



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



Public Objection Number: 1710

**Name: The Hon Mark Vaile MP
Deputy Prime Minister**

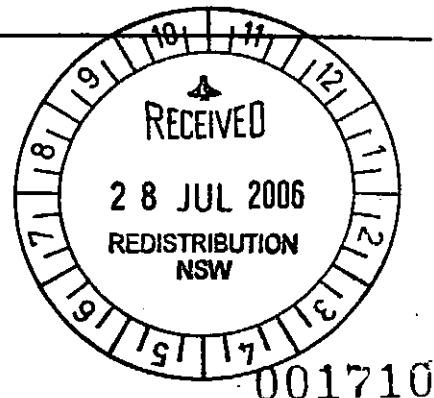
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The Hon Mark Vaile MP

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Trade
Leader of The Nationals

28 JUL 2006



Redistribution Committee for New South Wales
Australian Electoral Commission
PO Box 20014
World Square, NSW 2002

Dear Commissioners

I refer to your proposed Redistribution of Federal Electoral Boundaries for New South Wales, as published on June 30, 2006.

As the Federal Leader of the only political Party that solely seeks to represent the interests of country and coastal dwellers in NSW, I strongly object to any outcome that diminishes the electoral rights and access to parliamentary representation for country and coastal residents.

Having been involved in the preparation of The Nationals' suggestions and having examined the earlier submissions made by the other major parties, I maintain that you as Commissioners have available to you logical alternatives to the suggested abolition of Gwydir, namely the abolition of the Sydney electorate of Blaxland.

Given that many townships have been split from their primary service centres, it appears that the Redistribution Committee has not to date given adequate weight to the statutory requirements, particularly in relation to community interests and area, in its decision to propose the abolition of Gwydir.

Current proposals create the largest Federal Division in NSW since Federation, at a time when four divisions in Western Sydney are all well below quota on current boundaries. Gwydir was created at the birth of our nation and on the quota numbers determined by the committee, regional NSW remains entitled to its current 15 electorates.

The proposed boundaries for country and coastal NSW do not allow for reasonable interaction between local electors and Federal Members of Parliament.

Further, I am concerned that the committee may have introduced two new non-statutory principles into its considerations and that these may have outweighed other statutory requirements.

In paragraph 68 of the Report of the Redistribution Committee in the NSW Redistribution, the new principles of "equality of voters between divisions" and "the need to consider the state as a geographic whole" are introduced.

68. Whilst seeking to maintain a relative equality of voters between divisions, the committee also recognised the need to consider the state as a geographic whole. The committee acknowledged, therefore, that it must seek to link the relative low and high growth areas of rural and coastal New South Wales.

The *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, Part IV, Section 66(3) sets out the statutory requirements and the quasi-one-vote-one-value principle of relative equality between divisions adopted by the committee is not articulated in the legislation. Neither is it appropriate for the committee to seek to override the statutory requirement in Section 66(3)(b)(iv) of the *Act* with a subjective "need to consider the state as a geographic whole".

I therefore hold grave fears that the requirements of the *Act* in Section 66(3)(b)(i) to (v) may not have been given adequate weighting above other arbitrary considerations.

I formally request that before any further decision is made in the redistribution process, that at least one public hearing is held in the North-West of NSW to allow local people and organisations an opportunity to make clear the practical problems created by this proposal.

I support the statements made by The Nationals in their formal objection to the proposed divisional boundaries.

Yours sincerely



MARK VAILE