

# **COMMENT ON OBJECTIONS**

The Federal Redistribution 2009  
NSW



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## **Comment on Objections Number 35**

by

**Ben Franklin, State Director, National Party of Australia - NSW**

**11 Pages**

# **THE NATIONALS** *for Regional NSW*

18 September 2009

Mr Ed Killesteyn  
Electoral Commissioner  
Level 3, Roden Cutler House  
24 Campbell Street,  
Haymarket, NSW 2000

Dear Mr Killesteyn,

Please find attached the comments on public objections from the National Party of Australia – NSW to the proposed redistribution of New South Wales federal electoral boundaries.

Yours sincerely,



**Ben Franklin**  
State Director





**Comments on public objections  
to the proposed redistribution of NSW**

**The National Party of Australia – NSW**

**September 2009**

## **Introduction**

There are a number of matters raised in the public objections to the proposed redistribution of federal electoral boundaries on which we wish to comment. Our comments have been divided into those which relate to the objections of each of the Liberal and Labor parties, and those submitted by other organisations and individuals. Due to the number of objections received, we do not think it practical to comment on every objection, but rather on some of the issues that have been raised.

## **Liberal Party Objections**

### **Gilmore/Throsby**

We note that the Liberal Party's objection to the boundaries of the Divisions of Gilmore and Throsby was very similar to our own. In addition, almost 100 other objectors raised the same issue (more than for any other aspect of the redistribution), and the vast majority of them suggested similar alternative boundaries. Among those were the Shoalhaven Business Chamber, the Moss Vale Chamber of Commerce and the Southern Highlands Business Chamber. It is significant that organisations and individuals from both the Shoalhaven and the southern highlands have expressed a preference to be in the same division as one another, rather than with Shellharbour. That they should have such a preference accords with a considered assessment of the common community characteristics throughout the broader region.

As noted in our initial objections, we understand the Committee's desire to transfer electors to the south coast. Indeed, we are happy to support such a transfer, but only if it provides the best outcome on community of interest grounds that is achievable in the circumstances. In the context of the current redistribution, the best outcome that can be achieved is bringing together the whole of the Shellharbour LGA in the Division of Throsby, and uniting the southern highlands with the Shoalhaven in the Division of Gilmore.

We strongly support all those objectors who have asserted that the southern highlands community will be best served by uniting them with the Shoalhaven rather than Shellharbour. We also strongly believe that community of interest links in Shellharbour are best represented by bringing the whole of the Shellharbour LGA within a single division, namely Throsby.

Indeed, even the Labor Party in their objections declared that the inclusion of the southern highlands in Throsby was a poor outcome on community of interest grounds. This is not a partisan issue – every major party has recognised the potential for improvements to the proposed boundaries in this area, and where an alternative approach has been put forward (by The Nationals and the Liberal Party) there is agreement as to what an amendment to the proposed boundaries should achieve.

In our initial objections we referred to a number of common characteristics shared by the communities of the southern highlands and the Shoalhaven. These include the age structure of the two areas, ongoing agricultural production (which is not present in the Shellharbour LGA) and the transport connection which is at the very least comparable to the Illawarra Highway between the southern highlands and Shellharbour. We note that in their objections, the Liberal Party made similar observations, and that some of the community of interest ties between the southern highlands and the Shoalhaven were outlined in numerous other objections to the proposed redistribution. We therefore strongly support the very many objections which suggest the amendment of the Redistribution Committee's proposed boundaries to include the southern highlands and the Shoalhaven in the Division of Gilmore.

We do so not only because of the benefits to community of interest in those areas, but also because of the very strong community ties that exist through the suburbs of the Shellharbour LGA, which would also be united within a single division (Throsby) should these objections be upheld.

#### **Cook/Hughes/Werriwa/Fowler**

The Liberal Party have objected to small sections of the proposed boundaries between Cook, Hughes, Fowler and Werriwa, proposing alternative boundaries that better encompass communities of interest in the areas affected.

In our initial objections, we cautioned against any proposals at this late stage of the redistribution that would require consequential amendments to the boundaries of other divisions. We note that every boundary change proposed by the Liberal Party to these four divisions has the effect of better representing communities of interest. None of the changes are merely consequential amendments.

The Divisions of Hughes and Cook have used the Illawarra Railway Line as a substantial part of their mutual boundary for some time. In our initial suggestions to the Redistribution Committee, The Nationals suggested that the railway line should be used as the boundary between the two divisions at Sutherland. It was therefore disappointing to see the Redistribution Committee's proposal to move the boundary to the railway line at its southern end, while at the same time crossing the railway line in the north when there was no numerical imperative to do so. The opportunity exists to provide a boundary that is very clear and easily understood, and at the same time is reflective of community of interest in the area in question. We strongly support the Liberal Party's objection in this regard.

