



**The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES**



Comments on Public Objections – Comment No: 156

Name: AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (NSW BRANCH)

Page(s): 12

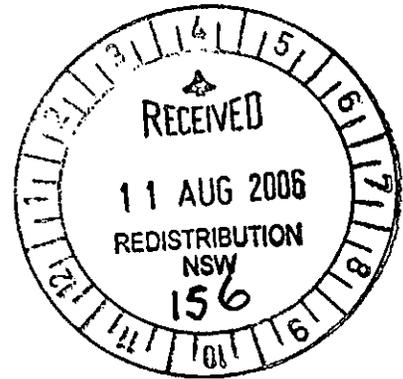
TELEPHONE: (02) 9207 2000 • FACSIMILE: (02) 9264 2574
EMAIL: alpo@nswalp.com • WEBSITE: www.nswalp.com ABN 36 192 855 036
9th floor 377 Sussex Street Sydney • PO Box K408 Haymarket NSW 1240



AUSTRALIAN
LABOR
PARTY
New South Wales Branch

11 August 2006

The Augmented Electoral Commission for NSW
4 th floor, Roden Cutler House,
24 Campbell Street,
Haymarket NSW 2000.



Dear Commissioners,

Please find attached the 'Comments on Objections' of the Australian Labor Party,
(New South Wales Branch).

If you have any queries, please contact me on (02) 9207 2000.

Yours sincerely,

Karl Bitar
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY - NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

Comments on Objections:

With almost 2000 Objections to its proposals, the Commissioners might be forgiven for feeling a little under siege.

However, around 90% of the Objections relate to the proposal to abolish Gwydir and the bulk of these complain about the size of the proposed Parkes. Of the remaining Objections, the majority are concerned with the Divisions of Macquarie, Paterson and Wentworth.

In its Objections, the Liberals have a particularly ambitious proposal to re-arrange the boundaries of 15 Divisions, ostensibly to correct what they perceive to be problems in Calare, Macquarie and Parramatta. Effectively, they are saying to the Commissioners to start again. We do not propose to try to rebut the details of this Objection as we think that the Liberal's attempt to both split Lithgow from Bathurst and to split Hawkesbury LGA destroys any argument on Community of Interest grounds. Further, we ask the Commissioners to note that the ALP's Objections relating to the proposed Division of Parramatta places the CBD of Parramatta entirely back into Parramatta as has been put by both the Liberals and the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce.

In the case of the Nationals, we note the Objection made by its former Leader, J. D. Anthony, who advances the case for mal-apportionment, which is outside the scope of the Commissioners considerations. We are outraged by the claim of the Leader of the Nationals, Mr Vaile, who isolates a less than half a sentence from the Commissioners Report of several pages in length and then claims the Commissioners have breached their statutory obligations under the Act.

This claim is both nonsensical and insulting and also follows the equally inane comments of his predecessor that the Commissioners proposal to abolish Gwydir was made because he's retiring. Interestingly, in his own Objection to the Committee, Mr Anderson comes up with an excellent explanation of both Dubbo's past inclusion in Gwydir and its claims today to be included in his seat. But then he wants to abolish Calare, a seat not held by the Nationals instead of one of their own.

We think that the latter is the true aim of their cleverly orchestrated campaign which has used as its shield the claim that the Commissioners have in Parkes drawn a Division too large in area.

That claim is also nonsense.

Let's take a close look at the existing boundaries of both Gwydir and Parkes. In Gwydir, the three most western Shires are Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke. Collectively they cover 83,203 Sq Km which is 10.38% of NSW. However, these Shires only have 6949 electors or 0.16% of NSW's total enrolment.

The three most outlying parts within the Division of Parkes are the Shires of Cobar, Central Darling and the Unincorporated Far West of NSW. Collectively they account for 192,137.7 Sq Km or 23.98% of NSW yet contain only 4811 electors or just 0.11% of NSW's enrolment.

