



The Federal Redistribution 2003  
QUEENSLAND



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## **Comment Number Ten on Public Suggestions**

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**5 pages**

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## **REDISTRIBUTION OF QUEENSLAND COMMENTS ON PUBLIC SUGGESTIONS**

I am writing to comment on several of the public suggestions offered to the Redistribution Committee.

I welcome the opportunity to offer these comments as I consider that the procedures laid down for public involvement in the redistribution process are a significant democratic feature. I therefore begin my comments with reference to Suggestions 5 and 17, which reveal possible shortcomings in the procedure. These suggestions are based on the misconceptions that the current redistribution process affects State Parliamentary electoral boundaries (Suggestion 5) or local government electoral boundaries (Suggestion 17). I do not know whether it is the policy of the Australian Electoral Commission to reply directly to correspondents who offer such suggestions in order to clear up misunderstandings. If such a practice is in fact followed, it would seem odd to advise correspondents that their suggestions are misconceived but then to proceed to include them in the published list anyway. On the other hand, if correspondents do not receive such advice, they may assume that they have simply been ignored and that the apparent welcoming of public input is spurious. It would be undesirable to create that impression. Of course, if correspondents pay continued attention to the process as a whole, they should become aware of what is actually involved, but it seems quite likely that they will not. Still, there are drawbacks to the alternative policy of advising people who offer suggestions based on a misunderstanding that their suggestions have, for that reason, been omitted from the public list. This would necessarily involve giving a discretion to present public suggestions selectively, and this discretion could be abused. I do not have an answer to this conundrum, but I suggest that the matter should be further considered. Two independent differently mistaken suggestions for just one redistribution are more than an isolated anomaly.

Another interesting point is raised briefly by Suggestions 9 and 10, which both refer to areas being 'tacked on to make up the numbers' in a division with which they do not otherwise have much in common. It is an inevitable consequence of the legislation governing redistributions that precisely such a result should sometimes occur. The legislation makes numerical considerations the overriding ones in determining boundaries, so that sometimes some areas must be 'tacked on' to divisions in the way complained of. There is no way to avoid this. However, given that the people in some areas must suffer this fate, it would seem fairer not to impose it on the same people time and again. In other words, there would be a sort of justice in using each redistribution to tidy up the most anomalous aspects of the previous distribution, even if, under the overriding pressure of the numerical requirements, this leads to the creation of new anomalies elsewhere. Even to consider the possibility of such an approach, however, it is necessary to have a clear statement of where the anomalies are. It is usual and appropriate for Redistribution Committees, and Augmented Electoral Commissions, to emphasise in their reports the respects in which boundaries satisfy the applicable qualitative criteria. Less satisfactory aspects of the boundaries are typically passed over in silence. Given that the overriding numerical criteria will almost certainly constrain the Redistribution Committee to propose some boundaries that are less satisfactory (in terms of the qualitative criteria) in some areas, I suggest that the Redistribution Committee acknowledge this directly in its report, since such information may be relevant and useful in future redistribution processes. This would also support the goal of enhancing the consultative and democratic aspects of the redistribution process. It is interesting to read Suggestion 7, from Christopher Connolly, in the light of this analysis. Christopher Connolly notes that some rural areas must be combined with some part of the metropolitan area, presumably for numerical reasons, although it is not otherwise desirable, and clearly states which of the divisions he proposes has been given less satisfactory boundaries for this reason (because he

considers the alternatives even less satisfactory). However much use the Committee makes of his boundary proposals, I suggest that his example in this regard should be followed, although a different phraseology from his term 'dog's breakfast' may be preferred.

The remainder of my comments are restricted to suggestions bearing on the same topic covered in my own suggestion, that of divisional names. The most comprehensive (and also most radical) suggestion on this topic is contained in Suggestion 4, from the Australian Democrats (Queensland), who propose the wholesale replacement of 'historical figure' names for divisions with geographical names. Possibly this approach will be rejected out of hand as representing too great a disturbance of existing arrangements. Personally I feel that proposals involving major disturbance to existing arrangements are often worth considering. Even if they prove impossible to adopt as is, they can stimulate useful thought. However, I believe that this particular proposal should be considered more systematically and at greater leisure, independently of the current redistribution. Possibly this is a matter that could be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters? In case the proposal is to be considered in detail, I have included my comments on it in an appendix. For the remainder of my comments, I will assume that current guidelines and practices affecting the use of geographical names will continue to apply.

