



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Objection 514

Anonymous 24

2 pages

Objection to proposed redistribution of North Sydney electorate into Bradfield, Warringah and Bennelong

As a person with long held roots in North Sydney I write to object to the proposed abolition of the North Sydney electorate.

Background:

I attended primary and secondary schools in North Sydney and graduated from North Sydney Boys' High School (in 2023, NSBHS was the secondary school that topped academic achievement in NSW). I live in Castlecrag and have done so for decades with the knowledge shared with many other North Sydney residents: that North Sydney, in its south, is essentially an extension of Sydney's CBD whilst, in its north, it has residential and community groupings that give North Sydney its coherency and its liveability. This means that North Sydney has a unique nature that cannot be simply cut up like a cake and spread to its neighbours.

Objection:

The proposed abolition is contrary to the 'glue' that makes the extant electorate a community. It would impose three unrelated Members of Parliament who would need to be energised to represent the community whenever local issues arise. The consequence of that would be a dissection of influence and a breakdown in the sense of community that is strong at present. Whilst our Federal electoral system is based on area-representation, it is essential that electorates are consistent with areas rather than being contrary to coherent areas.

In addition to that fundamental and paramount reason to keep North Sydney as a single electorate, there are other reasons that contribute to the ill-advised nature of the proposed redistribution:

1. Historic: North Sydney has had a long and important history in our Federation. From the days in which Prime Minister Hughes represented North Sydney to the present, it has been politically active yet a foundation stone in the stability of the Federation. To abolish North Sydney and thus lose the name of this historic electorate would be a vandalism applied to that history.
2. Demographic: projected responses to the present-day housing crisis clearly indicate that the extant electorate boundaries will encompass a much larger population. The AEC's numeric consideration of North Sydney's 2023 demography is short sighted to the point that future redistribution will be required to reverse this ill-advised proposal. A more forward-looking redistribution would abolish Bradfield (below the permissible minimum level) and distribute 50% of voters to North Sydney by extending North Sydney in a northerly direction and 50% to Berowra by extending it in a southerly direction.
3. Societal (Flow of community): the suburbs to the north of the current boundary (that is, the suburbs in Bradfield such as Gordon, Pymble, Turramurra) have always been recognised as geographically and socially distinct from the suburbs to their south. Thus, the name 'Upper North Shore' designated suburbs along the northern rail line that had some coherency as commuter dormitories that typically travelled to the CBD but also had their local schools and shops (even cinemas) that provided the 'community glue' that stood apart to the suburbs currently in North Sydney. To force those disparate groups into single electorates will mean

that political representation will be bifurcated and diluted. Similarly, the suburbs to the western side of the coherent North Sydney electorate (such as Waverton, Greenwich, Lane Cove), don't share as much in common with the seat of Bennelong and so the same distortion of identity will occur.

4. Education corridor: As I mentioned, I am a graduate of NSBHS. This is a prestigious high school outperforming every other school – public or private – in NSW. It is a public school. The NSW public school sector is under strenuous pressure as enrolment share falls and parents feel pressured to enrol their children in private schools. This trend is having a deleterious impact on social cohesion and equity. Thus, the need to champion public schools has never been as imperative as it is today. In contrast, the electorate of Bradfield has a different education corridor: it is characterised by expensive, highly resourced private schools. If NSBHS and North Sydney Girls High, as two exemplars of what public education can be, are moved to Warringah, that will mean that Bradfield will be an electorate dominated by private secondary schools. Instead of the current mix of private and high performing public secondary schools, we will have a North Shore dominated by private schools and a consequent loss of diversity in an important part of Sydney. The three local members affected by the proposed redistribution will be challenged to represent both ends of the education spectrum.
5. Timing: To abolish a longstanding electorate that dates back to Federation, is a highly significant action. Such an action should not be taken whilst we are at the cusp of major change in styles of housing that will have epoch-defining demographic impacts. Whilst this aspect of my objection may be read as a duplication of #2 above, it is more than that: a democracy must have an eye towards the future and it should hesitate to make dramatic changes such as abolishing an electorate such as North Sydney before having had sufficient time to make allowance for future population changes.

The proposed redistribution should be rejected or at least delayed.

Thank you for considering my objections to the abolition of North Sydney electorate.