



The Federal Redistribution 2006  
QUEENSLAND



---

**Objection Number 48**

**Mr Cameron Thompson MP**

**Member for Blair**

**12 pages**



"Thompson, Cameron  
(MP)"  
<Cameron.Thompson.M  
P@aph.gov.au>  
17/07/2006 02:59 PM

To <qld.redistribution@aec.gov.au>

cc

bcc

Subject Objection to proposed redistribution from C. Thompson  
MP. Copy will follow by post.

Classification  Unclassified

27 June 2006

Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee  
GPO Box 2590  
BRISBANE Qld 4001

Dear Sir/Madam

I write to object to new electoral boundaries published in the document "2006 Proposed Redistribution of Queensland into Electoral Divisions" drawn up by your committee following community submissions pursuant to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

Under the Act, your committee has a carefully prescribed role in preparing the electoral landscape within Queensland to ensure future elections are fair and that effective political representation is facilitated.

The process by which your committee determines the location of its proposed boundaries as part of a redistribution within a State is specified in Section 66 of the Act. The relevant part of the section follows:

*(3) In making the proposed redistribution, the Redistribution Committee:*

- (a) shall, as far as practicable, endeavour to ensure that, if the State or Territory were redistributed in accordance with the proposed redistribution, the number of electors enrolled in each Electoral Division in the State or Territory would not, at the projection time determined under section 63A, be less than 96.5% or more than 103.5% of the average divisional enrolment of that State or Territory at that time; and*
- (b) subject to paragraph (a), shall give due consideration, in relation to each proposed Electoral Division, to:*

**OBJECTION**

**№ - 48**

*(i) community of interests within the proposed Electoral Division, including economic, social and regional interests;*  
*(ii) means of communication and travel within the proposed Electoral Division;*  
*(iv) the physical features and area of the proposed Electoral Division; and*  
*(v) the boundaries of existing Divisions in the State or Territory;*  
*and subject thereto the quota of electors for the State or Territory shall be the basis for the proposed redistribution, and the Redistribution Committee may adopt a margin of allowance, to be used whenever necessary, but in no case shall the quota be departed from to a greater extent than one-tenth more or one-tenth less.*  
*(3A) When applying subsection (3), the Redistribution Committee must treat the matter in subparagraph (3)(b)(v) as subordinate to the matters in subparagraphs (3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv).*

The committee's failure to deal properly with these important principles is the first point of objection I wish to raise.

Before preparing your "Proposed Redistribution" the committee sought and received submissions and subsequent comments from interested parties. "*Suggestions covering the whole of the State were received from three organisations. The remaining eight suggestions related to parts of the state and specific localities.*" (paragraph 23, page 5). "*The Committee received twenty-six Comments relating to the Suggestions by the close of the Comments period on 17 March 2006*" (paragraph 24).

The three organisations which made whole-of-state submissions were the Liberal Party of Australia, The Australian Labor Party and the Nationals. In each case, the proponents were able to check compliance with the Commonwealth Electoral Act's required population growth limitations of plus or minus 3.5% using AEC-endorsed computer modelling. A fourth whole-of-state model was received from a group of private individuals (Alison Ezzy and 154 others) who responded to the AEC's call for community comments on the various submissions.

Certainly in the case of the Liberal Party submission the proposed boundaries were fully compliant with the very important requirements of the Electoral Act limiting population variation. This is borne out by the table of actual and projected populations contained within that submission.

There would be no reason why the submissions of the ALP or the Nationals would not be similarly compliant.

Provided the three outside submissions remain within the required population range, they are no more or less worthy on this point than the proposed redistribution and the electoral divisions drawn up by your committee. On your figures, Leichhardt (+3.24%) and Forde (-2.68%) are at the extremes of variation in the forecasts of population.

**OBJECTION**

**Ng - 48**

You outline the concept of population variation within your report on page 30.

*166. The Committee notes that under its proposal four divisions are above the variation of plus 1.5%, five divisions are below the variation of minus 1.5% and twenty divisions are within the range of plus or minus 1.5%. It is of the view that its proposal is equitable and achieves the best outcome given the geographical constraints and patterns of enrolment growth in Queensland.*

This paragraph implies the use by the committee of a false standard – because nowhere in the Commonwealth Electoral Act is a variation of +/- 1.5% mentioned or preferred.

