

36 Evelyn Owen Crescent
Dunlop ACT 2615
martin.c.gordon@hotmail.com

The Commissioners
Northern Territory Boundary Redistribution

Dear Commissioners,

I wish to lodge a redistribution submission for the Northern Territory.

I would like to make a number of observations and propose some ideas.

Observations

In 2015 the pattern of enrolments was quite different to now, with the creation of Spillett and the abolition of a central Australian seat Greatorex. Since then, the growth of enrolments has substantially stalled, and any growth continues in areas such as Palmeston, Alice Springs, Katherine, and parts of Darwin. Notably enrolments and or enrolment growth appear to have slipped in aboriginal areas, and the northern suburbs of Darwin.

It is possible to bring about a rebalancing of enrolments between seats, without abolishing a seat. Similarly, enrolment numbers in the Alice Springs Council area are such as to support 2.5 seats, and both Araluen and Braitling are considerably in excess of quota. The other central Australian seats of Namatjira, Stuart and Barkly are all well under quota.

In the 2011 redistribution the Commissioners had considered a new seat of Buchanan which was orientated east west, rather than north south as is the case with Stuart and Barkly. Given the broad orientation of local government councils in central Australia it seems that the orientation of seats will logically follow suit, in part driven by shifting elector numbers and underlying community of interest reflected in local councils and council wards.

Enrolments within Palmeston Council are enough to sustain four seats, and Spillett could conceivably contract eastwards and no longer include much of the unincorporated or Darwin Council areas.

Enrolments

In examining the SA1's of elector numbers and actual enrolments and ABC projections of elector numbers I found that there seemed to be surprisingly large falls in some seats, Braitling, Brennan and Nelson for example. I refer you to Attachment A.

I think that some unincorporated areas may not have been specifically allocated to their seats and this has impacted on some seat enrolments. In the case of Braitling, its excessive enrolment is a critical part of redrawing boundaries in Central Australia. A change in one month of some 445 electors is extraordinary. Large changes appear evident in the other seats of Brennan and Nelson.

My discussion below assumes that Braitling and Araluen are substantially above quota and that substantial redrawing of boundaries in Central Australia is necessary.

Because of the uncertainties over enrolments I have used a narrative form of description of my proposals at Attachment B.

Discussion

I have discussed seats in groups below:

Araluen, Braitling, Namatjira, Stuart and Barkly

These existing five seats collectively have just over 5 quotas between them. Their existing northern boundary could reasonably be retained as it defines larger, drier areas to the south, with more tropical ones to the north.

The first two seats are considerably over quota, whilst the latter three are significantly under quota. Reducing the physical size of both Araluen and Braitling and their enrolments is not difficult. The inclusion of the surplus electors from both, together with the remainder of the Alice Springs Council area would require only some 2,000 electors from Namatjira to make a smaller and substantially urban seat. I recognise however that the seat would need to expand some distance into the existing Namatjira to be sustainable at about quota. The abolition of Greatorex appears with the benefit of hindsight to have been a mistake, but would omit the fact that four years ago, the trend in enrolments suggested it as a reasonable solution to the continuing trend of relative decline in central Australian elector numbers. I would refer to the fact that in the not so recent past that the seat of Stuart took in Alice Springs suburbs and spread to the north of Alice Springs, here I suggest that the expansion to the south is the more reasonable solution.

The over enrolment in Araluen and Braitling are so excessive they need to be remedied, the Alice Spring Council area is a clear community of interest and nearby areas currently in Namatjira (in the MacDonnell Council area) can reasonably be combined.

The necessary displacement of Namatjira northwards, taking electors from Stuart and Barkly would reduce their combined enrolment to only one seats worth. The naming of a new seat might be reasonably called Namatjira, as it is certainly a name worth preserving, as the name is associated with someone more widely known than probably anyone else from the Northern Territory. Barkly has a strong regional connection around Tennant Creek and the Barkly Council, whilst Stuart is a long-established name and could be associated with the areas around Alice Springs and immediately to its north. An alternative would be to resurrect MacDonnell, again a strongly identified regional name.

Katherine, Daly, Arnhem, Nhulunbuy, Arafura

These five seats are slightly short of five quotas, with Katherine and Nhulunbuy been over quota and the other three been under quota. Katherine presently contains all the Katherine Council area but could lose some electors and that area north of the Katherine River seems to be the logical area to remove. Daly is only slightly below quota but a gain from Katherine would make Daly more rural in character and facilitate movements on the eastern side of the Stuart Highway that might add to numbers in Arafura (see discussion below).

