

COMMENT ON PUBLIC SUGGESTION

The Federal Redistribution 2009
NSW



Comment on Public Suggestion Number **14**

by

Australian Labor Party NSW Branch

11 Pages

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15 May 2009



Mr Ed Killesteyn
Electoral Commissioner
PO Box K406
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

nsw.redistribution@aec.gov.au

Dear Ed,

Please find enclosed comments and suggestions from the Australian Labor Party NSW Branch in relation to redistribution of Federal Electorate Boundaries in NSW.

Should you require anything further please contact me on (02) 9207 2000.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Thistlethwaite".

Matt Thistlethwaite
GENERAL SECRETARY

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (NSW BRANCH)

COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Commissioners have forecast that the NSW Federal Redistribution will likely apply for two Parliaments. However, with NSW having lost 1.1 Quotas in the past three years and with a current entitlement of 48.22, we think it more likely that the Redistribution will apply for only a single Parliament.

Nevertheless, this Redistribution for NSW is the first time in the modern era (since 1983) that the Commissioners have not assumed that the boundaries will not last the allotted time. Had the same formulae been applied as in the 1984, 1991, 2000 and 2006 Redistributions then the projected date, being three years and six months after the expected completion of the Redistribution would have been July, 2013. Had that date applied, then given growth patterns, a rural Division would have certainly been abolished.

The ALP agrees with the Commissioners decision to apply an earlier mid point (and thus the date of the projected quota) for the life of the Redistribution. The July, 2012 date chosen means--- as indicated by the ALP Suggestions, that a rural Division need not be abolished. It also appears to us that both the Liberal and National Party Suggestions have been influenced by an earlier expectation that the projected date would be July, 2013. Otherwise, we can't explain why the Nationals' Suggestion (to be analysed later in our comments) placed so many adjoining Divisions at the very lowest end of the allowable enrolment at the future date.

Notwithstanding our view that had the projected date been July, 2013, a year later than that actually decided a rural Division would have been abolished, it does not follow that a rural Division is under threat at the next Redistribution. Every Redistribution has its own set of numbers and thus a particular range of possibilities. Should this Redistribution only apply for a single Parliament, with NSW then being required to lose another Division, there is every chance that the abolition of either a urban or coastal Division will allow electors to be transferred to inland Divisions, thereby countering any shortfall.

We note that of the 124 suggestions received by the Redistribution Committee, that by far the majority are concerned—in the general sense with the potential abolition of a rural Division. Some of these make suggestions, such as proposing significantly smaller enrolments for rural Divisions which are outside the scope of the Electoral Act imposed on the Commissioners. For reasons provided later in our Comments, we think that the National Party's suggestions fall within this category.

Yet we do concede that with a rural Division having been abolished in 2006, that the Redistribution Committee can and should reasonably conclude that there is considerable disquiet in inland areas concerning the possibility that a second consecutive rural Division (and as has been recommended by the Liberal party) might be abolished.

The Commissioners are required to fulfil the numerical requirements and obliged to give due consideration to the community of interest criteria of the Electoral Act. It is our experience that the Electoral Commissioners use the allowable 3.5% variation in enrolments to establish better boundaries under the community of interest criteria of the Electoral Act. It's not some device for any other purpose. In other words, it's just wishful thinking to imagine that the Commissioners will set the

enrolment of a particular Electorate or a group of Electorates low or high unless they are given very good arguments based on the community of interest criteria.

Other suggestions have been made from Councils which mostly propose that either an entire LGA be brought together into a single Division or else be retained in a particular Division. Irrespective of the merits of these submissions, we think it reasonable for the Committee to infer that especially in rural and coastal Divisions that representatives of LGA's prefer their Council or Shire not to be split.

Two of the suggestions are from individuals containing suggestions for all Divisions and some others detail concerns relating to a particular or adjoining Divisions. Of interest is that three individual suggestions have been made outlining difficulties with the current western boundary of Robertson.

Many of the Non Party suggestions give a different perspective to those of the political parties and as such deserve careful consideration.

