Comments on Public Objections – Comment No: 2

Name: Hon Melinda PAVEY MLC

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04/08/2006 03:46 PM

To <nsw.redistribution@aec.gov.au>
cc "Melinda Pavey" <Melinda.Pavey@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
bcc
Subject Comment on objections to the proposed Federal Redistribution.
Classification ☒ Unclassified

To Whom It May Concern,

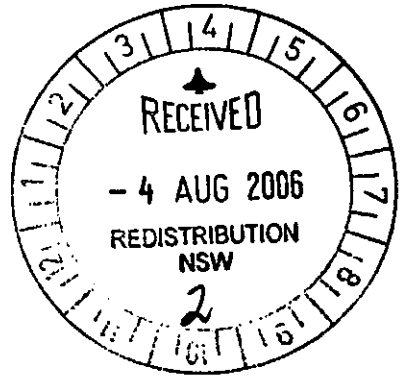
Please find attached my comments on the objections regarding the proposed Federal redistribution.

If you require anything further I can be contacted on (02) 9230 2977.

Regards,

Melinda Pavey MLC

RedistributionCommitteeforNSW_.doc



Redistribution Committee for NSW
PO Box 20014
WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002

Comment by Hon Melinda Pavey MLC regarding the objections received by the Redistribution Committee on the proposed redistribution of NSW Federal Electorate boundaries

I wish to make comment on the objections received by the Redistribution Committee for New South Wales, particularly the overwhelming sentiment against the abolition of the Federal Electorate of Gwydir.

An unprecedented 1,989 objections lodged with the Redistribution Committee in relation to the NSW Redistribution Committee's proposed boundaries, with huge opposition to the proposed abolition of the Gwydir electorate. These objections crossed political lines and demonstrated wholesale community, business and local government condemnation of the proposed boundaries.

I write as a country based representative of the NSW Upper House to present my strong opposition to the abolition of the Federal seat of Gwydir, a Federation seat, as proposed by the Redistribution Committee of the Australian Electoral Commission in their draft boundaries for the 2006 redistribution.

In making comment on the objections I wish to point out that I have recently toured the northwest of NSW and the anger and dislocation these communities feel, on all sides of politics, since the announcement of the draft plans is real and palpable.

The basis of a representative democracy is the notion that Members of Parliament are accessible to the communities they represent. The proposed redistribution and abolition of the seat of Gwydir, limits this access because of the sheer size of proposed new electorates of Parkes and Farrer.

- Parkes at its proposed size (379,474) is slightly larger than Japan (377,873 sq km)
- It is larger than Germany at (357,022)
- It is nearly half of the total area of NSW (47.3%) so you could very nearly fit all the other electorates in the state inside it.
- It is 1.67 times the size of Victoria and 5.5 times the size of Tasmania.
- It will contain 18 Local Government Areas - this includes the unincorporated areas, which will be split from their main service centre of Broken Hill.
- The only air services to Broken Hill come from Dubbo and Adelaide. Even flights from Sydney stop in Dubbo before reaching Broken Hill. There are no air services from Albury to Broken Hill.

The Redistribution Committee must consider options other than the abolition of Gwydir. I believe the only fair solution is to alter the electorates in the Sydney/Newcastle/Wollongong

region. Making them larger will not limit access for city residents to their Federal Parliamentary Representative because they will not have to travel the extreme distances faced by those living in remote communities.

In making comment on the objections, I ask the Committee to consider the following scenario. If a Centrelink customer in Moree needs the urgent attention and representation of their Federal Member to address a problem and the Member keeps their Federal Electorate office in Dubbo, that constituent will need to travel 964 kilometres to meet with their Federal Member.

Similarly, if a Councillor from Moree Plains Shire Council needs to make urgent representations to their Federal Member, they will be competing with Councillors from another 17 councils for their time and resources.

However, if the Redistribution Committee reconsiders the draft boundaries and abolishes a city held seat, the above scenarios would not be as dramatic. It may involve travelling across one suburb and in some Local Government Areas in Sydney, constituents have access to several Federal Members.

As an Upper House Member, covering the whole of NSW with 41 other Legislative Councillors, the idea that one person has to cover an area the size of 50% of NSW is unfair and I urge the Committee to look at more logical options.

One of the reasons for the early retirement of the former Federal Member for Parkes, Tony Lawler, was the impact travelling large distances had on his young family. To ensure he was accessible to his constituents as their elected representative he needed to cover a vast region from Dubbo to Parkes and over to Broken Hill.

When Federal Parliament sat for a two-week block and if a visit to a remote part of the electorate was required, his young children would not see their father for two weeks.

The region lost an outstanding representative because of the extreme hardship and toll it took to manage the sitting times of Federal Parliament, coupled with the travel within the electorate to give fair representation to all constituents. The time left for his family was not fair and was not comparative to a Federal Member living in Sydney

In making comment, the Redistribution Committee must seriously consider this important point given that the draft plan for the northwest of NSW will effectively double the size of this electorate. The impact it will have on the current Member and the disincentive it will be to future Parliamentarians is significant.

If the retirement of the current Federal Member for Gwydir, John Anderson, was a consideration in the creation of the draft maps then that was a big mistake that needs to be rectified.

Redistribution needs to be planned around practical and reasonable access for constituents, not on the retirement plans of elected representatives.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Melinda Pavey MLC