



**The Australian Greens (ACT)
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To the
Redistribution Committee
ACT Electoral Commission
PO Box 272
Civic Square
ACT 2608

Re: Comments on proposed redistribution of ACT electoral boundaries
Submission on behalf of the ACT Greens.

Introduction

In deciding on the most appropriate electorate sub-division we use these key guiding principles:

Protection of communities of interest

Community groups that have common interests should, if possible, be represented by the same Assembly members. In the present contexts, these community groups more or less correspond to the recognised townships, such as Woden, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin.

Fairness in elected numbers of Members per voter;

There should be a closely similar number of voters per Member of the Assembly. This requirement is enshrined in legislation.

Contiguosness of the area

Electorates should be contiguous so that they represent easily recognisable physical units. Hence, electorates that might consist of a few suburbs of Tuggeranong and a few of Belconnen should generally be avoided even if that could achieve other objectives.

Consistency over time

For voters to gain familiarity with their electorates, and for elected Members to have the chance to represent the same voters in consecutive elections, it is necessary to as much as possible maintain continuity over time. Hence, boundary changes should be avoided unless the other principles given above make a compelling case for a change of boundaries.

The current situation

Currently, the ACT boundaries have the clear problem that the Gungahlin community is split into two different electorates. It strongly violates one of our key principles, that communities of interest should be protected. The undesirability of breaking the community of interest of the Gungahlin community and placing Gungahlin into two separate electorates has been pointed out in submissions to the Redistribution Committee by Ms Darnell, The ACT Equality Party, the ACT Democrats and the Gungahlin Community Council.

The current situation is clearly not desirable and the disadvantage for the people of Gungahlin is obvious. However, the question must be asked whether there is any alternative boundary arrangement that would not lead to similar problems.

The ACT Equality Party proposed four different arrangements that would meet the numerical requirements of the Electoral Act. However, none of the proposed alternatives solve the problem of breaking the continuity of the Gungahlin community without breaking other communities of interest.

Similarly, the ACT Democrats also proposed an alternative arrangement that would solve the problem for Gungahlin by creating a similar problem for other communities.

The suburbs Chifley, Torrens and Pearce, placed in the electorate of Brindabella, have also been a long-standing anomaly and placed away from their community of interest, but for that anomaly, too, there appears to be no possible solution.

Overall recommendation

While the problems with the current arrangements are obvious, and, indeed, highly undesirable, we cannot see a way of solving these problems without creating equally significant problems somewhere else. None of the solutions that have been suggested appear to be an improvement on the current situation despite its obvious undesirability.

Hence, we concur with the view put forward by the Proportional Representation Society, that the current boundary arrangements be maintained in the interest of continuity and stability.

Miko Kirschbaum for
The ACT Greens