Our main focus will be on examining the differences between our own Suggestions and those of the Liberal Party (LP). Both Parties have in their suggestions, proposed complete redistributions for the State and both have met with the requirements of the Commonwealth Electoral Act. When drawing up its suggestions to place before the Committee, the ALP consulted with each of its MP's, Branches and many Party members. The outcome of this ALP internal consultative process is a proposal to the Redistribution Committee which we believe has moulded several ideas and interests and has fully considered the potential flow on effects of our particular Suggestions. As such, we believe that the ALP Suggestions lodged with the AEC on 1st May are the best possible result in fulfilling the community of interest criteria of the Act.

The ALP also has no doubt that an internal similar process to our own has been undertaken by both the LP and NP in seeking the views of not only its MP's but also, literally thousands of party members. At the same time, the ALP expects that the Redistribution Committee will properly judge our Suggestion only on its merits and will make its own decisions on what are the Electoral Boundaries which best discharges its obligations under the Electoral Act.

However, we also believe that the process adopted by the Augmented Electoral Commission during the Public Hearings in 2006 was farcical and unfair to the political parties. We'll return to this point later in our comments.

THE 2006 REPORT OF THE REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE FOR NSW

The ALP considers that the Report of the previous Redistribution Committee for NSW in 2006 holds special significance to the current process. Almost all the matters considered just three years ago remain relevant. Even more importantly, the 2006 Proposals were contained in a Report which provided not only the most comprehensive account of the Redistribution Committee's thinking ever given in NSW but it also introduced and explained its concept that improving communications and transport, together with the drift of population from the inland and its concentration into major centres, would enable the Committee in meeting the community of interest criteria to also allow it to establish regions for electoral purposes.

Let's now examine the above in more detail.

In its 2006 Report the Redistribution Committee for NSW (par 70) "identified three regions where a strong connection between rural, coastal and metropolitan areas was already evident. The Committee considered these to be the Hunter, the Blue Mountains and the Southern Highlands"

(Par 71) "These regions have long been recognised as major road and rail transport corridors through the State. The main western railway line and the Great Western Highway pass through the Blue Mountains. Additionally, the Blue Mountains has historically been regarded as the gateway to the west. The New England Highway and the main northern railway line pass through the Hunter region, with settlements along their length. The main southern railway line and the Hume Highway similarly serve the Southern Highlands".

The Report explained that (par 72) *"Historically, Redistribution Committees have used the Southern Highlands as a connective corridor between the rural and semi rural southern areas and greater Sydney. The Committee recognised that static or declining rural enrolment across much of inland NSW would force it to look beyond this approach. The Committee decided therefore, to also use the Hunter and the Blue Mountains to link related areas on the east and west of the Great Dividing Range"*

Elsewhere, the report stated (par 51) *"On the other hand, bridges do not always unite. A case in point is the Hawkesbury River where major bridges, while facilitating road and rail movements, do not link communities into a homogeneous entity"*

The ALP has quoted at length the previous Redistribution Committee's Report (and will also refer to it in other sections of our comments) because we believe that it offers a clear general strategy for this Committee and for the suggestions made to it.

Further, we note that the three major Parties have with their suggestions, substantially accepted the points made above. For instance, we each:

- Adopt the configuration of Macquarie as a Bathurst/Blue Mountains Division as had been decided by the previous Commissioners.
- Agree that the Hawkesbury River should remain as it has for many decades as an electoral boundary separating Sydney from the Central Coast.
- Retain the Great Dividing Range (which is also a LGA boundary) as the western boundary for north coast Seats. (Except for the Nationals which suggests a small excision involving fewer than 400 electors in Kyogle Shire from Page. We'll cover that proposal when we comment on the National Party's Submission.)
- As we agree that the Hawkesbury River and the Great Divide not be crossed our movements of required electors flows through the current Division of Hunter. (The difference between the ALP and LP suggested that the Division of Paterson will boil down to whether Mudgee, Muswellbrook and Singleton fit better with Cessnock, which more reflects current arrangements or better fits with the Myall Lakes/Forster/Tuncurry area.)

