

Submission ID: CS-0194
Date Received: 15/9/25, 10:40 am
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Submission Topic: Electorate Boundaries and Names
Electoral District: All
Related Submissions: S-001, S-049, S-068, S-069, S-077, S-078, S-087, S-090, S-095, S-100, S-101, S-102, S-103, S-105, S-110, S-111, S-112, S-114, S-115, S-116, S-117

Submission:

This submission (attached) provides commentary against a number of the submissions received by the QRC but with a Particular focus on those regional electorates in Far North Qld.

Submission Attachments

Comments on Suggestions - Qld Redistribution.pdf

Queensland Redistribution 2025 – Comments on Suggestions Received

Introduction

As a regional elector residing in the current electorate of Hill, much of my focus in reviewing suggestions is regional focused in Far North Qld and I have not made comments against the submissions that don't affect my region.

In broad terms and as a regional voter, I would assert that any reduction of the number of regional electorates in order to create more urban electorates might seem technically correct purely on the basis of the number but that belies the growing city/country (or urban/regional) divide. My own categorisation of electorates as urban or regional counts Greater Brisbane, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts and Ipswich as Urban with the remaining groups (in the QRC discussion paper) being regional. Based on my own my categorisation, the urban representation in parliament is already double (62 seats) that of regional representation (31 seats). This imbalance might be offset with an upper house, but Qld has no such house of review therefore I suggest that imbalance should be a factor in the deliberations of this commission. Nevertheless, I also acknowledge that on the raw numbers, there's a requirement for one additional urban seat and therefore a reduction of one regional seat (on the basis of the existing legislative requirements). On balance though, I urge the commission not to reduce regional seat numbers to counter the population growth in Urban Qld and if you do, that you err on the side of limiting a further increase of that city country imbalance.

Electorate names

A number of submissions include suggestions regarding electorate names and without going into any of them in detail I support the broad notion that the traditional practice of naming electorates after regions should be restored. My own electorate of Hill is named for an eminent Queenslander but gives no indication as to any link between that person and my electorate. Nor does it yield any intuitive notion of where the electorate is located. Regional naming of electorates makes these names more relevant when referring to them.

Babinda Region (Submissions 069, 087, 102, 103 and 111)

The combined input of these submissions proposes boundary realignment to put Babinda and, in essence, the Lower part of Cairns Regional Council local government area within Mulgrave. I strongly support this course of action.

I'd add to this the notion that those elements of Mareeba Shire that sit within Hill should be moved onto the neighbouring seat of Cook such that they align with the rest of Mareeba Sh.re

Michael McNeilly (Submission 001)

The suggestion that Cook and Traeger be combined would create a massive electorate that would be over quota from the outset and would therefore need to be trimmed substantially (from where?) to get back into quota. More importantly, such a large electorate (even after it were trimmed to achieve quota) would be perhaps the largest in the state making it exceptionally difficult for an elected representative to effectively represent, or for prospective candidates to be able to get around the electorate to make themselves and their policies known. On that basis, I don't support this suggestion as it's not in the interests of the residents of those regions.

Western Downs Regional Council (Submission 049)

I suspect the imposition of a minimum size (75 km²) might be difficult to implement but the notion of reducing the aggregation/accumulation of multiple small seats in urban areas is worthy of some consideration. It would however impinge on the principle of one vote one value.

The other aspect of this submission related to increasing the large electorate allowance and while the scop (2% now, increased to 5%) might be debatable, the principle being applied is sound in trying to preserve remote/rural representation and trying to maintain the practicality (or at least prevent the increasing impracticality) of representing large remote electorates. I support the intent of this suggestion.

Both suggestions in this submission are likely outside the QRCs scope/mandate, nevertheless, the commission might consider making their own additional recommendations to government to consider for potential legislative changes that make for slightly simpler redistribution deliberations in future.

Dale Knuth (Submission 068)

This brief submission makes a strong assertion not to further expand the large electorates (in land area) as they are already very large and difficult to manage for elected representatives (and for prospective candidates). On that basis this submission is strongly supported.

Submissions 077 and 078

These submissions while distinct have some correlation in terms of my region of interest. To the extent they support the dissolution of a Townsville seat (i.e. Mundingburra), I support these submissions as this provides the vehicle to rebalance electorate sizes in this area and restore quota to Townsville regional electorates without unduly impacting on those electorates further north that are within (and projected to remain within) quota. I refer to my more detailed comments relating to submission 110.

Robert Richardson (Submission 090)

The lack of a descriptive summary makes this submission difficult to assess but to the extent that it expands Hill into Cook (taking Mareeba et al) at the presumable expense of shrinking Cook seems to make little sense to me. Based on being difficult to interpret and that the changes proposed seem numerically illogical, I don't support this submission.

