



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Objection 719

Jill Newton

8 pages

Jill Newton
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

11 July 2024

To:

To: Redistribution Committee for NSW
The Australian Electoral Commission
Locked Bag 4007
Canberra ACT 2601

Re: My objection to the draft proposal in the Committee's Report to abolish the Federal Electorate of North Sydney in the course of redistributing electoral boundaries

Dear Committee,

I have lived, and owned a house, for over 25 years in Castlecrag which is in the Federal Electorate of North Sydney and I am a voter in that electorate.

I strongly object to your recommendation to abolish the Federal electorate of North Sydney and I ask for its retention. My reasons follow:

1) Current demographics and flawed demographic projections invalidate proposal to abolish North Sydney Federal electorate

The AEC's redistribution quota for NSW is 121,011.

The *permissible maximum* number of electors in an electoral division (Redistribution quota + 10%) = 133,112.

The *permissible minimum* number of electors in an electoral division (Redistribution quota - 10%) = 108,810.

North Sydney electorate's redistribution date enrolment number is 112,630.

While North Sydney electorate's 112,630 is below the 121,011 quota, it is above the permissible redistribution quota of 108,810.

North Sydney's redistribution date enrolment number makes it the 27th highest of the 46 electorates

So North Sydney electorate's redistribution date enrolment number of 112,630 being:

- 3,820 in excess of the permissible minimum number of electors in an electoral division, and
- the electorate having the 27th highest redistribution date enrolment number of the 46 electorates,

of itself, makes it a particularly unlikely candidate to be the one out of 46 electorates proposed to be abolished in NSW.

The AEC's projected estimate of North Sydney Electorate's enrolment number as at 28 April 2028 is 112,566

This estimate is 64 less than North Sydney electorate's redistribution date enrolment number of 112,630. With the greatest respect this is just NOT CORRECT.

The recommended boundary changes that abolish North Sydney are predicated on inaccurate projections for population growth within the existing North Sydney boundaries.

The population of North Sydney on its current boundaries is in fact growing. It is simply NOT falling.

The AEC's use of historic demographic data which does not take into account current planning policies, developments under construction and actual population movements sets the scene for a perverse and invalid outcome.

The State Government released proposed changes to planning legislation that would override Council limitations on the type of development allowed in its suburbs and around the transport hubs and town centres. Multiple state and local planning policies are designed to ensure this growth will accelerate significantly over the next ten years.
local centres.

For example Willoughby City Council commentary about the NSW government's plans on the home page of its website include the following:

'In December 2023, the State Government released proposed changes to planning legislation that would override Council limitations on the type of development allowed in its suburbs and around local centres.

These changes have the potential to transform the character of local streets, increasing the number of duplexes and terraces in our suburbs and increasing the scale of residential flat buildings located around local centres and stations.

The reforms will override Council's planning controls to allow:

- *More dual occupancy developments (i.e. duplexes) on smaller lots across most of the LGA, including in heritage conservation areas.*
- *Introduction of medium density multi dwelling housing development, such as terraces, villa developments, and two storey residential flats into currently low density areas.*
- *Taller and denser apartments and mixed use development in medium density areas within 800m of stations and local centres (for example, North Willoughby, Castlecrag, Naremburn).*
- *Rezoning of land within 1,200m of Crows Nest Station which as well as Crows Nest includes significant portions of Naremburn and St Leonards.'*

Crows Nest is identified by the NSW Department of Planning as a strategic and priority population growth node underpinned by the new metro stations at Crows Nest and Victoria Cross (North Sydney) and associated over station high density residential development, as well as high density residential infill development at St Leonards South.

The NSW Department of Planning website says the following about its proposal around Crows Nest metro:

'The 2036 Plan leverages the existing public transport infrastructure and the future Crows Nest Metro Station to support the growing St Leonards and Crows Nest community with the provision of new infrastructure, open spaces, upgraded cycle lanes and planning for health and education.

*The plan will **deliver 6,680 new homes**, planning capacity for an extra 119,979 sqm employment floor space and 16,500 new jobs in health, education, professional services and the knowledge sector.'*

This is for Crows Nest/St Leonards alone.