With regard to the Sydney Basin, all three Parties have agreed that the Hawkesbury River remain a boundary and that Macquarie basically be unchanged. Each Party has also proposed that Tumut and Tumbarumba be transferred out of Eden Monaro such that that Division can revert to its pre 2006 Boundary, whilst both the ALP and Liberal Parties suggest that Bundeena be transferred from Cook to Cunningham and that additional electors be transferred from Liverpool into Hughes we differ on where to place Goulburn. (The ALP suggests it remain in Hume whereas the Libs say it should go into Eden Monaro). On the other hand, the Nationals propose that the Division of Banks be abolished with substantial territory being given from Banks to Hughes. This betrays another substantial weakness in the Nationals which will be shortly covered in more detail.

But at this point, let's re-examine what the 2006 Redistribution Committee wrote on the general proposition of whether Hughes might gain additional electors from either Liverpool or from Bankstown via the Alford's Point Bridge into the Division of Banks.

In Pars 241-243 the 2006 Redistribution Committee Stated:

"The Committee noted that, although it did not cross the River at Liverpool Bridge, the existing division of Hughes already contained a significant part of the Liverpool LGA including Chipping Norton, Holsworthy and Moorebank.

The Committee considered that the community of interests between the existing Hughes electors of Moorebank, Chipping Norton and Holsworthy, with Liverpool was long standing and particularly strong.

The Committee did not see a strong community of interests between electors in areas connected by the Alford's Point Bridge"

In 2006, the Liberal Party suggested a similar arrangement between Hughes and Banks as now proposed by the Nationals. At the State level, in 1998 the NSW State Commissioners did place Padstow Heights in the same State District as Menai. This attracted very strong local opposition and a Daily Telegraph editorial opposed. The arrangement was then reversed at the next Redistribution in 2004. At the Federal level, the Georges River, which is also an LGA Boundary, is a boundary of much longer standing (since 1922) than that of the Hawkesbury River. It should remain in place as both the ALP and Liberal suggestions attest.

The Southern Highlands will also be covered in our regional analysis.

Before examining suggestions by region, the ALP will explain why the NP suggestions are of limited value to the Redistribution Committee.

NATIONAL PARTY SUGGESTIONS

The ALP contends that the NP Submission to the AEC, besides being riddled with errors also deliberately falls outside the scope of the Australian Electoral Act by artificially and ridiculously placing all Central Coast and Newcastle Seats as well as most country Divisions at the lowest end of the allowable tolerance.

On the other hand the NP then places a series of adjoining metropolitan Divisions at the highest possible end of the scale. Whilst it seems that under the NP suggestion, no individual Division is placed outside the allowable variations, it is certainly true that entire regions have been proposed by the NP to contain Divisions which in every case have the fewest possible allowable number of electors.

For example, under the NP's suggestion the six Divisions running from Robertson to Hunter contain an average enrolment of 95, 647 at the projected time which is 3 260 below Quota. This converts to the average enrolment of these Divisions being 3.3% below the future quota!

Of the five north coast Divisions, the NP places these at the projected date on average more than 2 000 below quota or on average 2.0% below Quota. The average enrolment for rural Divisions is also below average. Overall, the shortfall is more than 40,000 electors at the projected time for regions covering the North Coast, Central Coast/Hunter and the Inland Country.

The ALP accepts that in best fulfilling the community of interest criteria, it is not necessary to require that the Divisions in each region must balance. For example, with the Division of Hunter, the ALP believes that the Liverpool Range is a natural northern boundary (it is also the LGA boundary between the Councils of Liverpool Plains and Upper Hunter). We think that the community of interest

for both the Divisions of New England and Hunter is better served by keeping Liverpool Plains in New England.

But the systemic way in which the NP places virtually all rural Divisions and those divisions north of the Hawkesbury River so low is simply malapportionment. It's also rather bewildering. It is not necessary to abolish a rural Division; the NP should have directed its energies both to explaining why a rural Division should not go and to putting together suggestions reflecting communities of interest.

Unfortunately, neither objective has been satisfied or even tackled. Consequently, the NP is only useful to the extent that it proposes certain arrangements between towns and cities especially in the country. But it cannot be taken as a proposal which even attempts to fulfil the criteria of the Act. As such the NP Suggestions are akin to a letter to oneself with a CC sent to the Commissioners. Useful for propaganda purposes but not meant to be taken seriously.

