

Dear Redistribution Committee Members,

I make this submission on behalf of ACT Labor as the party's Secretary and Registered Officer.

ACT Labor welcomes the opportunity to participate in the redistribution process to determine the boundaries for the Divisions of the ACT for the 2020 ACT Legislative Assembly election.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the professionalism and conduct of Elections ACT in the regulation and operation of our electoral system. The ACT has greatly benefited from the innovations that have been implemented by Elections ACT and our small democracy is all the better for it.

This submission will make a series of recommendations for the consideration of the Redistribution Committee regarding the placement of boundaries for the five divisions of the ACT. This submission relies on the population projections released by the Redistribution Committee and the guidelines for submissions.

The 2015 Redistribution laid down the basic contours for the Divisions of the ACT that will form the basis of our electoral boundaries for the foreseeable future and this provides the basis for our submission.

I look forward to seeing the results of this process.

Kind regards

Matthew Byrne
Secretary, ACT Labor

Context

In 2015, the Redistribution Committee determined the boundaries for the five new electorates that would be contested for 25 seats of the Legislative Assembly.

In our submission, we argued that communities of interest centred on the five major town centres of the ACT should form the basis of the new divisions:

“The ACT’s local communities are based on the “town centres” developed by the former National Capital Development Commission (NCDC): North and South Canberra is the original ‘Burley Griffin’ Canberra or what would be called inner city in other cities. Of the new towns Woden was first in the 1960s, followed by Belconnen and Weston Creek in the 1970s, then Tuggeranong in the late 1970s to 1980s. Gungahlin is the most recent dating from the 1990s.

ACT Labor has a clear position that, as far as reasonably possible, the five new electorates should be centred on the five most prominent town centres of the ACT: Tuggeranong, Woden Valley, Canberra City, Belconnen and Gungahlin.

It is our belief that the town centres of the ACT have developed distinct identities in the years since self-government and these deserve to be reflected in the redistribution. The growth in these town centres has affected how Canberrans live, work and play and we argue that they provide the Redistribution Committee with the most logical basis from which to draw new boundaries.”

This position has not changed. With the need to make amendments to the boundaries of the five electorates due to a growing ACT population, we reiterate our support for the basic structure of the five current electorates and therefore we will be arguing for a minimal redistribution that protects the integrity of these five divisional boundaries.

As you will see in the map we submitted via the online Mapping Tool, we have recommended that the five electorates be redistributed as follows:

Yerrabi and Ginninderra

A small shift in boundaries from Yerrabi to Ginninderra is required to satisfy the population projections for these districts.

We submit that the suburbs of Evatt and Mackellar, along with the rural Belconnen District 2, be moved from Yerrabi to Ginninderra so that the boundary dividing these two electorates now be:

- the Barton Highway from the NSW/ACT border down to the intersection of Barton Highway and William Slim Drive,
- William Slim Drive to the intersection of William Slim Drive and Ginninderra Drive,
- then Ginninderra Drive to the suburban boundary of Kaleen.

Evatt and Mackellar were moved into the new division of Yerrabi in order to satisfy the population needs of the new electorate and because the Belconnen district was too large to be able to maintain these suburbs within the boundaries of Ginninderra. Population growth in the Gungahlin district has necessitated this change.

These are the only changes we believe are required for these electorates.

Brindabella

On current projections, the current boundaries for Brindabella do not have a large enough population to satisfy the criteria of the Electoral Act.

When the boundaries were determined in 2015, it is our understanding that over time the large suburb of Kambah – which was placed in the new division of Murrumbidgee – would have to be relocated into Brindabella to balance out the fast growing Molonglo district with the slower rate of growth in the Tuggeranong district.

For this redistribution we submit that the area of Kambah labelled “Kambah East” on the mapping tool be redistributed into Brindabella.

Murrumbidgee and Kurrajong

By redistributing Kambah East into Brindabella it becomes necessary to consider the division boundaries for Murrumbidgee and Kurrajong as Murrumbidgee falls 1.66% below the projected population for that area.

At this point it is worth examining the criteria used in Part 4, 36 of the Electoral Act to consider the redistribution of divisional boundaries.

Paragraph ‘36) b)’ says “[the Commission shall] 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 ascertained in accordance with the formula...”.

Paragraph ‘36) c)’ outlines the other criteria that the Commission must also take into account when considering the redistribution of boundaries i.e. communities of interest, means of communication and transport, existing boundaries of districts and electorates and natural features.

If one is to strictly apply the criteria as set out in ‘36) b)’, then we believe that the Commission will have to move a suburb of the inner south that borders the electorate of Murrumbidgee into that electorate.

On that basis the three best candidates for redistribution are Yarralumla, Deakin and Red Hill.

It is our view that the Commission should consider whether it is practicable to redistribute a single suburb from the electorate that incorporates its natural community of interest – Kurrajong – into an electorate with which it has very little relationship – Murrumbidgee.

We believe that this would create unnecessary confusion for the residents of whichever suburb is redistributed as to who their local representatives are. We think that this will create an inequity of representation for those residents in the inner south because they are unlikely to receive the same level of representation when placed in an electorate with which they have little connection.

We believe that the costs to the local community outweigh the problem of Murrumbidgee falling 1.66% below the projected quota threshold.

In order to comply with the projected quota criteria, we have chosen to move the suburb of Red Hill into Murrumbidgee. Red Hill shares the Red Hill Nature Reserve with Garran and Hughes which provides a natural link to connect these suburbs. Red Hill is also connected to Murrumbidgee via Hindmarsh Drive.

Future Considerations

The population of the ACT is going to change significantly over the coming years and this will create new challenges for future Redistribution Committees.

The growth of the Molongo district, infill of north Canberra and construction of new suburbs in West Belconnen foreshadow a need for significant change to electoral boundaries in the next three terms.

The Commission may wish to give Canberrans an insight into the potential changes to electorate boundaries by considering the placement of sparsely populated districts such as the eastern districts of the ACT – Jerrabomberra, Symonston, Hume, as well as Belconnen District 1 and 2 and Tuggeranong District 1.

Whilst largely symbolic, this could give Canberrans a view on how our electorates might change over time.