Nhulunbuy has been the subject of significant change in 2015 due in part to the loss of a major portion of its industry. The addition of areas in East Arnhem Land has more than compensated for

this and the seat could lose electors to either Arnhem or Arafura (both of which are substantially under quota).

Nhulunbuy is a substantial town and has increasingly expanded into Arnhem Land to meet quota. Given that there are substantial mining operations and processing it seems that the addition of Groote Eyland (also with mining operations) to Nhulunbuy rather than Arnhem might be considered. This would mean that Arnhem could be overwhelmingly a more concentrated mainland seat, with a more aboriginal population and better community of interest. Groote Eyland is also within the East Arnhem council, so it is an exchange of one part of the council for another. If now is not considered the right time, it could be considered again in four years.

Arafura is heavily focused on the Tiwi Islands of Bathurst and Melville Island, and takes in the north coast of Arnhem Land, but not Jabiru and Kakadu which is relatively closer. Reconfiguring Arafura to be a more West Arnhem seat, would make it more compact and the mainland components readily connected by road links.

Ideally Arafura would be the western most block taking in a major portion of West Arnhem Land including Jabiru and Kakadu, Arnhem a more central Arnhem land seat, and Nhulunbuy a eastern Arnhem land seat taking in Groote Eyland.

Goyder and Nelson

I propose no changes to either Nelson or Goyder. Both seats are near quota, growing and are the northern and southern portions of the Darwin rural area, with the southern portion partly in Daly.

Spillert, Blain, Brennan and Drysdale

The seats of Spillert, Blain, Brennan and Drysdale are entirely or largely within the Palmeston Council. The enrolment of the Council is enough to sustain the four seats. I would recommend that Spillert contract eastwards towards Palmeston and could conceivably contract eastwards and no longer include much of the unincorporated or Darwin Council areas.

Port Darwin, Fannie Bay, Fong Lim

All these seats are slightly over quota and will continue to have steady growth. Some slight changes with Spillert which is well over quota and moving some of the northern parts of Fannie Bay into Nightcliff or Johnston could be considered as apart from Wanguri which is projected to have some growth, all the seats in the northern portion of Darwin have slow growth and are below quota.

Nightcliff, Johnston, Casuarina, Wanguri, Karama, Sanderson

I am not of the view that substantial changes are necessary to boundaries in the north of Darwin. However, all the seats are below quota and except for Wanguri are not expected to have any substantial elector growth. In a previous redistribution I had lodged an objection proposing some minor boundary changes between Wanguri and Casuarina, using Lee Point Road as a stronger continuous boundary. Again, revisiting this option may be useful. Karama has strong boundaries, as does Johnston, given the need to increase elector numbers in all seats except Wanguri, some changes are necessary.

I look forward to your deliberations.

Martin Gordon

2 March 2019

Seat	Enrolment			2020 Projected Enrolment		Growth	Issues	Comments
	Jan-19	Feb-19	Aug-20	B-A	C-B			
	A	B	C					
ARAFURA	4583	4623	4710	40	87		No comment	
ARALUEN	6466	6475	6533	9	58		No comment	
ARNHEM	4852	4886	4965	34	79		No comment	
BARKLY	4850	4771	4683	-79	-88		No comment	
BLAIN	5885	5839	5999	-46	160		No comment	
BRAITLING	7108	6663	6605	-445	-58	See Note below	Projection over 7000 electors seems probable	
BRENNAN	5407	5038	5080	-369	42	See Note below	Projection of 5500 electors seems probable	
CASUARINA	5353	5368	5530	15	162		No comment	
DALY	5201	5238	5254	37	16		No comment	
DRYSDALE	5746	5750	5418	4	-332		Projection seems anomalous	
FANNIE BAY	5887	5865	6085	-22	220		No comment	
FONG LIM	5548	5527	5624	-21	97		No comment	
GOYDER	5389	5381	5722	-8	341		No comment	
JOHNSTON	5119	5114	5085	-5	-29		No comment	
KARAMA	5264	5244	5160	-20	-84		No comment	
KATHERINE	6072	6065	6188	-7	123		No comment	
NAMATJIRA	4942	4988	5110	46	122		No comment	
NELSON	5279	5178	5340	-101	162	See Note below	No comment	
NHULUNBUY	5751	5635	5624	-116	-11		No comment	
NIGHTCLIFF	5350	5378	5338	28	-40		No comment	
PORT DARWIN	5551	5548	5924	-3	376		No comment	
SANDERSON	5486	5503	5307	17	-196		Projection seems anomalous	
SPILLETT	6029	5986	6861	-43	875		No comment	
STUART	4914	4933	4738	19	-195		No comment	
WANGURI	5863	5824	6131	-39	307		No comment	
Sub Total	137895	136820	139014	-1075	2194			
Unincorporated				Appears to relate to				
9100101	0	0	0					
9100102	2	0	0					
9100103	118	125	125	Brennan				
9100104	233	239	247	Brennan				
9100105	185	188	198	Nelson				
9100201	313	310	306	Braitling				
9100202	75	74	77	Braitling				
9100203	0	0	0					
Sub Total	926	936	953					
Total	138821	137756	139967					
Quota	5553	5510	5599					

Seat and Proposed changes

In the narrative descriptions below, I rely on both existing boundaries of seats and Local Council areas and wards as building blocks. I have done so as particularly in regional areas; local government and its wards may give good indications of communities of interest. In my opinion they can be a sounder basis for seats than current boundaries.

Central Australia – Araluen, Braitling and Namatjira

I had previously described that Araluen, Braitling, Namatjira, Stuart and Barkly can be modified as a group, by internal changes that would transfer surplus electors from Araluen and Braitling (combining them with the remainder of electors from Alice Springs Council and a portion of MacDonnell Council to form a more compact Namatjira). Araluen and Braitling can be redrawn such that they are western and northern portion of the Alice Spring Council respectively (and in line with quota or possibly below, given their growth) and the southern and eastern portions of the Council combined with Rodinga Ward and that part of the Ljirapinta Ward east of the Stuart Highway from the MacDonnell Council. These parts of MacDonnell Council contain about 1,200 electors.

Alice Springs appears to be growing relatively strongly and the incorporation of the south easterly most ward of Rodinga with Alice Springs means that what is recognised as an existing community of interest within the MacDonnell Council is used as a building block. Rodinga surrounds Alice Springs currently and much of its population lives in communities such as Santa Teresa, Finke and Amooguna, despite the fact that part of the Simpson Desert is a major portion of the ward.

Central Australia – Stuart and Barkly

The remainder of the MacDonnell Council contains about 2,400 electors. This I propose be incorporated with Stuart (part of it already is), together with the entirety of the Central Desert Council and about 500 electors from Barkly Council, and I would suggest from the Alpurululam Ward, and from the towns of Arlparra and Ampilatwatja on the Sandover Highway which connects the ward and these towns.

Stuart under this configuration is less elongated than currently along the west side of the Northern Territory, including parts of the Victoria Daly Council, which I propose to exclude and incorporate in Barkly. The changes to Stuart make the seat more Central Australian in character and whilst areas along the Sandover Highway have not been in Stuart for some time, the transport and communication linkages are strong as is the use of Local Council communities. The Tanami Desert rather than substantially separating the northern and southern portions of Stuart becomes more or less the boundary of the seat.

Barkly as a result of these changes contracts to the north and gains additional areas from the inclusion of part of the Victoria Daly Council currently in Stuart. The east west orientation follows transport and communication links and ends the difficulties of the north south alignment of seats which is becoming difficult to maintain numerically without elongation of seats with little regard to community of interest.

Top End – Nhulunbuy, Arnhem and Arafura

Nhulunbuy has been the subject of significant change in 2015 due in part to the loss of a major portion of its industry. The addition of areas in East Arnhem Land has more than compensated for this and the seat could lose electors to either Arnhem or Arafura (both of which are substantially under quota).

Nhulunbuy is a substantial town and has increasingly expanded into Arnhem Land to meet quota. Given that there are substantial mining operations and processing it seems that the addition of Groote Eyland (also with mining operations) to Nhulunbuy rather than Arnhem might be considered. This would mean that Arnhem could be overwhelmingly a more concentrated mainland seat, with a more aboriginal population and better community of interest. Groote Eyland is also within the East Arnhem council, so it is an exchange of one part of the council for another. If now is not considered the right time, it could be considered again in four years.

Arnhem - Swapping western portions of East Arnhem Council into the seat of Arnhem would avoid the odd elongation of Arnhem from Groote Eyland, to Kakadu. It would also group a considerable number of northern Arnhem land communities in one seat (such as Ramingining, Millingimbi, Galiwinku and possibly Gapuwiyak). Segmenting Arnhem land into western, northern and eastern segments groups communities together, rather better than currently the case. It is quite possible ward boundaries in local councils could be useful building blocks.