The location of the Liverpool CBD was challenging at the last redistribution, and the area ultimately needed to be divided between divisions to ensure compliance with the numerical criteria for the redistribution. This redistribution has provided a clear opportunity to address this difficult area, and the Liberal Party in their objection have

demonstrated how the Division of Werriwa can be brought north along the Georges River so that that division incorporates the whole of the Liverpool CBD and the neighbouring suburb of Warwick Farm. This is clearly a better outcome for community of interest than the current arrangement, and we therefore strongly support the Liberal Party's objection in this regard.

The Division of Fowler, which already contains the northern part of Austral, is proposed by the Liberal Party to extend south to Bringelly Road to also incorporate that part of Austral which the Redistribution Committee has proposed to transfer to the Division of Werriwa (from the Division of Fowler). This is a commonsense suggestion which unites a strong local community of interest. Again, we strongly support the Liberal Party's objection in this regard.

The only criticism we have of the Liberal Party's objection through these areas is that they do not mention the small part of Camden LGA (CCDs 1291401, 1291402 and 1291403) that is presently in the Division of Werriwa. We stand by our initial objection that this area should be transferred to the Division of Macarthur, thereby uniting the whole of the Camden LGA in a single division.

We note that if the Liberal Party's objections were to be upheld in relation to these divisions, as well as our own objection in relation to the north-east of Camden LGA, it would not be possible within numerical tolerance to retain the southern boundary of the Division of Werriwa with the Division of Macarthur in its present location as proposed in our initial objections. It would instead be necessary to retain CCD 1300411 (Blairmount) in the Division of Werriwa, and transfer the area south-east of the Hume Highway (Woodbine) to the Division of Macarthur as proposed by the Redistribution Committee. The southern boundary of the Division of Werriwa would therefore follow the Hume Highway and Narellan Rd to the Camden/Campbelltown LGA boundary, which would form the western boundary of the Division of Werriwa with the Division of Macarthur.

We consider that the community of interest benefits that would be realised by uniting the whole of the Liverpool CBD and Warwick Farm in the Division of Werriwa are more important than any attempt to maintain existing divisional boundaries in the south of the Division of Werriwa. If the Liberal Party's objection were to be upheld, we would therefore support the transfer of Woodbine to the Division of Macarthur as proposed by the Redistribution Committee.

## Paterson

The Nationals support the objections of the Liberal Party to the proposed Division of Paterson, particularly in relation to the reunification of the rural areas south of Raymond Terrace with the rest of Port Stephens LGA. We note that the boundary proposed by the Liberals in this objection mirrors our initial suggestion in this respect. These areas share no similarity with the Division of Newcastle, which is overwhelmingly urban, and instead look to Raymond Terrace as their major regional centre.

The Division of Paterson, in contrast, retains a strong rural character, sharing common interests and issues with the area in question.

In addition to the benefits delivered to community of interest by the Liberal Party's proposal due to general nature of the areas concerned, we note four specific advantages of their suggestions in this area as compared to the draft boundaries.

- The Liberal suggestion reunites Heatherbrae with Raymond Terrace, a major anomaly under the current boundaries which is perpetuated by the proposed redistribution.
- The boundaries suggested by the Liberal Party in this objection make more extensive use of the Hunter River than those proposed by the Redistribution Committee. The Hunter River is an instantly recognisable and well defined boundary which is already utilised by the Committee for other sections of the southern boundary of the Division of Paterson.
- The boundary proposed by the Committee divides the town of Salt Ash, a major violation of community of interest criteria. Bringing the boundary back to the river, as suggested by the Liberal Party, rectifies this problem.
- The current (and proposed) boundaries between the divisions of Paterson and Newcastle through the Port Stephens LGA separate the population centres of the LGA from some of its most significant economic interests, including the RAAF base at Williamtown and tourist attractions such as Fighter World and the Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens at Heatherbrae. The Port Stephens community has an obvious interest in these areas, as recognised by the Liberal suggestion which places them in the Division of Paterson.

Likewise in the north of the division the area of hinterland surrounding Dyers Crossing fits well in Paterson. Although part of the Greater Taree LGA, this area has strong links with Nahiack, in Great Lakes Shire. Nahiack, due to its size and position on the Pacific Highway, is an important service centre for this region. In addition, this area is in close proximity to Forster-Tuncurry, one of the major population centres in Paterson.

## **Labor Party Objections**

The lack of seriousness with which the Labor Party has approached this objection period cannot escape comment. Their reliance on emotional language to the detriment of the relevant facts fails to recognise the process that was undertaken by the Redistribution Committee.

