



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Objection 542

Phillip and Cathy Browne

2 pages

To: New South Wales augmented Electoral Commission

Dear NSW Redistribution Committee,

Re: Your proposed plan to abolish the North Sydney federal electorate this year, and redistribute it between 3 other electorates.

My husband Phillip and I would like to begin by thanking you for your work. We are profoundly – and increasingly – grateful for the AEC, Australia’s compulsory voting, its electoral structure, and the general integrity and professionalism of electoral officers at all levels. There is not one moment where we take these systems, or our precious democracy, for granted.

In this spirit, I’d like to outline the reasons why we’re passionate about retaining the federal seat of North Sydney exactly as is, rather than redistributing it between three other electorates.

Our personal history with North Sydney

We are a married couple of empty-nesters who live in Lavender Bay (North Sydney LGA of North Sydney federal electorate) having moved here in 2016. We had previously lived and raised our family on the upper north shore. Before moving here, my own connection with the North Sydney area was strong: my father attended North Sydney Boys High School and played Reserve grade for the North Sydney Bears; many times, from infancy, I visited a beloved great-aunt at her home in Clanalpine St, Mosman; and I rented in that street in my twenties, from where I often walked to the local shops and beach.

Our current connection with the North Sydney federal electorate – “community of interests”

From the moment we moved to the North Sydney area, we felt we had “come home”: we’ve met lots of people with similar values such as inclusiveness, tolerance and community support and engagement. My husband runs his business from the Work Inc co-working spaces under the train line at Lavender Bay. From soon after we arrived here, my husband has kayaked twice a week on the harbour from a Lavender Bay beach. He has come to know well the young couple who run the kayaking business; and we have supported them as best we can by bringing friends and family to kayak as often as possible, and spreading word of their passion for protecting this bit of our harbour by partnering with science-based groups to install a mangrove nursery, sea garden, various prototypes of living seawall boulders, “Bruce” the large, solar powered floating rubbish collection unit in Berry’s Bay, Seabins, running “Clean up Paddles” in Lavender Bay and environs, and running their business as sustainably as possible. We have greatly enjoyed coming to know, and supporting, other small business owners in the area. I have volunteered at Wendy’s Secret Garden, and now at Kylea Tink’s office. I campaigned hard to get Kylea elected, because of the values underpinning her platform: accountability, integrity, and inclusive, forward-looking, evidence-based decision making. I have also campaigned for local Council and state government candidates who demonstrably hold these values. I coordinate a long-term book club at Stanton Library. We frequent the various markets such as at Coal Loaders and the North Sydney Civic Park; and value our natural environment for its beautiful health-giving

walks. My husband's brother and his partner have bought an apartment at Milsons Point, when seeing how much we loved, and are integrated into, the area.

Population decline?

We're really puzzled that one of your reasons for abolishing the North Sydney seat is that you say that the North Sydney electorate's population is declining. Have you driven down the Pacific Highway at St Leonards and Crows Nest, to see its high rise residential buildings, some already completed and others being built? Have you watched the transformation of the North Sydney CBD, with residential and office high rise above and around the area of the new light rail station, Victoria Cross? Our understanding is that the NSW State Government plans to see 5,900 new homes built in the North Sydney LGA alone by 2029 – and we can't imagine that the North Sydney LGA will be the only one of the four North Sydney LGAs to host such development. We also understand that North Sydney Council is planning for nearly 20,000 new residents in their area by 2036. In summary, both state and local government are planning for significant population increase in the North Sydney federal electorate within the next five years and beyond.

Community culture

One of a number of defining aspects of the North Sydney electorate's community culture, which we love and value, is its adherence to values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and civic responsibility and contribution; and its willingness to act on those values for the betterment of its community. It's no coincidence that we are one of the few electorates to vote for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament in 2023, after a sustained, "sensible centre", inclusive campaign; or that our electorate spawned the grassroots organisation North Sydney's Independent, which acts to educate about and support democratic participation at all levels. We are a proud Federation electorate, with a history of "sensible centre" independence. Our independent representative prior to Kylea Tink was the widely-respected Ted Mack, who you may know resigned after two terms in both state and federal seats rather than seek re-election, in order to avoid being paid what he considered was an inappropriate parliamentary pension. We in the North Sydney Federal electorate publicly advocate for a wide range of community issues, and for the empowerment and integration of all our varied cultures, languages and viewpoints. In addition to our valued tapestry of cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, many North Sydneysiders have generations of cultural, educational, sporting, social, economic and civic roots in our area.

Conclusion

In short, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." North Sydney is a growing, developing, vibrant, cohesive, highly functioning community. Please don't dislocate and divide this valuable community cohesion that underpins our, and to some extent NSW's, social, political and economic wellbeing.

We, the undersigned, therefore vigorously object to the AEC's proposed abolition of the North Sydney Federal electorate; and ask that you please retain our North Sydney electorate as it is.

Yours sincerely,
Phillip and Cathy Browne

