

NTEC Redistribution Committee
GPO Box 2419
Darwin NT 0801

14th April 2019

RE: 2019 Electoral Redistribution

Dear NTEC Redistribution Committee Members,

Preamble: I am conflicted as I write to you, the NTEC Redistribution Committee. Whilst I am not Yolŋu, I firmly believe Yolŋu landowners must be engaged, meaningfully consulted and local decisions respected over all decisions that impact on Yolŋu land and lives. Unfortunately, our political systems do not align and there is little to no opportunity for Yolŋu to make their own submissions to you.

The Object and Principles of redistribution.

The Committee is guided by "Section 139 of the *Electoral Act 2004* states that the object of a redistribution is to ensure that, at the time of the next general election, the number of electors in each proposed division is as near to equal as practicable" but must have regard to the following principles:

- (a) the physical area of a division containing rural and remote areas should be as small as practicable
- (b) the demographic characteristics of a division should be as uniform as practicable
- (c) the geographic features of a division should be as uniform as practicable
- (d) each identifiable community should be included in only one division if practicable
- (e) subject to paragraphs (a) to (d), changes to existing divisions should minimise the number of electors being transferred from one division to another

This submission is primarily concerned with the division of Nhulunbuy.

Comment 1

Background: It is important to recognise that Yolŋu Matha is spoken in all Yolŋu towns, communities and homelands, including Millingimbi, Ramingining, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Nhulunbuy as well as smaller population centres including Baniyala, Gan Gan, Gurrumuru, Mäpuru, Dhalinybuy, Rorruwuy to name a few. Languages spoken to the east, south and west of the division boundaries are structurally very different, showing greater linguistic divergence than for example that between European languages. In addition to major linguistic differences, there are also significant differences in political structures, kinship systems and ceremonial life with these same neighbours.

Principle b, "the demographic characteristics of a division should be as uniform as practicable" is particularly relevant. I believe this principle guides the Committee to include all centres with populations speaking Yolŋu Matha within one division.

Submissions with proposals to remove Ramingining from the division are not sound from historical and demographic perspectives. In the late 1960s Millingimbi suffered a severe water shortage resulting in the establishment of Ramingining. Ramingining and Milingimbi are closely linked

politically, socially and culturally. Residents of both towns regularly commute backwards to forwards the short distance by boat.

Proposals to relocate Ramingining into another division could be expected to further marginalise residents from Western political processes and democratic representation.

Recommendation: That the Redistribution Committee maintain the current boundaries of the Nhulunbuy division.

Comment 2

Submissions with proposals to remove Yolŋu Matha speaking centres of population from the division are undermining the overall integrity of the Yolŋu community.

Principle d states "each identifiable community should be included in only one division if practicable". This principle raises the question of what in this context is a reasonable definition of 'community'. 'Community' is often used when referring to a population centre, ie Millingimbi or Galiwin'ku community. Another definition is, a body of persons or groups having a common history, or common social, economic, and political interests.' As a whitefella who has lived and worked for some decades on Yolŋu lands, the use of Yolŋu Matha, the shared norms, networks, trust relationships and systems of land ownership indicate strongly that all Yolŋu Matha speakers living on Yolŋu land constitute the Yolŋu community with regard to Principle d.

Recommendation: The Redistribution Committee interpret 'community' in the context of Principle d to represent 'all Yolŋu Matha speakers living on Yolŋu land' and act accordingly to maintain the integrity of this community by not changing the boundaries.

Comment 3

According to Jeff Waddell's submission the current enrolment of Nhulunbuy is 3.9% above quota. This is well below 20%. Again according to Waddell, by August 2020, when taking into account average population growth and the projected increase in average enrolment numbers across all divisions, Nhulunbuy will be 2.9% above quota, a decrease in the percentage of enrolled voters above quota.

In addition, Martin Gordon's submission suggests a decrease in the number of enrolments over the period January 2019 to August 2020.

Perhaps at the next redistribution it will be possible to consolidate all Yolŋu speaking population centres into one division by the inclusion of Gapuwiyak.

Recommendation: The projected enrolment for the division of Nhulunbuy does not warrant a change.

Naming of division during redistribution.

After reading the submission by YIngiya Guyula I am convinced the name Nhulunbuy is no longer appropriate. Nhulunbuy is derived from a place name, with the suffix, -buy referring to 'associated with'. Nhulun is the name of the hill overlooking and the town, hence the name Nhulunbuy, the town associated with Nhulun.

The name Nhulunbuy is no longer appropriate because it is no longer representative of the division as a whole. As the division was expanded to compensate for the population decrease in the mining town. Nhulunbuy is now on the far north eastern corner of the division. The current division extends two hundred kilometres to the west and one hundred and fifty kilometres to the south. Guyula's suggestion 'Mulka' has considerable merit and needs to be seriously considered as the new name for the division.

Mulka is a word that means 'welcome', feel comfortable and be at ease', 'you will be respected here'. I believe Mulka is displayed on a signboard visible to people as they drive into Nhulunbuy. In this context it applies to all people, from all cultural and language backgrounds across Yolŋu land. Mulka is a word that is understood by all Yolŋu Matha speakers and many of us who are learning Yolŋu Matha, so it is an ideal choice. The people of Mapuru where I live support this change.

Recommendation: The division of Nhulunbuy be renamed Mulka.

Finally, thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

John Greatorex