

Submission to the 2016 - 2017 Legislative Council Boundary Redistribution

On behalf of The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division)





TASMANIA

The Liberal Party of Australia
TASMANIAN DIVISION

Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Redistribution Committee
Level 3, TasWater Building
169 Main Road
MOONAH TAS 7009

Dear Committee Members,

I make the attached submission on behalf of the Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division).

Should the Redistribution Committee wish to discuss the proposal and content of this Suggestions Submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SMQ".

Sam McQuestin
State Director



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INTRODUCTION

This submission is made in response to the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner's initial proposal for the redistribution of boundaries for the Legislative Council Divisions in Tasmania.

The Liberal Party's only submission with regard to the names of electoral divisions in Tasmania is that there is no good reason to make any change.

The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division) acknowledges that Tasmania will continue to have fifteen electoral divisions in the Legislative Council.

We note that the process of redistribution commencement is outlined within section 10 of the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Act 1995;

10. Commencement of redistributions

(1) A redistribution of the State into electoral divisions is to commence as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Redistribution Committee under section 4.

(2) If-

(a) it appears to the Electoral Commissioner, from a determination published under section 9 at any time after 4½ years after a redistribution of the State under this Act, that the number of persons enrolled in respect of 4 or more electoral divisions varies by more than 25% from the average divisional enrolment; or

(b) a period of 9 years has elapsed since the appointment of the Redistribution Committee under section 4-

the Electoral Commissioner must recommend to the Minister having the administration of the Electoral Act 2004 that the Committee and the Tribunal be re-appointed under section 4 of this Act.

(3) The Minister must cause a copy of any such recommendation to be laid before the Legislative Council within 5 sitting days of that House after he or she receives it.

The Liberal Party further notes that section 13 of the Legislative Council Boundaries Act 1995 must make an initial proposal;

13. Redistribution Committee to make initial redistribution proposal

(1) The Redistribution Committee must, in accordance with this Part, make an initial proposal for redistribution of the State into the number of Council divisions specified in section 18 of the Constitution Act 1934.

INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED)

- (2) In making an initial redistribution proposal, the Redistribution Committee must take into account the following priorities:
- (a) the first priority is to ensure, as far as practicable, that, if the State were redistributed in accordance with the initial redistribution proposal, the number of electors enrolled in each Council division would not, 4 years and 6 months after the redistribution, be less than 90% or more than 110% of the average Council division enrolment;
 - (b) the second priority is the community of interest within each Council division.
- (3) After taking into account the priorities specified in subsection (2), the Redistribution Committee must consider, in the case of each Council division, the following matters:
- (a) the means of communication and travel within the division;
 - (b) the physical features and area of the division;
 - (c) existing electoral boundaries;
 - (d) distinct natural boundaries.
- (3A) Subject to subsection (2), the Committee is to give such weight as it determines to the matters specified in subsection (3).
- (4) For the purposes of this section-
- (a) the Council division quota is to be the basis for the initial redistribution proposal; and
 - (b) the Redistribution Committee may adopt a margin of allowance to be used when necessary- but in no case is any variation from the Council division quota to exceed 10%.

In preparing this submission, the Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division) has addressed the elector constraints as set out in the Legislative Council Boundaries Act 1995 (The Act), and has also paid due regard to maintaining community of interests, means of communication and travel, physical features and existing boundaries.

The Liberal Party also believes there are a number of external factors to this process, which should be considered and may necessitate delay to this redistribution.

The Liberal Party believes the final proposal for redistribution should minimize the dislocation of voters and to ensure that the community is adequately consulted on any changes that may be made. In light of the external factors outlined in this submission this may not be possible at this time.

On behalf of The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division)

THE LIBERAL PARTY APPROACH

The Liberal Party does not believe, for two reasons, it is an appropriate time for a re-distribution to be conducted at this time.

Firstly we believe the process should be paused until the outcome of the current Federal redistribution is known given changes at this level will have direct impact on the boundaries of the House of Assembly.

Secondly, given the periodic cycle of Legislative Council elections a situation will be created in which voters will go to the polls this May while the process is potentially incomplete. This in some cases may see constituents vote for a member who only represents that community for a very short period of time. It is the Liberal Party's view that the process needs to be complete prior to the issuing of the writs for any election in the Legislative Council.

To achieve this a delay to clear the current round of elections should be considered.

