

COMMENT ON OBJECTIONS

The Federal Redistribution 2009
NSW



Comment on Objections Number 14

by

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6 Pages

From: Mark Mulcair [markmulcair@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 September 2009 8:42 PM
To: NSW Redistribution
Subject: Comments on Objections to NSW redistribution 2009
Attachments: COMMENTS ON OBJECTIONS TO NSW REDISTRIBUTION.doc

Dear Committee Members,

Please find attached my Comments on the Objections to the 2009 NSW redistribution.

As always, I hope these are of assistance to you in your deliberations.

Regards,

Dr Mark Mulcair



COMMENTS ON OBJECTIONS TO 2009 NSW REDISTRIBUTION

While there are 280 objections to the redistribution, nearly all of them can be broken down into a small number of groups.

1) Objections to the abolition of Reid:

A significant number of Objections are to the abolition of Reid and the creation of the new seat of McMahon. While there is certainly an argument that abolishing a high-growth electorate is unusual, most of the Objections give some rather odd justifications for keeping Reid, including:

- Personal and/or political support for the sitting member, Mr Ferguson.
- The fact that Reid has been represented by 'iconic' characters such as Jack Lang.
- Dislike of Sir William McMahon's record as Prime Minister.
- The feeling that the addition of 'affluent' electors from other parts of McMahon will result in competing communities of interest.
- The feeling from several ethnic, cultural and religious groups that their voice will be diluted by being placed in Parramatta or McMahon.

With the possible exception of the last point, none of these arguments are particularly strong, and most are outside the scope of the redistribution process. The idea that McMahon would somehow become impossible to represent because it contains many different communities of interest is particularly silly. Virtually every division contains a wide variety of people, all with competing interests and needs.

I appreciate that a high concentration of new migrants and people born overseas might constitute a 'community of interest', with similar concerns about immigration, citizenship, and employment. However, I note the proposed divisions of Parramatta and McMahon already contain large multicultural communities, and I assume the local MPs are already experienced and sympathetic in dealing with such issues. I do not believe these communities will be significantly disadvantaged by being placed in a different division.

The more fundamental problem here is that retaining Reid would have a massive impact on surrounding divisions and the state as a whole. It would essentially require the Committee to rethink the entire redistribution, and I do not believe such a change is warranted at this stage of the process. I do however recommend that the Committee consider tidying up the boundaries of McMahon to better reflect communities of interest in the area. (*e.g.* my Objections 11 and 12, or those of Mr Martin Gordon)

The only part of these objections I do support is the proposal to retain the name 'Reid'. My Objection 18 proposes renaming the proposed division of Parramatta as 'Reid', but the Committee may wish to explore other options such as Prospect. As a former Australian Prime Minister, every effort should be made to retain the use of his name.

2) Objections to the placement of Wingecarribee in Throsby:

Many individuals and organisations including the Council itself suggest that the part of Wingecarribee LGA proposed to go into Throsby should instead go into Gilmore (as I did in my Objection 6).

I strongly recommend this change be made, in order to avoid the messy split of Shellharbour, and improve community of interest in these two divisions.

3) Objections to the placement of Bundeena/Maianbar in Cunningham:

A number of residents and organisations in this area object to being removed from Cook. It is certainly clear that the majority of links from Bundeena are back towards Cronulla or Sutherland, not to the parts of Sutherland LGA proposed to be placed in Cunningham. Unfortunately, given Cunningham, Cook and Hughes are all set at the high end of tolerance, there is little room for changes between these divisions.

If the Committee were prepared to consider more significant changes to Hughes, such as those proposed by the Liberal Party, an adjustment between Cook and Cunningham in this area may become feasible.

4) Objections of rural Local Councils:

Wellington LGA objects to being split between Calare and Parkes, and recommends it be united in one division. I note that the council does not specify that this division must be Parkes. My Objection 3 would therefore address these concerns by uniting Wellington LGA in Calare. The National Party's changes are more substantial, but allow Wellington to be united in Parkes.

Cootamundra LGA objects to being placed in Hume. However, I believe Cootamundra has previously been in Hume, and would have links to areas such as Harden, Young and Yass currently within Hume. While the area may have stronger links with Wagga Wagga, there does not appear to be an overwhelming community of interest argument against this change.

Wollondilly LGA proposes an adjustment to be boundary between Hume and Macarthur in the Mount Hunter area. This is a sensible change, and would only involve a small number of electors. The related point regarding the 9 Wollondilly electors currently in Cunningham should also be accommodated, provided it would not leave these electors cut off from the remainder of Macarthur.

Wingecarribee LGA, as noted above, prefers a transfer to Gilmore instead of Throsby.

Greater Lithgow LGA proposes a return to Macquarie; however this does not appear possible given quota requirements. Lithgow has strong links with Bathurst and has previously been in Calare, and I believe fits well in a Central West division.

Gloucester LGA objects to being transferred from Paterson to Lyne. While it is true that Paterson would remain within tolerance without the loss of Gloucester, Lyne would be then under quota and forced to gain a small portion of either Great Lakes LGA or one of the Hunter Valley councils. This should be avoided.

Bourke LGA objects to the size of Parkes; however, the sparsely populated north-west of the state means that any division covering this area is likely to be geographically large. I submit that the redistribution has benefited Bourke LGA by returning it to Parkes, given its community of interest with Dubbo and surrounds.

Central Darling LGA expresses similar concern about the size of Parkes, but its suggestion is outside the scope of the redistribution.

