



North Canberra Community Council Inc.

PO Box 30 Watson ACT 2602

Redistribution Committee
ACT Electoral Commission
PO Box 272
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

Re: ACT Legislative Assembly Electoral Boundaries Redistribution 2000

There are five Community Councils in the ACT – North Canberra, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Weston Creek, and Tuggeranong. Each relates to a discrete geographic area which is fairly homogenous in character.

Community Councils address a broad range of issues of concern to residents. Amongst other things, they participate in ACT Government public consultation processes on residents' behalf, make submissions to Government, attend meetings, and make representations to Legislative Assembly Members.

While some of the issues addressed by Community Councils are Canberra-wide ones, many are unique to one Community Council area. Community Councils are therefore able to concentrate the major portion of their dealings with the Legislative Assembly on the Members for their own electorate.

Hiving off a portion of any of the Community Councils would only add significantly to the administrative burden of these unpaid voluntary organisations, forcing affected Councils into having to lobby Legislative Assembly Members from two electorates on a regular basis. It would also mean that some Members would have responsibility for different portions of a region. Hived off bits of a Community Council region would become a minor part of any newly-formed electorate. Instead of issues being of concern to a major portion of the electorate, as may currently occur, their importance would be downgraded to one of major concern to a small portion of the electorate only, thus becoming of relatively minor importance in the overall scheme of things. NCCC does not consider this to be proper or advisable.

NCCC believes that there should be three electorates, each with seven Members. We suggest that the following options be considered:

1. Weston Creek and Woden Valley (Woden Valley is not covered by a Community Council) be added to Ginninderra; and
2. All of Gungahlin be added to Ginninderra.

Of the two options, the first would appear to be the more appropriate. Although the removal of both Weston Creek and Woden Valley might seem to place Molonglo in danger of being more than 5 per cent below the quota, Gungahlin is a high growth area, and some of the urban infill developments in North Canberra will finally be occupied, thus boosting population.

With respect to the population projections determined by ABS, the fact that these incorporate information gained from forecasts of new occupied dwellings as provided by ACT Government is of no little concern.

NCCC has examined the ACT Government's Land Release Program 1999 to 2004. We have concerns regarding not only the demographic assumptions in that document, but also those relating to dwelling occupancy and the rate at which the need for new dwellings is generated.

ACT Demographics' latest population projections for the ACT 1999 to 2014, as available on the Net, using a medium case scenario in relation to net migration and the economic outlook in the May 1999 ACT Budget, predict negative net migration until 2004. The Land Release Program demographics, also supposedly using a medium case scenario with respect to net migration, assume negative net migration until 2000. The Land Release Program then goes on to assume certain dwelling occupancy rates in its formula for calculating the relationship between population increase and the demand for new dwellings generated. NCCC's examination of ABS 96 Census data on dwelling occupation and population in the ACT, showed that the Land Release Program's assumptions with respect to occupancy rates for single dwellings and multi-unit dwellings etc were significantly flawed. Weighting of the individual occupancy rates by the proportion of total population living in that type of dwelling, in order to derive the rate at which the need for new dwellings is generated, further discredited the figures used in the Land Release Program.

ABS obtains the land release data from the ACT Government and builds them into its population forecasting model in good faith. ABS should perhaps reconsider the reliability of such data in the light of our comments above. The pitfalls associated with using these land release data were further illustrated in an article in *The Canberra Times* of 22 February 2000. The article stated that Estimated Resident Population in Watson, for example, grew by 200 between June 1998 and June 1999. Urban infill was credited with the increase. That statement might have seemed quite reasonable, except for the fact that, while many multi-unit dwellings were completed or under construction at the time, few, if any, of the units at North Watson (where the infill was purported to have occurred) were occupied in June 1999. When ACT Demographics were advised of this apparent anomaly, they contacted ABS to obtain clarification. NCCC is advised by ACT Demographics that ABS' regression model is based on building approvals, Medicare registrations, and electricity connections, but that there are some administrative issues to consider when using these data. For example, the model uses a six-month lag between approval and occupation dates. ACT Demographics concedes that this assumed lag could have been too short for 1999.

NCCC strongly counsels against placing too much reliance on any land release data in population forecasting models, especially as part of the rationale for undertaking an important exercise such as this redistribution. We would prefer to defer an electoral distribution until after 2001 Census data become available.

If, after demographic assumptions used in determining the need for electoral boundary changes have been re-examined, the boundary changes are still deemed necessary, North Canberra Community Council **would not** support the fragmentation of Community Council areas as part of the redistribution process.

Lyn Davey (Miss)

Chair

11 March 2000