

PUBLIC SUGGESTION

The Federal Redistribution 2009
NSW



Public Suggestion Number 109

by

Warren Grzic

3 Pages

The AEC Redistribution Committee
PO Box K406
HAYMARKET NSW 1240



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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am a private citizen of NSW, writing to submit ideas for the 2009 redistribution of Federal electorates in this State. I note that the redistribution will see NSW lose one division, and its total of divisions will go from 49 to 48. Among my suggestions are for either Prospect or Lindsay to be abolished, and for a new division named McMahon to be created.

The last redistribution in NSW, prior to the 2007 Federal election, saw the rural division of Gwydir abolished. Putting aside the massive public reaction to this abolition, I believe that the AEC breached its own principles in abolishing the division – it had existed continuously since Federation and its name was of Aboriginal extraction, and the AEC is supposedly trying to preserve divisions with these characteristics, especially the former of the two. A rural division arguably had to go because of a dwindling rural population, but in hindsight maybe the division of Calare should have gone, as it was created years after Federation.

If the Redistribution Committee should decide that a rural division has to go, Calare should be that division. It is not a Federation division, and there seems less significance behind its name compared with the names of other rural divisions. However, in light of the hostile public reaction to abolishing Gwydir, I believe that the Committee should avoid abolishing another rural division. Few would truly care if a Sydney-based division is abolished.

I call for the abolition of either Prospect or Lindsay, both in western Sydney. Prospect is the more appropriate choice, because it hardly seems appropriate to name a division after a mere dam or body of water. Lindsay could also be considered for abolition, because it seems not to be named after an individual of outstanding significance, but being named after a person is more appropriate than being named after a dam.

To accommodate this abolition, I suggest transferring components of the division to seats like Fowler, Reid, Chifley, and Greenway. The division of Macquarie, currently stretching from around Bathurst to the Blue Mountains, should move east into the Penrith area and beyond, while Bathurst and its surrounds should go to divisions like Hume or Calare or even Parkes. At the same time, this could put the entire Parramatta business district back wholly in the division of Parramatta, after part of the district went into Reid last time round.

I also call for the creation of a division named McMahon, after former Prime Minister Sir William McMahon. Deceased since 1988, more than two decades ago, he is the only former Prime Minister not to have a Federal electoral division named after him. The time to honour him as every other former Prime Minister no longer with us is overdue. Maybe delaying this honour regarding McMahon was appropriate at the time, because when he passed away his predecessor, Sir John Gorton, was still alive. After Gorton passed away

in 2002, a division was duly named after him in time for the 2004 election. But McMahon has yet to be accordingly honoured.

I suggest this not as a fan of McMahon, but out of my own long-held fascination in Federal electorates and whom they are named after. The fact that he was hardly one of our best or most popular Prime Ministers is irrelevant – being rated good or bad has not mattered in the case of other Prime Ministers, and different people have different opinions about who was good or bad! And I note that the Australian Labor Party has previously called for a division to be named after one of its favourite sons, Gough Whitlam, currently Australia's oldest surviving former Prime Minister – given that Whitlam is still alive today and his late predecessor McMahon has yet to be honoured, surely this is totally inappropriate.

In a future redistribution, when Whitlam is no longer with us, he will undoubtedly have a division named after him, but he should not have it before his death and, more importantly, before there is a division named McMahon. This pending redistribution in NSW, which happens to be more than twenty years since McMahon's death, gives the Redistribution Committee a perfect opportunity to honour him. If this does not happen now, either I or someone else will bring this suggestion up again for future redistributions until it happens.

To accommodate a division named McMahon, I suggest several divisions that could have their names changed, unless any one of them could be abolished altogether. I mentioned what I consider the insignificance of Prospect and Lindsay, which I suggest for abolition, as division names. Other divisions that could have name changes are Charlton, Dobell, Grayndler, and Throsby. These divisions are not exactly named after individuals of really special significance – they could be considered for either a change of name or abolition. McMahon represented the seat of Lowe, in Sydney's inner west, but there need not be an onus on naming a division after him specifically in that neck of the woods. After all, the divisions named after former Prime Ministers do not necessarily cover the areas that they represented as members of the House of Representatives.

To sum up, I suggest the following to the Redistribution Committee...

- The abolition of either Prospect or Lindsay, or Calare in the event that it is deemed necessary to abolish a rural division;
- The creation of a division named McMahon;
- The renaming of Prospect, Lindsay, Charlton, Dobell, Grayndler, or Throsby.

I ask the Committee to act upon my suggestions for this pending NSW redistribution.



WARREN GRZIC
7/42 Forster St, West Ryde, NSW 2114
(0408) 497 758