We now turn to a more focussed commentary. Our main differences with the LP concern our respective treatment of country and outer suburban Divisions. We begin on the North Coast where of all Divisions, there is the greatest difference between the ALP and LP in our proposals for the Division of Paterson.

NORTH COAST/HUNTER and CENTRAL COAST

Most suggestions, including those of the ALP and LP propose no change to the boundaries of Richmond. With Cowper on Quota and Page within tolerance, the LP has proposed no change to these Divisions. Several other suggestions including the ALP's have proposed that all of Kempsey LGA be placed in Cowper. To us this makes better sense than the 'no change' option especially considering that Page has relatively slow growth and that uniting MacLean with Yamba also improves its community of interest.

The LP has proposed that Tuncurry be split from Forster and be placed in Lyne. These are actually twin towns and are at the heart of the State District of Myall Lakes. We note that the MP for Lyne, Rob Oakshott has in his Suggestion, expressed opposition to any proposal that would result in Forster and Tuncurry being split. If the Great Lakes Council must be split--and both the ALP and LP agree it does, then a far better option would be the excision of Bulahdelah. (NB the ALP has suggested unlike the LP that Gloucester be transferred from Paterson to Lyne. Gloucester has strong connections with Taree and its removal from Paterson also allows a far less intrusive split of the Great Lakes Shire).

Now we come to the Division of Paterson plus Hunter and Newcastle. There are some similarities between the ALP and LP in that we each propose that the Port Stephens area be placed in Newcastle. Both Parties also suggest the removal from Newcastle of Maitland and the satellite suburbs of Beresfield and Tarro. We each propose to consolidate Maitland itself resulting in it becoming the dominant centre, in our case in Paterson and under the LP suggestion in Hunter.

But as stated earlier it all comes down to a simple proposition. Do Mudgee, Muswellbrook and Singleton fit better with Cessnock or with the Myall Lakes area? A single statistic tells us the answer. The Singleton Council's website tells us that the Council area has (at June, 2007) 22 coal mines with 6,930 employees. Singleton is easily the largest producer of coal in NSW. Yet there are only 14,616 electors in the Council area and only 19.9% of the workforce in Singleton is engaged in mining. We also know that coal mining has ceased in the Cessnock Council area. But many of Singleton's miners, almost certainly a majority, hail from Cessnock.

There is a clear and very strong connection between Cessnock, Singleton, Muswellbrook (which has as its largest employment base the mining and power and energy industries) and Mudgee. The Mid

Western Regional Council website states that the *"coal and oil mining sectors make the largest contribution to wages and salaries"* in the Council area.

In contrast, mining only accounts for 0.5% of employment for those who live in the Great lakes Council. As might be expected in a growing tourist and retirement haven, just four categories account for more than half of all employment in the Great Lakes Council. These are Health Care and Social Assistance; Accommodation and food services; Construction and Retail.

It is simply absurd to suggest that part of both Great Lakes and Port Stephens Councils fit at all with Singleton and Muswellbrook, let alone that these areas replace Cessnock. Moreover, such a proposition turns on its head the concept of the 2006 Redistribution Committee concerning the linkage between the Hunter and more rural areas.

That's also indicated by the evidence given by the Federal MP for Paterson, Bob Baldwin when he gave evidence in 2006 at the Sydney Hearings of the Augmented Electoral Commission. At that time he was seeking to have Raymond Terrace retained in Paterson.

In his evidence, Mr Baldwin said:

(Par 9) "I would submit to you respectfully that there is very little connection between the township of Raymond Terrace in the Port Stephens Local Government Area, and indeed that of Newcastle.

(Par 11) I would respectfully submit to you that the township of Raymond Terrace, being one of the largest population districts in my current electorate, is actually the central hub.

