



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



Public Objection Number: 912

Name: Mr John Dunnet BA, M.Litt.

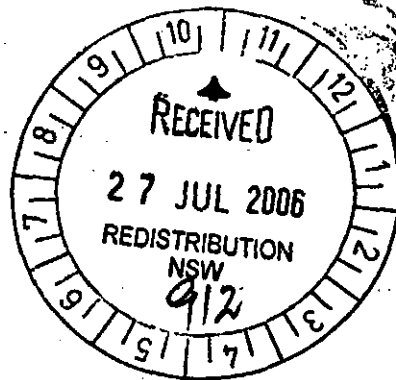
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THE COURIER

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The Australian Electoral Office
for New South Wales,
Level 1, Roden Cutler
House,
24 Campbell Street,
Haymarket, NSW, 2000



Dear Sir,

I wish to lodge a strong objection to the proposed redistribution of boundaries in NSW which will result in the abolition of the Federation seat of Gwydir and the creation of an enlarged seat of Parkes which would have an area of more than 390,000 square kilometres.

I write as a country newspaper proprietor with an understanding of the regional milieu and mood and as a person with an academic grounding in regional economic and social geography. I have also served, over the past 40 years, on a variety of regional government and commercial bodies.

It is evident to me that the dissolution of Gwydir and the creation of a 'super-Parkes' in order to satisfy the need to excise a seat in NSW to allow the creation of a seat in Queensland may well meet the formulaic requirements of the AEC and the catch-cry of 'one-vote-one value' but the decision does not meet the test of social and economic equity. In other words, true political equity is being diminished for the inhabitants of the seat.

The proposed new seat of Parkes would be as vast as several European countries.

While the population-density within the boundaries of the new Parkes may be relatively thin and outward appearances would suggest a high degree of homogeneity (characterised by gross social statistical indicators as economically disadvantaged), this is a misleading view. There are distinct regional identities within the proposed boundaries, nodes of distinctive economic activity, and differences of social and cultural focus.

To expect one individual to act as an effective parliamentary representative for such a vast, disparate area beggars belief. Such a person would need to encompass, traverse and understand a vast region which includes 19 local government areas, a wide range of agricultural activities - all with their attendant problems, forestry and mining industries - and their issues, along with the economic, cultural and social aspirations of scores of communities. The population mix ranges from disadvantaged indigenous settlements to prosperous towns. The new Parkes would take 14 hours by motor vehicle to cross and it would take a superhuman effort for an elected member to spend an appropriate amount of time in each part of the electorate.

The difficulties for, say, a poor constituent with a pressing problem to travel several hundred kilometres to visit the office of his representative are already enormous in the large rural seats. Such difficulties would be magnified to the point of impossibility for a remote constituent in Parkes.

Contrast the above with a densely populated, homogenous, residential seat in a metropolitan area. The local Member, in some cases can stroll around his electorate in a day. The issues in such seats tend to be clear and focused (such as airport noise or a motorway) and residents can easily access their local representative.

Please reconsider the decision on the dissolution of Gwydir.

Surely a 49-seat solution can be found for NSW without the need to create a vast seat which, while meeting the requirements of a formula, leaves the inhabitants disadvantaged in terms of political representation.


John Dunnet BA, M.Litt.

Managing Director

The North Western Courier Pty Ltd.

July 21, 2006