



The Federal Redistribution 2009
QUEENSLAND



**Comment Number 42
on Public Suggestions**

Cairns Chamber of Commerce

4 pages

From: Mr Sandy Whyte : Cairns Chamber of Commerce [sandy@cairnschamber.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 8 May 2009 4:57 PM
To: QLD Redistribution
Subject: Review of Federal electoral boundaries in Queensland
Attachments: 20090508164241197.pdf

I refer to the process of reviewing Federal electoral boundaries in Queensland and the 26 public suggestions received. Attached are comments from the Cairns Chamber of Commerce regarding some of the ideas presented.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or require clarification on any points.

Regards

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8 May 2009

Redistribution Committee of Queensland
Australian Electoral Commission
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Dear Committee

North Queensland Electorates

I refer to the current review of Federal electoral boundaries in Queensland and the 26 public suggestions received. The Cairns Chamber of Commerce wishes to comment on some of the ideas presented, based on observations gained through the conduct of various business activities in north Queensland.

Various submissions refer to two key tenets to some degree or other:

- Maintaining communities of interest.
- Connectivity – transport corridors/routes.

In some cases, a submission has been inconsistent in its treatment of the importance of one or both of the above – for example, the ALP submission suggests on the one hand that “Dawson should be kept based on Mackay and not allow the city to be divided...”, yet on the other hand suggests “Leichhardt remain centred on the State electoral divisions of Cairns, Barron River and Cook with most of the remaining sections of ...Mulgrave currently within Leichhardt moving into Kennedy.” What this latter point totally ignores is that most of the Mulgrave population is considered to be suburban Cairns, with a strong community of interest with Cairns and Barron River – indeed far more so than the supposed community of interest with Cooktown and remote communities in Cape York and the Torres Straits.

What is eminently more sensible is to look at the greater urban population surrounding Cairns, and work outwards from there. The LNP hints at this approach but is scant on detail.

Starting with the local government area of Cairns, there is strong community of interest across most of the shire, predominantly in the tourism industry and commuting/retail habits of residents. This includes the township of Gordonvale, which is demonstrably a dormitory suburb of Cairns city – what is of particular note here is not so much the proportion of land use (a mix of residential subdivision and cane farming), rather the relative weight in the population (predominantly suburban and growing, at the expense of cane land); included with Gordonvale is the Aboriginal community of Yarrabah, which has very close connections with Gordonvale as a servicing centre, for schools, medical services and so on. South of the Mulgrave River, however, the shire is predominantly rural and holds a much greater community of interest to communities to the south – this section of Cairns regional Council is proposed to be excluded from Leichhardt, which helps it achieve the target quota. The third precinct that should be included in a Cairns based seat is Kuranda – a tourism precinct which has a growing proportion of commuters to Cairns, both for work and for shopping/services – and arguably having greater community of interest with Cairns than with the hinterland (and already in Leichhardt for similar reasons probably).



Based on 2007 election results and February 2009 enrolments, the following estimates for a seat of Leichhardt based on Cairns are made:

Precinct	Feb-09 Enrolment
Cairns Regional Council (part currently in Leichhardt)	81,000
Gordonvale-Yarrabah (currently in Kennedy)	5,300
Kuranda (currently in Kennedy)	2,300
Total: "Cairns" Seat (new Leichhardt)	88,600

NB: Estimates have been calculated based on polling place, grossed up to include postals, pre-poll etc

This meets the required quota objective of 88,343, within 0.3%, based on current enrolment data.

The next logical step is to work down from the northernmost tip of Cape York, and build up an electorate that meets the quota. The balance of the current seat of Leichhardt is north/northwest of the proposed Cairns-base seat (as described above), an area which has a present enrolment of some 12,000. The balance of the current seat of Kennedy, after removing the areas above, comes in at around 87,000. If the two are simply added, there'd be 99,000 electors, hence there is a need to extract some 11,000 voters from the seat and redistribute into another seat. The vast majority of this broad Torres Straits/Cape York/Gulf region is primary industries based (mining, agriculture, pastoral, and fishing), and centred around dispersed townships and remote communities – a natural community of interest.

Critical in the decision of what to include/exclude where, therefore, is the degree of connectivity by various means of transport. In this instance, it is also necessary to take into account the impact of the wet season on transport options, which for the vast majority of the Gulf and Cape York is limited to air for four or five months of the year. Cairns makes a natural hub for such travel, as the servicing centre for flights throughout the Torres Straits, Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and through to Mount Isa. The Atherton Tablelands is also a natural jumping off point by road to most of the region, based on the major centres of Atherton and Mareeba. However, whilst there is also reasonably strong community of interest with the Charters Towers-Hughenden sector, this is the most logical segment of the current Kennedy to redistribute into other electorates to the south, having as it does, a similar level of community interest and possibly better connectivity to say western parts of Dawson, the northwest portion of Capricornia, or the northern end of Flynn.

In summary, a seat of Torres/Cape York/Gulf/North West (notionally called "Kennedy") is a follows:

Precinct	Feb-09 Enrolment
Current Kennedy (excluding Gordonvale-Yarrabah)	87,300
Plus Torres Strait/Cape York (currently in Leichhardt)	12,500
Less Townsville-Charter Towers (currently in Kennedy)	- 10,800
Total: "Cape-Northwest" Seat (new Kennedy)	89,000


NB: Estimates have been calculated based on polling place, grossed up to include postals, pre-poll etc

This meets the quota (within 0.8%) based on current enrolments.

A similar approach needs to be taken for electorates to the south of Kennedy, eg Dawson, Capricornia, Flynn and Maranoa; however, this is beyond the scope of this submission. What is clear is that the 'top end' of Queensland needs to be got right in the first instance as there is no flexibility to shift the outer boundaries.

In conclusion, this redistribution of Federal electorate boundaries, which gives Queensland an additional seat, presents an ideal opportunity to significantly overhaul electorates in northern Queensland and create a greater sense of community of interest and re-affirm connectivity for people who are living in vast and remote regions of outback Queensland, as well as creating a seat for the people of Cairns, consistent with that enjoyed by the people of other regional centres such as Townsville and Mackay.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Blockey
President