



The Federal Redistribution 2006  
NEW SOUTH WALES



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**Comments on Public Objections – Comment No: 6**

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08/08/2006 11:17 PM

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Subject Comment on objections

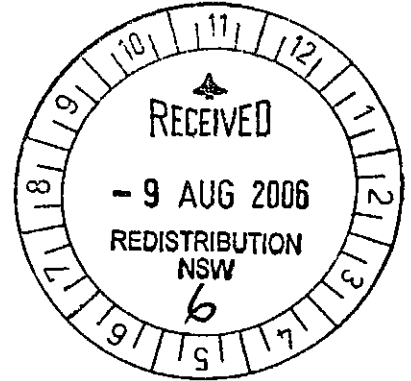
Classification  Unclassified

Dear sirs

Please find attached my comments on the objections.



Brett McMillan Comments on objections.doc



8 August 2006

### Comments on objections

I have been following the redistribution of NSW seats procedure over the last few weeks, and I have read all of the suggestions, comments on suggestions, and the report of the redistribution committee that have been posted on the internet. I haven't had time to read all of the over 1000 objections posted, but have read the first 100 or so and a selection of the remainder.

Most of the objections received are from residents of the existing seat of Gwydir who are blueing that the Committee has recommended the merging of the divisions of Gwydir and Parkes to form a new division of Parkes. Many of these are identical in wording and appear to be as a result of a campaign run in the local newspapers in that area. A number of others are from Bathurst and Lithgow residents complaining about being linked with the Blue Mountains community in Macquarie rather than the central west community in Calare.

Many of these objections lack the poess to understand that the size of electoral divisions is determined by the number of electors enrolled, not the physical size of the division. The Committee is bound by law to draw up boundaries which are within certain percentages of current enrolment and projected future enrolment.

It is these laws which underpin the "one vote one value" principal of the Westminster system of government. Because the government is determined by the number of representatives elected by the various parties, it is essential for a fair election that the electoral divisions contain a similar number of electors. If the request of many of the objectors was met, and the country electorates were kept to a reasonable size, it would produce an unfair election result. The only way that this could be achieved would be by moving to a *proportional representation system, which is outside the scope of this Committee.*

While I sympathise with my country cousins that their representation is significantly less than city folk, unfortunately, due to the drought and other factors, rural NSW are losing electors at a constant rate and cannot sustain the same number of electoral divisions. One objector claimed that the country only had 28% of the divisions in NSW – they only have 28% of the population so that's fair, unfortunately.

While the new seat of Parkes will be very large, 5.5 times the size of Tasmania as some objectors have pointed out, in outback Australia there are a number of large divisions which are represented by one person – Kalgoorlie in WA is the largest in the world, Lingiari in NT covers all of the NT except downtown Darwin, Gray in SA covers much of that state and Maranoa & Kennedy in Queensland are all larger than the proposed new division of Parkes. All of these divisions are excessively large but necessary due to the quota system determined by parliament to attempt to produce fair elections.

Indeed, I have also been following the redistribution in Queensland where the committee recommended a new seat to reduce the size of Maranoa. The main objections there are from locals moved to the new seat who wish to stay in Maranoa. You can't win! Many of these objects praise the excellent representation of Bruce Scott MP, the member for Maranoa, which, in its existing form, is twice the size of the proposed electorate of Parkes, so it can be done!

The other major complaint relates to the location of Lithgow and Bathurst in the division of Macquarie, along with the settlements in the Blue Mountains. Unfortunately, this is a consequence of the Committee's decisions in relation to Gwydir and Parkes, and the use of the Blue Mountains and the Hunter as well as the Southern Highlands as linkage points between Sydney and Country areas. While there is no real community of interest between Lithgow/Bathurst and the Blue Mountains, and that link is stronger with cities like Orange and Mudgee, this change appeared necessary to get the equality of numbers between the seats. There is also no clear community of interest between the Blue Mountains and suburbs in the Hawkesbury LGA so it is good that this link was broken. If the Committee had decided to keep Gwydir, then both Parkes and Gwydir would have needed to expand significantly and this would have probably pushed Calare into the Blue Mountains – a situation that would have been equally unpopular in Lithgow and Bathurst and with the local member for Calare Peter Andren MP.

The Committee's report included a table showing projected growth of the existing divisions. This table showed that Parkes and Gwydir were the 2 lowest growth divisions in the state, so it's not surprising that the Committee agreed to merge them. Both of these seats are currently held by the National Party. The 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest was the city seat of Wentworth, held by the Liberal Party. I find it offensive that the coalition parties, in their submissions and objections, should call for the abolition of the division of Blaxland, a safe ALP seat and the seat held by the immediate past Past Minister. This is clearly a case of political bias. If they feel that a city seat should be deleted, then why not Wentworth, Bennelong or one of their Northern Sydney seats?

The ALP called for the relocation and re-naming of Reid to Whitlam, as well as the abolition of a country division. I am glad this wasn't done as Reid was named after a former Prime Minister. I do, however, feel that in the future, after Mr Whitlam has died, that his former seat of Werrira could carry his name, likewise, maybe Lowe could be renamed McMahon in honour of William McMahon, another former deceased Prime Minister, the only one so far not to be remembered in a divisional name. I also agree that Cook should be named jointly for the former Prime Minister as well as Captain James Cook.

I noted that one suggestion even suggested that an electorate be called Bradman, although this was ridiculed by a comment. Sir Donald was an outstanding Australian, and if we can name divisions after artists (eg Lindsay, Dobell, Wright) then why not sportsmen? Maybe one to think about for the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to put my 2c worth into this debate.

Yours faithfully  
Brett McMillan