



Comment on objections 105

Australian Greens Victoria

15 pages

AUSTRALIAN GREENS VICTORIA

Comments On Redistribution Objections

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Introduction

We thank the committee for their work in this process and for considering our submission.

We do not envy the task of the committee to review 508 submissions. Many of them clearly form part of an astroturfing campaign that reflects the desires of a political party, not the community. We have no doubt the committee will be able to filter out those submissions from those with genuine non-partisan community insight.

We were troubled by the number of submissions which have accused the committee or the AEC of corrupt or partisan intention. We maintain that the AEC is a fair and impartial body which acts as a cornerstone of our democracy. While we may not like all the new boundaries the Committee provides, we understand that taking our, or anyone else's, electoral benefit into consideration is not part of the role of the Committee or the augmented Electoral Commission.

We were disappointed to see the major parties contributing to this misleading pile-on. Both Liberal and Labor sought to chastise the committee for the inaccurate projected data provided by the ABS. Although an investigation should occur as to the circumstances that led to the provision of the inaccurate projected data, it is not the fault of the AEC or the committee, who were left to clean up the mess. Indeed, if blame extends beyond some individuals, we consider many years of underfunding of the ABS to be the likely root cause. We thank you for doing this work under difficult circumstances.

After working through hundreds of submissions, we have decided to only comment on those created by the Labor and Liberal parties, highlighting what we consider their errors of logic and misunderstanding of community dynamics.

Objection to Submission 487

Victorian Labor

This submission contains a lot of cherry-picked data, and in places objectively false statements. We note a lot of this submission relies on comparing suburbs on opposite sides of an electorate. While commenting on the general character of an electorate is important, electorates will always contain some variation geographically, particularly those of federal size. Meanwhile comparisons with neighbouring electorates have often been neglected when making their arguments. For example, on page 14, the ALP's argument for objecting to the inclusion of Gowanbrae in Maribyrnong is based on comparing it to suburbs like Kensington, instead of neighbouring suburbs like Gladstone Park and Strathmore Heights.

Under the current legislation it is virtually impossible for the committee to draw an electorate that is completely cohesive. We submit the priority should be drawing borders containing distinct suburbs with reasonable geographical boundaries, in the context of contributing to the overall character of the electorate. Most electorates could be criticised by highlighting demographic differences in suburbs on opposite ends of the map.

Parkville and North Melbourne

This submission strongly rejects the proposal from the Victorian Labor submission to move the suburb of North Melbourne and parts of Parkville from the Division of Melbourne into the Division of Maribyrnong.

This suggestion fails to acknowledge the status, history and character of North Melbourne and Parkville as inner-city suburbs, closely connected with the neighbouring communities. These are suburbs which share borders with the Central Business District (CBD) of Melbourne, a fact crucial in understanding not only the demography of these communities, but also the physical features of the suburbs themselves.

Demographic characteristics of Parkville and North Melbourne

The ALP's submission seeks to make comparisons between Parkville and North Melbourne and the neighbouring suburbs within the Division of Maribyrnong. While we recognise some similarities and connections between these communities, the submission from the Victorian Labor Party glaringly fails to acknowledge that these similarities also apply between North Melbourne, Parkville and the surrounding suburbs within the Division of Melbourne.

When comparing core demographic indicators, such as median income or language and culture, Victorian Labor is highly selective in the suburbs to which it wishes to compare North Melbourne and Parkville. Below, we have provided the data highlighting the similarities between North Melbourne, Parkville and the nearby suburbs within the Division of Melbourne. We note that there is only a \$124 difference in median personal weekly income, and \$116 difference between the electorates when considering household income. While one electorate has a higher personal

median income, the other has a higher household median income. This reinforces that this is not a useful measure to determine the boundaries, that Melbourne is a diverse city, and that while North Melbourne and Parkville share similarities with locations within Maribyrnong, that same argument applies, and applies more strongly, for the Division of Melbourne.

