



The Federal Redistribution 2006
NEW SOUTH WALES



Comments on Public Objections – Comment No: 73

Name: GILGANDRA SHIRE COUNCIL

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Gilgandra Shire Council

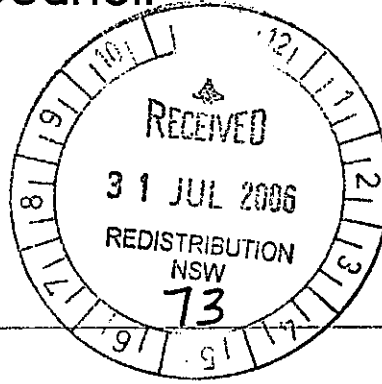
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Contact: Paul Mann

27 July 2006



Mr D Farrell
Australian Electoral Officer
Redistribution Committee for New South Wales
PO Box 20014
WORLD SQUARE NSW 2002

Dear David

REDISTRIBUTION OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES – PARKES & GWYDIR

Gilgandra Shire Council has noted with real concern the proposal to abolish the Federal seat of Gwydir and to combine the Parkes and Gwydir Electorates and has resolved to lodge the following objection to the proposal.

The proposed seat covers some 47% of the state of New South Wales and combines a number of regions including 19 local government areas and seven (7) State seats. The size of the proposed seat is 376 206 sq km which makes it twice the size of Victoria and five times the area of Tasmania, and the sixth largest seat in Australia

To represent an area of such diverse and important economic value to the Australian economy is a great responsibility and will be impossible for one Federal member to handle. The interests of the citizens within the electorate are therefore seriously under represented by the proposal.

Council contends that the physical size of the current seat of Gwydir is difficult to represent and that the proposed merger will exacerbate the problem and disadvantage electors. The 'general' community of interest across the electorate of Gwydir will be lost with the merger of the two electorates.

Due to the need to establish a population base for each electorate, it is accepted that there will be some inconsistencies, however, the immense distances proposed in the new electorate of Parkes will make it almost impossible for a Member to effectively represent the electorate.

Other alternatives to increasing population within the electorate need to be considered and could include the transfer of the major regional centre of Dubbo to Gwydir and along with other transfers would allow the retention of both Parkes and Gwydir. These have been explored in separate submissions to your Commission.

The diversity of industry in the proposed seat, particularly in the agriculture sector will exacerbate the difficulties for the member in providing effective representation. The member will be physically stretched to cover this vast area, but their focus and ability to represent communities with different opinions within the electorate is compromised.

In point 68 of *The 2006 Proposed Redistribution of New South Wales into 49 Electoral Divisions*. The report states:

"Whilst seeking to maintain a relative equality of voters between divisions, the committee also recognises the need to consider the state as a geographical whole. The committee acknowledged, therefore, that it must seek to link the relative low and high growth areas of rural and coastal New South Wales"

Under the proposed redistribution, Parkes and Gwydir combine to form one electorate for the majority of western NSW. There was no attempt to head in a horizontal easterly direction and pick up larger population areas but smaller in geographical size. In fact with the removal of the Upper Hunter LGA from the proposed Parkes electorate, the new electorate is even further from the larger populated areas on the coast.

The Gilgandra Shire Council feel that the abolition of a Sydney seat would have far less impact than the current proposal for the Parkes seat. The Australian Electoral Commissions own predictions have seats such as Wentworth and Watson in Sydney well over the plus/minus 3.5% variation allowable when the November 2005 quota for electoral enrolments was set. In addition, 16 of the 23 seats that were predicted not to meet the quota in 2010, were seats from the Sydney metropolitan area.

Geographically, the seats of Wentworth and Watson are number one and three respectively in terms of the smallest seats in Australia and according to the AEC predictions will have a variance below the November 2005 quota of approximately -11% each. A logical decision would see seats that are both small in area and unable to meet the electoral quota merged where minimal disturbance would be caused and the sitting member can still negotiate their electorate effectively.

Before the Australian Electoral inflicts the people of the proposed Parkes seat with an area the size of Germany, Gilgandra Shire Council urge that they further explore the Sydney Metropolitan area where the tyranny of distance won't see people denied the right to fair and equitable representation at the Federal level

Yours faithfully



Paul Mann
General Manager