

Victorian Redistribution

Introduction

The next House of Representatives election will be contested on re-drawn electoral division boundaries in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Redistributions in Queensland and South Australia will occur as a result of a change in entitlements to representation in the House of Representatives.¹ Queensland will gain an additional seat while South Australia will lose a seat. The Northern Territory will also lose a seat but as it will revert to being a single seat territory, no redistribution process will be required.

The redistribution in Victoria was occasioned by the 'seven year rule'. Under section 59 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (CEA) a redistribution is required if seven years have elapsed since a State or Territory's last redistribution. As Victoria was last redistributed in 1994, the Australian Electoral Commission directed a redistribution to commence on 18 January 2002. The redistribution process was formally completed on 29 January 2003 when the final determination of names and boundaries occurred.

This Research Note analyses the electoral consequences of the Victorian redistribution. The table below compares the actual 2001 election result to the estimated two-party preferred vote at the 2001 election adjusted for the boundary changes occasioned by the redistribution. The two-party preferred votes for the redistributed

divisions are calculated by first estimating the two-party preferred votes in each Census Collection District (CCD) and then allocating each CCD to the new divisional boundaries.

Highlights

The redistribution resulted in substantial boundary changes in Melbourne's north-west and in the La Trobe valley. Boundary changes in inner-Melbourne were relatively minor and in three divisions (Higgins, Kooyong and Melbourne Ports) no changes occurred. Only minor changes were made to Casey, Goldstein and Hotham. In total the 2002 redistribution was less disruptive than previous redistributions, with only 12 per cent of electors having changed divisions compared to some 17 per cent in 1994 and 25 per cent in 1984.

Despite the relatively few electors changing divisions the redistribution was not without controversy, particularly in relation to the changes in the La Trobe valley affecting the divisions of Gippsland and McMillan.²

La Trobe Valley

Since the expansion of the Federal Parliament in 1984, the three main La Trobe valley towns of Moe, Morwell and Traralgon have been included in McMillan, while the neighbouring division of Gippsland has covered the rural areas to the east and south of the La Trobe valley. This has resulted in two clearly defined divisions: McMillan, based on the mining and electricity

generation activities in the La Trobe valley, and Gippsland, based on agriculture activities.

The 2002 redistribution split the La Trobe valley by placing Morwell and Traralgon in Gippsland and moving the boundary of McMillan to the south to take in more rural areas around Leongatha. The electoral consequences of these changes is to create two marginal Coalition seats in place of a marginal Labor seat (McMillan) and a fairly safe Coalition seat (Gippsland).

The controversial nature of the Redistribution Committee's determinations in relation to the La Trobe valley was exacerbated by the fact that considerable changes were made between the initial proposals and the final determination, without a formal opportunity for any additional comment or objection by interested parties. Under section 72(13) of the CEA the augmented Electoral Commission has the power to determine that any changes between the initial proposals and the final proposals are insufficient to warrant any further objection. It could be argued that in respect to McMillan and Gippsland the changes made were sufficient to warrant further objection.³

North-West Melbourne

In Melbourne's north-west the redistribution abolished the fairly safe Labor division of Burke and replaced it with a super-safe Labor division, named after the former Liberal Prime Minister John Gorton. The new division of Gorton is largely based on the City of

Brimbank and incorporates parts of the old Burke, Calwell, Gellibrand, Lalor and Maribyrnong.

In creating Gorton as a purely outer-metropolitan division the redistribution moved the rural component (Macedon Ranges) of the old Burke to McEwen. The division of McEwen thus becomes more rural in composition with the acquisition of Macedon Ranges and the loss of Craigieburn to Calwell. McEwen now becomes a safer seat for the Coalition and the prospect of demographic change making the division more winnable for Labor in the future is reduced.⁴

1. During the thirteenth month after the first sitting of a new House of Representatives each State and Territory's entitlements are determined. Entitlements are based on the relative population of the States and Territories. At the determination of 20 February 2003, the entitlements of Qld, SA and the NT were altered, thus triggering redistributions in the two states. As the NT will revert to a single division no redistribution will be required.
2. M. Harvey, 'Redraw stacks odds against young MP', *Herald Sun*, 20 December 2002.
3. In the initial proposals McMillan comprised 86.4% of electors from the old McMillan, while in the final proposals McMillan comprised 65.6% of electors from the old McMillan. The corresponding figures for Gippsland are 81.4% and 63.2%.
4. Enrolment growth in the Labor voting area of Craigieburn was expected to make McEwen more winnable for Labor.

Victorian Redistribution, Final Boundaries
Actual and Estimated Two-Party Preferred Votes, 2001 Election
 Per cent

	Old Boundaries		New Boundaries	
	ALP	LP/NP	ALP	LP/NP
Aston	43.8	56.2	44.0	56.0
Ballarat	52.7	47.3	53.2	46.8
Batman	75.1	24.9	75.1	24.9
Bendigo	53.6	46.4	53.6	46.4
Bruce	55.5	44.5	56.5	43.5
Burke	55.5	44.5		
Calwell	67.7	32.3	65.1	34.9
Casey	42.8	57.2	42.8	57.2
Chisholm	52.8	47.2	52.7	47.3
Corangamite	44.3	55.7	44.6	55.4
Corio	58.7	41.3	58.5	41.5
Deakin	48.3	51.7	48.4	51.6
Dunkley	44.6	55.4	44.8	55.2
Flinders	42.4	57.6	42.6	57.4
Gellibrand	71.8	28.2	70.4	29.6
Gippsland	41.9	58.1	47.4	52.6
Goldstein	40.5	59.5	40.5	59.5
Gorton			70.2	29.8
Higgins	41.6	58.4	41.6	58.4
Holt	63.3	36.7	57.9	42.1
Hotham	61.0	39.0	61.0	39.0
Indi	38.9	61.1	39.3	60.7
Isaacs	52.8	47.2	56.6	43.4
Jagajaga	55.6	44.4	55.3	44.7
Kooyong	39.1	60.9	39.1	60.9
Lalor	65.6	34.4	62.1	37.9
La Trobe	46.3	53.7	46.3	53.7
Mallee	30.1	69.9	29.1	70.9
Maribyrnong	67.4	32.6	65.4	34.6
McEwen	48.8	51.2	47.8	52.2
McMillan	52.5	47.5	47.1	52.9
Melbourne	70.1	29.9	69.9	30.1
Melbourne Ports	55.7	44.3	55.7	44.3
Menzies	41.1	58.9	41.1	58.9
Murray	26.1	73.9	28.1	71.9
Scullin	69.2	30.8	70.3	29.7
Wannon	40.4	59.6	40.8	59.2
Wills	69.4	30.6	70.6	29.4

Gerard Newman
Andrew Kopras
Statistics Group
Information and Research Services

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