



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Objection 301

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3 pages

To:
Australian Electoral Commission
5 July 2024

Summary of Issue with the AEC's Current Proposal to Abolish North Sydney Seat:

For the AEC to abolish North Sydney is essentially unconstitutional, or more specifically, is a retrograde, degenerative step, that works against the intent of the Constitution, and directly damages my constitutional rights - and those of ~120,000 other people. The reasons are set out further below.

Recommendations:

I encourage the AEC to reconsider its proposed approach. Put simply the current proposal is lazy. There has been slow growth all over the place, yet only a few electorates like North Sydney will be decimated - along with my democratic rights.

Although it involves effort, my encouragement is for the AEC to move other boundaries, and preserve the very effective electorate of North Sydney, comprising like minded individuals who have thought carefully about how to use their limited representative voting rights in the form of electing an independent. An independent who actually represents the seat, rather than undemocratically propagating the ideology of their political party.

Detailed Reasons

1 Democracy and Community Issues

The most fundamental right of Australian citizens, under Australia's Constitution, is the right to vote in our representative democracy.

There are two fundamental problems with our representative democracy, which while better than many alternatives, is deeply flawed in the following two ways:

First part of this problem:

The long standing reality that most seats are strongly held by one or the other major party. Essentially this means either "Liberal" / "National" (collectively the Coalition), or "Labor". Thus, at the individual voter level, democracy fails to a large extent, as the majority of prevailing voting pattern in that seat rules the vote, year after year, election after election, decade after decade.

While the overall vote is representative of the ~120,000 or so voters in the seat, the individual vote makes absolutely no difference. In short, the outcome is pre-determined. Thus democracy fails in that regard.

Relatively few seats are marginal, and typically North Sydney is not one of them. With all due respect, marginal seats are the only ones worth voting in - they are the only seats in which my (individual voter) vote counts, with potential to exercise real voting power at the individual vote level, to flip a seat from one party to another, or if we are lucky, to an independent member of parliament. And finally we have that in North Sydney, since in 2022, from when my vote actually counted.

However, the AEC now proposes to take that recently improved democracy away from me. It proposes to revert to the situation of 30 years of voting where my vote made no difference, by pushing me, geographically, into a strongly held seat where my vote makes no difference again.

Second part of this problem:

Related to the first issue, it is plainly obvious that elected members of parliament, be they "Liberal" / "National" (Coalition), or "Labor", do rather little to represent their constituents. This is a fatal flaw in the application of our constitution. Elected members are supposed to (that is, under the Constitution) represent the electorate. However, as the AEC well knows, the "Blue" members ("Liberal" / "National" i.e. Coalition) tow their party line, and the "Red" members (Labor) represent theirs. And for a few "Green" seats (literally, the Greens), those members tow their party line too. Thus, the Constitutional ideal of representative democracy fails even further. And this is not new, it has always been the case.

Drawing these two problems together:

These two points are critically important in seats like North Sydney. Call them "Teals" if you like, but these truly independent members of parliament actually do what the Constitution intended. They actually represent their local constituents, who have voted for them. They are not aligned to the ideology of Blue, Red, or in some cases Green. This is when democracy works in Australia. Since 2022 is the only time my vote has actually ever counted, the only time it has ever had any democratic value.

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Although it involves effort, my encouragement is for the AEC to move other boundaries, and preserve the very effective electorate of North Sydney, comprising like minded individuals who have thought carefully about how to use their limited representative voting rights in the form of electing an independent. An independent who actually represents the seat, rather than undemocratically propagating the ideology of their political party.

There is no better democracy than in North Sydney with an independent member.

2 Population Growth Issues

Population in the North Sydney electorate is growing rapidly, with the NSW State Government planning for 5,900 new homes to be built in the North Sydney LGA alone by 2029, and North Sydney Council expecting 19,500 new residents to move into the area by 2036 - a massive 27% increase that far exceeds likely growth in other electorates.

Abolishing North Sydney is completely counterproductive, since the case to re-establish it by 2029 will be embarrassingly obvious for the AEC. With this reality so strong, it makes no sense to abolish the seat.

3 Other matters

While it is acknowledged that unfortunately the AEC has no power to address lies in political advertising (a very sorry state of affairs), what it can do at this time is uphold Australia's democracy, in the spirit of the intent of the Constitution, by preserving the seat of North Sydney. If the AEC cannot prevent rampant lures by politicians, at least it can foster a better democratic process than abolishing independent seats.

Conclusion

I do hope the AEC pays close attention and gives careful consideration to the Constitutional and practical issues raised above, reconsiders the current proposal, and preserves the seat of North Sydney.

Thank you

Simon Brookes
Long Term Resident of North Sydney Electorate