

OBJECTION

The Federal Redistribution 2009
NSW

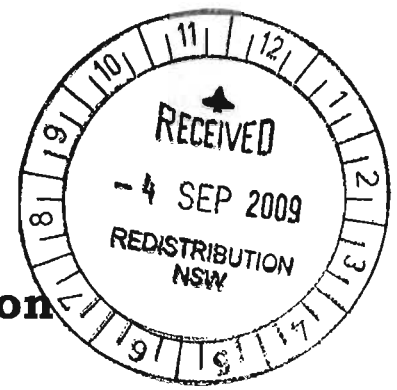


Objection Number **162**

by

Dr John Carmody

3 Pages



To the Australian Electoral Commission

I would like this to be treated as a formal objection to aspects of the *2009 proposed redistribution of New South Wales into electoral division*, the report (published in August 2009) by the Redistribution Committee for NSW which was set up pursuant to Section 68, Commonwealth Electoral Act (1918).

I had hoped that, after reading this committees' report, I would have a sense of the reasons for the specific action to which I object (and against I will raise 3 arguments) but found, to my disappointment and surprise, that the report is silent on these matters. The consequent risk is that I am arguing on premises which are not congruent with the thinking of that group. If this is the case, then there has been a regrettable lacuna or failure in their process of which they (or the federal Electoral Commissioner) should take note.

I refer to the elimination from the electoral catalogue of a division (electorate in the usual, non-legal parlance) named in honour of Sir George Reid.

The clear implication in this report is that there exists a principle *ipso facto* of "honouring" deceased Prime Ministers in the naming of federal divisions. This has been breached, without either justification or reason, in the case of Reid; yet a new electorate is proposed to be named after Sir William McMahon. Several issues have been left unconsidered, including whether or not, *qua* Prime Minister, such an honour is remotely deserved.

I make three points, therefore.

1. Reid, for all his faults, was an important figure in the debates about and the move towards Federation. He was also an early

Prime Minister and, indeed, member of the British House of Commons as well (a rarity in our political history). It is simply deplorable that there should be no federal division named in his honour.

2. This slight towards our history is made all the more crass in the retention of the name Lyne for a NSW division. Sir William Lyne was not only *never* Prime Minister (for all that he was, appallingly, favoured by the then Governor General in what has gone down in history as the "Hopetoun Blunder"), he was actually a *vigorous opponent* of Federation. Yet the AEC sees fit, while expunging Reid, to leave *his* name on an electoral division. In doing so, the AEC is displaying an indifference to history (or, worse, an **ignorance of history**) and is, in effect, reinforcing that "Hopetoun Blunder". Will this act become known as the "Killestyn Blunder"?

3. Then, to make matters worse, the committee proposes to "honour" the man who was, arguably, worst Prime Minister the country has ever had, McMahon. I consider that, as well as the formal requirement (to the AEC, seemingly, the *sole* requirement) of this honor, a person must be honourable and deserving of being honoured. *The committee's comments on McMahon are akin to hagiography!* They are, frankly, unsustainable. Admittedly, McMahon had a long career in the coalition governments between 1949 and 1972. He was, though, known over that time as duplicitous, vindictive and self-serving. Even politicians found that he displayed those characteristics to a supererogatory extent. The committee should, for example, consult Sir Paul Hasluck's fine book, *The chance of politics* (1997) and Peter Golding's *Black Jack McEwen, political gladiator* (1996). Except in the narrowest possible sense of having, at last and by divisive disloyalty, secured the PM's crown, McMahon is utterly undeserving of being honoured in the way which is proposed. This committee decision becomes, frankly, notorious when taken at the same time as depriving Reid of the honour.

Addendum: In respect of my own division, I commend the decision of the committee to remedy a foolish part of the previous redistribution and to return to Bradfield those parts of East Roseville, East Lindfield and East Killara which, ignoring the significant communal (as well as geographical) division of Middle Harbour, for the past few years have been located in the electorate of Warringah.

Submission from:
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