The Nationals contend that the Labor Party's objections, besides being riddled with factual errors, cannot be said to constitute a serious submission because they have failed to approach the process in a meaningful and constructive manner. "Their objections are akin to a note to oneself with a CC to the Commission. Useful for propaganda purposes, but not meant to be taken seriously" (with apologies to the Labor Party). Where they are of most benefit is in areas where other objectors have also addressed particular boundaries. In particular, some of their logic in respect of the Wollondilly LGA is valid (although that logic does not support their proposal).

The Labor Party also raises concerns about the proposed boundaries of the Division of Throsby, but reject the issue as being too difficult to address. This dismissive approach is further evidence of the ALP's failure to take this objection process seriously. There is a simple amendment possible to the Committee's proposed boundaries which resolves the split of Shellharbour while at the same time uniting stronger communities of interest in the Division of Gilmore. In this regard, the objections of both The Nationals and the Liberal Party offer a very similar proposal (as do many other objectors). It was not a difficult alternative to conceive, and the ALP's failure to do so betrays their disregard for this process.

### **Wollondilly**

The Labor Party and Wollondilly Shire Council both objected to the boundaries which affect the Wollondilly LGA, although their proposed amendments were quite different. The Nationals also objected that the Redistribution Committee's proposed boundaries through the Wollondilly LGA do not offer an ideal outcome on community of interest grounds. The Nationals, in our objections, expressed the view that the area of Theresa Park, Brownlow Hill and Mt Hunter should be located in the Division of Hume. We therefore strongly support the objection of Wollondilly Shire Council, who draw specific attention to this area, and suggest as we did that the Nepean River should be used as the boundary between the Divisions of Hume and Macarthur in this location.

Wollondilly Shire Council openly recognises that the numerical requirements of the redistribution prevent the whole of the LGA being incorporated in a single division, and have therefore made the above proposal which we support. Unfortunately, the Labor Party's thinking in this area is confused at best. They claim that they have a "proposal to align the communities of interest of Wollondilly (A) with the electoral



Division of Hume.” They go on to say: “This view is supported by the Wollondilly Shire Council who submitted to the Redistribution Committee a request that argued that services and representations are more difficult to attain when spread across multiple local Federal Members of Parliament.” But the Labor Party’s objection then fails to propose moving the entirety of the LGA into the Division of Hume, leaving 3,457 electors (at the projection time) in Macarthur, and 9 in Cunningham.

This proposal is all the more extraordinary when it is allegedly supported by the Labor Party’s declaration that “there is the risk that separating these areas into separate Electoral Divisions while being in the same LGA threatens to allow the local issues to be overtaken by the more populous areas (sic) of Campbelltown.” Yet the ALP suggest this situation is resolved by retaining fewer than 3,500 electors from the Wollondilly LGA in Macarthur, compared to almost 7,500 electors under our proposal. If one is to overlook their erroneous conclusion, the Labor Party’s logic actually argues against their objection, but rather supports the proposals of Wollondilly Shire Council and The Nationals.

This proposal from the Labor Party also requires consequential amendments to the boundary of the Division of Macarthur with the Division of Werriwa, which we are unable to support. The Labor Party’s proposal to transfer Austral to Macarthur would further isolate the north-eastern part of the Camden LGA, which we believe should be brought into Macarthur with the rest of the Camden LGA. If the Labor Party’s objection in this area were to be upheld, not only would the Catherine Field area be isolated from the rest of the Camden LGA, it would also be isolated from any similar areas within the Division of Werriwa. This would be a negative outcome on community of interest grounds.

### **Bywong**

The Labor Party in their objection have proposed to transfer the community of Bywong into the Division of Eden-Monaro, citing community of interest reasons. In attempting to improve the boundaries in this area they have inadvertently worsened the situation. The initial justification for their proposed change raises a valid point, however their actual proposal fails to address their stated concerns.

The ALP have quite rightly realised that sandwiched between Lake George and the ACT is an area of land that probably shares more links with the areas in Eden-Monaro than with Hume. They have then proposed that half of this area be taken into Eden-Monaro and the rest left in Hume. This area contains no significant centres, but is comprised of widespread development on acreage blocks. Given the homogeneity of the area it should be included completely in a single division.

The area is currently located in Hume. The ALP argues that it should be in Eden-Monaro, but in their objection only transfer some of the area into that division. Indeed, despite using the community of interest between Bywong and Bungendore as the

justification for their objection they fail to even include all of Bywong in their proposed Eden-Monaro.

