



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Transcript

## AUGMENTED ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR QUEENSLAND

**Reference: Objections Against the Proposed Redistribution of Federal  
Electoral Divisions in the State of Queensland**

MONDAY, 21 AUGUST 2006

LONGREACH

BY AUTHORITY OF THE AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION

**AUGMENTED ELECTORAL COMMISSION  
FOR QUEENSLAND**

**Monday, 21 August 2006**

**Commissioners:** The Hon. James Burchett (*Chair*), Mr Ian Campbell,  
Ms Anne Bright and Mr Glenn Poole

**Commissioners not in attendance:** Mr Dennis Trewin and Mr Bob McCarthy

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:  
Objections against the proposed redistribution of Federal electoral divisions  
in the state of Queensland.

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**Committee met at 8.30 a.m.**

**CHAIR (The Hon. James Burchett QC)**—In opening this meeting, I should give a very brief explanation for those who are not experts in electoral administration, which I guess is many people, and it was me until I had to learn this position. Under the Commonwealth electoral law there is an Electoral Commission to administer various electoral matters. It consists of just three members: a chairperson, who must be either a Federal Court judge or a former Federal Court judge chosen from three people nominated by the Chief Justice of that court; the second person is the Electoral Commissioner, who is on my left. I am the Chairperson. The third person is the Australian Statistician, who unfortunately is not here because he is in hospital; he would be here otherwise. My name is Jim Burchett. The Electoral Commissioner, on my left, is Mr Ian Campbell. The third member, who unfortunately, as I say, is in hospital, is Mr Dennis Trewin.

When a redistribution is required in any state, as it is now in Queensland, because you are getting an extra seat, the legislation provides for a committee to work out a proposal about it. The committee consists of the Electoral Commissioner, the Chief Commonwealth Electoral Officer in the state, in this case Ms Anne Bright, the Auditor-General of the state, Mr Glenn Poole, on my right, and another senior state officer who holds the position of Surveyor General—in this case he holds some other positions as well in this state—Mr Bob McCarthy. Unfortunately, he cannot be here, but he, I am told, is listening in by telephone. He is involved with us, though he could not get to Longreach.

What has happened so far in this matter is that the committee has made a proposal involving a new division, which they suggest be called Wright. A number of you, and other people, have objected to aspects of that proposal. The legislation provides that the objections must be considered by a body that is partly different from the original committee. That body is called the Augmented Commission. The Augmented Commission consists of the same three people who are on the Electoral Commission plus the other persons who were on the committee. In effect, the people who were on the committee have to take part and to reconsider what they proposed, and the other two members of the commission who were not on the committee, that is, Mr Trewin and myself, come on to provide a fresh consideration also.

We are empowered to hold an inquiry. We decided to agree to a request to hold it partly here in Longreach as well as in Brisbane. It concerns, of course, the whole state. Unfortunately, we have limited time. I should make it clear to you that that is not from choice. Personally, I would love to spend more time in Longreach. But the statute, the Act of parliament, which governs us as much as it does anyone else, says that we have to do this job in a very short time.

The members of the Augmented Commission have read—I want to make this clear to those of you who are going to speak; you should understand this—your objections. We have read all of the objections and the comments. There are 13 people here who have indicated that they want to take the opportunity to say something personally in support of their objections or comments. Please do not just repeat what you have written but speak to it. As I say, we have read it, and time is short. Except for Mr Trewin and Mr McCarthy, we are all here, and Mr McCarthy is listening.

We have about three hours. If everyone keeps to the point, allowing time for others, that should be time enough for 13 people. We can do a lot of listening in that time and I promise you we will think about what is put to us. You understand, however, it is our duty to be the ones who finally come to a decision on these things. I will ask Mr Secombe to speak first, because I am told he has a need to get away early. Then I will take people generally in the order of their objections. Mr Secombe?

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[8.37 a.m.]

**SECCOMBE, Mr John, Qantas Foundation Memorial Ltd (Objection 106)**

**Mr Seccombe**—Thank you, Mr Chairman, for this opportunity. I thank you and your commission for coming to Longreach and hearing our objections. I represent the Qantas Foundation. I am here representing our Chairman, Captain Warwick Tainton, and I am the Deputy Chairman of the foundation.

I personally am a fifth generation resident of this area. I am very passionate about western Queensland. It has been my family's home for that time, almost since settlement out here. I have lived my life putting up with decisions made on our behalf by people in south-east Queensland and, in the Commonwealth area, south-east Australia.

The objection and the concern that we have in the foundation is that western Queensland suffers dreadfully from a lack of infrastructure development. If we have an electorate based on the coast, the consideration for the electorate will be primarily with the population centre. We have already endured one imposition in this electorate, when we were part of Capricornia, and that was a classic example of the little consideration that this part of the region got from an electorate that had a population centre far removed from it.

There is no doubt that community of interest is, and should always be, the prime reason for putting a collection of people together. In this case, it is an electorate. One of the few things on which I agreed with former Premier of Queensland Wayne Goss when he was trying to amalgamate shires was that the shires should be based on a community of interest. The first thing he tried to do was amalgamate the shires of Jericho and Aramac, which had absolutely no community of interest—absolutely none at all. There is not even a connecting road between the two. We lodged strenuous objections to it, because there was not a community of interest between those two shires, and we were fortunately successful in that.

The proposal to remove this part of Maranoa and include it in an electorate based on the coast is exactly the same example, where we will have a member who undoubtedly will come from the population centre. It would be very difficult for a member out here to represent an electorate based on the coast, because obviously they will not be as well known on the coast, and that is where the votes are. We are terribly concerned that an electorate such as that under this proposal will not give us a fair voice out here, and this part of the Commonwealth will continue to suffer from the lack of representation that we had when we were part of Capricornia and it will suffer from a lack of capital growth and infrastructure development.

The Qantas Foundation's primary objective is to preserve the history of Qantas and to tell the story to all Australians. As you know, Qantas was born in Winton and grew up in Longreach. Longreach was the centre of its operation for the first 13 years. It is just by coincidence that Maranoa covers a vast amount of that early area that Qantas covered. Maranoa does have a great community of interest in this area. We have representation—and always have had—from a member that knows this area. From that point of view, even though they may struggle against their fellow parliamentarians, at least they understand the region and they work strenuously for it.

It is our belief that, if this proposal goes ahead, it will be seen without a doubt that the Commonwealth is further disfranchising this part of Australia. Already there is a great feeling throughout regional Australia that we do not get the fair share of the Commonwealth fortunes that others get. Much of our export wealth comes from regional Australia, yet we have such small representation in our parliament because we have a

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small population.

I do not want to hold you up much further than that, other than to say that we see this proposal as being absolutely counter to any benefit that this region would receive. We see it as being opposed to the community of interest principle. We see it as being a disfranchising of the vote out here. We see it as absolutely detrimental to any growth in tourism, infrastructure development and commerce in this western region. We are very concerned about this. We just want to stay in an electorate where there is that community of interest, a focus on regional Australia and where the population base of the electorate will not disadvantage this area. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Thank you for your forbearance in sticking within a reasonable time limit.

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[8.45 a.m.]

**TANKS, Cr Patrick, Mayor, Longreach Shire Council (Objection 17)**

**Cr Tanks**—Firstly, I endorse John Seccombe's comments. We welcome the commission here today. Obviously, it has, how should I say it, touched a nerve or made you very aware that we have real concerns out here about the Electoral Commission's decision to take these shires out of Maranoa and put them into a new seat of Wright. John touched on many issues. One thing, I think, covers it all in the statement that went to the Electoral Commission. Paragraph 46 states that the new division:

... enabled the Committee to give a significantly higher degree of consideration to the community of interests, transport and geographical criteria for it and the remaining Queensland divisions ...

I think that is a very important/pertinent point that the commission makes. By putting us into a new seat of Wright, we feel that our interests, policies, community of interest, communications, geographical interests and transport system would be hindered enormously. That is a very important paragraph. I would like the Electoral Commission to note that point. For them to say that it was much better from their point of view, I think, is completely wrong. The commission also states:

...together a number of shires with complementary communities of interest, with the major rural industries being mining, grazing and agriculture, all of which are dependent on the infrastructure and transport links radiating from the Port of Gladstone through Central Queensland to the west.

We challenge those statements. All of our business is done, including with our grazing industry, more in keeping with Rockhampton, Brisbane and Toowoomba. They are our points of interest, not Gladstone. It is exactly the same for transport, tourism and education. We do not communicate or have any commonality of interest at all with Gladstone. As John pointed out much earlier, having a representative sitting in Gladstone would definitely not represent our interests out here.

We also feel that as a region we have tried to work together very successfully with our Regional Area Planning and Development Board. We have 11 shires all working towards regionally making it a better area, more advantageous and more receptive for getting people to live out here in our western towns. Splitting these shires by having some stop in Maranoa and having some go to the new seat of Wright can only cause it to implode and have a detrimental effect on how we operate out here as a group of regional people.