Brendan Andrews (Submission 095)

This submission may be numerically sound (though it's difficult to tell from the volume of data presented) but I don't support this submission broadly on the basis of it being a dramatic revision of boundaries, particularly in rural and regional areas. This suggestion might look good from a desk but the maps, particularly for the proposed "Great Artesia", are simply too horrendous to contemplate. The notion that a single elected member can represent an electorate of this scale is an outright absurdity. I urge the commission to discount this suggestion.

Jeffery Waddell (Submission 100)

Although this submission captures aspects across the state, my support for this submission is on the basis that it identifies that the most northern electorates (Cook, Barron River, Cairns, Mulgrave and Hill) are within quota based on current and projected enrolments and should therefore remain unchanged. I think that subtle changes on the northern boundary of Hill and southern end of Mulgrave are justified to align electorate boundaries with local government area boundaries. See my more detailed comments elsewhere in this submission and particularly in relation to submission 110.

Phillip Pease (Submission 101)

This submission has not been reviewed in detail, but I support it to the extent that it supports the dissolution of Mundingburra and realignment of boundaries to restore quota in the Townsville region. I refer to my more detailed comments in this regard against submission 110.

KAP (Submission 105)

The KAP submission proposes an increase in the large electorate allowance from 2% to 4% and while the extent of the increase might be questionable, the intent is valid in trying to preserve remote/rural representation and trying to maintain the practicality (or at least prevent increasing the impracticality) of representing large remote electorates.

The further intent of this submission to preserve (and perhaps expand) Hill is supported but I'd argue the KAP submission doesn't go far enough in that the broader Townsville population base (now and projected) cannot support the current number of electorates and there should therefore be a reduction to allow a rebalancing of the remaining electorates and restoration of quotas in this region. I refer to my more detailed comments against submission 110.

LNP (Submission 110)

I am disappointed in the LNP's suggestions, particularly in relation to the impact on my current electorate of Hill. The LNP submission makes some sense in its opening commentary; in particular an aspiration to “preserve[s] **coherent communities of interest**, keep[s] infrastructure corridors intact, and positions Queensland for the demographic landscape of the next decade”. Their submission goes on to talk about a Community Centred approach that serves communities and doesn't fragment them. This is what makes the LNP proposal for dissolution of the Hill electorate so illogical.

Hill sits comfortably within quota, as do its surrounding electorates of Mulgrave, Hinchinbrook, and Cook. The exception being Traeger (projected to be well outside quota by 2032). The problem with absorbing Hill into Cook, Hinchinbrook and Traeger as proposed by the LNP is that it tries to address the Traeger problem but does so by dissecting the Tablelands Regional Council local government area; affecting electorates that are mostly within (and projected to remain within) quota.

There are some logical tweaks that would put more (if not all) of Mareeba Shire into Cook and parts of Cairns Regional Council area into Mulgrave, but these are relatively small changes (in terms of population). Moreover, they align like communities in the respective electorates. The expansion of Mulgrave to the south makes sense insofar as those communities south of Cairns that are part of the Cairns Local Government Area see themselves as part of that wider Cairns demographic. Having said that the logical line of separation then becomes the Local Government boundary on the south side of Cairns. The expansion of Mulgrave to the south would likely require a contraction of Mulgrave to the North to keep it within a comfortable tolerance band, but I feel there should be scope to achieve that amongst the other Cairns urban electorates.

Conversely, the LNP proposal tears the Tablelands local government area (and associated communities) apart as it extends Hinchinbrook up the Palmerston Highway to capture Millaa-Millaa, Malanda, Yungaburra, Kairi and Tinaroo. At the same time, Traeger is expanded across the Tablelands to capture Atherton and Tolga and the western parts of the Tablelands local government area.

Viewed on a map and when considering the splitting of the Tablelands demographic in particular, the LNP proposal is difficult to rationalise. Hill is a two-part electorate with the Tablelands to the inland and Innisfail on the coast but the LNP proposal makes this manifestly worse for those voters in the Tablelands local government area. It puts Atherton into the same electorate as Mt Isa, Normanton and Hughenden. At the same time it puts Malanda, Millaa-Millaa and Yungaburra in the same electorate as Ingham and the northern reaches of Townsville. This is beyond comprehension.