Table 1: Median Income across locations

Location	Median weekly income (Personal)	Median weekly income (Household)
North Melbourne	\$943	\$2,478
Parkville	\$586	\$2,567
CBD	\$864	\$1,448
West Melbourne	\$1,058	\$1,788
Fitzroy	\$1,265	\$2,194
Carlton	\$659	\$1,292
Docklands	\$1,182	\$1,957
Division of Maribyrnong	\$931	\$1,956
Division of Melbourne	\$1,055	\$1,840

Table 2: Language spoken across locations

Locations	Households where a non-English language is used	English only used at home
North Melbourne	44.5%	53.5%
Parkville	38.9%	66.3%
CBD	64.07%	35.93%
West Melbourne	51.86%	47.68%
Fitzroy	31.33%	68.61%
Carlton	53.63%	46.22%
Docklands	62.41%	37.48%
Division of Maribyrnong	34.5%	67.4%
Division of Melbourne	42.5%	57.1%

While a number of the demographic data points provided by the Victorian Labor submission do not provide compelling reasons for North Melbourne and parts of Parkville to move to Maribyrnong, other key indicators indicate why it should remain in Melbourne.

Consideration of tenure type strongly makes the case for North Melbourne and Parkville to remain suburbs within the Division of Melbourne rather than the Division of Maribyrnong. Renters should be considered by the AEC as a 'community of interest' with shared economic interests and an increasingly shared political identity. North Melbourne is a suburb of renters. The Division of Melbourne is an electorate of renters. Maribyrnong is not. With Melbourne rents skyrocketing, the importance of ensuring continued advocacy and representation for renters cannot be understated.

Table 3: Tenure type across locations

Location	% Owned Outright	% Mortgage	% Rent
North Melbourne	13.2%	19.8%	63.7%
Parkville	18.2%	14.3%	64.1%
Division of Melbourne	15.7%	18.4%	63%
Division of Maribyrnong	33.5%	31.3%	32.4%

As Labor correctly points out in their submission, students form a key community of interest in Parkville and North Melbourne, with shared economic and social indicators and experiences. The large number of students is reflected in the low personal median income. The Division of Melbourne is home to significant tertiary institutions, including the University of Melbourne, RMIT and campuses of several other universities, particularly Victoria University. As such, high percentages of its population are currently enrolled in tertiary education. Where people participate and work in tertiary education and also live near those institutions, they constitute a community of interest, and the university and tertiary education community forms a distinct part of the electorate of Melbourne. This is not true for the Division of Maribyrnong, as Table 4 below highlights.

Table 4: Percentage of the population currently enrolled in tertiary education

Location	% Currently Enrolled in Tertiary Education
North Melbourne	49%
Parkville	76.8%
Division of Melbourne	55.9%
Division of Maribyrnong	28.3%

Additionally, as we highlighted in our previous submission, a strength of the draft boundaries is uniting the public housing towers in South Yarra with a number of public housing towers across the division of Melbourne. North Melbourne contains three of these public housing towers on the Hotham Estate. The strong community connections between public housing communities should be maintained, especially given the common needs for servicing and advocating on behalf of constituents in matters such as housing, immigration and income support.

Heritage, density and dwelling structures

North Melbourne and Parkville, pre-Federation suburbs of significance to Melbourne’s cultural history, share common heritage features including Victorian-era architecture with Melbourne’s inner-city.

North Melbourne and Parkville are high-density, inner-city suburbs with building types and physical characteristics that closely match the Division of Melbourne. Table 5 below outlines the dwelling structure across the suburbs compared with the two divisions, demonstrating that while there is commonality in the number of terrace, row or townhouses, Maribyrnong is an electorate of separate homes, whereas Melbourne is an electorate of flats or apartments.

Table 5: Dwelling Structure Across Locations

Location	Separate House	Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse	Flat or apartment	Other dwelling
North Melbourne	4.2%	26.8%	68.3%	0.6%
Parkville	2.2%	36.1%	61.5%	0.2%
Division of Melbourne	6.1%	22.4%	70.8%	0.5%
Division of Maribyrnong	55.4%	23.7%	20.6%	0.3%

When considering the raw figures behind the above percentages, it is worth noting that according to the 2021 Census there were 6038 flats or apartments in North Melbourne alone, while the entire Division of Maribyrnong contained 12,466 flats or apartments. To move North Melbourne into the Division of Maribyrnong would significantly change the nature of dwelling structure within the Division of Maribyrnong.

Connection and community across North and West Melbourne

A key flaw in the proposal from the Victorian Labor party is the omission of recognition of the close community connections between North and West Melbourne. For many locals, these two suburbs operate as one community.

