



**The Federal Redistribution 2009
QUEENSLAND**



**Comment Number 45
on Public Suggestions**

Hon Bob Katter MP Member for Kennedy

7 pages

From: Stocker, Elise (B. Katter, MP) [Elise.Stocker@aph.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 8 May 2009 5:03 PM
To: QLD Redistribution
Subject: Comments on Public Submissions from Bob Katter
Attachments: comment on submissions.doc

To the Redistribution Committee for Queensland,

Please find attached the Hon Bob Katter's comments on the Public Submissions for the redistribution of the federal electoral boundaries in Queensland.

<<comment on submissions.doc>>

Our office would greatly appreciate confirmation that this submission has been received by the Redistribution Committee prior to the deadline of 6pm Friday 8 May 2009.

Kind regards

Elise Stocker

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SUBMISSION TO REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

2009 Redistribution of Federal Electoral
Boundaries in Queensland

Comments on Public Submissions

8 May 2009

The Hon Bob Katter
Federal Member for Kennedy

The following comments are provided to the Redistribution Committee for consideration in accordance with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

The Katter Submission, dated 24 April 2009, detailed a *Cascade Proposal* that provides the least amount of disruption to electorates by recognising: significant economic, social and regional ties; communication and travel networks; key physical features; and State and Local government boundaries¹. The Committee is required to consider these connections under section 66 of the Act.

Comment is provided on certain aspects of other Public Submissions that do not consider, and even seek to destroy, existing strong connections within Kennedy.

Proposal 1: Mid-West and Mount Isa into Maranoa (proposed by LNP, Bruce McIver)

The LNP proposal puts the people of NW Qld into an electorate dominated by a population residing 250km from Brisbane, in a SE Qld seat. It is 'absurd', transgressing to a point of offence, clearly against the three overriding principles - commonality of interest; geographic proximity; and minimal distribution.

Under this proposal, Mount Isa and the Mid West (MW) would be placed in an electorate based on a demographic centre of Dalby (*or even worse Kingaroy). Dalby is closer to Melbourne than it is to Mount Isa. The LNP has justified this proposal on the basis that it would provide a genuine community of interest. This is impossible to understand.

In the Mount Isa and MW, lines of communication and communities of interest run east-west, not north-south. Over 90% of the Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Hughenden work force is directly, or indirectly, in hard rock mining or the railways. This population has nothing in common with communities employed in the broad acre farming of wheat, grains, sheep and cotton, and cattle-fattening operations. These are industries of the Darling Downs, the heart of the Maranoa.

Cattle stations through MW, Mount Isa and Gulf are very rarely under 70,000 acres, and most are over 150,000 acres. They're invariably run by just a husband

¹ The *Cascade Proposal* and connections with Kennedy are detailed in the Katter Submission, Attachment 1 and 2.

and wife, resulting in very few people being employed in cattle. Railway services and mining are the main employers, not cattle.

Without mining and the railway, towns between Mount Isa and Hughenden would shrink to the size of Richmond and Julia Creek (under 100 people). Charters Towers still mines and processes copper silver gold zinc, so does Cloncurry, Julia Creek and Mount Isa. The railway depots at Mount Isa, Richmond, Hughenden and Charters Towers connect these mining operations to Townsville's huge zinc and copper refineries and port.

The second aspect of absurdity is putting Mount Isa, Cloncurry and the MW in with "Brisbane Blockys". These people live on small acreages (10-100 acres), stretching from Brisbane all the way up to Kingaroy. They want a rural lifestyle, but work and have significant connections with the city.

The second reason the LNP gave was that children from the region go to boarding school in Toowoomba. This is a most extraordinary exertion, I only know of three families from the region who have boarded in Toowoomba. It may be that, in any one year, 10 students from the region board at Toowoomba, Brisbane, or Sydney. At the same time, some 1,300 students board at Charters Towers and another 400 at Townsville. Almost all of these students are from the Gulf, MW, Mount Isa, or farming communities north of Townsville. All are in Kennedy.

A more logical solution would be to place the western shires within Flynn back into the seat of Maranoa. This has been supported by those shires in their submission to the Redistribution Committee, and would allow Maranoa to shed some eastern areas (bounding the seat of Dickson).

We would not be opposed to such a proposal. This could complement the *Cascade Proposal*, which allows the retention of Mount Isa and MW in Kennedy.

Proposal 2: Charters Towers into Capricornia (proposed by ALP, Anthony Chisholm)

The broad principles of the ALP proposal are basically the same as our submission. They suggest a minimal distribution, simple cascade down the coast. The anomaly in their submission is proposing that Charters Towers be moved into the Rockhampton seat of Capricornia.

