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Submission Topic: Electorate Boundaries and Names
Electoral District: All

Submission:

I write to object to aspects of the proposed redistribution of Queensland electoral districts on the basis that elements of the proposal do not adequately reflect communities of interest, cultural geographies, and the principle of equitable representation, particularly in relation to First Nations communities and regional Queensland.

While the redistribution process must achieve numerical equality of electors within the statutory quota, the Electoral Act 1992 also requires consideration of broader qualitative factors including community of interest, communication and travel patterns, demographic trends, and physical features.

In several respects, the proposal places disproportionate weight on population equality while insufficiently recognising the structural realities of regional, remote, and First Nations communities whose representation is already constrained by geography, service access, and socio-economic inequity.

Key concerns

1. Insufficient weighting of First Nations communities of interest

The proposed redistribution notes that a number of electorate names derive from Indigenous language origins. However, the proposal does not appear to substantively consider First Nations cultural geographies, kinship networks, or functional community connections as a primary determinant of boundary design.

First Nations communities are not defined solely by population density or administrative boundaries. Cultural landscapes, traditional owner group boundaries, service catchments, and patterns of mobility often operate across local government areas and existing electoral boundaries.

Where electoral boundaries divide communities with shared cultural authority, service infrastructure, or social networks, this risks weakening culturally informed representation, fragmenting advocacy capacity, limiting the ability of elected representatives to engage meaningfully with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and undermining principles of self-determination.

The Act requires consideration of economic, social and regional communities of interest. In practice, this should include explicit consideration of First Nations governance structures, cultural authority, and Indigenous data relating to community distribution.

2. Regional representation equity

The proposal includes consolidation of representation in regional Queensland in order to maintain quota compliance. While numerical parity is important, the proposal does not sufficiently account for the practical realities of representation across large and geographically dispersed electorates.

Large districts already present challenges in relation to travel time and cost for constituents, access to services, engagement with multiple Traditional Owner groups, equitable political participation, and the cultural obligations and community leadership responsibilities often held by First Nations leaders.

The current legislative framework provides only limited weighting for large geographic electorates. There is a strong argument that the existing weighting does not adequately reflect the complexity of representation in remote and regional Queensland, particularly where communities experience structural disadvantage and limited access to democratic processes.

3. Renaming of electorates and implications for cultural recognition

The proposal recommends reverting to a predominantly geographic naming convention for electoral districts. While geographic naming may support voter recognition, it may also reduce opportunities to acknowledge individuals of significance, including First Nations leaders whose contributions have shaped Queensland's social, cultural and political landscape.

Naming conventions play an important symbolic role in recognising histories that have often been marginalised within formal governance structures. Consideration should be given to maintaining a balanced approach that recognises both place-based identities and significant individuals, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

4. Need for stronger integration of demographic and social equity considerations

Population growth pressures in south-east Queensland are clearly a significant driver of redistribution decisions. However, the redistribution process should also consider broader indicators of community need, including socio-economic vulnerability, service access disparities, regional workforce pressures, housing stress, and population mobility patterns.

Communities experiencing structural disadvantage may require stronger representation frameworks, rather than consolidation or dilution of electoral influence.

Recommendations

1. That the Commission further review the proposed boundaries to ensure that First Nations communities of interest are not fragmented across multiple electorates where this reduces effective representation.
2. That additional weight be given to the practical realities of representation in regional and remote Queensland, including reconsideration of the adequacy of the current large district weighting mechanism.
3. That the Commission reconsider aspects of the proposed electorate

- naming approach to ensure continued recognition of significant individuals, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.
4. That future redistributions consider the development of clearer guidance regarding the incorporation of First Nations cultural geographies and governance structures as relevant community of interest factors.
 5. That the Commission explicitly acknowledge Indigenous data sovereignty considerations when interpreting demographic and spatial data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Electoral boundaries are not merely technical constructs. They shape how communities are represented, how voices are heard, and how policy priorities are understood.

A redistribution process that genuinely reflects Queensland's diversity must engage with both quantitative equality and qualitative equity. Strengthening recognition of First Nations communities of interest within redistribution processes contributes to a more inclusive democratic system and supports long-term legitimacy of electoral representation.