



The Federal Redistribution 2006
QUEENSLAND



Objection Number 117

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Member for Wide Bay

5 pages

OBJECTION TO PROPOSED ELECTORAL REDISTRIBUTION FOR QUEENSLAND

FROM WARREN TRUSS M.P.

OBJECTION

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The 2006 electoral redistribution proposals have failed to give appropriate weight to the criteria set out in Section 66 (3) (b) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 requiring that community of interests, means of communication and travel, and physical features should be key elements in determining electorate boundaries.

The proposals for regional Queensland do not meet these criteria and have delivered many unnecessary anomalies. The Committee seems to have given little weight to the submissions received and produced electoral divisions which divide communities and ignore traditional lines of communication.

The usual practice of using the Great Dividing Range as a natural boundary in southern Queensland has been ignored, meaning that several electorates have a natural barrier separating their communities.

The decision to create the new electorate based on Gladstone was not recommended in any of the submissions presented to the Redistribution Committee and has created extensive and inappropriate ripple effects both north and south.

For example, the electorate of Dawson, traditionally based on Mackay has been moved north to include parts of Townsville, but has had its key sugar growing hinterland areas of Mirani and Sarina moved into Capricornia with Rockhampton – the only non-sugar producing Division north of the Sunshine Coast. Much of Rockhampton's near hinterland, including Mount Morgan, has been moved into the new electorate of Wright. The electorate of Hinkler has been decimated with Bundaberg losing nearly all of its hinterland and instead being extended into the Fraser Coast to include Hervey Bay. The twin cities of Maryborough and Hervey Bay have been divided with Wide Bay being given a distinct Sunshine Coast flavour through the inclusion of Noosa. Maranoa has lost much of its traditional western heartland and has been extended across the Great Dividing Range to include three of the six South Burnett Shires.

The treatment of the coastal provincial cities has been especially inept. Some of the southern suburbs of Cairns have been taken from Leichhardt and placed in Kennedy with Mt Isa and Ingham. Some of the southern suburbs of Townsville have been included in Dawson with Mackay. Areas very close to the south and west of Mackay city, such as Mirani, have been included in Capricornia with Rockhampton. The areas west of Rockhampton (part of Fitzroy and Mount Morgan Shires) are included in Wright with Gladstone and Longreach. The northern suburbs of Bundaberg are included in Wright with Gladstone and Winton. The western suburbs of Maryborough (Woocoo) are included in Hinkler with Bundaberg. A small part of the Shire of Maroochy is included in Wide Bay with Maryborough and Murgon.

The Committee provides no justification for these proposals other than to adjust numbers to accommodate the new Division of Wright. These deficiencies can and should be corrected. Most can be traced to the decision to create the new electorate of Wright based on Gladstone.

The draft proposals should be withdrawn and recast to better meet the criteria of the Act.

WIDE BAY/BURNETT AREA:

Hervey Bay and Maryborough are the twin cities of the Fraser Coast and have been intrinsically linked since early settlement in the 1840's. Many people live in Maryborough and work in Hervey Bay or vice versa. Most organisations and services cover both cities. They are promoted as a single tourist destination. Cane from Hervey Bay farms is delivered to the sugar mill in Maryborough. The cities share the administration of Fraser Island. Hervey Bay's main link to the rest of the world is the highway through Maryborough.

The Fraser Coast and Bundaberg are rivals and do not work closely together. Hervey Bay and Maryborough City Councils are, by contrast, putting rivalries aside and there is active consideration about whether there should be a single local authority to cover the two cities. Maryborough and Hervey Bay share the same newspapers, radio stations and services.

There are no government service districts, e.g. police, education, welfare services etc., that draw regional boundaries between Maryborough and Hervey Bay. They share the same health district and their hospitals are increasingly operated as a single unit dividing services between them. The two cities are invariably included in the same service districts and should not be placed in separate federal electorates.

