



Objection 1

Zionism Victoria

6 pages

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Dear Secretariat

PROPOSED REDISTRIBUTION OF MACNAMARA ELECTORATE

Thank you for providing members of the public with an opportunity to make submissions in relation to the proposed distribution of electoral boundaries in Victoria.

On behalf of Zionism Victoria, I am submitting an objection to the proposed redistribution of the seats of Macnamara and Higgins. Zionism Victoria is the elected and representative roof body of the 55 Jewish organisations in Victoria. Our affiliates cover the full gamut of the Melbourne Jewish community – its schools, synagogues, youth movements, and other political, social, educational, sports and religious organisations. We represent these Zionist and Jewish organisations within the Jewish and wider communities.

I and my colleagues have had several conversations with leaders from our community in the weeks following the release of the AEC's proposal. Among many others, we are deeply concerned by the proposal.

The Jewish community is a textbook community of interest. It has a strong sense of itself as a community that is bound together by its shared religious, national and cultural identity. It acts according to and within a well-defined set of values, especially in its religious segments. The community is closely connected, with networks that form through the institutional and grassroots organisations that foster Jewish life. While the community is not uniform in its politics, it is nevertheless unified by a collection of political interests that relate to its activities and interests as a community and as Jews. These interests extend to issues of racial discrimination, community security, education, foreign policy and much more.

The Jewish community of Melbourne is concentrated in the suburbs of St Kilda, St Kilda East, Elsternwick, Balaclava, Elwood, Carlisle, Ripponlea and greater Caulfield. The infrastructure that gels the community is based in these areas – its kosher shops and restaurants; its shopping strips; its synagogues and schools; its aged care facilities, its many smaller and emerging associations, and so much more.

The organised community's presence north of these areas (across Dandenong Road) is by contrast limited. While there are several Jewish people that live in Armadale and Toorak, the bulk of the community's infrastructure and organisational presence is almost exclusively in the areas listed that are south of Dandenong Road. Indeed, those Jewish people that live north of these areas regularly travel south to engage with the community and its organisations. There is no comparable movement of those south to north across Dandenong Road for the same purpose.

All these areas in which the community bases itself have historically been located in the one electorate of Macnamara and prior to 2019 in Melbourne Ports. This has been critical for

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our political representation. While the Jewish community is only small, numbering some 55,000 people it is currently united in a representative sense with the significant majority

residing in Macnamara. This enables the community to coordinate itself effectively and express its interests through the political process. This is especially important considering that the community has no comparable presence whatsoever in any other part of Victoria.

The potential of this proposal to disrupt the Jewish community's engagement in politics and with government cannot be overstated and it will fragment the Jewish community across two electorates - Higgins and Macnamara, creating a risk in regard to the community's ability to represent itself effectively.

This proposal will create an artificial gulf across Hotham Street. There is only an illusory difference between the communities on either side of Hotham Street. This proposal will put synagogues in one electorate and congregants in another. It will put the residents of our community-run aged care homes in one electorate and their families in another. It will divide the community from the places that they visit every day – to pray, to shop, and to connect with friends and family. Moreover, it will put residents east of Hotham Street into Higgins, an electorate that does not represent a comparable community of interest, and on which members of the Jewish community do not ordinarily frequent as it is bereft of Jewish community organisations and other infrastructure, especially when compared to the current electorate of Macnamara.

It is for these reasons that we oppose the proposal. The community will be split up, and its ability to seek political action in relation to its interests will suffer as a result.

We urge the Secretariat to not proceed with the proposed redistribution of Macnamara and Higgins.

We understand that there are alternative pathways that respond to the challenge of Macnamara having more voters than is permitted that can be implemented without requiring any change to any other electorate outside of Macnamara and Higgins, including by removing Windsor from Macnamara. We urge the Secretariat to consider these alternatives.

Yours sincerely



Yossi Goldfarb
President