

# **COMMENT ON PUBLIC SUGGESTION**

The Federal Redistribution 2009  
NSW



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**Comment on Public Suggestion Number 13**

**by**

**Liberal Party of Australia NSW Division**

**13 Pages**

# Federal Redistribution 2009

COMMENTS

## Redistribution Of Federal Electoral Boundaries

The Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division)

MAY 2009





May 15, 2009

The Redistribution Committee for New South Wales  
Level 4, Roden Cutler House  
24 Campbell Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Committee Members,

It is my pleasure to submit Comments on behalf of the Liberal Party of Australia (New South Wales Division).

I would like to express our appreciation to the staff of the Australian Electoral Commission for the assistance they have provided throughout the redistribution process.

If you require any further information relating to our suggestions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me on (02) 8356 0300.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Neeham".

Mark Neeham  
State Director

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In our suggestions to the Redistribution Committee, the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division) acknowledged there must be changes in seats where growth and/or current enrolments are low, with consequential changes to other seats.

However, it is our belief that a proposal that minimises unnecessary change best complies with the 'letter' and 'spirit' of the Act.

In submissions by the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division) and the Liberal National Party of Queensland to the Redistribution Committees in New South Wales and Queensland respectively, our suggested boundaries mean a notional net loss of one seat to the Coalition in NSW and a notional net gain of one seat to the Liberal National Party of Queensland.

On the other hand, the Labor Party's submission recommends a notional net loss to the Liberal Party of four seats in New South Wales alone (Macarthur abolished; Paterson, Hughes and Gilmore become notional Labor.)

In large part this is facilitated by Labor's curious collection of hybrid seats mixing Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and adjacent rural areas without regard to communities of interest.

Contrary to some recent public comments, our suggestions provide for the highest number of NSW rural seats, compared with the other major parties.

Our submission keeps Gilmore as a wholly rural seat and enhances Paterson's rural character by replacing Nelson Bay, Raymond Terrace and Maitland with Muswellbrook, Singleton and Mudgee.

## COMMENTS

The Liberal Party wishes to comment on nine matters:

### 1. CHARGE OF IMBALANCE LEVELLED AGAINST AEC

We were shocked to read comments attributed to Mr Shane Easson in a report by Imre Salusinsky in *The Australian* on Tuesday, May 5, 2009.

The article states:

*"Labor strategist Shane Easson justified the Labor proposal as 'redressing the imbalance' that means Labor must achieve more than 52 percent of the national two-party-preferred vote to win government."*

Effectively, Labor is asking the Redistribution Committee to **change the result of the election** based on some fatuous claim about electoral bias instituted against them, presumably, by previous Redistribution Committees.

Redistribution Committees comprise the Electoral Commissioner, the Australian Electoral Officer for the state, as well as two senior state officials, usually the state's Surveyor-General and Auditor-General or equivalent positions.

All are committed and dedicated public servants who provide expert advice to the government of the day in an impartial and professional manner.

To question the veracity of determinations by past Committees is outrageous. The comment should be withdrawn.

Furthermore, Labor's argument doesn't stand up to any sort of scrutiny. A quick perusal of the AEC website shows:

- a. Labor won 52.7 percent of the two-party-preferred (2PP) vote nationally;
- b. With this 2PP vote, they won 83 seats;
- c. If Labor had won exactly 52.0 percent of the 2PP, they would have won 80 seats – four more than they needed for a one seat majority;
- d. Labor won only 50.4 percent of the 2PP vote in Queensland and 46.7 percent of the 2PP vote in Western Australia – far below their national average.

With almost 60 percent of the seats, the results in NSW and Victoria heavily skew the national 2PP vote. The only imbalance was Labor's uneven result, particularly in Western Australia.

Mr Easson is just wrong about Labor needing more than 52 percent of the national 2PP vote as the AEC website clearly shows. Clearly it doesn't.



But having opened the door, it is important to see if Labor has sought to artificially **change the result of the election** in any of the seats they suggest to the Redistribution Committee.

