



The Federal Redistribution 2009
QUEENSLAND



**Comment Number 18
on Objections**

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State Secretary
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9 pages



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21 August 2009

Redistribution Committee for Queensland
Australian Electoral Commission
7th Floor Collection House
488 Queens Street
Brisbane Q 4000

Dear Commissioners

Please find attached the Australian Labor Party, Queensland Branch comments on the objections to the proposed redistribution of Queensland.

Yours Sincerely,

**Anthony Chisholm
State Secretary.**

Australian Labor Party – Queensland Branch.

The ALP notes that the Commission is faced with the daunting task of sifting through 555 objections to the distribution they have presented. Though this may be a record for the number of objections to redistribution the Commission should not unduly weight the sheer numbers of objections.

429 of the 555 objections or 77% of the objections are concerned about the southern suburbs of Townsville. A further 39 are concerned with the name chosen for the additional division. The commission needs to rigorously apply Section 72 of the Act and the rest of the Act in regarding these objections. Many of these objections are substantially the same as matters raised in suggestions and comments. In fact the substantial matters raised in the 429 objections about Herbert were raised not only this time in suggestions and comments but raised at the last redistribution in both suggestions and comments. The difficulty for the commission is that the Act gives no more weight to an argument presented only once to the commission than to many objections based on the same idea.

Comments on the LNP Objections

Rejection of LNP Claims on ‘Context’.

The LNP in their submission (section 2) go to great lengths to suggest that the redistribution was unfair to them and that the boundaries drawn by the commission should be drafted with this result in mind.

The ALP did not and does not make such an assertion. We note the LNP quoted from a variety of newspaper columnists to back up their claims and note that many observers see this redistribution differently. One is the long time election analyst Malcolm Mackerras who recently wrote;

“This redistribution makes no significant difference to the Rudd government’s grip on power. By no means can it be called a “Ruddymander” because a 2.8 per cent swing is needed for Labor to lose its majority of the two-party preferred vote but only a 1.6 per cent swing for it to lose the median seat and a majority.”

That amounts to a very fair redistribution. But, then, every federal redistribution during the past 30 years has been very fair. Of course, both Labor and Liberal parties will claim that it is wickedly unfair to them.”

The Australian August 22 2009.

Though not making the claim that the proposed redistribution is ‘wickedly unfair’ to the interests of the Australian Labor Party, followers of the redistribution process should note that the seat the Commission added was nominally a conservative seat on past voting patterns and the boundaries

considerably weaken some ALP held seats that would mean the ALP would lose the seat based on recent election results prior to 2007.

However the Commission should rightly ignore this and any arguments of political parties arguing for political self interest on past results. The Commission has and should continue to act in accordance with the Electoral Act when determining the redistribution. The suggestion they do otherwise compromises the integrity of this process.

LNP suggestion for Malapportioned Divisions.

The ALP is disappointed that the LNP chose to raise an entirely new approach to the principals of drafting redistributions at this stage of the process, not mentioning these at the suggestions stage. The LNP then go on to say their own objections should be ignored at the current redistribution.

The ALP finds it difficult to believe that the LNP expects that section 3.5 (page 6) of their submission which amounts to a plan for malapportioned divisions is to be taken seriously. A malapportioned Division is defined by the act “a Division in a State or the Australian Capital Territory in which the number of electors enrolled differs from the average divisional enrolment of the State or Territory to a greater extent than one-tenth more or one-tenth less.”

Under the LNP’s suggestion any area of high growth but small in area would very quickly, if the LNP submission were to be taken seriously, become a malapportioned Division, while any large Division set at the lowest level with low growth would quickly become malapportioned.

While the Queensland State Electoral Act contains principals that support the LNPs contentions in a small number of large seats the Commonwealth Act deliberately does not

The end effect would be that there would be divisions that had a difference in the numbers of voters of greater than 20% from some other divisions (and increasing) virtually from the gazetting of the divisional boundaries.

The Act clause 59(b) makes clear that the malapportioning put forward by the LNP would actually trigger a further redistribution of the State to rectify the problem.

59(b) whenever it appears to the Electoral Commission, from statements published under subsection 58(1), that more than one-third of the Divisions in the State are, and have, for a period of more than 2 months, been, malapportioned Divisions;

If the Commission were to follow this plan for malapportioning of divisions then the Commission would be forced to under 58 and 59(b) to re-redistribute the divisions in Queensland. With the high growth in Queensland it is likely that this process would happen before even the next election. Redistributions

should be designed (where possible) to not trigger section 59(b) for seven years (See section 59(c)) subject of course to section 48.)

If given effect, the value of a vote in a seat like Kennedy (large in size but lower in growth) would quickly become 25% more than the value of a vote in neighbouring Herbert (small in area but high in growth).

The LNP further says that it does not rely on this ‘departure’ but it is the ALP submission that the AEC should not follow these principals in this or any future redistribution because they are not in accordance with the Act.

