

COMMENT ON OBJECTIONS

The Federal Redistribution 2009
NSW



Comment on Objections Number 3

by

**Warwick L Bennett, General Manager, Mid-Western Regional
Council**

2 Pages



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Mr Ed Killesteyn
Electoral Commissioner
Australian Electoral Commission
Level 3, Roden Cutler House
24 Campbell Street
Haymarket, NSW 2000

Dear Mr Killesteyn

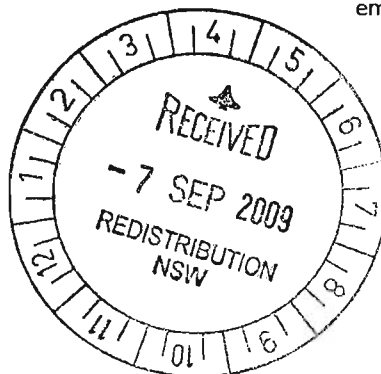
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3 September 2009



SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED FEDERAL ELECTORATE REDISTRIBUTION

Since its creation in 2004 through the amalgamation of Mudgee Shire, most of Rylstone Shire and a fraction of Merriwa Shire, the Mid-Western Regional Council has devoted extensive time and effort to the process of building a unified community. This has not been an easy process because many people in Rylstone Shire felt strong local loyalties and were bitter about the loss of their separate Local Government Area. Our efforts have begun to pay off, however, and divisions of the past are giving way to a sense of a unified community.

It is with grave reservations, therefore, that we view the manner in which the Redistribution Committee for New South Wales proposes to fragment the Mid-Western Regional Council LGA by placing Rylstone, Kandos and half of the Bylong Valley in the Hunter Electorate and the balance of this Region in the Calare Electorate.

Mid-Western Regional Council is one of only a very few LGAs where the proposed boundary adjustments would split a Council area between two Electorates, rather than retaining the entire LGA in a single electorate as it is at present.

We realise that the adjustment of electorate boundaries is based primarily on numerical population assessments. We believe, however, that this particular proposed Electoral Division fails to adequately comply with Section 66(3) *subparagraphs* (3)(b)(i), (ii) and (iv) of the Electoral Act which require the considerations of "community of interests within [a division] including economic, social and regional interests", "means of communication and travel within [a division]", and "the physical features and area of [a division]".

The economic, social and regional community interests of the eastern sliver of Mid-Western Regional Council which the proposed Electoral Division would place within the Hunter Electorate are clearly aligned with the rest of the Mid-Western Region LGA rather than any part of the Hunter, particularly in light of the post-amalgamation focus on building a single community.

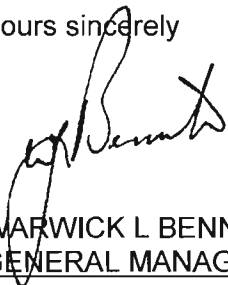
In terms of communication and travel, the entirety of the Mid-Western Region LGA is isolated from the Hunter Electorate by the Wollemi and Goulburn River National Parks with only a single road

(Bylong Valley Way) providing access. By contrast, an extensive network of roads link this portion of the LGA to the western balance of the Region. In terms of access by a Federal member, keeping the LGA in a single Electorate is by far the best choice.

As for physical features, the proposed and Electoral Division would place half of the remote Bylong Valley in the Hunter Electorate and the other half in the Calare Electorate. The map on the Electoral Commission web site makes it appear likely that the little village of Bylong, through which Bylong Valley Way runs, would be split in two. And as noted previously the Wollemi National Park isolates Rylstone, Kandos, Charbon and Clandulla from the Hunter Electorate with the winding Bylong Valley Way providing the only road link between the Hunter and these communities.

For all of the above reasons, we ask that the Electoral Commission keep the entirety of the Mid-Western Regional Council in the Calare Electorate. To do otherwise will severely disadvantage those electors transferred into the Hunter Electorate, disadvantage all of the LGA in terms of a cohesive and coordinated representation in Canberra and undermine Council's efforts to build a unified community with equal levels of benefit for all.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warwick L Bennett', written over a horizontal line.

WARWICK L BENNETT
GENERAL MANAGER