It seems that is exactly what they have done, as the following table shows:

Current Seat	Current Seat Liberal 2PP	Labors' suggested seat Liberal 2PP	Liberals' suggested seat Liberal 2PP
Paterson	51.5	43.5	49.8
Hughes	52.2	44.8	50.9
Gilmore	54.1	49.6	52.1
Macarthur	50.7	Abolished	55.8
Hume	54.2	54.6	Bradman

Labor's suggestions take three Liberal seats and make them notional Labor seats.

There may be some debate over the Labor seat of Robertson, where the Liberal 2PP vote at the last election was 49.9 percent, with Labor's Belinda Neal winning by just 184 votes. We don't think the addition of Wamberal has made it a notional Liberal seat but, like Paterson, we concede it would be very close. Given doubts about the impact of postal and pre-poll votes, both are essentially 50:50 on our suggested boundaries. By contrast Labor reduces the Liberal 2PP vote in Robertson to 48.7 percent.

We would also make the point that suggested boundaries by the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division) and the Liberal National Party of Queensland to the Redistribution Committees in New South Wales and Queensland respectively, would mean a notional net loss of one seat to the Coalition in NSW and a notional net gain of one seat to the Liberal National Party of Queensland.

## 2. NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES

The key issue that emerges in northern New South Wales is **Mudgee** and which seat it should be placed in.

In our suggestions, we explained why we transferred the Mid-Western Regional LGA from Parkes. This has been a common theme of all those persons or organisations that have attempted state-wide suggestions, except one. There is also agreement that this LGA should be in the same seat as the shires of the upper Hunter River valley, excepting one organisation.

The Liberal Party's approach to Paterson, Hunter and the Newcastle seats best reflects economic, social and regional communities of interest. By contrast, Labor has a number of curious hybrid seats.

Our suggested seat of Paterson best reflects the NSW Farmers Association's aspiration:

*Agriculture is directly responsible for up to 40 per cent of the economic activity across regional and rural NSW. Considering the significant contribution of agriculture to the NSW and Australian economy in general, it is imperative that farmers and other stakeholders in rural and regional NSW are adequately represented in the Commonwealth House of Representatives. Such representation is imperative not only to continue the generation of strong economic activity in the rural and regional communities in NSW but to also have a balanced representative voice at the policy making level.*

At present, Paterson is a predominately rural seat and it's categorised as such by the AEC on its website. Our suggestions enhance Paterson's rural character. We suggest a seat that includes Mudgee, Gulgong, Rylstone, Merriwa, Quirindi, Murrurundi, Scone, Aberdeen, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Dungog, Stroud, Bulahdelah, Karuah, Forster and Gloucester.

Removing Gloucester LGA, Stroud and Bulahdelah from Paterson, as suggested by Labor, does the reverse. It leads to two Labor seats - Hunter and Paterson – which are politically dominated by the urbanised provincial centres of Cessnock and Maitland respectively.

With the removal of Gloucester LGA, the significance of agriculture as an economic activity in the seat of Paterson is reduced and the urban component increased, thereby diminishing the voice of local farmers in a rural seat. This would appear to fail the test set in the NSW Farmers Association submission.

The Nationals' Paterson has some similarity to the existing boundaries of the division. This might have some merit were it not for the overall regional context, which is the likely transfer of Mid Western Regional LGA into a Hunter River valley seat.

### 3. CENTRAL COAST

Labor attempts to shore up Belinda Neal in Robertson with a wholly unnecessary swap with Dobell, where a smaller addition is all that is needed, as we have shown. The Labor submission's cut and paste job on Robertson is just factually wrong in parts (eg, they don't know that Narara Valley Public School and Lisarow High School are both, in fact, in Dobell) and misrepresents Terrigal's community of interest.

