The Federal Redistribution 2006
QUEENSLAND

Comment Number 39 on Objections

Australian Labor Party – Queensland Branch

8 pages

Please address correspondence to:
THE STATE SECRETARY, ALP (Qld.) PO Box 5032 West End Q 4101
1st Floor, TLC Building, 16 Peel Street, South Brisbane Q 4101

Tel: 07 3844 8101 Fax: 07 3844 8085

4 August 2006

Ms Anne Bright
Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland
7 th floor
Collection House
488 Queen Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Ms Bright

Please find attached the Australian Labor party, Queensland Branch's comments on the objections to the proposed redistribution of Queensland.

Yours Sincerely

Milton Dick
State Secretary

COMMENT
№ - 39

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY—QUEENSLAND BRANCH

COMMENTS ON OBJECTIONS

As the Commissioners are aware, the ALP has made three discreet Objections. One objection concerns which part of Cairns should go from Leichhardt to Kennedy, another concerns which part of the Division of Herbert that should be removed to keep it within quota and the final objection mainly restores existing boundaries plus makes an adjustment within Ipswich.

In summary, our objections do not seek to challenge the fundamental decisions made by the Commissioners, including such things as the location and name of the new Division , movements in and out of Greater Brisbane and so forth.

Based on past experience, we have few expectations that the Augmented Commission would significantly alter the proposals.

We have closely studied each of the 189 Objections and note that the bulk of Objections concern the proposed Division of Wright and adjoining Divisions. Several also are concerned with Divisions on the Sunshine Coast and with Blair/Oxley and adjoining Divisions.

Should the Commissioners be contemplating major changes to the proposals then we would ask that they consider Objection 4 made by the former Australian Democrat Senator John Cherry, particularly his comments on North Qld seats. The link is as follows:

http://www.aec.gov.au/_content/why/redistributions/2005/qld/object/QO04.pdf

Our comments will now concern those objections regarding the name of the proposed Division, the approach adopted by the Commissioners to the redistribution as well as particular regions.

NAME OF PROPOSED DIVISION

Almost every objection to the boundaries of the proposed Division of Wright also mention the name association with the disgraced former MP, Keith Wright who, only a few years ago represented the region in which the proposed Division is to be located. The objectors include the Liberal and National Parties.

The ALP has no quarrel with a proposal to name a Division in honour of Judith Wright. But we are sure that the Commissioners, on reflection will agree that the combination of the name of Wright and the proposed location of the new Division is unfortunate.

In the circumstances, the ALP believes that should the Augmented Commission uphold the proposed location of the new Qld Division that a less controversial and confusing name is chosen. Wright is a suitable name for a Division elsewhere in the State and could be chosen at a future redistribution.

We ask the Commissioners to reconsider our original suggestion that the name of the new Division be Theodore, in honour of E G Theodore, Premier of Queensland 1919-25; Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer 1929-31. We support objections 65 and 179 made respectively by Mr Evan Schwarten and the Australian Workers Union.

Excluding the current redistribution, Qld has had 10 new Divisions since 1977. Also, the Division of Darling Downs was renamed Groom in 1984. Of the 11 new names of Qld Divisions since 1977, six are named after persons who served in Parliament on the Conservative side of politics (Fadden, 1977; Rankin, 1984; Groom, 1984; Dickson, 1993; Longman, 1996; Bonner, 2004). Forde (1984) named after former Prime Minister, Frank Forde is the sole Qld Division named after a person who served on the Labor side.

APPROACH ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSIONERS

The Liberal Party and others, notably the MP for Blair have claimed in their objections that the Commissioners proposals do not conform to the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, 1918. They base this assertion on the fact that the Commissioners in their Report stated "that the principle of equality of electors between electoral divisions is of high importance" plus the fact that 20 of the proposed Divisions have a variance of less than 1.5%.

We reject the arguments advanced by the Liberals. Their objection in this instance seems like a cross between a crude attempt to threaten the Commissioners with legal redress unless other aspects of the Liberal's objections are upheld and a tantrum concerning the Commissioners impertinence in not agreeing with their original Suggestions in full.

Moreover, the Commissioners had earlier calculated that the current redistribution would only apply for one Parliament before Qld became entitled to another Division, hence triggering a further redistribution. Consequently, the Commissioners, very sensibly in our view, invoked the provisions of the Electoral Act that would enable them to make the projected time three years after the return of the writs from the last election.

Given that in five of the last six Parliaments Queensland has gained an extra Division, no criticism from any quarter was made of the Commissioners decision.

Given also that the projected date was only 17 months away, or well below half the usual projection period, at the time of the Commissioners Report it was only to be expected that the range of variance between Divisions is also less than usual.

The petulance of the Liberal's objection can be clearly seen in its treatment of the Divisions of Bonner, Griffith and Moreton. Here the Commissioners proposed no change to the boundaries of Bonner, a Division just over the projected average of electors. They then proposed to transfer to Moreton the excess of Griffith

and the Brisbane LGA parts of Rankin. In turn, Moreton then sheds to Oxley.

