



The Federal Redistribution 2006  
NEW SOUTH WALES



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**Public Objection Number: 1948**

**Name: The Hon John COBB MP**

**Page(s): 7**



The Hon

**John COBB** MP

**THE NATIONALS**

**FEDERAL MEMBER FOR PARKES**  
**Minister for Community Services**

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

Dear Commissioners

I have closely examined your proposed Federal Electoral Boundaries, as published on June 30, 2006 and as a result please find enclosed my comments and objections to your proposed boundaries.

It is obvious from the large number of letters, petitions and phone calls from electors in Western NSW that they feel abandoned electorally by this draft decision to wipe out the seat of Gwydir and wish to extend an open invitation to the Redistribution Commissioners to visit to listen to the upheaval that will result from the loss of this most important voice.

My first and foremost objection is the proposed abolition of the division of Gwydir, a Federation seat in north-western NSW. The abolition of Gwydir and the creation of the much larger electorate of Parkes, another Federation electorate, specifically fails to take into account the legislative requirements to consider communities of interest.

There is a perception that the division of Gwydir was targeted because former Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of The Nationals John Anderson will retire at the next election. Nowhere is this listed as a legislative consideration.

To be fair the federation seat of Gwydir should be kept – it does not have to go. With respect, I strongly believe you as Commissioners have alternatives to the suggested abolition of Gwydir, namely the abolition of the Sydney seat of Blaxland.

Broken Hill is considered the “centre” of the remote Far West area of N.S.W. The population of Milparinka, Wilcannia, White Cliffs, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Tibooburra, and the whole of the Unincorporated region use Broken Hill for business, health, education, socialising, supply of goods and services. Broken Hill is the centre of regional tourism, houses the Royal Flying Doctor Base and the School of the Air both servicing the remote Far West.

To imply that there is a strong link between Wentworth and Broken Hill – in the form of the Silver City Highway – is wrong. There is no rail, bus or air transport to Wentworth and certainly no one in Broken Hill uses to the same extent areas in the Electorate of Farrer, such as Albury.

The major road, rail and air links that service Broken Hill in all cases extend from Sydney through the electorate of Parkes, via the Transcontinental Rail-line, Barrier/Mitchell Highways and Rex Airlines, via Dubbo, Parkes, Broken Hill and then through to Adelaide. In fact the major transport

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and communication links all run east – west, through the existing and proposed electorate of Parkes, not north – south as stated in the draft redistribution.

I strongly believe that Broken Hill should be retained in the seat of Parkes, retaining its status as the heartland of outback NSW, rather than splintering it off to Farrer, where the other major population centre is Albury in the south east. How the electoral commission think their proposal is consistent with uniting communities of interest under the Act is bewildering.

The Nationals original submission to the Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee, strongly argued for communities of interest considerations to be at the forefront of the Commissioners minds when it came to redrawing the boundaries. The proposed boundaries in the Nationals original submission would have furthered strengthened the communities of interest in the Western Division of NSW and should be again examined and considered by the Commissioners.

As a result of the current mining boom in western and north western NSW the population growth in both the Parkes and Gwydir electorates has stabilised and is set to increase. The population growth is borne out in both figures on the current skills shortages in both Gwydir and Parkes. Contrary to assertions made in media commentary in relation to the redistribution there are no 'fly in fly out' mining operations in western NSW and all new mine employees will live locally.

I would welcome the opportunity to present my suggestions and objections at oral public hearings. In this regard, I am advised that you have tentatively set down commencement for September 6, 2006. I would also like the opportunity to provide you with a response at these hearings to other objections and suggestions that you receive, where appropriate.

I would also formally request that at least one of these public hearings be held in the newly proposed division of Parkes to give local people and organisations an opportunity to address the commissioners on the practical problems created by this proposal.

The only way that the interests of country people can be fairly represented is by retaining the electorate of Gwydir, looking after the common interests of the outback of NSW along similar lines to that proposed in the original submissions as proposed by the Nationals.

I believe very strongly that where the principle of one vote one value can be applied while maintaining our rural seats, then we should do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comments and objections.

Yours sincerely



**The Hon. John Cobb MP**  
**Minister for Community Services**  
**Member for Parkes**

## Overview

As the current Nationals Federal Member for the electorate of Parkes, I believe that the National's are the only political Party that solely represents the interests of country and coastal dwellers in NSW and as such I strongly object to any attempt to diminish the electoral rights of this group of people.