At the 'projection time', the Gosford LGA is projected to have 108,312 electors. That's too big for a federal seat at the higher quota for this and the last redistribution. Thus, it makes sense that the part of Gosford LGA that should be in Dobell, is the part that has greatest proximity to Wyong or Tuggerah – where the Member has his electorate office. And that's Narara, Niagara Park and Lisarow, not Terrigal and North Avoca.

The scheduled travelling time by train from Narara to Tuggerah is just thirteen minutes, eleven minutes from Niagara Park and nine minutes from Lisarow. Where Labor gets the idea that it takes in excess of thirty five minutes is unclear. It's certainly not the CityRail website. Public transport may be bad in New South Wales, but this time we think it's probably just sloppy research.

There is actually no direct public transport, bus or otherwise, from Terrigal to Wyong and Tuggerah, only to Gosford. This just reinforces why the current boundary is the best arrangement.

Oddly enough, Labor's argument about Wamberal's links to Terrigal (eg Catholic parishes) just emphasises why they should be together in the seat of Robertson.

Terrigal, North Avoca and Erina all have strong communities of interest with Gosford and the southern areas of the Central Coast, but virtually none with either The Entrance or Wyong, or indeed, Tuggerah in the north.



#### 4. SOUTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES

As expected, two approaches have emerged among those individuals or organisations that have attempted state-wide suggestions. One involves a transfer of votes from Macquarie to Calare (supported by Mr Jenkins and Mr Richardson). The majority, however, prefer to make adjustments along the Hume and Princes Highway corridors.

The Labor and Liberal submissions are in agreement on three key issues. First, both maintain Macquarie essentially intact.

Second, both draw **five whole divisions in western New South Wales** (including New England). There is a difference in nomenclature: Labor retains current seat names; our submission renames Riverina and Hume Bradman.

A number of suggestions point to the inclusion of Broken Hill in Farrer and seek to reverse this decision made in the last redistribution. However, the cure is worse than the disease in the suggested alternatives. We think our approach to the region is superior in several respects.

Labor transfers Broken Hill but creates an even larger division than any existing seat in this State. They have made the case for keeping Wellington LGA in the seat that contains the city of Dubbo on many occasions in state and federal redistributions. However, they have been unable to do so on this occasion. The Liberal approach keeps the two together in the division of Parkes. Labor's seat of Farrer reminds us of the elongated dog that has been featuring in a recent television advertisement for a roomy sports utility vehicle. Difficult though an Albury – Broken Hill connection may be difficult to justify, an alternative involving Deniliquin and Yass is no better.

Labor's inclusion of parts of Bathurst Regional LGA with Cessnock in Hunter is extraordinary. The villages and districts of Hill End, Turondale, Duramana, Freemantle, Sofala, Wattle Flat, Gowan, and Limekilns do not even have a community of interest with Mudgee, let alone the Hunter River valley. These areas have a strong community of interest with Bathurst, which is why we included them in Macquarie. Labor puts them in Hunter because they are trying to avoid the obvious: Liverpool Plains LGA should be transferred out of New England.

Labor also moves Wentworth and Balranald LGAs. Arguably, these Shires have their strongest community of interest with the Victorian towns of Mildura and Swan Hill respectively, not with any towns in New South Wales. However, water is the key issue for both, and in this respect, Wentworth LGA has a very clear community of interest with the Murray-Darling seat of Farrer.

So Labor's five seats have their problems, but with some adjustment could be made to work with the Liberal approach to the South-East, if the Redistribution Committee were so-minded, because of a third important point of agreement between the Liberal and Labor suggestions.

Both suggest **Yass Valley and Upper Lachlan LGAs are placed in seats west of and not including the city of Goulburn.**

Goulburn-Mulwaree LGA is where the two diverge. Our suggestions outlined the case for resuming the linkage with the seat of Eden-Monaro, within which Goulburn fell for the fifty years prior to 1984. After all, this is where the Goulburn-Mulwaree LGA's community of interest lies.

