



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Objection 569

Professor Laurence Mather, OAM, DMedSc, PhD

2 pages

To The NSW Redistribution Committee

Re: North Sydney electoral boundary changes

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the Redistribution Committee of NSW. At the outset, I state that I oppose the draft legislation to abolish the federal seat of **North Sydney** and request the Committee to make the relatively small boundary changes to keep the seat alive, as this would be a fitting outcome.

First, I acknowledge that the committee has based its recommendations on the requirement to reduce the number of federal electorates by one, that its recommendations are based on distribution quotas and projected populations of all electorates, and that these considerations form the basis of proposed alterations of boundaries of many electorates. Others, far more cognizant of the demographics and regulations than I, have previously made submissions to the Committee, and I have made some use of these.

Second, I have lived continuously in the **North Sydney** electorate since 1991. I am a retired Professor of the University of Sydney and worked in my capacity as a medical scientist at the Royal North Shore Hospital, in the heart of the **North Sydney** electorate. My family and I have developed a strong connection with the **North Sydney** electorate in general, and I have been an active participant in community affairs, especially at the Local Government level where I am a past Chair of the Lavender Bay Precinct of the North Sydney LGA.

Third, I find it regrettable that the committee has chosen **North Sydney** as that electorate to be eliminated for achieving its stated purpose. Instead, I would urge the committee to enlarge the **North Sydney** electorate in order to retain it, on the following grounds.

- (i) **Simple history.** North Sydney is one of the Federation electorates and rebalancing electoral boundaries to retain this historical association makes sense. Early on, this seat was held by Prime Minister William Morris Hughes, the “Little Digger”. More recently, this seat has been held by some extraordinary humanitarian members, such as Ted Mack. It has been held by some influential high profile members, such as Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey. It has been held by some influential progressive members, such as Trent Zimmerman. It is presently held by its first independent and female member, Ms Kylea Tink. Not only is Ms Tink highly esteemed in the North Sydney electorate, but she is recognized both within and without the **North Sydney** electorate to be truly hard-working, and her loss will be manifest not only within this electorate but in the Parliament at large.
- (ii) **Simple iconography.** The name alone conveys place, history and identifiability. Besides being among the largest of business districts in Australia, the present electoral boundaries contain populous and still growing suburbs exemplified by Chatswood. Moreover, the present boundaries split local government areas and state electoral boundaries. I do not understand the intricacies of these boundaries and their associated populations, but it seems logical that societal cohesion is promoted by logical inclusivity, and this could be achieved by thoughtful relocation of boundaries to satisfy the number of eligible voter residents.

- (iii) **Present issues.** The North Sydney electorate is quite outstanding for its mix of societal bodies and groups that include those of education, religious, humanitarian and medical that work for the good of society at large. Likewise, it has strong cultural diversity and is especially notable for being one of the few electorates that voted in 2023 for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.
- (iv) **Future projections.** With the state government policy of establishing high density living around transport hubs, along with its proximity to the city, the North Sydney electorate will inevitably increase. It is likely that the current population projections will, thus, be subject to greater-than-usual error margins. That, plus the rearrangement of boundaries to achieve more sensible and cohesive geographic boundaries to the east, say to the boundaries of Middle Harbour, and to the north, say by the uniting of electorally-split suburbs, such as Chatswood.
- (v) **Last**, in particular, I have read the submissions made by the sitting member, Ms Kylea Tink, and I wholly endorse the position that she has presented to the Committee about alternative boundary changes to enlarge the North Sydney electorate and thereby preclude it being the electorate chosen to be eliminated.

I reiterate that I, too, oppose the draft legislation to abolish the seat of North Sydney and request the Committee to make the relatively small boundary changes to keep the seat alive, as would be a fitting outcome.

Yours faithfully

Laurence Mather, OAM, DMedSc, PhD

Emeritus Professor

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(submitted 11 July 2024)