Numerically it is impossible to include all of Palerang LGA in Eden-Monaro without other adjustments to the division. Since the shire must be divided, there are a number of reasons why Labor's objection should be ignored and the Committee's proposal adopted *in toto* as it relates to this area.

The contrast between the acreage areas around Bywong and Wamboin and the agricultural areas on the Lake George plain is distinct. The strong boundary proposed by the Committee better delineates between these two areas, following the edge of the range north to the lake. The boundary proposed by the ALP, whilst recognisable, does not reflect this physical divide but instead uses Bungendore Rd, which runs through the centre of Bywong.

Furthermore, despite its connection to Bungendore, this area has relatively easy access through to the major towns in Hume. Yass and Goulburn are both no more than an hour's drive away, the latter along a four lane highway.

Therefore, whilst we believe that the ALP raises a fair point in relation to the ties that link this area through to Eden-Monaro, their solution is of absolutely no value. Ultimately this area is best served by its inclusion as a whole in Hume, as proposed by the Redistribution Committee.

## Other Objections

### Reid

The Nationals are very supportive of the Redistribution Committee's proposal to abolish a metropolitan division. As the only party to advocate the abolition of an inner-Sydney division, we are especially supportive of the decision to abolish a division in this particular region.

While a significant number of objections were received in relation to the proposed abolition of the Division of Reid (although fewer than there were objecting to the proposed boundaries of the Divisions of Gilmore and Throsby) it is worth noting that the majority of those objections relate to the abolition of "Reid" as a divisional name rather than any other aspect of the proposed redistribution.

This is the principal objection that is raised in relation to the proposed abolition of the Division of Reid. The Nationals have no objection to the name "Reid" being retained, if it is the view of the Commission that it is appropriate to do so in the context of the current redistribution. While the guidelines on the naming of divisions do say that former Prime Ministers should be considered in naming divisions, we note there is no requirement that they have divisions named for them. Nonetheless, we would not oppose the naming of an appropriate division in recognition of Sir George Reid.

After that, a number of objectors expressed concerns that the current Member for Reid might no longer be in Parliament after the next election if the proposed redistribution went ahead. That matter is clearly beyond the authority of the Commission in determining the redistribution.

### Lithgow

We note Lithgow City Council's arguments concerning their links with the Blue Mountains. If the augmented Commission was to uphold our objection in relation to the divisions of Calare and Parkes, there would be scope to address Lithgow City Council's concerns and retain that LGA in Macquarie. Adjustments would be made as follows:

Calare retains the LGAs of Parkes and Forbes as per our objection. Calare also retains Cowra and Weddin LGAs to compensate for Lithgow, and the boundaries of Hume are brought east to the Nepean River. Parts of the Lower Blue Mountains can quite easily be brought into Lindsay to bring Macquarie within numerical tolerance, with further consequential adjustments across Western Sydney.

### **Size of Parkes**

As stated in our initial objections to the proposed redistribution we accept the size of the proposed Division of Parkes, given the context of this redistribution and the constraints of the Electoral Act.

In 2006 the augmented Commission modified the Redistribution Committee's proposal with the specific aim of reducing the size of the proposed Division of Parkes, which was to be 376,000 km<sup>2</sup>. We agree with the principle of this finding: that the augmented Commission should seek wherever possible to contain the physical size of the western divisions. However we believe that the redistribution as proposed addresses this issue in a satisfactory manner given the circumstances. Certainly the proposed Division of Parkes is significantly smaller than both the Division proposed in 2006 by the Redistribution Committee and that proposed by the ALP at this redistribution.

Central Darling Shire Council has requested that a parliamentary secretary be appointed to the Division of Parkes to secure greater representation for the region. Whilst we sympathise wholeheartedly with their frustration at the current electoral legislation, which fails to provide equitable representation for regional communities, we realise that it is not within the power of the Commission to redress this issue.

### **Rylstone and Kandos**

The Nationals agree that the towns of Rylstone and Kandos have stronger community of interest links to the rest of Mid-Western Regional LGA than to the Hunter Valley, as mentioned both in our suggestion to the Committee and our objections to the proposed redistribution. However we acknowledge that the non-inclusion of these areas in the Division of Hunter would necessitate considerable changes to the boundaries of that division in order to bring it within numerical tolerance. In our objections we recommended that the augmented Commission might consider the merits of moving Liverpool Plains LGA from New England to Hunter if it wished to address this problem.

### **Wellington**

Wellington Shire Council has requested that their shire be included entirely in one division. As stated in our objections to the draft redistribution, The Nationals believe that the southern part of Wellington LGA and the majority of Mid-Western LGA have been transferred unnecessarily into the Division of Calare. This has obvious ramifications for the community of interest that exists across the shire, and abandons the existing boundaries without any apparent justification.