



**The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES**



Public Objection Number: 1032

Name: ANGLICAN COUNSELLING SERVICE

Page(s): 3



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27/07/2006 04:13 PM

To "Australian Electoral Commission"
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cc

bcc

Subject NSW REidistribution response

Classification Unclassified

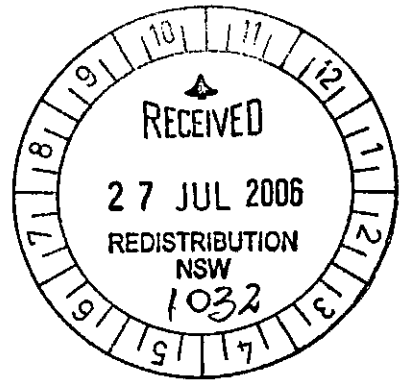
Please find attached in Word Format a response to the NSW Redistribution Boundaries for the Gwydir and Parkes electorate.

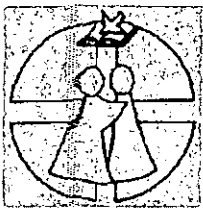
Regards,

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Anglican Counselling Service

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Thursday, 27 July 2006

The Chairperson
Redistribution Committee for NSW
PO Box 20014
WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002

Dear Sir / Madam

Proposed abolition of Electorate of Gwydir

The Anglican Counselling Service (Diocese of Armidale) has been providing professional personal, family and marriage counselling, life-skills education and counselling training to large parts of the Gwydir Electorate since 1986. In more recent times, the Service has been working with the current incumbent, the Hon. John Anderson MP to ensure constituents of regional, rural and remote communities of the electorate who have been affected by drought have access to prevention, early intervention and counselling services.

The Service sees over 1,000 clients for counselling each year and has over 300 participants in its courses. As the Executive Director of the Service, I endeavour to meet with the elected Federal representative regularly to talk about issues affecting the Service especially concerning federally funded programmes and issues affecting those programmes such as family law changes.

The Service recognises that with the movement of population, redistribution was necessary, and that NSW had to lose a seat to Queensland. However, the proposal to amalgamate Gwydir and Parkes into one vast electorate is ill-considered and inappropriate.

The Service understand the proposed new electorate of Parkes will cover approximately 379,000 km², compared with the already large existing seat of Gwydir at 185,000 km². As it stands, it is difficult in Gwydir for an MP to meet their constituents, let alone in a seat more than twice as large.

The possibility of the elected federal representative living in Parkes or Bourke will reduce the ability of community services such as the Anglican Counselling Service to have personal access to the elected member thereby possibly reducing effective representation at the Federal level.

Close examination of the two seats will show that Gwydir and Parkes are very diverse, with population scattered evenly through a number of centres. Geographically the proposed new seat does not serve a common community of interest. Certainly it is rural – but within that overall tag there are many different and diverse communities which would be all but impossible for any MP to know adequately.

"Celebrating 20 years in

2006"

It seems inconceivable that an elected representative could adequately cover 47% of the State and keep abreast of the economic, social and regional issues and interests over such a wide area. I am concerned about the impact of covering such a large area may have on the emotional, mental and physical health of the representative; the impact on personal and family relationships in order to meet the expectations of government, the party (if a part of one) and the electorate.

I agree that there are various forms of communication available which will enhance access to the member. However, rural areas do not have the same rate of take up on electronic communication as the city. The amount of travel involved would significantly increase the risk of accidents where roads are often of lower standards than those on the coastal fringe.

Given these factors, I am disturbed that if the proposed redistribution goes ahead, voters in this area will be very seriously disenfranchised from the democratic process due to a lack of face to face access with their local member.

In addition, if the seat of Gwydir is abolished, the overall representation of rural people will decrease, marginalising their voice in government. Rural communities have had to suffer depletion of all kinds of services in recent years, and the proposed redistribution will only add to their sense of betrayal and further alienate rural voters.

It appears that the proposed redistribution is 'the easy way out' in that it causes less disruption to electoral boundaries. However, a fairer solution would be to lose a seat in the city and then re-adjust the boundaries accordingly. City voters do not have to contend with physically large electorates and the boundaries could be redrawn such that communities of interest are maintained and voters input to the democratic process maintained.

Given the damage to rural democracy the proposed redistribution would cause, the Anglican Counselling Service requests that a fairer solution be found.

Yours sincerely,



Rev. Brian Kirk
Executive Director