To sum up, in the north west of NSW there are five sparsely populated Shires plus another area so sparsely populated that it's unincorporated. Together they cover 275,340.7 Sq Km or 34.4% out of NSW's 801351 Sq Km. Yet they contain only 11760 electors or just 0.27% of NSW's enrolment of 4 308 595.

Basically, they've been put together in the Commissioners proposed new Division of Parkes. They account for about 2/3 of the size of the Division. We think this is a good thing as it unites communities with similar interests, thereby meeting the Community of Interest criteria of the Electoral Act.

After all, they are all part of the Western Division of NSW, covering 40% of the State and formed as a result of a Royal Commission established in 1902. All land is leasehold and the Government imposes strict carrying, clearing and other planning controls which it enforces through the Western Lands Commission.

Had the Commissioners placed as put by Malcolm Mackerras the remainder of unincorporated NSW, containing just 379 electors into Farrer they would have drawn a Division of Parkes smaller in size than the Parkes which existed prior to 2001. But we think the Commissioners did right by not doing so.

MACQUARIE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Several submissions made to the Australian Electoral Commission objecting to the proposed boundary changes for the Federal seat of Macquarie were either incorrect or misleading. Worth noting were the objections made by the *Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division)*, *Mr Peter Andren MP*, *Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc*, and *Hawkesbury City Chamber of Commerce and Industry*. This submission will correct a number of statements made in these proposals and provide further arguments in favour of linking the Blue Mountains, Lithgow, and Bathurst Local Government Areas in a single Federal Electorate.

- 1.2 Generally, the objections have tended to ignore the clear communities of interest between Lithgow and Bathurst, and Lithgow and the Blue Mountains – Lithgow constituting a common nexus between the Bathurst and Blue Mountains LGAs. Lithgow is a part of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, the Blue Mountains Tourism Association, Sydney West Area Health Service and the Cox River Catchment Management Authority with the Blue Mountains. At the same time it shares Prime Television with Bathurst, relies on Bathurst for many services including (amongst other things) the Family Relationship Centre, maintains operational ties with Bathurst Base Hospital and falls within the same telephone area code as Bathurst.
- 1.3 It is evident that, despite the protests of the *Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division)* and *Peter Andren MP*, there is little opposition within the communities of Lithgow and Bathurst to the proposed boundary changes. Lithgow Council has voted unanimously to endorse the proposed changes, and Bathurst Council's only objection was to the fact that not all of Bathurst LGA was incorporated in the proposed electorate.

2.0 *Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division) Objection No. 1965*

- 2.1 4.20 (b) claims that Bathurst and Orange share a common television footprint and that this creates a community of interest between the two townships.

Whilst this is technically correct, according to the advertising material put out by Prime, the reception for the local Prime television station is received as far east as Katoomba where many residents tune in to Prime or Win as an alternative to the poor reception on Channels 7 and 9.

- 2.2 This objection asserts at 4.20 (d) that Orange and Bathurst have a close community of interest through the First Bathurst Orange Growth Area and that to place Orange and Bathurst in different division would "totally [ignore the] commercial realities and the strong business, employment and planning synergies they entail".

This statement is flawed, ignoring the fact that when the Bathurst Orange Growth Area was originally proposed, Bathurst and Orange were in different electorates anyway. The impact of re-dividing the towns would be to simply restore the area to its original state.

- 2.3 4.20 (e) refers to the fact that Charles Sturt University has campuses in both Bathurst and Orange. While this is true, it needs to be emphasised that the Orange campus was, only two years ago, a campus of the University of Sydney and substantial links between staff and operations at the two campuses are unlikely to have emerged. Indeed, had it not been

for financial difficulties experienced by the University of Sydney in maintaining the campus, CSU would not even have a presence in Bathurst.

