



The Federal Redistribution 2006  
NEW SOUTH WALES



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**Public Objection Number: 1956**

**Name: NARROMINE SHIRE COUNCIL**

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# NARROMINE SHIRE COUNCIL

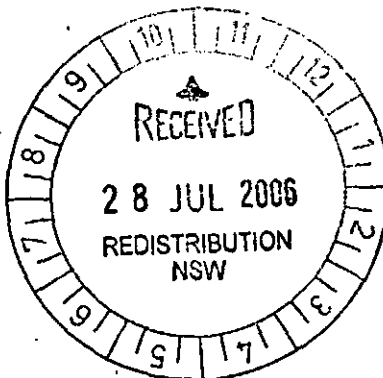
ABN 98 352 328 405

"Times Change... Values Don't"

Vr 91.082

26<sup>th</sup> July 2006

Mr Ian Campbell  
Australian Electoral Commissioner  
PO Box 6172  
KINGSTON ACT 2604



001956

Dear Sir

Council, at its last meeting, considered the report on the proposed redistribution of the Parkes Electorate which results in the loss of the seat of Gwydir, and resolved to lodge an objection. Council urges the Commission to find a fairer solution with the proposed redistribution.

These changes will have an enormous impact on people from this Shire as not only is it the loss of another country seat and voice in Parliament, but in future years, the local member could be based in, for instance Moree or Gunnedah - a long way from Dubbo.

Also the additional 60,000 square kilometres of area to be looked after greatly disadvantages people in this electorate who want access to their local member. This means the new amalgamated division which will be centred at Dubbo will have one Member of Parliament to look after the interests of voters spread over some 380,000 square kilometres or an astonishing 47 per cent of the State of NSW.

Other areas of concern are as follows -

- The seat of Wentworth in Sydney has an area of 26 square kilometres compared to some 380,000 square kilometres for the proposed seat of Parkes.
- Enormous rural electorates which take 14 hours to cross by car do not give electors a fair chance of accessing their political representatives.
- The country MP's workload is such that it is very difficult to serve the needs of constituents as well as taking on higher office such as a ministry yet surely rural electors have as much right as any to have their representative heard within Cabinet. It is essential for balanced national development that rural politicians have a strong Cabinet voice.
- Doing away with rural electorates and making the remaining ones too huge to service virtually guarantees that voice will be lost.
- Most MP's seats fit within a single local government area, whereas Gwydir and other rural seats have a dozen or so shires to look after.

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- Mega-divisions should be avoided if there is an alternative within the rules, and in this case there is.
- The criteria used to determine boundaries include firstly that there should be the right number of voters in a seat. One vote, one value principles must be respected. NSW had to lose one seat to Queensland yet Gwydir was only one of 23 seats under the population quota. The AEC Report noted that "the 25 greater Sydney electoral divisions are collectively expected to experience a slight decrease in their enrolment share". Council has great difficulty with the decision to remove the seat of Gwydir from the political landscape entirely rather than move some Sydney seat boundaries around marginally.
- Another criterion in the redrawing of boundaries is to attempt to keep communities of interest together. Moving boundaries from one city suburb to another does not jeopardise these interests. But to completely abolish 185,000 square kilometres that have been part of Australia since Federation – that is to break down the interest of community after community and sentence them to representation by an MP 1000 km away.
- Council has no problem with the independent process or the rules of redistribution, however considers that there is insufficient understanding of the ties that bind rural communities together.
- Democracy is more than just voting every three years – it is regular contact with the local MP's office about everything from roads to industries to phones to water to health services.
- Not only does the MP need to know the local issues and leaders of every small community, but must also be familiar with the physical landscape from soils to bridges to water courses. There was no need to go down this path. There were alternatives.

Council urges the Commissioners to look at the damage to rural democracy and use the laws given to them to find a fairer way through.

Yours faithfully



Paul Bennett  
General Manager