



**THE FEDERAL  
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NEW SOUTH WALES**

# Objection 695

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2 pages

I am writing to object to the proposed boundary changes to the HUNTER electorate in NSW.

I currently live in Muswellbrook and believe moving the towns of Muswellbrook and Denman into the New England electorate is an inappropriate change to make.

The New England electorate already stretches for several hundred kilometres. In fact, it is six times larger in area than the Hunter electorate, and will be expanded even more if this change occurs! That is a massive area for an elected representative to serve equally, easily and economically due to the time, logistics and expenses required to travel such large distances.

According to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) website, the Hunter electorate was "named for the Hunter River, which was part of the electoral division when it was first created." Not only is Muswellbrook situated roughly in the geographic middle of the Upper Hunter, but both Muswellbrook and Denman lie right on the Hunter River, which is in the Hunter Valley, and they have been a part of the Hunter electorate, a foundation electorate, since it was created over 100 years ago. This is simply where they belong.

It makes no sense to split the Upper Hunter (again, since Scone and Aberdeen have already been moved into the New England electorate from the Hunter) and remove these towns from their 'namesake' electorate - their home - and force them into another, which is named after an entirely different region. A region which, has a whole other identity to that of the Hunter.

The AEC website also explains that, "it is believed the [New England] area has been known by this name due to the similarity of its climate, fruits and cultivation to England," which is somewhat of a contrast to the character of the Hunter. The Hunter Valley and New England regions differ substantially in many aspects, such as in their economic needs and concerns, their industry focus and opportunities as well as in their

social and cultural attitudes. Even the weather and climatic conditions can vary greatly at any given time.

Why does this matter? What's important or concerning to someone in the north of the New England for example, would be completely irrelevant to those in the Hunter - hundreds of kilometres to the south. And vice versa. These citizens would be focused on an entirely different set of issues and challenges. However, what affects those in Muswellbrook, would also affect those in Singleton, which is a neighbouring town that will, remain in the Hunter electorate.

Like Singleton, Muswellbrook is surrounded by coal mines. As Singleton will remain in the Hunter electorate, these closely linked 'twin-town' communities, which have long shared a common bond, will become divided electorally and could potentially receive different levels of representation (such as having representatives from opposing parties for example), unlike the equal representation they receive now by sharing the same electorate.

Considering the uncertainty and confusion associated with the transition away from fossil fuels and the various proposals for alternative fuel sources - which is extremely pertinent to the Hunter electorate, consistent representation would ease these concerns and facilitate both a smooth transition and future certainty for the residents, workers and businesses in this region.

It is these people who will be affected the most, and it should be these people who have the final say as to which electorate they belong to. Any proposed electoral changes should be made democratically. It should not be forced upon an electorate. The people of the affected towns should not be excluded from the electorate they have always belonged to, nor should they be forced into an electorate with such a contrasting identity and needs to that of their own. It just doesn't make sense to do so.

Brad Hayne,  
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