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- 4 AUG 2011

ACT ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION

Dear Sir,

Re: Proposed Molonglo-Ginninderra Electorates Boundary Change

I wish to lodge my strong objection to the proposal of the Augmented ACT Electoral Commission (the 'Commission') to the change of boundary between the Molonglo and Ginninderra electorates as it relates to the area of Lyneham and O'Connor. The social and political integrity of the Inner North community should not be sacrificed in this way to the interests, legitimate as they may be, of growing suburbs elsewhere.

As a resident of Canberra's Inner North (O'Connor, Lyneham) over many years, it is my experience and belief that the Inner North is a stable and established community with strong intra-communal ties. It is the integral area where I live my personal and communal life. It is an area where communal discourse is also bonded with the ANU and the central city and their residents.

The area around Gungahlin is quite distinct from that of the Inner North. Gungahlin is a rapidly growing area with major differences relating to demography (age structure, family status) and in terms of government, to requirements for physical and social infrastructure provision. The differences also relate to geography: the two areas of Gungahlin and the Inner North are substantially separated by a large area of non-residential uses, including the Mitchell industrial area, the Canberra Racecourse and the Canberra Nature Park.

To propose, as the Commission does, to conjoin electorally the Gungahlin area with that of O'Connor/Lyneham is to seriously impair the representation of residents of the latter, on account of its smaller size relative to Gungahlin, its differing requirements, and its isolation from the rest of the electorate. The proposed change would also seriously damage the integrity of the Inner North community.

In this matter I would like to refer to the Commission's interpretation of the criteria relating to redistributions set out in Section 36 of the Electoral Act. In the Commission's report *Proposed Redistribution of the ACT into Electorates for the Legislative Assembly* (2011), the Commission states (page 11) that it has a 'requirement' to be 'within +/- 5% of the quota at the time of the 2012 election'. I do not believe that this is a correct interpretation of the Act. According to Section 36(a) the duty on the Commission is to 'ensure' that the number of electors is within +/- 10% of the quota. This is the requirement. According to Section 36(b) the Commission is then charged, within these bounds, to 'endeavour to ensure' i.e. to do the best to ensure, in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 36(c), that the number of electors is within +/- 5% of the quota. The Act requires the +/- 10% figure, it does not require the +/- 5% figure. To adopt the latter as the requirement, as the Commission appears to do, would be to render Section 36(a) of the Act redundant. I would therefore contend that within the requirement of +/- 10% the Act provides sufficient flexibility for the Commission to satisfy the wishes both of the Inner North community and of the Gungahlin community with regard to numbers of electors, without doing the serious damage to the Inner North community that the Commission currently intends.

Yours sincerely,



C.L. Nobbs