In summary, I would like to go to the conclusion, because I think that says it all, namely, that such a split would definitely undermine our policies and weaken our unity of purpose, our outlook and our representations, when one group of central western outback shires must look east for its parliamentary services and the other remains with the proposed inland division of Maranoa. That is a very pertinent point. Splitting the shires to form the central west into two federal divisions definitely diminishes the advantages of being a concentrated grouping.

I think the commission will see this—and I am sure the proposal it has gone through with the RAPAD Board and the attendance of all the mayors here in the shire today—as a proving point, and it lends a lot of substance to how we feel about moving from our seat of Maranoa, under which we have done very well. Going to a new seat of Wright would be detrimental to us. The commission should understand that, for all intents and purposes, we have changed from the seat of Kennedy and we have been to Capricornia, which was not good. We did not feel we had the representation of people out here in the shire then, with our member in Rockhampton. Then we went to Maranoa. Now, they want us to go back to a new seat of Wright. This chopping and changing does not give us any sustainability. I will not take up too much of your time, because there are other speakers. I strongly urge the commission to relook at the proposal and take the lead from our shires out here; we wish to stop in the seat of Maranoa, for all of those reasons.

**CHAIR**—You mentioned the other electorates that you have been in in the past. Would I be right in thinking that each of them had a very large country component, meaning by ‘country’ the sort of country that you are, not merely cropping and other things; is that right or not?

**Cr Tanks**—Could you repeat the question, again, please?

**CHAIR**—Did each of those divisions that you have been in in the past—you mentioned Kennedy, for instance—involve a large slice of western areas of Queensland?

**Cr Tanks**—Yes, they did.

**CHAIR**—But you are saying that this would lump you in with Gladstone; is that really your problem?

**Cr Tanks**—It is. That is really my problem. They keep emphasising Gladstone as the port. Our connections/interests with Gladstone are non-existent. Just on the tourism part alone, look at the website—

**CHAIR**—I did not mean you to start on something that you have in fact put in your written submission. I just wanted to clarify a comment that you made in what you said orally.

**Cr Tanks**—When we were in Kennedy we did very well. We were well represented in Kennedy. But it is getting the consistency of knowing where you are. The shires have had very good representation as members of that group in Maranoa. It would be an absolute tragedy to see the shires in the south split up from those up here. We would lose our importance and our ability to work to lobby governments.

**Ms BRIGHT**—Regarding the shires being in Capricornia or Kennedy, there seemed to be two statements. We know that Winton has been periodically in both Maranoa and Kennedy. But Longreach, Aramac, Barcaldine—did you mean that they were in the rural seat of Kennedy or Capricornia? I did not quite get that.

**Cr Tanks**—They are in the rural seat of Kennedy and Capricornia.

**Ms BRIGHT**—And Capricornia. So the shires were split in part in the past?

**Cr Tanks**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Is Rosemary Champion here?



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[8.53 a.m.]

**CHAMPION, Mrs Rosemary, private capacity (Objection 33)**

**Ms Champion**—My name is Rosemary Champion. I am a grazier and a tourist operator from my local property, 11 kilometres from Longreach. I would like to bid you welcome and thank you very much for making the effort to come out to western Queensland to hear our concerns, which are, as speakers before me have alluded to and those after will allude to, enormous.

This is a critical issue for us. I would prefer probably to have spoken after the RAPAD Board has spoken. It has done an enormous amount of work, in conjunction with the mayors affected in this area, to engage a consultant to crunch the numbers, and for the commission to listen to our concerns and in fact to come up with a solution. The RAPAD Board has, as I said, crunched the numbers to make that possible. But, in fact, having to speak before the RAPAD Board is a little bit difficult.

Just to reiterate my situation—my mother's family came out to this area in the 1890s, before Federation, as dam sinkers. My father drew a block of land at Muttaborra in 1929. I would like to speak more about the grazing industry, which I know a lot about, and the tourism industry, which I also know quite a lot about, and local interest.

We have been grazing cattle for 43 years, and I have been in tourism with my husband—a tourism operator—at Longway Station for 22 years. These are the two critical industries that affect us in Maranoa or in this central western area. The six shires that have a commonality of interest are being asked to come out of Maranoa and go into a seat based, with no commonality of interest, on Gladstone.

It is very hard with 13 speakers not to cover the same ground. Take grazing, for instance—we are cattle producers—and the wool and the sheep industry, where 80 per cent of our product goes south. It very rarely goes east. If you are selling wool, meat, sheep—a lot of those sheep and cattle now go down to Victoria, South Australia and particularly into New South Wales. The major selling centres for all of those products are based to the south of here in that central remote western Queensland corridor around through to Roma and then south to meatworks at Wandoan and feedlots at Condamine. The wool selling centres are all in the south. This does have an impact on the people who live in this area. We are primarily a rural grazing entity out here.

Tourism is now becoming a major earner for this part of the world. With the establishment of two world-class facilities, as in Qantas Foundation and the Stockman's Hall of Fame, and people from all around the world come here. We have the Matilda Highway and Sustainable Regions putting funding into this part of the world. The Matilda Highway runs from Cunnamulla to Kurumba, this corridor again through remote and regional areas in outback Queensland.

As to traffic—it has been said on quite good authority that two out of three travellers going through Barcaldine go south-west to Roma and only one in three go east to Emerald. You can draw your own conclusions from that. But the corridor where we travel, particularly for boarding schools for our children—there are certainly good schools east of here, but a lot of children go to boarding schools, TAFE colleges and universities down through Roma, Toowoomba and on to Brisbane.

The commonality of interest with various communities with Gladstone will probably be highlighted by other people. For people who do not know, RAPAD has done an amazing submission based on the geographic and historical trade development. Particularly as John Secombe said, there is a lack of funding to these regions. Most of it

is coming from the federal government now. We are seeing very little funding from state government. We are absolutely reliant on good representation from the federal representative. It has been done very effectively by the present member, Bruce Scott, in Maranoa. After all, this part of the world since Federation in 1901 has been in Maranoa. We would be going backwards if we were to go, as we did with Capricornia, to being a seat based on a capital city that does not have a commonality of interest. It was bad being in Capricornia. Even Kirsten Livermore admitted that it would have been better to leave the people out in western Queensland as they were or with the least disruption. People are getting tired of being moved around from electorate to electorate. It is very destabilising.

The regional roads issue is terribly important out this way. If you have a federal member with a major seat based in Dalby, Warwick or even Roma, you have a commonality of interest; you understand the problems—why the roads are so bad. But having the elected member largely based on the coast, where the seat is going to be won within probably a 300- or 400-kilometre distance from the major capital city of the seat—fairly said, because of the population all being on the coastal side of that electorate—the federal member, whoever it is, has to work just the shopping centres, the aged care units and the hospitals within a 400-kilometre region of the capital, or the hub, of their electorate. They rarely have to travel out to, say, Middleton, Winton and places like that.

In Maranoa, Bruce Scott, or whoever the elected member is, has to work very hard. It is a large electorate and we are scattered in a big area over that large electorate. The elected member has to work every town in that area, because they do not have a hub of population in one major centre.

Education—I know the Tambo people will speak about this, and the ICPA. A lot of education is based in the south-west. There is the social aspect of being in a seat that has no commonality with a major mining alumina centre, such as Gladstone. Our communications, our DNR—there is a whole range of issues. Tourism is growing. People have crunched the numbers and have said that, although a lot of people in the grazing fraternity do not like to see this happen, tourism income is probably equating to as large an income for the central and remote areas—western areas—as is the grazing industry now.

I apologise for the CEO of the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame not being able to be here to speak. I am also the central-western branch chairman of the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame. My dad was the chairman of the Stockman's Hall of Fame. We need to work to get people to come to the outback. These tourism icons are bringing in lots of people. We need to develop airports to bring larger numbers of tourists here, based on Longreach, with a commonality of interest, so that we can fly people in to spend a week in the outback—we think the same; we have a commonality of thought about that—and then to disperse them further on to outback regions or more remote regions.

Other people will speak probably far more eloquently than I have. I beg you to think about how it would be if you were—I do not want to be disrespectful here—a long-term, sixth, seventh or even third or fourth generation person living out here. We have a commonality with people who understand our situation. It is only in living the life that you can really understand what it is like to live in a remote area. We are represented well here by the Mayor of the Isisford Shire. It is the smaller communities that I am very worried about—the Middeltons, the people who really do not have the numbers that maybe larger centres such as Longreach have.

I could go on for ages, but there are another 10 speakers to follow. I urge you to listen to people outside the region, too, who have put in very good objections. Democrat John Cherry and Kirsten Livermore, people outside the traditional political party that would hold Maranoa, have supported us and urged that the AEC let the six shires that we

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have spoken about here stay in Maranoa. I thank you for your time. Thank you for coming.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mrs Champion. Councillor Davidson, Mayor of Tambo.

[9.06 a.m.]