Port Stephens LGA proposes an adjustment with Newcastle, but oddly still leaves part of the LGA within Newcastle. It seems more sensible to unite Port Stephens entirely in Paterson (as proposed in my Objection 2).

5) Objections of Mr Martin Gordon:

There are many points of agreement between Mr Gordon's Objections and mine, namely:

- Transferring the section of Wingercarribee LGA to Gilmore instead of Throsby (similar to my Objection 6).
- Transferring the balance of Camden LGA and Austral to Macarthur, and leaving the Blairmount/Woodbine area in Werriwa (similar to my Objection 7).
- Adjusting the boundary between Hughes and Banks in the Revesby area (similar to my Objection 8, although I believe Padstow Heights should remain with Padstow in Banks).
- Rotating Banks, Barton and Watson (similar to my Objection 9, although he goes further by placing all of Kogarah LGA in Banks).
- Focussing McMahon on the Parramatta River by having it gain Newington and Silverwater, rather than the Lidcombe/Auburn area (similar to my original Suggestion for Lowe).

Placing all of Kogarah LGA in Banks would allow the division to shed its Canterbury LGA component, but would also end up splitting the centre of Kogarah. If the Committee were interested in removing Canterbury from Banks, perhaps a better alternative would be to extend Banks eastward to Botany Bay to gain Ramsgate, Sandringham and Sans Souci.

I do not understand Mr Gordon's problem with the proposed Bennelong. This division is well within tolerance, has strong boundaries, and is not under immediate pressure from neighbouring divisions. The best solution is to leave Bennelong untouched, as noted in my Objection 14, and there is no need to transfer electors from Ryde LGA to North Sydney.

6) Objections from the ALP:

At the Queensland redistribution, the LNP attacked the Committee for the redistribution's perceived political unfairness. Here, it's the ALP who lead their Objections off with a whinge, accusing the Committee of 'malapportionment'.

I suggest these comments be ignored. The 10% and 3.5% variations are there for a reason, and there is nothing that requires every division or every region to be as close to quota as possible. I personally have no problem with divisions being set near the top or bottom of tolerance if it results in strong boundaries and clear communities of interest.

The ALP make two Objections:

While I agree with their proposal to transfer Austral to Macarthur instead of Werriwa (as proposed in my Objection 7), I do not support transferring Macarthur's share of Wollondilly LGA to Hume. Those parts of Wollondilly LGA around the Sydney metropolitan area are similar to the semi-rural parts of Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool LGAs proposed to be placed in Macarthur, and would not be out of place in that division. The only exception would be the minor adjustment around Mount Hunter as proposed by Wollondilly Council and the National Party.

The second objection proposes uniting Palerang LGA in Eden-Monaro. Since it would only involve 576 electors, this change should be made.

7) Objections of the Liberal Party:

The Liberal party put forward three Objections:

They propose, as have others including myself, that Wingecarribee should go into Gilmore instead of Throsby. However, while they unite Shellharbour LGA, they propose a split of Kiama LGA. This is not necessary; Gilmore can accommodate the loss of all of Kiama LGA, while Throsby can be easily adjusted by transferring Unanderra to Cunningham (as shown in my Objection 6).

Their second objection proposes a change to Paterson and Newcastle, with most of Port Stephens LGA being placed in Paterson, and Metford in Newcastle. This is very similar to my Objection 2, although the Liberal Party's proposals still leave Port Stephens LGA split by placing Fern Bay in Newcastle. While Fern Bay probably has a stronger community of interest with Stockton than with the remainder of Port Stephens, leaving Fern Bay in Newcastle would cause Paterson to fall outside tolerance. This then forces the Liberal Party to detach a small part of Greater Taree LGA from Lyne to make up the numbers in Paterson.

I recommend consideration of my Objection 2 in preference to the Liberal Party's proposal in this area. Fern Bay should be united with the rest of Port Stephens LGA in Paterson, allowing all of Greater Taree LGA to remain in Lyne.

The third objection from the Liberal Party proposes a rearrangement of Werriwa, Fowler, Hughes and Cook to unite the Liverpool CBD in Werriwa. There is certainly some merit to this proposal, since Liverpool is very oddly placed in Hughes, and the Georges River is a strong boundary in this region. Retaining Bonnet Bay and Como West in Hughes would also allow Cook to retain Bundeena and Maianbar, which many of the local residents want.

One disadvantage is that Werriwa would become a more elongated division, stretching from Chipping Norton Lake to Campbelltown, containing large parts of both Campbelltown and Liverpool. I also note that the Liberal Party's boundaries for Fowler would result in a 'dog-leg' around West Hoxton, and split West Hoxton from Hoxton Park.

8) Objections of the National Party:

The National Party propose retaining Mid Western and Wellington LGAs in Parkes, and Parkes and Forbes LGAs in Calare. Provided the numbers balance, this seems like a sensible proposal, as it would allow electors in these shires to remain within their current division. They note that Parkes would lose around 1900 electors to Calare, and express concern that Parkes may fall outside tolerance in the future. Upholding my Objections 1, 4 and 5 would easily compensate Parkes for this loss, and would help unite a further three rural LGAs.

The Nationals objection regarding Greenway and Chifley is similar to my Objection 16, although they leave Shanes Park in Chifley. I recommend a simple return to the existing boundaries in the area, with the new Greenway/Chifley boundary in Blacktown following the existing Chifley/Parramatta boundary in its entirety.

The other objections from the National Party have been discussed above, namely placing Wingercarribee in Gilmore, Mount Hunter and surrounds in Hume, and all of Camden LGA within Macarthur. I support all of these proposals.