The proposed redistribution divides Bundaberg along the Burnett River, separating the main city from its northern suburbs and transferring these suburbs along with hinterland Shires such as Kolan and Mt Perry into the new division of Wright. Dividing a city of Bundaberg's size in this way is ludicrous. The areas moved into Wright with Longreach and Winton rely on Bundaberg for all their hospital and other services. They have no links with the other centres in Wright. The Committee's claim that Kolan has "community of interests" with "the other Shires located in the new division" (para 53) is indefensible.

The redistribution splits the Woocoo Shire, population 2,315, in two and as a result separates Maryborough's western suburbs including its railway station from the city. These parts of Woocoo rely entirely on Maryborough for their services and the people would need to travel through Maryborough to reach the other centres in the Hinkler electorate. Except for the small number of voters near Brooweena, Woocoo Shire residents vote at Maryborough city polling booths.

By including Noosa in the federal division of Wide Bay, the Committee has changed the character of the electorate. Noosa is clearly a part of the Sunshine Coast, not the Fraser Coast. The people of Noosa receive their services from the Sunshine Coast, watch Sunshine Coast television, read Sunshine Coast newspapers, and are a part of Sunshine Coast tourism promotions. Noosa is invariably included in Sunshine Coast service districts and is part of the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee. (Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Gympie and the South Burnett are in the Wide Bay Area Consultative Committee).

The Commission's proposal continues to divide the 6 Shires of the South Burnett. They are a closely knit group with Kingaroy as their primary centre. These Shires have been divided and moved in various ways from electorate to electorate in almost every redistribution. It is time that their community of interest together was recognised and they be provided with electorate stability. This proposal will place Kingaroy, Wondai and Nanango in an electorate with Roma and Birdsville, while Murgon and Cherbourg and Kilkivan will remain in Wide Bay. While Kingaroy and Nanango have been included in the Maranoa electorate in one previous distribution, the community of interest of the South Burnett would be best suited in the electorate of Wide Bay

(although for numerical reasons that may not be possible). The Central and North Burnett Shires of Biggenden, Gayndah, Mundubbera, Eidsvold and Monto all have links with Bundaberg and Maryborough – Biggenden more with Maryborough. None of the Burnett Shires would consider Gladstone to be their major regional centre (paras 49-51).

Proposals:

The Redistribution Committee has provided no justification for the radical and seemingly illogical changes to the boundaries of electorates in the Wide Bay Burnett area. The proposals should be recast, reunifying Maryborough and Hervey Bay in Wide Bay and placing all of Bundaberg and its hinterland in Hinkler. Noosa should be maintained in a Sunshine Coast electorate and the South Burnett Shires (all 6 plus Biggenden) should be included in Wide Bay.

If these fundamental changes cannot be made, the following improvements should be a priority:

Wide Bay Division:

Priority One: The whole of the Woocoo Shire should be retained in Wide Bay. (adds 1224 voters)

Advantages:

- Places a shire with a relatively small population in a single electorate
- Includes Maryborough's western suburbs in the same electorate as the rest of the city
- Will enable the people of Oakhurst and surrounding areas to vote at their traditional polling booths without having to undertake absentee voting
- The Woocoo Shire's community of interest is overwhelmingly with Maryborough and its neighbouring shire of Tiaro, both of which are proposed to remain in Wide Bay
- The Woocoo Shire has never been divided previously and has always been in Wide Bay

Priority Two: Transfer the small part of the Maroochy Shire from Wide Bay back to Fairfax. (deletes 2113 voters)

Advantages:

- The southern boundary of Wide Bay will follow logical Local Government boundaries
- The Maroochy Shire will then be in only two federal divisions (not three) and nearly all in Fairfax.
- "Re-uniting Maroochy in one division" was identified as a priority by the Committee (para 99).

