



Comment on objections HF

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5 pages

COMMENT ON OBJECTIONS BY JULIAN HILL MP, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BRUCE

Overall the Redistribution Committee's strategic logic is sound, but it can be more simply achieved with significantly less change for more than 20,000 current electors in Bruce and the four adjacent Divisions of Hotham, Isaacs, Holt and La Trobe.

I provide these comments as the sitting MP for Bruce with a deep knowledge of the local community and geography.

Taking account of the mathematical requirements of the Act and growth patterns in South-East Melbourne, it is clear that Bruce needs to (again) shift further out to the south-east / east. In effect, Bruce again becomes the funnel for the growth in this part of Melbourne.

Last redistribution, Bruce was affected more than any other electorate in terms of the extent of the change for electors, and this time Bruce also will be subject to major changes.

Three minor and contained local adjustments are proposed, as in these areas the Committee's proposals do not make local sense and can be improved on:

1. **Bruce / Hotham interface** at Mulgrave / Noble Park North
2. **Bruce / La Trobe and Bruce / Holt interfaces** at Berwick /Harkaway, and Hampton Park
3. **Bruce / Isaacs interface** at Dandenong South

Together these local adjustments mean that more than 20,000 current electors in five Divisions DO NOT change Divisions, as more of the current boundaries are preserved and communities remain united.

These issues are raised by many other objectors and I provide my comments on them below.

I do understand that it may be relatively unusual for the Commission to consider and make three sets of changes to what is broadly accepted to be a well conceived draft proposal.

However given the extent of the changes to Bruce, and the fact that these suggestions overall reduce the extent of changes required, I hope that the local nuance can be taken into account and these refinements adopted in the final stage.

1. Bruce / Hotham interface at Mulgrave / Noble Park North

Police Road should be retained as the northern boundary between Bruce and Hotham.

The Commission's proposal to cross Police Road into the suburb of Mulgrave and the municipality of Monash makes no sense. If that small part of Mulgrave came into Bruce it would be unnecessarily confusing for electors in Mulgrave, and Bruce would then be split between three local government areas.

In 2018 the Commission adopted "*Police Road and the local government area boundary for the majority of the northern boundary of the proposed Division of Bruce*" (para 182 of the previous Redistribution Committee's proposal which was adopted in the final maps). There is no logical need at this time for such a confusing change that would run counter to the principles in the Act.

The flow-on consequence is that the locality of Noble Park North must then be split in half between the Divisions of Hotham and Bruce, unnecessarily moving electors from Bruce to Hotham. This is an unnecessary and strange proposal at a local level.

All of these problems (and frankly annoyances for electors and the relevant local MPs and local governments) can be easily avoided by simply retaining the locality of Noble Park North within Bruce, and leaving Mulgrave in Hotham.

This keeps localities united, reduces unnecessary change for electors, better reflects communities of interest, and avoids illogically and unnecessarily splitting suburbs and Local Government Areas across Divisions.

I can understand how at a macro level when preparing the initial proposals the Committee just drew the boundary up the creek, however in local terms it is confusing and makes no sense.

To use a non-technical term, this very logical minor correction in the final maps is a 'no-brainer'.

2. Bruce / La Trobe and Bruce / Holt interfaces at Berwick / Harkaway, and Hampton Park

Many objectors have raised concerns about the proposal to move part of the Berwick township from La Trobe into Bruce. The township is split into two along High Street and these electors moved from the Division of La Trobe to Bruce.

The split of 'old Berwick' is only necessary if Clyde is moved from Holt. Objections have rightly been raised about the inclusion of three growth areas in La Trobe.

The municipal boundary between Casey and Cardinia councils has been proposed by the Committee as the Bruce / La Trobe border however this an administrative not a strong community of interest boundary in this location. In any event, it is noted that the proposed Division of La Trobe still (has to) contain parts of the Casey LGA and parts of Berwick suburb.

I share the concerns raised by many submitters and objectors, including by the ALP, the Liberal Party and Charles Richardson regarding these changes which are peculiar and unnecessary.

