure is another common challenge. Attracting basic services from Governments is another, especially when there is a misconception that people can rely on metropolitan facilities 'just down the road'.

The shared concerns that need to be addressed in Blair focus on linkages between service centres and relatively poor under-developed hinterlands.

Northern and Western Ipswich, the part covered by Blair, has a far stronger orientation to the hinterland, for example, than those suburbs of Ipswich to the east, where the outlook is much more metropolitan. Similarly, Kingaroy, Gatton, Esk etc are important regional service centres.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SENT

4/7/03

In each case, problems with services are common – and often the difficulty arises because these areas are too close to Brisbane to qualify as rural, but too far away to benefit from capital city convenience.

This is the underlying common source of difficulty that is lost on those who see Blair as 'Ipswich extended'.

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That is why the Liberal submission, to include rural parts of Forde and Oxley and service centres such as Boonah is more in line with the character and the social and community concerns of Blair residents.

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Another factor worth considering is the part played by residential development in the future of these regions. West Ipswich, the Lockyer, Brisbane Valley and the Burnett are all areas in which under-funded, poorly constructed residential and rural residential development has caused serious difficulties in the past.

All remain within a couple of hours travel of the greater metropolitan area and the challenge of effectively managing development in these areas remains extremely difficult. This subject was highlighted by recent Courier Mail reports about the comparative lack of reserved green space in the hinterland area covered by the Blair electorate.

RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

Submission 4 - Australian Democrats (Qld Division Inc)

I disagree strongly with the Democrats view that the Blair/Oxley split in Ipswich fails the community of interest test.

In reality, the line of division between Blair and Oxley reflects – fairly accurately – the divide between Ipswich residents who still relate to and shop at the Ipswich CBD and those whose orientation is to the east. For years now, Ipswich CBD has struggled to attract trade and patronage from the east, especially with the emergence of large shopping centres such as those at Redbank Plaza. Ipswich CBD retailers, such as RT Edwards, will tell you the lion's share of their custom comes from the west, including rural areas, and it is difficult to entice east Ipswich customers to travel west to shop in the Ipswich CBD.

This east versus west orientation in Ipswich is also recognised in State electoral boundaries. The line between the State seats of Ipswich and Ipswich West is very close to the Blair/Oxley dividing line and this strongly supports my submission for the boundary to remain unchanged at this point.

In every sense, the current division does recognise these separate Ipswich communities of interest and is appropriate. As development proceeds to the west of the CBD, so the CBD will re-emerge and strengthen but the division in the way residents align their interests will remain.

In relation to the proposal to transfer the Kingaroy Shire to Wide Bay, I strongly disagree again. On this matter, I have sought the advice of the Mayor of Kingaroy, Roger Nunn and the shire's CEO, Ron Turner.

Mr Nunn intends to raise the matter with his council members, but has indicated his preference that the shire should remain with Blair and not be cut off. Mr Nunn said he would be writing to you on this matter but suggested that if you had any queries you should contact Mr Turner on Tel. 07 4162 6200.

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My concern in this regard is the fact that the town of Kingaroy remains an important service centre for the South Burnett and all the towns in the top end of my electorate.

Residents in Nanango, Yarraman, Blackbutt and Maidenwell all live outside the Kingaroy Shire but all rely on Kingaroy for the provision of Job Network, Centrelink etc as well as major shopping and service industries. It would be a backward step for those residents to be divided from Kingaroy in this way.

The Democrats submission chooses to relocate the township of Crows Nest into Groom and (simply to make up numbers) brings Woodford and Maleny into Blair.

In the case of Crows Nest, I argue it has many interests separate to those of Toowoomba (which must be the over-riding concern of the Groom MHR).

Crows Nest is a service centre in its own right – particularly because of its comparatively large aged care facility and the recognition this receives from nearby communities. Crows Nest township suffers many of the same wrong assumptions and lack of recognition in relation to its proximity to Toowoomba as other Blair communities suffer because of their proximity to Brisbane. For that reason, I argue it is an appropriate inclusion in Blair.

As for the proposed name, I submit this demonstrates on behalf of the Democrats a real failure to understand the nature of the communities now included in Blair and those that would remain if their proposals were implemented. People in Kilcoy and Nanango would not appreciate the change of orientation evident in the submission and the name of 'West Moreton' or 'Ipswich'.

More importantly, regions that would strongly identify with the term of 'West Moreton', such as Gatton, Laidley and most of the rural part of Ipswich itself, would be lopped off.

Overall, the Democrat submission would be to attach (wrongly) an additional urban area (greater Ipswich) to rural communities that have little or no real connection to it – while removing any link to rural communities that did have an Ipswich connection.

Instead of strengthening the common bond between the various regions of Blair, this submission would sharply divide Blair into one urban constituency and a largely separate rural community.

