



AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
Australian Capital Territory Branch



**Redistribution Committee
ACT Electoral Commission
Level 2, 12 Moore St
CANBERRA ACT 2601**

Dear Redistribution Committee Members

I make the following submission to the Redistribution Committee as the Secretary and Registered Party Officer of the Australian Capital Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party (ACT Labor).

In making this submission I note the Redistribution Committee is bound by section 36 of the Electoral Act and section 67D of the Commonwealth *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988*.

Further, I specifically refer to the requirements of the Electoral Act and the Self-Government Act that provides that the Redistribution Committee and the augmented Electoral Commission shall; -

- (a) ensure that the number of electors in an electorate immediately after the redistribution is within the range of not greater than 110%, or less than 90% of the quota;
- (b) endeavour 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%, or less than 95%, of the expected quota for the electorate at that time; and
- (c) duly consider -(i) the community of interests within each 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 2002*.

In making the following points I acknowledge that no changes were made to the electoral boundaries following the redistribution process in 2003 and that on current projections all three electorates will fall within the acceptable range of the expected quota at the time of the 2008 Election.

That stated, I am concerned that, while within the limits set by legislation, if no change is made to the boundaries as part of this redistribution then there will be significant difference of variance from the quota between the electorate of Molonglo compared with the two five member electorates of Brindabella and Ginninderra.

Of more concern would be that with no change to the boundaries and with the current population growth estimates the electorate of Molonglo at the next election would be reaching the upper permissible limit of variance from the quota, at 4.38%. Furthermore it is the electorate of Molonglo that contains the vast majority of high-growth suburbs such as Gungahlin (excluding Nicholls), Barton, Braddon, Turner, Kingston and Phillip.

This significantly heightens the chance that with no change to current boundaries the electorate of Molonglo may well exceed the limits set by the legislation by the time of the next ACT Election.

While the legislation allows for a 5% positive or negative variance on the estimated quota for an electorate at the time of the next election, ACT Labor believes that the Committee should still seek to best protect the principle of '*one vote, one value*' and accordingly look to minimise such variances.

Although ACT Labor has always advocated for stability in the electoral boundaries it would appear that some minimal change on this occasion, in reducing the electorate of Molonglo, would be appropriate in seeking to achieve the above principle.

I note that the Redistribution Committee of the Australian Electoral Commission made changes to the boundaries of the Federal Electorates of the ACT to correct the differential between the two seats caused by the high growth in the northern part of Canberra.

A minimal redistribution of ACT electoral boundaries is not done as easily while still protecting some discrete 'community of interest' issues.

ACT Labor has previously noted its concern over the separation of the suburb Nicholls from the electorate that contains the majority of other suburbs that make up the Gungahlin region. ACT Labor has previously stated that it would be ideal if all of the Gungahlin suburbs were contained within the one ACT Electorate, however as noted in our submission in 2000 we recognise that having some Gungahlin suburbs in the Ginninderra Electorate is the only way to maintain the current electoral structure without major or radical change.

While my recommendation to the Redistribution Committee on this occasion is for minimal change I believe that in light of the continuing population trends and the pressure they are placing on the current ACT electoral boundary structure, the Committee should give consideration to foreshadowing some more significant electoral boundary change options for future redistributions.

I look forward to viewing Committee's Proposed Redistribution Report.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Cossey
ACT Secretary
Australian Labor Party

8 March 2007