



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



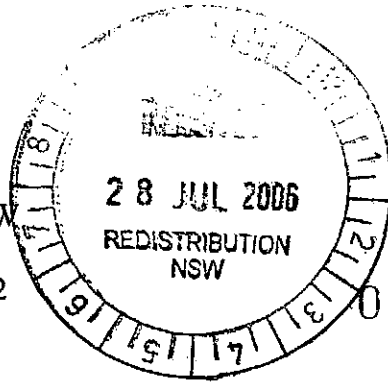
Public Objection Number: 1751

Name: Ms Gabrielle FOLEY and Ms Christine BELLING

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109 Barber Street
GUNNEDAH 2380
24 July 2006

Redistribution Committee for NSW
PO Box 20014
WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002



Dear Madam/Sir,

**Re: Proposed Redistribution of Federal Electoral Boundaries of NSW –
Abolition of Gwydir Electorate**

In studying the criteria for drawing up the redistribution of Federal Electoral boundaries I am amazed that the only criteria constantly referred to in the proposal is *enrolment*. The Gwydir Electorate is not far under the population benchmark some other Electorates in New South Wales, within the Metropolitan area, also fit into this category.

I quote the following from www.aec.gov.au frequently asked questions:

The Redistribution Committee must also consider the following criteria:

- *Community interests within the division, including economic, social and regional interest*
- *Means of communication and travel within a division*
- *Physical features and area*
- *Existing boundaries of divisions*
- *Enrolment*

It would seem to me that in proposing the abolition of the Gwydir Electorate the above criteria have not been fully investigated.

Do I need to enlighten the city dwellers that NSW does not stand for Newcastle Sydney and Wollongong?

Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813. It seems that many people living in Metropolitan NSW still have 'not crossed' the Great Dividing Range and for them all worthwhile living only goes on in the narrow coastal areas of the State from Newcastle to Wollongong.

In 2006 many people choose to live in the area of NSW over the Great Dividing Range and 'by the sweat of their brows' provide our Metropolitan sisters and brothers with food, clothing and shelter and other services.

We are resilient people who bear the burdens of natural disasters - droughts, floods and fires. Some of us struggle on and are prepared to lower our standard of living for the good of the District, the State and the Nation. The current long years of drought, is a natural disaster, and many people have had to leave the area; when the rains come some people will return.

Why choose the Gwydir Electorate as a whole to be abolished, which has been in existence since 1901. Is it because our present member John Anderson MP, former Deputy Prime Minister, is retiring? One is skeptical enough to come to this conclusion.

This is a very poor, uninformed proposal from the Redistribution Committee who has not taken into account all the criteria as quoted above. One wonders what criteria our pioneers in the new Federation used as they planned for the future of our Nation, it could not have been only on enrolment!!!!

We have also been the victims of both National and State Government decisions that have centralised industry and other services. I ask why do our present Governments resist any form of decentralization? What has happened to the dream of past National Governments in which the people were promised areas of growth in Regional Centres? This has never been pursued and we, the tax payers and citizens of New South Wales and Australia, continue to live and work in an unfilled economic and social wasteland.

Our young people leaving school have to leave to pursue higher education or a career. I refer you to the article in *The Sun-Herald* July 22, 2006, pp.16-17. Headlines read: **Tug-of-War for a battling town's youngest adults**, written by Louise Hall of Gunnedah where she profiles the 34 students of the Higher School Certificate Class of 2005 at St. Mary's College, Gunnedah. *Today only half of them remain in Gunnedah, which, like so many country towns, is fighting a losing battle against an ageing population.... Most of the absent members of the St. Mary's College Class of 2005 left in search of tertiary education or to take up apprentices. A further 17% have deferred their study to save money so they can follow their classmates next year.* Something that their metropolitan contemporaries do not have to do, leave home, find accommodation and live in an urban environment.

If the proposed redistribution goes ahead than the people living in 47% of New South Wales will be denied their democratic right to have access to their parliamentary representative. It is physically impossible for one person to be representing such a vast area. The health and well-being of the Representative has not been taken into account, who will ever take on this mission impossible???? Criteria - *communication and travel* has not been investigated.

The present and future generations in this area will continue to become lower-class citizens because they will never see their representative nor be able to travel to visit him/her to discuss any personal or community issues. Democracy will no longer be a reality!!!!

Natural disasters, in time, lead to plentiful times. Human disasters are often caused by other humans who are less informed and often ignorant thus leading to injustice for some citizens while 'protecting' the interests of others. The criteria of - *interests within the division, including economic, social and regional interest* has been neglected in this Proposal. This is nothing but geographic snobbery!!!

I would endorse one, if not two Officers, from the Australian Electoral Office for New South Wales to visit the whole area under review, length and breadth of the 47% of the State your time away from the office will be weeks not days, you need to communicate with the people in both small and larger centres, if this is to be experienced honestly.

In making the trip a few helpful hints will ensure that you are prepared for the journey once you leave World Square, Sydney 2000. Do you know how many Postcodes areas you will travel through, in the Proposed Area?

- One suggests a four-wheel vehicle, fitted with a bull-bar, a shoo-roo, two spare tyres, and shatter-proof windscreen. Traffic Hazards you will encounter - Kangaroos, Cattle and Sheep in the 'long paddock', narrow sealed roads many needing resurfacing, and many gravel roads. Oh carry plenty of water both for drinking and emergencies it's a long way between towns and maybe the vehicle will overheat and water is essential.
- Rail networks are continually being drawn in and Air travel is non-existent in many areas. If one did opt to travel by rail or plane one could not be sure that a car hire service was available at the terminal. Maybe Countrylink buses would be at the rail terminal and one faces many hours of more travel arriving at a destination in darkness.
- Bring your mobile phone, which will not be in range except in or near bigger centres - this becomes a very limited form of communication, black spots abound. You'll need coins or Phone cards to use Public Phones, if you can find one.
- A Laptop Computer, in a heavy dust-proof carry case, may be of limited use don't depend on the communication system to link into the internet, broadband and wireless services are but a dream for many constituents. Dial up services are spasmodic.
- A credit card may be of some use, in bigger towns. In some smaller towns/villages there are no Banks (so many closures over the years) and ATM's are very limited, if they ever existed, don't take EFTPOS facilities for granted. If one has a cheque book this may be of some use, plenty of cash is the only option.
- Cost of petrol/diesel will far outstrip city prices every time.
- You need to check your watches when travelling in the Western area since you will enter into the Central Time Zone of Australia.

In summer on the Queensland border you will need to forget about Day-light saving time. Farmers actually disregard this now in the whole area since they work while there is daylight and harvest their summer crops well into the darkness of the evening. What other electorate spans two time zones and three in summer?

If the only criteria is *enrolment* what happens when the enrolment increases? Alternatively, what happens if the enrolment further decreases will the proposed area continue to be increased?

We challenge the members of the Redistribution Committee to grasp this opportunity to look at long-term future planning now and are wise and courageous enough, as our pioneers were in 1901, to make decisions about redistribution on all the criteria as quoted above. All Electorates in New South Wales should be treated equally in deciding where electorate boundaries will be re-distributed aware that we have to reduce our total number by one.

Yours sincerely,

G. A. Foley

Gabrielle Foley

Christine Belling

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