

ALP Submission to ACT Legislative Assembly Electoral Boundaries Redistribution 2000

Background

The Electoral Act 1992 provides that a redistribution of electorates for the ACT Legislative Assembly must begin as soon as practicable after the third Saturday in October two years before the next general election is due.

The Electoral Act and the Self-Government Act provide that the Redistribution Committee and the augmented Electoral Commission shall

- ◆ ensure that the number of electors in an electorate immediately after the redistribution is within the range of not greater than 110 per cent, or less than 90 per cent of the quota;
- ◆ endeavor to ensure, as far as practicable, that the number of electors in an electorate at the time of the next general election of members of the Legislative Assembly will not be greater than 105 per cent or less than 95 per cent, of the expected quota for the electorate at that time; and
- ◆ duly consider - (i) the community of interests within the proposed electorate, including economic, social and regional interests; (ii) the means of communication and travel within each proposed electorate; (iii) the physical features and area of each proposed electorate; (iv) the boundaries of existing electorates; and (v) the boundaries of divisions and sections fixed under the Districts Act 1966.

On the current boundaries, Ginninderra is projected to be 7.0 per cent below the quota in October 2001. Molonglo is projected to be 5.6 per cent above the quota and Brindabella is projected to be 0.9 per cent below the quota.

Options

The Electoral commission has itself outlined a number of proposals; these include:

- ◆ Adding one or more Gunghalin suburbs to Ginninderra
- ◆ Adding one or more North Canberra suburbs to Ginninderra
- ◆ Making Ginninderra the seven member seat by adding either Gunghalin and North Canberra or Gunghalin and Weston Creek

The ACT Branch of the Australian Labor Party has considered these options and decided to favour the first (*Maintain Ginninderra at 5 members and move the Gungahlin suburb of Nicholls out of Molonglo and into Ginninderra*).

The second option would be difficult to support in respect of the *community of interest criteria* as North Canberra is distinctly separate from Ginninderra both in respect of geography and history. The same applies to any proposal to add Weston creek suburbs to Ginninderra. Weston Creek and Belconnen are separated by considerable distance, open paddocks, pine forests and a river. The two areas have different community focal points.

The third option represents a far bigger change to the electoral structure. ACT residents have been subjected to many electoral changes over the past 20 years.

- ◆ The old advisory Assemblies had a Senate type of electoral system with two electorates, then the first self-government Assemblies had a D’Hont system with one electorate. Currently we have the 3 electorate Hare Clarke system with three electorates
- ◆ The federal electorates have gone from two to three divisions and then back again in the space of seven years.

With self-government still to gain the affection of the electorate it is vital to bring some stability to the system.

The table below highlights the projected situation if boundaries are not changed and the outcome resulting from the first option, favoured by this submission.

Electorate	Quota 2001	Number of electors projected-existing boundaries	Deviation from quota	Number of electors-suggested boundary changes	Deviation from quota
Ginninderra	63,791	59,345	-7.0%	62,384	-2.2%
Molonglo	89,307	94,335	5.6%	91,296	2.2%
Brindabella	63,791	63,208	-0.9%	63,208	-0.9%

This proposal meets the statistical requirement of no more than a 5 per cent variation from the projected quota as well as having the least impact on the community of interests within the proposed electorate, including economic, social and regional interests;

The principal advantage of this proposal is that it involves minimal disruption to the existing electoral boundaries. **Only 3,039 voters will be relocated into another electorate.**

The splitting of Gungahlin into two electorates is unfortunate but represents the least-worst option. The suburb of Nicholls is contiguous to Hall, Spence and Evatt, all of which are in Ginninderra. Nicholls has established employment, shopping and transport links to the Belconnen area. Nicholls is also a feeder suburb for two Belconnen colleges, Copland and Lake Ginninderra.