



The Federal Redistribution 2006  
NEW SOUTH WALES



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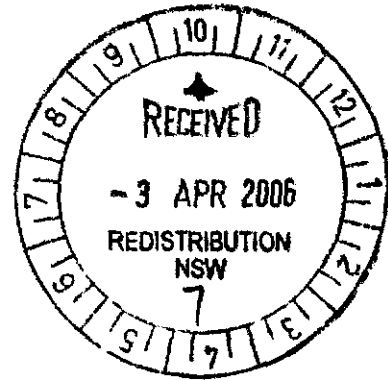
**Public Comment Number: 7**

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NSW Redistribution Committee  
Australian Electoral Commission  
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WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002



Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the submissions prepared and lodged by my fellow contributors to the public stages of the New South Wales redistribution.

From a personal point of view, it was extremely heartening to discover that most of the contributors agreed with my view that there is absolutely no need for the Redistribution Committee to reduce the number of rural electorates in New South Wales.

However, the various suggestions submitted are all subtly different and should provide the Redistribution Commissioners with much food for thought over the coming months.

As an initial step, I should acknowledge that the suggestion and comment stages of the redistribution process are open to the public at large without limitation, except where the need to impose deadlines is stipulated by the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

Given this, the Australian Electoral Commission should be applauded for retaining the suggestions of Anthony Ellul and Peter Thyer even though both submissions dealt with matters beyond the *Terms of Reference* of the Redistribution Committee. Mr Ellul was commenting on the recent redistribution of NSW *State* Parliamentary electorates, while Mr Thyer used his forum to advocate significant Constitutional change. If anything, these suggestions do highlight the level of freedom of speech and opinion we enjoy in Australia.

For the sake of brevity and containment, I will group the remaining suggestions for comment in no particular order.

**1. DARVEL BAIRD, MRS J. MCGREGOR, ROBYN MURPHY, KENNETH and LINELLA JUDD, and DAVID HOUSTON.**

These suggestions were submitted by individuals from various country centres around New South Wales who were sufficiently concerned by the prospect of *change* to their local electorate. While the suggestions were undoubtedly well intentioned, their major shortcoming was that they failed to acknowledge the needs and requirements of the wider community.

Mr Baird proposed the creation of a single, compact electorate encompassing the communities of Orange, Dubbo, Wellington and their immediate environs – much like the old Division of Lawson, which existed from 1949-69. While such a division might operate successfully in its own right, its creation in this day and age would mean that all neighbouring electorates would need to be enlarged considerably in order to encompass the entire North-, Central- and South-West of the State.

Mrs McGregor and Mr Houston both live in the existing Division of Riverina, which many contributors (myself included, I suppose) have suggested be abolished or significantly altered. They, along Miss Murphy from the existing Division of Calare, have resorted to requesting that the Redistribution Commissioners refrain from abolishing *their* electorates and instead abolish someone else's. They don't seem to understand that the Commissioners will, in fact, be abolishing all 50 divisions in New South Wales – and then creating 49 new divisions in their place, many of which will carry the same names that earlier divisions in similar locations carried.

**2. NAMBUCCA SHIRE, HAY SHIRE, GOSFORD CITY, GRIFFITH CITY, GUNDAGAI SHIRE and BALLINA SHIRE**

Councils, and particularly rural councils, always take a keen interest in the redistribution process, as, in many instances, they must forge relationships with different Members of Parliament after new electoral boundaries are formulated.

The suggestions submitted by the above councils are indicative of the standard requests made by Local Government to redistribution committees across Australia: "Please retain our Shire/City in its current electorate" and "Please do not split our Shire/City between electorates".

Council representatives often like to remind the Australian Electoral Commission of its obligations in redistributions insofar as *Community of Interest, Communication & Travel, Physical Features and Existing Electoral Boundaries* are concerned. However, they invariably forget that the overriding concern in *any* redistribution is *Population*. Shires and Cities will be transferred or split between electorates if local population requires such steps be taken, and there is basically nothing that anybody can do about it.