(Par 17) The children from Seaham and areas around there actually attend Raymond Terrace High School. The sports school carnivals are in Raymond Terrace. They're not the Raymond Terrace children going down to Newcastle or to Windale to compete in regional sporting finals, they're all at Raymond Terrace and I would say to you respectfully that Raymond Terrace is a key part of the seat of Paterson. It is actually the hub. That's where most of the doctors, medical facilities, X-ray facilities, pathology facilities, it's where defence housing is which services the needs of people who are living as far out as Salamander, across through to Thornton and up through Seaham, Clarence Town"

In part as a result of Mr Baldwin's convincing evidence given in 2006 the ALP has suggested that Raymond Terrace remain in Paterson. It's also different to Port Stephens which has increasingly become a tourist and retirement destination especially for the Hunter region. Port Stephens consequently has a much stronger relationship with Newcastle than does Raymond Terrace. Indeed, since its creation in 1988, the State District of Port Stephens has always contained some Newcastle suburbs. Prior to 1988 Port Stephens was also in the State District of Newcastle.

Later during the hearings Mr Mark Speakman SC also argued that Woodberry and Beresfield more strongly related to Newcastle than with Maitland.

It at least is pleasing to see that in its 2009 Suggestions the LP statement concerning Beresfield that "Although a part of Newcastle it is effectively a twin town of Woodberry (in Maitland LGA) and much has been said in State and Federal Redistributions over the years about why these two towns should be in the same seat."

The ALP does not wish to go into laborious detail concerning every aspect of the LP suggestions. We do note that both the ALP and LP have suggested Wallarah Creek be the north western boundary of Dobell. Our only remaining comment in the Central Coast/Hunter relates to the Divisions of Dobell and Robertson.

The ALP has made what we characterise as a tidying up exercise (similar in intent to what both Parties have proposed for Dobell/Shortland) with respect to the boundaries of Dobell and Robertson. In summary, we have proposed that at the western end of Robertson, that the boundary be the Gosford LGA boundary, thereby uniting Gosford itself in Robertson. We gave a detailed explanation

of our thinking in our suggestions. Robertson would still draw its electors entirely from Gosford LGA but under the ALP Suggestion, no suburb would be split between Robertson and Dobell.

At the eastern end the suburbs of Wamberal, (in Dobell), Terrigal, Erina and North Avoca are in Central Coast terms are a distinct entity. The number of electors we propose to transfer from Robertson at this end is similar to the number of electors necessary to transfer from Dobell to allow Gosford City itself to be placed whole in Robertson.

The current arrangement does cause some confusion and as evidence of this we note that at least three local suggestions have been made saying (at different ends) what the ALP has suggested. We also note that in his suggestion, the former Victorian LP Redistribution writer, Charles Richardson has written:

"It is not necessary for Dobell and Robertson to change at all, but it is suggested that the opportunity could be taken to align the western end of their common border with the municipal boundary".

Considering that our suggestion is a same numbers in as out exercise, we have done exactly what Richardson has suggested.

INLAND COUNTRY

The ALP is more flummoxed than perplexed by the LP Suggestions for inland rural Divisions. We are amazed that the LP considers that for the second consecutive Redistribution, that an inland Division should be abolished. This is especially strange given that once Tumut and Tumbaramba are transferred west out of Eden Monaro there is no longer any need to abolish a country Seat.

Additionally, we think that the LP's proposed rural Divisions are in every instance far worse than the current divisions in reflecting communities of interest.

Our summary of the LP breach of the community of interest criteria for country Divisions is as follows:

NEW ENGLAND/PARKES: Narrabri and Moree have been together in the same State and Federal Electorates since Federation. This time the LP say they should be split with Moree going into New England. Yet surely New England is a tablelands Division. That ought to mean that if it be required to gain significant additional electors that the obvious place to pick up is Gunnedah as has been suggested by the MP for New England, Tony Windsor. NB the LP has also said Werris Creek, where Tony Windsor lives along with the remainder of Liverpool Plains should go into a Myall Lakes seat.

FARRER/BROKEN HILL: One of the silliest outcomes of the last Redistribution was having Broken Hill in the same seat as Albury. This time even the NP have been forced to join with the ALP in saying let's take Broken Hill out of Farrer. The LP won't have a bar of this. They say lets add Menindee Lakes to Farrer. Lest we think the NP are being reasonable let's now see where they put Broken Hill. The logical thing would be—as the ALP suggests, putting Broken Hill with Dubbo together with the like minded surrounding Western Division towns. No way says the NP. Their intuition tells them that Broken Hill fits best with.....Orange!!