According to the act, the recommended threshold is +/- 3.5%. Once the +/- 3.5% rule is met, there is nothing in the act to imply that a proposal with an even lower range is more virtuous. There is nothing to imply that reducing variations in population between divisions is an absolute goal. If that was the case, there could be no room for any criteria other than comparisons of trends in population. Communities of Interest etc could not be accommodated at all.

However it appears that the Liberal Party submission, with all divisions within the range of variation specified by the Act, was rejected by your Committee because a lower number of six of its proposed divisions met an artificial standard of +/- 1.5%. The ALP and Nationals' submissions were rejected for the same reasons.

This, however, draws into question the committee's treatment of electors in those of its proposed divisions which fall outside its preferred population range of +/- 1.5%. Voters in Leichhardt in particular are singled out by the committee. At the projected date, that electorate would be 3.24% above the average.

If Queenslanders were to accept that a 1.5% variation was the preferred norm, why should one particularly remote electorate receive this treatment? In effect, under the committee's preferred model, votes in Leichhardt would be worth 3.24% less than the average of votes elsewhere in the State. Leichhardt voters would be left to wonder why the committee chose their division as the location within the State where votes were to be worth least.

By comparison, under the Liberal Party proposal, only two electorates (Hinkler and Fairfax) would be at greater variance from the population average than the committee's proposed Leichhardt division (+3.24%). But under the Liberal Party proposal the number of electors within Hinkler and Fairfax would still fall within the 3.5% cap prescribed by the Electoral Act.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act makes it clear that variations in population between electorates which are the inevitable consequence of population growth must be corrected by way of a redistribution. Excessive variations over time trigger redistributions. They are the trigger for this redistribution; for others in the past and for many to come.

However, the Act does not ask your committee to eliminate variation at the time of the redistribution; nor does it ask that variation be eliminated at the projection time under Section 63A (being 30 November 2007 in this case).

**OBJECTION**

**№ - 48**

The process driving the selection of the projection date and the expectation of a further electoral redistribution to commence in 2008 was outlined on page 2 of your report:

7. *The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) supplied enrolment projections to the AEC using AEC enrolment data as the base and a cohort-component method to project the enrolment of each Census Collector District (CCD) to 30 November 2007. The Electoral Commission determined a projection date that is one year, being 30 November 2007, after the expected determination of the redistribution, being 30 November 2006 (refer Table 2). The Electoral Commission determined the shorter projection time because it believed the trend of population change indicates that Queensland is likely to gain an entitlement to a further electoral division at the next entitlement determination, expected in November 2008. Such a gain will necessitate a further redistribution to accommodate a 30th electoral division for Queensland at that time. Otherwise, the projection time would have been 30 May 2010.*

Clearly, according to the Commonwealth Electoral Act, 1918, when a redistribution of electoral boundaries is made, the principle of reducing variation between the populations of electorates is not an absolute. What is required is a reduction in variation to below +/- 3.5%. This is the full extent to which population variation is a factor. Provided the cap is satisfied, the authors of the redistribution are then required to look to other factors deemed important in the act: community of interest; means of communications and travel; physical features and area; boundaries of existing divisions.

Fundamentally, your committee has not applied the hierarchy of principles set out in the Commonwealth Electoral Act correctly. It has over-emphasised population variation and failed to accommodate community submissions and comment which it sought pursuant to the Act. As a consequence;

- It has given insufficient weight to community of interest.
- Insufficient weight to means of communications and travel
- Insufficient weight to physical features and area.
- Insufficient weight to existing divisional boundaries.

The false population standard established by the committee represents a basic departure from the principles set out in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 which was not endorsed by the Australian Parliament or public. It was not promulgated prior to the committee's request for submissions (which closed on March 3) or its subsequent call for community comment on those submissions.

At the time that public comment was sought, the only three models available with which the community could assess the likely impact of the 2006 redistribution came from the whole of state submissions of the ALP, the Nationals and the Liberals.

Given the divergent nature of the political views these submissions each represent, it is remarkable that all three proposed boundaries that were, in large part, consistent.