I endorse the Liberal Party's alternative proposal, subject to a minor refinement so that the established township area of Berwick (east of Harkaway Road) and the locality of Harkaway remain in the electorate of La Trobe. Harkaway Road could form the Eastern boundary between Bruce and La Trobe in that area running down Llyal Road to Clyde Rd.

This means that Clyde remains in the Division of Holt, and 'old Berwick' and Harkaway remain in the Division of La Trobe.

These minor adjustments spread growth areas more evenly between electorates; better respect communities of interest; reduce change for electors overall; largely remove rural residential areas from the electorate of Bruce by retaining the Harkaway township in La Trobe; and better position the region for anticipated future redistributions.

This last point regarding future redistributions is worth explaining. It is currently more likely than not that Victoria will lose a Federal seat in the next term, necessitating yet another redistribution. In that scenario it seems highly unlikely, based on current growth patterns, that the area to the east of Harkaway Road would remain in Bruce, so it makes even less sense to make that change in this redistribution.

Bruce then needs to gain electors from Holt. **I agree with the thrust of the Committee's proposal and the Liberal Party's objection that the extra electors to be gained by Bruce from Holt are most appropriately found in Hampton Park / Narre Warren South.**

The Liberal Party's suggestion is a sensible way to do so, save for a minor adjustment to meet the mathematical requirements of the Act which would see the southern boundary of Bruce run along Fordholm Road and River Gum Reserve as the boundary with the Division of Holt. This matches as closely as possible the Liberal Party's objection. It is acknowledged that the Commission may prefer a slightly neater boundary, perhaps along Cairns Road to the south, although this is not necessary.

3. Bruce / Isaacs interface at Dandenong South

I endorse the ALP's objection regarding the transfer of the area of Dandenong south of the Railway line from Isaacs to Bruce.

The community south of the Railway line is very distinct from central and north Dandenong, and the Railway continues to provide a strong boundary, as it has for decades and this change is unnecessary.

In nearly 5 years representing Dandenong in the Federal Parliament and being very involved in community events across the City, including in areas that are in the Hotham electorate, I have hardly ever had cause to visit the area south of the Railway line in Isaacs. It is a very distinct community that relates far more strongly to the south including Parkmore Shopping Centre than it does to central Dandenong.

In particular I note the objection provided by Cr Jim Memeti highlighting the Albanian community's prominent and relatively self-contained role in Dandenong South.

This area has formed part of the Isaacs electorate for many years and there is no need to change it. The consequence of not proceeding with this change is that there is then no need to move Lyndhurst from Holt into Isaacs.

SUMMARY

These minor local adjustments respond to issues raised by many objectors while respecting the Committee's strategic approach which can actually be achieved with far less change to current boundaries.

Importantly, 20,500 current and almost 23,000 future electors do not have to change Divisions: in Bruce (Noble Park North), Hotham (Mulgrave), Issacs (Dandenong South), Holt (Clyde and Lyndhurst) and La Trobe (Berwick township and Harkaway).

In return for leaving these 20,500 current electors in their current Divisions, only 4,229 current electors in Hampton Park move from Holt to Bruce to meet the mathematical requirements of the Act in a way that's consistent with the other criteria.

Reducing change for electors is consistent with one of the key criteria in the Act and these changes provide a more elegant final solution consistent with the strategic Committee's strategic logic.

I note also that the changes have no material impact at all on Bruce's estimated 2PP as compared to the Committee's initial proposal; while this is not a consideration I simply note this to dispel concern that these changes may be driven by electoral implications.

It really is not necessary to make such disruptive changes in this redistribution, especially given the massive changes to Bruce only two years ago.

I respectfully submit that the Commission can achieve its objectives with a less radical and more conservative approach that maintains more of the status quo.

I wish to be heard and present at the public hearings and will bring a single map to simply explain these changes.

Thank you, sincerely, for considering these comments.

Julian Hill.