On that assumption, Suggestion 8, from the National Party, offers insufficient justification for giving a new division the geographical name of 'Riverside'. Even if the Committee were to consider geographical names, this one seems too ambiguous to be usable. There are just too many localities in Australia, and even in Queensland, to which the name could apply. (However, if the general approach to naming suggested by the Australian Democrats were to be adopted, there might be a case for the composite name 'Brisbane Riverside'.)

Suggestion 26 offers the name of 'Lang' for a new division, despite the fact that John Dunmore Lang (to whom the suggested name refers) was a resident of New South Wales, not of Queensland. The guidelines for naming divisions refer to distinguished service to Australia, not to the particular State where the question of divisional names arises, but I do not think that there are any past examples of any divisions in any one State being named after somebody who always resided in another State. I can see no objection to the recommendation of the name of a distinguished Australian, as opposed to the name of a distinguished Queenslander, but if such a divergence from past practice is to be considered, I suggest that the general principle should be decided on before considering individual names. There are many people who were distinguished Australians but not distinguished Queenslanders whose names might be considered for electoral divisions, of whom John Dunmore Lang may be one, but only one. The fact that he has an important historical association with Queensland does make some difference, but not all the difference. I have a personal preference for avoiding his name that will be easier to explain in the context of discussing another suggestion, below.

The distinction between 'distinguished Australians' and 'distinguished Queenslanders' is also raised by Suggestion 23, from the Australian Labor Party (Queensland Branch), which offers the name of former Queensland Premier Edward 'Ned' Hanlon. Hanlon was a significant figure in Queensland history, but the question for the Committee is whether this necessarily equates directly with being a significant figure in the history of Australia as a whole. My own view is that, for naming electoral divisions for the national Parliament, there are enough names of truly 'national' figures to justify a selective approach to purely 'State figures'. On this basis, perhaps, there would be several existing divisional names, and not only in Queensland, that could be reconsidered. There are already many divisions named after State Premiers. In Queensland, there are Herbert, Lilley, Griffith, Dawson, Ryan, and Dickson, and there are others in other States. At least some of these were also distinguished in various ways at the national level. I regret that I am insufficiently acquainted with the career of Premier Hanlon to know to what extent he too might be considered a 'national figure'. The suggestion refers to his role in building Queensland's public hospital system, which undoubtedly deserves to be commemorated. I simply do not know whether it deserves to be commemorated as a contribution at the national level. If another division is to be named after a Queensland Premier, I should like to see a consideration of the relative merits of other possible names, for example, Queensland's longest serving Premier (excluding, as I assume we should, those still alive), William Forgan Smith, or Edward 'Ted' Theodore, who achieved higher office in national politics, at least, than any other former Queensland Premier. I do not particularly recommend any one name. I know that Theodore, at least, might be a

controversial choice, but then almost every person after whom a division could be named (or has been named, for that matter) is potentially controversial.

Having mentioned possible controversy over potential names, there is one that is controversial for me personally. I hope that I can raise this matter without giving offence, particularly as I know that my opinion on this matter is a decidedly minority one. Still, minority feelings are as much entitled to be aired as majority ones, even if they do not prevail. The use of people's names for electoral divisions not only memorialises them personally, but commemorates and symbolises their achievements and the events of their lives. I wish to record my preference not to commemorate the symbolic significance of one particular career, although this is not intended as a criticism of the person involved. I refer to John Murtagh Macrossan, mentioned in Suggestions 12, 13, and 28. A number of Macrossan's achievements are mentioned in these suggestions, but one that is prominent in all of them is his role in promoting Federation. For myself, I regard Federation as having been a burden and not a benefit. During the celebrations for the recent Centenary of Federation I never heard one reference to anything good that has happened because of Federation that would not have happened anyway, and if I could send a message back through time I would send advice to vote 'NO' in the Federation referendum. My own preference, therefore, would be to commemorate nobody for their role in promoting Federation. I know that several other divisions already commemorate prominent Federationists and I can only say that I would prefer not to see those names used either. I would say the same about John Dunmore Lang, whose name appears in Suggestion 26 without reference to his connection with Federation.