There was no hint within the submissions or subsequent community comment that any Queenslanders were less than satisfied with the allowance for population variation set down within the act. In fact, the overwhelming bulk of the community's arguments for or against

**OBJECTION**

the location of electoral boundaries were expressed in terms of communities of interest etc. rather than in terms of bare numbers.

All three whole-of-state submissions received by the committee by March 3 and the subsequent whole-of-state submission from 155 individuals sought to create the additional seat by partitioning Blair. The only fundamental difference in treatment came when the ALP chose the southern half of Blair as the core of the new seat, while the Nationals and Liberals chose the northern half.

Your committee recognised the basic similarities between these three submissions in paragraph 52 of your report when you chose to reject them in favour of your own model.

It is also remarkable that the community response to these submissions and to the likely shape of the redistribution was positive. The total number of comments received was just 26. Among these, the alternative state-wide model presented by Alison Ezzy et al reflected the same overall methodology and structure adopted by the parties. Their model sought to partition Blair and build on the communities of interest in the two halves.

Few of the comments received were critical of the overall picture presented by the parties. Each of the whole-of-state submissions proposed changes that would have relocated various communities between electorates, but public criticism of those proposals, where it was present at all, was of a relatively minor nature.

This is the basis of my second objection to the redistributed boundaries proposed by your committee.

Submissions were sought by March 3, but none of the three whole-of-state submissions or any of the part submissions received by the Committee sought a new seat in Central Queensland. The three whole-of-state proposals chose to partition Blair and to group those electors in the part which was to become the new seat with adjoining centres according to their perceived community of interest.

The submissions were then released to the public and comments sought. None of the subsequent comments from the community identified the need for a new seat further north. None were specifically critical of the politically bipartisan plan to anchor the new seat within Blair. The only comment that touched on the issue, which was endorsed by 155 Queenslanders, specifically endorsed Blair as the best location for the new seat.

As the sitting member for Blair, I have made submissions to this and to previous committees as an advocate for people within the boundaries of Blair. The constituents of the many small rural communities across the electorate are too far away from metropolitan centres to receive access to city services, but are too close to be eligible for dedicated rural services. These communities see themselves as rural, but do not have the recognition as rural communities that would provide them with more services.

Their overwhelming concern relates to the impact of waves of population growth and development in the south-east corner driving resettlement and over-extending the less-than-basic services in the hinterland. Local concerns remain focussed on the drift of population from the south-east and the need to manage services to meet rapidly growing

**OBJECTION**

expectations. Since 1998, this has been best represented by grouping them together in the one division of Blair.

On this occasion, I had supported the partitioning of the existing division of Blair only because in every likely scenario, both northern and southern halves were to be regrouped with their own, more localised, communities of interest.

This expectation was born out to a greater or lesser extent by each of the whole-of-state submissions received by the committee and strongly endorsed in subsequent community comment.

In submitting their case for the new seat to be based on Blair, Ezzy et al produced the following commentary and table which demonstrates that the centre of growth in the State is nowhere near Central Queensland:

*"1. The top 8 electorates that contain too many electors, taking into account current population statistics, plus projected population growth til 30/11/2007, are:*

- *Blair;*
- *Dawson;*
- *Fisher;*
- *Forde;*
- *Hinkler;*
- *Oxley;*
- *Rankin;*
- *Wide Bay*

*2. Fisher is not the electorate with the highest excess of electors, as the Liberal Party of Australia have implied in their submission and subsequent media statements. Even after taking projected population growth into account, Fisher is still only the fourth largest electorate in terms of elector numbers. The electorates of Oxley, Hinkler and Wide Bay, in that order, all contain a higher number of electors than Fisher.*

*3. Further, when assessing the more pressing need for the creation of a new electorate, it is important to look at the statistics for entire regions rather than individual electorates*

*4. Having regard to the 8 electorates named above, the current projected population growth statistics tend to indicate that the most pressing need for a reduction in size of the existing electorates lies in the ring of electorates from Rankin and Forde (particularly the northern half of the electorate) and Oxley through to Blair (the Ipswich component).*

*Projected as at 30/11/2007:*

<i>Excess electors in Rankin/Forde/Oxley/Blair region:</i>	<i>24,664</i>
<i>Excess electors in Hinkler/Wide Bay region:</i>	<i>14,295</i>
<i>Excess electors in Fisher:</i>	<i>6,680</i>

**OBJECTION**

**№ - 48**

5. Note that the other electorates that contain the most excessive elector numbers do not generally adjoin other similar electorates. Hinkler and Wide Bay do adjoin, indicating that the second most pressing need for significant changes is in the region from Maryborough and Harvey Bay to Bundaberg and Gladstone. However, Dawson and (importantly) Fisher do not adjoin other electorates with overpopulation problems."