Specific Division Comments on Objections

Blair

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Bonner

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Bowman, Forde & Wright

We note that the LNP made comments regarding the area of Carbrook in their submission. If the Commission accommodates the LNP suggestion the commission may consider substituting an area of Boronia Heights into the proposed Forde. (As put forward in the ALP’s objection) The area of Boronia Heights is split from the rest of Wright by the freight rail line to the west. This is an effective physical barrier and a good argument for including Boronia Heights in Forde.

This suggestion was put forward by the ALP’s objections to the proposed boundaries. To clarify the proposal previously put forward, the commission should consider keeping some of the old Rankin division areas moved to Wright specifically the areas to the east of the freight rail line north of Stoney Camp Rd (Boronia Heights and Greenbank), into Forde instead of Wright and move all of Jimboomba into Wright.

The suggested boundary would run from the rail line east along Stoney Camp Rd to the Mt Lindsay Highway along the Logan River and then finally south down the Waterford Tamborine Rd. This simple direct swap creates a better community of interest on the northern Brisbane part of Forde and unites the Jimboomba area in one division.

Fadden

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Griffith

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

McPherson

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Moncrieff

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Moreton

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Oxley

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Rankin

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Fisher - Fairfax

The LNP in their submission make reasonable points about the communities of Palmwoods and Montville. The suggestions do seem to unite these small communities in one single division in a better way than the proposal. These minor suggestions rise directly from the proposal, are sensible and should be considered by the committee.

Longman –Dickson

The ALP notes there are ten objections from members of the public about the boundary between Longman and Dickson and have nothing further to add from the comments contained in the ALP objection.

LNP Northside Changes

The LNP makes significant changes to the Northside of Brisbane moving thousands of voters to divisions they have never been in before. If the Commission were to follow the LNP proposal then they should certainly be considered significantly different from the Redistribution Committee proposal under the terms of 72 (12) (c).

However we suggest that the Commission not follow these objections as many of the issues canvassed have already been duly considered by the commission in drafting the proposed boundaries.

The proposed move by the LNP to move 12,000 voters in Dakabin, Kallangur, Murrumba Downs and Petrie into the proposed Petrie moves new voters that have never been in Petrie into that division. All of these voters are on the west side of the Bruce Highway, a highway that the commission has recognised as a clear border.

The other north side changes put forward by the LNP are a result of this attempt to move these 12,000 voters across the Bruce Highway into Petrie and are really about creating solutions regarding quota problems caused by

this move. The suggestions do not represent any improvement in community of interest arguments.

Brisbane

The reference to 1,243 voters in Enoggera (part) is ill-defined and it is difficult for the ALP to respond to. The commission identified more voters in an area of the same description.

The areas to the south of Stafford Rd are identified to be moved by the LNP are a result of other changes made by the LNP on the north side. Stafford Rd is a major east-west rd that the Commission identified as a clear and defined boundary in the Commission's report. The area south of Stafford Rd and west of Webster Rd has been in the division of Brisbane for decades. The LNP objection would result in even greater dislocation of voters from Brisbane. The ALP does not support this proposal.

Leichhardt

The ALP notes that there are 12 objections to the inclusion of Kuranda into the division of Kennedy. These objections focus on the difference between Kuranda and the Tableland communities that are in Kennedy and the greater social and tourism connections that Kuranda shares with Cairns.

The Kuranda Skyrail and Train are not only a 'means of communication and travel' (66 (3) (b) (ii))but further it is an economic link that binds the Kuranda community to Cairns. Kuranda shares with Cairns an economic connection with the tourist trade that should be given due consideration under section 66 of the Act. (66 (3) (b) (i)).

The ALP supports the many objections to Kuranda being included in Kennedy and asks the Commission give due consideration to revising their draft proposal.

Further the ALP notes that no objection makes any argument to remove The Cape and Torres communities from the Division. It is clear that these communities are centred on Cairns and maintain a close community, travel and economic connection to Cairns and to no other regional centre.

Herbert

Greater Townsville Council is projected to contain more than 118,000 electors. The maximum allowable enrolment for any Division is 100,635 at the projected time. Thus the Commissioners have little choice if following the Act but to distribute to other Divisions a significant surplus of Townsville. That task is rendered more difficult by the need to keep Mackay together as far as possible.

It's been a rather churlish campaign by the MP for Herbert in pretending that his objections have been a sincere attempt to keep Townsville together.

Clearly, there are some who think the Commission is a body which adheres to the 'squeaky wheel' principle.

The difference between the number of objections relating to Townsville and those relating to Mackay can be fairly characterised as the difference between an orchestrated campaign and one that is not. What we can say is that with its proposed boundaries the Redistribution Committee has come up with is a result of the committee feeling they had very little in the way of options that would satisfy all regarding community connections.