Further, it is worth noting that Charles Sturt University, while drawing a large proportion of students from the Bathurst/Orange area, also draws a substantial number of students from the Blue Mountains and Lithgow. For Lithgow students, CSU is very much regarded as the local university. Many Blue Mountains students commute to CSU on a daily basis or live on campus during class and return on weekends. CSU's reputation for its journalism courses has made it an attractive option for most students west of Penrith.

- 2.4 4.20 (g) claims that people frequently commute back and forth between Bathurst and Orange. This submission does not challenge this but two points need to be made in this regard: -
- a) The Blue Mountains (particularly Hazelbrook and the upper mountains) share a similar reciprocal connection with Lithgow. Large proportions of Lithgow residents commute to the Blue Mountains and vice versa – particularly with respect to school teachers.
 - b) There are numerous examples of people who commute from the Blue Mountains to Lithgow or Bathurst on a regular basis. For example, one cardiologist practising in Bathurst commutes to Bathurst from Springwood in the Blue Mountains at least twice a week. This is contrary to the assertions of 4.21 (b).

- 2.5 4.21 (a) asserts that, because City Rail trains only go as far west as Lithgow, there is little connection between Bathurst and the Blue Mountains.

Lithgow is in fact the end of the electric line for City Rail services. This claim neglects the fact that Country Link trains use the Blue Mountains as a corridor to Bathurst and Lithgow (usually stopping at Katoomba, Mt Victoria, and Lithgow to pick up passengers), supporting the argument made at paragraph 72 of the Redistribution Committee's report. Indeed, Country Link buses regularly connect with City Rail services terminating at Lithgow station, continuing and terminating at Bathurst.

- 2.6 4.21 (f) and 4.20 (h) identifies local papers for the relevant regions and arguing that this constitutes a basis for community of interests. There are several major problems with this: -
- a) The circulation of the Western Magazine is so widespread (54,000) that it is akin to arguing that the circulation of the Sydney Morning Herald is sufficient to create a community of interest.

- b) The Blue Mountains Gazette, The Western Magazine, The Western Times, The Western Advocate, and The Lithgow Mercury are all run by Rural Press. As a result stories with relevance for several communities are sometimes duplicated between papers.
- c) Rural Press runs an advertising program which allows Blue Mountains advertisers to run advertisements in both the Blue Mountains Gazette and the Lithgow Mercury at a reduced rate - knowing that upper Blue Mountains residents get the Lithgow Mercury and vice versa.

2.7 4.22 assert that the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury should be linked because they share a community of interest. There are numerous flaws with this argument, many of which were addressed in the original submission by the Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch). The main points are summarised below: -

a) *Economic interests:*

Only 2% of Blue Mountains LGA residents are employed in the Hawkesbury LGA. Significantly, the majority of the Hawkesbury figure is comprised of people living in the northern part of the Blue Mountains LGA (i.e. Mount Wilson, Mount Tomah) who work relatively close to home in suburbs like Bilpin and Kurrajong.

b) *Social interests:*

The number of Blue Mountains students enrolled in Hawkesbury schools and vice versa is negligible. This is a stark contrast to the ties between Lithgow and the upper mountains with independent schools like Blue Mountains Grammar and Korowai attracting Lithgow residents and Lithgow High School attracting many upper mountains students in alternative to Katoomba High School. There are no direct operational links between Hawkesbury Hospital and Blue Mountains medical services.

d) *Regional interests:*

There are few, if any, links between the Mountains and the Hawkesbury as far as service provision is concerned. There are instances where all three areas have a service location in common (e.g., the Fair Trading Centre and Tribunal for Penrith, the Mountains and Hawkesbury is at Penrith), but there does not appear to be any unique Mountains/Hawkesbury service relationship in either the public or private sectors.

The Hawkesbury Gazette (weekly on Wednesdays), the Hawkesbury Courier (weekly on Fridays), and the Hawkesbury Independent are not circulated in the Blue Mountains, nor is the Blue Mountains Gazette circulated in the Hawkesbury. The

Hawkesbury Courier and the Hawkesbury Independent do however; circulate in the Hills District and Riverstone – supporting the Commission’s redrawing of the Greenway District boundaries.

