



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



Public Objection Number: 1737

Name: MOREE PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL

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Kathleen.sinclair@mpsc.nsw.gov.au
28/07/2006 12:27 PM

To nsw.redistribution@aec.gov.au
cc
bcc

Subject Submission for Proposed Redistribution of Electoral
Boundaries for Parkes and Gwydir from Moree Plains
Shire Council

Classification Unclassified

Please find attached a copy of the letter and submission from Moree Plains Shire Council pertaining to the proposed Electoral Boundaries for Parkes and Gwydir.

The original document will be sent in today's post.

Should you require any further information, I can be contacted on the number listed below.

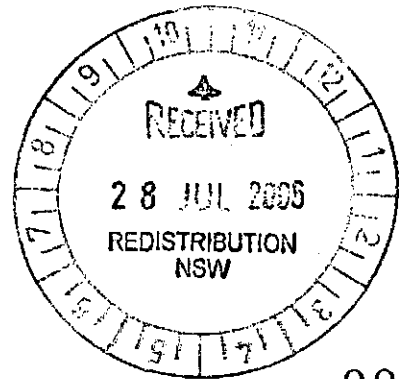
Yours sincerely
Kathleen Sinclair
EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

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Letter to the Australian Electoral Officer for New South Wales.pdf



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Executive Office

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26 July 2006

Mr D Farrell
Australian Electoral Officer
Redistribution Committee for New South Wales
PO Box 20014
WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002

Email: nsw.redistribution@aec.gov.au

Dear David

Re: Redistribution of Federal Electoral Boundaries in New South Wales

I wish to advise that at the Council meeting held on the 5th July 2006 the Moree Plains Shire Council discussed the proposed redistribution of Federal Electoral boundaries and requested that I express the disappointment of the Council with the proposed redistribution.

The Council would like the following concerns expressed regarding the proposal for creating the seat of Parkes;

1. The seat does not take into account the various communities of interest in the north western half of the state.
2. The seat comprises almost 50% of the State and therefore will be a very difficult for a member to maintain local contact with its constituents.
3. Travel within the electorate will be expansive and costly for the member to undertake.
4. It devalues the importance of the regional areas of the state in comparison to the urban electorates. The areas within the proposed electorate are suffering from population decline and the subsequent loss of services. These communities need significant changes in government policy to address these issues.
5. The Commission's redistribution takes advantage of the retirement of the member for Gwydir, John Anderson without consideration of the diverse needs of the electorate being properly represented.

I would appreciate your consideration of the Council's comments regarding the proposed changes to the electoral boundaries.

Yours sincerely



David Aber
GENERAL MANAGER

**Submission to the Australian
Electoral Officer for New South Wales
From Moree Plains Shire Council**

**On the Redistribution of Federal Electoral Boundaries in
New South Wales**

Introduction

The Moree Plains Shire Council at its meeting held on the 5th July 2006 discussed the proposed redistribution of the Federal Electoral boundaries and resolved to make a submission on the proposal. The Council is concerned that the proposed redistribution will reduce the quality of representation for the electorate because the member will be required to represent such a large and diverse seat and it devalues the importance of the regional areas of the state in favour of the more populated regions.

The Council's Concerns

Following is a summary of the Council's concerns regarding the proposal for creating the seat of Parkes;

6. The seat does not take into account the various communities of interest in the north western half of the State. The area is geographically diverse with differing communities of interest and these communities of interest are based on different regional centres.
7. The seat comprises 47% of the State and therefore will be a very difficult for a member to *maintain local contact with constituents*. This will require significant travelling for the member as well as for the constituents to see their member.
8. Travel within the electorate will be expansive and costly for the member to undertake.
9. It devalues the importance of the regional areas of the State in comparison to the urban electorates. Rural areas within the proposed electorate have suffered population decline in recent years and subsequent loss of services. *These communities need significant changes in government policy to address these issues and need a member with the time and capacity to understand and work with the many communities for proper representation.*
10. The Commission's redistribution takes advantage of the retirement of the member for Gwydir, John Anderson. To combine two (2) electorates, without consideration of the diverse needs of each electorate leaves them vulnerable to not being properly represented.

Communities of Interest

The area is a geographically diverse, with differing communities of interest. The proposed electorate includes seven (7) State seats, and nineteen (19) Local Government bodies. This will provide a heavy workload for any member to communicate effectively.

