



The Federal Redistribution 2009  
**QUEENSLAND**



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**Objection Number 27**

**Philip Newton**

**4 pages**

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Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland  
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27 July 2009

**RE: PROPOSED REDISTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES IN QUEENSLAND**

Dear Anne

I will probably get on your wrong side by starting with a hostile negativity; but why can't the 'drongos' in the relevant bureaucratic 'quango' department think outside the square?

**SURE**, we have to have a redistribution, in this case caused by a relative change in the population between states. Just as we have a redistribution when there is a marked change of population in electorates within the state.

**SURE**, we have a name for the new electorate, **WRIGHT**, and nothing is wrong with honouring such a well respected literary person and Queenslander.

The initial mechanics of the redistribution, I assume, is based on dividing the voting population of Queensland by 30 to arrive at the size of each electorate.

So, **SURE**, large centres of population e.g. Brisbane, will have several electorates necessitating boundary lines that follow some natural line of division (creeks) or even down the middle of a road. This in turn would mean that near neighbours are in different electorates and thus vote for different representatives. This does not present an undue problem as each voter probably lives within three or four suburbs from their elected member.

But WHY, oh WHY, does this have to be the case in the more decentralised areas of Queensland? In fact just about anywhere outside the south-east corner of the state.

I live in Mackay so I will restrict most of my comments to the DAWSON/CAPRICORNIA electorates although these generalisations, I'm sure, would apply to just about everywhere else.

I find it to be totally illogical, impractical and just plain silly that the boundary for Dawson/Capricornia is the Pioneer River other than the fact that it is an easy line on the map on which to run a black felt pen.

Why can't Dawson be **centred** in Mackay with the boundary lines being, say, 200 km north, south and west of Mackay?

Why can't Capricornia be **centred** on Rockhampton with the boundary lines, again, 200 km north, south and west of Rockhampton? And so on for all the major centres along the coast.

The southern boundary line for Dawson could be in the St. Lawrence to Marlborough area, give or take 50 km. Something similar for the northern boundary of Dawson – somewhere between Bowen and Home Hill, with the western boundary extending to wherever is necessary to adjust the electoral size.

I'm sure Sarina would be best served if in Dawson, likewise Ayr, Home Hill and Charters Towers would be best served in an electorate based on a southern part of Townsville while the northern part of Townsville would also include Ingham and further north.

As you say,

**“...the Redistribution Committee takes into account community of interests, communication and transport links, physical features, and the current boundaries.”**

It seems to me that '**the current boundaries**' is the dominant, and possibly the only criteria considered! Otherwise you wouldn't have and shouldn't have the ridiculous situation whereby –

- Voters in the southern outskirts of Townsville (400 km north of Mackay) could be represented by a member who could be resident in Mackay while voters living in Walkerston or Pleystowe (10 km from Mackay) could be represented by a member who could live in Rockhampton .
- Voters in Capricornia (Pleystowe, Walkerston) live further north than voters in Dawson (Bakers Creek, Chelona).
- Voters living in a very very small community (Rosella) voting in different electorates.
- Voters living near Mackay are represented by a member living in Rockhampton, while people living in Mt Morgan are not.

Now would be the time to 'bite the bullet' and redraw the electoral map, possibly leaving the greater Brisbane area as is, with just about all other areas based on centres of population with boundary lines in the more isolated, wide open, unpopulated areas in between. Logical? Impractical? Desirable? Just plain TOO HARD?

In the Brisbane area, some suburbs, **not all**, but some suburbs are separated by natural features, rivers, creeks, ridges and the like and these lend themselves to obvious electoral divisions. But why apply this statewide? Why not think 'outside the square'. Why not use the lines on the map (latitude and longitude). For instance, the 22<sup>nd</sup> parallel (south) could be the Dawson/Capricornia border with the northern border for Dawson being a few minutes either side of the 20<sup>th</sup> (depending on whether Bowen was to be included or not. Perhaps divisional lines could be drawn perpendicular to the general slope of our coast line or parallel to major highways (but not along them) so that obvious communities like Charters Towers, Hughenden and Winton and further west would be in the same electorate, likewise Rockhampton through to Longreach in another.

I don't have the statistics or the expertise but that is what your committee should have and must have and given a free rein and the encouragement, I'm sure that they could come up with something more meaningful, I'm also sure that there are enough lateral thinkers on the committee to accomplish this.

Possibly, someone might voice the complaint that if there is no obvious creek or river to mark the boundary, how will voters know where the boundary is to their electorate? Well then, write them a letter and tell them – you do anyway. "Dear Sir, You are in the Electorate of 'Whatever' and your nearest polling booth is located at ....." The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 might appear outdated but I'm sure some radical and more relevant alterations to the boundaries doesn't require parliamentary amendments.

Finally, please don't take the very small (extremely small) number of suggestions (26) and comments (47) that your office has received following advertisements in the Government Gazette, Courier Mail and Sunday Mail in March as a sign of satisfaction with the status quo as not everyone outside the southeast corner of Queensland read these papers and an even smaller number would bother to make suggestions as, from experience with government bureaucracies, these are going to be placed in the 'too hard ' basket or even the 'circular file' at the end of the desk.

This letter is not meant to convey or imply any bias against any elected member or political party.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip H. Newton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

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