



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Comment on suggestion 97

Andrew Gee MP

6 pages



Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare

Independent Federal Member for Calare, the Hon Andrew Gee MP, Submission in Reply for the 2023-2024 New South Wales Federal Electorate Redistribution

Submission

I refer to my submission dated 27 October 2023 (“my previous submission”) and now provide the following submissions in reply.

It is submitted that:

1. No weight be given to the submission of the Liberal Party of NSW (“the Liberal Party submission”) as it pertains to the seat of Calare.
2. The Liberal Party submission that the seat of Calare be abolished should not be accepted.
3. No weight be given to the submission of the NSW Nationals (“the National Party submission”) as it pertains to the seat of Calare.
4. The National Party submission as it pertains to the seat of Calare should not be accepted.
5. As the Calare electorate is one of the few seats that meets the AEC’s current and future quotas, the boundaries of the seat should remain unchanged.
6. The name of the seat should be retained as Calare.





Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare

The Liberal Party Submission

It is submitted that the Liberal Party submission, in proposing the abolition of Calare, is fundamentally flawed. It is further submitted that the Liberal party submission, as it pertains to the seat of Calare, should be viewed as a document representing political aspiration and opportunism (or more colloquially, wishful thinking) rather than serious demographic analysis.

By proposing that the seat of Calare be abolished it is submitted that the Liberal Party submission betrays not only political motivation, but also a fundamental misunderstanding of the communities of interest that exist west of the Great Dividing Range. It also betrays the party's anxiety about not only losing one of its metropolitan seats but also having its margin in the seat of Hume reduced by virtue of that seat moving closer to Sydney, or losing that seat altogether by way of redistribution.

The Liberal Party submission ignores the point made in my previous submission that Calare is one of only 12 electoral divisions that meets the current and projected enrolment quotas as determined by the AEC.

As indicated by the AEC within the 'Essential information about the NSW federal redistribution' webpage, there are numerous federal electorate divisions that are under the redistribution and projected enrolment quotas, some of which are located in major metropolitan areas. If a seat is to be abolished, it is submitted that it should come from one of these parts of the state.

If the aim of redistributions is to have seats meeting quotas, it is submitted that it makes little sense to abolish one of the few seats that is currently achieving this!

As also stated in my previous submission, from sport, to art and culture, shared services, industry and enterprise, there is a very strong bond and community of interest between the people, villages, towns, and cities of Calare that clearly and obviously does not extend over the Great Dividing Range. That mountain range is not only the natural physical boundary of the seat but also delineates communities of interest.

In this regard, a fundamental inconsistency in the Liberal Party submission is also evident. On the one hand, page 10 of the Liberal Party submission acknowledges the importance of recognising the natural boundaries of the state of New South Wales such as the Great Dividing Range, yet on the other hand, proposes that this natural boundary be totally ignored by taking the seat of Calare over the mountains and into western Sydney. It is submitted that such an inconsistency detracts from the credibility of the Liberal Party submission.





Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare

Furthermore, the Liberal Party submission fails to acknowledge the community of interest that currently exists between the Wellington districts and Mudgee and as noted above, fails to recognise the obvious lack of community of interest over the Great Dividing Range between Lithgow and the Blue Mountains.

The Liberal Party submission would also require the electorate of Calare to represent communities on the edge of greater Sydney through to small villages and farming communities such as Tallawang in Central Western NSW. It is submitted that communities of interest between the farming communities of the Central West and those of a metropolis such as Sydney simply do not exist.

The Liberal Party submission would see the Orange LGA and most of the Cabonne LGA move to the division of Riverina. By doing this, the Liberal Party of NSW is in effect submitting that the community of Bland, some 189 kilometres away, has stronger ties to Orange than the village of Millthorpe a mere 22km away, thereby highlighting the lack of understanding the Liberal Party has for Central Western NSW. Communities within the Cabonne LGA rely heavily on the Orange LGA and separating these communities would not be in the best interests of those who live and work within them. Cabonne is one of the few remaining rural 'doughnut' shaped shires, almost completely encircling the Orange LGA. Separating these communities would be an absurd and perverse result.

Including the Orange LGA in the Riverina electorate would also require the Member for Riverina to represent Wagga Wagga which has been the primary location of an electorate office for the division, but also Orange, some 300 kilometres or a four-hour drive away. It is submitted that the communities of interest between these differing regions of the state are weak, and pale in comparison with those that exist between the communities currently within the boundaries of Calare.

Furthermore, in the Liberal Party submission, the seat of Parkes simply keeps expanding to make it even more physically challenging for a single member to represent.

By way of contrast, in the Liberal Party submission for the Liberal held seat of Cook, it has prioritised keeping the boundaries of the Bayside LGA within that electorate, but in the case of Calare and regional Australia, moving electoral boundaries for apparent political gain, rather than for the benefit of the communities within, has taken priority.





Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare

It is submitted that the Liberal Party submission recklessly ignores the communities of interest that exist within the Calare electorate and would reflect poorer outcomes and representation for the people of regional Australia.

It is also disappointingly noted that the Liberal Party submission seeks to dispense with the name Calare. As noted in my previous submission, Calare is a Wiradjuri word and is also one of the very few seat names in New South Wales of Indigenous origin. It is submitted that by suggesting that the name also be abolished, the Liberal Party submission betrays a lack of understanding of the seat and history of the region.

The National Party Submission

It is submitted that the National Party submission with respect to the seat of Calare should also not be accepted.

To address the requirement of a reduction in Federal Electoral Divisions from 47 to 46 in NSW, the National Party submission has proposed this be achieved by abolishing the Electoral Divisions of Grayndler and North Sydney and creating a new electoral division around the locality of Guildford.

As a result of these changes, the boundaries of the electorate of Calare would shift so that Wellington, Geurie and part of Yeoval would move to the division of Parkes and Calare would gain the Cowra Shire Council LGA.

Unfortunately, these proposed changes have failed to account for the existing communities of interest within the Calare electorate.

The community of Yeoval is an integral part of the Cabonne Shire. It is submitted that splitting part of the Yeoval community from the remainder of Yeoval and its neighbouring small communities of Cumnock and Molong (the administrative centre of the shire) makes little sense.

Similarly, Wellington and Geurie have very strong communities of interest with both the Mudgee region and the Cabonne Shire/Orange regions with respect to employment, sport and a whole range of services. Wellington has a very strong identity and definitely views itself as being completely distinct and separate from Dubbo and its communities, plus the wider electorate of Parkes. It is submitted that their interests are not served best by joining an already geographically enormous Parkes electorate. The social disadvantage experienced within elements of the Wellington community adds weight to the importance of it being part of a geographically manageable electorate.





Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare

Wellington has also been moved multiple times in recent redistributions and it is further submitted that this lack of continuity does not serve it well.

Furthermore, while Cowra is a thriving centre, and it is possible the National Party submission eyes political gain by a boundary change in that direction, there is not a strong community of interest between the Cowra LGA and the greater Calare electorate.

The boundaries of the Cabonne Shire and the Calare electorate in the vicinity of the Belubula River at Canowindra also highlight the boundaries of communities of interest.

Interestingly, in its 2009 redistribution submission to the AEC, the NSW National Party referred to the Lachlan River as "a strong and sensible boundary". It was in effect an argument against extending the seat of Calare southwards.

If accepted, the National Party submission would add an entire additional LGA to the Calare electorate of approximately 13,000 people and 2,800sqkm. The seat is already a geographically dispersed electorate covering 32,666sqkm. The addition of the Cowra LGA would result in the electorate of Calare representing the regional centres of Mudgee, Orange, Bathurst, Lithgow, Oberon and Cowra and risk falling outside the AEC's redistribution requirements should any further population growth occur in Central Western NSW (which as outlined in my previous submission is occurring).

It is also important to note that the Cowra LGA existed within the Hume electorate prior to the 2015/2016 NSW federal electorate redistribution and should Cowra be repositioned into the Calare electorate, voters from Cowra would be enrolled to vote under their third electorate across four election cycles. It is submitted that the interests of the residents within this community are not served best by yet another boundary change and that consistency is an important consideration.

My previous submission stated that the boundaries of Calare should not change. That submission is categorically and unequivocally affirmed.

If the AEC did make a determination to change the electorate boundaries (for example, to add more people to the seat), it is submitted that the changes would be westwards to Forbes as opposed to southwards to Cowra.

It is submitted that the Forbes community has a stronger community of interest with Calare.





Andrew Gee MP

Federal Member for Calare

There are strong links between the region with respect to agriculture, mining, health services, freight logistics and sport. The natural tourism corridor from Sydney and the east coast to Forbes is through the Calare electorate.

Forbes is currently in the state seat of Orange whereas no part of the Cowra LGA or state seat of Cootamundra fall within the Calare electorate. Geographically, Forbes is manageable for a local member to represent and was previously represented by the Member for Calare prior to the 2015/2016 redistribution.

Eugowra and the Forbes Shire were hit hard by the storm and flood disaster of last year and are undergoing the reconstruction and recovery process as neighbours. Forbes is a short drive to Eugowra and the bonds are strong. The Forbes Advocate for example, covers news in Eugowra. The Cabonne and Forbes Shires are on the same flood plain and it is submitted that these local government areas could have benefitted from a single representative in response co-ordination and organisation.

Conclusion

The seat of Calare is one of the few seats meeting the current and future AEC quotas. The strong communities of interest between the communities comprising Calare add further, crucial weight to the submission that the boundaries of the seat should remain unchanged.

For the important historical and cultural reasons outlined above and in my previous submission, the name of the seat should remain unchanged.

Yours Sincerely



Andrew Gee MP
Independent Federal Member for Calare

Dated:
10 November 2023



6/6