A more closely aligned boundary system to the State boundaries would be preferred as it will reduce the liaison needed for a Federal Member with the State Members. The large number of councils contained within the proposed electorate will also require significant liaison and communication for a sitting member.

The Pilliga area provides a physical barrier through the middle of the electorate. Local Government areas below Pilliga are developing stronger ties to Dubbo while to the north of Pilliga the residents of the Shires have no reliance or ties with Dubbo. These communities are more self sufficient and Tamworth is the nearest major regional centre. For Moree Plains Shire Toowoomba is also a regional centre even though it is located in Queensland.

The proposed electorate is bisected by the Barwon, Gwydir, Namoi and river catchments each forming different geographical area and characteristics. These catchments provide natural boundaries as they flow north-west across the State to join the Darling River system. Communities of interest tend to follow these catchment areas along with the major transport corridors.

Size of the Proposed Electorate

The seat comprises 47% of the State and therefore will be a very difficult for a member to maintain local contact with the constituents. The area is greater than Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT combined. It is also larger than the nations of Japan, Germany and England.

This will require significant travelling for the member as well as for the constituents to see their local member. The primary mode of travel is by necessity a motor vehicle.

Travel

Travel within the electorate will be expensive and costly for the member to undertake. There is no regional air or rail service that allows travel throughout the area. The elected member would be required to undertake extensive car travel to cover the needs of the constituents. Up to eight (8) hours driving will be required to travel from an electoral office to the outer reaches of the electorate. Multiple electoral offices will need to be maintained to provide accessibility to the electorate.

The current management of health services within the proposal is split between Newcastle and Dubbo. Narrabri, Gunnedah and Moree are currently managed by the Hunter New England Health Services from Newcastle. The remainder is under the Greater Western Health Service managed from Dubbo. The alignment of the Health Service boundaries better reflects the concept of transport corridors as described in the Commission's report.

Regional Importance

It devalues the importance of the regional areas of the State in comparison to the urban electorates. The proposed electorate has suffered from population decline in recent years in the rural areas while the population centres have maintained population or increased. There has been a subsequent loss of services in the smaller towns because of the loss of population.

These smaller communities need significant changes in government policy to address these issues and need a member with the time and capacity to understand and talk to these many communities for proper representation.

The removal of an elected member from the western area of the State further reduces the capacity of the area to be represented at a Parliamentary level. To advocate policies that will improve and achieve the potential of the proposed electorate will be difficult because the balance of representation has a stronger emphasis on the city and coastal areas.

It would be preferred that the seat was lost in the more populated areas like Sydney. We would be keen to see the areas west of the Great Dividing Range linked with the coastal areas of NSW as this would allow more members to be better acquainted with the western and regional issues and give the people a stronger voice in parliament as well as provide more voices to represent them.

Retirement of John Anderson

The Commission's redistribution takes advantage of the pending retirement of the sitting member for Gwydir, John Anderson. To combine two (2) electorates, without due consideration of the diverse needs of each electorate guarantees that the people will not be properly represented.

It is important that strong representation is maintained for the people living within the electorates of Parkes and Gwydir. Gwydir is a federation seat in the Parliament of Australia and has played a productive, strong and significant role in Australia's history.

To lose the seat because of the retirement of the sitting member is a concern and is seen as a significant blow to this regions ability to influence national debate.

This Council recommends that if a seat is to be lost, then the redistribution should be taken from a more populated area in Sydney and redistributed out rather than taking the easier option of amalgamating two (2) large seats like Gwydir and Parkes to form a mega seat.

Conclusion

The need for the redistribution is acknowledged by Moree Plains Shire Council. It is important that strong representation is maintained for the people living within both of the electorates of Parkes and Gwydir. Gwydir is a federation seat in the Parliament of Australia. Moree Plains Shire and the other Shires included in this electorate have played a productive,

strong and significant role in Australia's history. Moree Plains Shire is the most productive agriculture producing Shire in Australia.

To reduce the quality of representation for the people of both Parkes and Gwydir by proposing to amalgamate the western areas of the two (2) seats to form a mega-seat is not in the best interests of the people. Our recommendation is that if a seat is to be lost, that it be taken from a more populated area in Sydney and redistributed out rather than taking the easier option of amalgamating two (2) already large seats as in the proposed seat of Parkes.