Goulburn is linked by passenger rail services to Queanbeyan, connecting with other services to Bombala, Cooma and Eden. Goulburn's local television news service, like Queanbeyan and Cooma, is broadcast from Canberra, whereas Bowral receives its local television news service from Wollongong.

The Anglican Diocese and Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn carry out their Church mission and ministry within this region. St. Saviour's Cathedral in Goulburn is the mother church of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Sts Peter and Paul's Cathedral, Goulburn was formerly the cathedral Church of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. St Christopher's in Canberra was consecrated in its place in 1973.

Both Anglican and Catholic Diocesan arrangements include Bega, Cooma and Eden Parishes with Canberra and Goulburn. On the other hand, the Catholic Parish of Bowral falls within that Church's Diocese of Wollongong, while the Anglican Parish of Bowral, like Picton and Camden, falls within the Diocese of Sydney.

Additionally, the Goulburn-Exchange Rugby League Football Club plays in the Canberra Region Junior Rugby League competition against Canberra, Cooma and Queanbeyan based teams.

Our approach is reinforced when the consequences of the alternative approach suggested by Labor is considered.

First, by maintaining a seat called Hume including Goulburn, Labor has tried to claim they have abolished a "city" seat: Macarthur. In fact, Labor has drawn a seat of Hume that includes Australia's first inland city (Goulburn) that is then linked to a substantial component (at least 20,000 electors at the 'projection time') from Western Sydney. They could have chosen either Camden or Campbelltown LGAs. Either alternative would include totally unnecessary splits of Camden or Campbelltown and neither is an appropriate linkage for Goulburn. Their split of Camden is quite bizarre, with Mount Annan and Narellan in two different seats. But a linkage of Goulburn with Campbelltown would be no more satisfactory. At least Camden has always had a distinct character deriving from its rural heritage, even if now subject to urban development.

The second consequence of linking Goulburn to south-western Sydney are the flow-on effects to the south coast seats and the Sutherland Shire seats. These are a mess.

Labor's plan is to use its Illawarra heartland as the basis for drawing three Labor seats. Rather than drawing two seats with strong community of interest in northern and southern Wollongong with a clear boundary between both (as we have), they split off the southern suburbs of Throsby and include them in the rural seat of Gilmore. As a consequence, they need to break off the Sydney suburbs of Loftus, Yarrawarrah, Engadine, Woronora Heights and Heathcote from Hughes and transfer them to Cunningham. A large part of Sutherland is also included in Cunningham. In fact virtually all of the Sutherland Central Business District is included, including the Sutherland Shire Council Chambers.

It is our view that it makes more sense for Hughes to be an outer metropolitan Sydney seat, rather than a hybrid of Wollongong and Sydney, as Labor has suggested. We reject the notion that the Sutherland Shire, an outer metropolitan LGA, has more in common with part of a different regional city.

For example, key government services for Hughes residents are accessed in Sutherland or at Liverpool. For residents of the northern suburbs of Wollongong, such services are provided out of Wollongong - their regional centre.

The Sutherland Shire watches Sydney television while the northern suburbs of Wollongong get their television service from WIN Television out of Wollongong. In fact, the Illawarra Mercury – the predominant newspaper for the northern suburbs of Wollongong – is not even sold in the Sutherland Shire.

Moreover, a detailed examination of the timetable for the Illawarra Line shows that rail services between Sutherland and the northern beach suburbs of Wollongong are infrequent and usually indirect, sometimes requiring a change of trains.

Labor's inclusion of northern areas of the Campbelltown LGA (the suburbs of Glenfield, Long Point and Macquarie Fields) in a seat with Menai and Sutherland is strange, to say the least. Residents of those areas would need to catch at least two different modes of public transport - a bus and two trains (changing from the Bankstown Line to the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra Line at Wolli Creek) – taking at least an hour and a half, just to see their federal member of parliament at Sutherland.