This evidence was given to your committee as part of public commentary, prior to considering your proposal for redistributed electoral boundaries in Queensland.

Despite the weight of this evidence and the consequent alignment of all public proposals regarding the best location for the new electorate, your committee sought a contrary outcome.

Through its exaggerated methodology based on population, your redistribution committee gazumped all the earlier submissions and public comment.

You came up with an unlikely outcome that sees the new seat hundreds of kilometres further north, displacing long-established linkages and communities of interest across the State in the process.

As a result, the anticipated opportunity for many communities previously grouped within Blair to build stronger communities of interest and to improve the focus of their electoral representation was taken away.

To many of these people, your proposed redistribution of boundaries exploits the negative aspects of submissions received prior to March 3 and delivers none of the benefits. The Kingaroy, Nanango and Crows Nest shires are to be separated from Blair, but moved into Maranoa, an outback electorate in which extreme remoteness and the Warrego Highway are core concerns and linkages. This will be a huge disappointment and a serious disadvantage to these South Burnett communities.

The South Burnett is an area looking east, not west. I anticipate strong local opposition to the committee's proposals. Already, you have a taste of community reaction in the comment received from the Wambo Shire Council – *"The Shires of Dalby, Wambo, Chinchilla and Murilla should be retained in the Maranoa electorate just as they have been for decades, because they are not connected in any meaningful way with communities north east of the Great Dividing Range in the current electorate of Blair. There is no relevance for business and no geographical relevance for these shires with the South and Central Burnett regions."*

The Member for Maranoa, Bruce Scott was also correct when he stated in his comments that shires based on the Darling Downs and Western Queensland had *"...no community of interest east of the Great Dividing Range, which provides a natural boundary between Maranoa and Blair."*

I strongly object to the inclusion of the South Burnett in Maranoa because the linkage drawn by the committee devalues the identity of the South Burnett and undermines the genuine

**OBJECTION**



community of interest it shares with communities along the D'Aguilar and Brisbane Valley Highways to the east.

Similarly your proposals will cause anguish in the southern part of the existing division of Blair. By separating Esk Shire from Gatton, Laidley, Boonah, and Ipswich, the perverse proposal of the committee leaves the rural hinterland which seeks its services from Ipswich separated and remote from the very place those services are based.

Across the State, there are many similar mismatches proposed by the committee, driven by its unfair focus on reducing population variation at the expense of community of interest; transport and communications links; existing boundaries etc.

Along the full length of the Queensland coast, your decision to relocate the new seat so far to the north distorts existing relationships and destroys well established community groupings based on common interests, transport and communications corridors etc.

As someone who lived and worked as a journalist in both Longreach and Gladstone, I am stunned by your creative writing when you assert a community of interest between these centres in your proposed new division of Wright.

The splits between Maryborough and Harvey Bay and between Bundaberg and its hinterland (contrary to the Kolan and Mundubbera Shire submissions); the link between Murgon and Noosa; the loss of the Capricorn Highway from Capricornia; linking Rockhampton with the Mackay hinterland (but excluding Mackay) and Gladstone with the Rockhampton hinterland (excluding Rockhampton); all are mismatches that will draw protests from affected communities.

The extent of this dislocation offends Section 66 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918. Communities of Interest; Means of Communications and Travel; Physical Features and Area and Existing Divisional Boundaries all have been set aside or traduced by the committee in formulating boundaries skewed by false population criteria.

According to table 5 on page 34 of your report, your committee has chosen to relocate 353,141 electors into new divisions, when under the Liberal Party submission, the total number changing electorates is limited to just 230,369.