Further:

- The NSW Government plans to see 5,900 new homes built in the North Sydney LGA alone by 2029. If that growth is replicated across the other three LGAs currently within the North Sydney electorate that would see 24,000 new homes built across the North Sydney Federal Electorate, and
- North Sydney Council is expecting 19,500 new residents to move into the North Sydney LGA by 2036. This is a 27% increase in just one of the four LGAs currently within the North Sydney Electorate.

Accordingly the current redistribution proposal is based on unreliable and inaccurate demographic projections, particularly for the localities of St Leonards, Crows Nest, and North Sydney.

The AEC has failed to consult appropriate sources for future growth. Had they done so, North Sydney would certainly NOT been on the list of possible electorates to be abolished.

It is therefore highly likely that to proceed with abolishing our North Sydney seat would be completely counterproductive as it seems clear there will be a need to re-establish it come 2029.

2) The Community of Interest test

The proposed boundary redistribution also fails the community of interest test.

The boundaries as proposed sever the highly connected and integrated communities of Lane Cove, Greenwich, Crows Nest, North Sydney, Waverton, Wollstonecraft, Cammeray, Northbridge, Naremburn, Artarmon, Castlecrag, Middle Cove, Willoughby and Chatswood, dispersing them in three directions grafting them to electorates where there is no community of interest at all.

In the case of myself living in Castlecrag, I am most unhappy that the Committee proposes to sever our suburb from the communities of Lane Cove, Greenwich, Crows Nest, North Sydney, Waverton, Wollstonecraft and Cammeray all of which I consider as part of my 'burb', and instead include my suburb Castlecrag together with Northbridge, Naremburn, Artarmon, Middle Cove, Willoughby and Chatswood, in the upper North Shore electorate of Bradfield.

Living in Castlecrag on the lower North Shore I have absolutely nothing to do with the upper North Shore suburbs such as Killara, Pymble up to Hornsby and those other suburbs that belong to the Kur-in-gai Council LGA. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I have visited a shop or other destination in the Bradfield electorate. I occasionally drive through these suburbs on the way north of Hornsby to say the Hawkesbury, Newcastle, Northern NSW and Queensland. I pass through the Upper North Shore but do not stop there much at all.

Many of my activities are centred around the North Sydney Federal electorate in the Lower North Shore. Examples of these are as follows:

- My main shopping areas are at Northbridge Plaza, Castlecrag, High St Willoughby, Chatswood, Crows Nest restaurants, North Sydney and on occasions Lane Cove. I don't shop in the Bradfield Electorate.
- For music, theatre and film, I frequently attend the Chatswood Concourse, at Milsons Pt, the Ensemble Theatre and at North Sydney, the Independent Theatre and at Cremorne The Hayden Orpheum Picture Theatre. I don't go to any theatres or concert halls anywhere in Bradfield Electorate in the Upper North Shore.
- I belong to a few clubs in the North Sydney electorate, namely the Kirribilli Club, Norths at Cammeray, and Willoughby Bowlo. I don't belong to any clubs in the Bradfield.
- Many of my friends live in the lower north shore areas in the North Sydney Electorate. I have very few friends who live in the upper North Shore, Bradfield Electorate.
- When catching public transport I can catch a city route bus from Eastern Valley Way Castlecrag either through Northbridge/Cammeray or through North Sydney.
- Our hospitals of choice, both being in the North Sydney Electorate, are the Mater Hospital at Wollstonecraft or Royal North Shore Hospital at St Leonards.
- I'm a convenor of a local Castlecrag bushcare group. Many of our events, talks and lectures are conducted through our own Willoughby City Council in conjunction with the bushcare groups from North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils. We seem to have little if no connection with Kur-in-gai bushcare groups.
- I attend weekend markets at Laurelbank in Willoughby, North Sydney and Chatswood Victoria St markets.

I'm aware that most children in Castlecrag seem to attend schools in the lower North Shore, North Sydney electorate region. The schools include Loretto Kirribilli, Monte St Angelo North Sydney, St Aloysius College Kirribilli, St Ignatius College Riverview, Monte St Angelo North Sydney, Wenona North Sydney, Shore North Sydney, North Sydney Boys High School, Marist North Sydney, St Thomas Primary School Willoughby, Northbridge Public School, Willoughby Public School, Willoughby Girls High School, Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner Schools Castle Cove and Castlecrag campuses and Montessori School at Castlecrag. Not nearly as many children attend the upper North Shore Private Schools.

