

Your local voice



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Minutes of the WCCC General Meeting Wednesday, 23 February 2011

1. Meeting opened

WCCC Deputy Chair Tom Anderson opened the meeting at 7.35pm.

Twenty persons were present.

Tom welcomed three Members of the Legislative Assembly, Speaker Mr Shane Rattenbury (Greens), Ms Caroline Le Couteur (Greens), and Mr Jeremy Hansen ((Liberal).

He also welcomed the guest speaker, Ms Linzi Lamont, from the ACT Electoral Commission.

2. Apologies

Mal Ferguson, Pat McGinn

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous public meeting (November 2010) were accepted as circulated.
(Moved: Trevor Wilson; Seconded: Simon Header)

4. Presentation: Redistributing Electoral Boundaries for the ACT Legislative Assembly

Ms Linzi Lamont from the ACT Electoral Commission said that the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Phillip Green, had sent his apologies, as he was out of town.

1. Linzi opened her presentation by explaining that the main job of the Electoral Commission is to run elections for the ACT Legislative Assembly. This includes reviewing the size of electorates before every election and carrying out a redistribution if population changes indicate this is needed—that is, re-drawing the electoral boundaries. The last redistribution was held in 2007 for the 2008 elections. At that time, the suburb of Farrer moved out of Molonglo electorate into Brindabella electorate.

2. The aim of redistribution is to ensure that, as nearly as practicable, each electorate has representation in the Assembly in proportion to the electorate's voting population, so that all electors in the ACT get fair representation.

3. Two years before the next election is due, as soon as practicable after the third Saturday in October, a redistribution must begin.

- The current redistribution commenced in January 2011.
- Statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) are used to predict population trends.
- Public submissions were invited on 10 February 2011
- A redistribution typically takes around six months to complete although it can take longer.

4. The ACT Electoral Commission appoints a Redistribution Committee consisting of the ACT Electoral Commissioner, the head of the ACT Planning and Land Authority, the ACT Surveyor-General and an appointed fourth member. After public consultation the Committee publishes a proposed redistribution.

- The final decision on the redistribution is made by the three members of the Electoral Commission augmented by the members of the Redistribution Committee (“the augmented Electoral Commission”).
- The current members of the Electoral Commission are Roger Beale (Chair), Phillip Green, and Dawn Casey.
- Members of the current Redistribution Committee are Phillip Green (Electoral Commissioner), Neil Savery (ACTPLA), Bill Hirst (Surveyor-General)—all appointed as set out in the ACT’s *Electoral Act 1992*—and Stephen Collett (ACT Regional Director, ABS).

5. Legal Requirements

- Section 67D of the Commonwealth’s *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* provides that electorates must be within plus or minus ten percent of the quota. The Redistribution Committee aims to ensure that by October 2012 the electorates will be within plus or minus five percent of the quota as specified in the ACT’s *Electoral Act 1992*.
- Part 4 of the ACT’s *Electoral Act 1992* sets out detailed steps for dividing the ACT into three electorates.
- The Act provides that the Territory must be divided into three separate electorates, with:
 - Seven members to be elected from one electorate, and
 - Five members to be elected from each of the other two electorates.
- The Self-Government Act sets out the following formula for calculating a quota:

$$\frac{\text{No. of Territory electors} \times \text{No. of electorate members (MLAs)}}{\text{No. of Territory members (MLAs)}}$$

- The quota for the five-member seats is 5/17 of the total ACT enrolment.
- The quota for the seven-member seats is 7/17 of the total ACT enrolment.
- The Redistribution Committee and the augmented Electoral Commission are required to duly consider a range of factors when drawing boundaries:
 - The community of interests within each proposed electorate, including economic, social and regional interests;
 - The means of communication and travel within each proposed electorate;
 - The physical features and area of each proposed electorate;
 - The boundaries of existing electorates;
 - The boundaries of divisions (suburbs) and sections fixed under the *Districts Act 2002*.

6. Steps in the Redistribution Process

- A Redistribution Committee must be appointed by the Electoral Commission.
- The Committee invites public suggestions. This year, public suggestions must be submitted by 10 March 2011. Submissions will be published on the Elections ACT website, and hard copies are available at the Elections ACT office.
- Public comments on the submissions can be made within 14 days. Comments can be lodged in writing through the website or by post or hand delivery from 11 March till 24 March 2011.
- The Redistribution Committee considers the public suggestions and comments before making a proposed redistribution. Maps showing the proposed boundaries and names of the electorates are published in the newspaper and on the Elections ACT website. It is intended to have the proposal published by the end of May 2011.