This aspect of the LNP proposal should be contrasted with the genuine quota problems in the Townsville region where Thuringowa, Townsville and Mundingburra in the Greater

Townsville region are trending in the wrong direction in quota terms. These are adjacent to the rural electorates of Burdekin and Traeger that are also trending in the wrong direction. Elimination of one of these three Townsville electorates and realigning boundaries for the remaining Townsville and surrounding electorates should restore them to quota now and for the future out to 2032. This solves the “Traeger problem” without impacting the in-quota electorates of Hill (and surrounds) and appears a more numerically logical approach. This might require realignment of Hinchinbrook and Hill at their combined boundary which might actually reduce the extent to which the Tully community is currently split by the Hill/Hinchinbrook boundary. I suggest these are lesser impact changes compared to the absolute carve-up of the Tablelands local government area proposed by the LNP submission.

Greens (Submission 112)

The greens submission is problematic insofar as it primarily considers urban seats. Nevertheless, the broad notion that the capping of seats/electorates at 93 is an artificial constraint is quite correct; and that artificial constraint should therefore be removed legislatively. I acknowledge this is outside the QRC mandate but could nonetheless be a comment or recommendation to Government in parallel with changes to boundaries under the existing legislation.

I further support the point made in the Greens submission that growing the number of urban seats by reducing rural/regional seats within a cap of 93 seats overall, ultimately reduces the level of representation in rural seats. This is particularly so if the so called “large seats” have to expand to the coast and pick up coastal populations in order to try to maintain them within quota. This will make those genuinely rural and regional voters less likely to be genuinely represented in the Parliament as their seats will be dominated by those coastal population centres.

Benjamin Close (Submission 114)

This is an interesting submission that tries to address the challenges of North Qld in an alternate fashion. While my preference has been outlined in my earlier comments against Submission 110, this submission has alternatives that could also be adopted (or a hybrid version of the two). On that basis I support the broad thrust of this submission in relation to North Qld in conjunction with my comments against Submission 110.

Labor Party (Submission 115)

The ALP submission seems to try to politicise this process by questioning the composition of the commission. I feel this is a thinly veiled swipe from a disgruntled opposition and should be treated with the contempt it deserves. I also oppose the ALP notion of further denuding the Large Electorate Allowance construct as to do so will

reduce the effective representation of regional and remote Queenslanders even more than they already are. This assertion by the ALP is a tilt to gerrymandering that would see more predominantly left leaning seats and less conservative leaning seats (based on demographic profiles). Other aspects of the ALP submission remain valid, and I therefore support their assertions in section 2 of their submission, particularly the caution against making large changes when there are uncertainties or low confidence in projected population changes.

The ALP's particular submission in relation to the Far North Qld electorates (Barron River, Cairns, Cook, Hill and Mulgrave) is agreed as the numbers show these seats continue to sit comfortably in quota. The assertion that the three urban electorates in Townsville should be sustained cannot be supported on the existing or projected populations (regardless of any doubts over those projections) as these electorates and surrounds are clearly below quota now and require adjustment. I reiterate my assertion that these electorates could be reduced (three to two) and surrounding electorate boundaries adjusted to restore and maintain quota into the future (see my comments against submission 110 in particular).

Alicia Ruhl (Submission 116)

I strongly support this submission that asserts the need to preserve (and perhaps increase) the allowance for large electorates such that do not become unrepresentative of their already large areas and they should therefore not be forced to grow still further. Beyond the simple reduction of representation that would arise due to expansion of these already large electorates, their expansion makes it harder again for their elected representatives (and prospective candidates) to actually get around those electorates and truly represent their constituents.

This argument is reinforced by Submission 118 which I further support.

Mark Ruhl (Submission 117)

This submission reinforces my earlier point that the Cairns region (and inland) is largely stable and doesn't warrant substantial changes. This supports my assertion that Hill should be retained (arguably renamed) and that the population changes in/around Townsville are those that require more substantive boundary changes to achieve/restore quota.

Conclusion

In summing up then (again in broad terms), the notion that regional electorates should be sacrificed to create additional urban electorates is not supported. At a macro level there might be an argument to change those proportions overall but only by one seat.

I propose the numerically logical location to do that is in the Townsville region where there are three electorates in the Greater Townsville region that are trending in the wrong

direction in quota terms. These are adjacent to truly rural electorates that are also trending in the wrong direction. Elimination of one of these three Townsville electorates and realigning boundaries for the remaining Townsville and surrounding electorates should restore them to quota now and for the future out to 2032. This then would allow for the creation of one additional urban electorate which, combined with boundary realignments, would allow Urban seats in the Greater Brisbane, Ipswich, Gold and Sunshine Coast regions to be rebalanced to achieve quota without further widespread disruption to the remaining regional seats across Queensland.

I must stress that the notion of reducing rural/regional electorates to create more urban electorates will increase the city/country divide and thereby further disenfranchise those rural and regional residents/voters.

I acknowledge and offer my appreciation to the commission for its efforts in what is a very challenging task.