



**THE FEDERAL  
REDISTRIBUTION  
NORTHERN TERRITORY**

# Comment on suggestion 1

Darren McSweeney

8 pages

# Comment on Suggestion Redistribution of Commonwealth Electoral Divisions

Darren McSweeney



Northern Territory 2024

*Gadalathami (Town Beach), Nhulunbuy*

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This Public Comment on Suggestion was lodged 25 June 2024 by  
**Darren McSweeney**  
an Australian Citizen, resident of Victoria, and member of the Australian Public Service.



<http://mcsw.ee>

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I live and write, the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

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The views, opinions, arguments and recommendations presented in this Comment on Suggestion to the redistribution of electoral divisions of Northern Territory are the author's own and in no way reflect the views of Services Australia, the Australian Public Service or Australian Government.

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I hold no interest in, and do not stand to receive any benefit or advantage resulting from the outcome of this redistribution. I have written this submission as a private citizen taking a personal interest in psephology and the electoral redistribution process. I am not now, nor at any time in the past been a member of any political party or similar associated organisation.

This submission is lodged claiming political neutrality. No political bias or partiality is implied within this submission and none should be inferred. This submission is lodged in accordance with [guidelines for making public submissions to a redistribution](#). The political implications – if any – of the recommendations have not formed part of the recommendation and should not be inferred.

Division names – including any suggested new names– comply with [guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions](#). Suggested names are based on the individual's merit and contribution to Australian society, and do not imply any political bias towards the eponymous persons. Proposals to abolish or rename a division – if any – do not reflect the performance or character of the current member of Parliament representing that division or the eponymous person, unless specified.

Criticism of submissions or decisions taken as part of this redistribution is based solely on the merit of the arguments and recommendations presented therein and serves solely to improve electoral representation for the people of Northern Territory. It is not in any way a reflection upon the character or abilities of any individual, government or community group or organisation participating in this process, nor any member of a Redistribution Committee, augmented Electoral Commission, any other member of the APS, the Australian Electoral Commission, any other Australian Government entity, agency, department or any current or past member of Parliament.



# Contents

Introduction ..... 5

General themes presented in suggestions ..... 5

Renaming divisions after geographic features ..... 6

Additional comments about specific suggestions ..... 7

Conclusion ..... 8

## Introduction

I am providing comment on all suggestions submitted for the redistribution of the Northern Territory electoral divisions.

I'm not sure if it's a reflection of the straightforwardness of the task ahead of the Committee, or a more general apathy toward the electoral divisions of the Northern Territory, but it is disappointing to see so few suggestions. Unless the Labor Party missed the deadline, and will submit their suggestion as a comment, somewhat following the way the Liberal Party did in Victoria, then I am disappointed that they did not warrant it important enough to contribute. Likewise I certainly expected a few more of the regular statewide contributors to have participated, although I could understand that their focus may have been with redistributions occurring in other states.

Anyway, I thought that I should provide some commentary on the suggestions that were lodged, lest there may not be any other comments lodged.

## General themes presented in suggestions

Having few suggestions to work through, the theme is where to draw the only boundary. The fact every suggestion that discussed the boundaries suggested making the same change is hardly surprising, as this was the only logical conclusion that could be drawn from the enrolment figures. I would contend this means the easy, obvious solution is the move the boundary to align with the Palmerston LGA boundary.

## Renaming divisions after geographic features

As I have mentioned in previous redistribution phases, I am opposed to naming a new division, or renaming an existing division, to a name based on geographic descriptors, even in an indigenous language.

First, it can be difficult to find a suitable geographic name to represent the entire division. For a division such as the current **SOLOMON**, this may be easy, however trying to find a single geographic name that accurately represents all communities within the existing **LINGIARI** would prove difficult, if not impossible.

Secondly, geographic names are usually used by state or territory electorates and districts. This can lead to duplication and confusion, particularly as state or territory districts are much smaller than federal divisions and therefore some electors in the federal division will be electors in a different district in the state or territory.

Third, geographic divisions are restricted by their namesake. This means either regularly renaming the division as its boundaries move, or twisting and contorting the division to retain the eponymous geographic feature. The division of **HUME** in New South Wales once centred around Albury in the far south of the state. It is now proposed to be confined to the Camden area in the outskirts of Sydney. Likewise, the nefarious division of **WERRIWA**. The current division of **SWAN** in Western Australia contains no area contained in the original federation division. The division of **RICHMOND** now only barely skirts the Richmond River and includes no part of the Richmond Valley. While this may not be case currently for **SOLOMON**, we have no way of knowing what lays ahead with future redistributions or even a potential expansion of Parliament.

Finally, renaming divisions to be based on geography removes a unique element of the Australian electoral landscape. Divisions named for Australians allows both prominent and unheralded persons to be recognised for their achievements. This feature should be celebrated and continued rather than dismissed.

## Additional comments about specific suggestions

The rather concise **Suggestion 1 – Anonymous**, while only providing a deviation, exactly mirrors the deviation mentioned in **Suggestion 4 – Jeffrey Waddell**. And given that suggestion matches my own, this anonymous suggestion also aligns with my thoughts. I did, however, elaborate and provide more background information about the methodology and naming of divisions. Given the boundary changes are identical, I support this suggestion.

I also support the boundary change as described in **Suggestion 2 – Leon Shinkai**. Although, it seems to have slight variations in the actual and projected numbers. There is a difference of 298 actual and 350 projected electors transferred into **SOLOMON/GARRAMILLA** in this suggestion that are not transferred in the other suggestions, including my own. As they have described the entirety of Palmerston LGA being transferred, I presume this discrepancy is a error, although I cannot ascertain which electors may have been transferred in their calculations.

I do not however support the suggestion to rename the division of **SOLOMON** to **GARRAMILLA** for the reasons I described earlier.

I support the suggestion for boundary changes in **Suggestion 4 – Jeffrey Waddell**. His figures match the electoral data in my own suggestion, so our boundaries are identical. I understand the position he has taken regarding projected electoral numbers, and I do agree that the Committee should ensure projected numbers are carefully calculated, especially given the error with projected numbers in both Western Australia and Victoria. However, I wish to note that the reason we revisit electoral divisions by way of redistributions every seven years is because those projected figures are estimates and are expected to change.

Furthermore, I note there was a concerted effort to increase enrolment within the remote and indigenous communities in the Northern Territory leading up to the Voice referendum in 2023. This effort would have been unaccounted for in the original projection, and would explain why there was a large increase in enrolment in Lingiari.

While not wishing to disregard the concerns addressed in **Suggestion 5 – Tess Martin**, I acknowledge that their concerns are entirely out of scope of the redistribution.

Both Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Island are required by legislation to be included in a division in the Northern Territory instead of Western Australia. While their concerns do have merit, I believe the legislative basis for including any external territories together with one of the internal territories has merit. I also note the same arrangement applies with both Jervis Bay Territory and Norfolk Island being included in divisions in the Australian Capital Territory.

Again, I agree with the suggested boundaries for **Suggestion 6 – Country Liberal Party**. I note that the elector data from their suggestion matches both mine and **Suggestion 4 – Jeffrey Waddell**, again reinforcing the correct boundary divisions aligning with the Palmerston LGA.

## Conclusion

With only six suggestions submitted, it is easy to see, there are no contentious issues raised and all suggestions are unanimous in their proposed division boundary changes. Therefore, I believe the Committee will have little trouble in reaching a proposed redistribution which follows the suggestions and incorporates all of Palmerston LGA within the division of **SOLOMON**.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide suggestions and comments, wish them well in their hopefully short deliberations. I look forward to the proposed redistribution report being released.