- Members of the public have 28 days from the date of publication to lodge objections to the proposed redistribution.
- Objections are considered by the augmented Electoral Commission, which may hold public hearings into objections.
- After it has considered all the initial objections lodged, the augmented Electoral Commission makes a second proposed redistribution.
- If this second proposal is not significantly different from the first proposal, the second set of proposed boundaries will become the final boundaries for the ACT.
- If the second proposal is significantly different from the proposal made by the Redistribution Committee, the augmented Electoral Commission will invite further objections from members of the public or organisations.
- Further objections must be lodged within 28 days.
- The augmented Electoral Commission will consider any further objections, and may again hold public hearing into objections.
- Following its consideration of all objections, it will make a final determination of boundaries and names of electorates for the ACT.

7. Current Electorates

Brindabella: a five-member electorate comprising the district of Tuggeranong, the Woden Valley suburbs of Chifley, Farrer, Pearce and Torrens, and the districts of Booth, Coree, Cotter River, Paddy's River, Rendezvous Creek, Tennent and Mount Clear.

Ginninderra: a five-member electorate comprising the districts of Belconnen and Hall, and the Gungahlin suburb of Nicholls.

Molonglo: a seven-member electorate comprising the districts of Gungahlin (excluding the suburb of Nicholls), Canberra Central, Weston Creek, Woden Valley (excluding the suburbs of Chifley, Farrer, Pearce and Torrens), Jerrabomberra, Kowen, Majura, and Stromlo.

8. Current Enrolment and Variations from Quota (ABS statistics used for these projections)

Electorate	% above or below quota as at 31/01/2011	% above or below quota as at 20/10/2012
Brindabella	- 1.92%	- 3.49%
Ginninderra	- 4.11%	- 5.63%
Molonglo	+ 4.31%	+ 6.52%

Note

The name "Brindabella" is derived from an Aboriginal word meaning "two kangaroo rats". For generations of Canberrans, Brindabella is the name associated with the mountain range which dominates the southern horizon of Canberra City

The name "Ginninderra" is derived from an Aboriginal word meaning "sparkling like the stars". It is the name given to the creek that flows through the middle of Belconnen, which was dammed to form Lake Ginninderra, the lake on which the Belconnen Town Centre is sited.

The name "Molonglo" is derived from an Aboriginal word meaning "like the sound of thunder". It is the name of the river that flows through the central electorate, which was dammed to form Lake Burley Griffin, one of the focal points of Canberra and of the central electorate.

ACT Elections website: <http://www.elections.act.gov.au>
Email: elections@act.gov.au

Several WCCC members had questions for the speaker.

Q: The process of redistribution is a politically independent process. When does the government or opposition get to put their suggestions?

A: The ACT Electoral Commission is a statutory body, and therefore is removed from politics.

- It is political parties who make submissions, rather than Members of the Legislative Assembly.
- The decision of the augmented Electoral Commission is final.

Q: At what date does moving a suburb from one electorate into another become final?

A: When the report of the augmented Electoral Commission is made public, from that date.

Jeremy Hansen made the point that it is important for politicians to know which suburbs will be in which electorate as soon as possible.

Clarification of this information from Elections ACT: A redistribution becomes official when the Augmented Commission makes its determination. The determination takes effect the day after it is notified on the ACT Legislation Register. It is also published in the *Canberra Times*. The Augmented Commission also prepares a report on the redistribution process. This is submitted to the Minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, the report is available from the Elections ACT website or in hard copy from Elections ACT's office. Any change in electorate boundaries applies to the Legislative Assembly election immediately following the redistribution.

Q: Why is it that in the ACT whole suburbs move from electorate to electorate?

A: Population density makes a difference—in the ACT, population is not as dense as in cities like Sydney or Melbourne, where one side of a street may be in one electorate and the opposite side in another.

Q: Are electors notified of changes in their electorate, if their suburb is moved?

A: Electors are not notified by personal letter. The information is advertised in the *Canberra Times* and is also available on the Elections ACT website. Any changes to the electoral boundaries are also highlighted in the brochure that is sent to all ACT households in the lead up to the next Legislative Assembly election. At the election, all polling booths have ballot papers for all electorates, so a voter does not have to be in the right electorate in order to vote.

