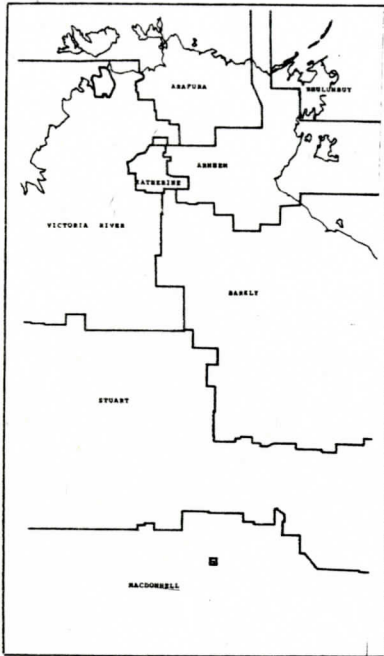


Numbers stay the bottom line

Existing rural electorates.



Comment by FRANK ALCORTA

The substance of all the submissions by political parties and individuals to the Electoral Redistribution Committee is that there should be one seat less in the south and one seat more in the north.

The new distribution allows for an average of just more than 2900 voters.

The combined total in the south's six seats — Araluen, Brai-ling, Koolpinyah, Stuart, Macdonnell, and Katherine — is only 14 888, or an average of 2483.

That means that one seat has to go.

The 11 Darwin seats are roughly within the 2900 quota.

The combination of Palmerston and Koolpinyah is way above.

The rest of the Territory's seats, with the exception of Katherine which has grown thanks to the influx of air force people, largely balance with the proposed new quota.



A new seat is likely for the Palmerston-Koolpinyah area.

That means one new seat at Palmerston-Koolpinyah.

Had the redistribution been ordered on the basis of two new seats for a total of 27, there would have been no problem.

But the redistribution is on the basis of the existing 25 seats.

This poses a severe headache for the redistribution committee.

Basically it has to find balance between two diametrically opposed propositions: the CLP wants to eliminate the seat of Macdonnell (held by Labor MLA, Mr Neil Bell) by extending the Alice Springs electorate of Flynn (held by NT National, Mr Enzo Floreani) all the way to the South Australian border.

The NT Nationals and ALP on the other hand want to eliminate the Alice Springs urban seats of Brai-ling and/or Sadadeen respectively.

The CLP's proposal is crystal clear. Heads I win, tails you lose. Getting rid of Mr Bell, who holds the safest seat in the Territory, or Mr Floreani, who wrenched the previous CLP stronghold of Flynn, would be a formidable coup.

The NT Nationals and ALP proposals are also clear.

Sadadeen is held by an independent conservative, Mr Denis Collins, who has been flirting with the CLP lately and who will never vote Labor.

'Heads I win, tails you lose'

Brai-ling is held by the Tourism Minister, Mr Roger Vale. A conservative will still hold the new seat. But another would go.

It is all about final numbers in Parliament. No such dilemma exists in the Top End. Here the redistribution is fairly straightforward.

Palmerston will be split into two seats, the new seat probably including some suburban areas as well as rural bits and pieces now in Koolpinyah.

In Darwin the only problem is whether to expand Ludmilla to include parts of Karama (as the CLP and NT Nationals want) or to spill over Millner into Jingili.

The rest of the seats will not experience any radical changes although all will have different boundaries.

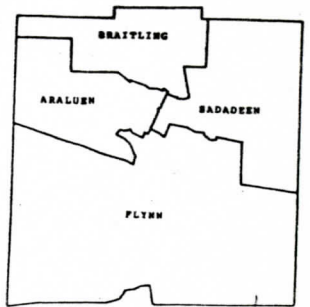
Earlier fears by the NT National leader, Mr Ian Tuxworth, that the CLP would tamper with his seat have proved groundless. Barkly remains.

It might lose Borroloola to Arnhem in exchange for Ali Curung, but the essential nature of the electorate will not change unduly.

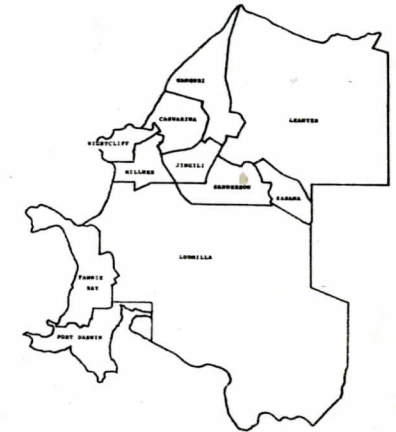
Katherine will also be worth watching.

The ALP believes that the town is almost large enough for a seat on its own.

So do the NT Nat-



Central Australia looks set for major changes.



Darwin suburban electorates are expected to remain pretty similar.

ionals who argue, along with Labor, that Katherine is the natural centre for the whole Victoria River Downs district.

The committee will have to make a Solomonian decision here to allow for balance between all submissions.

The NT Nationals believe that their candidate, likely to be the Katherine Mayor, Mr Jim Forscutt, can win the seat.

The ALP reckons their candidate can win the rural Katherine area because of the Aboriginal population.

One way or another the sitting CLP members, Mr Mike Reed and Mr Terry McCarthy, will be nervous about the final submission.

As far as Darwin is

concerned the ALP submission would probably get rid of Jingili CLP MLA, Mr Rick Setter, and Leanyer CLP MLA, Mr Fred Finch.

But the CLP submission would strengthen Mr Setter's and Mr Finch's position.

It would also prop up Mr Daryl Manzie in Sanderson by including service personnel and policemen (who are more inclined to vote conservative) at Wulagi into the new seat.

With those minor exceptions all the submissions are well thought out and an honest attempt to carve up the Territory into acceptable boundaries.

One thing is for certain — there won't be a gerrymander in the next election.