



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Objection 475

Bland Shire Council

3 pages

27 June, 2024

Mr Tom Rogers
Chair
Redistribution Committee for New South Wales
Locked Bag 4007
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Rogers

Re: 2023-24 New South Wales Redistribution

Council has recently been made aware that the 2023-24 New South Wales Redistribution has proposed that the Bland Shire local government area be transferred to the Division of Parkes. This proposal is wholeheartedly rejected by Bland Shire Council. The Bland Shire local government area is currently contained in the Electoral Division of Riverina and Council submits that this local government area should be retained wholly within this electoral division.

While Council accepts that there was a need to consider the numbers of electors within the Riverina region, it would argue that the retention of Bland Shire within this electorate would see elector numbers within the permissible range. Specifically, according to information provided via the Australian Electoral Commission documentation, including Bland Shire voters within Riverina would see a projected enrolment of 133,164. This figure is 993 enrolments below the permissible maximum number of electors in an electoral division at the projection time of 134,157¹.

Bland Shire's position on this matter is based on several factors. Bland Shire maintains that the local government area should remain in the Division of Riverina having regard to the established community of interest and the social, educational and cultural connection between the Shire and other local government areas within the Riverina, as well as the connection with Wagga Wagga for accessing government services. In support of Council's position, we draw your attention to the following information:

- For the NSW Government's strategic planning purposes, particularly with respect to economic development matters, Bland Shire has been placed in the Southwest Slopes Functional Economic Region together with Temora, Weddin, Hilltops and Cootamundra-Gundagai local government areas - all of which are in Riverina.
- For regional planning purposes, Bland is also included within the Riverina region as part of the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041. This process clearly articulates the links between all those local government areas within the region, the collective approach to building resilient and sustainable communities and demonstrates the region is connected, attractive, healthy, safe and prosperous.

¹ Table 8, Page 13 - Redistribution of New South Wales into electoral divisions May 2024

- Bland Shire combines with Temora local government area to form the Bland Temora Fire Zone for bush fire management purposes.
- Bland Shire has also partnered with Temora Shire on the development of Regional Drought Resilience Plan that presents a range of individual and collective approaches to building more resilient communities.
- Bland Shire is currently a member of an alliance of six Councils within the Riverina Region for the purposes of undertaking internal audit functions and directly employs staff for the provision of services to support the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees of those Councils.
- Bland Shire provides support services to Family Day Care educators within Temora Shire and has done so for several years.
- Bland Shire Council is a member of the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC) for resource sharing, collaboration and advocacy purposes. Seven of the eight member councils are situated in the Division of Riverina.
- Bland Shire Council is a member of Eastern Riverina Arts along with seven other Councils, all of which are situated in the Division of Riverina.
- Community members living within Bland Shire traditionally travel to the south towards not only Wagga but other communities within the Riverina electorate for a range of matters. As a result, there is a strong community of interest which has been established between those communities and ours.

The above is only a small snippet of the reasons behind Bland Shire's desire to remain within the Riverina electorate – a division of which it has been part for 40 elections since Federation. The existing communities of interest between our shire and others within the electorate are long standing and have resulted in a strong network of partnerships and collaborations. Our communities face similar challenges and support each other in activities that frequently extend beyond geographical borders. While our local residents participate in educational and sporting activities across the Riverina region they also frequently travel to the major centre of Wagga Wagga for retail opportunities and medical appointments. As such, we have a strong affinity to the name Riverina.

The same cannot be said for the Division of Parkes – an electorate that encompasses the largest land mass within New South Wales. The inclusion of a further 8,560 km² to that local member's area of representation does not appear logical, not to mention the increased distances Bland Shire community members would be required to travel to attend the member's electorate office. Dubbo is located more than 257 kilometres from the town of West Wyalong, which is the major community within Bland Shire. The City of Wagga Wagga, central to the Riverina electorate, is at least 100 kilometres closer facilitating far easier access for the community to its elected representative.

With regard to the number of actual enrolments for the Parkes electorate, should Bland not be included, the number of voters (126,216) is still within the permissible range². It should also be noted that while submissions were received arguing for the transfer of the local government areas of Parkes and Forbes to the Parkes electorate, at no time was there a proposal lodged recommending the removal of Bland Shire from the Riverina electorate. Had that been the case, this correspondence would have been provided to you at a much earlier date. While Parkes and Forbes “share a close connection with Dubbo which is one of the major towns within the Division of Parkes”³ there is no obvious community of interest between the towns within Bland Shire and the regional centre of Dubbo.

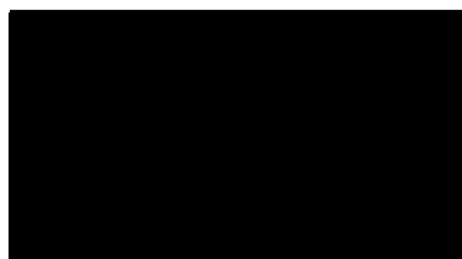
Having regard to the reasons outlined above, Bland Shire Council respectfully submits that the electors from within our local government area remain within the Electoral Division of Riverina.

Please don't hesitate to contact Council should you have any questions or require any further information, on (02) 6972 2266.

Yours sincerely



Cr Brian Monaghan
Mayor



Grant Baker
General Manager

² Table 8, Page 13 - Redistribution of New South Wales into electoral divisions May 2024

³ Paragraph 390, Page 80 - Redistribution of New South Wales into electoral divisions May 2024