Hawkesbury Community Radio station has a broadcast footprint that does not cover any aspect of the Blue Mountains, whereas it can be heard clearly as far south as Riverstone and Schofields – again supporting the Commission’s proposed boundaries for Greenway.

e) Means of communication and travel within a district

Between the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains there is no major road, only two small, single-lane, indirect roads from the Blue Mountains to the Hawkesbury: Hawkesbury Road (which becomes Springwood Road once in Yarramundi) and the Darling Causeway which links the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road. Hawkesbury road comprises a number of hairpin bends, and crosses the Hawkesbury River at the often flooded Yarramundi Bridge. This road is so infrequently used that very few people were inconvenienced when the whole road was closed by landslides for six months approximately ten years ago. Furthermore, there are no bus services from the Blue Mountains to the Hawkesbury.

Via train, a trip from Blue Mountains LGA to Hawkesbury LGA requires going to Blacktown and then changing for a train. This is so inconvenient that only 3 weekly tickets and 48 standard tickets sold from Blue Mountains LGA to Hawkesbury LGA stations in a typical week

This is in contrast to the travel routes between the Blue Mountains and Lithgow/Bathurst. As the Redistribution Committee noted in its original report, the Great Western Highway and the Blue Mountains train line provides a key link between metropolitan Sydney and Lithgow/Bathurst. The Great Western Highway is a major highway that is a dual carriage-way for the bulk of the journey between the Blue Mountains and Bathurst, indicating that it is a major transport route. Similarly, as this submission has already noted, the Blue Mountains train line continues to Lithgow and is supplemented by Country Link services to Bathurst.

Finally, the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains LGA do not even share a common telephone area code (45XXXXXX in the Hawkesbury and 47XXXXXX in the Blue Mountains). Whilst it is clear that Lithgow and Bathurst have a different area code too (63XXXXXX), this demonstrates that a community of interest exists between the two LGAs.

e) *World Heritage*

The *Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division)* submission is correct to assert that the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains are incorporated in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. However, 4.22 (f) fails to mention that much of Lithgow LGA is also included in this World Heritage Area. The community of interest argument is equally as strong for linkages between Lithgow, the Blue Mountains, and the Hawkesbury.

- 2.8 At 4.25, the objection notes that the upgrades to the Great Western Highway have improved links between Lithgow and Bathurst and Sydney – excluding the Blue Mountains LGA. This is a rather spurious claim, which even if it were testable, ignores that fact that the simple existence of major transport routes is relevant for the purposes of redistributions. Further, these transport routes creates a community of interest for tourism purposes and open up the possibility for links between communities.

3.0 *Peter Andren MP Objection No. 1061*

- 3.1 At 2.2, it is argued that there is a natural barrier between the Blue Mountains and Lithgow/Bathurst and that as such, no division should extend beyond this boundary.

Whilst physical boundaries are a consideration for redistributions, in this instance the two major roads crossing this barrier (the Great Western Highway and the Bells Line of Road + Darling Causeway) are evidence that such a physical barrier is insufficient to prevent an electorate crossing this divide. Furthermore, there is substantial historical precedent for crossing this barrier – that was the makeup of the seat of Macquarie when held by Ben Chifley for example.

It is worth noting that the geography and topography of Lithgow is very similar to the geography and topography of most Blue Mountains towns. Lithgow is situated 900 metres above sea level and is widely regarded as a geographical extension of the Blue Mountains.

- 3.2 At 3.1, Mr Andren objects to the exclusion of part of Bathurst LGA from the proposed district of Macquarie. Similar protests were lodged by Bathurst City Council.

This does not appear to be an unreasonable proposition and indeed, if this is at all possible based on projected enrolments; the excluded component of Bathurst LGA should be incorporated – observing the legislative requirement that the AEC establish divisions based upon existing boundaries like LGAs.