**DAVIDSON, Cr Dougal, Mayor, Tambo Shire Council (Objection 34)**

**Cr Davidson**—Mr Chairman, Commissioners, firstly, thank you very much for coming out to hear what we have to say. We are all extremely concerned about the proposed changes. First, I would like to commend the Remote Area Planning and Development Board submission to you. It has been very well documented/researched. I will not go over a lot of the things in it, but I would like to commend it to you.

Firstly, in my role as President of the Western Queensland Local Government Association—eight shires are proposed to be shifted into this new seat of Wright, which most people think is badly named; it probably should be ‘Wrong’. Basically, it is the hub, if you like, of the association. Whilst we have some members, local authorities, in central Queensland, which is based on Rockhampton and the Central Highlands—that area—we also have members who are in the South-West Local Government Association as well.

In another one of my roles, on the State Executive of the Local Government Association I represent all of these shires. If we take out those eight, I would sort of have eight in one area and four in another, and it certainly would not be as united and simple to represent them all. We also have the Regional Roads Alliance, which was alluded to earlier, which is 16 shires. I also happen to be chairman of that. We would be basically splitting our group in two. The idea is to have a cohesive group that can get their story together and do things that benefit not only their own shires but the whole region. It is centred on a regional idea and, as I say, it would be split in two again.

I have had some experience with meetings that have been called in the Gladstone area. I have never been able to attend any of the meetings over in that region, purely and simply because of the method of getting there; it is so difficult. From Tambo all we have got to connect with that area is the mainly unsealed Dawson Development Road, which goes from Tambo to Springsure and through Rolleston across to Gladstone, that way. The connection that way is very hard. There are no buses. As for plane services—because we do not have our own airport, we access those from Charleville or Blackall, and they all go to Brisbane. As to the train—we do not have that. We used to have a service in Blackall, but that has been discontinued, which I guess also helps to highlight the fact that trade and passenger travel from that area does not head that way. There is a limited bus service that comes out along the Capricorn Highway. The train connection from our corner of the world is very limited.

The main transport function for a lot of our area—and I am talking about the western Queensland local government situation here—is via the Landsborough Highway. As has been mentioned before, that connects down Mount Isa way right down through our region and into Brisbane, and to a lesser extent you can hive off at Barcaldine and go across to Rockhampton. Then if you want to go to Gladstone, which it has been proposed that we be connected with, you have to take another turnoff again, and further distance. From a transport aspect, it is very difficult. Tourism—all of our tourism focuses on this western route and really hooks more into the south-east than into any of the central part.

One other thing that I think we need to highlight, too, in terms of the whole region is that the area we are talking about shifting into this new seat is all west of the Great Dividing Range. We have a natural barrier there, and that is why transport, communication—everything—is very difficult with that area. For the Tambo Shire, our eastern boundary is the Great Dividing Range. In some respects, we are one of the closest shires to the rest of the proposed new seat. We still have very limited access and methods of communicating.

In Tambo's case, all of our education/our local school, they are all hooked into the south-eastern area, Roma or Charleville. We do not have any connections with that area at all in those respects. Our health is up in this area. The police are down in the south-west, again. We do not have anything where we are functioning with it. Main Roads is based on Barcaldine. Even postal telecommunications are all down into the south-western area.

A lot of business, our banking, livestock agents, and so on, Charleville, Roma, Toowoomba, accountants, solicitors, Brisbane—they are all down in that same run from Tambo. We can do some of our political part whilst we are doing business as well, so it assists greatly from there.

In that direction, we probably have limited trade with cattle going to Rockhampton. The majority of our cattle and sheep, which is a lesser aspect now than it used to be—once again, it is all down into that south-east, down to the south; nothing goes across the range into Springsure and this proposed new seat area.

The other thing is that Tambo has historically always been in Maranoa. I have been in Tambo for 25 years. It has never been anywhere else in that time. I understand that years ago at one stage it was in Kennedy for a very short period, but it then came back into Maranoa.

The community of interest aspect is extremely important, with that area over there rapidly becoming more mining, mixed farming and all the rest, whereas out our way the only mixture is sheep and cattle. We do not have all the rest of it.

Whilst we are friends with them all, we do not have a hell of a lot to do with them; it is not our area. We have had a couple of race meetings since all of this came out, in Tambo. We do have quite a good crowd at our races. I have not had one person say to me yet, 'Gee, this is great, we are going to this new seat.' They all want to stay in Maranoa. With that, thank you very much for coming, again, and I hope you see fit to leave us where we are.

**Mr POOLE**—Councillor Davidson, you made some comments early on about the impact of splitting the various associations and regional groupings that will be caused by this new division. Could you perhaps indicate some practical examples of how you would see that happening? Those same groupings seem to exist at the moment with a number of state representations and so on. Why would changing the divisional boundary have such an impact on those groupings?

**Cr Davidson**—A lot of us are in the same state electorate as well. I think nearly all of us are. We are all in the seat of Gregory. I feel—and I guess we all feel—that if we are in the one electorate we have a far better chance of getting our message through to one representative than trying to convince two, three or whatever. I realise that there are a couple on the fringe who are not in Maranoa, but basically the core of our area out here is in Maranoa. It is far simpler dealing with one politician than having to deal with a couple. I guess, too, if it came to the situation where we had one in one party and another in another party it becomes more difficult again. It is just simpler if you are dealing with one position.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—You and the three speakers before you have all been very eloquent, but there is one point that I am still trying to work through. Is the major argument you are putting, sir, that the eight shires should stay together? In a sense, there are two issues here. Do the eight shires stay together and do they stay in Maranoa? In the past, the shires have been split between several divisions. At one stage they were split

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between Kennedy/Capricornia, were they not?

**Cr Davidson**—Yes, we have had Kennedy, Capricornia and Maranoa.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—I think you are all arguing very strongly that the eight shires stay together. That is one of the arguments that is coming out?

**Cr Davidson**—Yes, that is what we are arguing.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Your second argument is that you would like to stay in Maranoa because there is then a relationship with some of the other activities in Maranoa but also because you would then have the one member putting forward your views?

**Cr Davidson**—Yes, that is right. But also from Tambo's point of view, we would be out on a limb from that area, whereas we are basically in the swing of being in Maranoa because we are so much more connected that way. Our methods of communication, travel or whatever to get to Gladstone—I know how hard it is to get to Rockhampton, and that is a darned sight easier. There is a simple example. In terms of health, if you have to get flown out of Tambo for medical purposes you go to Rockhampton. It is fine getting there; it is getting home that is the drama. You are stuck up there. There are no transport links to get you back. They just tip you out of the hospital and you are on your own. That is an example. We do not have transport connections or anything with that area. Hence, we do not trade, we do not do business—we do not do anything much—with that area. I do not think people even go for holidays in that area much. It is right out of our area.

**Ms BRIGHT**—There was mention before about state representation, yet between the eight shires there are four state districts involved. You have got, as Mayor of Tambo, Gregory Downs and Blackall in Gregory as well. But you also have Ilfracombe and Mount Isa. From your perspective, in terms of answering the commissioner's question—

**Cr Davidson**—No, Ilfracombe is in Gregory.

**Ms BRIGHT**—Is it?

**Cr Davidson**—Aramac may not be, but I think everyone else is in Gregory. Aramac is in Charters Towers.

**Ms BRIGHT**—There are still four state districts involved. How then would you view not staying together versus staying together? You have got four state representatives. You have had one federal representative. Could you explore that a bit more?

**Cr Davidson**—When you look at the whole region, the majority of us—I am not just talking about the eight shires, I am talking about the 11, 12, 16 or whatever you are looking at—are basically in Gregory.

**Ms BRIGHT**—Yes, the majority are.

**Cr Davidson**—The majority are. I think it would probably be simpler if we were all dealing with the one state representative as well. I just think it is far simpler. We have got so much commonality in what we do. The whole region is basically sheep and cattle, whereas someone from, say, over at Gladstone may not know anything about it. There are no sheep once you go over the range. There are not too many out this side, either, but there are none over there at all. To get someone who knows something about

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those sorts of things is much more difficult. Our whole road system goes in the same direction. In our case, we would be down in the corner or down on the southern boundary adjoining Maranoa to our south. That is where we have all our links.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Next on my list is Councillor Wheelhouse, Mayor of Blackall Shire Council.

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[9.22 a.m.]

**WHEELHOUSE, Cr Les, Mayor, Blackall Shire Council (Objection 37)**

**Cr Wheelhouse**—Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my community's concerns. I am the third generation at Blackall. I am the Mayor of Blackall and my community has asked me to attend today. Firstly, they would like me to advise you that we support wholeheartedly the submission prepared by the RAPAD Board. It enunciates very clearly most of our issues. They have asked me to point out to you that they are very concerned that the major issues affecting the eastern side of the proposed electorate are vastly different from the issues that concern us out here. The major issues that they see affecting the eastern side of the Great Divide are industrialisation and development, population growth and environment, whereas the major issues affecting us out here are population decline and the struggle to maintain our services and the survival of our communities.

