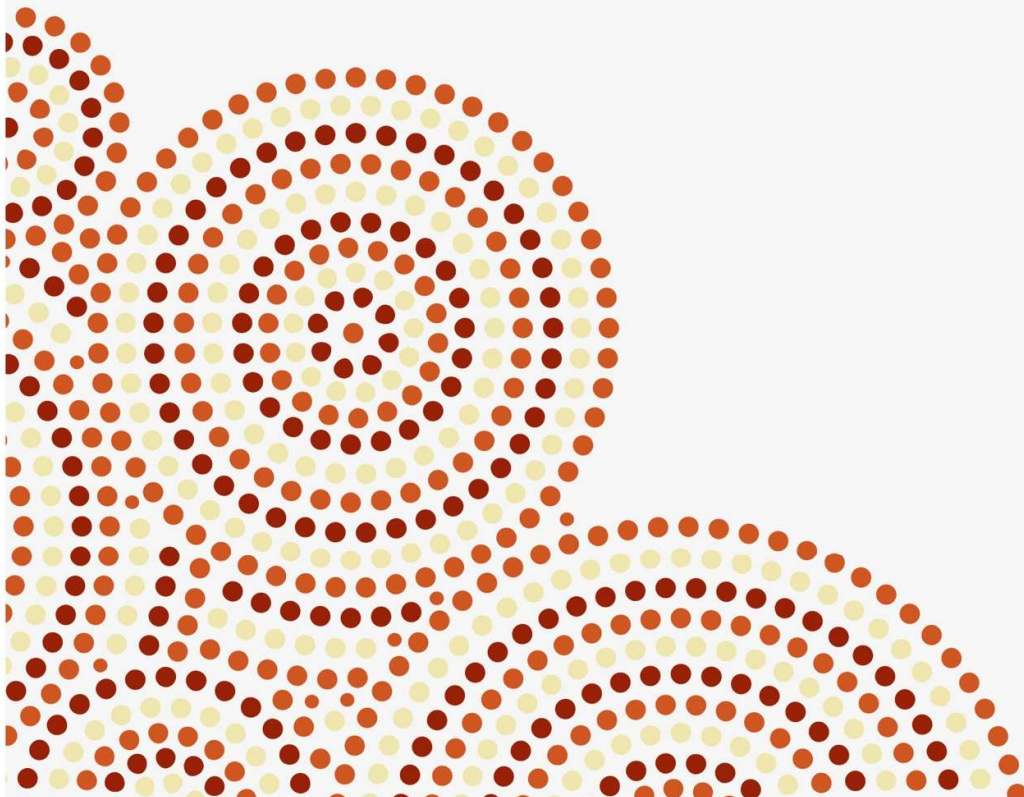


TANGENTYERE
COUNCIL
SUBMISSION



Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Ensuring Fair Representation of the NT) Bill 2020



WORKING
TOGETHER
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JUNE 2020

1. Recommended Citation

Klerck, M. (2020). Tangentyere Council, Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Ensuring Fair Representation of the NT) Bill 2020. Alice Springs, NT: Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation.

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2.Executive Summary

Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Ensuring Fair Representation of the NT) Bill 2020

TCAC has formed the opinion that the Northern Territory should have a minimum of 2 House of Representative electoral divisions including Lingiari and Solomon. This position is partly expressed by the following statement:

The Aboriginal population in Lingiari represents a statistically significant 40.2% of this electoral division (ABS, 2018)ⁱ. In Solomon 8.5% of the population is Aboriginal (ABS, 2018). The Aboriginal population of the new electoral division of the Northern Territory reflects 25.5% of the population (ABS, 2018). The merger of Lingiari and Solomon has politically disadvantaged the Aboriginal population of Lingiari by joining it to the statistically less significant Aboriginal population of Solomon.

The Indigenous population of Lingiari arguably had the potential to be the most politically influential Aboriginal population in Australia. Merging these seats is a backward step for reconciliation and will further marginalize the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. This marginalization is achieved by reducing the electoral power of Aboriginal voters from regional, remote and very remote NT (in Lingiari); and through the reduction of representation from two House of Representatives seats to one.

