

SUBMISSION TO THE REDISTRIBUTION TRIBUNAL 2017

From: Greg Hall MLC, Member for Western Tiers
Deputy President of the Legislative Council, Chair of Committees

Objection to the Initial Redistribution Proposal for Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries 2016-17.

Dear Redistribution Committee,

My objection to the Initial Redistribution Proposal for Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries 2016-17 is based on FIVE key points. As well as this written submission I would also like to request to be able to make a personal appearance before the Tribunal when hearings are held and to provide other supporting information as needed.

KEY POINTS OF OBJECTION

1. The current division of Western Tiers is well within the 10 per cent population variation requirements of the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Act 1995 (and amendments) and would not exceed it over the next 4 ½ years.
2. The Initial Redistribution Proposal does not meet the Communities of Interest criteria for electors in the proposed divisions of McIntyre and Prosser.
3. The One Vote One Value criteria would be seriously devalued in the proposed electorate of McIntyre as one Member would be required to service the needs of some 25,000 voters from such diverse communities as Railton, Deloraine, Westbury, Longford, Evandale, Scottsdale, Bridport, Flinders Island, St Helens, Scamander and St Marys as well as their surrounding rural communities.
4. The proposed electorate of McIntyre does not contain a population centre that would be appropriate for an electorate base. Elector numbers in the towns of Deloraine, Westbury, Longford, Evandale, Scottsdale, Bridport, St Helens, Scamander are all between approx. 1,000 and 2,000 people making adequate representation almost impossible on the existing arrangements for a Legislative Council member.
5. The proposed division of McIntyre also fails to meet the other considerations in establishing Legislative Council divisions by way of
 - Means of communication and travel within the division.
 - The physical features and area of the division.
 - The existing electoral boundaries.
 - Distinct natural boundaries.

DETAILED EXPLANATIONS

1. The current division of Western Tiers is well within the 10 per cent population requirements of the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Act 1995 and would need very little adjustment to meet that requirement in four and a half years time.

Since the last redistribution in 2008 the number of enrolled electors in the division of Western Tiers has gradually increased according to the Legislative Council Enrolment figures published in accordance with the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Act 1995. **(See Attachment A, 2 pages)**

In 2008 the number of enrolled electors in Western Tiers had a variation from the division average of minus 4.29% (-1011 enrolled electors)

In January 2017 the number of enrolled electors Western Tiers had a variation from the division average of minus 0.06% (-16) enrolled electors.

According to *Appendix I – Existing Divisions and Enrolment Trends* of the Initial Proposal Booklet 2017, the projected variation from the division average in 2021 will be -1.12% (-280) enrolled electors.

There would appear to be no reason for any change to the division of Western Tiers based on population numbers. More changes will lead to voter confusion.

Since 1989 enrolled electors in the Meander Valley (from Deloraine to Carrick) have had four electorate name changes to deal with — Tamar, Roland (although no election was held under this name), Rowallan and Western Tiers. Now they are being asked to accept another change to McIntyre.

The level of invalid votes cast in the division of Western Tiers at the last election was 5.64% which is at the higher level for Legislative Council elections according to TEC data. **(See Attachment B)**
(https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/Legislative_Council_Elections/Previous_Elections/LC2012/Results/WesternTiers.html)

On the data in **Appendix I – Existing Divisions and Enrolment Trends of the Initial Proposal Booklet 2017** only the division of Rumney is projected to exceed the 10% variation in the legislation (+13.54%) and a simple exchange of electors with Apsley (-6.31) would resolve this imbalance. **(See Attachment C)**

The Initial Redistribution Proposal 2017 is based on ABS data from 2015 and uses this to make projections for 2021, which presumes a continued drift of population from rural areas to the east and south of Tasmania.

These presumptions fail to take into account new population growth drivers in the north-west, north, north-east and midlands — irrigation schemes, vineyard

berry and dairy expansions, aquaculture, adventure tourism (mountain bikes), golf, angling, mining and UTAS relocations.