The three Councils in the North Sydney Electorate, namely North Sydney, Willoughby City and Lane Cove seem to work well together in many areas, as well as in the bushcare area mentioned above.

In other words, I have strong connections to places and people in the North Sydney Electorate area and little connection to people and places in the Upper North Shore Bradfield electorate.

In the case of the new boundaries of Bennelong, there is no community of interest between Greenwich for example with Marsfield, Denistone or North Epping at the far western extremity of the Division of Bennelong.

There are no community of interest connections to the west of the Lane Cove River and Victoria Rd.

Similarly, grafting the communities of North Sydney, Wollstonecraft, Crows Nest and Waverton into the Division of Warringah defies any community of interest analysis. It is hard to suggest a community of interest exists between these communities and Curl Curl on the northern beaches. The community of interest case has not, and cannot be made between any of the suburbs west of the Warringah freeway and the northern beaches and Brookvale end of the Warringah electorate.

The proposed boundaries do not respect either natural or physical boundaries. Vaulting over both Middle Harbour and the Warringah Freeway to cross Warringah into North Sydney, and ignoring the opportunity to use the Lane Cove River as a natural boundary between the existing North Sydney and Bennelong.

Our Business Community

The North Sydney Electorate that includes the two cities of North Sydney and Willoughby/Chatswood CBD, is the third largest business centre in the country. Surely therefore the North Sydney businesses and industrial zones deserve the focus of a local member. For example how can a member for Bradfield electorate that extends way up the Upper North Shore to Hornsby have the time and capacity to focus also on the businesses and industrial zones of Chatswood in particular?

North Sydney has a total of 28,000 small to medium size businesses whose needs do not overlap entirely with those of the newly proposed areas of Bradfield, Bennelong or Warringah.

3) 123 years of History

I've been proud to be a voter and live in the North Sydney Federal Electorate, not least because of its historical significance which is part of our community's identity. North Sydney is a Federation seat, created on 11 December 1900 and first represented in 1901. The AEC indeed has said that a Federation seat should not be removed without good cause (or word to that effect).

I'm afraid I can't see any good cause to abolish the seat of North Sydney electorate and break up its communities and indeed I think that the abolition is based on flawed demographic projections.

4) Effect of our North Sydney electorate being split asunder into three.

The communities of North Sydney, Lavender Bay, Waverton, Wollstonecraft, Greenwich, Lave Cove, Crows Nest, St Leonards, Naremburn, Artarmon, Cammeray, Northbridge, Castlecrag, Castle Cove, Middle Cove, Willoughby and Chatswood are strongly bound by deep and enduring community networks, associations, organisations, educational and economic links. North Sydney enjoys a cohesive and connected community affinity and identity. In the same way there is a common community of interest between Mackellar and Warringah linked by the Northern Beaches.

It is anathema to nurturing and supporting vibrant and cohesive communities to carve up North Sydney's strongly aligned communities and graft them onto three equally disparate electorates each with their own specific and distinct identity and affinities.

Nowhere is this more evident than where the proposed new boundaries of Bennelong, Bradfield and Warringah converge in Crows Nest / St Leonards. This is the highest density and fastest growing area in any of the three electorates and yet it is here at this very epicentre of growth that the Commission proposes to place the intersection of three electorates which have their respective centres of gravity on the northern beaches (Warringah), Ryde (Bennelong) and the Upper North Shore (Bradfield).

I believe it is a most unusual case to split an electorate into three, instead of conducting more minimalist changes to the boundaries of the involved electorates that are available to the EAC, and in the case of our North Sydney electorate splitting it into three, as shown above, will be damaging.

The AEC redistribution process is importantly apolitical and independent but it should not be blind to the potential real-world outcomes of the boundaries it proposes and the impacts they may have on the effectiveness of representation for a community.

