



Objection 346

Phillip Starkins

4 pages

Redistribution Secretariat
The Australian Electoral Commission
Locked Bag 4007
Canberra ACT 2601

C/o: AEC website (lodged 26 June 2024)

SUBJECT: Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Victorian redistribution draft 2024

Attention: AEC Redistribution Secretariat,

I write to object to the draft redistribution as a constituent of the Federal electorate of Higgins. As it stands, my family and I will be redistributed into the seat of Chisholm based on new boundaries. I had the privilege of serving as a volunteer office bearer role within the local liberal party electorate conference for many years within the electorate of Higgins. The proposed boundary changes and abolition of the Higgins electorate will not serve the community well.

I recommend consideration by the AEC of the following:

- Retain more of the current seat of Higgins into the revised seat of Chisholm
- Rename the revised seat of Chisholm as Higgins
- Rename the revised seat of Hotham as Chisholm

I recommend these for the following reasons – more fully explored as per the attachment to this letter – however in brief:

- Within the seats of Higgins is the Stonnington LGA. This is a citizenry who clearly identify as a single community of interest and should be preserved intact within a federal electorate as far as possible.
- Governor Charles Hotham – for whom the seat of Hotham is named – has a controversial legacy. It is no longer appropriate for an electorate to be named in his honour.
- Given the current seats of Hotham and Chisholm are proposed to merge, it would be appropriate to re-name that seat to honour the legacy of the highly regarded suffragette, Carolyn Chisholm.
- Given the current seats of Higgins and Chisholm are proposed to merge – and assuming Hotham is renamed Chisholm – it would provide the opportunity to keep the name Higgins, to honour the legacy of Justice Henry Higgins. Justice Higgins was a founding father of the Commonwealth of Australia, a high court judge, and a strong advocate for social justice, including women's suffrage and workers' rights.
- Higgins is a seat of historical significance to both of Australia's major political parties.
- For the Liberal party, the community within the seat of Higgins has produced two Prime Ministers and two Treasurers – something that has not been matched by any other electorate.
- For the Australian Labor party, because they secured the seat in an historic victory in the 2022 Federal election.


Thank you for your consideration of my objection.

Yours sincerely,


Phillip Starkins
Higgins Resident &
Former Chair, Higgins Federal Electoral Conference, Liberal Party of Victoria

26 June 2024

Phillip C Starkins

East Malvern, 

Attachment: Electorate Naming Considerations

Why the Higgins name should be retained, and more of the current seat preserved in a single electorate

I have had the privilege to represent a considerable community of interest as former Chair of the Higgins Federal Electorate Conference, Liberal Party of Victoria. In this capacity I served the local members of the party, and supported the elected members for the electorate, being the Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer followed by Dr. Katie Allen.

During the time of my chairmanship (2019-2023) there were more than 1200 registered members of the Liberal Party in Higgins. The abolition of the seat of Higgins will see the largest electorate membership of the Liberal Party in Victoria split into five different electorates. The current proposal will drive stake through the heart of a strong and proud party membership.

There is a clearly identified community of interest with Higgins, corresponding closely with the Stonnington LGA. As much area as possible should be preserved into a single electorate, ideally a 'new' Higgins.

Both centre-left and far left leaning parties have been increasingly active in the seat over the past 20 years, reflecting an evolution in community attitudes and of Higgins changing in its political outlook. Presumably, these parties will have similar views.

This includes the Australian Labor Party who made history in 2022 by winning the seat for the first time. The Australian Greens have also been highly active in Higgins with the last four federal elections being a 3-way tussle between the Liberal Party, ALP and the Greens.

The Federal seat of Higgins in Australia holds historical significance as it is named after Justice Henry Bournes Higgins (1851-1929), a notable figure in Australian history. Henry Higgins was a prominent politician, judge, and social reformer who played a crucial role in the country's legal and social development.

