



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



Comments on Public Objections – Comment No: 20

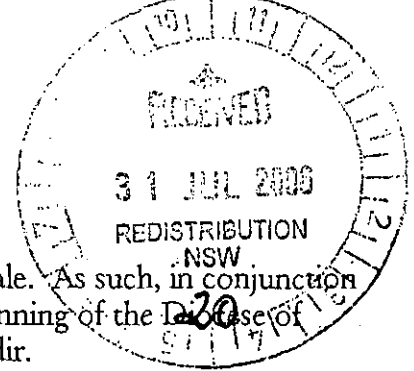
**Name: THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL, ANGLICAN CHURCH of
AUSTRALIA, DIOCESE of ARMIDALE**

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The Chairperson
 Redistribution Committee for NSW
 PO Box 20014
 WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002

28/7/06



Dear Sir / Madam,

Proposed abolition of Electorate of Gwydir

The Diocesan Council is the executive body of the Anglican Diocese of Armidale. As such, in conjunction with the Bishop, Diocesan Council makes decisions regarding the day to day running of the Diocese of Armidale, of which a large portion is contained within the Federal seat of Gwydir.

Council recognises that with the movement of population, a redistribution was necessary, and that NSW had to lose a seat to Queensland. However, the proposal to amalgamate Gwydir and Parkes into one vast electorate is plainly unfair.

We understand the proposed new electorate of Parkes will cover approximately 379,000 km², compared with the already large existing seat of Gwydir at 185,000 km². As it stands, it is difficult in Gwydir for an MP to meet their constituents, let alone in a seat more than twice as large.

It might be argued, for instance, that the size of the proposed new electorate is manageable given that the seat of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia is larger still. However, closer examination of the two seats will show that Gwydir / Parkes is much more diverse, with population scattered more evenly through a greater number of centres. In other words, the population of Kalgoorlie is concentrated in fewer centres, and therefore it is easier for people to access their MP.

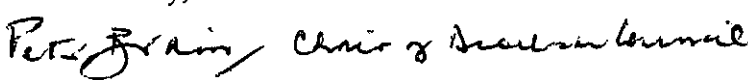
Geographically the proposed new seat does not serve a common community of interest. Certainly it is rural – but within that overall tag there are many different and diverse communities which would be all but impossible for any MP to know adequately.

Given these factors, we are disturbed that if the proposed redistribution goes ahead, voters in this area will be very seriously disenfranchised from the democratic process due to a lack of face to face access with their local member.

In addition, if the seat of Gwydir is abolished, the overall representation of rural people will decrease, marginalising their voice in government. Rural communities have had to suffer depletion of all kinds of services in recent years, and the proposed redistribution will only add to their sense of betrayal and further alienate rural voters.

It appears that the proposed redistribution is 'the easy way out' in that it causes less disruption to electoral boundaries. However, a fairer solution would be to lose a seat in the city and then re-adjust the boundaries accordingly. City voters do not have to contend with physically large electorates and the boundaries could be redrawn such that communities of interest are maintained and voters input to the democratic process maintained.

Given the damage to rural democracy the proposed redistribution would cause, Diocesan Council requests that a fairer solution be found.

Yours sincerely,

 PETER BRAIN
 BISHOP OF ARMIDALE