To better respond to this inquiry, TCAC has approached the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in order to populate a spreadsheet with demographic information for each current electoral division and for both Lingiari and Solomon. The ABS has provided this information and it demonstrates our hypothesis that prior to its merger with Solomon, that Lingiari had the largest proportion of Aboriginal people of any Commonwealth electoral division. In fact, the margin was statistically significant. Prior to redistribution the top 5 electoral divisions with respect to the proportion of Indigenous people was as follows: (1) Lingiari- 40.2%; (2) Leichhardt- 16.8%; (3) Durack- 16.7%; (4) Parkes- 15.9%; and (5) Kennedy- 13.7% (ABS, 2018). Outside of this group of electoral divisions no other electoral division has an Indigenous population above 8.5% (ABS, 2018). This validates the TCAC perception that Lingiari was the electoral division where Aboriginal voters had the greatest level of proportional representation. The merger of Lingiari and Solomon means that this representation has been reduced.

According to the Australian Electoral Commission Lingiari was "named in the honour of Vincent Lingiari AM, who was a member of the Gurindji people from the Victoria River District. Mr Lingiari was a stockman and land rights leader who worked for many years to improve the conditions for Aboriginal people. In 1966, he led the walk-off of his people from Wave Hill Station, which eventually resulted in the establishment of Wattie Creek and a land grant to the Gurindji people" (AEC, 2020)ⁱⁱ. Lingiari is therefore an appropriate name for the electoral division with the largest Aboriginal population in the country. The arbitrary abolition of Lingiari is not supported by TCAC. TCAC supports any measures required for the reinstatement of Lingiari and Solomon.

3. Background

TCAC is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) delivering human services for the benefit of Aboriginal people from Alice Springs, its Town Camps and Central Australia.

TCAC has 16 Town Camp Corporate Members, over 600 Individual Members and provides services to more than 10,000 people from a region that covers approximately 873,894 km².

The TCAC Board of Directors (BoD) is composed of the elected Presidents of the 11 Town Camp Associations and 5 Aboriginal Corporations.

The work undertaken by TCAC is aligned with action on the social, environmental and behavioural determinants of health and wellbeing. Programs delivered throughout Central Australia include: (1) Child Protection and Wellbeing; (2) Children and Schooling; (3) Community Safety; (4) Alcohol and Other Drugs; (5) Tenancy Support; (6) Employment; (7) Aged and Disabled; (8) Chronic Disease Care Coordination; (9) Family Violence Prevention; (10) Housing Maintenance; (11) Municipal and Essential Services; (12) Construction; and (15) Art and Culture.

TCAC was formed to assist Town Campers to gain legal tenure and in order to obtain water, electricity and housing. From 1979 until December 2009 TCAC operated as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing Organisation (ACCHO) and service provider.

In 2009, the 11 Town Camp Housing Associations and 3 Aboriginal Corporations in possession of Head Leases in Perpetuity executed Tripartite Alice Springs Living Area Subleases with the Executive Director of Township Leasing (EDTL) on behalf of the Commonwealth and the CEO of Housing on behalf of the Territory. The EDTL then entered into Housing Management Agreements with the NT Government (corresponding with each Head Lease) making the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development (DLGHCD) the Housing Authority for the Town Camps. The execution of these agreements was agreed to under the threat of compulsory acquisition.

Despite the changed leasing arrangements, TCAC and its Community Corporate Members; Subsidiaries retain an active role in Property and Tenancy Management; and Environmental Health.

TCAC founded Sonwane Pty Ltd Trustee for Tangentyere Charitable Trust Number 2 T/A Tangentyere Constructions in 1999. Tangentyere Constructions is a CAL Accredited Member of the Master Builders Association of the NT. Tangentyere Constructions delivers Property Management contracts employing Housing Maintenance Officers (HMOs) to deliver services on the Town Camps and 11 Remote Communities. HMOs provide assessment and undertake works of less than \$100 in respect of 'Responsive Repairs and Maintenance'. Tangentyere Constructions is also on a Panel for the Provision of Trade Qualified Repairs and Maintenance Works for the Town Camps and 22 Remote Communities.

