THE FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION NEW SOUTH WALES

Objection 132

Gregory Gange

3 pages

To :

Australian Electoral Commission.

Redistribution Committees for New Sout Wales and Victoria and Western Australia

From :

Gregory Gange.

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I have recently become aware of the proposed abolition of the Australian Federal Electorates of North Sydney in NSW, and Higgins in Victoria, along with a redistribution of voters and a realignment of electorate boundaries in the same two states. This will be accompanied by the establishment of a new electorate in Western Australia.

In my humble opinion, this course of action is completely unfair to the Australians who are Registered Voters in both NSW and VIC, but also gives the voters of WA an advantage. I do not mean this from any sort of party-political bias or point of view, but from the number of Federal Seats in comparison to overall State Population.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia's population increased by just over 500,000 people in 2023. The greatest increase was 3.3% in WA, but Western Australia's population is only approximately 3 million people. In real terms, the increase was 93,000.

The actual population increases in NSW and VIC were about 185.500 and 186.500, although as a statistic these increases were 2.5% and 2.6% respectively. This increase in each state is enough to fulfill the required population for a Federal Lower House Seat, yet the AEC proposes a reduction. These two states house nearly 60% of Australia's total population, and you, the AEC is proposing to reduce the per capita representation of these voters at the Federal level. Is this fair?

The fact that the entire Electoral Distribution plan is authored by the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 surely suggests that it is out of date. I realise that you, the members of the committees involved do not make the rules. You have only to exercise their instructions. Those instructions are archaic to say the least. In 1918, the indigenous population was not counted in Australia's total population, and since then there has been a major global conflict with the resultant population changes, societal awareness, and in 1967 even a change to Australia's Constitution to include our Indigenous population.

There is already great imbalance in the Electoral Boundaries as they currently stand. Without becoming political, over the course of the last few Federal Elections it has been seen that the National party has gained nearly four times the number of seats in the House of Representatives as have The Greens, when both have polled roughly the same number of first preference votes. If the proposed changes proceed, Western Australia will end up with a disproportionate number of Federal Lower House seats, and a resulting party bias that can at this point only be imagined.

Politics since the turn of the millennium have become extremely divisive in Australia. With a few, rare exceptions it seems to us outsiders that becoming a politician is more about the power and money that the position engenders than any sense of "doing good". The degeneration of the political discourse from polite to "robust", down to outrightly abusive is both a poor reflection of who Australians truly are, has been a leading contributor to the overall decline in civility and politeness, what used to be called "manners" throughout the rest of society. (Australia is not alone in this. The political discourse in both the United States and Great Britain is even worse.)

At the 2022 Federal Election, for the first time in many electorates, voters were given a choice to vote for a collective of individuals who felt that Australians, and the things that actually matter to us were offered a new choice. Those people, mostly women, were labelled “Teals”. Their campaigns were clean and honest, and funded by ordinary Australians. The people who are affected by every decision made by the politicians in Canberra, but who are never consulted directly. The “We the Voters” as I describe us whenever I write anything online. We are never “Stakeholders”. We just cop what comes and wait for the next there years to come around to fix it. Again. At the 2022 election, six women were successful.

However the decisions on which electorates should be dissolved were arrived at, the proposed Electoral Redistribution is targeted at those Teals. The seat of North Sydney will be removed altogether, and its voters diluted among other electorates. This means that in 2025 the sitting member will have a much lower chance of attaining a seat at all. It will not affect either of the two major parties. The seat of Higgins will be reallocated to its surrounding electorates too, with an adverse effect on another Teal in Kooyong, whilst at the same time bolstering the Liberal party’s chances, as evidenced by the discussions over Mr Frydenberg’s return to politics in that seat.

Australia’s democratic principles and foundations are fragile. My first exposure to this fragility was as a high school student in 1975 with the dismissal of the Whitlam government by the then Governor General. At that point in time, I had no real understanding of the significance of that event, but I was greatly aware of the social upheaval it caused, even just among the staff members at my high school. I have interested in Australia’s political structures and behaviours from that point in time and I have become more and more involved at a societal level as the elections roll by.

Our entire bi-cameral system is already set up to deny any meaningful change. The constitution allocating the same number of Senate seat to every state, regardless of population, and then allocating Lower House seat numbers with a formula based on Senator numbers is flawed mathematics. It gives unequal power to the voters of the states with small populations. The fact that a majority of States must accept a change as well as an overall majority od Australians means that anything new, or meaningful or however else it might be described, is almost impossible. The concept that in a Federal Referendum, the three East-coast mainland states could all vote “Yes”, there be an overall population majority “Yes” but the proposal would fail if Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia all rejected the proposal is just plain insulting. This will never change. And now You, the Federal Electoral Commission, are proposing to distort this further.

I am not apolitical analyst, or expert, or politician. I am just a very concerned Australian Citizen. One who took great pleasure in seeing the successes of the Teal and other Independent or non-major party candidates at the 2022 Federal Election. All I can see now, if these changes go ahead as proposed, is that a system that is so fragile, so difficult to alter even slightly, and is already stacked against the urban voters in the Eastern State capitals, is being manipulated from within, by a part of the system that is behind the scenes and cannot be altered by those of us who just get to vote every three years.

I implore you not to adopt the proposed changes.

Yours sincerely.

Gregory Gange

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