That's 122,772 Queenslanders relocated between electorates for reasons other than provided for under the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

For the reasons listed above, I submit that the redistribution of electoral boundaries prepared by your committee is inconsistent with the Act. The committee should scrap and redraw its proposal in line with the views expressed in public submissions and comment and in keeping with the principles set out in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

Under the Act, even at this stage in the process, your committee has the capacity to proceed as set out in the above paragraph to propose and finalise boundaries that do comply with the principles set out in Section 66.

However, I acknowledge that in the time that remains in the legislated process, you

**OBJECTION**

committee may not come to share my view about the need to completely recast your proposed boundaries.

So, without prejudice to the case presented above, I make the following suggestions for changes to your proposed boundaries which would help to restore a small part of the damage which otherwise would be caused to S66 (3)b principles in the southern part of the existing Blair electorate.

Please note: these changes will do nothing to restore the real damage to the community of interest of the South Burnett districts in the northern part of the existing Blair electorate as proposed in your redistribution.

As stated in my previous correspondence to you, the shires of Gatton, Laidley, Boonah and Esk (particularly the region from the township of Esk and to the south) have similar characteristics and needs.

Esk shire is different from other shires in that it does not have one commercial and administrative centre in the shire. Instead, along its length, there are four or five main centres of roughly equivalent population. Consequently, residents in the southern end, around Lowood and Esk, would have a lot firmer connection with Ipswich than they would with a town within their own shire such as Moore or Linville. The shire is easily divisible, between Esk and Toogoolawah, for purposes of recognising communities of interest. The southern part of the shire's community of interest is very firmly with Ipswich.

State boundaries recognise this fact, with the electorate of Ipswich West including the southern area of Esk Shire – the towns of Minden, Fernvale, and Lowood – included with the West Moreton and Western Ipswich communities.

Residents in the communities of and surrounding Lowood, Fernvale, Minden and Esk are all situated in the vicinity of Ipswich, and are reliant on Ipswich for virtually all their needs and services. Nearly every factor of social, medical, community, business and administrative infrastructure connects this area strongly with Ipswich.

In terms of transport, residents in the south of the existing Blair boundaries use the Warrego Highway. To the east, these residents use Ipswich as their major centre. In the west, they utilise services in Gatton. With the booming development around Plainland, the Laidley Shire is also strengthening community ties and relations.

Government services that these residents and organisations use, such as hospitals, Centrelink, Natural Resources, and the Ipswich and West Moreton Area Consultative Council, are based in Ipswich.

So are the community services, such as the Ipswich and West Moreton Division of General Practice, or Veterans' services such as the Lockyer-Brisbane Valley Vietnam Veterans' Federation. Local independent schools draw their students from throughout the region. Several local schools form cluster groups for the purposes of funding applications and project or resource acquisition.

Commercial and retail facilities are in Ipswich, as is employment for many residents. The

**OBJECTION**

02 - 48

area is even serviced by the same media, with the Queensland Times (Ipswich) and the Boonah Newspaper Company producing local newspapers that are circulated across the Ipswich hinterland.

The needs of the communities either side of the committee's proposed new boundary are inseparable. Residents in Minden share the same style of community, with the same challenges, needs and requirements as residents in Marburg. The same applies for Lowood, Tarampa, Mt Tarampa, Glamorgan Vale, Fernvale, Coominya and Esk with their counterparts in Ipswich, Gatton and Laidley shires.

These communities associate themselves with being regional to Ipswich. To make these residents rely on the Pine Rivers Shire-based electorate of Dickson, is disadvantageous to every member of these communities. Transport, access to services, and access to representation become highly problematic when the centre of the proposed new electorate becomes Strathpine, north of Brisbane. There is no community of interest in that arrangement, nor any benefit to residents who associate themselves with being regional to Ipswich.

In defence of its proposals, the committee cited the outcome of the 1992 redistribution, which grouped the Lockyer and Brisbane Valleys in Dickson with Petrie, Strathpine and Ferny Grove.

The linkage of disparate communities across the vast empty space of the Brisbane Forest Park and forestry area would not have been regarded well, even in 1992 when the Moreton Shire covered part of urban Ipswich and the Samford Valley/Dayboro area was distinctively rural. Changes to shire boundaries and growing urbanisation in Pine Rivers Shire makes the irrelevance of such a grouping very clear today.

