



Transcript of Proceedings

Copyright in this transcript is vested in the Crown. Copies thereof must not be made or sold without the written authority of the Director, State Reporting Bureau.

Issued subject to correction upon revision.

AUGMENTED ELECTORAL COMMISSION FOR QUEENSLAND

THE HON PETER HEEREY QC, Chairperson
MR E KILLESTEYN, Electoral Commissioner
MR B PINK, Australian Statistician
MS A BRIGHT, Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland
MR GLENN POOLE, Auditor-General for Queensland

INQUIRY INTO OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE PROPOSED REDISTRIBUTION OF
FEDERAL ELECTORAL DIVISIONS IN THE STATE OF QUEENSLAND

TOWNSVILLE

..DATE 29/09/2009

WARNING: The publication of information or details likely to lead to the identification of persons in some proceedings is a criminal offence. This is so particularly in relation to the identification of children who are involved in criminal proceedings or proceedings for their protection under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, and complainants in criminal sexual offences, but is not limited to those categories. You may wish to seek legal advice before giving others access to the details of any person named in these proceedings.

THE COMMISSION (COMMENCED?) AT 2.30 P.M.

1

CHAIRPERSON: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this hearing of the Augmented Australian Electoral Commission. My name is Peter Heerey, I'm the chair. On my right, Mr Ed Killesteyn, who is the Electoral Commissioner. On my left, Mr Brian Pink, the Australian Statistician and the other members of the Augmented Commission sitting below are Ms Anne Bright, the Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland and Mr Glenn Poole, the Auditor-General for Queensland. Can everybody hear me at the back there? Thank you.

10

Now, we're here to consider a proposal made by the Redistribution Committee for the redistribution of Queensland into 30 Federal electoral divisions. That proposal was released on the 24th of July and objections were received from members of the public and subsequently, comments on those objections were received. We have to consider all the objections and submissions made today. The present redistribution has come about because of the growth in population of Queensland, which means that it has become entitled to one additional member of the House of Representatives, bringing its total to 30 seats.

20

The primary consideration governing the redistribution is the - that the numbers of electors in each division should not vary more than 3.5 per cent from the projected average. Projected average is the average projected as at 9 July 2012 and that average is 97,232. So the maximum you can have is, in any one electoral division, is 100,635 and the minimum you can have is 93,829.

30

Now, provided an electoral division is within those limits we are to have regard to the community of interest within the division, including economic, social and regional interests; means of communication and travel; physical features, such as roads, rivers, shorelines et cetera; and the boundaries of existing divisions, although that last mentioned factor is to be treated as less important.

40

Now this inquiry will be recorded and full transcripts of the proceedings will be included as part of our final report. After hearing the submissions we will consider them and we tentatively expect to make an announcement of our decision on the 6th of October.

We ask members of the public making oral submissions today to give their name and address. So I'll commence by asking Mr Matthew Crossley to address the Commission. Mr Crossley, are you there? No. Mr Eggins.

50

MR EGGINS: Your Honour.

CHAIRPERSON: Yes, please come forward, Mr Eggins. Take a seat at the table. You may sit or stand whichever is more comfortable.

1

MR EGGINS: My name is Aubrey Eggins. I'm 80 years old tomorrow. I lived - I've lived in this town for 35 years. I was a kid in this school - in one of the schools here in 1935. I can remember Townsville well before a lot of you people can.

Now I've lived here for 35 years. I've enjoyed Townsville and it's a wonderful city but I do object to being told that I'm going to vote for a town Mackay, 400 kilometres south. Now if the Electoral Commission had a good look at Townsville and its population it's grown from about 40,000 people when I came here to - to possibly 100,000 people, not sure.

10

But on the same thing it would be in our Townsville interests to split Townsville into two and - and the surrounding suburbs even taking in possibly Home Hill and Ayr and the northern beaches and so forth to be - to keep Townsville a very very viable city. And - and by - by pushing my suburb into Mackay I think is disgusting and - and I will - I will not vote if I've got to vote for a town in Mackay because it owes me nothing.

20

Townsville has owed my life and my wife and my family a living and I'm an ex-serviceman. I spent six years in the RAAF and it is only this year - last year, sorry that I got a medallion given to me for my service at Maralinga. Nobody wanted to know me at one stage. That's my life and I love Townsville and I'm - I'm passionate about Townsville and you can - I am sure that you could possibly split Townsville into two decent sized electorates without hurting anybody but as far as I'm concerned I'm not going to vote. I'll - I'll defranchise myself and I will not vote for Mackay.

30

Townsville's got to be Townsville and the electorate - whatever you do with the electorate whether you split it in two is the only best thing for Townsville. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Mr Eggins. Does any member of the Commission wish to ask Mr Eggins anything? No. Thank you very much, Mr Eggins. Mr Baison?

40

MR BAISON: Yes. Okay, your Honour. I'll only be a short matter here. My name is Fred Baison of Abbott Street in Oonoonba which is only five minutes by vehicle.

CHAIRPERSON: I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch the name of the suburb.

MR BAISON: Oonoonba.

50

CHAIRPERSON: How do you spell that?

MR BAISON: O-O-N-O-O-N-B-A.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MR BAISON: Just over the Ross River. Now then, I'm - I'm surprised there's only a few people here. I can't understand it. Anyway, I can't believe I'm five minutes away from the top of the City Council office, centre of Townsville, and yet I belong to Mackay. I've got to vote for somebody in Mackay who I don't know and if - anyway I saw a letter in the Sunday Sun, an article by Peter Lindsay, complaining about Annandale being in Dawson and yet there's more soldiers in Annandale than what there is in Lavarack Barracks. So Peter Lindsay complained about that and they have the cheek to put Lavarack Barracks in Townsville, and over the road is Annandale which is in Dawson. Now, how stupid can you get?

1

10

Also - where am I going to now - we wrote - yeah, I wrote to the Commission in - in July and they acknowledged my letter. Anyway I thought, well I saw his article in the paper so I thought I'd better turn up 'cause I like Peter Lindsay. He does a lot of good work and I thought, well I better come around and support him, so that's why I'm here.

20

Now then - also we have to be forced to vote for somebody we don't know in an - in an electoral - election, and if you don't vote you get fined. You know what I mean? I want to vote for somebody I know. I don't want to vote for people I don't know in Mackay.

So, anyway that's why I'm here and I hope to convince the Electoral Commission to cancel the idea of me being in the Mackay area - district. Okie dokie. Thanks very much.

30

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much, Mr Baison.

MR BAISON: Righto.

CHAIRPERSON: Mr Katter, we'll be glad to hear from you.

THE HON B KATTER: Mr Chairman, I don't want to take up the hearing's time with reiterating what I said in Cairns this morning. I'll concentrate my - my remarks today on - on Charters Towers, the proposal that Charters Towers should be divided in half and I can't see any purpose in speaking with restraint about that. I mean it can only conceivably remotely be explained in terms of someone trying to get a political advantage. The logic behind that is just appalling. There's no logic at all behind it.

40

Just to give you - sorry, the Federal seat of Kennedy has only been held by three families in its entire history. Mr Macdonald who was the first member was there for about 25, 30 years. And then there were the Reardons, and then there were the Katters but that's it and all of them come from Charters Towers.

50

Charters Towers has always been the historic centre of the seat. Even though it's been a small town now for probably 50 years it was the biggest town in Queensland. But culturally because it educates everyone in the Gulf country and a lot of

people in Mount Isa naturally go to the local schools but a lot of them go away to school and they go to Charters Towers.

1

For those of you that follow rugby league Nathan Fien comes from Mount Isa and - a State of Origin player but he went to the boarding schools in Charters Towers and my own son who was signed for the Cowboys he also went to the schools in Charters Towers. But they've been the sort of centre - it's been a sort of centre. It has the pest and weed research station for northern Australia is based there. The school of distance education for most of North Queensland is based there.

10

It's been the sort of rural hub as well as being quite a substantial mining town till - it's had 2,000 people up until recently. We're down to about four or 500 employees now mining there which gives it - and it's hard rock mining. I mean coal mining is just quarrying operation. Hard rock mining is fundamentally completely different. But all of North West Queensland is hard rock mining and Charters Towers also is still hard rock mining. So that's a bit of background.

20

To ask a member of parliament from Mackay to get up to Townsville and then do another couple of hours in a car to go up to Charters Towers to represent half of Charters Towers which is I mean relatively small, some 6,000 electors I just - I mean there's no - there's no logic behind that at all.

And - and I don't want to take up too much time of the Commission because I just can't see how anyone on a commission, or anywhere else, could take a proposition so ridiculous as that seriously.

30

I do want to be a little tiny bit pointed, I suppose, in pointing out that the area - the southern part of Townsville, one part of it votes very strongly liberal and the other part votes very strongly labour, and has a consistent record in both cases of voting that way. So, I mean, obviously there is tremendous feeling.

40

Now that is changing, as all voting patterns are changing, but that is particularly true in that area, that both voting patterns of both areas are changing, but - but they've had historic way of voting that way and - and hence the two sides would be arguing desperately to, you know, keep this bit in and push that bit out.

So I'm saying those things about Charters Towers because of the three big private schools there. All Souls, the Anglican school there, was the biggest private school in Northern Australia and it's still very, very big. It educates all the people from there and ties them all together culturally, if I could use that word, as well as the pest and weed research station which is very, very important to us in the cattle industry, and as well as the mining vent for all the miners kids from all the small mining towns. They've always come down to the Charters Towers schools to be educated.

50

I don't think there's a great deal that I'd want or need to add to that. The Treasurer has called a round table conference, the Federal Treasurer, for three weeks time for the clean energy corridor, and that is for the area of Pentland which will be the biggest renewable energy project in Australia or Australian history, I suppose, and it is to take power out to Mount Isa, because we've got a terrible shortage of power situation out there, to open up all the mines out there, but - but I mention it because it's most certainly receiving national attention. This will be my fourth meeting with the Treasurer on it, and - and that power will be supplied from just west of - west of Charters Towers. Again indicating the very close links between all along this line from - from Townsville to - to Mount Isa.

1

10

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman, and once again I - for the people that are here today, I said it at Cairns this morning, that people may complain about which way the redistribution is going but the simple fact of the matter is that Cairns is well and truly above quota and there's nowhere Leichhardt can go. It can't go into New Guinea. It can't go into the Gulf of Carpentaria, the sea - or the Pacific Ocean. There's only one way it can go and that's into Kennedy.

20

So, you know, Kennedy's above quota as well so Kennedy's got to take part of Leichhardt, and the only part of Leichhardt, the only part with population, is Cairns itself. So I'm left no alternative but to take parts of Cairns and then Kennedy's got to shed votes and, I mean, fairly naturally that'd be the Townsville Northern Beaches area, which I put immense amount of work in, as I explained this morning, as far as the road development there goes and - and also other things like - like the telephones, and - and it's not pleasing to me to see it all - all of that work and years of input by myself being lost but I just can't see how else the redistribution Commission could do it.

30

It'd be ridiculous to take some part of the mid-west or Mount Isa and push them south because there's nowhere for them to go. There's no population. You'd have to go down to Tamworth before you got any significant population in western - inland Australia.

40

So I think that that's about the only thing that could happen and then, of course, Townsville's got to shed population south because it's had to take all this area from Kennedy which then would take all this area, and we call it a cascade proposal and - and that's, you know, I - I always thought that the Commission would - would go in that direction because I don't - just don't think there's any other logical direction that the Commission could've travelled in. So, whilst I put a submission in, it really was, in my opinion, just rubber stamping that was going to happen anyway.

50

We thank the Commissioners for acting with integrity. I have really never had a situation in which I could cry foul at the referee, and there are very, very few situations in which I could say that. So we thank you for your good work down

through the years and, for those people who think they can come along here and impinge upon your integrity and get political advantage out of it, I think they should be ashamed of themselves, quite frankly. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. 1

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, Mr-----

THE HON B KATTER: If there's any questions anyone wants to asks, I'll only be too happy to answer them. 10

CHAIRPERSON: Yes. Any questions for Mr Katter? No. Thank you very much, Mr Katter. Miss Page. Is Miss Page in the room? Is Mr Crossley in the room?

MR CROSSLEY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I'd first like to apologise for my delay. I was held up by unforeseen circumstances.

I'm Matthew Crossley. I - my enrolled address is 37 Hansen Drive, Proserpine, but I'm currently in Townsville at the moment studying at James Cook University. The two divisions I'd like to discuss is Herbert and Dawson. 20

CHAIRPERSON: Mr Crossley, I wonder if you could keep your voice up a bit so the people in the back can hear.

MR CROSSLEY: Sorry.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. 30

MR CROSSLEY: I'm here to discuss the federal division of Herbert and Dawson. I'd personally like to see the - the Townsville suburbs of Wulguru and Annandale actually kept in Herbert for - for several reasons.

They're an intricate part of the Townsville community and, according to the guidelines for electoral redistribution, major regional centres such as Townsville should be kept as a whole as much as possible in the same electorate, and so we go into section 190 of the - your report. 40

You state that, "The Committee determined that Lavarack Barracks should remain within Herbert due to the strong community of interest that exists between the barracks and Townsville." This is definitely true. There - there's no - no - no point in doubting that but, as a point, there's actually more defence personnel who reside in Annandale than who reside on Lavarack Barracks, and Annandale is proposed to be put into Dawson with the local federal member located some 400 kilometres away in Mackay. 50

That will actually be the equivalent of voters in Brisbane having their federal member located near Bundaberg. That - that just puts it in perspective.

CHAIRPERSON: But isn't it fair to say that the member at any time need not necessarily live 400 kilometres away, depends who stands for election and who's elected.

1

MR CROSSLEY: Yes. That - that's - that's completely true and I - I looked into the proposed population and there'll still be at least 40 per cent of voters located in Mackay and 60 per cent located outside of Mackay, so it's unfeasible for the federal member to locate their office in Townsville when there's only a relatively small portion of voters there.

10

CHAIRPERSON: Isn't the reality of - the - the Australian Parliament has decided that basically there should be one vote, one value-----

MR CROSSLEY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON: -----but within a certain percentage tolerance.

MR CROSSLEY: Yes.

20

CHAIRPERSON: And it'd have to decide - in Australia if you're going to have that you're going to have some very big electorates, so it seems inescapable that in some situations the sitting member is going to be quite a long way away from some of the electors in the division.

MR CROSSLEY: That - that's completely true, and that - that's why I've proposed that the townships of Mirani and Sarina be placed back into the federal division of Dawson. They're currently in Capricornia. What I'd like to see is Annandale and Wulguru kept in Herbert and, yes, Herbert will be above quota, but it's a relatively small electorate geographically wise.

30

And so I'll just move on to - to Dawson now. At the last redistribution Mirani and Sarina, both small cane farming towns, Mirani is west of Mackay and Sarina is south of Mackay, they were taken out of Dawson and put into Capricornia and similarly they're in a situation such as Wulguru and Annandale at the moment where their Member is located in Rockhampton, some 300 kilometres away, and yet the Member for Dawson is within half an hour's drive. And Sarina and Mirani, both small sugar cane growing areas. Dawson is a sugar growing electoral. There's several other areas. There's Proserpine within the electorate, there's the Burdekin and North Mackay, all have cane farms, all have sugar mills. Very, very similar issues and yet Mirani and Sarina are in Capricornia, which is a - primarily a beef - beef and livestock seat.

40

50

So to keep Dawson at quota I would like to see Mirani and Sarina put into Dawson, whilst Annandale and Wulguru still remains part of Herbert. Realistically I - I drove from the Member for Herbert's office to Annandale, see how far it took. It took five minutes. Took five minutes drive to reach Annandale, and probably about 10 minutes to reach Wulguru.

So that would mean instead of having their Federal member located five minutes away it'll be more about four and a-half hours away. Annandale and Wulguru, they are - they do form a very, very intricate part of Townsville and - and the Herbert of - electorate. And just doing a little bit of research on this, the Member for Dawson does have a small budget for charter aircraft, but they cannot fly into Townsville airport because that's located outside the electorate of Dawson, therefore they can only fly to Ayr and they have to get a car from Ayr to Townsville, which is an hour's drive, and what that basically means is the Federal Member will spend most of their time travelling rather than actually talking to constituents and representing them. Their time will be held up travelling.

1

10

So basically in summing-up I'd like to see Herbert and Annandale retained in Herbert and the small towns of Mirani and Sarina placed into Dawson. The Member for Kennedy covered Charters Towers and the Northern Beaches so I won't hold up any more of your time.

20

CHAIRPERSON: Got any - any questions?

MR KILLESTEYN: Mr Crossley, you acknowledge that putting Annandale and Wulguru into Herbert would see the number of electors exceed the quota.

MR CROSSLEY: Yes. Yes.

MR KILLESTEYN: I think you would be aware that the Act, Commonwealth Electoral Act, which prescribes the way in which the redistributions need to be conducted, place considerable primacy on the need to have electorates within the quota; provides a tolerance, of course. Do you have any - given that you've acknowledged that the number would be in excess, do you have any suggestions as to how the committee might deal with that excess?

30

MR CROSSLEY: Yes. That - that is a hard question. I - I covered Dawson but Herbert, it's a very, very difficult case because you've got the Northern Beaches, which can either fall into Herbert or - or Kennedy, and then you've got Annandale and Wulguru. I believe the Commission will have to make a decision on which area to retain in Herbert and which area to put into a - another seat. Primarily I - I believe that Annandale and Wulguru should retain in Herbert and Northern Beaches will be at your discretion, obviously, put into Herbert or - or Kennedy.

40

MR KILLESTEYN: Mmm. See, the committee is not unsympathetic to these sorts of arguments. I think they're - they're well made.

50

MR CROSSLEY: Yes.

MR KILLESTEYN: They're clearly - obviously from Mr Eggins point of view they come with passion; from - from your point of view they come with considerable pragmatism.

MR CROSSLEY: Yes.

1

MR KILLESTEYN: But essentially it's around trade-offs between one area and another and it's difficult to make those trade-offs.

MR CROSSLEY: Yes. I - I completely understand.

MR KILLESTEYN: And everyone will have a different view about the trade-offs and we're certainly looking for solutions as to how those trade-offs may - might be made.

10

MR CROSSLEY: Yes. Yes. I - I think I - I - I understand the situation that - that the Commission is in, that - that it is a balancing act and you can't please everyone all the time.

MR KILLESTEYN: And we're required to follow the Act.

MR CROSSLEY: Yes. Yes. Yes, okay.

20

MS BRIGHT: And I suppose, Mr Crossley, if I could add on from what Commissioner Killesteyn said. Mr Eggins talked about the military and we acknowledge the great service that that does for our country, but is it - is it really the case that most of the military personnel, while some do live on the barracks, is it the case that they do live in Annandale or is it actually there are a number of other suburbs, and in weighing up a decision as to how to balance the criteria of the Act for the proposed redistribution, if the committee decides another area, as you suggest maybe Northern Beaches or something-----

30

MR CROSSLEY: Yes.

MS BRIGHT: -----be excised, are we then also still taking out defence personnel from the Herbert electorate?

MR CROSSLEY: Okay. I don't know how familiar you are with - with Townsville, particularly the southern suburbs, but Lavarack Barracks is on one side of University Drive and on the other is Annandale-----

40

MS BRIGHT: Mmm.

MR CROSSLEY: -----and I - I do know that there is a higher proportion of defence personnel living in Annandale for its proximity to - to the barracks.

MS BRIGHT: To the base.

MR CROSSLEY: Northern Beaches, I don't doubt there's defence personnel there. It's - it's relatively close to RAAF base Townsville, but they're more - there is more defence personnel located in Annandale rather than the Northern Beaches. Does that answer your question?

50

MS BRIGHT: Yes, thank you.

MR CROSSLEY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON: All right. Well, thank you, Mr Crossley. Thank you very much. 1

MR CROSSLEY: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON: Is Ms Page here? No. Anybody else like to make submissions? Yes.

MR TERRY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I - my name's Gordon Terry. My enrolled address is 43A Alligator Creek Road in Alligator Creek. I did not make a formal submission, however I was told that I would be welcome to say a few words. My understanding of the draft redistribution was much of the same as Mr Katter's explanation is that Leichhardt has to lose electors, they have to go into Kennedy. Kennedy then has to cascade those into the seats down the east coast. Kennedy - losing those seats from Kennedy is difficult because the - the population centres are - are quite far apart and as he pointed out, the - Charters Towers with high schools and - and things like that is very, very integral to other parts of Kennedy. 10 20

I think that my - I have come up with some suggestions as to what would be an alternative, and I - essentially with my criteria or my thoughts were to say if we looked at the Local Government area of Hinchinbrook, which is focussed around Ingham; you've got about four - from my understanding about four and a-half thousand electors in that area. Now, that's a cane farming area, very similar to the - the townships and - and Local Government areas in Dawson. They currently have to travel a long way to see their local Member. They - it's a regional community with the same issues as - as Dawson. 30

My thoughts would be that if you were to put the Local Government area of Hinchinbrook and perhaps a very small percentage of the Northern Beaches into Dawson, where you've got agriculture, cane, coastal cattle growing, you would perhaps have fairer representation and their local Member would be able to service them a little bit better and focussing on Mr Crossley's point, you'd also be able to fly from Mackay to Ingham and still be within his electorate. 40

It would also mean that the private schools and citizens of Annandale and Wulguru, or not private, or State schools and - and private schools of Annandale and Wulguru would remain in Herbert, where students - the students reside. The families are involved in Herbert. Their sporting clubs are in Herbert. The roads they use are in Herbert. It just seems to be the lesser of two evils. I understand in this process there's always going to be people upset, but I think that it would be - it makes more sense to me personally, and I know that doesn't count for much, it would seem more sensical to place Hinchinbrook out of Kennedy into Dawson. 50

It would - Dawson would then be on both sides of Townsville, or Herbert, rather, and that may provide some complications, but they're areas where industry's the same, issues are the same, they're not particularly tied in with the - Hinchinbrook is not particularly reliant on other areas of Kennedy in the

same way that Charters Towers is, and I - I just think that would be a - a more sensible solution and would appease the residents of Annandale, Wulguru, while still cascading Leichhardt voters down the east coast by putting them into Dawson still, just avoiding Herbert. I have nothing further.

1

CHAIRPERSON: Good. Any questions? No. Thank you very much, Mr Terry. Sorry, the lady that's just come in, are you Ms Page? No. Anybody else would like to make some submissions? Yes, the gentleman at the back?

10

MR MACDONALD: Mr Chairman, members of the panel and others. I'm Jock Macdonald, 11 Laroona Court in Annandale.

CHAIRPERSON: Are you an M-C or a M-A-C, Macdonald.

MR MACDONALD: M-A-C and a small D-O-N-A-L-D.

CHAIRPERSON: I married one so I know to be - I married a Macdonald so I know to be sensitive about these things.

20

MR MACDONALD: Yeah, yeah, I am too. The - I think it's ridiculous that Lavarack Barracks travels through Annandale to get to Townsville and also Fairfield Waters, which hasn't been mentioned and Wulguru, Stuart and Idalia, Oonoonba et cetera, the latter that I mentioned there are already in Dawson and I know those people aren't very happy but nothing much was said about that at that time.

When I first came to Townsville, which is nearly 40 years ago, I had a newsagency in the heart of the Defence Forces and as you - everyone knows, we are going to get an influx of some 2,000-odd personnel by the end of next year. That's 2000 Army personnel, but what a lot of people forget about is the hanger-oners, the grandparents, other siblings possibly that move up here. Now that's anywhere from five to 22 per cent I am told which increases that 2,000 quite a bit, and I think that - I don't know how often that these redistributions come up, but I believe that we have virtually enough voters in the Townsville area to split Townsville in two, keeping our northern suburbs in the - in the northern ones and possibly even going as far as Ingham, which is virtually a stone's throw away.

30

40

The other way, of course, we can take back Fairfield Waters, we can take back Idalia, we can take back Oonoonba and possibly even Ayr. Now for all the distribution - well, for all that's going to happen in the next few months - and with the redistribution I believe the whole thing will happen again in the next redistribution and Townsville will be split into two because I believe that the numbers will stack up like it has down south. That's about all I have to say, thanks very much, but I hate wasting money and there must be a lot of money spent in these redistributions. Thanks very much.

50

CHAIRPERSON: Yes, thank you. Any questions? Thank you, Mr Macdonald. Anybody else like to make a submission? Yes.

MRS PAGE: These are my thoughts. I've been a voter for 61 years. 1

CHAIRPERSON: I'm sorry, your name, Madam?

MRS PAGE: Boundaries should be as-----

CHAIRPERSON: Excuse me? Your - your name and address please?

MRS PAGE: Oh, Edna Page. 10

CHAIRPERSON: And where do you live?

MRS PAGE: This is my file. Boundaries should be-----

CHAIRPERSON: Sorry, where - where do you live?

MRS PAGE: Oh, 38 O'Reilly Street, Mundingburra, Townsville.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Yes? 20

MRS PAGE: Now boundaries should be as per city boundaries for Townsville not distributed for by numbers of people. To suggest that a member of Parliament located with a southern extremity of his electorate, that's 400 kilometres from his northern consistency - constituents, be able to reasonably, adequately represent them is to put it mildly, the height of stupidity.

Loss: The lack of local representation day to day, additional travel for the Dawson member, cost of two - two offices and staff, cost of travel, accommodation for the Dawson member and it's dividing a city. Members situated in Mackay has no sway with the Townsville City Council when they need local support. Benefits: Less constituents for Herbert, more for Dawson still divide a city or alternative boundaries. If division proceeds, should the member be required to reside in that part of the electorate with the most members? 30

Suggested boundaries: Townsville/Thuringowa should be left as it is and the removal of Oonoonba and Wulguru and Stuart should be placed back in Herbert. Flexibility and commonsense should be one of the main ingredients of electorate distribution. Boundaries should have been stopped at Giru. I'm sorry, but that's my thoughts. 40

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much.

MRS PAGE: Thank you. 50

CHAIRPERSON: Any questions? Thank you. Thank you, Ms Page. Any other submissions? Yes, the gentlemen there, thank you.

MR HUGHES: My name's Edward Hughes. I'm from 1 Rosebud Place, Annandale. I just want to reinforce the items of local interest and - and local topography in - in electorates. You've got Oonoonba and Fairfield Waters that have gone to Mackay, which was last redistribution, and the - I know from a

lot of people that I know there are very unhappy because they can't get through to the member and the member doesn't show any great interest in their problems. You've got Annandale and the Army that are going to be shifted to Dawson and now I hear - that I wasn't aware before - that Sarina and Mirani have gone to Capricornia. Well, that is going against the - the areas of interest because Mirani and Sarina are both sugar towns going into a beef and grazing area. You've got Wulguru - Wulguru and Fairfield Waters that have gone into Dawson which is predominantly a sugarcane growing area and then you're going to have Annandale, which has the majority of the married officer population of the Army living in it, being segregated from their place of work - and we had a meeting at Annandale on this some time ago and the thing that - there were piles of people there, most of them were Army officers. One particular person was the Army Chaplain. Now he lives in Annandale, his wife lives in Annandale and they're both in the Army and they work in Lavarack Barracks across the road from where they're going, and they're going to have different members.

Now the other thing, to get from Townsville to Mackay invariably, unless you fly in a light plane or a little plane, you have to fly to Brisbane and then back to various - whether you're going from Mackay to Townsville or Townsville to Mackay, you have to fly to Brisbane, then back again unless you fly in a relatively small aircraft. It's not - it's still a commercial but it's Qantas - Qantas Link as against a 737 or an airbus. Now you're moving - what I'm trying to say is that - that - that in previous redistributions the area of influence and community has been overlooked, and it looks like it's going to be overlooked again if Annandale goes into Dawson. That's all I want to say.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Any questions?

MR KILLESTEYN: Just a - just an observation. Again, I think the committee is not unsympathetic to the issues.

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR KILLESTEYN: There's been an number of comments which relate to splitting Townsville into north and south. Essentially that would result in approximately - let's just say 60,000 of the Townsville residents appearing in two electorates. Against the background of the requirements of the Electoral Act a further 40,000 electors would still need to be found for each of those two electorates

MR HUGHES: Well-----

MR KILLESTEYN: And that has quite dramatic implications for electorates both north and south of Herbert. Now this is where we would look for other solutions coming from the - the community.

MR HUGHES: But-----

MR KILLESTEYN: Solutions that wouldn't be as bad, if you like, or - you know, your terms----- 1

MR HUGHES: Well from Townsville the area of interest would probably flow down to as far as just north of Proserpine.

MR KILLESTEYN: There - there may not be 40,000 electors in that-----

MR HUGHES: Yeah. But----- 10

MR KILLESTEYN: -----that area. That's-----

MR HUGHES: -----that area there, if you draw a circle around and the same as Ingham. Ingham people consider Townsville as their area for major health et cetera problems. Although we've got a pretty poor hospital but the - that's where people come. The specialists and that from - when you're looking at people from Ingham to probably just south of Sarina - south of - probably Bowen come to Townsville for their hospital and everything. Therefore that - that becomes the area of influence as far as I can see. Whereas, as I say, Townsville going to Mackay would never happen. You know, someone from Annandale going to Mackay as an area of influence is just not on. 20

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MR PINK: I was going to make a comment if I can for the benefit of all the people here today. The - the Act requires that we work with a set of numbers and some tolerances around that. And the three electorates that we're dealing with here in reality, Kennedy, Herbert, and Dawson, are all projected by the - the end of the period of 2012 to be right on the edge of those tolerances. So it's very difficult to - to redesign these three electorates without having very significant impacts on a number of electorates. Those tolerances leave, you know, no opportunity to take people from one of them and put them in another. They're all pretty full and so it's a - you know, if you were - if you were going to make any significant changes to any one of them it means a big impact on all of them. 40

MS BRIGHT: And I think it's fair to say, too, another observation following on from that is in fact while those three - and in fact the four - are very close within the tolerance range the four of them to date aren't big enough with the population base to be solely concentrated around say a - a Townsville or a Cairns to be dedicated without some, if you like, neighbouring split flow on effect cascading proposal that has already come before the Commission. I was going to ask the question earlier if I may, Mr Chairman? 50

CHAIRPERSON: Certainly.

MS BRIGHT: The proposal is looking at Annandale and Wulguru and we've heard views here expressed this afternoon that that would be detrimental to the community of interest for citizens

of Townsville. The reality is that some change has to occur and - and this is part of the reason we're having this hearing this afternoon to get your views so that we can revisit and re-examine this again. And I was just wondering if, as we've been advised this afternoon, that the majority of the defence personnel actually do reside in Annandale and work next door at the base, is one palatable reason, providing all the rippling effect and flow on, is for Kelso to come out?

1

MR HUGHES: Well just answering that question, since the Ring Road's been in-----

10

MS BRIGHT: Mmm-hmm.

MR HUGHES: -----straight across the bridge it's almost as close to the army as what Annandale is.

MS BRIGHT: As what Annandale is.

MR HUGHES: And of a morning going to work now the Ring Road is pretty - really well used with army personnel coming to Lavarack Barracks.

20

MS BRIGHT: Okay. And just for the record if I also may, Mr Chair, Sarina and Mirani were actually moved in the last redistributions so these issues were looked at at that time. They're not proposed to be done again in this one.

MR HUGHES: Even when-----

30

MS BRIGHT: They stay.

MR HUGHES: -----Fairfield Waters and - and Oonoonba and Alligator Creek went - went into Dawson they take Sarina and Mirani out of Dawson and put it in Capricornia. To me that's not looking at the area of influence. That's looking at numbers and numbers aren't interested to me.

MS BRIGHT: Unfortunately, Mr Hughes, numbers-----

40

MR HUGHES: Yeah.

MS BRIGHT: -----there's the criteria in the Act for communities of interest but the overriding criteria that we are obliged to follow is in fact the numbers. And meeting the tolerances at that future projection point. But thank you.

MR HUGHES: Yeah. I'll be voting informally-----

CHAIRPERSON: Good. Thank you, Mr Hughes.

50

MR HUGHES: -----if I go to-----

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MR HUGHES: -----Dawson.

CHAIRPERSON: Any other speakers? Yes. Yes, Mr Eggins.

MR EGGINS: May I ask a question?

1

CHAIRPERSON: Yes. Sure. But can you come up to the table, please?

MR EGGINS: If we're getting about-----

CHAIRPERSON: This is Mr Eggins again.

MR EGGINS: -----about two and a-half thousand people a year moving into Townsville are youse going to take into consideration all those cities whose - whose residents are leaving those cities and coming to Townsville? Are - is the Commission going to alter their boundaries to suit the situation? Because people move today because of work experiences and if we're getting say up to now I believe we're getting about two and a-half thousand people a year moving into Townsville, somebody in the south is - is going to miss out in relationship to their place in those cities. Therefore a lot of those city's people will be moving up here. Therefore they're going to be much smaller.

10

20

And - and I feel that we are at this stage a victim of circumstance in Townsville. I do. I think we ought to be left alone by the Commission because - as I said before - I'm very passionate about Townsville. And whether we - we've got 100,000 people here we are a big community and - and altering out boundaries isn't the way to go. It's going to create so much trauma in this town. As this gentleman said, there's people who live in Annandale who kids go to school over in - in North Ward and all those sort of places. You know, it's not anymore. People - the - the Commission has got to look forward to doing the right thing by communities like Townsville. Never mind the numbers. We're all part of this country.

30

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Any other speakers? Yes. The lady - yes.

MS DARTNALL: Thank you. My name is Jean Dartnall. I live at 17 Kepler Street, Wulguru.

40

CHAIRPERSON: Sorry. Could you just spell your name, please?

MS DARTNALL: D-A-R-T-N-A-L-L.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you.

MS DARTNALL: I recognise the problem that the Commission has in getting the numbers right and that this is the core issue. And I can see that there may be no solution to this present redistribution which will not leave people cross. I wonder whether or not the Commission is in the habit of publicising its possible long term solutions to areas of this sort. In other words whatever solution you decide for this particular redistribution, would it be possible for you to say perhaps in two redistributions down the track then it might be

50

appropriate to do these - these bigger broader sweeping changes.

1

I can see that you don't want to try and introduce massive changes at one redistribution. That produces all sorts of problems, but if there were going to be big changes to the redistribution of the northern electorates, then the sooner people begin to get the ideas into their head that these are possibilities and start to think about them, the better.

10

And so that if you could say, "Well, you know, in 20 years time then Kennedy may be this shape and Leichhardt may be this shape and Herbert might be two other things entirely," that would perhaps help people to make long term decisions and help to console people if they're not happy with the short term implication.

I'd also like to say that one of the things for - for purely, I guess, sentimental reasons that has made this particular redistribution suggestion unpopular is that some of the suburbs that are going to be moved out of Herbert are very long-standing suburbs. They're not like the northern suburbs, which have a relatively short history. They're places like Oonoonba and Wulguru, which have always been part - you know, always "been part of" Townsville and, therefore, have long-standing historical connections with the centres - centre and, therefore, people feel more passionately about having them redistributed.

20

CHAIRPERSON: Do you suggest that in the long term there should be some changes to the Act in the way the system works?

30

MS DARTNALL: I don't think I know enough about the Act to have a - a detailed opinion on that. But I do think that because the population of Australia is - is traditionally a mobile one and is becoming, I think, more mobile because of - of changes in - in economic and industrial affairs, then longer term ideas about how electoral fairness can be achieved might not to be - to be floated.

40

CHAIRPERSON: see, the - the present system assumes that basically there should be one vote and one value. You can't get that-----

MS DARTNALL: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON: -----mathematically accurate, but basically the system involves-----

MS DARTNALL: Yes.

50

CHAIRPERSON: -----dividing the electors up and striking an average and saying every electorate must have electors within a pretty small margin of that average. Now-----

MS DARTNALL: I think that's entirely appropriate myself, yes.

CHAIRPERSON: Yes. So - but I understand the sort of social and emotional problems that you advert. Is there any way that you can think of that the present system should take those into account - should be altered to take those into account?

1

MS DARTNALL: I don't think so. I think we - I think - some of - some of your decisions are - I'm sorry, going to be very unpopular and people are going to write you rude letters and we just have to wear it. Maybe one of the things to take into account is that when you do significantly change the shape of an electorate, as is happening with Dawson, started in the last redistribution and will be the case now, then you ought to begin to think about, "Okay. Is there an electorate which is sufficiently geographically large to need extra expenses for double offices and things of that nature," which I know some of the larger electorates are able to - to have.

10

CHAIRPERSON: Mmm.

MS DARTNALL: That's all I have to say, thank you.

20

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much, yes.