This Tasmanian Government media release outlines one of these new population drivers:

"19 February 2015

Will Hodgman, Premier

Jeremy Rockliff, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Irrigation Schemes Grow Primary Industries and Regional Communities"

Today is a very significant day for Tasmanian farmers, jobs and our economy.

"I welcome the Federal Government's \$60 million investment in Tasmanian irrigation," Premier Will Hodgman said.

"Jobs are our number one priority and this investment will grow hundreds of jobs in our vital agriculture sector.

"We understand the importance of reliable water to our primary industries, which is why we have worked hard to secure this Federal funding.

"This investment in addition to \$30 million the State Government has committed will go towards progressing five proposed tranche two irrigation schemes across our state.

"Irrigation development in Tasmania represents a genuine partnership with our farmers."

"Together with their private sector involvement of around \$27 million the overall capital investment in Tasmanian agriculture will exceed \$115 million."

The five proposed schemes include Scottsdale, Swan Valley, Southern Highlands, Circular Head and North Esk. These schemes are being actively pursued by the Government and developed by Tasmanian Irrigation.

"Irrigation is transforming Tasmanian agriculture, strengthening our regional communities and creating new jobs on farms and in country towns," the Minister for Primary Industries and Water Jeremy Rockliff said.

"High reliability water means farmers can secure their existing enterprises and invest further with confidence.

"This will unlock huge opportunities in areas like dairy, wine, fruit, vegetables, poppies and new seed crops.

"The future is certainly looking bright for our primary industries with demand for our premium produce growing and free trade agreements with China and South Korea soon to come into play.

"Irrigation development is critical to achieving the Liberal Government's vision of growing the farm gate value of Tasmania's agricultural industries to \$10 billion a year by 2050."

Full text of media release (**See Attachment D**):

http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/irrigation_schemes_grow_primary_industries_and_regional_communities

I respectfully offer the attached Division Map (**Hall3.pdf, see Attachment E**) and Projected Enrolled Electors Panel (**Hall Scenario 3.jpg, see Attachment F**) that have been prepared with the assistance of Mr Phil Page, of Geodata Services (Land Tasmania) for your consideration.

It does not adversely affect other Divisions in the Initial Proposed Redistribution and meets the requirements of the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Act 1995 in regard to Population and Communities of Interest.

Key points are:

- Derwent gives up Brighton to Western Tiers.
- Apsley gives up Southern Midlands and west of the South Esk River to Western Tiers.
- Derwent no longer gains the remainder of the Central Highlands under this scenario.
- It includes existing division boundaries, natural boundaries (South Esk River) and municipal boundaries (Southern Midlands Council).

2. The current division of Western Tiers satisfies the “communities of interest” requirement of the Legislative Council Electoral Boundaries Act 1995 but the proposed new division of McIntyre does not.

I believe that in general terms the Legislative Council boundaries created in 1998 provided the right balance of population and communities of interest.

In their reasons for the **Initial Redistribution Proposal, 2007-08 Redistribution of Legislative Council Boundaries (Page 11 and 12, see Attachment G, 2 pages)**, the committee said: “The 1998-99 redistribution has stood the test of time remarkably well: the current deviations from average division enrolments (ADE stand within the range -6.6% (Rowallan) to +5.5% (Derwent).”

The adjustments made in 2007-08 have quite clearly worked in meeting the requirements of the Act in regard to population.

The Legislative Council boundaries of 1998 created a north-south orientation for both Western Tiers and Apsley and brought together some arguably quite disparate communities into significant Communities of Interest and regional identity.

In the 2008 review very little adjustment was made to the shape and composition of these divisions to meet the population requirements. As the Redistribution Committee of 2008-09 stated, these divisions have stood the test of time and I can see no reason why they cannot continue to do so.