Evidence of the existence of North and West Melbourne as one community can be demonstrated through:

- Their shared community association: the North and West Melbourne Association
- Their shared community centre: North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre
- Their shared community newspapers: North & West Melbourne Community Newspaper and North and West City News
- Their shared primary school zoning to North Melbourne Primary School
- The fact that one of Melbourne's busiest railway stations has been known as North Melbourne, despite being located in West Melbourne, something unlikely to occur in suburbs with a more distinct identity.
- The division of Melbourne has contained both North Melbourne and West Melbourne since 1913

We strongly encourage the Redistribution Committee to reject any proposal which would create an artificial splintering between the communities of North and West Melbourne.

School Catchment Zones

We also urge the Redistribution Committee to consider the community of interest that exists based around the catchment zone for University High School.

University High currently includes the following suburbs in its catchment area: Docklands, the CBD, Carlton, West Melbourne, Parkville and North Melbourne. These shared education boundaries clearly demonstrate a shared community of interest, as well as evidence of the high degree of movement and transport between the suburbs.

The significance of the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct

North Melbourne and Parkville share a clear economic interest, both being home to Melbourne's Biomedical Precinct.

Parkville is home to Melbourne University and its significant research capability and many of the city's largest hospitals, including the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital.

The Victorian State Government has identified the Arden Precinct located in North Melbourne as a future home of research sectors, and according to their own material "highly complementary to the nearby Parkville Precinct."

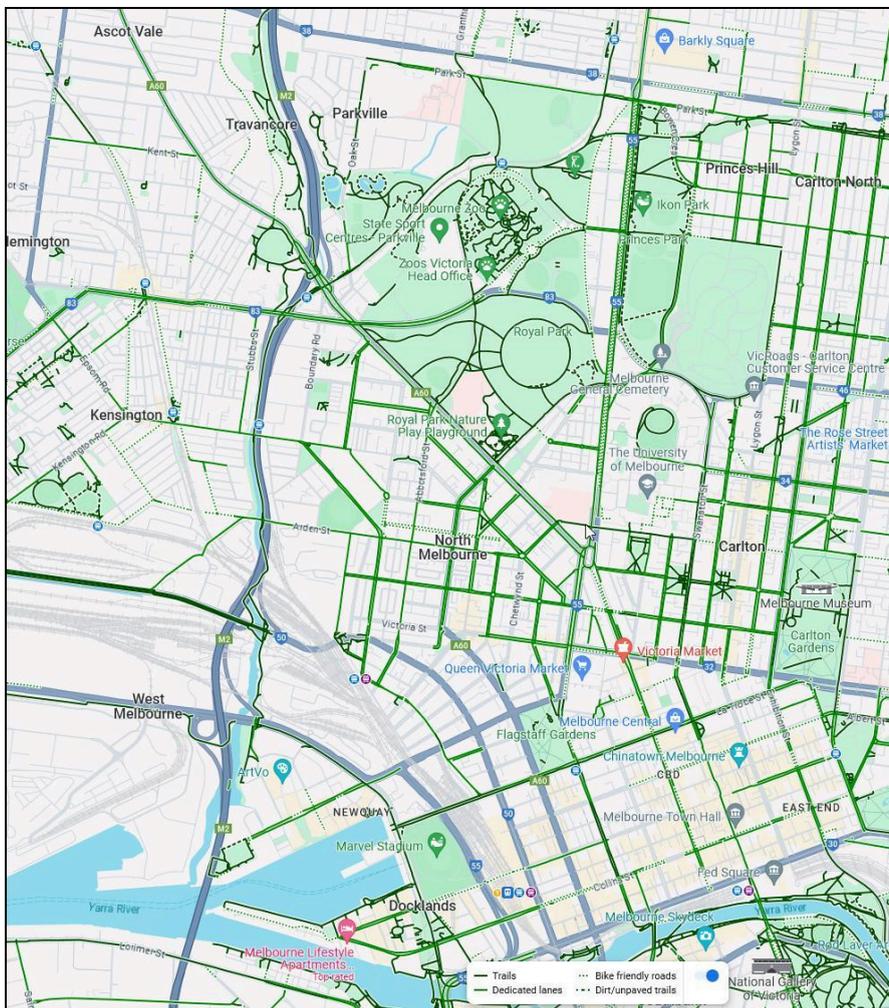
The proposal to move North Melbourne and parts of Parkville out of Melbourne and into Maribyrnong would divide this biomedical precinct in half. It would even go so far as splitting campuses for individual hospitals across two electorate boundaries, potentially limiting their ability to meaningfully advocate for their services.

