



Objection 359

Ann Albrecht

4 pages

SUBMISSION

TO: The Redistribution Committee of the Australian Electoral Commission

FROM: Ann Albrecht

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CROYDON VIC ██████████

Mob: ██████████

RE: Objection to the proposed Victorian federal redistribution of Deakin and Aston – Heathmont boundary

27th June 2024

INTRODUCTION

My particular interest is the suburb of Heathmont. I believe that the proposal by the AEC Redistribution Committee to move the boundary between the federal electorates of Deakin and Aston northwards to Canterbury Road, Heathmont, from the current position of Dandenong Creek would be deleterious to the residents of Heathmont.

I ask that the Redistribution Committee alter this proposal as it will split – for the first time ever, according to AEC maps – the suburb of Heathmont into northern and southern sections, across two electorates.

Heathmont is a small suburb – so small in fact, that many Melburnians have never heard of it. Heathmont residents take pride and pleasure in living in a leafy, peaceful and friendly suburb with a genuine community spirit. It is well known amongst local real estate agents that Heathmont residents love living in the suburb. The arbitrary splitting of the suburb into northern and southern sections because of the need for an electoral redistribution would have damaging effects on people, community groups and businesses.

I know the suburb of Heathmont and its neighbouring suburbs well. My husband and I raised our family in Heathmont, living for 50 years at the same address of ██████████. Even though twelve months ago my husband and I downsized from our Heathmont home (in the electorate of Deakin) to a smaller home in Croydon (still in Deakin), I still frequently visit friends, businesses and community groups in Heathmont. We have seen many changes take place politically over the last five decades, but during all that time Heathmont has been a united suburb in the same federal electorate, represented by the same member of Parliament.

I ask that, as has always been the case hitherto, Heathmont's northern, southern, eastern and western boundaries remain intact, inside a single federal electorate, so that the closely knit suburb can stay united.

COMMUNITY LINKS WITHIN HEATHMONT

It seems a logical assumption to make that when electoral redistributions take place, consideration of the alteration of any boundary changes should take into account existing land use and community links as far as possible.

The Redistribution Committee's proposed moving of the electoral boundary between Deakin and Aston from Dandenong Creek northwards to Canterbury Road would disconnect the southern part of Heathmont from the rest of the suburb and artificially try to join it to the unconnected suburb of Bayswater by placing it in the electorate of Aston, which is nonsensical.

The AEC's long-ago original decision to align the current southern boundary of the electorate of Deakin with the southern boundary of the suburb of Heathmont was a logical one, as the geographic feature of Dandenong Creek provides a sensible physical division. You will be able to see on a map that along its length Dandenong Creek is blessed with magnificent parklands and bush reserves. The width of this important creek reserve (which is also significant in neighbouring suburbs through which the creek flows) creates a naturally occurring separation between the southern part of Heathmont (south of Canterbury Road) and the northern part of the suburb of Bayswater on the southern side of the creek. Residents of the southern part of Heathmont are naturally bound to the rest of Heathmont because of propinquity and practical convenience, rather than with the physically disconnected residents of Bayswater. Being represented by two different members of Parliament would be at odds with the united interests of residents.

The links between Heathmont residents are rich and dense. Some of the means through which Heathmont residents feel connected to each other are:

- Friendships
- Neighbourly relationships
- Services (privately run ones and those provided by Maroondah City Council)
- Transport services (Heathmont train station and the Heathmont bus stop)
- Parks, of which Heathmont has many
- Sport: Two large Heathmont parks north of Canterbury Road provide sporting and recreational facilities – Jubilee Park and Gracedale Park. However, the very popular and very large H. E. Parker Reserve, south of Canterbury Road, abuts the Dandenong Creek reserve, and provides the most sporting and recreational facilities in Heathmont. If the Redistribution Committee's proposal goes ahead, the H. E. Parker Reserve would be in the electorate of Aston instead of Deakin, which would be nonsensical as its wonderful facilities cater for whole of Heathmont.
- Playgroups
- Early learning centres
- Kindergartens
- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Churches – Baptist, Presbyterian and Uniting, and churches in neighbouring Ringwood.
- Many community groups flourish in Heathmont and the neighbouring suburb of Ringwood, to the north-west of Heathmont, but there is little connection with Bayswater, which is quite a long way by car because of the barrier effect of Dandenong Creek. Heathmont residents connect with each other and with Ringwood and East Ringwood residents, and contribute to and draw from the rich web of experiences which Heathmont and Ringwood provide. Some examples are:
 - Friends of FJC Rogers Reserve

- Friends of Dandenong Creek
- Friends of the Heathmont Village Green
- Heathmont area scout groups
- Heathmont Bushcare
- Heathmont History Group
- Maroondah Photographic Society
- Probus
- CRISP Nursery
- Ringwood Art Society
- Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc.
- Service clubs (Rotary & Lions Club)

LAND USE: THE LACK OF COMMONALITY AND CONTIGUITY BETWEEN HEATHMONT AND BAYSWATER

The Redistribution Committee's proposal to join the southern part of Heathmont to Bayswater, as part of Aston, lacks logic in terms of land use and community links. Immediately to the south of Dandenong Creek, the suburb of Bayswater has an important extensive industrial area next to the large Bayswater shopping centre. There is a great deal of high-density housing in the form of many multi-storey apartment blocks clustered around Bayswater station. It is utterly unlike the leafy suburb of Heathmont.

Not only is Heathmont very different in nature from the northern part of Bayswater, but because of the presence of Dandenong Creek, the two suburbs do not have collector roads or local roads which connect them. Road access is via the main roads of Wantirna Road on the western boundary of Heathmont and Bayswater Road on the suburb's eastern boundary. The southern part of Heathmont and the northern part of Bayswater might look close to each other on a map, but they are not close in terms of driving. The Redistribution Committee's proposal does not take into account these problematic practicalities.

COMMERCIAL LAND USE

The Heathmont Village shopping centre is full of successful shops and businesses on the northern and southern sides of Canterbury Road.

The café culture in Heathmont is vibrant and strong, and this generates a pleasant sense of community.

I know of people who live in Blackburn who come to shop at Heathmont because of its variety of shops and businesses. These include supermarkets, a health food shop, a fruit and vegetable shop, a butcher, a post office, a dry cleaner's, a newsagent, bakeries, florists, a jeweller's, a picture framer's, a sewing shop, an interior design shop, clothes shops, beauty shops, cafés, optometrists, doctors and dentists.

The traders in the Heathmont Village shopping centre are a united group who know each other, and who work together to foster their connections to each other and to the community.

I have personal knowledge of the generosity of the traders donating goods, money and support to community groups.

Heathmont residents have a strong sense of connection with each other and support the local businesses, who in turn, have a productive symbiotic relationship with the community.

The Redistribution Committee's proposal would split the traders on the north side of Canterbury Road from the traders on the southern side. The northern and southern traders would have different members of Parliament representing them federally. This would be nonsensical and harmful.

CONCLUSION

I can imagine how challenging it must be for the AEC Redistribution Committee to make redistribution decisions for the whole of Australia without having personal knowledge of the affected communities. I hope that you will find this submission helpful in alerting you to the damage which this electoral boundary proposal could inflict on the Heathmont community.

I respectfully suggest that the Redistribution Committee keep the existing boundary along Dandenong Creek in Heathmont between the electorates of Deakin and Aston, and make the necessary electoral boundary adjustments elsewhere.

Thank you for considering my objection.

Yours faithfully,

Ann Albrecht