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Cc:

Subject: OBJECTION TO NEW PROPOSED 2011 ELECTORATE REDISTRIBUTION
Attachments: NCCC Objection to 2011 Electorate Redistribution.doc

Please accept the attached objection on behalf of the North Canberra Community Council

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OBJECTION TO NEW PROPOSED 2011 ELECTORATE REDISTRIBUTION

The North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) appreciates the opportunity that the 2011 Augmented Electoral Commission has provided in seeking the community's views on its Proposed Redistribution of 5 July 2011, which outlines its decision to propose major changes to the electoral boundaries for the ACT.

The NCCC agrees with the Augmented Commission that its proposal differs significantly from the 2011 Redistribution Committee's proposal of 5 May 2011. The NCCC must therefore object to the 2011 Augmented Electoral Commission's Proposed Redistribution of 5 July 2011. This objection is due to this proposed redistribution being less compliant with the *Electoral Act 1992* (the Act) than is the 2011 Redistribution Committee's proposal of 5 May 2011.

The NCCC is particularly concerned with the proposal to move the Inner North suburbs of Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner from the electorate of Molonglo to the electorate of Ginninderra. In doing so, the 2011 Augmented Commission has applied Section 36(c) of the Act significantly differently from the 2011 Redistribution Committee, the 2007 Augmented Commission, the 2007 Redistribution Committee and the bodies involved in the 2003 and 2000 redistributions.

To elaborate, Section 36(c) of the Act states that in making a redistribution of electorates, the augmented commission shall duly consider—

- (i) the community of interests within each proposed electorate, including economic, social and regional interests; and
- (ii) the means of communication and travel within each proposed electorate; and
- (iii) the physical features and area of each proposed electorate; and
- (iv) the boundaries of existing electorates; and
- (v) the boundaries of divisions and sections fixed under the *Districts Act 2002*.

In moving Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner from Molonglo to Ginninderra, the NCCC submits that the Augmented Committee's proposed redistribution violates all of Section 36 except for Section 36(c)(v). In fact, the redistribution goes against conclusions from previous redistributions as recently as 2007. For example, the Augmented Commission's Final Redistribution Report of 2007 (the previous redistribution) states emphatically on page 59:

transferring (to Ginninderra) all three of these suburbs (Lyneham, O'Connor, Turner) would further disrupt the communities of interests these suburbs share with the adjacent north Canberra suburbs.

For these reasons, and the fact that this would represent a substantial change to the electoral boundaries, the Committee considered that neither of these options was very suitable.

There have been no significant changes in the Inner North since 2007, so even by the Augmented Commission's standards the proposed redistribution violates Section 36(c)(i) and 36 (c)(iv).

The 2007 Final Report also states on the same page, in the scenario of transferring Lyneham and O'Connor to Ginninderra, that:

The Committee considered that Lyneham and O'Connor share significant communities of interests with the adjacent north Canberra suburbs, such as Watson, Downer, Dickson and Turner. These suburbs were developed at similar times and share similar socioeconomic characteristics, as well as transport links, schools and shopping and employment facilities. 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.

Duplicating the Gungahlin Drive extension only increases the barrier, which is certainly greater than barriers of other roads such as Northbourne Avenue. The 2011 Redistribution Committee's Report also discusses the option of moving Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner to Ginninderra and concludes 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.

For the above reasons, the Committee concludes that it could not propose this change to the existing boundaries.

The NCCC submits that the descriptions provided above show that the 2011 Augmented Commission's proposal, without even considering existing electoral boundaries, violates Section 36(c)(i), (ii) and (iii) of the Act. It could also be argued that the Inner North suburbs,

including Lyneham, O'Connor and Turner, have more issues in common with Inner South Canberra suburbs due to similar periods and types of development.

However, the 2011 Augmented Commission's report paradoxically tries to claim that barriers with Belconnen such as O'Connor Ridge are actually links, clearly contradicting the earlier report by the Augmented Commission itself. The NCCC therefore supports the 2007 and 2011 descriptions above as accurate and questions contradicting statements in the 2011 Augmented Commission's report.

All of the strong evidence above, provided by the Augmented Commission and Redistribution Committee themselves, begs the question of why now make such a dramatic change in electoral boundaries that is so at odds with Section 36(c) of the Act?

There has been strong lobbying now and in the past by the Gungahlin Community Council and Gungahlin residents to include all of Gungahlin in a single electorate. This has ranged from resisting the move of suburbs from Molonglo to Ginninderra to suggesting more far reaching changes. 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.

However, besides Gungahlin, the issue of split electorates is one that Woden already faces (and the Woden Valley Community Council has opposed), and NCCC notes that the Weston Creek Community Council provided a submission requesting that Weston Creek not be split in any redistribution. And of course, in this objection the NCCC is opposing splitting Inner North suburbs between electorates.

Interestingly enough, the 2011 Augmented Commission's report (page 12) decided not to change the Brindabella-Molonglo boundary (which splits Woden) because Woden Valley suburbs have been included in Brindabella since its inception and that the boundaries of existing electorates are a factor to be given weight under Section 36 of the Act. If the same logic were to be applied to the Ginninderra-Molonglo boundary, this would favour the 2011 Redistribution Committee's original proposal to move just the suburbs of Palmerston and Crace to Ginninderra, following precedent from previous redistributions.

While strong growth of population of Gungahlin is what originally began Gungahlin's progressive splitting between electorates, it has also made the option of combining all of Gungahlin with Belconnen into a 7-member electorate closer to reality. However, the population of Gungahlin is not quite large enough to accomplish this. Even the 2011 Redistribution Committee's report notes in page 16 that because Gungahlin and Belconnen combined are not yet large enough to constitute a 7-member electorate, "any attempt to avoid splitting Gungahlin must of necessity split another district." For some reason the Augmented Commission has decided to make the shift now, but the NCCC argues that the Augmented Commission has jumped the gun

and that it is not yet time to make such a dramatic shift, especially if it is at the price of splitting already established and linked communities.

The NCCC notes that the Augmented Electoral Commission has decided to include the new district of Molonglo Valley in the electorate of Molonglo. As Molonglo Valley develops, the increase in population of the Molonglo electorate will accelerate the movement of Gungahlin suburbs from Molonglo into Ginninderra and can make a 7-member Ginninderra including all of Belconnen and Gungahlin a reality in the near future. And this can happen without having to resort to ripping out suburbs from other areas to make up for the difference in electors.

It would be a subjective argument say whose community interests outweighs whose, but if the Augmented Commission weighs both Gungahlin's and the Inner North's interests at the same value, Section 36(c)(i), (ii) and (iii) would cancel each other out. The only portion of Section 36 that differ between the 2011 proposals is Section 36(c)(iv), the boundaries of existing electorates. The only conclusion one can make therefore is to follow the 2011 Redistribution Committee's original proposal to move the suburbs of Palmerston and Crace to Ginninderra.

The NCCC therefore believes that the Augmented Commission should take a long-term perspective and aim for the ultimate goal of combining Gungahlin suburbs into the same electorate while following Section 36 of the Act. This need not involve a drastic change in trajectory from previous redistributions.

The NCCC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2011 Augmented Commission's proposal, as it differs significantly from the 2011 Redistribution Committee's earlier proposal. In conclusion, given the evidence provided above, the NCCC argues that the redistribution option that is more compliant with the *Electoral Act 1992* is the 2011 Redistribution Committee's original proposal of 5 May 2011. The NCCC therefore requests that this redistribution option be followed.

North Canberra Community Council

4 August 2011