

Submission ID: CS-0461
Date Received: 22/9/25, 4:29 pm
Name: Gerhardt Pearson
Organisation Name: Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation
Submission Topic: Electorate Boundaries
Electoral District: Hill
Related Submissions: Balkanu submission to retain the number of regional electorates and retain the electorate of Hill

Submission:

Recommendations

General

- Democratic fairness must be reflected in the maintenance of boundaries that honour the contributions and aspirations of Queensland's remote and sparsely-populated regions.

The electorate of Hill

- Balkanu vigorously opposes any move to abolish the electorate of Hill or any other remote or regional electorate.

The electorate of Cook

- Mareeba, Mossman and Port Douglas should be removed from the electorate of Cook. Including these areas in Cook drives significant division across the electorate, failing the goals of section 46 of the Electoral Act to consider social and community interests;
- The electorate of Cook should not be extended to include sections of the electorate of Hill, as this would further this division; and
- The area of Strathmore Station in the south-western corner of Cook should be included in the electorate of Traeger, as it is more closely aligned to townships in that seat.

Submission Attachments

Letter - Submission to Queensland Redistribution Commission Discussion paper
- 220922.pdf

Submission to Queensland Redistribution Commission Discussion paper: Invitation for suggestions on the State redistribution, July 2025

Introduction

Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation is a not-for-profit Indigenous-led organisation supporting the economic and land interests of the Indigenous peoples of Cape York. It was established nearly 30 years ago and works with State governments to advance the health, wellbeing, land and economic goals of Indigenous communities. This submission focuses in general on the electoral and democratic necessity of continuing balanced representation of the populations of remote and regional Queenslanders with city-based seats in the unicameral parliament. Balkanu welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on the Queensland Redistribution Commission's (QRC) 2025 proposed State electoral redistribution. The signatory to this submission is available for further comment if required.

The QRC Discussion Paper

The QRC paper's emphasis on the need to balance representation with 'other factors' are important to a State where only 45% of the population reside in metropolitan areas and the majority of its Indigenous population reside in regional Queensland. This State characteristic must ensure that the QRC's dedication to balancing equity representation with 'other factors' contained in Section 89A of the Act is maintained.

Background

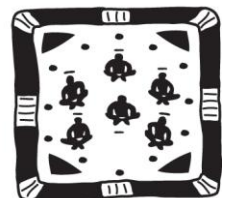
Queensland has a chequered history of fairness when considering the manipulation of electoral boundaries by motivated political parties to skew redistributions to maintain power. The nature of a unicameral parliament reinforces that temptation and must at all times be resisted. The democratic representation of Queensland's unique population spread, particularly its Indigenous population, should not be threatened by the pleadings of political opportunists.

Balkanu thanks the Commissioners in advance for their commitment to independent consideration and thought around proposed boundary changes.

Background pertinent to the Indigenous peoples of Cape York

The following points arise from our lived experience of the last 25 years:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland only gained the right to vote in State elections in late 1965 – the last State to grant this right.
- Successive gerrymandering of boundaries by the Bjelke-Petersen government to cement his government in power and consolidate the strangleholds of his cronies on vast tracts of regional Australia further alienated the rights of the majority Indigenous inhabitants of remote Queensland.



- Historically, Independents and minor parties in the State parliament have been drawn from remote and regional Queensland, underscoring the obvious reality that domination by metropolitan and outer-suburban MPs in the parliament does not serve the needs and aspirations of most Queenslanders who live outside these areas.
- Balkanu's experience is that MPs who represent the interests of non-city areas can better promote Indigenous interests in State policy deliberations. Independents and minor parties have proven particularly invaluable to our efforts and reforms.
- Some recent examples include attempts since the early 2000s to introduce Vegetation Management Acts which, without the intervention of Independents and minor parties, would have significantly harmed Indigenous interests.
- Another example was the introduction of the Wild Rivers Act 2005, which with political intervention, media exposure by our organisation and legal action over a number of years, helped lead to the protection of Indigenous interests. Later, more intervention was required by the Independent MP for the seat of Cook, Billy Gordon, when an identical policy which was to be known as Pristine Rivers was proposed.
- Representatives in regional and remote Australia are closer to the issues and reflect the concerns of their constituents. Any move to abolish regional and remote electorates is a return to the dark days of manipulated boundaries which serves only to reinforce city-centric policies and the self-serving ambitions of city MPs.
- Our experience is that some State governments have over the decades viewed Cape York through the prism of conservation and ecological preservation principles or to salve the desires of powerful economic interests - not through the lens of community needs and outcomes. The major influences on some governments have not been the people who for generations have lived, worked and raised families in these communities, but the vested interests of powerful city-based groups.

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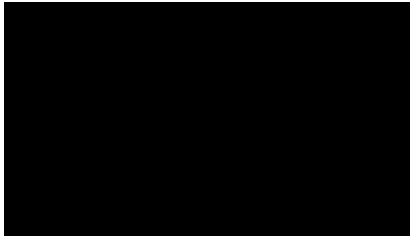
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Regards,



Gerhardt Pearson
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Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation P/L