### 3. KAY HULL MP and PETER ANDREN MP

The current Members of the House of Representatives for Riverina and Calare were the only politicians who submitted suggestions to the Redistribution Committee – a somewhat surprising turn of events given the reason why this redistribution is occurring in the first place.

Mrs Hull is basically correct when she attests that the current Division of Riverina would fit comfortably within the projected enrolment tolerances of a 49-division New South Wales. However, her electorate is not the problematic division as far as the Redistribution Committee is concerned.

The existing Division of Parkes requires an injection of 10,000 electors (at least) if it is to be successfully retained. Such a significant number of electors cannot logically be sourced from the west, north or east of the current electorate, so they will have to be sourced from the south (ie: from the western regions of the existing Divisions of Farrer and Riverina). As noted in my suggestion, these areas have long histories of inclusion in electorates with Broken Hill and the Far West of the State of New South Wales.

The necessary removal of these areas from their current divisions means that the Redistribution Committee must create two essentially 'new' electorates around the regional centres of Wagga Wagga and Albury (as a traditional Wagga/Albury electorate of Farrer would no longer be viable due to the high populations of these cities).

The Wagga electorate *could* incorporate the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area – as the existing Division of Riverina does – but that would leave the communities along the north bank of the Murray between Moama and Albury effectively 'cut off' from the rest of the State and with insufficient population to sustain a single electorate.

Mr Andren has gone to more trouble, but he has essentially shown the Australian Electoral Commission how to redistribute the entire State of New South Wales while leaving the Division of Calare relatively untouched. His suggestion really can't be taken *too* seriously by the Redistribution Committee, as he spruiks in his covering letter the need to maintain rural electorates at a manageable size – and then proceeds to argue that the two most unwieldy divisions in New South Wales (Parkes and Farrer) should be made even larger.

What Mr Andren essentially proposes is the recreation of the old *Riverina-Darling* electorate in the Far West of NSW. This division was abolished by the AEC in 1992 in favour of the existing Division of Riverina, as it proved impossible to administer and featured little if any Community of Interest between the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the Far West. The AEC should not even consider revisiting such a Division.

4. RIVERINA ELECTORATE COUNCIL (NSW NATIONALS), NATIONAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW), LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW), AUSTRALIAN LABOUR PARTY (NSW)

The three major political parties have obviously spent much time and effort in developing their suggestions, but their completed submissions tend to run along thoroughly predictable lines. The ALP proposes the abolition of one of the safest conservative electorates in the Division of Riverina, while the conservative parties propose the abolition of one of Labour's safest electorates, namely the Division of Blaxland.

While acknowledging that these suggestions are designed solely to enhance and fully maximise their respective Party's fortunes at the next Federal Election, I should point out that there are a number of points in all submissions that I agree with and there are also points in all submissions that I disagree strongly with.

I agree with and fully support the Liberal Party's emboldened assertion that there is *absolutely no need* for the Redistribution Commissioners to reduce the number of rural electorates in New South Wales. However, I do not believe that their proposals for the seven divisions also covered by my suggestion will prove sustainable over the duration of this redistribution cycle. The major shortcoming in the Liberal Party's suggestion concerns the proposed Division of Parkes – unfortunately, the acquisition of the Shire of Young will not provide the existing Division of Parkes with enough electors to remain viable. In contrast, I commend to the Redistribution Commissioners the Liberal Party suggestion that the Shire of Muswellbrook – rather than the City of Dubbo – should be transferred into the Division of Gwydir to facilitate the retention of that electorate.

I find the National Party's suggestion particularly confusing, proposing as it does that Local Government areas (and even some towns) all around the State be split in order to retain the existing number of rural electorates. The two other parties both recognised that this was not necessary or desirable in rural areas, and I agree very strongly with them on this point.