In addition to proposing the name of Macrossan, Suggestion 28, from Denis Cleary, brings up another issue that I think requires comment. It emerges from what Denis Cleary has to communicate that a previous Redistribution Committee made a direct request to the Queensland Department of Natural Resources for suggestions for divisional names, in addition to the general request for public suggestions required by legislation. Let me say at once that this strikes me as a sensible and logical practice, given the Department's administrative responsibility for place names. What I do not understand, and cannot justify, is the former Committee's omission to mention this fact in their report, especially as they chose to adopt the name (Blair) that had (it now appears) emerged as a result. I note from Denis Cleary's letter that he was concerned about the possibility of political censorship, in the form of a decision not to issue future invitations for suggestions to his Department if a politically unacceptable name was offered. In my view, it is quite unacceptable that the suggestion or selection of names for electoral divisions should be open to even the appearance of vetting for political 'suitability' by the Government of the day. I suggest that it would be a big step in the right direction for the Redistribution Committee to include in its report information about what additional invitations have been issued directly to suitable bodies to suggest names, and what the responses have been. I also feel that it is an appropriate response to propose explicitly the name that Denis Cleary forbore to offer on that previous occasion, namely, Oodgeroo, after the late Oodgeroo Noonuccal (as she has come to be known), writer and campaigner. I only regret that I did not think to include her name in my own original suggestion. As between Oodgeroo and my own original suggestion of Bonner, I express no preference, except to note that there are currently many divisions named after politicians and very few named after writers. I think both names are worthy of consideration and it is always possible that there will be occasion for two new names to be used.

Suggestions 3, 6, 7, 14, 15, 21, 25, and 27 all propose the name of Bonner as I originally did, and also offer far more biographical detail. I elected not to attempt extensive biography in my original suggestion, on the assumption that the name of Neville Bonner was sure to be known to the Committee and that the Committee would have easy access to as much information as I could provide, or more. I adopt the same principle in offering the name Oodgeroo. I am sure that the Committee will be familiar with the name of Oodgeroo Noonuccal and will have no difficulty finding as much information about her as seems necessary.

Suggestion 7, from Christopher Connolly, raises two additional points about naming that I would like to comment on. In connection with his suggestion of the name of Bonner, he says that the family's views should be considered. I endorse this view and believe it should apply in all cases where close relatives are still alive, although it may not matter in the case of names drawn from earlier periods (such as Lang or Macrossan, for example). He also refers to the appropriate application of existing names to the specific boundaries he has suggested. He

tentatively assigns the name of 'Blair' to a division constituted 61 per cent from the existing Oxley and 39 per cent from the existing Blair, and the name of Oxley to a division constituted 51 per cent from the existing Ryan and 37 per cent from the existing Blair (these are his own figures). He then goes on to consider the possibility that it would be better to call the former division 'Oxley' and to find a new name for the latter one. I endorse the principle behind this last remark, which seems to me to be the natural implication of the current guidelines for naming divisions. The exact application of it depends on the decisions that are eventually made about boundaries.

Suggestion 1 does not offer a particular proposal for a divisional name, but asks that a woman's name be chosen. The suggestion states that there have been many outstanding women who have contributed much to Queensland on all sides of politics. This remark appears to reflect an assumption that naming of a Commonwealth electoral division in Queensland should reflect significance to Queensland, rather than significance to Australia. I have made my comment on this issue already. It also appears to reflect an assumption that it is contributions of a political nature that are relevant. It may be natural for politicians to predominate among those for whom electoral divisions are named, but there is no rule requiring this and it has not been a universal practice in the past. If the Committee wishes to act on this suggestion, my views are as already stated. There is no need to restrict consideration to women active in politics, and contribution to Australia, not just to Queensland, should be considered.

More interesting is Suggestion 24, from David Lowe, which supports the view that efforts should be made to redress the gender imbalance in the naming of electoral divisions, but has a specific name to offer, that of suffragist and political activist Emma Miller. I would like to express my gratitude to David Lowe for drawing my attention to the career of Emma Miller, of which I was previously unaware. I still feel that I do not know enough about her to offer my own comment on the suggestion, but I look forward to learning more. David Lowe also supports the view that there are already enough divisions named after politicians (presumably in the narrow sense of parliamentarians, since Emma Miller's career was obviously political in the broadest sense), and that a greater diversity should be aimed at.

