



The Federal Redistribution 2006
QUEENSLAND



Objection Number 182

Hon Ian MacFarlane MP

Member for Groom

3 pages



Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives

IAN MACFARLANE MP
Federal Member for Groom

21 July 2006

Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee
GPO Box 2590
BRISBANE Qld 4001

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to the document *2006 Proposed Redistribution of Queensland into Electoral Divisions* prepared by the Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee (the Committee) pursuant to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Act).

I note that the role of your Committee is clearly prescribed by the enabling legislation.

In preparing the *2006 Proposed Redistribution of Queensland Electoral Divisions* document, it was incumbent on the Committee to apply correctly the principles as set out in the Act and, to apply accordingly, the hierarchy of these principles.

Having comprehensively assessed the impact that the recommendations contained within this document will have on the proposed redistribution if implemented, I am concerned at the proposals in some instances and the methodology by which your Committee has arrived at these proposals.

Population Variation

As it relates to populations, the principle of reducing variations between the populations of electorates must, of course, be considered and acted upon. However, the Committee's reference to population variations of +/- 1.5 is incongruent with the +/- 3.5 prescribed in legislation. Clearly, the Committee has gone beyond the intentions and scope of the Act, thereby undermining the very principles set-out within the Act.

Mindful of the principle of population variation, and how this must be treated according to the Act, it is also incumbent upon the Committee to consider other important factors such as: community of interest; means of communications and travel; physical features and area; boundaries of existing divisions. My concern is that the Committee's reliance on 'false' population variation criteria of +/- 1.5 has prevented other principles from being considered. I express this concern mindful that reducing population variations of electorates is not the definitive principle by which electoral redistributions must be proposed.

OBJECTION

No 182

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Proposed New Seat

The fact that the Committee proposes a new seat in Central Queensland is clearly at odds with the public submissions received by the Committee, including from the Liberal Party of Australia, The Nationals and the Australian Labor Party. It would seem there was broad agreement in the public submissions that the new seat should be based within the federal electorate of Blair. However, the Committee has chosen an alternative option. In doing so, again, it would appear that the Committee has placed disproportionate weight on the 'false' population variable of +/- 1.5% at the expense of the following principles: communities of interest; means of communication and travel; physical features and area; and existing divisional boundaries.

This is not consistent with the notion of hierarchy that exists within the Act.

Dislocation across Electorates

This course of action, that inexplicably establishes a new seat in Central Queensland, has the cumulative effect of bringing together disparate communities and, in doing so, severs existing and long-established linkages, associations and connections across a number of electorates - a notion of great concern to many Queenslanders in regional and rural Queensland. For example, the splits between Maryborough and Harvey Bay and Bundaberg and its hinterland are as difficult to fathom as the linkages that will bring together communities such as Rockhampton and the Mackay hinterland, but without Mackay; and Gladstone and the Rockhampton hinterland, but without Rockhampton.

Dislocation in Groom

This dislocation, contrary to the principle of 'community of interest' is also apparent in the federal electorate of Groom. The Committee's proposal removes Clifton from Groom with no due consideration that Toowoomba represents a business, social and community focal point for people in Clifton. Furthermore, many children in Clifton attend both public and private schools in Toowoomba, including Harristown High School. Whilst acknowledging that there needs to be a balancing of numbers in terms of population, it would be far more desirable to reunite that part of the Crows Nest Shire currently in Groom (Census Collection Districts - 3 141 904 (split); 3 141 913; 3 142 204; 3 142 205; 3 142 211; 3 142 212; 3 142 215; 3 142 203; 3 142 202) back into the Crows Nest Community, as per the Liberal Party of Australia submission.

Population Dislocation

The distortion that the Committee's focus on population variation has given rise to is exemplified by the fact that, consistent with the document *2006 Proposed Redistribution of Queensland into Electoral Divisions*, some 353,141 voters will be relocated into new electoral divisions. Whilst on the surface this seems excessive, the true extent of dislocation is brought to bare when considered against the context of the

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previous submission supplied by the Liberal Party – this submission would have relocated considerably less voters, some 230,369. Hence the proposal by the Committee dislocates a further 53% of voters, relative to the number proposed by the Liberal Party.

Accountability and transparency must remain core elements of the electoral redistribution process. The principle of population variation must be considered, assessed and addressed in the process – no-one would refute that. However, the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* prescribes principles other than population variation that must be assessed and considered within such an undertaking. It is on this basis that I contend that the Committee has, in part, not discharged its duties in accordance with the Act and, in doing so, appears to have paid scant attention to public submissions on the matter.

Yours sincerely

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