In such a large electorate as is proposed, and with the majority of the electors being on the eastern side of the Great Divide, with the pressure upon the member and with our low population base out here, they feel that perhaps our issues may take a back seat and may not be deemed to be quite as important as the issues that arise in the heavily populated areas. That is a concern to them.

Currently, in the electorate we are like with like. We basically all have common issues. That gives us a greater base, you might say, a greater population base, with which to combine our efforts and try and get some of our issues redressed.

The other issue that they wish me to advise you of is that our drift is naturally to the south. All of our highways and transport services go that way. As evidence of this, when the last community cabinet meeting—state cabinet meeting—was held in Charleville, a joint submission was prepared and a deputation was sent from the Tambo Shire to speak to the Minister for Health, asking that the transfer of patients from the Blackall and Tambo shires not be automatically to Rockhampton, because we have very little community of interest with Rockhampton even, and the transport services from that direction are basically non-existent. That is why they sent us to speak to the minister.

I am sure the others will speak to you about various other aspects, but those were the two issues of major concern to my community. I thank you for your time.

**CHAIR**—In relation to health transfers, you asked that they go not to Rockhampton but possibly to where?

**Cr Wheelhouse**—To the south—Toowoomba and Brisbane.

**CHAIR**—Toowoomba?

**Cr Wheelhouse**—Yes. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Next is Councillor Rob Chandler, Mayor of Barcaldine.



[9.27 a.m.]

**CHANDLER, Cr Robert, Mayor, Barcaldine Shire Council (Objection 45)**

**Cr Chandler**—I welcome the commission here today. Welcome to the central west of Queensland's outback.

Through the RAPAD Board, of which Barcaldine Shire is a member council, and the Outback Queensland Tourism Authority, of which I am a board member, we are in the process of rebranding this area out here. I do not like the terminology of being a 'bushie from the bush'. I am Rob Chandler from Barcaldine in the central west of Queensland's outback.

The recently published Queensland paper *The blueprint for the bush*, I feel, should have been called the blueprint for regional and outback Queensland, because there is a huge difference between regional Queensland and outback Queensland. There are so many differences. Just in the produce that we produce—out here it is beef, No. 1; tourism, No. 2; and sheep and wool, No. 3. We do not have any cropping, we do not have any mining and we have very few chemicals. This country out here is unique in every way, shape and form.

The speakers before me and the ones still to speak will speak on behalf of their communities. They all have the common interest at heart. I commend the RAPAD report to you, and David Arnold will speak to that later on, I am sure. That just about sums up what we out here feel as far as this proposal to throw us into the seat of Wright in Gladstone.

Our tourism industry—and this is something I would like to talk about and which was spoken about before by Rosemary Champion—is now one of our biggest industries. Approximately 90 per cent of our visitors come up through the seat of Maranoa, from Cunnamulla up through Tambo and into the central west, up through the middle, St George up into Roma, and out to Tambo in the central west, and from Brisbane out through Roma, Tambo and into the central west.

Between the Outback Queensland Tourism Authority and Tourism Queensland we have an advertising campaign that still has about two years to run. It has some \$500,000 worth of advertising. Our slogan is 'Check out Queensland's backyard'. It is mostly directed at south-east Queensland and to a lesser extent New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

The Matilda Highway is about to receive up to half a million dollars in funding for the rebranding of the Matilda Highway as the tourist way for our southern visitors to come up here and visit the central west of Queensland's outback.

**CHAIR**—Just tell me quickly the main towns along the Matilda Highway.

**Cr Chandler**—The Pitman Way comes up from New South Wales to the border and into Cunnamulla. You may be confused, because it is the Landsborough Highway and it is also the Matilda Highway. It starts at Cunnamulla and comes up from Cunnamulla to Charleville, Augathella, Tambo, Blackall, Barcaldine, Ilfracombe, Longreach, Winton and on to Mount Isa and Kurumba.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—Therefore, the tourist route that you are talking about goes through Maranoa, under the current boundaries, not the proposed boundaries, through Maranoa and then into Kennedy. Where do the tourists go when they leave here? If they come up from the south, where do they go?

**Cr Chandler**—Those that do decide to go past Barcaldine—yes, most of our visitors come up from the south. They come into Longreach, up to Winton, go on to Mount Isa and generally come back across the Overlanders Way, from Mount Isa back into Townsville, or they do a U-turn at Winton, generally, or at Longreach and go back to Rockhampton and back down the coast.

**Ms BRIGHT**—Along the Capricorn Highway?

**Cr Chandler**—Back down the Capricorn Highway.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—The reason I raise that question is that, therefore, the tourist issue that you are talking about does at the moment cut across two divisions, the current division of Maranoa and the current division of Kennedy?

**Cr Chandler**—That is right. The Outback Queensland Tourism Authority looks after from Cunnamulla into Mitchell, up to Charleville back into Mitchell, right up to Mount Isa, out west to Birdsville, Bedourie and Boulia. It is about 820,000 or 830,000 square kilometres.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—At the moment you have an issue where tourism is cutting across several members' interests as well?

**Cr Chandler**—That is for sure. Our advertising campaign is through Outback Queensland Tourism, which promotes that travel up through Maranoa. Roma is the unofficial gateway to outback Queensland, even though Roma is not in the Outback Queensland Tourism Authority, although we are trying to steal them at this stage. But our gateway is into this area, through Cunnamulla, up into Maranoa and through Maranoa, Roma and out through the central west. You will hear a lot today from the other speakers with regard to local governments' perspective on it. As I said before, I endorse RAPAD's submission. You have had some very good submissions. The submission of Jenny Russell, from Blackall, was very good. The RAPAD submission is very good. We just ask that you consider these submissions. We have a passion for outback Queensland. We are unique out here and we would like to stay as a unique place in Australia's great outback. Putting us into Gladstone is not on, for all the reasons you will hear today—health, trade, travel, trade and those sorts of things. It does not work. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Next is Mr David Arnold from RAPAD. You have had a lot of introductions, Mr Arnold. We are looking forward to hearing from you. We have of course read what you put in writing, in your submission and comments.

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[9.35 a.m.]

**ARNOLD, Mr David, General Manager, RAPAD (Objection 47)**

**Mr Arnold**—I thank members of the Augmented Electoral Commission. I am David Arnold, the manager of the RAPAD Board. Firstly, I will give my apologies on behalf of Councillor Gary Peoples, the Chair of the RAPAD Board and Mayor of Aramac, who unfortunately had council commitments that he could not get out of today.

I respect the commission's point that you do not want us to re-emphasise what we have already put in our submission. I will abide by that. I will probably give an overview of RAPAD; it is important to understand what RAPAD is. RAPAD is a voluntary grouping of councils. It is built around the central-western statistical division. It has 11 member councils. Of those 11 member voluntary councils, all of those councils elect a representative to sit on the board and work for the region and make regional decisions, which certainly do not bind councils; all of our decisions and resolutions are worked through on consensus.

Some of the principles for members of the board include being an advocate for the region, to consider the regional benefits relating to the environmental, economic and social issues, and to aim for outcomes by consensus. Those are some of the principles that bind membership of RAPAD. That is just a background.

From listening to the other speakers—and, again, respecting your wish that you do not want to hear over and over what we put in our submission—what everyone is touching on is that strong community of interest and the strength of communities, whether that be a micro community, such as an Isisford or an Aramac, or a large community. It is the social fabric that binds those communities together.

**CHAIR**—I did not intend to restrict you in what you were saying, but rather to point out that we have read the submissions. Obviously, if that is your argument, neatly expressed there, you will be saying much the same now.

**Mr Arnold**—I am really saying what we said. I am also conscious of the time; otherwise I will take too long.

**CHAIR**—We are concerned about that. Other people have referred to your submission, so I think it would be reasonable to expect that you might go longer than some of them.

**Mr Arnold**—I will try to frame our board's, which I am speaking on behalf of, oral objection against the background of that strong community interest, that social fabric that binds communities together, and also a triple bottom line approach. That is really important. We often hear government at the highest levels talking about a triple bottom line. Quite often, there is a mixture of rhetoric and reality here. What you have heard every councillor and speaker say is that we have no economic, social or environmental ties to the Gladstone region. It is really important to get that across; that is what everyone is saying.

As to the major points—again, I raise Mr John Cherry's note that there were 97 objections from this region. Again, our region works as one cohesive group. There are two practical examples straightaway. The Sustainable Regions package has been mentioned. That is a uniquely outback approach by the federal government to provide a program for the Darling Matilda Way—New South Wales and Queensland. It has no links to the coastal region. It recognises that strong outback link across from New South Wales right up to Queensland.

We have another example in our region. The entire region has come together to support Longreach in its approach to upgrading its airport. I believe it would be very difficult to get that same passion across to the Gladstone region in terms of the importance of upgrading a significant piece of infrastructure for our region, if we were then lumped into that Gladstone region. Those are just two practical examples of why we are working together, and the cohesiveness of our region.

You have heard schooling mentioned. The southern shires go to the Toowoomba/Brisbane region predominantly. The northern areas may go, to a lesser extent, to Townsville and Charters Towers but also Brisbane and Toowoomba.