TCAC founded the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company (CAAHC) in collaboration with the Central Land Council, Health Habitat and MLCS Corporate in 2009. CAAHC was the first National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) Accredited Community Housing Provider (CHP) in the NT and delivers Tenancy Management on the Town Camps as a contractor for the DLGHCD. Since 2009, CAAHC has also established its own community housing portfolio through a range of property development activities and leasing and management partnerships. Including the Town Camps, CAAH now manages over 370 properties in Alice Springs.

4. Ranking Electoral Divisions by Indigenous Status

TCAC approached the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to provide key demographic information about contemporary electoral divisions and the recently abolished electoral divisions of Lingiari and Solomon. It is hoped that this information will support the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to determine in favour of a minimum of 2 electoral divisions for the NT.

The following table is based upon a Census of Population and Housing, Customised Data Report developed by the ABS (ABS, 2018). The electoral boundaries have been ranked based on the proportion of the population that is Indigenous.

2018 Electoral Boundaries		Area		Population		Redistributed
Division	State	Km ²	% Mean	Total	% ATSI	
1. Lingiari	NT	1348158	2625.7%	120,387	40.2	2020
2. Leichhardt	Qld	148,559	289.3%	167,430	16.8	2018
3. Durack	WA	1,629,858	3174.3%	181,764	16.7	2016
4. Parkes	NSW	393,413	766.2%	153,769	15.9	2016
5. Kennedy	Qld	567,377	1105.0%	164,372	13.7	2018
6. Solomon	NT	191	0.4%	108,273	8.5	2020
7. Herbert	Qld	941	1.8%	159,998	8.5	2018
8. New England	NSW	66,394	129.3%	154,184	8.4	2016
9. Braddon	Tas.	21,369	41.6%	102,887	7.3	2017
10. Grey	SA	908,595	1769.6%	169,052	6.4	2018
11. Calare	NSW	32,666	63.6%	161,298	6.3	2016
12. Cowper	NSW	7,296	14.2%	159,321	6.1	2016
13. Riverina	NSW	48,988	95.4%	155,793	6.1	2016
14. Maranoa	Qld	729,897	1421.6%	149,266	6.0	2018
15. Hunter	NSW	10,640	20.7%	156,796	5.9	2016
16. O'Connor	WA	868,576	1691.6%	156,323	5.9	2016
17. Lyne	NSW	16,099	31.4%	145,480	5.5	2016
18. Page	NSW	19,342	37.7%	159,107	5.5	2016
19. Paterson	NSW	1,123	2.2%	155,634	5.5	2016
20. Dawson	Qld	14,630	28.5%	153,822	5.5	2018
21. Capricornia	Qld	90,903	177.0%	152,243	5.3	2018
22. Flynn	Qld	132,824	258.7%	155,488	5.3	2018
23. Gilmore	NSW	6,342	12.4%	150,436	5.0	2016
24. Lyons	Tas.	35,721	69.6%	102,180	4.8	2017