Cycling Infrastructure

Suburbs within the Division of Melbourne have high connectivity through cycling infrastructure across the electorate. Parkville particularly has a number of dedicated trails which connect the north, west and east of the suburb.

North Melbourne also has bike lanes present on most roads, which heavily connect the residents with West Melbourne and the CBD. This cycling infrastructure does not have the same presence to the west of the Citylink. Dedicated bike trails are only present along the border of the Citylink, and only a few bike lanes are present on major roads to travel into Kensington and Flemington. Compared to the east of the Citylink there is dramatically less biking infrastructure.

Map 1: Cycling lanes (in light green) dedicated cycling trails (dark green), comparing east and west of the Citylink



Physical Boundaries

The Citylink Toll Road provides a firm, unmoving physical limit on the inner city area of Melbourne. As outlined above, beyond the Citylink the suburbs of Melbourne gradually trend more and more residential, with larger dwellings, and features that increasingly resemble that of outer suburban living.

Unlike the arbitrary line the Labor Party has drawn through Royal Park, dividing the suburb of Parkville and carving out North Melbourne from the Division of Melbourne, Citylink and the Moonee Ponds Creek that runs beneath it provide an obvious and impactful natural and manmade boundary. Understandably, this is the reason the western edge of the Division of Melbourne was drawn along the Citylink in 2021.

To create a southern boundary and divide North & West Melbourne, the submission by the Victorian Labor party attempts to distinguish the north of Victoria Street from the south. This is a baseless argument - both sides of the street feature commercial usage, in keeping with the amenity of Queen Victoria Market. Specialty shops, retail, cafes and other commercial venues continue through the perpendicular streets of Howard, Leveson & (particularly) Errol Streets.

Gowanbrae

Labor's primary argument of Gowanbrae's inclusion into Wills is patently false. On page 7 the submission states, "Return the previously held locality of Gowanbrae from Maribyrnong to Wills, uniting the Merri-bek local government area in one Division". While uniting a whole local government area is usually an ideal boundary for an electorate, the map Labor provided does not do that. They appeared to have ignored that the section of Coburg North, east of the Merri Creek is in the division of Cooper, to which they have made no change. All of Coburg North is within the City of Merri-bek - if they wish to unite the LGA, Coburg North would need to be included as well, which would not be feasible on the projected numbers.

Regardless, while Gowanbrae is within the City of Merri-bek, it is much more geographically isolated than the surrounding Merri-Bek suburbs. Under Labor's proposal, the only road out of Gowanbrae on the South East of the suburb would require residents to cross into Maribyrnong first to travel into the rest of Wills. As a general rule we think one should be able to travel to all areas within an electorate without having to cross through another electorate.

Boundaries of Wills

The Muslim Community of Melbourne's north-western suburbs

Labor has made an argument that the interests of the Muslim community require their preferred boundaries of Wills to be adopted. Whilst Wills is home to a significant Muslim population, to the extent that the AEC considers this a relevant factor, this remains the case for the AEC's proposed boundaries, and indeed the data for the suburbs contested by Labor do not support their argument at all.

Analysis of the Islamic population of the outer north western suburbs of Melbourne indicates that Gowanbrae, Glenroy West and Oak Park have a significantly smaller Islamic community than the neighbouring suburbs of the northern part of Wills, ie Glenroy East, Fawkner & Hadfield.

In fact, the data below indicates that the contested suburbs of Gowanbrae, Glenroy West & Oak Park have more in common with nearby Maribyrnong suburbs of Gladstone Park - Westmeadows, Strathmore and Tullamarine when it comes to the Islamic community.

According to the most recent census data below in Table 6, the SA2s the Committee proposes to include in Maribyrnong: Strathmore, Tullamarine, Gladstone Park - Westmeadows, Oak Park, Gowanbrae and Glenroy West, all have an Islamic population between 4-11%, whereas those the AEC proposes to keep in Wills: Glenroy- East, Hatfield and Fawkner, are all between 21 and 35%. This powerful fact alone should be enough to refute any objection made by Labor.