In its appeal, the Liberals revive their earlier suggestion that Chelmer, Sherwood and Graceville be transferred from Moreton to Oxley in place of the area the Commissioners propose. However, given the infusion into Moreton of 5000 electors from Rankin, (which the Liberals do not oppose) plus 4300 from Griffith, the Liberals proposal still leaves Moreton well above the maximum allowable variation. They 'solve' this problem by trying to pass on to Bonner, a Division already over quota, as much of the excess of Griffith as it can tolerate.

Then, when the Commissioners decline to implement the Liberal's suggestion, the Liberal's accuse the Commissioners of failing to adhere to the Electoral Act, when all they have done has been to make a proposal at variance to the Liberal's suggestions.

OBJECTIONS TO THE BOUNDARIES OF WRIGHT AND OTHER NORTHERN DIVISIONS

This region is the subject of the most number of Objections. The ALP prefers the Commissioners boundaries including that of Wright to the Objections made by the Liberal and National Parties.

The Liberals seek to revive their original suggestion that the new Division be created in another area. We think all the original Party suggestions for the new Division contained flaws and the ALP further believes that for all its faults, the Commissioners proposed new Divisions reflects a better arrangement of Communities of Interests than the suggestions made by each of the major parties.

That said, it must be acknowledged that the Commissioners new proposed Division comes at the price of the reduction of the Communities of Interests of adjoining Divisions. But there seems to us no point in trying to revive earlier suggestions, which contained weaknesses that have already been considered and rejected by the Commissioners. Such an approach goes nowhere to making improvements to the boundaries proposed.

The Nationals propose several significant changes to almost every country Division including the transfer back to Maranoa of some of the western parts of Wright to be swapped for Kingaroy and almost 5000 electors from Fitzroy LGA. However, the improvements they seek to effect in some Divisions are more than offset by the weaker boundaries they make in other Divisions.

For example, the Nationals, in order to keep Mackay together propose to rip Charters Towers, (which many see as the heart of the seat), out of Kennedy and into Capricornia which would then be forced to lose all of the Fitzroy LGA which adjoins Rockhampton, the major centre in that Division. Elsewhere they try to remove from Groom places that would prefer to be placed in a Division containing Toowoomba, all to effect Kingaroy going into a Division with Gladstone as its major centre. Clearly, the kindest thing that can be said for these proposals is that the Nationals have failed to come up with boundaries reflecting the Community of Interest criteria than those already proposed.

In assessing the merits of the objections of others in this region we thought it might be helpful to look at the enrolments of the major centres of these Divisions, reflecting the relevant LGA's and historical connections. This we reproduce below:

DIVISION	Major LGA's	2007 Proj	%of a Division
1. HERBERT	**Townsville**	**103944**	**116**
	Thuringowa		
2. DAWSON	**Mackay**		
	Mirani	**66362**	**74.0**
	Sarina		
3. CAPRICORNIA			
	Rockhampton		
	Fitzroy	**65625**	**73.3**
	Livingstone		
4. HINKLER			
	Bundaberg		
	Burnett		
	Miriam Vale	**83592**	**93.3**
	Calliope		
	Gladstone		
5. WIDE BAY			
	Hervey Bay	**55575**	**62**
	Maryborough		
6. NEW SEAT			
	Cooloola	**57703**	**64.4**
	Noosa		

As can be seen from the above, Townsville/Thuringowa contains too many electors to be contained whole in a Division. Also, unless and until Dawson loses a significant part of its northern portion (probably as a backbone of a new Division) then it will be impossible to keep Mackay and its surrounding LGA's together and

this will make it more difficult to keep traditional arrangements in other Divisions. In this context, the location of the new Division not only does nothing to preserve the traditional core arrangements in Divisions containing, respectively, Mackay and Rockhampton but ensures the break up of the traditional core centres in both Hinkler and Wide Bay.

Many of the problems identified above can be solved once a Division containing the northern part of Dawson is formed. But the numbers today do not warrant or even allow such a Division to be formed. However, it's reasonably easy to see that once such a Division is created, the Commissioners proposed boundaries do allow the facilitation of the traditional arrangements as listed above. That is an argument to do nothing. Another approach would be the big changes as put by John Cherry. But as shown by the Nationals objections, the worst approach is attempting to improve a few things whilst ignoring the damage done to others.

SUNSHINE COAST -- DICKSON

Each of the appeals in this region stem from the Commissioners decision to place Esk LGA in Dickson and Kilcoy in Fisher.

The ALP supports the Commissioners boundaries in this region. We note that the Commissioners had little choice but to move Esk and Kilcoy into this group of Divisions. Not to have done so would have prevented the Commissioners from being able to include all of Noosa LGA in its Gympie/Noosa Division.

It also seems to us that at the next redistribution the growth in Northern Brisbane as well as on the Sunshine Coast will force Kilcoy and Esk out. So we are dealing with a temporary arrangement--- where to park these two LGA's for a single Parliament. In the circumstances it's reasonable to stay with the Commissioners proposals.