



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



Public Objection Number: 1042

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John Hooper
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27/07/2006 10:30 AM

To nsw.redistribution@aec.gov.au
cc
bcc
Subject re: Redistribution Gwydir/Parkes

Classification Unclassified

The Electoral Commissioner,

Dear Sir,

I am John Hooper, the Uniting Church Patrol minister based in Cobar, NSW. The area for which I am responsible covers the local government shires of Cobar, Bourke, Brewarrina and Bogan.

I wish to comment on the proposed redistribution of electoral boundaries which effectively combines the electorates of Gwydir and Parkes in NSW.

While I strongly agree that the principle of one vote, one value should be the aim in our democracy, and that this is the basis for the proposed redistribution of electorates, there is another factor to be taken into account: equality of access to the elected representative. Given the distances involved in the proposed new electorate it will be very difficult for constituents to have access to the elected representative.

My concern has a parallel. I am currently engaged in doctoral studies researching factors influencing Uniting Church ministers when they consider taking a church in a rural area. I have described the fact that where ministers are withdrawn from areas, where congregations are combined into larger areas, where one minister now serves the area previously covered by three or four ministers, then there is a decline in participation in the church, loss of numbers. I know there are various factors involved, but there seems to be a correlation between accessibility of the minister and participation in the church.

I suspect that a similar situation may exist in the political sphere. Where a member of parliament has to cover too large a geographical area it may lead to loss of engagement by people in the political process, leave the way open for interest and lobby groups to exercise disproportionate influence and having the contrary effect to the one vote, one value principle.

I do not have any answer. I know that we do not want to see gerrymander situations created, as was seen in Queensland in the past. But is the attempt at equality going to produce the desired outcome?

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern.

Rev. John Hooper