These areas, all within the Campbelltown LGA, have direct community links with Campbelltown, and it makes no sense at all to include these areas in a seat with the Sutherland Shire. By contrast, the Liberal Party has suggested a seat of Werriwa which has the entire Campbelltown LGA and its associated community of interest wholly contained in that seat.

## 5. GILMORE

Gilmore has always been a rural seat. It has never included any regional centre larger than Nowra/ Bomaderry. It is probably more rural than the north coast seats of Richmond, Page, Cowper and Lyne.

The Shoalhaven is not an extension of Wollongong. While tourism and HMAS Albatross are significant, the local economy also includes significant primary production, including dairy farming, winegrowing, beef cattle, oyster farming (Greenwell Point and Lake Conjola), mussel farming (Jervis Bay), emu farming (Falls Creek), fishing (from Greenwell Point, Huskisson and Ulladulla) and forestry. Products grown include fruit, vegetables, olives and turf. The value of this primary production exceeds \$50 million a year. The Shoalhaven also has a number of rural-related manufacturers as well: the Milton Meats abattoir at Milton, Unicorn Cheese at Nowra and Manildra at Bomaderry, manufacturing starch, gluten and ethanol.

To include the suburbs of Wollongong in such a seat is just wrong. The comments made previously about Labor's Paterson, and rural character, are equally applicable to Gilmore. This is another seat where Labor is attempting to water down rural Australia's voice in the Parliament.

The Eurobodalla LGA is a much better fit with Gilmore than Wollongong's southern suburbs. Its character is essentially the same as the Shoalhaven (although without the naval presence): tourism, retirement living and primary production, with some light manufacturing. While we are only able to include 80 percent of Eurobodalla LGA at this redistribution, as Queanbeyan continues to grow, Gilmore can absorb the whole LGA at the next redistribution.

We strongly urge the Redistribution Committee to transfer Goulburn to Eden-Monaro and avoid these appalling consequential changes.

## 6. WENTWORTH

We note Labor agrees with us that the high-enrolment division of Wentworth should be reduced, but by transferring the whole locality of Clovelly to Kingsford-Smith.

The Augmented Electoral Commission's logic in redrawing the boundaries in 2006 is the basis of our submission. They canvassed the issue of the southern boundary fairly extensively on that occasion.

We note that no suggestions have been received recommending any additions to Wentworth on its western boundary.

## 7. NORTHERN SYDNEY

Liberal and Labor suggestions both recommend relative stability among northern Sydney seats. Both adopt the logic that Mitchell gain electors from Parramatta to help adjust the Northern Sydney shortfall. We note Labor also moves Glenhaven, Annangrove and Box Hill out of Mitchell.

Both Liberal and Labor suggest that North Sydney remain substantially the same. However, one suggested alternative has a sizable transfer of electors from Cremorne and Neutral Bay into the division of Warringah.

Currently the North Sydney LGA is wholly contained within the federal division that bears its name. The suggested alternative would only lead to an unnecessary separation of localities that share commonality of interests. It would also confuse electors.

There is one point of difference between the Liberal and Labor submissions, concerning North Epping.

There seems to be no good reason to exclude North Epping from Bennelong. The only reference in the Labor submission, given by way of justification, is the use of the M2 as a boundary. **This is curious, to say the least, as the M2 in fact goes underneath North Epping in a tunnel and is no physical boundary at all.**

North Epping's community of interest lies with suburbs in Bennelong. The reason is immediately obvious. There is no direct access between North Epping and any of the Berowra suburbs. To reach them residents would have to leave North Epping, in Labor's Berowra, via Norfolk Road, drive through Bennelong and then join Beecroft Road adjacent to Epping Railway Station to get to Cheltenham and Beecroft, also in Berowra.

North Epping has its own shopping centre, which includes a branch of Bendigo Bank that stages a Spring Fair each year attended by locals as well as people from other parts of Epping. The Bendigo Bank also awards Community Groups and Sporting Clubs, including organisations based in Epping. North Epping has Anglican and several Asian Community Churches, while people of other faiths generally attend the Epping Catholic and Epping Chester Street Uniting Churches in Bennelong. North Epping also has a Public School but the nearest High School is Epping Boys High at Marsfield in the Bennelong electorate.