Arafura is heavily focused on the Tiwi Islands of Bathurst and Melville Island, and takes in the north coast of Arnhem Land, but not Jabiru and Kakadu which is relatively closer (and part of West Arnhem). Reconfiguring Arafura to be a more West Arnhem seat, would make it more compact and the mainland components readily connected by road links.

Ideally Arafura would be the western most block taking in a major portion of West Arnhem Land including Jabiru and Kakadu, and even areas on the eastern side of the Stuart Highway which is currently in Victoria Daly Council (and the Daly electorate). Some exchanges of West Arnhem Wards between Arafura and Arnhem would facilitate this reorientation of seats and make a more geographically logical arrangement.

Top End – Katherine and Daly

Katherine presently contains all the Katherine Council area but must lose some electors and that area north of the Katherine River seems to be the logical area to remove. Daly is only slightly below quota but a gain from Katherine would make Daly more rural in character and facilitate movements on the eastern side of the Stuart Highway that might add to numbers in Arafura (see discussion above).

The changes I have in mind for Katherine and Daly are quite modest. The Darwin Rural seats of Goyder and Nelson do not need changes, Daly with some minor gains from Katherine can contract slightly westwards and Arafura gain some numbers directly from Daly and indirectly from Nhulunbuy from exchanges through Arnhem (discussed above).

Darwin – Rural, Nelson and Goyder

I propose no changes for these seats. Both are compact, have well defined boundaries and are well within quota.

Palmeston – Spillert, Blain, Brennan and Drysdale

The Palmeston Council area contains enough electors for four seats. I consider than contracting Spillert eastwards and placing it within Palmeston is a viable option, noting the strong elector growth of Palmeston generally. Those parts of Darwin Council and unincorporated areas currently in Spillert could be used to supplement numbers in Fong Lim, enabling changes to Nightcliff, Johnston, Casuarina, Sanderson and Karama. Fong Lim could be confined south of the Stuart Highway picking up areas from Spillert, losing The Narrows, Fannie Bay and Ludmilla.

Darwin – Port Darwin, Fannie Bay and Fong Lim

These three seats are all over quota and growing. The discussion above alludes to a gain of electors currently in Spillert in areas such as Winnellie, Coonawarra and Berrimah. I had in a previous objection proposed such a solution and given numbers in Spillert (and Palmeston) this may be an idea whose time has come.

Port Darwin has been progressively physically shrinking and becoming much more densely settled. Fannie Bay is similar, and Fong Lim also. These three seats are like the inner-city areas of other major Australian cites, with rising socio-economic status, higher housing density etc. I propose no changes to Port Darwin.

Fong Lim by the addition of electors south of the Stuart Highway and currently in Spillert would still be likely over quota and growing steadily. The removal of The Narrows, Fannie Bay and Ludmilla will have consequences for Fannie Bay, but offers via displacement of electors an opportunity to redress the lowish enrolment of northern Darwin seats and suburbs such as Coconut Grove and Ludmilla and the Narrows are ideal for transfer to Nightcliff, Johnston or even Sanderson.

Fannie Bay is already over quota and losing Coconut Grove and losing some parts of Ludmilla whilst gaining others from Fong Lim will make the seat more coherent.

Darwin – Nightcliff, Johnston, Casuarina, Sanderson, Karama and Wanguri

The discussion above alludes to a transfer of electors from Coconut Grove and Ludmilla and the Narrows are ideal for transfer to Nightcliff, Johnston or even Sanderson.

Collectively these 6 seats are about 700 electors short of quota, but projections indicate slow overall growth. The only seat with more electors than quota is Wanguri. Johnston is most below quota and Karama next. Transfers from Coconut Grove, or even the Narrows as well as Eaton (the RAAF base) could remedy Nightcliff, Johnston, Sanderson, but adjustments to boundaries are needed to effect changes to Casuarina, or Karama.

Splitting suburbs is generally not undertaken in other states and territories, but given it is well established in the Northern Territory and the tolerance margins as large as they are, still in some cases do not meet quota, it is possible to split suburbs to come up with workable boundaries.

With naming of seats, the only one that may warrant change could be Wanguri. Previously a seat was called Leanyer (which apparently has Aboriginal origins as does Wanguri). Leanyer is a vastly larger suburb in population than Wanguri (2.5 times the size). Leanyer would appear to be the more suitable name. Surrounding seats are called Nightcliff, Fannie Bay, Port Darwin, Karama and are clearly locational names. I would be inclined to restore Leanyer as the name for Wanguri.