Because the Liberal Party believes the process of re-distribution should be delayed we have not provided any suggestions in terms of a proposed set of electoral boundaries. Instead the Liberal Party believes the factors outlined below need to be prioritized when formulating the final proposed set of boundaries when this process is conducted.

The Liberal Party believes that Tasmanian voters will be best served by changes being limited to only those necessary for the appropriate number of electors to be enrolled in each Division. This is important to ensure the minimum dislocation and confusion is created in for voters.

On behalf of The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division)

CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

While it is accepted that the committee has undertaken the advertising that is required under the Act for this redistribution it is the Liberal Party's position that this has not been sufficient to enable the Tasmanian community to be fully consulted.

The timing of the call for submissions, over the summer break for many Tasmanians, has created a situation where many people are not aware that this process is ongoing.

Further the media mix used to advertise the process, in terms of the paid media, has been very limited and does not adequately reflect the way many Tasmanians now access their news and information. It is worth noting the substantial difference between the manner in which this process has been advertised and the way the lead up to either a General Lower House or Legislative Council is advertised.

The latter including television, social media, radio, online news as well as the traditional print media.

NAMING OF DIVISIONS

The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmania Division) submission does not recommend any changes to the names of existing electoral divisions.

The current Division names are accepted within the community and there is nothing to be gained by changing them.

It is the Liberal Party's view that re naming and reshaping the Divisions of Apsley and Western Tiers to Prosser and McIntyre will create unnecessary confusion within the Tasmanian Community.

EXISTING ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

The Liberal Party notes that one of the priorities outlined for the committee to take into account within a re-distribution process is that of existing boundaries. We believe this consideration should take two parts, both existing Legislative Council boundaries and those of the House of Assembly.

The proposal developed by the committee has been seen by many in the community to be a radical departure from the boundaries that have been in place over recent years. This approach does not seem to satisfy the Act's own criteria to take into account matters including existing boundaries.

Major changes from the existing boundaries will also create many challenges for candidates for the Legislative Council both those who are seeking re-election in the next year as well as those who have expressed an intention to be a candidate for upcoming election.

The Liberal Party believes that if the re-distribution proceeds it should be done on the basis of incremental change from the existing boundaries to ensure as little confusion as possible.

The correlation between the boundaries of the Legislative Council divisions and the current House of Assembly and House of Representatives has recently been strong. While it is accepted that not all Legislative Council divisions sit wholly within the Larger Lower House boundaries the majority traditionally have done.

The Liberal Party believes as a result of the current re-distribution at a Federal level this re-distribution should be held over until that process is complete to ensure that the correlation between the two sets of boundaries can be fully understood.

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

The initial proposal does not appear to have given full consideration to the natural connection of communities. This is particularly evident in the North and East of the State.

To give a couple of examples, there does not seem to be a lot of practical sense in moving the boundary of the Division of Launceston to the South to include the semi rural area of Devon Hills and Perth to the almost exclusively urban area of Launceston City.

Further the separation of the northern and southern areas of the East Coast, which are currently wholly within the Division of Apsley, seems a retrograde step. This is especially the case when the recent combined move to market the region as a tourism destination known as the “Great Eastern Drive” is taken into account.

Finally Tasmania is a decentralized population which definite regions within the State. It has been widely noted that this redistribution unnecessarily shifts the number of seats with in the Legislative Council to the South of the State.

Whilst this change may at some time be necessary, the changes that are currently required are nowhere near of the scale out-lined in the initial proposal. This is especially the case when it is considered that only one Division is currently forecast to fall outside the 10% variation in 4.5 years time.

CONCLUSION

As outlined above there are a number of external factors that the redistribution committee has no control over which have undermined the undertaking of a redistribution at this time.

The on going Federal redistribution makes it impossible for the committee to make a considered decision with all the necessary facts available to it. Further, the time line for the redistribution will cause significant uncertainty for the voters going to the polls in this year's Legislative Council election.

It is the Liberal Party's position that this redistribution should be delayed until this necessary information is available to the committee.

When the redistribution is conducted it is the Liberal Party's view that it is important to minimize confusion within the Tasmanian voting public. It is our view that to achieve that, incremental change rather than wholesale change, will best deliver that objective.

Considered changes to achieve the stated aims of the redistribution should better make reference to the existing boundaries of the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly, once they are known, and also give better consideration to communities of interest including the balance between the North and South of the State.

