

**From:** Andrew Bajkowski  
**Sent:** Friday, 5 August 2011 6:48 PM  
**To:** Elections  
**Subject:** Re distribution of ACT electorates - submission by Andrew Bajkowski and Caroline Wallace

Mr Phillip Green  
ACT Electoral Commissioner,  
ACT Electoral Commission  
P O Box 272  
Civic Square ACT 2601

5 August 2011

Dear Commissioners

### **Re distribution of ACT electorates**

We recently became aware that the ACT Electoral Commission is planning to move the suburb in which we live (Turner) from the seat of Molonglo into Ginninderra. We thank the Commission for the opportunity to respond to this proposed decision.

We object to this taking place and would urge the Commission to reconsider the need for such a major distribution. Our understanding is that the original redistribution proposed moving two Gungahlin suburbs — Crace and Palmerston — into Ginninderra. However, objections by some Gungahlin residents have thus led to a new proposal that would result in a split of the inner north into two electoral seats by moving Turner, O'Connor and Lyneham (over 30,000 voters) with Gungahlin and Belconnen suburbs.

We think this is undemocratic — and we would have objected earlier had there been more consultation about this process.

In relation to guidelines the Commission is to consider in arriving at its decision, we would make the following points:

### **Guideline C (i) specifies the need for due consideration for the community of interests within each proposed electorate including economic, social and regional interests**

By way of illustration, we as residents of Turner use sporting and recreational facilities at the Australian National University, libraries in Dickson and Civic, eat at restaurants in Braddon, Dickson and Watson and have memberships in local clubs, such as the White Eagle Club, Turner Bowling Club, Braddon Bowling club and ACT Leagues Club (Braddon). We shop at local supermarkets and purchase goods and services from small businesses in the area — hair dress salons, bike shops, chemists and newsagents. We know the proprietors personally as they have run these businesses for many years.

Strong social and family links exist between people in our suburb (as well as in O'Connor and Lyneham) with people in Ainslie, Braddon, Dickson, Watson, Downer and Watson. These are socially organic connections that sustain informal and voluntary people-to-people networks that provide important - albeit not necessarily formally recognised social services - including child care and help for the elderly. Although

redevelopment is slowly changing the local demographic, relative to newer parts of Canberra, there is still a higher proportion of people aged over 65 due to major aged care accommodation in suburbs such as Ainslie.

At the same time, North Canberra residents tend to share common social values that have a distinct electoral voice that is reflected in the current composition of the Legislative Assembly.

The implications of the proposed change for the seat of Molonglo for people in North Canberra are very significant in that this would inequitably marginalise the inner north electorally by denying our representation as a distinct geographic and social community with its own identity entitled

to a fair voice in the Legislative Assembly on issues of common interest and concern: how densification and redevelopment is managed; the future of Dickson college and other public schools; stormwater and sewerage and other infrastructure needs (for instance, cycle paths); health centres, and many other issues.

Apart from being older and established communities, we also depend on the same community facilities and public amenities, use the same parklands and ovals for recreation purposes, are members of local inner north-based clubs and associations and read the same local newspapers and newsletters. So we belong together in the same seat. As a community, we identify as North Canberra and do not distinguish ourselves as a discrete set of suburbs - we are part of the Braddon, Hackett, Dickson, Watson and Downer communities.

We do not belong with Gungahlin — their needs and interests are different to ours. Nor do we have much in common with Belconnen voters and issues their MLAs seek to address.

**Guideline C (ii) requires due consideration of the means of communication and travel within each proposed electorate.**

Suburbs such as Turner, Braddon, Reid and Campbell are within walking distance of the city. Issues such as cycle access, footpath safety, lighting, and parking are important and different in nature to amenity and infrastructure concerns in newer suburbs in Gungahlin and Belconnen.

Traffic management is a major concern for people in North Canberra — and our concerns are entirely different in nature to Gungahlin or Belconnen residents since we reside in areas which become heavily congested as commuters travel to major employment centres in city centre, Russell and ANU and in and around the Parliamentary Triangle, which is situated in the Molonglo electorate.

**Guideline C (iii) requires due consideration of the physical features and area of each proposed electorate.**

Parts of the inner north coupled with older areas of the inner south comprise the bulk of areas in Canberra with recognised heritage streets and buildings that are governed by relevant zoning and planning controls. This gives these areas a particular character ; it is also important for the efficacy of public consultation processes that the ACT government engaged us on, especially as it revises the Territory Plan and devises new neighbourhood master plans. Voting in the Assembly is important for public accountability in terms of how well this is managed.

Turner, Braddon, Lyneham and Dickson are affected by the Territory Government housing re-development program. Voters share similar concerns related to the quality

of housing, privacy and the preservation of green space. The Northbourne Precinct proposal separately envisages high rise unit development on a significant scale. To separate voters on one side of Northbourne Avenue from the other would not be fair.

## **Conclusion**

If the Assembly is to more effectively manage and balance issues and interests affecting different parts of the city and its distinct communities, it is more sensible to maintain like-with-like and minimise electoral boundary changes given the very different nature between newer and older parts of Canberra. The proposal to move Crace and Palmerston was an equitable and sensible one given the interests the Commission had to balance (which it did very well). On the other hand, the proposal to expand Ginniderra seems totally disproportionate to the balancing of interests that all of us seek.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Bajkowski

And

Caroline Wallace