2018 Electoral Boundaries		Area		Population		Redistributed
Division	State	Km ²	% Mean	Total	% ATSI	
25. Franklin	Tas.	10,009	19.5%	99,045	4.6	2017
26. Dobell	NSW	787	1.5%	154,067	4.4	2016
27. Blair	Qld	6,472	12.6%	162,414	4.4	2018
28. Farrer	NSW	126,590	246.5%	163,980	4.2	2016
29. Lindsay	NSW	339	0.7%	166,528	4.2	2016
30. Hinkler	Qld	3,818	7.4%	143,135	4.1	2018
31. Wide Bay	Qld	14,227	27.7%	142,687	4.1	2018
32. Chifley	NSW	126	0.2%	171,249	4.0	2016
33. Groom	Qld	5,586	10.9%	148,866	4.0	2018
34. Shortland	NSW	265	0.5%	144,482	3.9	2016
35. Longman	Qld	1,237	2.4%	160,594	3.7	2018
36. Macarthur	NSW	363	0.7%	162,017	3.6	2016
37. Newcastle	NSW	171	0.3%	152,948	3.4	2016
38. Richmond	NSW	2,148	4.2%	152,913	3.4	2016
39. Whitlam	NSW	1,331	2.6%	152,280	3.4	2016
40. Bass	Tas.	7,975	15.5%	102,286	3.4	2017
41. Eden-Monaro	NSW	41,617	81.1%	147,532	3.2	2016
42. Hume	NSW	17,240	33.6%	150,643	3.1	2016
43. Macquarie	NSW	4,374	8.5%	141,439	3.0	2016
44. Oxley	Qld	159	0.3%	167,169	3.0	2018
45. Clark	Tas.	292	0.6%	102,573	3.0	2017
46. Wright	Qld	7,577	14.8%	156,437	2.9	2018
47. Robertson	NSW	980	1.9%	143,103	2.8	2016
48. Forde	Qld	418	0.8%	165,538	2.8	2018
49. Petrie	Qld	152	0.3%	163,268	2.8	2018
50. Rankin	Qld	131	0.3%	179,170	2.8	2018
51. Spence	SA	532	1.0%	172,727	2.8	2018
52. Hasluck	WA	1,192	2.3%	143,626	2.8	2016
53. Mallee	Vic.	81,962	159.6%	153,865	2.6	2018
54. Nicholls	Vic.	14,768	28.8%	150,416	2.6	2018
55. Barker	SA	65,206	127.0%	165,629	2.5	2018
56. Brand	WA	377	0.7%	164,031	2.4	2016

2018 Electoral Boundaries		Area		Population		Redistributed
Division	State	Km ²	% Mean	Total	% ATSI	
57. Burt	WA	172	0.3%	168,783	2.4	2016
58. Bowman	Qld	536	1.0%	147,010	2.3	2018
59. Cunningham	NSW	519	1.0%	155,380	2.2	2016
60. Lilley	Qld	144	0.3%	150,150	2.2	2018
61. Forrest	WA	11,072	21.6%	147,768	2.2	2016
62. Pearce	WA	13,250	25.8%	181,763	2.2	2016
63. Bean	ACT	1,913	3.7%	135,802	2.1	2018
64. Dickson	Qld	724	1.4%	151,442	2.0	2018
65. Fairfax	Qld	1,004	2.0%	147,514	2.0	2018
66. Gippsland	Vic.	33,182	64.6%	144,569	2.0	2018
67. Canning	WA	6,304	12.3%	146,019	2.0	2016
68. Fisher	Qld	1,198	2.3%	146,119	1.9	2018
69. Fenner	ACT	238	0.5%	136,421	1.8	2018
70. Bonner	Qld	374	0.7%	149,636	1.8	2018
71. Swan	WA	134	0.3%	163,202	1.8	2016
72. Kingsford Smith	NSW	91	0.2%	176,238	1.7	2016
73. Werriwa	NSW	172	0.3%	170,909	1.7	2016
74. Fadden	Qld	387	0.8%	163,220	1.7	2018
75. McPherson	Qld	229	0.4%	151,581	1.7	2018
76. Hindmarsh	SA	122	0.2%	160,767	1.7	2018
77. Indi	Vic.	29,187	56.8%	144,408	1.6	2018
78. Wannon	Vic.	33,419	65.1%	151,087	1.6	2018
79. Cowan	WA	180	0.4%	147,538	1.6	2016
80. Greenway	NSW	81	0.2%	170,067	1.5	2016
81. Moncrieff	Qld	100	0.2%	167,115	1.5	2018
82. Kingston	SA	165	0.3%	158,721	1.5	2018
83. Bendigo	Vic.	5,496	10.7%	146,035	1.5	2018
84. Fremantle	WA	196	0.4%	148,744	1.5	2016
85. Makin	SA	162	0.3%	167,050	1.4	2018
86. Ballarat	Vic.	4,322	8.4%	148,792	1.3	2018
87. Canberra	ACT	312	0.6%	126,769	1.2	2018
88. Hughes	NSW	369	0.7%	144,289	1.2	2016