Please note that enclosed is a letter from the Gatton Shire, where councillors have discussed their preferences when it comes to the redistribution. The CEO, Mr Schumacher, advises that the councillors prefer to be part of Blair.

COMMENT**13 - - 7***Submission 7 - Mr Christopher Connolly*

The statements of the Gatton Shire and Kingaroy Mayor again dispute this submission which simply removes Blair from rural areas and substitutes Dickson.

Mr Connolly states in his submission that he is not a Queensland resident. He does not seem familiar at all with the types of service and development issues I have related in my commentary on Blair.

The Liberal submission refers to the many changes of electoral allegiance in rural parts of Blair brought on by previous redistributions and Mr Connolly's submission would result in just one more unnecessary change.

His submission proposed Blair to be similar to Oxley in years gone by. However, I doubt whether the numbers would add up to facilitate the boundaries he proposes. If there are more accurate maps that accompany Mr Connolly's submission, I would like to receive them, but on the face of it, the switch from Blair to Dickson/Forde in the hinterland area would seem to be unjustified. Mr Connolly himself refers to his version of Dickson as a dog's breakfast and I agree with him.

Submission 8 - Queensland Nationals

Like the Democrats, the Nationals have failed to recognise the needs of communities struggling to provide services on the rural fringe. Instead of grouping this community of interest, they have divided it.

Their proposal for Blair would link a long, thin strip of the Brisbane Valley with an overwhelming number of urban voters. Kilcoy is one shire in particular badly treated under this model. Without a sizeable rural population in Blair, this area would have little in common with greater Ipswich and no remaining community of interest.

The Nationals plan for Blair retains areas north of Kingaroy, but transfers Kingaroy Shire to Wide Bay. It retains areas west of Gatton but transfers Gatton Shire to Groom.

Both of these shires have expressed a wish to remain in the Blair electorate. Since the formation of Blair, there have been other signs to demonstrate the growing community of interest between Gatton and the Lockyer Valley and Ipswich, but also extending to Boonah, Kilcoy and Kingaroy.

The most obvious example has been the change in the Area Consultative Committee, which represents Commonwealth interests in employment and regional development programs.

In the past, the Gatton Shire was included in the Darling Downs ACC, but at the Gatton Shire Council's request, it was re-aligned to be part of the Ipswich Region ACC a couple of years ago. This same ACC also covers Boonah Shire. The new ACC boundaries have been very well received.

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Similarly, Gatton was previously served by Centrelink from Toowoomba. Gatton people often complained that the arrangement was inconvenient. Under an arrangement between the Ipswich and Toowoomba offices, Centrelink has now established a discrete office at Gatton and that has been very successful also.

Both these examples illustrate the change in Gatton to be more strongly linked with Ipswich and less closely aligned with Toowoomba than in the past. This is a firm indication of community sentiment and the common interest is well served by the current Blair boundary.

Taking all this into account, it is difficult to understand why the Nationals would delete Gatton Shire from Blair, but retain part of Crows Nest (north of Toowoomba).


CLOSING REMARKS

The proposals from the Nationals and the Democrats that Blair should take a much greater part of Ipswich are well addressed in the submission of the Member for Oxley, Bernie Ripoll (Submission 11) who represents the vast bulk of Ipswich today.

In his submission, Bernie makes an important point about the nature of the Ipswich urban area – in that it is divided into what he refers to as ‘distinct communities of interest’. He wrote “Oxley is a seat that since the redistribution in 1996 now covers three distinct communities of interest – that being the Ipswich CBD and suburbs to the south, the Goodna region including greater Springfield (one of Queensland’s fastest growing areas) and the Brisbane western suburbs of Inala and Forest Lake.”

Clearly, Bernie demonstrates my central point that Ipswich is not an amorphous mass. The Nationals and Democrats make that assumption and as a result, they fail to give adequate consideration to the different needs of these distinct groups. To align people deep in suburbia – at Goodna or Collingwood Park – with people in Crows Nest or Kilcoy is a real mismatch.

Yours sincerely



Cameron Thompson
Federal Member for Blair
DH

Gatton

Growing Together

**COMMENT**

30 JUN 2003

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26 June 2003

OUR REF: 1.1/3/2
YOUR REF:
ENQUIRIES: Lester Schumacher
DIRECT DIAL: 07 5462 0300

Mr Cameron Thompson, MP
Federal Member for Blair
PO Box 5115
BRASSALL QLD 4305

Dear Mr Thompson

Redistribution of Federal Electoral Boundary

I refer to your recent discussions with the Mayor, Cr Jim McDonald, regarding the possible changes to the federal electoral boundary of Blair.

Following discussion at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 18 June 2003, it was resolved to write to you to express its desire for Gatton Shire to remain part of the Blair electorate.

Yours sincerely

Lester Schumacher
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER