

Sent: Monday, 1 August 2011 12:14 PM
To: Elections
Subject: Objection to July 2011 proposed redistribution for Molonglo
Attachments: Electoral Redistribution re Molonglo Aug2011.odt

Attached is a formal objection with respect to the latest (July 2011) version of the proposed redistribution for Canberra's electoral boundaries.

The document is in Open Office. Please contact me if there is any problem with opening it, or with the formatting.

M Foster (Dr)

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Dear Sir/Madam

This is a formal objection with respect to the latest (July 2011) version of the proposed redistribution for Canberra's electoral boundaries.

I have noted the various criteria that are legislatively required for consideration by the Augmented Commission when making electoral redistributions in the ACT. However, I consider that the latest proposal does not apply the criteria appropriately, and this is to the detriment of the overall electoral redistribution objective. In particular, the residents of O'Connor, Turner and Lyneham have been disadvantaged for no noticeable improvement in the electoral redistribution process.

One of the more noticeable aspects of the Augmented Commission's report is that it makes many assertions. Seemingly it has arrived at an idea (in particular, making Gungahlin the 7-member electorate) through listening to the loudest complaints rather than fact-based analysis of the problem. Unsubstantiated assertions are often then made to try to justify re-arranging electorates to obtain this outcome.

Examples of this less-than-adequate approach can be given by analysing several key statements in the report. Since I am an inner-north resident, I have only addressed aspects that affect this area. This approach has been prompted by my very strong view that my community of interest is best preserved by O'Connor, Turner and Lyneham remaining in the Molonglo electorate.

Example 1

The Augmented Commission also noted that many objections referred to the diverse nature and large size of the existing electorate of Molonglo (p13)

Reading the submissions, I certainly found that some Gungahlin residents made assertions about the so-called diverse nature of Molonglo. However there was no substantiation/quantification of this view, and one could just as well make a similar observation about Gungahlin and Belconnen, albeit focussing on different aspects. Under a counterview, the older infrastructure, and possibly the older population (for example), of much of Molonglo contribute in their own ways to a community of interest with particular needs.

Now that inner north areas have been alerted to the need to argue for their community of interest, the Augmented Commission might find that there are objections to the diverse nature of the new electorate of Gungahlin.

Example 2

... given too much weight to the criterion regarding existing electoral boundaries and too little weight to the other criteria related to community of interests, including economic, social and regional interests, means of communication and travel, and physical features and area. (p12)

There are some quite logical reasons why greater weight might be given to minimising changes to existing boundaries. In particular, it is relatively straight-forward and not subject to as much interpretation as "other less tangible criteria" (p13) criteria. It is only a few years until the next redistribution process, and speculations as to future growth areas are not necessarily useful.

Example 3

The Augmented Commission had sympathy with the submissions that argued that, as a rapidly growing new area, the fact that Gungahlin was split between two electorates divided the clear community of interests represented by the new community of Gungahlin, at a critical point in its development. (p12)

It could just as well be argued that much of Molonglo is undergoing growth too, though of a different type as it is more focussed on in-filling and replacing older infrastructure. This current era is also a "critical point" in the development of the inner suburbs.

Example 4

"The Augmented Commission is inclined to accept the view that Molonglo now contains more significant variations of economic, social and regional interests, and more extensive networks of communication and travel, than it did at its inception." (p13)

The relevance as well as the accuracy of this statement is debateable. In particular, every electorate would have more variation in just about everything than "at its inception".

Example 5

... proposed transfer of Gungahlin to the same electorate as Belconnen received extensive endorsement by submissions from Gungahlin residents and the Gungahlin Community Council. (p13)

Yes, because inner north residents of Turner, O'Connor and Lyneham possibly assumed that the original commission report seemed quite sensible and minimalist (as required), and so did not feel the need to defend remaining in Molonglo.

Example 6

Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner – that had close connections with each other and which were delineated by the major multi-lane thoroughfares of Northbourne Avenue and Barry Drive. The Committee also noted that two of these three suburbs were immediately adjacent to the Belconnen suburbs of Kaleen and Bruce, that they shared access to O'Connor Ridge Nature Park and that they had strong transport links along Belconnen Way, Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway. The Committee also noted these areas had a range of other connections due to their proximity, including access to schools, shops, sporting facilities and

Calvary Hospital. (p13)

These isolated observations have little discriminatory power in terms of making a decision as to what suburbs should go where. Similar statements could be made about almost any set of contiguous suburbs in the ACT. Furthermore, the commonality of links of these and other inner north suburbs to the ANU and Lake Burley Griffin could just as easily be emphasised.

Regarding transport and shopping links, as a resident of the one of the inner north suburbs that the latest proposal considers shifting to Gunghalin, I can most emphatically state that my community of interest is much more closely aligned with inner north suburbs on the other side of Northbourne Avenue than with any part of the Gunghalin electorate. I would suggest that I am not alone in this.

Example 7

While this is a major change, it is one which will make it more likely that the stability of boundaries will be enhanced in the future. (p13)

This is quite a speculative statement. More importantly, it pales into insignificance in the face of the movement of 31,600 electors under the latest proposal versus 4000 in the previous one.

It is of interest to note that the previous report noted that *its* redistribution proposal (which did not recommend transferring any inner north suburbs) had an advantage with respect to stability of boundaries:

the transfer of Crace would include in Ginninderra a developing suburb that could be expected to have high growth after the 2012 election, which may assist in preserving the stability of the boundaries at the following redistribution. (p15)

Example 8

In reaching this conclusion it agreed with the assessment made by the Redistribution Committee that, if Belconnen and Gungahlin are to be combined into a 7-Member electorate, the most appropriate suburbs to include would be Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner. (p15)

This statement is somewhat disingenuous, pulling out an assessment made by the previous Committee concerning one option without noting the reasons for the rejection by that previous Committee of this option.

In conclusion, I believe that the Augmented Commission should revert to the redistribution recommended by the Redistribution Committee since the previous proposal achieved the necessary balancing of electorate numbers without excessive changes to boundaries.

Yours sincerely

M Foster (Dr)