CALARE/MIA: Currently the Seat of Riverina connects the MIA consisting of the Councils of Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera and Murrumbidgee with Wagga Wagga. That's sensible and reflects a strong community of interest. In its suggestion, the ALP seeks to preserve this arrangement. Consistent with its apples and oranges suggestions for other rural Divisions, the LP put the citrus groves of the MIA in the same seat as the City of Orange.

BRADMAN: The Libs attempt to conjure an attractive name for a new Seat as a cover for their real intention which is the fact that they appear to really want to abolish a country Seat in order to improve their margin in the city Seat of Macarthur.

The ALP anticipates that the NP may complain about the size of the ALP's suggested Parkes. The ALP in turn regards the outcome of the previous (2006) Redistribution as a poor outcome in meeting the community of interests for electors in several rural Divisions, especially Farrer, Eden Monaro, Parkes and particularly Calare. The less than ideal boundaries of the aforementioned Divisions in part were the result of a fixation of the previous Commissioners in attempting to reduce in size the largest Division but at the expense of the community of interests of the affected electors.

Not a soul in Cobar or Bourke thinks they have a better connection with Orange than with Dubbo. Yet that is the current arrangement which both the NP and LP want perpetuated. Yet for most of the years since Federation these areas have been in the same Division as Broken Hill and have also strongly related with Dubbo. The decline of Broken Hill allows the Commissioners to place most Western Division towns in Parkes.

We repeat our remarks made in our suggestions:

'The LGA's in far western NSW of Brewarrina, Bourke, Central Darling, Cobar and Walgett plus Unincorporated Far Western NSW cover just over one third of the area of NSW. Collectively they contain 11,179 electors or less than one eighth of the quota for a Division. These are all part of the Western Division and have similar interests. The population in these areas look to both Dubbo and Broken Hill. We place them in a Division containing both Broken Hill and Dubbo'.

As for the NP, in QLD it has suggested that the size of Maranoa be massively increased by more than 80% to almost one million square kilometres or 1.2 times the size of NSW.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS/ SOUTH COAST

As earlier noted all three Parties have suggested that Tumut/Tumbarumba be transferred west from Eden Monaro. Whereas both the ALP and NP have suggested that Eden Monaro take back parts of the Eurobodalla LGA from Gilmore, the LP has instead proposed that Goulburn be sent to Eden Monaro. We acknowledge that this suggestion is made possible if a rural Division is abolished. However, the ALP also regards this proposal as counter to the 2006 Redistribution Committee's description of the Southern Highlands as a "connective corridor" between Sydney and the rural and semi rural areas to its south.

True, Goulburn was in Eden Monaro from Federation until 1984. But the increase in the size of the Parliament that year meant that Eden Monaro had to shrink. That Division's healthy growth in the years since has allowed it to remain a Queanbeyan/coastal Division which reflects its history. Also, as the ALP stated in that part of its suggestions concerning the South Coast, should any of these Divisions include a section of the 'connective corridor' then there will be a far greater impact on electoral boundaries of south coast and Illawarra Divisions than otherwise would be the case.

We had described how in the years since 1984 the South Coast and Illawarra which in Four Divisions had a Highlands component, had by 2006 no Highlands component, but with Hughes running east west to make up for any shortfall for the region.

In summary, in this region the ALP has stuck with the formulae of the 2006 Redistribution Committee. Both the shortfall of the south coastal Divisions and the compensation for the loss of Tumut and Tumbarumba from Eden Monaro has been made up by drawing Hughes further west. That Division is now a Liverpool Seat with a Sutherland component rather than the other way round. It still contains Menai and Sutherland

from Sutherland Shire but these suburbs effectively are being held in reserve to make up for the inevitable shortfall of electors in Illawarra Divisions that will be required at the next Redistribution.

The LP has a variant of this theme. In its suggestions the LP also moves Hughes further west and Gilmore remains a coastal Division but it also effectively attempts *to replace* Tumut/Tumbarumba with Goulburn. Such a measure, if adopted could only be temporary and should be rejected.