There are five further reasons we should honour the historical significance of Henry Higgins by retaining the name of his electorate:

Justice Henry Bournes Higgins: Higgins served as a judge on the High Court of Australia and is best known for his role as President of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. His landmark judgment in the 1907 "Harvester case" established the principle of a basic wage, ensuring that workers received fair pay sufficient to support a family. This case laid the foundation for Australia's modern industrial relations system and workers' rights.

Contribution to Federation and Legal Reforms: Higgins was a member of the first Australian Parliament and contributed to the drafting of the Australian Constitution. His legal philosophy and decisions significantly influenced the development of Australian labour law and social justice policies.

Social Reformer: Beyond his legal work, Higgins was a strong advocate for social justice, including women's suffrage and workers' rights. His contributions to social reforms have had a lasting impact on Australian society.

Honouring Historical Contributions: Retaining the name Higgins honours the substantial contributions of Henry Bournes Higgins to Australian law, politics, and social justice. His legacy continues to influence contemporary Australian life. The name serves as a reminder and educational point for future generations about the important historical figures who shaped the nation. It highlights the significance of social justice and fair labour practices and acknowledges the ongoing relevance of Higgins' work in promoting fair and equitable treatment for all citizens.

Why the name of Hotham should be changed to Chisolm

The Federal seat of Hotham in Australia is named after Sir Charles Hotham, who served as the Governor of Victoria from 1854 to 1855. While he played a role in the colony's early development,

Hotham's tenure as governor is associated with a period marked by policies and actions that had adverse effects on worker's rights and Indigenous Australians. Changing the name could be part of broader efforts to address and reconcile historical injustices.

Controversial Governance: Hotham's time as governor was marked by significant controversy, particularly related to the Eureka Stockade rebellion. His handling of the situation, which involved the suppression of miners protesting for fairer treatment and democratic rights, was seen by many as heavy-handed and exacerbated tensions between the government and the mining community.

Modern Relevance: The name Hotham does not hold significant contemporary relevance or resonance with the local community. Updating the name to reflect a more modern concept such as equality of women (which renaming the seat Chisolm would achieve) will enhance community identity and engagement with the political process.

Reflecting Diversity and Inclusion: Renaming the seat could provide an opportunity to honour a more diverse range of individuals who have contributed to the nation's history, including women, Indigenous Australians, or other historically underrepresented groups. This could promote a more inclusive national narrative.

Why the name of Chisholm should be used to re-name Hotham

The Federal seat of Chisholm in Australia is named after Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877), a notable philanthropist and humanitarian. The seat of Chisolm is merging with the seat of Hotham.

Chisholm is remembered for her work in assisting immigrants, especially women and families, during the early colonial period in Australia. There are many reasons we should honour the legacy of Chisolm by renaming the seat of Hotham as Chisolm.

Legacy of Humanitarianism: Caroline Chisholm's work had a profound impact on Australian society. She provided crucial support for immigrants, helping them find employment and housing, and advocating for their rights. Her efforts significantly improved the lives of many and contributed to the social fabric of the nation.

Symbol of Compassion and Service: Chisholm's dedication to humanitarian causes and social justice resonates with values of compassion, service, and community support. Retaining her name in the electorate honours these values and serves as an inspiration for current and future generations.

Historical Significance: Caroline Chisholm's contributions are an important part of Australian history. Her name on an electorate ensures that her legacy is remembered and recognized within the political landscape.

Educational Value: The name Chisholm serves as a reminder of the importance of social welfare and advocacy, providing educational value about historical figures who made significant contributions to society

Promoting Positive Historical Figures: Renaming the seat of Hotham to Chisholm would replace a name associated with colonial governance and controversy with one linked to positive contributions and humanitarian efforts. This change could reflect a shift towards celebrating more universally admired figures in Australian history.

Addressing Historical Injustices: By renaming the seat, it can be seen as a step towards addressing and reconciling historical injustices associated with colonial figures, thus promoting a more inclusive and reflective national identity.

Enhancing Community Identity: The name Chisholm might resonate more positively with the local community, reflecting values of support, compassion, and social justice. It could enhance community pride and identity.

