



Suggestion 55

Craig Fletcher

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Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

As a resident of Ballarat, I am keenly interested in ensuring that the federal electorate in which I reside is effectively designed in a way that enables a local member to legitimately represent the communities that elect them.

With the bulk of its population in the city of Ballarat, the challenge for the AEC will always be in ensuring that the smaller towns in surrounding regions, which are required to get the division to quota, are those that are connected with the city through transport routes and communities of interests.

In that respect, the Division of Ballarat, as it stands today, has been well designed by the AEC.

Hepburn Shire has long had a connection with Ballarat. Creswick and Clunes are on the Ballarat trainline, and Daylesford is little more than half an hour away down the Midland Highway. People in towns across Hepburn see Ballarat as their main centre for shopping, education and work. Even the football league they play in is based in Ballarat.

Large parts of Golden Plains Shire are similarly connected to Ballarat. Meredith, Elaine, Buninyong and the other towns towards the Ballarat end of the Midland Highway commute into the city of Ballarat for work and school. While I acknowledge that areas closer to Geelong, such as Lethbridge or Teesdale, have closer links with that city, their rural nature is quite in keeping with towns in the Ballarat electorate, and they are closely connected with the other Midland Highway towns that look towards Ballarat.

The challenge now is in ensuring that the Division of Ballarat remains near quota, without compromising the integrity of its communities of interest. In doing so, I suggest that the AEC take the simple approach of adding Bannockburn to the electorate. The roughly 8,000 electors there should bring Ballarat close to quota, while maintaining the nature of the electorate.

One of the most significant changes of the most recent redistribution was removing Bacchus Marsh and surrounds from the Division of Ballarat. In my view, that was a **good** decision by the AEC.

While the rest of the Ballarat electorate is rural or regional in nature, Bacchus Marsh and its surrounds are distinctly peri-urban with many in those growing communities commuting to Melbourne for work. This will only increase over coming years. These communities have needs and priorities that are different from the rest of the Division of Ballarat, and as such would be better represented by a Member of Parliament who represents other peri-urban communities.

Regardless, it is clear that over the longer term, the population growth around Bacchus Marsh will mean that it cannot remain in the Ballarat electorate. Putting it back in the division now would be a backwards step that would have to be undone in the not too distant future.

Yours sincerely

Craig Fletcher.