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Submission:

See below

Submission Attachments

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SUBMISSION TO THE QUEENSLAND REDISTRIBUTION COMMISSION

Objection to the Proposed Redistribution of Queensland Electoral Districts

Katter's Australian Party

Introduction

Katter's Australian Party formally objects to the proposed redistribution of Queensland electoral districts, particularly the abolition of the electoral district of Hill and the substantial redrawing of Traeger and surrounding electorates.

This objection is made on principled and practical grounds.

The proposal diminishes North Queensland and should be rejected.

The abolition of Hill is unnecessary and damaging. The practical effect is clear, with Brisbane and the south-east gaining another voice while North Queensland loses one. That is a direct reduction in the representation of a part of Queensland already required to fight harder than most to be heard in Parliament.

Legislative Framework

The Commission must apply the criteria set out in section 46 of the Electoral Act 1992, including:

- a reasonable tolerance around the average enrolment ($\pm 10\%$);
- community of interest considerations;
- means of communication and travel;
- physical features of the area;
- existing boundaries; and
- demographic trends.

Katter's Australian Party submits that these broader criteria must be given genuine weight, not treated as secondary to numerical convenience. The Act has regard for effective representation, however the draft redistribution does not. It is a politically influenced proposal, under the guise of mathematical precision at the expense of effective representation. The Act permits the Commission to acknowledge the unique realities of regional and remote Queensland, but this has clearly not been done.

1. The Proposal to Abolish Hill Is Politically Motivated and Practically Unworkable

The proposal to abolish Hill should be rejected.

Hill is within quota. It is a coherent, functioning regional electorate with an established community identity. Its abolition is not necessary to achieve enrolment compliance. Where pressure exists in neighbouring districts, it should be addressed through modest boundary adjustments, not by abolishing a viable regional seat.

Abolition should be a last resort.

The argument that Hill's communities naturally align with Traeger and surrounding western electorates is wrong. The Atherton Tablelands and Cassowary Coast are fundamentally different from the western pastoral districts in industry, geography, climate and economic character.

Accepting this proposal would create exactly the kind of outcome section 46 is meant to prevent: fractured communities of interest, an unmanageable electorate, and the potential for weaker representation in practice.

2. Reduction in Regional Representation

North and regional Queensland lose a seat, and South-East Queensland gains one.

Regional electorates are not interchangeable with metropolitan ones. A Brisbane electorate covers a compact population connected by short travel times and dense services. A North Queensland electorate can span vast distances, multiple industries, remote communities and major service gaps.

Whether Brisbane has 63 or 64 seats makes little practical difference to metropolitan representation. Whether North Queensland loses one of its limited seats makes a tangible difference to the ability of regional communities to have their concerns heard.

Removing one of 30 regional seats is not a minor adjustment. It is the loss of one of a limited number of voices speaking for regional Queensland in a Parliament dominated by the south-east.

Representation of regional Queensland electorates is often more than constituent issues; it is representing the potential for the state and the nation from the natural resources and industry in these large electorates.

State and National development in regional Queensland reverses the trend of population decline; population decline being the very driver behind the academic reasoning given to significantly redraw boundaries and expand already large electorates.

The Commission should not treat all electorates as though they are interchangeable. They are not.

The proposed removal of Charters Towers from Traeger and its transfer into Burdekin compounds those concerns. Charters Towers is not a peripheral addition to Traeger. It is one of the electorate's major centres and an important part of its political and geographic identity. Moving it into Burdekin weakens the coherence of Traeger while disrupting continuity of representation for a major inland North Queensland community.

Increasingly, western communities are being drawn to the coast. This is illustrated by the broader direction of the proposal: established inland North Queensland communities are being shifted and diluted as regional representation is pared back.

3. Communities of Interest — section 46(1)(a)

The communities affected by the proposed redistribution are not arbitrary collections of voters. They are linked by shared industries, transport corridors, service centres and the practical realities of life in North Queensland.

The Atherton Tablelands and the Cassowary Coast, and the broader northern and western communities affected by these changes are each coherent regions with genuine internal connections. Their common interests arise from geography, industry and lived experience.

Splitting those communities to satisfy enrolment arithmetic is a poor, if not politically motivated, application of section 46(1)(a). Community of interest should not be treated as secondary to political expediency or mathematics.

The abolition of Hill would sever an electorate with genuine regional coherence and established identity. The Commission should be reluctant to dismantle such a seat where less disruptive alternatives exist.

4. Travel and Communication — section 46(1)(b)

In metropolitan areas, this criterion may be less pressing. In regional and remote Queensland, it is fundamental. In Brisbane, an electorate could take as little as 15 minutes to traverse east to west. This draft redistribution imposes a more than 15-hour drive for constituents and their elected Member to traverse the proposed electorate of Flinders. This is far from reasonable.