The numbers alone do not support a cut being made in a regional area.

The 15 current divisions outside of the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong basin are project to have a total of 1,392,062 electors in 2010.

With the quota as determined by the Electoral Commissioner at 93,508 on projected figures, this will mean that these current 15 divisions contain enough electors for 14.89 divisions.

Comparatively, the current 35 divisions that make up the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong basin are projected to contain 3,189,877 electors which would only be enough electors for 34.11 divisions.

Given the determination has been made that NSW is to have only 49 divisions it would follow from the above that the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong basin is entitled to 34 of the 49 divisions.

Regional NSW is entitled to 15 divisions.

These figures clearly show that the abolition of any electorate in NSW should take place in the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong basin in order to ensure electors in regional NSW are not given fewer representatives than to which they are entitled.

In order to ensure the one-vote, one-value principle is maintained the abolition of a division must not occur in regional NSW.

In the Report of the Redistribution Committee the Committee members stated that: "The Committee considered that there were insufficient elector numbers in the rural north-west to retain these two divisions....the divisions of Gwydir and Parkes were amalgamated as a result".

Given we have already established that regional NSW is entitled to 15 divisions it is now clear that an erroneous assumption was the starting point for the Redistribution Committee's entire proposal. The Nationals respectfully insist that the redistribution process was flawed and should be recommenced entirely.

The Nationals originally submitted that while there will be a reduction of one seat due to population changes in NSW, from 50 to 49, there is a very strong case for minimal changes in non-metropolitan boundaries.

The Nationals' suggestions complied with the quota of electors for the purpose of the 2006 redistribution at 93,508 electors and the projected enrolment parameters.

It also took into consideration the statutory requirements of:

- community interests within the division, including economic, social and regional interests
- means of communication and travel within a division
- physical features and area
- existing boundaries of divisions
- enrolment (both current enrolment and projected enrolment three and a half years after the redistribution).

Based on the above criteria The Nationals strongly maintain that a Sydney seat, Blaxland, should be abolished.

I would strongly argue that the Redistribution Committee has clearly failed to take into account many of the statutory considerations in its proposal to abolish Gwydir, particularly in relation to community interests and area.

Many townships have been split from their primary service centres and in some cases alienated from their only link to the rest of the State.

The key tenet in The Nationals' submission to the Redistribution Committee was that divisions in country and coastal areas of NSW should facilitate interaction between constituents and their elected federal representatives. Clearly the proposed boundaries have not been drawn with this outcome in mind. We strongly stand by this sentiment on the basis of equity and commonsense.

## **Gwydir/Parkes**

### **Overview**

The proposed abolition of the division of Gwydir is ill-conceived and fails to take into account the key legislative criteria.

As has been previously noted there is not a statistical basis for the removal of a division from non-metropolitan NSW.

On all measures this proposal should be overturned and as suggested by The Nationals, and Liberal Party, in our original submissions the Sydney seat of Blaxland should be abolished.

### **Community Interests Within The Division, Including Economic, Social And Regional Interests**

Broken Hill is considered the "centre" of the remote Far West area of N.S.W. The population of Milparinka, Wilcannia, White Cliffs, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Tibooburra, and the whole of the Unincorporated region use Broken Hill for business, health, education, socialising, supply of goods and services. Broken Hill is the centre of regional tourism, houses the Royal Flying Doctor Base and the School of the Air both servicing the remote Far West.

To imply that there is a strong link between Wentworth and Broken Hill – in the form of the Silver City Highway – is wrong. There is no rail, bus or air transport to Wentworth and certainly no one in Broken Hill uses to the same extent areas in the Electorate of Farrer, such as Albury.

The major road, rail and air links that service Broken Hill in all cases extend from Sydney through the electorate of Parkes, via the Transcontinental Rail-line, Barrier/Mitchell Highways and Rex Airlines, via Dubbo, Parkes, Broken Hill and then through to Adelaide. In fact the major transport and communication links all run east – west, through the existing and proposed electorate of Parkes, not north – south as stated in the draft redistribution.

Graziers living north of Broken Hill often own homes in Broken Hill, some purchased to educate their children in Broken Hill or for overnight accommodation because of huge distances travelled in this remote area, to carry out business, etc., in Broken Hill.