We have heard tourism mentioned from many speakers, and also Councillor Chandler. Again, there are approximately 17 shires, I believe. Again, they have no links to the coastal region. Along with primary production, that is the second most important economic driver for our region.

Also, we have Desert Knowledge Australia, a Northern Territory based organisation chaired by Fred Chaney, which is also driving an Australia-wide approach to tourism, into which this outback region is incorporated. Again, they are basing the Desert Knowledge Group CRC around the strength of the desert region of Australia. It has no links to the coastal areas.

We have touched on natural resource management. Our area is part of the Lake Eyre Basin. Adopting the triple bottom line approach, if our social and economic strengths in the future are going to be tied increasingly to the environment—we have no links to the Gladstone region; they are completely different catchment regions. Those natural resource management groups, again, are established through federal and state government intervention, and I suppose you would say more from a federal intervention approach. It was founded on the principles of participatory democracy and harnessing strong communities of interest. Again, the Gladstone region has no community of interest with our desert/channels region, which is the Lake Eyre Basin.

Again, a recent practical example is the regional network analysis done by the Queensland Department of Transport. We have had numerous communications with the Department of Transport. It has presented to this region on a range of scenarios. None of those scenarios in any way links our air transport or bus transport under that program by the state government to Gladstone. It is not even considered in the scenarios they are presenting. That is another practical example of the state's approach.

Again, everything I said has been said in our report. That is reflected in the speakers' views. It has got to be framed under that real strength of community. I think everyone is saying that the strength of our community or where we are in the world is a shared understanding of rural and remote, one of ownership of outback. It does not matter what your economic strength is or the size of your community; the strength of your community comes from the social fabric. That shows out across the eight shires and across the wider outback. Those principles are espoused in contemporary community development practices and also economic development practices. There is also the triple bottom line. We have no economic, social or environmental ties to Gladstone. I think that needs spelling out very clearly.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for being so brief and to the point. Is there anything that any member of the commission wants to ask this gentleman? No. Thank you. Mr Bruce Emmott.

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[9.43 a.m.]

**EMMOTT, Mr Bruce, private capacity (Objection 69)**

**Mr Emmott**—I am Bruce Emmott. I have been a grazier in this district for the whole of my life. My parents came here 100 years ago this year. We have been through lots of ups and downs. I am interested in politics. I am retired, naturally at my age now. I spent 40-odd years as a member of the Longreach council, and I have been involved in most of the community associations.

One point concerned me greatly when I saw this proposed new electorate—and other speakers touched on it earlier—and that is the completely different community interests. That will cause it to fail. We were in Kirsten Livermore's seat, which came right out here. She herself said she could not properly service this area and do that down there. If this comes in, we will revert to a position that was very unsatisfactory. Then we came into Maranoa, which is largely all one interest—grazing. I believe in that period we have had good representation in parliament. But if this comes in, without a doubt the person elected to represent us will be elected down near the coast where the population is large. Out here it is very sparse; we will never have a member in from out here.

Our industry covers a vast area of inland Queensland. We cannot be properly represented unless they live in the area, have been in the area and put years in to know it. Somebody on the coast cannot realise our problems. I think Kirsten Livermore was probably a very good person. I liked her, the bit that I saw her. But she admitted she could not do the job.

If this comes back, we will revert straight back to that. The present electorate is largely pastoral and I think we have had good representation. It worries me that an electorate could be set up, in a state like Queensland, starting from Gladstone and extending 300 kilometres west of here. This western part will be more or less without representation, in my opinion. A member of parliament is elected by a big majority of people down on the eastern corner. They go into parliament and, if their interests are contrary to ours, he must go in the house and represent the majority of his constituents. He will do that and we will be forgotten. We will be on the outer, like we were before. That worries me. It will not matter that much to me, of course.

I have been interested in the industry all my life. I have retired to Longreach now, but my family are still there. When our family started and my mother came out here and drew a block, there was not a building. There was six miles of 36 miles of boundary up. They had to erect that by crowbar and shovel. They worked and worked to get that up. It concerns us that, these days, when it is so essential that we have good representation in parliament we will not get any or very little. That will happen only when our interests do not conflict with the interests down there.

Gladstone and the areas around there have shipping interests, fishing interests, lots of different mining industries, and numerous farming interests, which are different from our pastoral interests. A member of parliament must go in and represent them if they want something, and we will be forgotten. For that reason, I am very concerned about the future. I feel that we will be on the outer.

That was my main point. As David Secombe, the first speaker, said, community of interest is of vital importance to the people out here. Today the towns are getting benefits from tourism. But the pastoral industry is very important to the Commonwealth and to everybody who lives within the Commonwealth, because of the amount it supplies. Similarly, the farming industry is a very important industry. It supplies much of what you live off and much of what we export and earn our dollars

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from. Why split it up again like this when it has already failed? A similar electorate was here, and it failed. For a short period we have gone along very satisfactorily with what we have now, Maranoa, yet we are going to ditch that and go back to the other again. I think that is only looking for trouble. I feel we are going to be forgotten. Those are the main points that I wanted to make. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Emmott. We will now hear from Councillor John Black, Mayor of Ilfracombe Shire Council.

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[9.50 a.m.]

**BLACK, Cr John, Mayor, Ilfracombe Shire Council (Objection 70)**

**Cr Black**—It would be pointless for me trying to get into this too far, because we would be covering the same ground again and again. I would like to make two points, if I can.

We have already spoken about regionalisation, which is a major concept and major push from both state and federal governments. To have this electoral redistribution and create this new seat of Wright seems to me to cut right across the very ideals of that concept. We are being asked to marshal our thoughts and our efforts in regions and then, on the other hand, from an electoral point of view, we are being disjointed and pulled apart. That is one point.

The other, very briefly, is simply the case for, I suppose, continuity or something like that in our little shire of Ilfracombe. We have been in the electorate of Kennedy, Capricornia and Maranoa, and we now appear to be headed for Wright. I certainly hope we are not. It would seem to me that we are being treated as some sort of a small political football to be booted around. I just hope that sooner or later we can settle down in one spot and be treated as—

**CHAIR**—I can assure you that no-one on the Augmented Commission for one moment is treating you like that. There are problems, and you realise that, but we are listening to your side of the story and we will certainly consider it. But you will not be a football, and I do not really believe you ever have been. You have been perhaps, from your point of view, a victim of circumstance. Electorates have to have a certain approximate number at least, and sometimes drawing the boundaries is not easy. But, please, no-one think that you are being treated as a football. That is certainly not the case. You will not be by this Augmented Commission, anyway.

**Cr Black**—Fair enough. I thank you for that.

**CHAIR**—Please tell me if you have something else to add. I understand from reading your written submission that really what you do is support the RAPAD submission.

**Cr Black**—Absolutely.

**CHAIR**—Is there anything that was left out when Mr Arnold presented his argument about the RAPAD submission that you want to emphasise?

**Cr Black**—No, I do not think so. I would leave it at that.

**CHAIR**—You think it is covered?

**Cr Black**—Yes, thank you.

**CHAIR**—We now have Mr Bruce Scott MP.

[9.54 a.m.]

**SCOTT, The Hon. Bruce, Federal Member for Maranoa (Objection 84)**

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Commissioners, firstly, thank you very much for coming out to Longreach in response to the objections that have been received in relation to the proposed new seat of Wright. Welcome to Queensland's outback. I speak as the federal member for Maranoa.

Firstly, in the submissions that went forward from the major political parties it was acknowledged by those major political parties, as outlined in my comments, that Maranoa met the requirements of the Act in relation to population, as did a number of other electorates, and it did on the projected numbers. For that very reason, I think the communities in this part and many other parts of my electorate did not put submissions forward, believing that because we met the Act there was no need to get involved in a new seat that was perhaps going to impact on the electorate of Maranoa.

As a voice in parliament for rural communities, it is important in a participatory democracy to make sure that that voice can speak with authority and speak knowing that it does so in the best interests of those communities it represents in the federal parliament.

Rural Australia, as we all know and acknowledge, is declining in terms of its number of members in parliament. But it is important in any participatory democracy to make sure that rural Australia, regional Australia and outback Australia have a strong voice in parliament, albeit one or two or a limited number by comparison with the overall numbers of our federal parliament.

I said a moment ago that I did not believe that the electorate of Maranoa would be impacted in the way it has been. Having said that I believe we met the requirements under the Act, I will comment on the proposal as it is presented, and I admit that it is a draft proposal.

In relation to the central Queensland areas of the electorate of Maranoa proposed to go into a seat of Wright, I think you could gauge from the lack of objections from that region that they do see that they have a community of interest with Gladstone and the coastal region, the Emerald, Peak Downs and Bauhinia shires, and I accept that as the member for Maranoa, so I am commenting on the proposal. Whether it is sustained that way in your final determination is obviously yet to be determined.

