



**The Federal Redistribution 2006  
NEW SOUTH WALES**



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**Public Objection Number: 870**

**Name: Mr Peter J SARGENT**

**Page(s): 6**



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26/07/2006 09:27 PM

To <nsw.redistribution@aec.gov.au>  
cc  
bcc  
Subject: Objection to proposed redistribution 2006

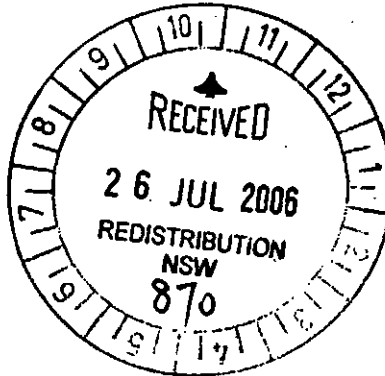
Classification  Unclassified

Please find attached my objection to the proposed redistribution of NSW.

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Peter James Sargent  
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26 July 2006

Redistribution Committee for NSW  
PO Box 20014  
WORLD SQUARE  
NSW 2002

Dear Sirs,

Please accept this document as a formal objection to the proposed boundary changes intended for the NSW division of **CALARE**.

Whilst I appreciate the need to redraw the boundaries in NSW to accommodate the loss of one seat, I am concerned about the impact that the proposed changes will have on rural/regional NSW. I am concerned that in framing the proposed changes, particularly with regard to the seat of Calare, it appears the committee has not properly interpreted and applied the requirements of s66(3) of the Electoral Act. The proposal to move Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon from Calare into the Blue Mountains seat of Macquarie does not satisfy the requirements of s 66(3)(b) of the Electoral Act, and the justification provided in the redistribution report appears to be driven by historical precedent and a broad and constructive interpretation of 'communities of interest', which is tenuous at best..

Further, despite having received suggestions which would preserve the seven 'country seats'<sup>1</sup> west of the Great Divide, the committee seems intent on further reducing the representation of constituents in western rural/regional NSW by abolishing the seat of Gwydir, creating a huge geographical area to be covered by one Member of Parliament. Public Suggestion Number: 18, provides for the retention of the seven country seats, and although focusing in greater detail on 25

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<sup>1</sup> Public Suggestion Number:18, Peter Andren MP, received by the AEC 23 March 2006.

non-metropolitan seats, the suggestion notes that the metropolitan voter population can be readily divided into the remaining 24 seats<sup>2</sup>.

Although I am concerned generally with the impact on western regional NSW by the abolition of Gwydir, my objection focuses chiefly on the proposed redistribution of Calare. Particularly with reference to the proposal to move Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon into the Blue Mountains seat of Macquarie.

The current seat of Calare is within the statistical tolerance allowed, and the projected voter population growth is above State average<sup>3</sup>. The loss of Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon means that Calare needs to gain a large number of electors to remain within statistical tolerance. Public Suggestion: 18 leaves the seat of Calare largely unchanged as it is **already** within statistical tolerance, and predicted to increase in voter population by more than the state average.

According to the *Report of the Redistribution Committee*, the committee has 'sought to keep electors in their existing divisions wherever it could be equitably achieved'<sup>4</sup>. Clearly this is possible in Calare, however the proposed carve up of Calare requires a substantial relocation of voters to maintain Calare. The transfer of Lithgow, Oberon Bathurst to Macquarie appears to disregard the **community of interest** principle required to be observed under s66(3)(b). In fact, the changes to Calare appear to completely contradict parts of the committee's stated considerations:

*52. Often, areas separated by geographic and physical features share commonality and community through their reliance on local government, public utilities and service industries. In this context local government areas are also indicators of community of interests, though more so in rural and regional areas.*

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<sup>2</sup> Public Suggestion Number:18, Peter Andren MP at [4.1]-[4.5].

<sup>3</sup> 2006 Proposed Redistribution of NSW, *Report of the Redistribution Committee* at [132].