Charters Towers is a town that relies for all of its major big city services upon Townsville, and whose survival depends upon the provision of service facilities to the towns along the Flinders Highway, west to Mount Isa, and up to the Gulf. Services, based in Charters Towers, provided to these regions include: schooling facilities, educating over 1300 boarding students and the school of distance education; Nth Qld's Pest and Weed Research Station; and Eventide Homes, one of the states only 2 retirement facilities. Almost all Eventide residents are from the MW, Gulf and Mount Isa.

Charters Towers has always been the spiritual centre of the Kennedy electorate. In fact for 106 years of the electorate's 108 year history, the Kennedy Member of Parliament has been from a Charters Towers family.

The ALP has justified this proposal on the basis that it is better to include Charters Towers in Capricornia than to further split Mackay. This fails to acknowledge that the current Capricornia boundary is already in suburban Mackay.

The *Cascade Proposal* retains Charters Towers in Kennedy and requires a movement into suburban Mackay. However, central Mackay is left intact. This provides the critical mass necessary to give the people of southern Mackay (already in Capricornia) a stronger voice, whilst retaining central and northern Mackay as the heart of Dawson.

The ALP proposal also fails to acknowledge that, in the recent State redistributions, they strongly supported and succeeded in joining Charters Towers with the Tablelands in the creation of the seat of Dalrymple (a move also supported by the LNP). Now they are putting the completely opposite proposition forward, arguing that Charters Towers should be placed in the federal seat of Rockhampton. This brings into question the 'political objectivity' of this proposal.

Proposal 3: Cape York into Kennedy (proposed by LNP, Bruce McIver)

The LNP suggest that there is community of interest between Cape York and the Gulf communities. This fails to acknowledge that there has been extreme sensitivity between the Cape York and Gulf areas to a point of legal dispute and physical violence.

Traditional views vary dramatically. Look no further than the recent wild rivers declarations - the Carpentaria (Murrandoo Yanna) went in one direction and Cape York (Noel Pearson) went in a completely opposite direction. Almost all Cape York communities are Torres Strait Islander, where as Gulf communities are most certainty not. The Karumba and Normanton areas survive on general tourism, and recreational and tourist fishing - there is not Cape York community that has a significant income from either.

Clearly the LNP proposal was drawn up by people unaware that almost all commercial fishing was closed down by the 2 previous governments. All that is left is mostly based in Cairns. However, there is no doubt the Karumba and Torres Strait fishing industry is homogenous. Therefore, there would be logic in putting the Gulf, Cape York and Torres Straits into the Cairns electorate. The LNP has put forward the exact opposite proposition – taking these communities out of Cairns (where industry is based) and putting them into the sugar, mining hard rock, banana and agricultural electorate of Kennedy.

Almost every family in Cape York and Torres Strait would have family in Cairns. These communities have the strongest of strong ties, and reliance on, Cairns. All of their commercial, health and administrative functions are controlled out of Cairns, not out of Innisfail or Mount Isa.

The *Cascade Proposal* requires only a minor boundary change on the southern outskirts of Cairns to start the cascading of votes to south east Queensland. This will have limited effect on the seats of Kennedy and Leichhardt. These areas are key growth areas in Leichhardt and placement of these areas in Kennedy would ensure that both Kennedy and Leichhardt remain within quota in 2012².

CONCLUSION

The *Cascade Proposal* follows natural boundaries and communities of interests, and presents minimal disturbance of existing arrangements. It also allows the centres of major towns to remain intact, but does require some minor movements around the southern and northern outskirts of coast towns.

² 2012 quota calculations should consider that future growth in Leichhardt is likely to concentrate on the southern outskirts of Cairns. With these areas being transferred into Kennedy, Leichhardt would only need to shed about 4,000 votes currently to meet the 2012 quota.

The movements required are not highly disruptive and, in certain areas, allow for a critical mass to be reached ensuring that voters already on the outskirts of some cities will have an improved local voice.

The *Cascade Proposal* also avoids the need for bizarre scenarios, such as moving Mount Isa and the Mid West into Maranoa, Charters Towers into Capricornia and the Cape into Kennedy. All of which have been put forward, arguably, to serve selfish, narrow political interests.

People are entitled to have faith that their Electoral Commission will not acquiesce to such self-serving political interest.

I trust that due consideration will be given to the *Cascade Proposal* that I have put forward.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Katter', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

The Hon. Bob Katter MP
Federal Member for Kennedy