Table 6: Islamic population by SA2

SA2	Islamic %
Strathmore	4.41%
Tullamarine	4.50%
Gowanbrae	4.95%
Oak Park	6.37%
Gladstone Park - Westmeadows	8.36%
Glenroy - West	11.00%
Hadfield	21.34%
Glenroy - East	23.24%
Fawkner	34.67%

Sporting Clubs

The submission from Victorian Labor goes to great lengths to highlight the role of sporting clubs and facilities as a community of interest that exist across the northern suburbs of Wills. We don't at all seek to dispute that sporting clubs exist as a community of interest. However, we have two key points to raise in response to the Labor submission. Firstly, we would argue that there are other communities of interest which may have more relevance to federal politics and policy, and therefore be more impacted by electorate boundaries, such as renters, or students. Secondly, if the Committee was to consider sporting clubs as a key community, we would argue that the proposed boundaries from the AEC, which would move Carlton North and Fitzroy North into the Division of Wills, similarly unite sporting clubs and facilities who primarily draw their membership from across the suburbs of North Fitzroy, Carlton North, Brunswick, Brunswick East and beyond.

To demonstrate, we draw the Committee's attention to clubs such as the Brunswick Zebras Football Club, which has a large number of players who live in Fitzroy North or Carlton North, and travel to the club's home ground at Sumner Park in Brunswick East to train and play.

There are a range of sporting clubs which are based at Carlton North's Princes Park, including FC Birrarung, the Carlton Cricket Club and Princes Park Bowls Club which draw their membership from not only suburbs south of Park Street, but also Brunswick and Brunswick East.

Parkrun is another large sporting group, which hosts group runs every Saturday at Princes Park. The group of runners draw from across the inner north, particularly neighbouring suburbs to the park including Princes Hill, Carlton North and Brunswick.

The Renegade Pub Football League is a vibrant part of Melbourne winters, and acts as both a sporting and community activity for participants. Clubs in the league are tied to local pubs, and under the AEC proposed boundaries the East Brunswick Eye Gougers would see their namesake suburb and training ground of Fleming Park united under one electorate with their affiliated pub, the Railway Hotel in Fitzroy North. The Vic Hotel Galahs are another club pub footy team who hail from slightly further north into Brunswick, but both clubs draw players from surrounding suburbs - again including Carlton North, Fitzroy North, Brunswick & Brunswick East, demonstrating the spread of this community across inner northern suburbs of Melbourne.

Community aquatic centres are a beloved part of Melbourne's amenity, and are frequented year round by families and members of the public generally who are seeking to swim, work out and socialise. When looking at the parts of Pascoe Vale and Brunswick West which lie to the west of the Citylink, it is worth considering which pool community members would consider their local. We doubt it would be the Coburg Leisure Centre or Brunswick Baths, which would require a further commute across the Citylink, and instead suggest that residents here would be swimming at the North-West Aquatic Centre in Essendon, connecting them into the wider Maribyrnong community.

Physical Boundaries in the north-west

As stated in our previous submission, we accept the boundaries that the AEC have drawn for the Division of Wills as they are. If the augmented commission is persuaded by arguments that Pascoe Vale Road is not a significant boundary however, we would instead propose the Craigieburn train line as a suitably significant boundary for the north-western edge of the Division of Wills.

After the Citylink curves to the west above Bell Street, rather than take the creek line or Pascoe Vale Road, there is a strong case for Wills to continue north up the Craigieburn train line. At this point in the line, the train still runs at ground level. As part of Victorian Labor's level crossing removals project, the station and rail line have been sunken further to the north at Glenroy, but level crossings remain (and are not yet scheduled for removal) at Gaffney Street & Devon Road.

The train line is a physical barrier that divides both Oak Park & Glenroy. It cuts the west of these suburbs off from their eastern neighbours, with only the above-mentioned cross roads available.

This boundary would also avoid dividing Statistical Area Level 1's, as the Pascoe Vale Road boundary does. 21003153706, 21003153616 & 21003153615 all cover territory both to the east

and west of Pascoe Vale Road, whereas a train line boundary would neatly follow these statistical geographies, as we understand most Commonwealth boundaries do.