However, what the Libs try to do with Goulburn which both the ALP and NP leave out of Eden Monaro also helps explain why the ALP and NP have the same northern boundary for Gilmore. We also unite Kiama LGA but in Gilmore (not Throsby as the LP proposes) and we also remove Albion Park Rail from Throsby.

Elsewhere, the ALP and LP try to make Campbelltown the centre of Werriwa by removing to it the Campbelltown component in Macarthur. We also each have the Liverpool LGA only split between the Divisions of Fowler and Hughes. Our differences are due to both our different treatment of Goulburn and also in the case of the LP to the knock on effects of removing Liverpool Plains from New England.

METROPOLITAN SYDNEY

Both the ALP and LP retain the eastern boundary of Macquarie; the Hawkesbury River boundary and the Georges River boundary until Liverpool. We each, in different ways try to unite the Parramatta CBD in the Division of Parramatta. Our differences in metropolitan Sydney are not nearly as significant as in the other regions. Hence, the ALP does not wish to dissect the LP suggestions for Sydney.

So we confine ourselves to a few points.

We find unconvincing, to say the least the LP reasoning for its suggestion that Wentworth be placed at the lowest end of the range of the future Quota. The 2006 Commissioners set Wentworth at 8.6% above the average quota as at 5th December, 2005. At the time the current quota was struck in February, Wentworth was 4.9% above and is projected to be 2.7% above the future quota in July, 2012.

In the ALP's Suggestions we have proposed that Wentworth shed the suburb of Clovelly to compensate Kingsford Smith for the loss of Rosebery to Sydney. The LP has also suggested that Rosebery go back into Sydney. Given that Wentworth has never kept pace with the State's average growth---as demonstrated above it can only be wishful thinking to seriously suggest that Wentworth be placed low.

Finally, we corrected a small error concerning a single CCD in Greenway which was separately communicated to the AEC by Shane Easson. The correction is formally made in these comments.

NAMES OF DIVISIONS

It is now 21 years since the passing of Sir William McMahon. We have no objection to a Division being named in his honour and we think this should be a higher priority than say naming a division after Sir Donald Bradman. Gough Whitlam is now Australia's longest lived former Prime Minister. We also would have no objection to a Division bearing his name. There are plenty of precedents for a Division being named after a living person. The most recent is Rankin (QLD) created in 1984.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

In 2006 the Public Hearings of the AEC were a farce. In the face of 2000 objections only two hearing days were held. In the case of the Narrabri Hearings, the political parties were only allowed 5 minutes each to

present. With the Sydney hearings the ALP representative, Shane Easson was allocated just one hour to both present the ALP Objections and to reply to the Liberal and National Party presentations before they were made! The hour allocated also included the three ALP witnesses.

These Hearings were a complete disgrace and did not conform to the spirit of the Act. (See pars 264-9 of the transcript of the Sydney hearings).

We ask that when the Augmented Commission is formed, that the Commissioners both note that the Electoral Act was amended in 1987 to allow more time for Public Hearings and further that the greater the number of seats in a State that there are exponentially more possible arrangements for divisions and thus potentially a greater possibility of disputes (or objections) which, as the Act requires should also reasonably be heard. (but with additional information to that in written form).

In practice that might mean that the AEC discuss with the major Parties and others what objections they wish to raise at the Hearings. Should this be done, we are confident that the Parties will be reasonable. But at the least a better process than last time should be adopted. For example, a process of hearings by regions would mean whichever party representative appears first is not disadvantaged.

These comments are made at a time when no-one has any idea of whether the Redistribution Committee's proposed boundaries might arouse significant objections or not. It may well be that as in 2000 two days of hearings would provide more than enough time. But please try to avoid what happened in 2006.

CONCLUSION

In its suggestions, the ALP transfers 14.0% of electors between Divisions. The LP transfers 15.6%. Both Parties transfer slightly fewer electors between Divisions than the 16.47% of 2006. The numbers transferred in both cases are reasonable.

The ALP trusts that its comments have been helpful to the Redistribution Committee. We believe that our approach to the setting of divisional boundaries has been consistent with that of the 2006 Redistribution Committee. Our comments regarding other suggestions especially that of the LP have in large measure been an attempt to measure the extent to which these suggestions have followed the same approach as adopted by the Committee in 2006.