

Counter Objection and Reasons

The Central Otago District Council objects to the submission put by Alexa Forbes in relation to the proposed boundary changes in the Clutha/Southland electorate under the following criteria set out in the Electoral Act.

Primarily the Council objects to the submission as it fails to adequately reflect communities of interest. Secondly, the proposed boundaries in the objection will not meet the required number of people per electorate.

Communities of interest. Neither the proposal made by Ms Forbes nor the Commissions proposed boundaries reflect communities of interest. Council notes that there are myriad definitions of “communities of interest” and will not take the Commissions time in putting a definition to the Commission that best suits Councils purpose. Indeed, as the Western Australian Local Government Boundaries Commission (1972:8) wrote: *“This (community of) interest appears to increase to large proportions, or diminish to almost complete insignificance, depending upon the claim of a Council appearing before the Commission”*. However, Council asks that the Commission consider these factors.

- Current Boundaries. Currently the whole of the Central Otago District sits in the Waitaki electorate, putting it in the same electorate as Geraldine (310 kilometres from Alexandra), and Oamaru. The vast geographical size alone of the electorate makes a claim of it encompassing a community of interest challenging.
- Ms Forbes proposed boundaries. Ms Forbes suggests a boundary bringing in Te Anau and Cromwell alongside Queenstown and Wanaka. In the first instance, such a move would not reach the necessary population numbers. In addition, these are boundaries based on a common tourism industry whereas a broader “Inland Otago” seat as Council proposes will combine not only tourism but broader geographical and economic considerations.
- Proposed Boundaries. The issues Council has with the proposed changes are two-fold. Firstly, moving Roxburgh, Alexandra and Clyde into the Clutha-Southland electorate again does not reflect a community of interest. There is little economically or socially linking these towns with, for example, Lumsden or Winton. Council does note that the change does put these towns in the same electorate as Queenstown, which Council submits there is more of a community of interest perspective to be argued. But that brings us to another issue, being that Cromwell, which sits between Roxburgh, Alexandra/Clyde and Queenstown, is not proposed to move to the Clutha/Southland electorate. The proposed change has Cromwell, the CODC town nearest geographically and in many ways economically to Queenstown, in a different electorate.

Population

Ms Forbes proposes combining essentially the current QLDC boundary with Cromwell and Te Anau. On current census figures, including all relevant mesh blocks; this would equate to 51,432 as per Table A (figures 2018 census night resident population)

TABLE A

QLDC	39,153
Cromwell West	3,048
Cromwell East	2,562
Lindis/Nevis	2,391
Te Anau	2,538
Whitestone	618
Makaroa	774
Kingston	<u>348</u>
TOTAL	51,432

This population is inadequate to constitute a seat.

Proposed Solution and Reasons

Council submits that an "Inland Otago" electorate covering the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago District boundaries would far more accurately reflect communities of interest than either the current or proposed structure or that submitted by Ms Forbes. Council bases this on the following:

Projected variations in electoral populations over the next 5 years. Council submits that this is the biggest failing of the Commissions proposed change and Ms Forbes proposal contained in her objection, being that (in the Forbes case) the proposal does not reach the required numbers and in the Commission's proposal, it does not take into account the significant growth in the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago electorates in comparison with surrounding territorial authority population growth.

The two districts have (as of March 2018 census figures) a combined population of 60,711, currently short of the required 65,458.

However, both districts have significant year on year growth (QLDC 6.8%, CODC 3.8%). Using current figures (see Table B) the combined population of the two districts is currently approximately 67,460 people, already over the threshold.

TABLE B

	Census night 03/18	+18 months 09/19	03/2021 ⁽³⁾
QLDC (+6.8%)	39,153	44,658 ⁽¹⁾	47,695

CODC (+3.8%)	21,558	22,802 ⁽²⁾	24,110
Combined	60,711	67,460	71,805

Methodology.

⁽¹⁾ QLDC $39,153 \times 1.068 = 41,815$ after 12 months. A further 12 months growth at same rate ($41,815 \times .068 = 2,843$ more people. Divide in half for 6 months growth = 2,843. $2,843 + 41,815 = 44,658$)

⁽²⁾ CODC $21,558 \times 1.038 = 22,377$ after 12 months. A further 12 months growth at same rate ($22,377 \times .038 = 850$ more people. Divide in half for 6 months growth = 425. $425 + 22,377 = 22,802$)

⁽³⁾ Approximate end of year one of proposed boundary changes, three years growth from census night.

Council recognises that the threshold will have increased as other parts of the region have small increases in population and that these workings do not consider residents not on the general roll.

In relation to the relative growth of the other territorial authorities involved, it is crucial that the major variance between the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago Districts is noted by the commission. The year on year growth rate between the 2013 and 2018 census for the relevant authorities shows:

Queenstown-Lakes District	6.8%
Central Otago District	3.8%
Waitaki District	1.4%
Dunedin City	1.0%
Invercargill City	1.0%
Clutha District	0.9%
Southland District	0.8%
Gore District	0.6%

Council submits that the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago Districts can be described as a community of interest, with very similar and linked economies, climates, geography and cultures.

The formation of an Inland Otago electoral seat will allow for the major disparity in populations that will occur within the first year of the new regime while allowing for a clear community of interest to be recognised.