Priority Three: Retain Biggenden Shire in Wide Bay. (adds 1119 voters)

Advantages:

- Retains Biggenden Shire in Wide Bay where its community of interest is strongest
- Maintains existing boundaries of Wide Bay Electorate
- Brings enrolment for the new Wide Bay nearer to quota

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Priority Four: Retain Wondai Shire in Wide Bay (adds 3055 voters)

Advantages:

- Retains Wondai Shire in Wide Bay where its community of interest is strongest

- Keeps Wondai, Murgon and Cherbourg Shires together in a single Division (Murgon was for many years a part of the Wondai Shire)
- Maintains existing western boundaries of Wide Bay Electorate

The effect of the first three proposed changes would be to increase the proposed enrolment of Wide Bay by 230 and would leave the Division still below quota. The addition of Wondai Shire (3055 voters) could also be accommodated within the parameters required. The movement of 2113 voters into Fairfax could also be accommodated within the tolerances outlined in paras 5 and 10 of the Committee's proposal or, if considered necessary, by adjusting slightly the boundaries between Fairfax and Fisher. If required, Kilcoy Shire (2255 voters) could be excluded from Fisher and added to Dickson, as Kilcoy and Esk are sister shires.

Hinkler Division:

Priority One: The whole of the Burnett Shire should be included in Hinkler. (adds 6076 voters)

Advantages:

- Reunite the whole city of Bundaberg into one electorate along with its key coastal communities
- These voters rely entirely on Bundaberg for their services, transport networks etc

Allowing for the transfer of 1224 voters in the Woocoo Shire from Hinkler to Wide Bay, the inclusion of 6076 more voters from the Burnett Shire can be accommodated in Hinkler.

The Kolan and Perry Shires should also logically be included in Hinkler (3284 voters) – though numbers may not permit this adjustment. Their community of interest is strongly with Bundaberg and they have no links with Gladstone or Longreach.

It will be necessary for the Isis Shire to remain in Hinkler as, under the Committee's proposals, it is the linking shire between Bundaberg and the electorate's new area in Hervey Bay. Isis community of interest is clearly with Bundaberg.

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OTHER AREAS:

If the new electorate is to be located in Central Queensland there are a number of changes which would improve the new distribution.

The redistribution would be better if the balance of the Fitzroy Shire and Mount Morgan were transferred from Wright to Capricornia (total 4035), as their community of interest is overwhelmingly with Rockhampton. Mirani should be returned to Dawson (3369 voters). In return, no parts of Herbert should be transferred to Dawson (4875 voters), but rather, numbers which must be shed from Herbert should all go into Kennedy. This would mean that all of Townsville would be in two federal electorates – Herbert and Kennedy – rather than shared among three as proposed by the Committee. As a result, Kennedy would be over quota and so some of the territory on its southern boundary would need to be included in Wright, possibly some of the areas south of the Flinders Highway. Wright will need extra enrolment because of my earlier proposals to remove north Bundaberg from Wright and return it to Hinkler. One option would be to take the southern part of the Dalrymple Shire and the town of Charters Towers into Wright.

On the Sunshine Coast it seems strange that Kilcoy is included in the electorate of Fisher. The numbers in Fisher are low, but could be adjusted easily with the

boundaries of Fairfax and Longman. I have already suggested that the northern part of the Maroochy Shire be moved into Fairfax which could allow a corresponding transfer of voters into Fisher. Kilcoy could be moved into Dickson with Esk or into Maranoa with Rosalie and Nanango.

Division Name:

The chosen name of Wright for the new division is inappropriate and should be changed. As the proposed new electorate is located near Rockhampton, the name is immediately associated with Mr Keith Wright, former Federal Member of Parliament and Leader of the Opposition in Queensland and convicted child sex offender.

The poet, Judith Wright, was born in New South Wales and has made no known contribution to the social, economic or cultural life of the new Division. The Committee has had to refer to a book she wrote about her grandparents to establish any link with the region at all.

If the electorate retains its current character and the towns of Longreach and Winton, it could be named Fysh after Sir Hudson Fysh, one of the founders of Qantas. Another appropriate name for a new Central Queensland Electorate would be Thiess in honour of the "father" of the modern Queensland coal mining industry, Sir Leslie Thiess.

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