



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Suggestion 21

Carol Richard

2 pages

It is with great consternation and trepidation that we view another redistribution of NSW Electoral divisions. Currently NSW regional land area comprises of four Electorates – Parkes, Farrer, Riverina, New England., i.e. four (4) of 47 representatives in House of Representatives. This is already a very low representation for regional communities and a poor voice for our Indigenous and other marginalized citizens who are “**over represented**” in general population figures in regards to access to health, education, employment opportunities and documented low life expectancy.

Currently, the Renewable Energy Zones are being imposed on our farming communities – we are food producers, not power plants. Our local community of Coolah is fractured between the paid hosts of wind turbines and the farmers who have imposed on them high voltage transmission lines dividing their productive farming land and stringent No Go areas on their everyday farming activities.

The high bushfire risk of these transmission lines is widely known, especially following the tragic fires around Canberra in 2003 and Victoria 2009. Kinglake/Marysville Fire *Around midday, as wind speeds were reaching their peak, a single-wire earth return mains power cable was ripped down. This sparked a bushfire that became the deadliest (120 deaths) and most intense firestorm ever recorded in Australia. The overwhelming majority of fire activity occurred between the afternoon of 7 February and 7:00 pm, a period when wind speed and temperature were at their highest, and humidity at its lowest.*

Fire Captain Bill Kingwill in The Land article October 12, 2023, explains arcing – When the electricity in the high voltage power line jumps to the ground through the ionised air - which is through the smoke of the fire – charged particles which conduct electricity jump to the ground. If a man or truck goes in there, it just makes the distance that much shorter to ignite.

A lot of times in timbered country, the easement of that line is the only place where you can get a truck through. In 2003 when Canberra burned, the line was loaded to the hilt to keep the air conditioners going in Sydney and on a kilometre span the line was that loaded it heated up and sagged. With the wind and the haze and the dust, electricity arced onto a tree on the side of the easement that lit the fire we were fighting for two weeks. Mr Kingwill is concerned that the government is putting a price on human lives by being unduly biased on the cheaper, overhead wires rather than considering underground lines – feasible and safer.

Additionally, with the neighbouring windfarm towers, the option of aerial water bombing would be severely restricted. In 2017, 55,000ha of our immediate district burnt in the Sir Ivan Fire and destroyed 35 homes. The memory of this fire is still very raw in our minds.

Our sense of community is very strong in small towns. In Coolah, we experienced a body blow when in 1996, the Coolah Tops National Park was declared, closing our town’s biggest private employer timber business. Since then we have had compulsory Shire amalgamation, 2004; loss of Gwydir Electorate, 2006 – ever diminishing local representation. Volunteers have strived to keep our town and district viable and a great place to raise families and keep farming sustainable. Our local member for Parkes, Hon Mark Coulton, visits as often as possible – less than 6 times a year – but is always available to assist with grant procurement, attend important opening of facilities built by volunteers from grant sources but due to time and travel constraints, most communication is done electronically.

Due to our regional lack of representation in Parliament, we bang our heads against a brick wall when it comes to seeing our social fabric, our environment, our farmlands decimated by the creation of Renewable Energy Zones.

It is not humanly possible for one Member for Parkes to cover any more territory than Mr Coulton currently manages - **393 413 sq km** of mainly poor roads, none or poor linking regional air services.

The Federal Government is a very poor Employer to expect so much of one representative over the Parkes, Farrer, Riverina and New England Electorates under existing boundaries without imposing an impossible workload by increasing the electoral boundaries.

You would not find that any city-based Parliamentarian would consider moving to take on this burden – in fact, I would be hard pressed to find more than a handful who would travel by car as far out as Parkes Electorate in their holidays.

Unfortunately, it is well know that NSW stand for Newcastle Sydney and Wollongong.