2018 Electoral Boundaries		Area		Population		Redistributed
Division	State	Km ²	% Mean	Total	% ATSI	
89. McMahon	NSW	168	0.3%	165,693	1.2	2016
90. Sydney	NSW	44	0.1%	200,181	1.2	2016
91. Griffith	Qld	57	0.1%	149,713	1.2	2018
92. Moreton	Qld	109	0.2%	161,994	1.2	2018
93. Adelaide	SA	86	0.2%	180,890	1.2	2018
94. Stirling	WA	74	0.1%	147,992	1.2	2016
95. Grayndler	NSW	32	0.1%	149,513	1.1	2016
96. Corio	Vic.	773	1.5%	148,288	1.1	2018
97. Monash	Vic.	8,879	17.3%	140,807	1.1	2018
98. Perth	WA	80	0.2%	151,089	1.1	2016
99. Cook	NSW	94	0.2%	139,062	1.0	2016
100. Brisbane	Qld	57	0.1%	159,698	1.0	2018
101. Mayo	SA	9,135	17.8%	158,999	1.0	2018
102. McEwen	Vic.	2,670	5.2%	142,208	1.0	2018
103. Ryan	Qld	370	0.7%	153,445	0.9	2018
104. Boothby	SA	115	0.2%	165,397	0.9	2018
105. Casey	Vic.	2,466	4.8%	149,321	0.9	2018
106. Dunkley	Vic.	152	0.3%	152,027	0.9	2018
107. Flinders	Vic.	871	1.7%	137,225	0.9	2018
108. Gorton	Vic.	540	1.1%	168,293	0.9	2018
109. Lalor	Vic.	493	1.0%	174,881	0.9	2018
110. Banks	NSW	53	0.1%	155,806	0.8	2016
111. Fowler	NSW	60	0.1%	164,235	0.8	2016
112. Cooper	Vic.	60	0.1%	158,163	0.8	2018
113. Corangamite	Vic.	5,441	10.6%	134,522	0.8	2018
114. Barton	NSW	40	0.1%	172,850	0.7	2016
115. Parramatta	NSW	57	0.1%	186,320	0.7	2016
116. Sturt	SA	97	0.2%	174,563	0.7	2018
117. Calwell	Vic.	265	0.5%	162,411	0.7	2018
118. Scullin	Vic.	116	0.2%	157,970	0.7	2018
119. Tangney	WA	83	0.2%	136,038	0.7	2016
120. Blaxland	NSW	61	0.1%	174,634	0.6	2016

2018 Electoral Boundaries		Area		Population		Redistributed
Division	State	Km ²	% Mean	Total	% ATSI	
121. Mackellar	NSW	233	0.5%	148,613	0.6	2016
122. Reid	NSW	55	0.1%	181,347	0.6	2016
123. Holt	Vic.	266	0.5%	165,722	0.6	2018
124. Jagajaga	Vic.	104	0.2%	145,350	0.6	2018
125. La Trobe	Vic.	748	1.5%	149,196	0.6	2018
126. Curtin	WA	98	0.2%	143,086	0.6	2016
127. Moore	WA	90	0.2%	140,258	0.6	2016
128. Berowra	NSW	786	1.5%	145,136	0.5	2016
129. Mitchell	NSW	101	0.2%	153,449	0.5	2016
130. Watson	NSW	47	0.1%	174,806	0.5	2016
131. Aston	Vic.	113	0.2%	154,154	0.5	2018
132. Gellibrand	Vic.	124	0.2%	165,817	0.5	2018
133. Wills	Vic.	46	0.1%	154,928	0.5	2018
134. Bennelong	NSW	60	0.1%	168,948	0.4	2016
135. Warringah	NSW	68	0.1%	147,333	0.4	2016
136. Wentworth	NSW	38	0.1%	145,949	0.4	2016
137. Bruce	Vic.	95	0.2%	178,342	0.4	2018
138. Deakin	Vic.	79	0.2%	153,474	0.4	2018
139. Fraser	Vic.	106	0.2%	167,941	0.4	2018
140. Isaacs	Vic.	155	0.3%	150,072	0.4	2018
141. Maribyrnong	Vic.	64	0.1%	157,945	0.4	2018
142. Melbourne	Vic.	40	0.1%	188,952	0.4	2018
143. North Sydney	NSW	53	0.1%	161,526	0.3	2016
144. McNamara	Vic.	41	0.1%	167,227	0.3	2018
145. Bradfield	NSW	101	0.2%	160,255	0.2	2016
146. Chisholm	Vic.	65	0.1%	170,149	0.2	2018
147. Goldstein	Vic.	50	0.1%	147,627	0.2	2018
148. Higgins	Vic.	41	0.1%	158,309	0.2	2018
149. Hotham	Vic.	83	0.2%	174,897	0.2	2018
150. Kooyong	Vic.	55	0.1%	154,877	0.2	2018
151. Menzies	Vic.	184	0.4%	148,771	0.2	2018