4.0 *Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc Objection No. 1045*

4.1 This objection is based predominantly on the suggestion that the Hawkesbury and the Federal Electorate of Macquarie has common historical links. There are several points that must be made here: -

- a) Historical matters are not a legislative consideration in the determining of new boundaries during a redistribution.
- b) The suggestion that the Division of Macquarie shares a longstanding historical link with the Macquarie towns of the Hawkesbury is incorrect. For much of its history the Division did not include the towns.

The Division, like many federation electorates, was named not after the towns or even directly after the colonial governor but after the *river* which flowed through Bathurst, one of its then major centres. This in fact means that the proposed boundaries are restoring an historical link.

WENTWORTH

The Liberal Party's objection for Wentworth, although supported by several representatives of the Jewish community, both ignore the reasoning behind the Commissioners proposals and at the same time produces vastly inferior boundaries under the Community of Interest criteria of the Act. This can be readily seen when we examine the Liberal's consequential changes to the Divisions of Sydney and Kingsford Smith.

Let's start with the arrangements proposed by the Commissioners for those electors within the Randwick LGA. Presently these electors are split between the Divisions of Kingsford Smith and Wentworth. The electors would remain split between these Divisions under both the Commissioners and Liberal proposals.

Currently, Kingsford Smith contains all of Botany LGA and nearly 85% of the more than 75,000 electors within Randwick LGA. Under the Commissioners proposals Kingsford Smith, which needs to gain around 6,500 electors to bring it up to the quota, simply picks up the required numbers from the suburb of Randwick in Wentworth? The result is that around 93% of Randwick LGA would be in Kingsford Smith, an eminently sensible proposal.

The Commissioners then transfer to Wentworth around 18,000 electors from Sydney. The boundaries are clear as clear can be.

Under the Liberal's objection, Sydney City LGA would be split twice between Wentworth, Kingsford Smith and Sydney. Its proposed boundaries would also split the suburb of Kings Cross between Wentworth and Sydney and transfer into

Kingsford Smith parts of inner Sydney which simply do not fit the nature of this Division.

Now, let's look at the particular objections concerning Randwick North. As part of the Objection the Liberal's included a 'Demographic Profile of the Sydney Jewish Community' by Dr Gary Eckstein in 2003 and based on the 2001 Census.

On page 27 of Dr Eckstein's paper, (p99 in the Liberal's Objection), he has a table which provides the numbers by postcode of both Jewish children and the elderly. It can be clearly seen that the Jewish population in either Kingsford or Maroubra, both of which are in Kingsford Smith, is higher than in Randwick.

Elsewhere in his paper, Dr Eckstein notes the growth of the Jewish population in the South East of Sydney, a population shift that has accelerated since and is related to the relatively cheaper housing in Kingsford Smith than in Wentworth.

The Jewish community of the Eastern Suburbs is in three different Council areas – Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra and in three State electorate – Vaucluse, Coogee and Maroubra. There is no reason why it should be included in two federal seats as well.

There are Jewish communities located in the existing Kingsford Smith – notably those around the Synagogue in Brook St Coogee, and those around the Mt Sinai Jewish School in Maroubra.

Clovelly Rd and Darley Rds provide a clear, easily understood and logical boundary – especially compared to the North Ward boundary which chops and changes, down streets and around corners.

PATERSON

The problem with the Liberal's objection to the Divisions of Paterson and Newcastle is that whilst they claim to solve what they perceive to be a problem, (the split of Port Stephens LGA between Paterson and Newcastle), they create more problems elsewhere.

For example, under their objections, the Liberals split Maitland LGA between three Divisions instead of the current and proposed split of that LGA between Hunter and Paterson. Moreover, the Liberal's Newcastle would contain in its north-western end boundaries that can only be described as awkward and which would certainly confuse electors in Maitland.