Kennedy - Dawson

The LNP plan to take voters from the Charters Towers Regional Council 'below the Flinders Highway' is a poor outcome for the residents of this regional Council. The LNP is insistent that the residents of selected Townsville suburbs (but not other Labor voting suburbs) have no connection to Mackay because they are 375 km from Mackay but are then happy to suggest that a part of a regional council that is just as far or further from Mackay does have a connection. Further this suggestion splits Charters Towers in half while not solving the problem of Townsville's southern suburbs. It is a numerical fix to attempt to include a LNP voting suburb of Annandale in Herbert at the expense of the Charters Towers community.

The ALP recognises that the Commission has a difficult community of interest problem with the southern suburbs of Townsville but the solution offered by the LNP is not a better community of interest solution.

Capricornia

See Gracemere section of Flynn below.

Flynn - Hinkler

The LNP repeats the argument rejected by the commission that 8 CCDs on the north side of Bundaberg should be removed from Hinkler and put with Flynn. This argument is also put forward by the LNP member for Hinkler. We normally see from the Member for Hinkler worthwhile submissions but this one does not equal his previous submissions.

In fact in previous submissions the LNP member for Hinkler has previously appeared before the Commission at previous redistributions and has never advanced this argument before.

This argument has already been presented in suggestions by the LNP, considered and rejected by the Commission in their proposal. It is clear that this suggestion fits into 72(3)(a) being a matter that is "substantially the same as matters that were raised in" suggestions or comments.

While it is undoubtedly true that the Burnett River forms a natural Barrier the presence of the Don Tallon Bridge, the Burnett Bridge and the Rail Bridge (since 1897) across the Burnett in Bundaberg mean that the North Bank of the city is well connected to the rest of the city.

Commissioners need only compare this argument with the argument in Herbert to see that the LNP is presenting two completely contradictory arguments about rivers within a regional centre. Townsville has a population that is greater than a single division; clearly Bundaberg does not and can and should easily be contained within one division.

The 8 CCDs in North Bundaberg are deeply connected to the rest of Bundaberg south of the river because;

- Bundaberg's main shopping centres are on the south side of the river and most north side residents would use them regularly. While North Bundaberg now has an IGA many North Bundaberg residents still shop south of the river.
- The Bundaberg Base Hospital, the Mater and the Friendly Society Private Hospital are on the south side of the river serving North Bundaberg residents. The Don Tallon Bridge directly connects North Bundaberg to the Bundaberg base Hospital. Further most North Bundaberg residents cross the river to visit a GP.
- The Australia Post office and business center is on the south side of the Burnett but serves both parts of the city.
- There are no banks (only ATMS) in North Bundaberg, with North Bundaberg residents having to cross over.
- The Ambulance station in Bundaberg serves all of Bundaberg including North Bundaberg. There is no Ambulance station north of the river.
- The Police station in Bundaberg serves all of Bundaberg including North Bundaberg. There is no Police Station in North Bundaberg.
- Bundaberg Train station serves all Bundaberg including North Bundaberg, North Bundaberg's Old Bundaberg Station is no longer used.
- The Port of Bundaberg serves both North and South Bundaberg.
- Bundaberg TAFE serves both North and South Bundaberg
- The Bundaberg Council offices and Chambers are on the south side of the river.
- The University Campus that serves all of Bundaberg is on the south side of the river.
- The Bert Hinkler Airport that serves all of Bundaberg is on the south side of the river.
- North Bundaberg residents that want to participate in sports teams and clubs must cross to the south side to play sport or visit clubs or even play Bowls, while south Bundaberg residents must cross to North Bundaberg for Hockey.
- Most North Bundaberg residents cross over the river to attend Church services as there is only one Wesleyan Methodist Church in North Bundaberg.

- Finally many North Bundaberg residents work in Bundaberg proper while some Bundaberg residents travel south to work at the Bundaberg foundry.

In conclusion Bundaberg North is an intrinsic part of Bundaberg with comprehensive links and government services shared together. To suggest otherwise is an attempt to mislead the commission.

This is all contrived by the LNP in order to find numbers to re-include North Burnett- Biggenden in Hinkler and Gracemere to Capricornia. This is a poor argument by the LNP and far weaker community of interest outcomes than the proposed boundaries. The Commission should rightly reject this argument that is based around the unneeded splitting of a regional community.

Capricornia- Flynn

There is no doubt that Gracemere does share connections with Rockhampton that are stronger than the connections Gracemere shares with Gladstone. However the LNP's suggestion is to split up Bundaberg in order to include Gracemere with Rockhampton is a very poor solution. Gracemere is some 9 km outside of Rockhampton and is distinctly separated. The quota requirements for Flynn mean that the best solution is the one presented by the commission to include Gracemere within Flynn.

Wide Bay

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.

Maranoa

Despite the LNP stating in 3.8 of the LNP submission that they would not rely on their spurious arguments about square kilometre size of electorates the LNP does so in relation to Maranoa in 6.9.2. The Commission should reject any arguments based upon this flawed principle as put forward earlier in these comments on submission.

Groom

We note that the LNP had no objections in relation to this division.