5. Urban, Remote and Very Remote NT

Lingiari and Solomon were very different electoral divisions. Solomon corresponded with Urban NT (ABS, 2016)ⁱⁱⁱ whereas Lingiari corresponded with Remote (ABS, 2016)^{iv} and Very Remote NT (ABS, 2016)^v.

TCAC is concerned that the merger of Lingiari and Solomon will mean that remote and very remote NT will be dominated by urban NT. Lingiari was second only to Durack with respect to its geographical size. It seems apparent to TCAC that the concentration of 47% of the population in an area of 191 km² in the vicinity of greater Darwin will disenfranchise voters from remote southern NT and very remote NT. The lack of a major urban area in Lingiari protected remote and very remote voters from being dominated by a concentrated urban population.

6. Population

Lingiari and Solomon were not the least populated electoral divisions prior to their merger. The electoral division of the Northern Territory is now the most populous electoral division.

Prior to the redistribution of Lingiari and Solomon there were five Tasmanian electoral divisions with smaller populations including: (1) Franklin; (2) Lyons; (3) Bass; (4) Clark; and (5) Braddon. Tasmania as an original state is guaranteed a minimum of five electoral divisions. The Northern Territory is only guaranteed one electoral division despite the large geographical size and population of the resultant merged electoral division.

Whilst Lingiari and Solomon were ranked 145 and 146 from 151 with respect to population, the electoral division of the Northern Territory is now the most populous electoral division in Australia. The electoral division of the Northern Territory is also geographically the second largest electoral division in Australia.

Residents of the NT are now the most electorally disenfranchised voters in Australia based on the ABS population estimate of the electoral division of the NT when compared with the other electoral divisions.

It is likely that the self-reporting of household data by residents of remote and urban public housing in the NT to the ABS has led to a lower population estimate than the actual population. This statement reflects the observation of TCAC with respect to the level of overcrowding on the Alice Springs Town Camps compared with ABS population estimates.

The Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development (DLGHCD) has an Estimated Resident Population for the National Partnership Agreement for Remote Housing (NPARH) NT Footprint Communities that is higher than the corresponding ABS estimate by 6% across 73 Remote Communities. These figures do not consider the likely underrepresentation of population data for the 2343 households located on the homelands and Town Camps of the NT outside the NPARH NT. The homelands and Town Camps are likely to be consistent with the example provided for the NPARH NT Footprint.

It is also likely that the true number of people living in urban public housing and those sleeping rough is also underestimated.

Additional information outlining the number of dwellings, registered occupants, estimated resident population and ABS census figures for each NPARH NT Footprint Community can be provided on request if deemed valuable to the inquiry by TCAC.

TCAC can also provide detailed homelands and Town Camps data. If this data is considered valuable then it is recommended that the Committee also seek advice from the DLGHCD on the number of public housing dwellings in urban and regional centers including Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

TCAC considers that the model of rent has led to a wariness from individuals and households to report details of residents that are neither tenants of recognised occupants. TCAC recommends that public housing rents should be aligned with a straightforward and affordable dwelling-based rent model. The DLGHCD has been working on such a model.

7. Recommendations

The Northern Territory requires at least two electoral divisions in the House of Representatives. To ensure that the population of the NT is adequately represented, TCAC would like to make the following recommendations:

- That the Northern Territory be provided a minimum of 2 electoral divisions in the House Representatives;
- That the electoral divisions of Lingiari and Solomon be restored.

8. References

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- ⁱⁱ AEC. (2020). Electoral division names no longer in use. Canberra, ACT: AEC. Retrieved from <https://www.aec.gov.au/electorates/abolished.htm>
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