



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Comment on objections 151

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4 pages

Background

I am Cheston Mak, who have made an objection regarding Bennelong and surrounding electorates (OB36). In my objection, I have proposed a suggestion with alternative electoral boundaries where majority of Epping and North Epping are able to retained in Bennelong, and reducing the number of impacted voters who have to change divisions, while ensuring that all 2023 and projected 2028 enrolment numbers of each seat are within the acceptable variances of the required respective quota.

Comment on my own review of the objections

As there are 738 objections received by the AEC, it is difficult for me to spend the time to go through every single one. As such, I could only view a handful of objections randomly, mostly related to Bennelong, plus those by the political parties, MPs or well-known analysts like Ben Raue. Unfortunately, my selection of random objections (especially relating to Bennelong and North Sydney) appear to be mostly non-constructive objections. There may be some objections who have done a detailed analysis on the figures and actually offered good or suitable suggestions to the boundaries, I just did not have a chance to find out which ones they are and provide my comments on them.

General comments on the objections received by the AEC

I have noted that many comments are made by local residents against abolition of North Sydney or objecting splitting of Epping to Berowra and Parramatta. As there are a number of them, I won't be naming specific objection numbers in general.

A number of these comments against the abolition of North Sydney did not consider that there is a requirement for 1 seat in NSW to be abolished. Many of these appear to come from residents who have little knowledge of how redistribution works, and have simply opposed the abolition for the sake of opposing. Some have proposed alternative solutions but did not consider the need to abolish a seat. For example, the objections OB272 and OB442 are identical, but equally asks for North Sydney and Warringah to be retained without stating a feasible alternative, such as which seat to be abolished. I suggest these comments are to be ignored as they have clearly missed the point of the redistribution and offer little to none benefit to aid AEC's redistribution.

I also note that a number of these comments against the idea of transferring Epping or North Epping to Berowra are also made by local residents, as they don't feel like they belong in Berowra. They associate more with Bennelong which has covered their localities since 1977. While I live in Victoria currently, I used to live in North Epping (NSW) and agree with these residents, in that Bennelong had been well known as the local federal seat for years.

Unfortunately, many of the comments have not raised alternative solutions, and therefore are also not of much use to aid AEC's redistribution.

Comment on Mr Charles Waterfield's objection OB276

OB276 states that "NSW State Government plans to see 5,900 new homes built in the North Sydney LGA". It also states that the draft AEC proposal "does not seem to take into account the large projected growth in population in the North Sydney electorate expected by 2028". The AEC report indeed does not show an increase in population for the existing North Sydney electorate, but rather shows a slight decrease in population, so Mr Waterfield's objections may be justified.

However, redistributions are based on statistics and projections by the ABS in 2023 which is the most recent at the time of the start of the redistribution process (and before the state government announcement), and a more updated projected statistic will only be available after this redistribution is due (i.e. October 2024). It is not possible to account for any more recent housing policy announcements made at this stage of the consultation, and unfortunately this projected population growth will have to be accounted from the next seat determination onwards, about 2-3 years later.

In past or ongoing redistributions, where a state had a seat abolished before or after regaining a seat, it is common to see that the abolished seat was an inner suburb seat while the regained seat was in the outer suburbs. For example, Hawke vs Higgins in Victoria, Stirling vs Bullwinkle in WA. This is because population growth is much quicker in the outer suburbs. The objection's sentence: "abolishing the seat of North Sydney now would be completely counterproductive, as there will likely be a case to re-establish it come 2029" may not come true, as I don't think the growth in the North Sydney electorate would be larger than the growth in the outer suburbs of Sydney. If in the future it is determined that NSW requires an additional seat in the House of Representatives again, it is likely that the seat will be in the growing outer suburbs such as Box Hill, Gables, Leppington etc.

Comment on Labor's objection OB669

Labor's proposal is similar to my own proposal. This includes retaining the eastern half of Epping with Bennelong, transferring the entire West Pennant Hills to Berowra, retaining Rouse Hill Town Centre with Mitchell, retaining parts of Seven Hill West with Greenway and cutting back some of Bennelong's North Shore gains (e.g. Greenwich).

However, their proposal would have continued to allow North Epping to be transferred to Berowra. This is a mistake made previously during the Parramatta Council boundary changes in 2016, where the North Epping was retained in Hornsby LGA and a separate LGA to the

adjoining suburb of Epping. North Epping can only be accessed via one road (Norfolk Road), which has to be accessed via the suburb of Epping. North Epping and Cheltenham are separated by a national park with no roads accessing between the two adjacent suburbs.

At local government level, Hornsby waste trucks coming from Cheltenham will have to take a forced huge detour via Beecroft Road and pass Epping station, before making a “u-turn” to head towards North Epping, which is an insensible thing to do. Looking at it similarly at a federal level, the federal MP for Berowra (the current MP’s office is at Pennant Hills) will have to take a detour via Epping in order to get to his new constituents at North Epping, and vice versa, a North Epping resident who would like to visit their federal MP would have to take a detour to get to the electorate office. In both cases, they will have to travel through another electorate, which does not seem very logical. Therefore, North Epping and Epping (eastern portion at the very least where the station is) should not be in different electorates. This is a point I also made in my objection, where I proposed North Epping to remain with Bennelong along with eastern half of Epping.

Therefore, while sharing similarities between Labor’s and my proposals, I am not satisfied with Labor’s proposal.

Comment on Kylea Tink MP’s objection OB686

Ms Tink has offered an alternative proposal where Bradfield and Berowra gets merged into one electorate, in lieu of abolishing North Sydney. It also appears that Ms Tink has “done the homework” and made sure the 2023 and projected 2028 enrolment numbers are within the required variances.

Looking at her proposed boundaries, it appears that North Sydney would gain areas north of Chatswood, Parramatta would gain many areas south of the M2 from Mitchell, Mitchell would gain areas like Dural from Berowra, and retaining most of Bennelong with additional gains north of the M2. While drastically different to my proposal, it has retained the areas of the entire Epping and North Epping with Bennelong which aligns with my views.

I note that it is odd to place West Pennant Hills in Bennelong as this area has never been associated with Bennelong, nor is it located in the state seat of Epping which overlaps with Bennelong. However, this is not an issue for Beecroft and Cheltenham, where the state seat is Epping and therefore already shares a electorate with the suburbs of Epping and North Epping. I also note that in my opinion, Berowra and Bradfield shares similar demographics and merging them does not seem unreasonable.

Assuming that all calculations are correct, I am satisfied with Ms Tink’s proposal as an alternative to mine.

Comment on Greens' objection OB705

The Greens have made comments and justifications that I agree with. For example, pushing for Newtown to be unified under one division instead of having the suburb split along King Street between the Sydney and Grayndler divisions, opposing Box Hill and Gables to be in Greenway which is more associated with Blacktown LGA, or opposing the extension of Kingsford Smith electorate onto the former Rockdale LGA territory. However, it would have been more helpful if there were maps provided with calculation of enrolment numbers. At this stage, it just sounds like the Greens have merely written out what they agree or disagree without offering a feasible alternative proposal. Therefore, while I am in support of Greens' concerns, I am overall neutral to their objection.

Conclusion

Therefore, looking at a selection of comments, I still firmly believe my own suggestion in OB36 is the most sensible suggestion with the least impact to existing voters, retaining North Epping and Epping in Bennelong, and making sure Epping and North Epping are in the same electorate. Ms Tink's proposal (OB686) is also acceptable in my view as it aligns with my objectives.