Most Residents of North Epping would generally travel east from Pembroke Street Epping towards the City and the natural major shopping centre for them is Macquarie Centre. Many North Epping residents shop at their nearest supermarket, which is the Coles Supermarket in Rawson Street, Epping. Epping Railway Station is the hub of public transport in that area and North Epping residents catch the train and buses from Epping Station, again travelling west to Epping Station rather than north.



## 8. GREENWAY

Labor's Greenway is extremely curious. It seems a change in Marsden Park has given southern Greenway a lobster claw type effect. The kindest thing we can say about this is perhaps someone forgot to split or move a CCD in that locality.

However, this is a minor matter compared to the ludicrous suggestion to move Pitt Town, Oakville, Scheyville, Maraylya and Cattai out of Greenway. These towns and localities, that are part of the Hawkesbury LGA, should be in Greenway.

Students from Cattai attend Cattai Primary School, Pitt Town Primary School, Hawkesbury High School at Freemans Reach and Windsor High School in Greenway. The Windsor offices of Centrelink, DOCS and the Department of Housing are most accessible for residents in the areas proposed by Labor to be transferred to Berowra. Hawkesbury District Hospital is closer and more accessible for people living at Cattai and Pitt Town, once they access Windsor Road, the flood evacuation route direct to the hospital, and ambulance services are based in Windsor and Riverstone. The areas are within the Police Local Area Command, stationed at Windsor. Cattai and Pitt Town residents attend Church services within the Hawkesbury LGA. For example, there is no Catholic Church in these localities: they travel to Windsor.

The residents in these areas consider themselves part of the Hawkesbury region and our submission demonstrates it is possible that this distinctive LGA on Sydney's north-west outskirts be contained wholly in one seat.

We should also note that the Member for Berowra's electorate office is in Pennant Hills, while the Member for Greenway's office is in Windsor. Pitt Town residents would need to travel to Windsor to catch the train to Pennant Hills (via Strathfield).

## 9. LOSS OF A RURAL SEAT

Three-quarters of the submissions received have been lodged in response to the speculation over the preceding few months that Riverina would be abolished by Labor in their suggestions. A related theme was "loss of a rural seat".

Ironically, there was a flood of letters from Wagga Wagga concerned that their seat of Riverina would be large and impossible for a Member to service, including one from the Member for Riverina, Mrs Kay Hull MP. Yet Mrs Hull's own Party has suggested that Riverina be doubled in size, extending to the South Australian border! By contrast, our suggested Bradman includes Wagga Wagga in a smaller, easily serviced seat.

The Farmers Association has entered the debate about the number of rural seats. They make the case for "a balanced representative voice at the policy-making level". We agree. The Liberal Party of Australia represents more rural seats in the Federal Parliament than any other political party. Our suggestions provide for the highest number of rural seats – more than Labor or the Nationals.

We keep Gilmore as a wholly rural seat and enhance Paterson's rural character by replacing Nelson, Bay, Raymond Terrace and Maitland with Muswellbrook, Singleton and Mudgee.

In summary, the following table shows how many seats have been drawn in each party's suggestions where more than 85 percent of the electors live outside urban Sydney, Central Coast, Lower Hunter (incl. Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens LGAs) and Wollongong (incl. Shellharbour LGA):

Liberal	Nationals	Labor
Richmond	Richmond	Richmond
Page	Page	Page
Cowper	Cowper	Cowper
Lyne	Lyne	Lyne
Paterson	New England	New England
New England	Parkes	Parkes
Parkes	Farrer	Farrer
Farrer	Calare	Calare
Calare	Riverina	Riverina
Bradman	Hume	Eden-Monaro
Eden-Monaro	Eden-Monaro	
Gilmore		
(12)	(11)	(10)

The facts speak for themselves.