Obviously, I am in fundamental disagreement with the ALP insofar as that party's suggestion proposes a reduction in the number of rural divisions. However, Labour's proposed divisions of Farrer and Hume are clearly quite similar to my proposed divisions of Riverina and Hume and are worth lengthy consideration by the Commissioners. The only point I would make about the two proposed divisions in question is that the splitting of Wagga Wagga and Coolamon, and the splitting of Goulburn and Yass, into different electorates makes *very* little sense against *any* of the criteria that the Redistribution Committee must consider.

**5. KEN MAHER, WARREN GRZIC, JUNE BULLIVANT, SUE ROSEN,  
and GRAHAM EAMES**

Now we come to my favourite suggestions – those primarily concerned with proposed division names.

But before I speak to the suggestions submitted by the contributors above, I must express my amazement at the submission of the Australian Labour Party in regard to proposed division names. When the Keating Labour Government controlled the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the committee introduced a requirement stipulating that federal electorates should be named for the deceased. Now, the ALP's State Secretary in NSW is demanding that that regulation be ignored. Additionally, Mr Arbib seems to have forgotten that the most recently deceased ex-Labour Federal Minister (A.J. Grassby) represented the Division of *Riverina* – a division that Mr Arbib proposes be abolished.

In respect of other existing division names, I must firstly express my total support for the suggestions of June Bullivant and Sue Rosen that *Reid* be retained. If an existing division name from the West Sydney region is to be abolished, then *Prospect* would have to be the obvious choice initially as it fails to address a single guideline for the naming of federal divisions. Many other contributors to recent redistribution committees have also noted that *Werriwa* is a particularly silly name for a division based on Ingleburn and Macquarie Fields. My initial idea was to name my proposed Southern Highlands/Goulburn division *Werriwa* – until I realised that that proposed division did not actually contain Lake George. If Lake George was able to be included in an eventual division encompassing Goulburn and the Southern Highlands, then the name *Werriwa* could be returned to its proper location.

As far as rural electorates are concerned, the Redistribution Committee has less room to manoeuvre with names as *Eden-Monaro*, *Hume*, *Riverina*, *Parkes*, *Gwydir*, *New England*, *Richmond*, *Cowper*, *Hunter* and *Robertson* are all Federation division names (as is the provincial divisional name *Newcastle*). This is why I decided to dispense with the name *Farrer* and have my proposed division based on Albury and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area named *Riverina*.

I was also intrigued by the assertion in Warren Grzic's suggestion that the abolition of the Division of *Illawarra* in 1922 was somehow "a mistake". Mr Grzic seems to have researched this quite thoroughly, so he must surely be aware that, when the Division of *Illawarra* was abolished, it was replaced by the Division of *Barton*. I certainly hope that Mr Grzic is not suggesting that the implementation of an electorate named after Edmund Barton was "a mistake".

Finally, I want to strenuously oppose the suggestion of Ken Maher that a federal Parliamentary electorate be named after Sir Donald Bradman. Many of our existing electorates are fittingly named after former politicians, while some others are named in honour of great Australian artists and writers whose works were inherently polemic and political. The old adage dictates that sport and politics do not mix, making the use of Sir Donald's name entirely inappropriate in an electoral context.

Well, there's nothing like the prospect of losing one's Federal Electorate and Member of Parliament to raise the spirits, feelings and prejudices of communities throughout a given State. We in Western Australia have never lost a Federal Electorate through redistribution (and we haven't even replaced/relocated an existing electorate since 1922), so I have observed and considered the attitudes of my fellow contributors with a mixture of bewilderment and surprise.

The prevailing attitude seems to be that the Commissioners should leave "my" electorate alone and redistribute everyone else's instead. This shows that the Redistribution Committee has a thankless task, and I wish the Commissioners well in their deliberations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in the public processes of this redistribution.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J E Lush". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John E. Lush