



The Federal Redistribution 2006  
NEW SOUTH WALES



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**Public Objection Number: 1755**

**Name: Councillor RG (Gae) SWAIN**

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**Office of the Mayor of Gunnedah Shire  
Councillor Gae Swain**

63 Elgin Street  
(PO Box 63)  
GUNNEDAH NSW 2380

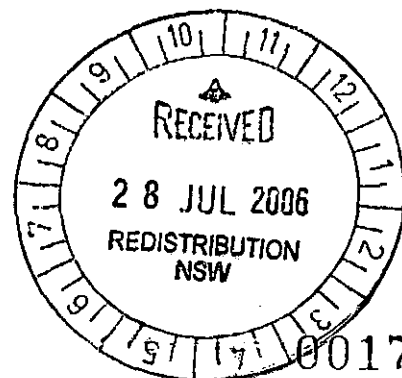
Phone: 02 6740 2115  
Fax: 02 6740 2119  
Mobile: 0429 468 041



Redistribution Committee for NSW  
PO Box 20014  
WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002

27 July 2006

Dear Sirs



**Proposed abolition of the Gwydir electorate**

I write to you on behalf of Council and the citizens of Gunnedah Shire requesting the Redistribution Committee to seriously reconsider the proposal to abolish the Federal seat of Gwydir through its incorporation into the electorate of Parkes.

Council does not question the necessity of a redistribution as it appears the flow of electors to Queensland from NSW necessitates an additional seat within that state. However, Council does question the methodology by which the committee determined the redistribution in New South Wales and the appropriateness of the abolition of a rural based electorate, namely Gwydir.

To the uninformed, it would appear the committee has taken the soft option by abolishing the seat of Gwydir simply because the elected member is retiring from politics at the end of his term.

The creation of a seat that covers 47% of NSW brings into question the rationale of the redistribution process and the consideration of providing adequate and fair representation to the rural sector of NSW; a sector already disadvantaged by distance and the city - country divide.

Put simply, country NSW will lose 14.2% (1 member) of its representation in Federal Parliament and, politically, will drop National Party representation proportionally more, than if the seat were held by either of the two major parties.

By incorporating Gwydir into Parkes, the Committee has created a massive seat with a north/south orientation, covering only those areas of the State comparatively sparsely populated. Surely the Committee, to avoid the creation of a seat like Parkes, should look to the east to 'top up' the quota for a seat of diminishing population, through incorporation of smaller areas of higher population density. Electorates across NSW should therefore reflect a hub and spoke formation, radiating from Newcastle - Sydney -Wollongong.

A fundamental principle of democracy lies in providing every citizen with fair, equal and unhindered access to his or her member. Council believes that the creation of large electorates like Parkes undermines that principle.

Members of parliament representing city based electorates are far more accessible and available to their constituents than their colleagues representing in electorates thousands of square kilometres in size. A city based member can traverse his or her electorate in minutes by car and attend functions within minutes of each other, at the extremes of the electorate. This is impossible in rural electorates. Rural based members face hours of vehicle or aeroplane travel to achieve only a fraction of the political exposure enjoyed by their city cousins.

Rural constituents sometimes have to put important issues 'on hold' before they can personally present them to their member. In large electorates the time between appointment opportunities is proportionally greater.

To effectively service their electorates, MPs must carefully balance Canberra's parliamentary duties, constituent appointments, attendance at functions, private time and, for some, Ministerial and Committee commitments. In large electorates travel time severely erodes a member's capacity to reach all constituents and deliver quality interview time. The Parkes proposal is a prime example. No amount of MP's charter allowance will compensate for the time lost in travelling to remote communities to service their just-as-important needs! Time is irretrievable.

An important factor in effective representation is the member's workload. The broader the variety of issues, the greater the workload. This places greater the reliance on staff by the member to effectively inform on issues. An electorate the size of Parkes contains and generates so many diverse issues, most not even contemplated or experienced in insular, city based electorates.

The incorporation of Dubbo as the only city in Parkes suggests the local member will establish the electorate office there. This too has the potential to create wider representation conflicts for the member. A regional city like Dubbo is 'city centric', absorbed in its own activity with only economic links to the outlying region. Politically, regional cities are isolated, not sharing the issues and representation requirements of smaller regional towns and rural dwellers. How could a member located in Dubbo, fairly and adequately represent the other 379,640 sq. km outside Dubbo?

In general, rural voters are more politically motivated as they nurture and appreciate close, personal contact with their member to overcome relative 'isolation' and to feel reassured they have a voice in Canberra. Over the decades, the fear of diminishing effective representation in Canberra has been exacerbated by the gradual abolishing of rural seats and upsizing of remaining rural electorates. In essence, the productive, rural voice is being diluted.

The vast proportion of this nation's productivity is created well outside metropolitan based seats. Its mineral resources and agricultural production are obtained in the rural based seats that are unfortunately becoming larger. The importance of this production is often underestimated and requires greater representation for the future of the nation.

Gunnedah Shire's community of interest now firmly focuses towards the New England and Hunter. It has little in common with the vast majority of the proposed Parkes electorate. Gunnedah is experiencing a period of accelerating growth, with the re-emergence of coalmining in the area and the promise of other major projects. Gunnedah is at the heart of the Gunnedah Coal Basin and estimates from the University of New England indicate that Gunnedah's population will increase by at least 1,500 by 2011.

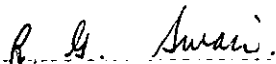
Other developments within the Shire include a proposed ethanol bio-refinery and introduction of natural gas. These will prove significant catalysts for economic growth and employment generation - factors that are far removed from anything within the Parks electorate.

The committee has the opportunity through reviewing the draft, to stop the under representation of and bias against rural electorates in favour of metropolitan electors.

I ask that the committee seriously reconsiders the draft proposal for Parkes. Proportionally, the status quo for rural parliamentary representation must be maintained.

Thank you for the opportunity to present Gunnedah Shire's objections to the draft proposal and Council looks forward to a reversal of the planned redistribution.

Yours faithfully



Councillor RG (Gae) Swain  
MAYOR

Contact: Chris Frend 02 6740 2147