

Electoral Newsfile

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2006 Redistribution Process Commences

A redistribution of federal electoral boundaries commenced in Queensland and New South Wales early 2006. This edition of Electoral Newsfile examines the redistribution process.

The Electoral Commissioner announced in November 2005 that, as a result of changes in population, the Parliamentary representation entitlements of Queensland (Qld) and New South Wales (NSW) will change.

The Electoral Commissioner made the determination of the number of representatives to which each State and Territory is entitled on 17 November 2005, based on figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other sources. These figures confirmed that Queensland will gain an extra seat and New South Wales will lose one seat in the House of Representatives.

The Australian Electoral Commission met on 2 December 2005, to direct the commencement of redistributions in Queensland and New South Wales. Notice of the redistributions in Queensland and New South Wales was published in the *Commonwealth Gazette* on 2 December 2005.

How was the determination made?

The determination was made by dividing the total population figure for all the States, excluding the Territories, by twice the number of Senators for the States to obtain a quota. Each State and Territory population was then divided by the quota, rounding the result to the nearest whole number to determine the entitlement (see page 3 for detailed explanation of the calculations).

The determination of representation entitlements was made under sections 46 and 48 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) which require the Electoral Commissioner to ascertain the population of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories twelve months after the first meeting of the newly elected House of Representatives and to then determine each State and Territory's representation entitlements at the next general election.

Changes to entitlements in a State or Territory trigger a redistribution of electoral boundaries.

A Redistribution Committee is formed to develop a redistribution proposal.

A Redistribution Committee for a State consists of the Electoral Commissioner, the Australian Electoral Officer for the State, the Surveyor-General (or equivalent) for the State and the State Auditor-General. If the Surveyor-General or Auditor-General are not available, their deputies or, failing that, senior officers of the Australian Public Service from that State are appointed.

What causes a redistribution?

There are three triggers defined in section 59 of the Electoral Act that can cause a redistribution to be held.

A redistribution is required:

- a) when the number of parliamentary representatives to which a State or the ACT is entitled has changed;

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- b) when the number of electors in more than one third of the divisions in a State or in one of the divisions in the ACT deviates from the average divisional enrolment by more than 10 per cent in three consecutive months; or
- c) if seven years has elapsed since the last redistribution.

When were redistributions last held?

Redistributions were last held in:

New South Wales	11 February 2000
Queensland	25 November 2003

Can people have a say in the process?

After a redistribution commences the Electoral Commissioner invites public suggestions on how the new boundaries should be drawn and names for the electoral divisions. Following this period the suggestions are available for public comment for a further 14 days. The Redistribution Committee then develops a redistribution proposal and publishes and exhibits maps showing proposed boundaries and names. The public then has 28 days to lodge objections to the proposals.

An augmented Electoral Commission for a State or a Territory then has 60 days in which to consider the objections (including initial and any further objections). The augmented Electoral Commission for a State or Territory consists of the members of the Redistribution Committee for that State or Territory, plus the Chairperson of the Australian Electoral Commission and the non-Judicial Commissioner (the Australian Statistician).

If the augmented Electoral Commission proposes to set boundaries that are significantly different from those proposed by the Redistribution Committee, further objections may be lodged. The augmented Electoral Commission may hold public hearings to consider objections before making a final determination of boundaries and names of the electoral divisions.

What is considered by the Committee?

In developing its proposal, a Redistribution Committee must take into consideration:

- community of interests, including economic, social and regional interests;
- means of communication and travel;
- physical features and area;
- boundaries of existing divisions; and
- enrolment (both current enrolment and 'projected' enrolment).

What is the three and a half year rule?

Boundaries are drawn with the aim that three and a half years after the redistribution, the enrolment in each electoral division should not vary from the State or Territory average by more than three and a half per cent.

This is the case for the redistribution of NSW where the projection date is 31 May 2010.

However, where the Electoral Commission is of the opinion that the number of divisions to which a State is entitled may change sooner than 3.5 years, a shorter projection time may be used.

This is the case for the redistribution of Queensland where the Electoral Commission is of the opinion that Queensland may gain another division in November 2008 and so has determined a projection date of 30 November 2007 in accordance with section 63A of the Electoral Act.

How will an election affect the redistribution?

New electoral boundaries do not come into effect until the next general election. Any by-election held prior to the next general election would be conducted on existing boundaries.

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The Quota

The quota is calculated by dividing the number of people of the Commonwealth by twice the number of Senators for the States:

$$\frac{19,752,065}{72 \times 2 = 144} = 137,167.1181$$

The Population

<i>State/Territory¹</i>	<i>Number of people</i>
New South Wales	6,764,690
Victoria	5,012,689
Queensland	3,945,940
Western Australia	2,003,778
South Australia	1,540,223
Tasmania	484,745
The Commonwealth ²	19,752,065
The Australian Capital Territory ³	325,790
Northern Territory ⁴	206,492

The Entitlement

The number of Members of the House of Representatives to be chosen in each State and Territory is determined by dividing the number of people in each State and Territory by the quota, and rounding the result to the nearest whole number.

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Quota</i>	<i>Number of members to be chosen</i>	<i>Change</i>
New South Wales	49.3171	49	-1
Victoria	36.5444	37	-
Queensland	28.7674	29	+1
Western Australia	14.6083	15	-
South Australia	11.2288	11	-
Tasmania ⁵	3.5340	5	-
Australian Capital Territory	2.3751	2	-
Northern Territory	1.5054	2	-
Total		150	

- 1 Under section 38A of the CEA, the Territory of Norfolk Island is not taken to be a Territory for the purposes of this determination, but certain Norfolk Island residents are included in State and Territory population figures.
- 2 Under section 45 of the CEA, the total number of the people of the Commonwealth does not include the numbers of people of the Territories.
- 3 Under section 4 of the CEA the population figure for the ACT includes Jervis Bay for the purposes of this determination.
- 4 Under sub-sections 48 (2C) and 48 (2E) of the CEA the population figure of the Northern Territory includes Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island and twice the standard error of the estimate of the net undercount for the Northern Territory for the purposes of this determination.
- 5 Under section 24 of the Constitution Tasmania is guaranteed a minimum of five Members.

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The redistribution timetable

Australian Electoral Commission directs redistribution to commence and quota of electors determined.
Electoral Commissioner invites written suggestions from public.
Appointment of Redistribution Committee

Public suggestions invited

Closing date for suggestions

Suggestions available for public comments

Closing date for written comments

Redistribution Committee considers suggestions and comments and develops a set of boundary proposals

Redistribution Committee publishes and exhibits maps showing proposed boundaries and names

Public objections to proposals

Closing date for written objections

Objections available for public comments

Closing date for written comments

Augmented Electoral Commission considers objections.
Augmented Electoral Commission makes final proposal (open hearings)

Final determination

NOTE:

The indicative timetable for the Queensland and New South Wales redistributions are on the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au

30 days

14 days

No time specified

28 days

14 days

60 days

As soon as practicable