<sup>4</sup> At [65]

*53. Other ways that communication and social networks unite communities can be found in health services, welfare support, air and land transport routes, and even newspaper circulation areas.*

*54. Further contemporary indicators include communications and transport infrastructures, shopping and service catchments, health, sporting and other social networks. These all serve to unite and identify communities in different but related ways, often overcoming geographic barriers, including mountain ranges, waterways and distance.*

Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon Councils are part of the Central NSW Regional Organisation of Councils, which focuses on local government issues and cooperation relevant to the Central Tablelands and Slope and Plains regions of NSW. This is a clear example of the commonality which already exists in Calare. Clearly the committee's restructure of Calare contradicts the considerations above at [52]. The local government area of Bathurst has been completely disregarded in order to move the bulk of the constituents in Bathurst into Macquarie. This has resulted in the Mayor of the City of Bathurst residing in Calare, whilst the bulk of his constituents, and the City he represents is in another federal electorate. The Mayor will be one of the constituents in the Bathurst LGA, who will be voting at a federal level for a Member who is not concerned with the interests of Bathurst. Clearly this is non-sensical and completely unacceptable.

The only link between Bathurst Lithgow and Oberon and the Blue Mountains in terms of transport is the fact that the electric train system executes at Lithgow, and the Great Western Highway passes through the mountains. This simply means that residents and transported goods from the 'Central West' need to travel through the mountains to get to Sydney. It doesn't by any stretch serve to establish a link between the communities. If anything, the ongoing road works through the Blue Mountains has now made it faster and easier to bypass communities in the Blue Mountains completely as we travel to Sydney. Nobody I know travels from Bathurst to Katoomba or Springwood for retail shopping, however, I know many people who travel from Bathurst to Orange to go shopping.

There are no sporting links between the communities in the Blue Mountains and the communities in Calare. However, the Western Region Academy of Sport, based in Bathurst, essentially services the entire existing electorate of Calare and some regions further west, recognising the strength of the region's sporting affiliations. People in Bathurst most often travel *west* to play sport, rarely *east* unless going on to Sydney. This is evidenced when sporting talents are chosen to represent their schools at 'regional level'. These activities, rarely if ever involve the Blue Mountains. Parents are often driving their children to locations around the whole Calare electorate for sporting activities.

In terms of health, people often travel to Orange to seek specialist treatment. There are many examples of specialist services provided in Orange that people from Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon access. Again, I am not aware of anyone travelling from the 'Central West' to the Blue Mountains for specialist medical treatment. If travelling east, people from the Central West will *pass through* the Blue Mountains on their way to specialist appointments in Sydney.

The media footprint in the Central West does not extend into the Blue Mountains. An ad placed in the classifieds of the Western Advocate in Bathurst will be read by people as far west as Dubbo. No-one in the mountains will see it. Our regional television news covers issues in communities in the central west, not in the Blue Mountains. Residents in Bathurst Lithgow & Oberon are generally not informed about issues in the mountains. Clearly there is no evidence of communities of interest here.

All of the 'contemporary indicators' mentioned in the paragraphs above already exist in the current seat of Calare. In moving Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon into the seat of Macquarie, the committee considered at [94], that *'these regions shared communities of interest amongst each other and with the Blue Mountains centred on domestic and international tourism, national parks, wilderness and weekend recreational activities. The committee observed that major road and rail transport routes linked these communities.'*

These constructed links are broad brush strokes and present an attempt to construct communities of interest where they do not currently exist, in order to justify the carve up and reconstruction of a seat already within the required

tolerances, with above average projected voter population growth, and where communities of interest are already well established.

### **Conclusion**

As a voter in the Calare electorate, I urge the Redistribution committee to reconsider the proposed changes to Calare. I would encourage the committee to again review suggestions, such as Public Suggestion Number: 18 which would leave Calare largely unchanged, and allow the committee to redistribute NSW in a way that accurately reflects the legislative requirements, and fits within the considerations made by the Committee as opposed to contradicting them.

Further, I would ask the committee to hold a public inquiry in Bathurst, to provide the public with an opportunity to directly address the committee and present their concerns.

Yours sincerely,

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