To summarise on this last point, if preference is to be given to names that are not those of parliamentarians, then, of the names discussed, this consideration would count against Bonner, Hanlon, Lang, and Macrossan, but not against Miller or Oodgeroo. On balance, I feel that this factor should be given some weight but not an overriding one.

Yours faithfully

John Daniel Encel

**APPENDIX  
COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL  
(OFFERED BY AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS)  
FOR GEOGRAPHICAL RENAMING OF ALL DIVISIONS**

The general principle advanced is that naming of divisions on a strictly geographical basis will make identification easier. As I have indicated in the body of my comments, I think this idea has enough in its favour to deserve thorough consideration.

The first issue I think needs to be recognised is that piecemeal introduction of the proposed new approach might be untidy. It is impossible to justify from first principles a system in which all Commonwealth electoral divisions in Queensland have geographical names while most in the rest of Australia do not and it would be awkward to explain after the fact. This is why I have suggested that the proposal would be better considered independently of any specific single redistribution. If a genuinely comprehensive new approach is to be adopted, it should be adopted across the country at one time.

The second issue is the possible difficulty in distinguishing between geographical names and names that commemorate a historical individual. The suggestion list itself refers to the current division of Oxley as being named after both a locality and a historical figure (an explorer). On the other hand, names such as 'Burnett Curtis' (to take just one example) are offered as geographical, even though the relevant geographical features must themselves originally have been named to commemorate individuals called Burnett and Curtis. Perhaps even a majority of geographical features have names commemorating individuals. It would prove awkward to exclude all of these from a list of geographical division names. The proposal rejects the present divisional name of 'Herbert' both because it is not geographical and because it is geographical, referring to a geographical feature (named after the same person) that used to be within the division but is so no longer. One possible solution is a predominant reliance on combinative names, of which 'Logan East' is a typical example from the offered list. Logan the locality has an eastern part, but Logan the historical figure hardly did. Names like the suggested 'Burdekin Mackay' might be suitable in much the same way.

The third problem is the selection of geographical names that are a good enough fit with the divisional boundaries. For example, the suggested use of the name 'Redlands' might be more meaningful to the voters of the Redlands Shire than the name 'Bowman', but it might be a source of confusion (and also irritation) to voters in that part of the division which does not fall within the Redlands Shire. Once again, greater use of combinative names (as I have called them) might help. I suspect that it is partly the difficulty of finding a suitable geographical name that has led to the suggested retention of the existing non-geographical divisional name of 'Kennedy'. To begin with, neither 'North West Queensland' nor 'Northern Queensland' quite fits the bill. Making a virtue of necessity, the suggestion attributes the retention of this name to its being an original 1901 one, but this has not prevented the suggestion from dropping the original 1901 division names of Herbert and Moreton. This partial respect for the existing guideline in favour of retaining original names sits oddly with the wholesale abandonment of the existing guideline against geographical names.

The difficulty of finding suitable geographical names will be even greater in larger States (although easier in smaller ones: the Tasmanian divisions might perhaps be quite easily renamed as Central Tasmania, South Tasmania, North East Tasmania, North West Tasmania, and Hobart). The suggestion has eight divisions named after Brisbane, with various qualifiers, but in larger States it might be necessary, in each case, to find up to three times as many suitable distinguishing qualifiers for parts of the State capital. The other parts of each State would also probably offer greater complexities than in the case of Queensland. This is relevant if my view is accepted that it is not worth making the change for Queensland alone.

I have two minor points to add. The suggested name of 'Far North' is clear enough in a purely Queensland context, but the putative 'Member for Far North' would be a member of the Commonwealth Parliament, where the name might be ambiguous. 'Far North Queensland' would be clear, and there are other possibilities such as 'Cairns [and] Cape York'. The use of the unqualified name 'Brisbane' alongside names such as 'Brisbane North', 'Brisbane West', and 'Brisbane Redcliffe' is potentially confusing, and also gives the appearance of a special priority to the division of 'Brisbane' for which there is no good reason. The obvious alternative is some such name as 'Brisbane Central', 'Central Brisbane', or 'Inner Brisbane'.