Q: Will there need to be a redistribution for 2012?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there any provision that change should be minimal?

A: There is no specific statement to that effect, but there are legal constraints and other factors that must be taken into account. The bias in the system is probably towards minimal change.

After a break, normal business resumed.

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the bank balance is \$2534.54.

He also said that he had submitted grant applications to the Department of the Chief Minister and to ACTPLA respectively. It is expected that these will each be around \$5000.

Motion: That the Treasurer's report be accepted. (Moved: Chris Wilson; Seconded: Trevor Wilson). The motion was passed.

6. General Business

6.1. *Southside Chronicle*

Tom Anderson expressed the thanks of WCCC to the *Chronicle* for its continued support.

6.2. Government mailing lists

Weston Creek has again not been included in ACT Government mail-outs—this time, for a Sustainable Waste Strategy meeting.

6.3. Planning

Members are warned that individual residents may not get notification about changes in proposed Development Applications, even if they were notified about the original DA, and could get a shock when they find out that a developer has made minimal changes to have a DA approved, but even with the changes, the DA may not be acceptable to residents.

Changes are notified in the Community Zone Newsletter put out by ACTPLA.

Q: Should neighbours have the power to veto a DA?

A: If they did, then maybe no development would happen. The balance between residents and developers is not quite right at the moment, but it should not be shifted too much the other way. We rely on ACTPLA to administer the existing regulations to hold the balance.

Caroline Le Couteur, who is on the Assembly Planning Committee, said that the ACT needs a body to provide building design quality oversight, such as there is in Adelaide. This is particularly important for medium and big developments, and could, for example, ensure that streets are not made too narrow.

6.4. Fetherston Gardens

- Agreement has been reached with the Islamic School on the boundaries between the School and the Gardens. The agreement has kept the integrity of the plantings, although slightly more of the lawn area has been given to the School. Nevertheless, the final outcome is a good solution for all concerned. The Islamic School expressed its appreciation of the WCCC being willing to cooperate to reach the eventual solution.
- The School will install normal school fencing between the School and the Gardens.
- The regular working bees on the last Sunday of every month, from 10am till 1pm, are being coordinated by Lesley Pattinson.
- The Gardens Working Group (sub-committee of WCCC) will identify large jobs that TAMS could undertake at the Gardens.
- TAMS wants to have proper fencing around the Gardens, with a proper main entrance on the lower (south-western) side. It is proposed that there will be two additional access gates—one in the north-eastern corner for TAMS to use, and one in the grassed area on the south-eastern side, partly to provide emergency exit for the School. TAMS is working on a master plan for the Gardens.
- The Working Group has notified the Heritage Committee that it intends to apply for Heritage listing for the Gardens and for some special botanical plantings in the Gardens.
- On water issues, discussions with the Defence Housing Authority did not bring a satisfactory solution for the Gardens or for the Islamic School. TAMS is looking at a short-term plan for water supply, as the sprinkler system still exists. It has been suggested that water could be pumped from the dam at the bottom western corner of the School to the top of the Gardens. In the long term, it may be possible to get water from the new Weston Pond that is to be built in Molonglo.

Q: What hours will the Gardens be open?

A: That has not yet been decided.

6.5. Draft Waste Strategy

Comments must be submitted by 28 February. Tom has copies of the Draft Strategy if anyone wants one. He cannot do a submission, but would be glad if anyone else would like to do one.

6.6. Miscellaneous Questions

Q: A member asked if the ACT Government is responsible for cleaning the concrete block in Trenerry Square that is intended as a notice-board, since there are many old notices still there

and the block does not appear to have been cleaned for months.

A: Caroline Le Couteur said that TAMS is meant to come around once a month to clean off old notices.

Q: Many of the trees in the car parks at Cooleman court look sick, and some are dead. Whose job is it to maintain these trees?

A: TAMS is responsible. Tom Anderson will raise the matter with them.

Electoral Boundaries: Tom will do a submission on behalf of WCCC.

Q: Could we suggest to the ACT government that there be a big-item rubbish pick-up once or twice a year, as there is in a number of other cities.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

NEXT MEETING

Progress Report on the Cotter Dam Project

Wednesday, 30 March 2011, at 7.30pm