However, let us come west and into this part of Maranoa, into the central-western Queensland area. This morning there were questions from yourselves in relation to the fact that these eight shires have been part of other federal divisions in the past—Kennedy, Capricornia—for a very limited time, for two terms, since Federation, but for the rest of that period it has been Maranoa. I have put a map on the wall from 1901 to 1906, at Federation, when the region was first drafted into the seat of Maranoa.

This has always been an outback electorate. It has always had a large rural community and has had those issues that are almost unique to rural communities and regional groupings of communities as the basis for the issues that a member would have to represent in the federal parliament.

Can I respond to a question about this region being in three or four state divisions? It is largely in the seat of Gregory. Winton—the Mayor of Winton is here with us—is certainly in the seat of Mount Isa now, but that does not mean to say that it was accepted by the people of Winton at that time. It came out of Gregory and went into



Mount Isa. It was considered at the time by the people of Winton as a mismatch. The Shire of Aramac is connected to the seat of Charters Towers. I think they feel in many ways the same as they feel about the proposal now, that it is a mismatch to have them connected to the seat of Charters Towers, which goes north of the Great Northern Line. That does not mean to say that it was right. Largely, Gregory is the state based seat, which has incorporated these areas very largely in the past in one division.

Can I mention something that I noticed in your comments to do with the draft proposal, that is, that this would substantially reduce the size of the electorate of Maranoa and that that in some way is seen as a positive. In relation to size, I do not know whether the Act limits the size of any division. Maranoa has always been a very large division.

**CHAIR**—It says that we have to take area into account. Those are the words in the Act. Area is one of a number of factors, of which community of interest clearly is one also.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Community of interest was No. 1.

**CHAIR**—All of these factors are there, and we have to look at them all.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—In relation to geographical size, that is also a consideration of the federal parliament in relation to entitlements for very large rural electorates. Maranoa has always fallen into that category, which gives the member, whoever that might be, an additional electorate office, additional electorate staff, a charter entitlement and additional resources generally to deal with the issue of size.

I might describe a typical working week for myself in Maranoa. I live in Roma and I came here, under my charter entitlement, yesterday in an hour and a half. If I happened to be returning from parliament, I could have travelled on the domestic air service from Brisbane to Longreach, Blackall, Barcaldine or even to Winton as a connection to travel to Longreach. I can be at home tonight in an hour and a half. Tomorrow I will drive for a little under three hours to my main office in Dalby, and the following day to Warwick. During the course of the week I would have travelled from the north-west corner to the south-east corner of the electorate under entitlements and resources provided by the parliament to representatives of large constituencies. Whilst area is a consideration, it is not the prime or dominant issue that needs to be considered. The communities of interest that bind an electorate together to enable a member to go to federal parliament and to be their voice is, I believe, the prime issue that needs to be considered by the commission.

The submissions that have been put forward by the RAPAD Board and others have presented alternatives that the commission could have looked at. I note, when I talk more broadly about Maranoa, that a proposal to put in the shires of the Burnett, Crows Nest, Nanango, Kingaroy and Wondai regions east of the Great Dividing Range could have been quite easily considered as alternatives to the proposal to put this part of Queensland into the new proposed seat. They do provide an alternative where there would be a greater community of interest, because those shires/communities look to the east, they do not look to the west; they are separated from Maranoa by the Great Dividing Range. Almost since Federation that has been the case, with a couple of small exceptions.

Can I mention the shire of Taroom, which is obviously not out here. It has always been in the seat of Maranoa. I think the Taroom shire themselves have proposed that they not be included in the proposed new seat of Wright. They see themselves, as they have been since Federation, forming part of the federal division of Maranoa. With those adjustments that could well be made on the east of the Great Dividing Range, where communities look to the east because of the commonality of interests of trade,

education and other social aspects of their daily life, those could have easily been considered to form part of the federal divisions to the east of the Great Dividing Range rather than including them, as they have said, in an electorate that has quite a different nature and different issues. The adjustment could also have been made up against the boundaries of the seat of Groom, which largely met the Act. Maranoa and Groom have often interchanged, from time to time, as adjustments have been required east of the Great Dividing Range, when Groom has often gone east of the Great Divide and has been adjusted on those adjoining boundaries.

In summary, I again thank you for coming up to Longreach to take the time to be here to listen to the concerns. They are genuine concerns that people have. I think you can gauge that by being here. You may read their submissions, but I do not think it is possible to understand the feeling of the people without being here, and that is why I thank you for being here. I am sure that, if the commission accepts the proposition put forward by the RAPAD Board with the alternatives that that does present to the commission, the process of a redistribution can work, public hearings can work and the voice of the people can be heard as part of the process, which would mean the process does work.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Scott.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—I have one question and one observation. I was very interested in your comments about size. Maranoa, as currently configured, before the proposed redistribution, is about three-quarters of a million square kilometres, and the redistribution brings it down to a mere stripling of about 550,000 square kilometres. From your point of view, do you find the three-quarters of a million square kilometres—and given that you have two offices because of its size—is actually achievable in terms of one person being able to get around it all? That is what you are saying, is it not? You have to work hard at it, but you can do it?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—You have to work hard. For instance, when I come to this part of Queensland—I came in an hour and a half under an entitlement given to me as a member of parliament—I can talk to a grouping of councils about issues of concern to them. I can talk about health and the Royal Flying Doctor Service or the schools of distance education, the need for which is as common in this part of the electorate as it is in Charleville, south-west Queensland and towards my own home town. The issues are common. That is what makes the representation, albeit in a very large area, something that is far more achievable; because you speak with a voice of knowledge and understanding, because you are able to meet with a grouping of people.

**CHAIR**—You are saying that the homogeneity of the electorate of Maranoa assists you in being able to deal with its various parts? In relation to the transport linkages that the RAPAD submission talks about, is it the case that because of the way those links are oriented it is possible to get around this electorate fairly conveniently?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Absolutely. The air services are from Brisbane to Blackall, Barcaldine, Longreach and connecting in to Winton. There are even proposals—and I do not know whether they will come to pass—linking the Birdsvilles, Bedouries, Windorahs, Quilpies and Charlevilles perhaps with this part of Queensland. They are under consideration by the councils now as domestic air services. The Landsborough-Warrego Highway is the main arterial route, the AusLink route, to Brisbane, Charleville and over into New South Wales, and the feeder highways that radiate from that. They all radiate off this Landsborough/Matilda Way/Warrego Highway.

From the road count numbers, which are in my submission, you will see that they split at Barcaldine and still dominate going to the south. In terms of the daily bus

service from Brisbane, one of the comments made by the Blackall shire, and perhaps Tambo as well, concerned health transfers to larger hospitals and the preference of patients to go to Toowoomba or Brisbane because there is a bus service—

**CHAIR**—What I was getting at was that the ability to service a very large electorate depends not only on the area itself but also on the transport within that particular electorate.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Absolutely.

**CHAIR**—If you had a large electorate that covered very disparate transport systems, you might have more difficulty than you would with an even larger one if the transport system was reasonably connected; is that a fair comment?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—It is indeed. For the proposed seat of Gladstone, which goes to the edge of Bundaberg and sugarcane country, the Barrier Reef and to the edge of Rockhampton—the issues there are in no way connected to this part of Queensland or even to other parts of my electorate. They are certainly not connected in any way to the eight shires in this proposed seat of Wright, whereas they are connected under the existing boundaries of Maranoa—not only the issues but also the transport linkages.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—A lot of your transport would be by charter plane and not only by commercial?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—There is a fairly generous commercial charter—

**Mr CAMPBELL**—I am not talking about the entitlement, I am talking about the actual means of transport.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Charter. I am also entitled, as a large electorate holder, to have a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—My point is that the commercial flights mainly come from Brisbane and then a lot of the flying you would do within the current Maranoa would be done by commercial charter?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Most of them, except that if I am coming back from parliament I can fly from Brisbane to Longreach.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—My point is that within the division a lot of it is done by charter and not by the commercial airlines?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—I do utilise the ones—

**Mr CAMPBELL**—I am not talking about your entitlements, Mr Scott.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—I utilise commercial flights, because that saves my charter.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—And you save the taxpayer, therefore.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Yes, I am very mindful of the taxpayer. We are catered for reasonably well in the large electorates.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—This should not be read as any conclusion, but just as an observation. You talked about Maranoa originally being both within projected and current guidelines under the Act, and that is quite true. The only observation I would

make is that, if people have time, they might want to relook at the early part of the report where we point out where the growth is occurring in Queensland. Interestingly, as distinct from past redistributions, growth is not really occurring in the south-eastern corridor, the growth is occurring more up the coast. That is one of the issues that the committee had to work on and the augmented committee has to work on. Unlike in the past, when the south-east corner was where it was all occurring, the growth is now occurring more up the coast and not inland, as you know. That is just an observation.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—I did note that.

**Mr POOLE**—From your experience as an elected representative, a number of previous speakers have talked about a possible fragmentation from having the shire councils being drawn together across two divisions. Could you give us some practical experiences from your perspective as to what that might mean, and to what extent having two elected members representing the inland shires might cause difficulties?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—I think they are the best to judge the representation that they get, rather than the member. That is what democracy is about. The RAPAD Board grouping of councils extends well into the south and to the western parts of Maranoa. They come together for a very good reason—to work together cooperatively to see how they can keep these communities growing and to cooperate rather than compete against each other.

