



**Augmented ACT Electoral  
Commission's Proposed Redistribution**

**ACT Greens Party Submission**

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Submission to ACT Electoral Commission  
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**Subject: Augmented ACT Electoral Commission's Proposed Redistribution**

The ACT Greens write to express a number of concerns about the recent augmented proposed redistribution which changes the electoral boundaries to include parts of the Inner North in the electorate of Ginninderra.

The ACT Greens support the notion that Gungahlin should, when possible, be represented in a single electorate. However, in attempting to address this issue, i.e. that of the community of Gungahlin being broken across two electorates, the most recent proposal from the electoral commission essentially creates the same concern for another community i.e. that of the Inner North. We contend that this is not in the interests of the community of the Inner North, particularly given that ongoing strong expected growth in the population of Gungahlin will render this a short term solution. We believe that it goes against the principle outlined in the legislation that smaller changes are preferred. We also believe the proposed changes potentially results in unnecessary upheaval and confusion for residents of both the Inner North and Gungahlin should there be future changes associated with changes to the size of the Legislative Assembly in the short to medium term.

The previous proposal only changed two suburbs, one of which is a very new suburb, yet this proposal moves 3 very well established suburbs, which have always been in the Molonglo electorate since the ACT Assembly was established.

## **Comments on the second redistribution**

Section 36 of the Electoral Act sets out the criteria under which a redistribution is to be conducted. The ACT Greens make the following comments on two items under the criteria:

### **(i) the community of interests within each proposed electorate, including economic, social and regional interests;**

The ACT Greens believe that, like the community of Gungahlin, the Inner North is a community of shared interests, demonstrated through the shared services and facilities within the area, and by a shared culture exhibited in community events.

By drawing the boundary along Northbourne Avenue, the Commission is splitting this in two.

The community of the Inner North is united through:

- The physical separation between the Inner North and other parts of Canberra by O'Connor Ridge to the West, the Lake Burley Griffin, Mount Ainslie/Majura to the East, and EPIC to the North. It is a physically separate community;
- Sullivan's Creek runs from one side to the other and unites it;
- The many community festivals held on an Inner North basis such as the recent series of wetland festivals and the Majura Festival;
- Representation by one community council – that is the North Canberra Community Council;
- Dickson as the group centre is the major shopping destination for all of Inner North;
- District sporting grounds provided for the whole of the Inner North; and
- The one college for the area located in Dickson.

The Inner North community also faces common challenges, including:

- Traffic management issues as people use the suburban streets to reach further destinations;
- Transport issues on the Northbourne Avenue corridor;
- Urban densification of the area – in the suburbs and along Northbourne Avenue;
- Redevelopment of older houses;
- Changes to the central area around Civic;
- An ageing population; and
- Ageing infrastructure such as footpaths, shops and schools.

Similarly, the community of Gungahlin also has challenges unique to its community, and whilst the Greens support addressing how those issues might be best represented within the electoral distribution framework, we do not support creating similar challenges in another area as a by-product of resolving the issues for Gungahlin.

However, the ACT Greens also believe that there is some commonality of interest between the Inner North and Gungahlin. Both areas are growing in population. Many people from Gungahlin use Dickson as their shopping area, partly for historical reasons. Many people from Inner North also shop to some extent in Gungahlin and use some facilities there. Both areas share Northbourne Avenue as a major road and there is a clear shared interest in the Inner North and Gungahlin around transport planning. Much of the congestion being experienced in the Inner North is resulting from the growth of Gungahlin.

It could be considered that, at least in the short term, leaving the two areas in a single electorate would be preferable in seeking positive solutions to some of these issues.

In contrast Belconnen is not growing to such an extent and has different issues to both Gungahlin and Inner North.

*(ii) the means of communication and travel within each proposed electorate;*

The Inner North and Gungahlin are well connected by Northbourne Avenue. Most bus routes to Gungahlin go through the Inner North. The connection between Gungahlin and Belconnen is not as great, as the Gungahlin Drive Extension goes through O'Connor Ridge, not a residential area.

*(iii) the boundaries of existing electorates; and*

The proposed redistribution will mean that all of Gungahlin (except Nicholls which is already in Ginninderra), and the western half of Inner North, will change electorates from Molonglo to Ginninderra. The Greens believe that the criterion in the legislation supports minimal change. The proposed second redistribution cannot be described as a minimal change.

### **Overall comments against the criteria**

The ACT Greens appreciate that the commission is in a position that, given the number and size of electorates, there is no perfect solution that meets all criteria. From the point of view of the 'community of interest' criteria, both of the two proposed redistributions solve one problem and create another. Either Inner North or Gungahlin will be divided. However taking into account the criteria of 'boundaries of the existing electorates', our conclusion is that the whereas the first redistribution is consistent with that criteria, the second is not.

## **Process issues**

While the redistribution has been commented on in the media, most of this commentary has been on the possible effects on political parties, it's likely that very few members of the public in the Inner North would be aware that their region is proposed to be split into two by an electoral boundary. The ACT Greens believe that such significant electorate changes should be supported by more extensive public engagement before they are incorporated into legislation.

## **Longer term issues**

The Greens believe Gungahlin should, ideally, be wholly within one electorate. However, we would suggest that such a radical re-drawing of the electoral boundaries should not be undertaken for the 2012 election, but reviewed within the context of debate about resizing the Legislative Assembly, an issue that has been under consideration for some time. This would be a more logical time to undertake major boundary change, and as this remains a live political discussion, is a relevant factor for consideration.

This is particularly pertinent as it is likely to be the case that the Inner North suburbs, moved into Ginninderra under this proposal, would be re-incorporated into Molonglo at the next redistribution. This would result in compounded confusion for voters. We believe that it is preferable to gradually expand Ginninderra, rather than make two significant changes to Molonglo over two or three electoral cycles. .

## **Conclusion**

The ACT Greens support the Commission's first redistribution, which was one of minimal change and left the electorate of Molonglo essentially the same with the transfer of Palmerston and Crace into Ginninderra..