Objection to Submission 398

Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division)

Higgins

Many of our objections to the argument to retain the seat of Higgins are well covered by our previous submission. We recognise the need for abolition to come from the south-east, and that there are clearly multiple distinct communities in Higgins who would form stronger communities of interest in neighbouring electorates.

We do want to reiterate our objection to the perceived history of the Division, as the seat of former Liberal Prime Ministers and a Treasurer. The modern face of Higgins is that it is a seat made up of 41.6% renters. As a result, the population of the seat is highly transient in its nature and many have only lived in the seat for a relatively short time. Many residents are relatively new constituents of Higgins, with a large portion of Carnegie and Murrumbeena being added in the 2010 redistribution.

The idea that a substantial number of residents have community connection to a former politician who left Parliament 50 years ago is unrealistic. While it is historically interesting, it is not proof of Higgins being a community of interest.

Melbourne

We strongly question the suggestion to move the Melbourne boundary to Toorak Road in page 19 of the Liberal Party submission. They claim the section between Toorak Road, Punt Road, and Malvern Road that was put into the Division of Melbourne exists as a community of interest. However it does not include an explanation as to why it should be separated from the section of South Yarra that is north of Toorak Road. Confusingly, they claim Punt Road is a strong natural border, but then proceed to not use it as a border.

We agree Chapel Street signifies a community of interest, with its vibrant nightlife and strong retail economy. However, again the proposal from the Liberal Party of Victoria is contradictory as it suggests boundaries that would split the precinct into multiple electorates.

South Yarra Station is a major focal point for connectivity of the local area and splitting the electorate down Toorak Road does not reflect that. It divides up communities which are heavily built up around this Station.

Lastly, as raised in our previous submission, public housing residents form a significant community of interest within the electorate of Melbourne. Including South Yarra in the electorate further unites the public housing towers by including the Malvern Road towers. We think it would be a shame to disregard the opportunity to unite this community if the Toorak Road border was to be adopted.

Hotham

When considering the rest of the south-eastern suburbs, we found the boundaries proposed by the Liberal Party for Hotham to be the most problematic. As highlighted in our previous submission, the AEC's draft boundaries united the significant Greek community in this area, based in Oakleigh and Clarinda. The long-standing strength of the community in this area has a clear influence culturally on the businesses and local economy. As shown in the heat map of the Greek population in our previous submission, the Monash Freeway provides an incredibly strong boundary for the Greek community. The suburbs of Chadstone and Mount Waverley contain a significant Greek population, however this is almost entirely located below the Monash Freeway. The Liberal proposal divides this population, as well dividing the suburb of Oakleigh in which this community is centred. There is a far more substantial Greek population in Hotham than there is in Chisholm. The idea that the Liberal Party submission unites most of the Greek population in the Monash LGA has little justification or evidence. These arguments can also be applied to Labor's suggestion for Hotham which unnecessarily divides up the Greek community to a more extreme degree.

The alternative the Liberal submission provides is the inclusion of Wheelers Hill into Hotham instead. This suburb seems decidedly out of place in the division of Hotham. In terms of weekly household median income, Wheelers Hill would stand out quite significantly compared to the rest of Hotham; it is more similar in that regard to Mount Waverley, Glen Iris and Malvern East (of which our submission suggests a solution to unite this suburb entirely).

Conclusion

The Australian Greens Victoria once again thank the Redistribution Committee for their work through the redistribution process.

As our comments above demonstrate, we strongly oppose the proposal in the Objection to Submission 487 from Victorian Labor to move North Melbourne and parts of Parkville from the Division of Melbourne to the Division of Maribyrnong. This is a suggestion based on highly selective data, proposed to protect perceived party political interests. When considering the demographics and physical features of these suburbs, and comparing it to the electorates overall, it is clear that North Melbourne and all of Parkville must remain within the Division of Melbourne if their communities of interest are to be preserved.

We also draw the attention of the committee to some inconsistencies in the arguments regarding the suburbs of Gowanbrae, Oak Park and Glenroy, and endorse the adoption of the boundaries for Wills and Maribyrnong that were included in the proposed redistribution.

Regarding the objection from the Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division) in submission 398, we hope to highlight the inconsistencies inherent in the arguments for proposed boundary changes within Melbourne's south-east, and once again endorse the boundaries as proposed by the Committee in May 2024.

We thank the Committee for their consideration of our comments.