Also, in general, the Liberals boundaries produce difficult to understand boundaries parcelling Maitland between three Divisions. If Maitland must be split we support the Commissioners proposals which not only confine the split to two

Divisions but also, by using the Hunter River and Railway provide a much clearer delineation of Maitland than the current boundary.

The Commissioners are correct when they stated in their Report that (Par 110) "both Raymond Terrace and Williamstown share a strong community of interest with Newcastle the committee noted that Beresfield and Tarro were part of Newcastle LGA and that these changes reduced the number of divisions over which that LGA is split."

If it were possible, the ALP would prefer that Maitland LGA be contained in a single Division. We also think that there is a very strong case to include both Dungog and Gloucester LGA's in Hunter. They do fit better with Singleton which is in Hunter. They were all placed in the State District of Upper Hunter at the most recent State redistribution.

However, try as we might to achieve the above, (which also would have resulted in more of Port Stephens LGA going to Newcastle), our ideas ran up against the problem that Hunter, were it to lose Maitland to Paterson would then be forced to move into Newcastle LGA.

In other words we found that should we propose to solve the Maitland problem we would create even greater disruption for electors in the three Divisions concerned with the outcome that our overall boundaries would be inferior to the Commissioners proposals.

That's why we made no objection in this region. We submit that the Liberal's, albeit from a different starting point have come up against the same difficulties as we faced.

BLAXLAND/BANKS

At the heart of the objections relating to these Divisions is whether the Commissioners' proposals relating to Bankstown itself are satisfactory or capable of improvement on Community of Interest grounds.

We now turn to the Objection made by Bankstown Council which basically supported the Commissioners proposals. Paragraph five argues that the Bankstown railway line is a natural boundary of the suburb of Bankstown. If that were so Bankstown 2200 postcode would be entirely south, or north of that railway line. This is not so and never has been so. The railway line cuts the CBD into two, it cuts the Bankstown postcode area into two. There was nothing natural about the Bankstown railway line apart from the fact that the railway could not make the ascent to the Hume Highway when it was originally constructed. Bankstown is where it is, rather than situated around the original Bankstown Town Hall on the Hume Highway for that reason. The argument put in the rest of

this paragraph is essentially the same as that put in the Combined Pensioners' submission. These assumptions are false and misleading. There is nothing natural to the state electoral boundaries or the ward boundaries.

Paragraph 6 simply argues that because Condell Park is in the state seat of East Hills it should be in the federal seat of Banks. The original state redistribution had Condell Park in the seat of Bankstown but, by agreement amongst through state members, the suburb was retained in East Hills. This was a matter of convenience and in no way natural or inevitable. The suburb of Condell Park and the areas south of Marion Street in Bankstown have been in the electorate of Blaxland since 1949. Canterbury Road has been an absolute boundary between these two seats throughout the modern post-war history of Bankstown. It is totally identifiable and should be retained right up to Stacey Street.

Paragraph 7 says that the water supply pipeline is a natural boundary between Bankstown and Auburn Councils. That is true but the state seat of Auburn comes right into Bankstown's North Ward and East Ward. Nothing is immutable when it comes to redistributions and the setting of boundaries. The ALP now concurs with the Redistribution Committee's decision to use the water pipeline as the northern boundary of Blaxland but notes that Reid previously crossed this boundary.

The data provided by Bankstown City Council on population increases forecast for Bankstown's Central Business District is irrelevant to the submission's argument but bolsters the Australian Labor Party argument that Bankstown's Central Business District should not be split into two as is the case in the current proposal.

The map of the City of Bankstown is misleading in that it does not show the other Council areas involved in the redistribution proposal. What it does highlight, however, is the splitting of Bankstown's Central Business District into two and the fact that the excision of Bankstown proper and Condell Park, which should properly lie within the seat of Blaxland, distorts the amount of the City of Bankstown that has historically been shared between the seats.