

Submission ID: CO-0050
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Submission Topic: Electorate Boundaries
Electoral District: Noosa; Coolum (formerly Ninderry); Nambour (formerly Nicklin)
Related Submissions: O-251, O-385, O-467, O-489, O-512, O-559, O-663, O-683, O-724 & O-734

Submission:

Submission on the Proposed Allocation of Eumundi, advocate transfer into Noosa

The proposed transfer of Eumundi into the Nambour electorate appears to be a convenient population carve-out that reduces numbers in the proposed Coolum electorate and elevates numbers in Nambour, with insufficient regard to the statutory requirement to preserve communities of interest. While the Commission must keep electorates within quota, it must also weigh economic, social, regional and other community of interest factors, ways of communication and travel, physical features, existing boundaries and demographic trends.

The preferred outcome is to include Eumundi in the proposed Noosa electorate, while using the southern hinterland localities proposed to be removed from Nambour — including Palmwoods, Chevallum, Ilkley, Hunchy and Tanawha — to support the population balance of the proposed Nambour electorate. That alternative better satisfies both the numerical requirements and the broader statutory criteria because those southern hinterland localities are already identified as a connected community of interest centred on Woombye and Palmwoods, and they sit within the broader Nambour-facing southern hinterland. By contrast, Eumundi's ties run strongly eastward toward Noosa and the coastal hinterland rather than south-west toward the Nambour district.

Submissions (251, 385, 489, 512, 559, 663, 683, & 734) lodged with the commission are overwhelmingly supportive of the inclusion of Eumundi into Noosa and each have detail in their arguments reflecting their probable residence in the town.

I contend that submissions 467 and 724 are not made by Eumundi residents and provide no evidence to support inclusion of Eumundi in Nambour and are merely supporting a numbers game.

The proposed Eumundi-Noosa boundary should follow the Bruce Highway to the west, the North Coast Line to the east, and connect northward to Noosa where the present local government boundary extends from the Bruce Highway across the railway line to the Nandroya/Eumundi Range Road junction. That alignment would use recognisable transport and physical features while also respecting the current local government boundary, both of which are matters the Commission is required to consider.

Eumundi has a long electoral history of association with the east rather than the western hinterland. It was placed in the Noosa electorate in 1991, remained in Noosa in 1999 and 2008, and was then included in Ninderry in 2017. Over at least the last 35 years, Eumundi has therefore been politically, culturally and socially associated with the coastal region and has had no real electoral connection with the western hinterland.

That eastern orientation is reinforced by economic reality. Business expenditure data from a hosted accommodation business in Eumundi for FY2024-25 shows spending concentrated in Eumundi (43%), Noosa/Noosaville (25%) and Cooroy (14%), with only a small proportion flowing to businesses in the proposed Nambour electorate (5%) and proposed Coolumbul electorate (4%). The same submission notes that Cooroy contains the nearest supermarket essential to the business and that there is effectively nothing comparable to the west for its operating needs. This pattern supports the conclusion that Eumundi's day-to-day economic connections are local and eastward, not westward.

The broader regional economy points the same way. The Eumundi Markets have been reported as generating \$54 million in annual visitor expenditure, supporting more than 1,000 direct jobs and contributing around 30,000 accommodation room nights worth \$9.3 million across the wider Noosa and Sunshine Coast visitor economy. That evidence shows Eumundi is part of an established Noosa-hinterland economic system, not simply a numerical unit available to correct enrolment pressure elsewhere.

Community of interest is also reflected in lived social behaviour. Weekly travel to Noosa for beach, recreation and services is a practical example of how residents orient themselves eastward toward Noosa, not westward toward the Mary River hinterland. This is directly relevant to the statutory criterion concerning means of communication and travel within electoral districts.

For these reasons, Eumundi should be allocated to the proposed Noosa electorate, and the southern hinterland localities including Palmwoods, Chevallum, Ikley, Hunchy and Tanawha provide a more coherent source of numbers for the proposed Nambour electorate if further balancing is required. That approach would better reconcile quota compliance with the Commission's wider duty to preserve coherent and genuine communities of interest.