In the case of the proposed divisions of McIntyre and Prosser the existing ‘East Coast’ Communities of Interest that encompasses coastal living and

tourism would be separated. An example of their Communities of Interest is the recently established and government endorsed co-operative tourism promotion called the Great Eastern Drive, that encompasses communities from Binalong Bay to Maria Island.

This Tasmanian Government media release outlines the importance of these Communities of Interest:

“28 June 2015

Will Hodgman, Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events

Great Eastern Drive campaign launched

The Great Eastern Drive is one step closer to being recognised as one of Australia’s iconic road trips with the launch of an exciting new marketing strategy.

The Great Eastern Drive is a 176km stretch of scenic road from Orford to St Helens that takes in both spectacular ocean views and inspiring rural vistas.

The highly targeted campaign will enhance the brand of the East Coast and showcase the route’s strengths with the aim of increasing visitation and spend. It is all about discovery, adventure and finding the magic as you wander along The Great Eastern Drive.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is investing \$500,000 over two years to deliver a new brand, website, new tourism and directional signage and a tailored industry tool kit which will allow East Coast businesses to capitalise on the increased recognition of the Great Eastern Drive.

Other activities will include television advertising and promotion via social media, on-line advertising, blogs and partnerships.

Rub rails and warning signs have already been installed in key locations to improve motorcycle safety and State Growth is investigating possible locations for the installation of slow vehicle turnouts.

We are putting up a challenge to other iconic roads like Victoria’s Great Ocean Road for the title of Australia’s top coastal drive.

The East Coast has experienced a 16 percent increase in visitors in the 12 months to March 2015, I look forward to even more tourists discovering the East Coast as a result of promoting the Great Eastern Drive.”

Full text of media release (**See Attachment H**):

http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/great_eastern_drive_campaign_launched

The drastic change to a new division of McIntyre would lump five very different “communities” (North-West, Meander Valley, Northern Midlands, the North-East and East Coast) into one large electorate with very little in the way of common interests.

3. The One Vote One Value criteria would be seriously devalued in the proposed electorate of McIntyre as one Member would be required to service the needs of some 25,000 voters from such diverse communities as Railton, Deloraine, Westbury, Longford, Evandale, Scottsdale, Bridport, Flinders Island, St Helens,

Scamander and St Marys, as well as their surrounding rural communities.

In my view the importance of keeping the enrolled elector numbers within 10% has to be balanced by the accessibility of elected Members to the electors in their division. The current divisions work because they provide a “communication corridor” from the North to the South.

In practical terms this means that every time a members travels from his division to the Parliament in Hobart he travels through his division. In the case of the proposed division of McIntyre this ability to service elector communities would be lost.

The difficulty in servicing elector issues in places as far apart as Railton (in the north-west) to Gladstone (in the far north-east), or Scamander (in the east) or Whitemark (on Flinders Island) would considerably reduce the value of the vote of people in these regions.

4. The proposed electorate of McIntyre does not contain a population centre that would be appropriate for an electorate base.

Elector numbers in the towns of Deloraine, Westbury, Longford, Evandale, Scottsdale, Bridport, St Helens, Scamander are all between approx. 1,000 and 2,000 people making adequate representation almost impossible on the existing arrangements for a Legislative Council member. (See **Attachment I, 2 pages**):

The division of Western Tiers is currently centred on Deloraine which, although in the north of the division, is seen as an appropriate and acceptable focal point for the division and its communities of interest.

It is likely that the division base for the proposed division of McIntyre would be Launceston which would deprive two large existing divisions of direct and accessible representation.

While it might be argued that Members of Parliament in the Lower House and Federal Members of Parliament are able to service electorates larger and more decentralised than the proposed new Legislative Council divisions.

This however doesn't take account of the fact that Legislative Council seats are single member divisions and do not have the staff or resources available to other Members of Parliament to cover widely spaced population centres and communities.

It also doesn't take into account the fact that Independent Members of the Legislative Council do not have access to party resources, staff or support.