In 1992, Strathpine was clearly a service centre for the wider Pine Rivers Shire, with the North Pine Dam, strong rural linkages and its own productive hinterland in which a major industry was dairying. Similarly, just seven years after the completion of the Wivenhoe Dam in Esk Shire, there was a productive rural hinterland in which dairying was a major industry and support for communities and service centres.

Today, Strathpine is much more a metropolitan shopping centre than a service base for a rural hinterland. Esk Shire has taken most of the rural parts of the now defunct Moreton Shire and retains its strong rural focus. The common thread of dairying is no longer shared. Urbanisation in Esk Shire is not as much to the fore as it is to the east of the range in Pine Rivers Shire. But to the extent that the urban population continues to grow strongly around Fernvale, Minden and Lowood, it increases the local reliance on services provided from Ipswich and accentuates the disconnect from centres east of the range.

What is relevant about the 1992 division of Dickson is the northern boundary in the western part of that division. Passing between Esk and Toogoolawah, it cuts the Brisbane Valley in two, recognising the two community groupings in the Esk Shire – those facing south towards Ipswich and those with a secondary link to the north – towards Kilcoy and Caboolture. Neither grouping would recognise a linkage to Strathpine.

The 1992 Dickson boundary between the Brisbane City and Gatton Shire north of the town of

**OBJECTION**

№ - 48

Esk would be a suitable path along which to relocate the Blair/Dickson boundary as currently proposed by the committee.

In addition, in the proposed redistribution, a separate community of interest, needs and social requirements east of Ipswich CBD and Queens Park has been added to Blair.

The focus of suburbs east of the Ipswich CBD eg: Blackstone; Riverview, Bundamba and Dinmore, is markedly different from those further to the west. These suburbs look to the east along the well established transport and communications corridor which is Brisbane Road and the Ipswich Motorway. They have their own community network and identity that separates them from the areas to the west of the CBD. As a part of the electorate of Oxley, these suburbs are more closely aligned to areas of similar orientation.

The lion's share of their administrative services, health services, jobs and shopping are provided in centres in the east - in Booval, Goodna, Redbank, or further east into Brisbane.

*The strengthening linkage between Redbank Plains and Springfield is another example of this eastward orientation. These are centres that are rapidly merging, with the construction and redevelopment of two large shopping centres (Orion and Redbank Plains) bringing additional housing development and joining both in a clear community of interest.*

The eastern limit of Blair should not be extended further into these well-defined communities of interest than at present. At a stretch, the eastern boundary could be taken as far as North Station Road/South Station Road, to join the current boundary at the Bremer River (to the north) and Bundamba Creek (to the south).

This would retain a boundary to the west of the Booval Shopping Centre and ensure the Redbank Plains/Springfield community of interest was not separated.

In closing, I have suggestions to make in relation to the serious dilemma that faces the South Burnett Shires of Kingaroy and Nanango and the Eastern Downs community of Crows Nest which have been mismatched with Maranoa in your committee's report.

Of all communities in the State, these would be prime beneficiaries if your committee was to simply scrap and revise its current proposals in line with community sentiment.

The Liberal Party submission offers significant advantages to South Burnett residents when compared to the Committee's proposed boundaries. These communities need an eastern orientation to address the serious challenges described earlier in this submission. *Alternatively, they would much rather remain in Blair or join another eastern grouping than to be linked to the far west of the State as currently proposed. Crows Nest would share these sentiments, but with a further preferred option – inclusion in Groom.*

Finally, if the new division is to retain the name 'Wright', it surely cannot remain located in an area formerly known as Capricornia. The committee knows that in the context of Federal politics, the name 'Wright' has sinister implications for residents in Central Queensland. This has nothing to do with the poet and is no reflection on The Greens who suggested the name. It is just inappropriate and in bad taste to apply that name to a federal electoral division in Central Queensland.

**OBJECTION**

**№ - 4.8**

Yours sincerely

**Cameron Thompson MP**  
Federal Member for Blair

**OBJECTION**

**№ - 48**