

PUBLIC SUGGESTION

The Federal Redistribution 2009
NSW



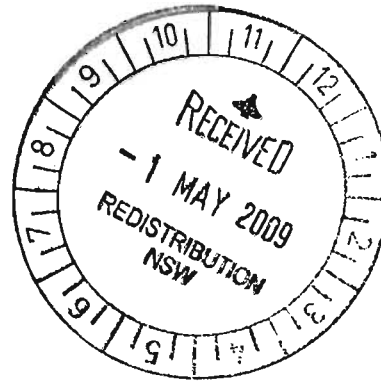
Public Suggestion Number 120

by

Junee Shire Council

3 Pages

Redistribution Committee
Australian Electoral Commission
Level 3, Roden Cutler House
24 Campbell St, Haymarket
Sydney NSW 2000



Dear Redistribution Committee

Redistribution of Commonwealth House of Representative Seat (NSW)

I write to you concerning the reduction in entitlement of NSW from 49 to 48 House of Representative seats. My comments do not relate to the loss of a seat through population increase in Queensland – this is a consequential and correct process in our democratic system. I wish though to comment on a number of other important principles of political life in Australia, being the right to equal and fair representation (both in numerical, spatial and accessibility terms) and an apolitical redistribution process.

Equal and fair representation for rural and regional (inland) areas

When an electorate is abolished through redistribution the area of the surrounding electorates, particularly in rural and regional areas, inevitably becomes larger. The ability of the local member to reasonably service the electorate is decreased. The larger the electorate the less the community of interest between geographic areas of the electorate, and the more marginalised some parts of the electorate (the people) become. Within rural and regional areas of NSW the community of interest and the distance travelled to represent people with the same 'community of interest' is paramount.

In rural and regional areas the House of Representative seats are already very large, compared to coastal or metropolitan based seats. For example the inland seats of New England, Parkes, Calare, Riverina and Farrer cover about 80% of the State's land area but constitute less than 10% of the State's population (based on the AEC estimated population at 2012). Abolishing any of these seats (and most inland seats generally) would increase the size of the electorate, making it harder for the people to access the local member, and harder for the local member to effectively represent the electorate.

Increasing the size of the electorate also potentially brings into play differing communities of economic and social interest, leading to the marginalising of that part of the electorate whose needs may be different, but no less relevant, to the remainder of the electorate. For these reasons we recommend that rural and regional House of Representative seats not be abolished, as despite the effort to equalise the population across seats, the distance and service factor will likely further diminish the potential for equal and fair representation across the surrounding seats.

With particular reference to Junee, the Junee Shire and district has historically been located on the edge of our local House of Representatives seat, however the people of Junee usually have a strong 'community of interest' with other towns and rural areas within the electorate (Riverina). We benefit particularly from a hard working local member, who despite the distances required to travel across the electorate has always given equally to the people of the electorate, including the Junee area.

Abolishing the seat of Riverina would potentially diminish the potential for equal and fair representation across the Riverina area in general.

Abolition of a metropolitan based seat

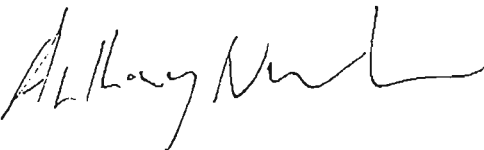
If one accepts the argument that rural and regional (inland) seats not be abolished, then the remaining seats are coastal or metropolitan based.

There are a numerous seats which are based in the Sydney metropolitan area and coastal regions of the State, where the geographic area of the seat is considerably smaller than rural and regional seats. However the five seats with the lowest population (as estimated by the AEC at 2012) and which are located in the Sydney metropolitan area are Berowra, Cunningham, Fowler, Lowe and Throsby. These seats generally feature much better accessibility than rural and regional seats, due to better public transport and less distance to travel, thereby making it easier for the people to access their local member and vice versa. These seats could be considered by the AEC for redistribution.

The apolitical selection of a seat for abolition in the metropolitan area could be based on the choice of seat whose redistribution would not create a politically marginal electorate, which points towards choosing an existing seat whose neighbouring electorates vote along similar lines, with similar two party preferred percentages.

Thank you for considering the Council's submission.

Yours faithfully

per 

GFS Campbell
General Manager