The Nationals original submission to the Australian Electoral Commission Redistribution Committee, strongly argued for communities of interest considerations to be at the forefront of the Commissioners minds when it came to redrawing the boundaries. The proposed boundaries in the Nationals original submission would have furthered strengthened the communities of interest in the Western Division of NSW and should be again examined and considered by the Commissioners.

With such diverse communities proposed to be placed in one new division it becomes difficult to ascertain any community interests between many of the far spread townships such as Tibooburra and Moree.

One of the main community groups that will be disadvantaged under the proposed new boundaries is the residents of Unincorporated NSW.

Unincorporated NSW has strong ties to the community of Broken Hill from which it will be separated under this proposal.

School children of towns such as Tibooburra receive their schooling via the Outback School of The Air, their teacher broadcasting from Broken Hill.

In NSW local government departments are classified into regions, clearly indicating communities with common interests.

The Far West local government region encompasses Unincorporated NSW, Broken Hill City Council and Central Darling Shire Council.

These and many other examples clearly indicate that the strong ties between Unincorporated NSW and Broken Hill should not be broken for any reason.

### **Means of Communication and Travel Within A Division**

The proposed changes to the new division of Parkes will mean that travel for constituents from remote western parts of the electorate to visit their local Member becomes a major obstacle for them to fully participate in our democracy.

As the current Member for Parkes I am able to service the remote areas of the current boundaries due to the location of a second electorate office in Broken Hill. Under the proposed boundaries this office would no longer be within the electorate and due to the large population in the proposed

north western portion of the electorate, a second office would surely be located in one of these communities, such as Moree. These changes mean that residents in the west of the proposed division, particularly in Unincorporated NSW, are isolated from their MP.

When a resident of Tibooburra wants to initiate a meeting to see their local representative it would involve a road trip to either Moree or Dubbo.

Town to Town	Distance	Driving Time
Tibooburra to Moree	1118.02 km	12 hours 56 minutes
Tibooburra to Dubbo	806.93 km	9 hours 36 minutes
Tibooburra to Broken Hill	351.23 km	4 hours 28 minutes
Sydney to Melbourne	882.36 km	9 hours 14 minutes

These travel times and distances illustrate the fact that Tibooburra residents, along with other residents of the far west of the proposed Parkes division, would be asked to travel unreasonable distances to reach their "local" member of parliament.

It is worth noting that during the drive from Sydney to Melbourne you would cross 12 Federal Divisions, while in the longer drive from Tibooburra to Moree you would not even entirely cross one division.

Additionally, the only air access to Broken Hill is via Dubbo or Adelaide. This means that the Member for the proposed division of Farrer will be required to either to travel through Dubbo, currently the key service centre for the existing division of Parkes, or leave the State entirely.

The ability of electors to fully participate in our democracy living in the far west of the Parkes electorate who previously had no more than five hours to travel to their closest electoral office, will be severely curtailed if they are forced to travel up to 13 hours to meet with their local Federal Member of Parliament.

The proposal to abolish Gwydir does not in any way take into account the fact that the AEC's proposed electorate of Parkes does not contain common media centres; in fact the electorate will have two distinct media centres. Within the proposed electorate of Parkes the northern electors would source their local television news and the ABC radio news out of Tamworth and in the southern and central part of the electorate both TV stations and the ABC radio are based out of Dubbo.

### **Physical Features and Area**

The proposed new division of Parkes is almost 380,000 square kilometres in size, or 47 per cent of NSW and whilst I personally am not concerned about travelling to long distances to meet with constituents, I am extremely concerned that electorate in the proposed electorate of Parkes, which includes remote and indigenous communities, will be forced to travel long distances to access an electorate office.

The proposed division is split by a natural feature, which cannot be removed. The area of the Pilliga Nature Reserve (80,240 ha) and the Pilliga State Forest which in total consist of (126,415 ha) are major features which divide the proposed electoral division. This area is a geographical boundary between the main economic regions of the proposed electoral division.

Broken Hill's water supply is sourced from the Central Darling Shire, specifically the Menindee Lakes and Darling River. Broken Hill's water is reticulated via a pipeline 120km from Menindee. The Electorate of Farrer sources its water supply from the Snowy Hydro and the Murray River.

The proposed new division has no vast tracts of unpopulated areas. Rather it is comprised of small rural communities and settlements. While the division of Capricornia in Queensland is larger than the proposed division of Parkes, it contains extensive areas of unpopulated land mass.