The proposed boundary changes shift constituents from being within reasonable reach of their Member's office to being many hours away, across roads that may be unreliable and in areas with limited telecommunications and service access.

An electorate may be within quota but still be practically impossible to represent effectively. The Commission must consider not just enrolment quotas, but whether a Member can realistically service the electorate and whether constituents can reasonably access their representative.

Queensland law already recognises the distinct character of large remote electorates. section 46(1)(b) should be applied as a real constraint on unworkable outcomes.

5. Physical Features — section 46(1)(c)

North Queensland is shaped by mountain ranges, river systems, coastline, floodplains and the transport routes that connect communities across large distances. These features shape where people live, travel and access services.

The proposed redistribution gives vastly insufficient weight to those realities. Boundaries that cut across natural regions or join communities with little practical connection produce electorates that lack coherence and are eminently challenging to represent.

Where an electorate reflects a coherent geographic region, that should be preserved unless there is compelling necessity otherwise. No such necessity has been demonstrated in this proposal, with Mulgrave straddling the Great Dividing Range for the first time. Burdekin has also been fundamentally changed. Its composition was a Central Queensland coalfields and coastal cane farming electorate and now proposed to be forced to represent intensive coastal farming districts as well as extensive western grazing regions and outer Townsville.

6. Local Government Boundaries — section 46(2)

Local governments are central to infrastructure planning, service coordination and regional priorities. Where state electoral boundaries align with local government areas, constituents benefit from clarity and representatives can work more effectively across levels of government.

The proposed redistribution breaks established alignments between electoral districts and local government areas without sufficient justification. That creates confusion and weakens representation.

A clear example of this is the Charters Towers Regional Council, where the remote township of Greenvale, and the community of Hidden Valley have been carved out to be placed in Flinders. The small population in these areas could easily be accommodated in the Burdekin electorate.

It is also significant that local governments in the affected North Queensland region have formally opposed these changes. Their views should be given real weight.

7. Proposed Principles for the Commission's Consideration

Katter's Australian Party reiterates the following principles, which should inform this redistribution and future redistributions.

Greater Flexibility for Large Electorates

Very large electorates should be afforded greater flexibility in meeting enrolment quota, whether through a broader permitted variance or through clearer recognition that geographic practicality must moderate numerical precision.

Weighted Enrolment for Electorates with Indigenous Councils

Electorates containing Indigenous Councils should receive a weighted enrolment adjustment reflecting the additional complexity of service, communication and community engagement in those areas.

Practical Boundaries as a Primary Constraint

Redistribution should not create electorates that cross multiple logistical or natural barriers simply to satisfy numbers. If an electorate cannot realistically be serviced, it is not effective representation.

8. Public Confidence in the Process

Redistributions derive legitimacy not only from legal compliance, but from public confidence in their fairness.

That confidence is damaged when regional Queensland sees another proposal that reduces northern representation while expanding the south-east's. Whatever the Commission's intention, that is how this outcome will be seen.

The Commission should consider whether a reasonable North Queenslanders would view this proposal as fair. Katter's Australian Party submits that they would not.

A redistribution process that repeatedly shifts representation toward the south-east risks exhausting the goodwill on which its legitimacy depends.

Conclusion

Katter's Australian Party calls on the Commission to reject the proposed abolition of Hill and to reconsider the boundary changes affecting Traeger and surrounding regional electorates.

The proposal, as it stands:

- removes a seat from North Queensland and adds one to the south-east;

- is not required to achieve enrolment quotas;
- divides coherent communities of interest across the Atherton Tablelands, Cassowary Coast and broader North Queensland;
- wrongly characterises Hill's communities as naturally aligned with the western pastoral districts of Traeger;
- creates electorates that are less workable for Members and less accessible for constituents;
- gives inadequate weight to travel, communication and geographic realities;
- cuts across local government boundaries and established regional alignments without necessity; and
- abolishes a viable, compliant and coherent regional electorate when less disruptive alternatives exist.

That concern is sharpened further by the proposal to remove Charters Towers from Traeger and transfer it into Burdekin, stripping Traeger of one of its major regional centres and further weakening the continuity and coherence of inland North Queensland representation.

North Queensland is not asking for special treatment. It is asking for fair treatment.

The people of North Queensland already contend with vast distances, higher costs, weaker service access and a Parliament oriented toward the urban south-east. They should not now be asked to hand over another parliamentary voice.

The Commission should preserve Hill, give proper weight to the section 46 criteria as they apply to regional representation, and ensure this redistribution strengthens rather than further erodes the democratic voice of Queensland beyond the south-east corner.

Katter's Australian Party

Submission to the Queensland Redistribution Commission