MR KILLESTEYN: Perhaps just another observation, thank you, Ms Dartnall, I - I think there's - it's clear that there is a significant population drift into Queensland. Mr Eggins, you pointed that out as a consequence of that drift, this particular redistribution in Queensland is occurring at the same time as a redistribution in New South Wales. New South Wales has lost a seat because of the population drift that you pointed to and as a consequence of increases in population in Queensland, an extra seat is entitled to to Queensland. So there are - redrawing of boundaries going on, both in New South Wales and Queensland at the same time.

30

And indeed, it's likely that there will be a redrawing of boundaries in Victoria during 2010. So this merely reflects, I think, what is happening in the demographics of Australia, that there is a - a population shift moving north and that will continue to result in further redrawing of boundaries in the future. Which, I guess, comes to your point, Ms Dartnall, that - that there are some longer term implications here that this will continue to happen.

40

It's probably worth noting that - that the committee has attempted to keep the community interest in Townsville as whole as possible. At the moment on the proposed boundaries some 83 per cent of the population of Townsville is contained within the electorate of Herbert, notwithstanding the difficult issues that you pointed to in relation to Annandale and Wulguru, that it's still 83 per cent of the population is being kept within a single division. And that was one of the things that the committee was attempting to do was to ensure that that strong community of interest within the Townsville greater area was preserved as much as possible.

50

As to whether the Commission can move in to long term forecasting, there are some legal issues around that. The

question of redistributions only occurs after every new house of representatives sits. So that's after every election and there can really be no further projections until each new government is - is formed. Clearly there may be some other - I think if you look forward, it's quite clear that the - as I say, the population will continue to increase here in Queensland and that will involve further redrawing of boundaries.

1

CHAIRPERSON: Mr Katter, thanks.

10

THE HON B KATTER: Mr Chairman, you know, you can see the spirit of frustration that is here and - and I think it's very good-----

CHAIRPERSON: Perhaps you can repeat what you said on the way. It may not have got on the transcript.

THE HON B KATTER: Yes. But - but I - I sort of - addressing my remarks not only to the Commission, but also to the people that are here today. You must understand that the Parliament, not the - not the Commissioners, the Parliament of Australia deciding that every electorate should be the same size. Now, if there is a country on the earth that does that, I'd like you to tell me about it because I don't know any country that does that.

20

In Canada, Nunsiak, the last time I was - which is a while ago now, had 22,000 electors and - and I think it was East Quebec had 130,000 electors. You know, you - you just can't have electorates of equal size, it doesn't deliver democracy. In - in Great Britain, you would think, "Well, they wouldn't have that." Well, they do. Orkney Isles is about 20,000 people and - and that was - East London, had 130,000 last time I looked.

30

But in Australia, if you take it up with your political parties, the National Party, the Liberal Party, the Labour Party, they all voted - all three of them to have electorates of equal size. Now, all the Commissioners can do is deal with that. And we, North Queenslanders, have got to understand there's nowhere for Leichhardt to go. It can't go into New Guinea, it can't go in the Pacific Ocean or the Gulf of Carpentaria, it can only go south. And - and I'm telling you, it will be a lot worse next time, because that southern corridor south of Cairns 60,000 people will be there in the next 10 years on top of what's already there now.

40

So, I mean, they'll be shedding - you know, south - I call it cascading and it will continue. There's just no way - I mean, the population of - of Cairns is - it's a very big growth area by any standards in Australia, it will just keep going that way and pushing the people south. And there's no-one off the coast. I mean, forget about that. You know, there's a little - 27,000, but that's not really very important in the - in these electorates. There are - there are - over 200,000 people in each of these northern electorates.

50

But I - but I just can't see that there is any other way of approaching that. I mean, there's no population out west of Cairns, so you've just got to push the bottom of Cairns south. And that means then that you've got to put the - bottom of Townsville south in exactly the same way. So I hope everyone understands clearly that if you don't like what's happening here - and I can tell you, I'm one that doesn't like it at all, you - then you - you've got to get to your politicians and tell me that those laws that have to be changed.

1

This is a very primitive arrangement. No-one else in the world is doing this and that's where the problems lies and - and the Commissioners all they can do is just do their best to try and make each electorate and population about 200,000 people. So I'd just like to make those observations, which I made earlier today that I didn't make here, Mr Chairman.

10

CHAIRPERSON: Yes. Well, I think the - the point's well made, Mr Katter, and it's deeply engrained in the Australian system. It goes back to Federation. The constitution provides for approximately equal electorates with the exception of Tasmania which is guaranteed five seats, so it's-----

20

THE HON B KATTER: Well, Mr Chairman, could I - please, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but - but, you know, that was not the case before they passed this legislation. My father had 25,000 electors, I represent 95,000 electors. His electorate was very small. Really it was just Charters Towers and - and Mount Isa. But - but when we moved to this "one vote, one value system," then clearly the Kennedy electorate, as such, just vanished, you know, went to a city electorate and it'll be more or less Cairns based electorate now, where it was Townsville based before this last redistribution.

30

But - but it's very heartening for me to see the faith in democracy-----

CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

THE HON B KATTER: -----and the frustration that's there and so please understand our frustration, Mr Commissioners, and we understand it's not your fault. But we must try harder to get a bit more enlightenment in Canberra.

40

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Any other speakers? All right. Thank you. Well, we'll now conclude this hearing in Townsville. The Commission is most grateful for the thoughtful submissions that have been made to it today. Thank you very much for attending. Thank you.

50

THE COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 3.34 P.M.