

From: John Symond
Sent: Friday, 5 August 2011 11:33 AM
To: Elections
Subject: A submission concerning the proposed changes to ACT Electoral Boundaries
Attachments: Friends of O'Connor ACT Electoral Commissioner.doc; ATT00001.htm

I submit the attached letter on behalf of an ACT registered association.

John Symond
Chairman of the Friends of O'Connor Association Inc.

Friends of O'Connor
ACT Association Number A05026

ACT Electoral Commissioner
Australian Capital Territory Electoral Commission

Dear Sir or Madam,

**An objection to proposed changes to
ACT Legislative Assembly electoral boundaries**

Our association represents the interests of local residents and business people.

The 'Friends of O'Connor thank the Augmented Commission for the opportunity to make a submission, at this late stage, and we acknowledge the difficulty the Commission faces in making an equitable decision. The Commission is on record as having said:

"any attempt to avoid splitting Gungahlin must of necessity split another district."

We submit the following points regarding the current proposal to move Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner (LOT) into an enlarged Ginninderra electorate:

1. The creation of a new seven member electorate should be canvassed Canberra-wide. It has been argued for by only one of Canberra's regions - Gungahlin.

[The 2007 Augmented Commission report (page 28) noted that "only representatives and/or residents of Gungahlin have argued for changing the location of the 7 member electorate." The location of the 7-member electorate has therefore not been a Canberra-wide issue.]

2. The Commission has accepted that there is a community of interest with 'adjacent north Canberra suburbs', and has stated earlier.

"While Lyneham and O'Connor share some interests with the adjacent Belconnen suburbs, particularly O'Connor ridge, the new Gungahlin Drive extension forms a natural barrier between them. The Committee considers that Lyneham and O'Connor have much stronger links with the adjacent north Canberra suburbs."

This is even more true of Turner.

3. The disruption of a long established community:
The 2011 Redistribution Committee's Report (aka 'the first report') discussed the option of moving Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner (LOT) to Ginninderra and concluded on page 19:

The Committee is also concerned that this option would significantly disrupt the community of interests that Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner share with neighbouring (north) Central Canberra suburbs. As the various Central Canberra suburbs were developed and settled much earlier than the suburbs of Belconnen and Gungahlin, it is arguable they have much more in common with each other than they do with the suburbs developed more recently. For example, it could be argued that Lyneham, Turner and O'Connor have much closer connections to the university precinct of Acton, the adjacent City area and the neighbouring suburbs of Braddon, Dickson, Downer and Watson than they do with Belconnen or Gungahlin.

However, the 2011 Augmented Commission's report (aka the second report) paradoxically claimed that barriers with Belconnen such as O'Connor Ridge are actually links, clearly contradicting the earlier report by the Augmented Commission itself.

Northbourne Avenue is an insignificant barrier between the suburbs of the Inner North and has no intrinsic merit as an electoral boundary, whereas O'Connor Ridge, far from being a *connection* between LOT and Belconnen, is in fact a *barrier*.

4. *Densification and urban in-fill.*

The planned densification of population along Northbourne Avenue will create, rather than diminish, community between both sides of Northbourne Avenue. The expected densification of population elsewhere in the inner north creates a distinct set of issues and interests different from issues in other more recently developed suburbs.

5. *Moving the 'LOT' suburbs is unnecessarily disruptive and may need to be reversed later.*

The changes in the second proposal would lead to a major change in boundaries and would substantially disrupt residents in both Gungahlin and the Inner North. This is not necessary or desirable. In addition, Gungahlin's expected growth might result in the three 'LOT' suburbs in Inner North, being moved back to Molonglo in the 2016 redistribution.

Future population trends will require more redistributions, and the correct course for 2011 is to make the *minimal changes* suggested in the Commissions first proposal.

6. *The 'Friends of O'Connor' therefore submit that the least disruption to voters and to community loyalties would be achieved by moving Crace and Palmerston as originally proposed. Crace has a population of less than 200. This would be consistent with the clearly desirable continued progression towards the electoral union of Gungahlin with Belconnen.*

7. *We note our concern that the means of public notification have been inadequate, thus inhibiting public debate and the democratic process, and giving an unreasonable advantage to those who have been made aware, by good fortune, of the redistribution*

issue earlier in the process. We request an exact description of the means by which the public was notified.

8. We note that the legal requirement for three electorates, with 7,5,5 members, and geographical contiguity, greatly constrains the decision and makes the disappointment of some voters inevitable.

We therefore believe that the interests of Canberra would be better served by three electorates of seven members each, which we understand would require legislation both at the local and the federal level. We would be interested to know, from the Commission, whether that solution would make the issue of boundaries less contentious.

Yours sincerely,

John Symond
Chairman, The Friends of O'Connor Inc