Our North Sydney electorate is a cohesive and engaged community: It is home to many environmental, humanitarian, religious and social groups all working together to improve our community. It is telling that we were one of the first electorates to stand up for independent representation in 2022, and one of the few to vote for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the 2023 referendum. We respect and value our cultural diversity, with half of our population born overseas and a third speaking a language other than English at home. And we are home to several active and competitive sports teams, including two of the largest community-based sporting organisations in the state.

The abolition of our North Sydney electorate in splitting it into three neighbouring seats means the loss of our independent representative, Kylea Tink MP. To me it feels like our North Sydney electorate is being deprived of its democratic rights. So many members of our community have worked so long and hard to finally achieve an amazing parliamentary representative for our electorate, one who truly tries to represent her community rather than any party interests. To abolish North Sydney is to abolish our rights and to tear asunder large numbers of voters in North Sydney who have worked so hard for our common cause of at last being heard in the federal Parliament.

I must say it feels so unfair. I note that both the Liberal and Labor Party in their own different ways advocated in their submissions for the abolition of the North Sydney electorate. Labor disguised it a little by suggesting merging a small portion of the North Sydney Electorate into Warringah which it suggested renaming as North Sydney!

I have always respected the integrity of the AEC and trusted that it would do the right thing. Unfortunately this AEC report is beginning to make me feel my trust may have been misplaced.

I see NO reason why our North Sydney must be torn asunder (rather than have its boundaries twiggged if desired) particularly as it is so likely to fulfill the population projections in 2028, other than both major parties have asked for North Sydney to be abolished and the AEC is being protective of the two party system.

With so many more party members from NSW in the house of Representatives than independents, the loss of an Independent seat is disproportionate to the number of party seats and is most disappointing.

It seems appropriate here to quote an extract from an article by Michael Pascoe in the New Daily July 3, 2024 headed '*Cutting federal democratic representation by 8.3%*'

Along the way, I've seen Ms Tink and her team work harder to connect with their community than any other MP I've experienced.

But now [the Australian Electoral Commission intends to scrap North Sydney as part of a redistribution](#) brought about by varying rates of population growth.

For mine, the AEC is looking in the rear-view mirror, rather than ahead. North Sydney is slated for rapid population growth, the North Sydney Council area alone expecting nearly 20,000 new residents by 2036.

There also is something like a cohesive political identity in the seat dating from the role of Ted Mack, the "father of independents", who held the state seat from 1981 to 1988 and federal seat from 1990 to 1996, resigning from both to avoid receiving rich parliamentary pensions.

A Ted Mack quote leads Ms Tink's policy overview: "The very basis of democracy is that a decision taken by the public as a whole will be right more often than decisions taken by an elite group."

Maybe North Sydney should apply for a Heritage Order to preserve it, both as one of the original electorates in 1901 and its Ted Mack independent ethos.

5) A proposal that passes the community of interest tests and meets quota requirements

A solution is available to the AEC that meets the electoral quota requirements, passes the community of interest test and maintains the Division of North Sydney.

This can be achieved by:

- Preserving North Sydney and adjusting its boundaries of North Sydney northwards to incorporate additional electors in the Chatswood area (community of interest maintained and quota achieved)
- Adjust the boundaries of Mackellar east towards St Ives and westward towards Hornsby with commensurate changes to the boundaries of Bradfield and Bennelong to meet quota similar adjustments can also be made to Warringah.
- The requirement to reduce the number of electorates can be fulfilled through the abolition of a Division which is more consistent with natural boundaries and community of interest considerations and with lower growth forecasts than those which **should be applied** to North Sydney.

6) Conclusion

Accordingly the current redistribution proposal is based on unreliable and inaccurate demographic projections, particularly for the localities of St Leonards, Crows Nest, and North Sydney, to arrive at a misconceived solution which fails the community of interest test and which will undermine effective representation for our community which is, arguably, the most critical impact of this flawed proposal.

The AEC has failed to consult appropriate sources for future growth. Had they done so, North Sydney would certainly NOT been on the list of possible electorates to be abolished.

Due to flawed demographic considerations and a lack of knowledge of the cohesive and engaged community that makes up our North Sydney Electorate the committee proposes abolishing our electorate. For the reasons given above I hope and trust that the Committee will consider this proposal and instead retain the North Sydney Electorate.

Jill Newton