**Mr POOLE**—In this proposal we are not doing anything to split up the RAPAD grouping of councils. They will still be there, they will still have their boundaries and they will still have their community of interest. The difference will be that there will be two members representing this area. What sort of practical impact is that likely to have, from your experience as the elected representative?

**The Hon. B. Scott**—As they have outlined here, the member that would represent them would have to represent the larger industrial areas and mining areas of the east. They feel, and I think rightly so—you can read it in their submissions—that their voice would not be considered of dominant importance when their member went to Canberra. The RAPAD Board does extend into parts of Maranoa. It extends into parts of Birdsville and to the south as well now. It would split the regional grouping of councils.

Sustainable Regions extends throughout the western regions. It was pointed out that the Lake Eyre Basin extends right down through the western regions of Maranoa and the desert channels. They are all grouped together. They work together and want to have a single voice that represents them in the parliament, that understands them and will be able to attend their meetings when they come together. Obviously, from my point of view, it is of high importance, because they are a large part of my electorate. When you have an industrial city on the eastern seaboard, I think the issues there would dominate the representation that that member would have to, by virtue of numbers, represent in the federal parliament.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. We have Councillor Joe Owens, Mayor of Isisford Shire Council.

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[10.14 a.m.]

**OWENS, Cr R. L., Mayor, Isisford Shire Council (Objection 141)**

**Cr Owens**—Thank you for coming out here to the central west and giving us the opportunity to voice our opinion.

Like a lot of speakers before me, my family is long term central west. I am fourth generation. We have been camped by the same waterhole for 108 years and do not like moving at this stage. As Mayor of the Isis Shire, I am here to represent my people. Isisford is the smallest shire population-wise in Queensland. We have under 300 people in the shire, and 180 of those are on the electoral roll. As you will see by the objections, even though some were individual objections, some were signed by two people and one was even signed by three. Seventy-five of those 180 electors in our shire objected to this redistribution. I have spoken to quite a few of them. A lot of the concerns have already been covered by previous speakers, so it is not much good going over those grounds again.

Representation comes out as their main objection—getting proper representation by whoever. We do not know at an election what party our representative is going to belong to. I do not think at times that matters, provided we can get proper representation, seeing the member and having the member understanding our circumstances.

It has already been said about the link with the coast, Gladstone being the one that we have been put with, that there are differences in the areas. At the coast there is mining, coal exporting, cropping and so on. Out here it is all grazing. They do not fit together. Maranoa is basically all grazing. We have all got common interests, whether we be way out west or closer in around Dalby. There are still common interests. As I say, that was one of their problems.

The transport corridors east of Rockhampton—rail and road, buses and aeroplanes—come from the south. Most of our people, when they do travel, travel south. If they have a problem, they can drop in and see the member on the way through. At this stage, with our representative being in Roma, that is quite handy. We do not know in the future where that person may be based, but you can guarantee that it will be closer in, in the more populated areas. That is the problem with the new seat of Wright. That person will come from closer in and will be very hard to access.

I can particularly speak about access in Gladstone, because my accountant is in Gladstone. We have to go to great trouble to get there to see them once a year, at tax time. It is not easy to access. Other than their being, in my opinion, very good accountants and doing very well by us, I would not go there, because it is so hard to get to.

Picking up on some of the questions asked to Bruce Scott before about the splitting up of the group, whether it be western Queensland local government or the RAPAD group, if we are in two different electorates, if we do have a sitting member of parliament and an opposition member, if they do come to our regional group—as seems to be the case in most cases, because they are from different sides of parliament—and they have different ideas, we are in trouble. What if we have the elected member, who is a member of government, saying, ‘This is what I can do for you people’ and you have got the opposition saying the opposite for the same area with a common interest, and yet we are divided—one person saying that this is the way to go and the other person saying otherwise? That is something I picked up on that I think really comes home to me. We really should, as organisations, try and stay in the one area with the one representative.

As has been said before, our area fully endorses the RAPAD submission. There

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was a very good job done on that. I will leave it at that. Most of what I had has been covered and it is only going over old ground.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Owens. That is the penalty for being one of the later speakers. People often find that.

**Cr Owens**—It is, but I would rather be down here than one or two further up. I want to leave with you the percentage of our shire who went to the trouble to object against this redistribution. Personally, I think they should be commended for doing that.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Councillor Bruce Collins?

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[10.21 a.m.]

**COLLINS, Cr Bruce, Mayor, Winton Shire Council (Objection 172)**

**Cr Collins**—I would like to make a few points. As Councillor Owens said, much of this has already been covered. Winton fully endorses the RAPAD submission. In Winton's submission a few different points were raised, but we do not disagree with anything in RAPAD's submission.

Our solution as regards numbers is somewhat different, but we do not have the resources to scrutinise the numbers and the availability of those figures. Our solution was put forward fairly early in the piece. I am not saying that it is better or worse than what RAPAD has done; in fact, RAPAD's is probably the better way to go, because there would have been more effort put into it.

Winton is probably one shire that is a bit different from the other eight in that it has had a historical connection with Townsville through transport links, and still has. For many years, Winton was in Kennedy. If we were going to be shifted anywhere, I would have expected that might have been where it was. I, like pretty well everyone in the shire, was rather surprised to see the proposal that we go back to a central coast based seat.

As previous speakers have said, when we were in Capricornia—with absolutely no reflection on the member at the time—we did not receive good representation. I think representation really hinges around the issues in an electorate or a division, whichever you like to call it. If there is a wide diversity of issues, then the member really is swayed by the prevailing/predominant ones. In this case, if we were in Wright, it would be coalmining, industry, farming, irrigation farming, and grazing would be a fair way back at the tail of the field.

Getting back to Winton's community of interest with Townsville—I should also point out that it also has a strong community of interest with Longreach, Longreach being the local centre. I went to the trouble of writing down the commonality or the connections that Winton has. In terms of media, both radio and newspaper, sport, racing, education, health, main roads, local government, air services, passenger coach, passenger rail—we have a connection with Longreach in that direction.

Recently—it is a little while ago now—on the state side Winton was taken out of Gregory, which it had been in for many, many years, and put into Mount Isa. With regard to state politics, that shut us out a little. Once again, with no reflection on the current representation in Mount Isa, what drives that electorate is mining. Our issues are really secondary to mining. They do not, I believe, get the consideration that they would if we were in an electorate largely based around that common interest.

Somewhere in the Winton submission—I will not waste time chasing it up—I think we make the point that we believe community of interest is a much bigger and more important issue to people living in smaller and more remote rural areas. I would like to support that by saying that I believe this is so because people in these sorts of communities are used to travelling longer distances for all sorts of purposes—social links, business, whatever. There are people in Winton who will quite often drive to Townsville six hours because they can do everything they want in Townsville. That would probably be an option instead of ducking across to Longreach in two hours. It is just that it is the bigger centre. That is a relativity issue.

The other thing about rural/remote areas is that we are experiencing declining population, which is accompanied by declining services and service delivery. I will not go into that, because I could be a long time. People living in those areas believe they have

an issue that they want to take up with their member. I am not suggesting that people living in the heart of Brisbane do not have issues; they are different issues. But across a number of federal divisions in Brisbane most of those issues would be much the same—traffic congestion, security, violence, you name it.

If our issues in a rural or remote division are all the same—and very common across the whole division—we have a greater impact in lobbying our member than if we are battling to lobby the member when we are competing with different interests and different issues as put forward by the mining industry, the fishing industry, the smelting industry or whatever in Gladstone.

Also in the Winton submission we make the point that the principle on which the division of Wright is proposed is at opposition with points made by Tom Sherman, QC, when he delivered his Electoral and Administrative Review Commission report in Queensland, which was an extensive report. It is some years old now. He said, following all of his deliberations, investigations and public hearings, that we should guard against a hub and spoke approach. The long, narrow proposed electorate of Wright, radiating out of an industrial city, I believe, is just that.

I do not have too many more points to make. I would hope that the commissioners correctly interpret many of the points raised. We talk about them as though they are quite common. I am not sure whether you understand the significance of the tick line to cattle movements, et cetera, and the fact that cattle coming from 'clean' tick-free country west of the divide can in fact, if they are infected with ticks, suffer tick-borne diseases, babesiosis, et cetera. It is not just an imaginary line. That has a big impact on stock movements and trends.

The transport links are a really big issue in the cattle industry. The better transport links are certainly down the Landsborough Highway rather than across the Capricorn Highway. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Collins. Finally, among the people who have notified that they wish to speak, we have Mr John Milne. Is he here? He is not here. In that case—

**Cr Davidson**—If I can just make a final comment?

**CHAIR**—Yes, you can.

**Cr Davidson**—One of the questions that has been raised a couple of times—I was asked it, I think David was and Bruce Scott certainly was—is about the effect it would have of splitting our organisations out here. I have been president of western Queensland for many years. I was just having a look at Bruce's maps while the last couple of speakers were on. This area has been dominated by Kennedy and Maranoa for many years.

