

ACT Electoral Commission

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The 2019 ACT Redistribution Committee has proposed a redistribution of the ACT Legislative Assembly electoral boundaries. The suburb of Kambah is currently in Murrumbidgee. The proposal is to split Kambah and move Kambah West from Murrumbidgee to Brindabella and leave Kambah East in Murrumbidgee and move Yarralumla and Deakin from Kurrajong to Murrumbidgee.

The Yarralumla Residents Association is opposed to the proposal to move Yarralumla from the Kurrajong electorate to the Murrumbidgee electorate for the following reasons.

Need to comply with the Electoral Act

The Electoral Act requires a redistribution to adhere strongly to the current existing electoral boundaries and to 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 be within plus or minus 5% of the expected quota.

As the Committee's Report notes, neither Kurrajong nor Murrumbidgee electorates require adjustment "sitting comfortably within the current and projected enrolment quota parameters". It is only because the larger part of Kambah (Kambah West) is proposed to be moved to Brindabella that there is a need to increase the numbers in Murrumbidgee. If Kambah West and part of Kambah East is left in Murrumbidgee there is no need to move Yarralumla and Deakin to make up the numbers in Murrumbidgee.

The Redistribution Committee's objective could simply and more easily be achieved by leaving Kambah West in Murrumbidgee and adjusting the boundaries of Kambah East to retain 1000 projected residents in Murrumbidgee and move only 3842 projected residents from part of Kambah East to Brindabella instead. This is the only change that would be required and would result in a change to only one boundary rather than two.

Such a change would also impact on part of one suburb only rather than three suburbs and on only 4002 current residents as opposed to 11422 current residents if the Committee's proposal is accepted

As the following tables demonstrate, the electorates of, Murrumbidgee and Kurrajong would still remain within 5% of the quota and Brindabella will be 19 projected enrolments outside the 5% variation.

Brindabella			Variation from quota
	Proposed	59247	-0.95%
	Less Kambah West	6265	
	Sub total	52982	
	Plus Revised Kambah East	3824	
	Total	56805	-5.03%

Murrumbidgee			Variation from quota
	Proposed	59150	-1.11%
	Less Yarralumla	2424	
	Less Deakin	2344	
	Sub total	54382	
	Less Revised Kambah East	3824	
	Sub total	50558	
	Plus Kambah West	6265	
	Total	56823	-5.0%

Kurrajong			Variation from quota
	Proposed	57009	-4.69%
	Plus Yarralumla	2424	
	Plus Deakin	2344	
	Total	61777	+3.27%

Changes in population numbers

YRA is also concerned that as population numbers change after the next ACT election, Yarralumla will again move back to Kurrajong. The Redistribution Committee's Report recognises Molonglo as an area of greatest growth in the ACT and Molonglo and Curtin have both been identified in the ACT Planning Strategy 2018 as Urban Intensification Localities so it is not unreasonable to expect these suburbs to have significant increases in population. Under the Committee's current proposal, Kurrajong will be -4.69% under the quota. If, as expected, the population in Murrumbidgee increases and exceeds 5% above the quota the logical response would be to move Yarralumla back to Kurrajong causing further disruption to residents as well as ACT Government Ministers and Members.

Community of interest

Survey results

A survey of YRA members showed strong opposition to the proposed move. Of the respondents, 88% disapproved or strongly disapproved of the proposed change in electorates. No response indicated support for the proposal.

The survey results overwhelmingly showed residents had a strong community of interest with other inner south suburbs such as Deakin, Manuka, Griffith and Forrest rather than Woden Valley Curtin, Weston Creek and Molonglo. 94 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Yarralumla has a stronger community of interest with other inner south suburbs rather than suburbs in the electorate of Murrumbidgee.

In terms of the most popular location for day to day activities such as daily shopping, doctors, schools and restaurants, respondents ranked Yarralumla as number 1, followed by (in order of popularity) Deakin, Manuka, Woden, Curtin and Weston Creek.

81% of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that Yarralumla has similar social, economic and planning and environmental issues to inner south suburbs rather than the existing Murrumbidgee suburbs. Examples quoted included similar established garden suburbs, heritage, aging infrastructure and an older demographic unlike Molonglo and Woden Valley.

Physical features and area

Yarralumla's community of interest with the inner south is reinforced by geography. Yarralumla is geographically separated from Weston Creek Molonglo Curtin and Woden Valley by large expanses of open space whereas it geographically abuts Deakin which in turn abuts the other inner south suburbs.

Yarralumla also shares Lake Burley Griffin and its shoreline and adjacent areas with other Central Canberra suburbs like Acton, Barton and Kingston reinforcing Yarralumla's links with those suburbs. Managing Lake related issues and liaising with Commonwealth entities responsible for the Lake such as the National Capital Authority will be made more difficult and inefficient the more ACT electorates are involved.

Similarly, as much of Yarralumla is *designated land* under the National Capital Plan under the Committee's proposal responsibility will be split between Legislative Assembly members for Kurrajong and Murrumbidgee in planning and matters involving NCA, resulting in further inefficiencies and duplication.

Michael Lewis

President

3 June 2019