5. The proposed division of McIntyre also fails to meet the other considerations in establishing Legislative Council divisions.

1. Means of communication and travel within the division – the road

distances between the far reaches of the proposed division of McIntyre, not including the Furneaux Group of Island in Bass Strait, exceed 200 kilometres. Railton, in the west, looks to Devonport for its commercial activities and the North West for its media, entertainment and recreation. Scottsdale and Bridport have their own local media as does St Helens and Scamander. These communities look to Launceston for their commercial activities, entertainment and recreation.

2. The physical features and area of the division. There are no common physical features between the areas surrounding Deloraine or the Northern Midlands and Scottsdale, Bridport, St Helens and Scamander.
3. The existing electoral boundaries. The new divisions of McIntyre and Prosser are greatly different in shape and composition to the existing divisions of Western Tiers and Apsley. The existing divisions have both logistical and community of interest advantages over the proposed new divisions.

The existing divisions also provide a balance of seats between the North and South. The proposed new divisions are based on projections that are based on 2015 ABS data (**see Initial Proposed Distribution Booklet 2017, see Attachment J**;) and presume a continued drift of population from rural areas to the east and south.

However, currently there are 194,651 enrolled electors in the eight northern divisions and 181,319 in the seven southern divisions — a difference of 13,332 enrolled electors.

If the changes went ahead there would be a projected 186,891 enrolled electors in seven northern divisions and 197,531 enrolled electors in southern divisions — a difference of 10,640 enrolled electors.

The proposed boundary changes in my opinion would mean a loss of representation for rural communities in Tasmania.

On the basis that the electoral power base of Prosser would be in Sorell it would transfer a seat in the Legislative Council to a southern community and cause an arguably unfair change in the balance of representation in the Upper House.

4. Distinct natural boundaries. There are few natural boundaries in either of the two new proposed divisions. In fact, the proposed new division of McIntyre crosses the natural boundaries of the Tamar Valley and the Northern Midlands.

IN CONCLUSION

The creation of two new electorates is the most drastic changes to the Legislative Council since the Tasmanian Parliament was reformed to 40 members in 1998. The

two proposed new Legislative Council divisions will affect approx. 50,000 enrolled electors in two large rural divisions.

I am greatly concerned that under the current boundary review provisions neither elected Members or enrolled electors are required to be consulted before a proposal is formulated.

The current process no doubt served the people of Tasmania well when the number of divisions were to be reduced in the 1990s. However, I question whether the process is now fair or even democratic to electors for the Legislative Council.

I am certain that a great many enrolled electors in Western Tiers and Apsley are unaware of the changes being proposed. These changes were only advertised in daily newspapers, on one occasion, and newspaper readership has declined enormously in recent times.

In other areas of responsibility of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, enrolled electors are often advised personally (by letter) of issues in relation to elections. I believe all enrolled electors of Western Tiers and Apsley should have been contacted by letter (or perhaps email if available) to advise of these drastic changes to their divisions.

In the case of Western Tiers, voters in the Meander Valley (from Deloraine to Carrick) have had four electorate name changes to deal with since 1989 — Tamar, Roland (although no election was held under this name), Rowallan and Western Tiers. Now they are being asked to accept another change to McIntyre.

I also note that a Federal electorate review is currently underway with the findings due to be released later this year. There are considerable communities of interest between Tasmanian federal electorates and Legislative Council divisions. For example, the current division of Western Tiers is largely in Lyons and Apsley is largely in Bass.

The proposed new division of McIntyre would be half in Lyons and half in Bass. This of course may change as a result of the federal electorate boundary review and it would be prudent to delay the current process until the outcome of this review is known.

As a member of the Legislative Council who has been elected for three terms of office I strongly believe that this not the time for major changes to division boundaries. Democracy will surely be best served by minimal elector confusion and disruption to existing and long established communities of interest. I ask the Tribunal to find a far less disruptive proposal for this redistribution.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Attachments A to J (Page).