One of the observations that I have made is that, when we are having our meetings—this is western Queensland—it is hard to get politicians to come out here, but if the majority of us are in the one electorate we do have a far better chance of getting an attendance.

Bruce, for instance, does not attend all of our meetings. He makes his best effort, but occasionally we slip up and put it on when parliament is sitting. But if it is possible, we get him. Back in the Kennedy days, one of the Katters used to be in attendance. That is one of the advantages we have had in being basically in the one electorate.

The ones who represent, I guess, the fringe councils of our organisation—we



rarely ever see them at one of our meetings. For instance, Capricornia does take in quite a bit of western Queensland—still does—but we very rarely ever see any representation from there. That is one of the advantages we have. We do have a far better chance of getting them to attend our conferences to hear what our problems are first-hand and to be able to discuss those with us in local government. That part had not been mentioned, and we had been asked about practical advantages; I thought I would like to elaborate on that.

**Ms BRIGHT**—Councillor Collins referred to Gladstone as being industrial. We have heard this morning about how this is central Queensland, this is outback Queensland and about what the new tourism badging is going to be doing for the region. In terms of your being in Kennedy, Mount Isa has always invariably been in Kennedy, which is a mining town, yet it would be deemed to be an outback Queensland town. But it is mining, and that is versus Gladstone, which is coastal and mining. Is it purely because of the Great Divide and that area being different?

**Cr Davidson**—I think the Great Divide has a lot to do with it. Things just do not seem to flow east over the Great Divide so well. They go back the other way a bit. Heading west, it does not happen. It does not matter much where you are. Some things stay in the south-east corner and do not get out to Maranoa, too.

I was not so much involved in local government when it had the present demographics. With Mount Isa, you have a one-off mining area. But the proposed seat of Wright—it is a very developing mining area, with coal at the moment. All of that eastern part of it is a growth centre, the whole lot of it, whereas we are not. We feel that growth attracts attention far better than decline does. We do not want to decline anymore. We would like to join the growth part, but that is pretty hard. In terms of being dominated by a bigger growth centre, take the example of the whole of Queensland versus the south-east corner. What attracts all of the attention? The south-east corner. That is where the people live. That is where everything is happening, and then there is a bit up the coast. It is very hard to get this out in the west. We just feel that if we have a western voice we would be far better off than we would be if we have a coastal voice.

**CHAIR**—Another speaker mentioned that, apart from the mining and industrial centre in Gladstone, the more country part of the new electorate would include a deal of irrigation farming activities, which are different from your type of rural area. Have you any idea what proportion that would involve?

**Cr Davidson**—A very big percentage of that part over the range is all developed country of some sort or another. It might be irrigation. A lot of it is developed pasture. I guess lucerne is a good example, where that has been encouraged and grows. It is a different type of rainfall area. It is higher rainfall. Basically, out here, except for a little bit of pasture development on scrub country, we are just a natural grazing-type area. It is a completely different type of country and lifestyle.

**CHAIR**—Just enlighten my ignorance, but would that be part of the answer to the problem about comparing an electorate based on Gladstone extending out to here with an electorate based on Mount Isa extending out to here; that in the large areas in between the centre and here the activities are different?

**Cr Davidson**—If you take the city of Mount Isa out—and I mean where all the houses are, not the whole local government area; the local government area encompasses a lot of rural area—they are more our types of areas. There are bigger properties. Whereas you are closer settled in there, where the properties are smaller and more highly developed. You get into the Darling Downs part, where you get into farming. But it is still a different type. It is west out here, not central.

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**CHAIR**—I think I understand.

**Cr Davidson**—It is a completely different type of area from what they call the Maranoa when you are not talking about electorates, which is Roma and the Darling downs. That area might be different from here. But it is still more along our type of thinking and our types of problems than that area over there.

**Cr Chandler**—I would like to answer Anne's question about Kennedy having a direct link from Townsville out to Mount Isa. That is completely different from this proposed new seat of Wright. They have a direct railway line from Townsville to Mount Isa. The road is straight ahead, the Overlanders Way. It has had a lot of money spent on it. It is Townsville to Mount Isa. They have direct air services from Townsville to Mount Isa. It is a completely different set-up from what we have here.

When we were in Kennedy, Bob Katter Junior came down to speak at one stage in Barcaldine. He got up and started speaking about sugar tariffs, the fishing industry and something else. This is a prime example. This is what will happen to us if we end up in Wright. Bob Katter stood up in front of a mob of western Queensland graziers and locals and talked about sugar tariffs, fishing and bananas, for God's sake. I said, 'Bob, we don't give a rat's about sugar tariffs. Out here we want government subsidies, we want help with interest rates, et cetera.' It does not work.

**Ms BRIGHT**—Thank you.

[10.40 a.m.]

**USHER-SLADE, Ms Vicki, private capacity**

**Ms Usher-Slade**—My apologies for coming in late. My name is Vicki Usher-Slade. I am a local resident here. For people to understand what and where you come from you have to live it. It is no good just writing on a piece of paper and saying, 'This is the distances we travel in a normal day or how we go about our business and how we cope with it,' you have to live it. Having our member, Mr Scott, who lives just down the road a little bit, and working in the area of Maranoa, he understands and lives it each and every day and knows what our problems are.

From the point of view of transport, health, freight, increasing costs, running of small business and big business—he is right amongst it. If we had a member representing us who lived on the coastal area, where things are at their fingertips, at the drop of a hat, they really would not understand what we go through.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—Could I answer the question about the difference in agriculture between this side of the dividing range and the other side? This is very much pastoral and there is very little development except for some gidgee country that might have been developed into buffel country. If you go east of the dividing range, you get into small crops, you get into the citrus industry and you have intensive feedlots. It is quite a different agricultural scene altogether—citrus, small crops, the cotton industry, irrigation and some cattle industry. The dominant agriculture would be those small crops, citrus, table grapes and the cotton industry. It is totally different from the agriculture on this side of the dividing range.

I had one other comment to do with growth. One of the issues I am sure the commission is looking at is how do you draw boundaries that will include some growth and deal with the issue of the many parts of Australia where there is limited growth, albeit that some of those areas are doing a tremendous amount to try and sustain their communities and grow their economies.

In the eastern parts of my electorate now there is massive change occurring. In the Darling Downs and Warwick/Stanthorpe region, because of lifestyle issues people are leaving the south-east corner and coming over the range for the more affordable housing. There is growth there. I believe the latest Census collection data will demonstrate that once it is available. It obviously will not be available for this redistribution. There are power stations being developed just west of Dalby and Chinchilla. For instance, Chinchilla is expected to have another 1,000 houses in the next two or three years, and likewise with Dalby. That is because of power generation, using coal bed methane gas, an industry for which the technology has been developed only in the last 10 years. That is now providing a new industry and growth that I do not believe is in the current Census data, which was five years ago. That will provide substantial growth in the eastern parts of Maranoa—Warwick, Stanthorpe, Gundiwindi, Dalby and Chinchilla, including Roma, my own home town, where there is a 500 megawatt gas-fired power station going up. There will probably be several more in the next four to five years. That growth is being reflected in the demand for housing and a population that would not be reflected in the numbers that you have now.

**Mr CAMPBELL**—You are quite right, Mr Scott. But as you may well be aware, the process that we are following is a legislative one. There are projection time frames. The commission decided late last year—we can do this under a section of the Act—to halve the projection time frame, because all of the data is leading to the conclusion that Queensland may well get a 30th division. You have 28 now and this is the 29th. You may well have a 30th division after the 2010 election. It is a 12-month

period. In effect, your growth in Queensland is so great that all of the projections lead us to the conclusion that we will be going to another redistribution in the state in three years' time. To that extent, we know what you are talking about, and that is why we took the legislative route of halving the projection time, to make it easier in three years' time.

**The Hon. B. Scott**—My point was that there is growth occurring, substantial growth, in the east of the division of Maranoa, which obviously helps with a determination and offsets where there is very limited growth, albeit that I am sure all my western shires out here, through tourism, have seen some growth—and quite remarkable growth.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. That brings our hearing here to a close. I want to conclude by making one remark, which will be obvious to all of you the moment I say it, but in case anyone has overlooked it: we of course have to consider your problem in the context of the problem of redrawing a great number of boundaries. We really do have to look at the whole state. That should be clearly understood. That does not mean that the individual points in every part, particularly when there are obviously so many people concerned, are not also extremely important.

On behalf of the Augmented Commission, I thank you all, first, for the attention and interest that you have displayed and the amount of research and effort that has gone into considering the problems; and, second, if you will not accuse me of in any way being condescending, I should express my personal appreciation of the moderation and reasonableness that people have adopted. Sometimes when issues concern people a great deal, they can descend into immoderate language. None of you has done that. I personally thank you. I will close these proceedings.

**Committee concluded at 10.48 a.m.**