



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Comment on Objections 217

Zali Steggall OAM MP

3 pages



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FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WARRINGAH

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Redistribution Committee for New South Wales
Australian Electoral Commission
Locked Bag 4007
Canberra ACT 2601

Re: Comment on objections to the Proposed Redistribution of the Division of Warringah and abolition of the Division of North Sydney

Please find below my comments on objections to the proposed redistribution of the Division of Warringah and abolition of the Division of North Sydney.

1. The Division of Warringah

I note that there were few objections that oppose the retention of Warringah as a Division. This accords with the decision of the Redistribution Committee to retain the Division. It also demonstrates that there is widespread support for the retention of the Division of Warringah.

However, there were many objections to the removal of specific suburbs from the Division. Objections 74, 91, 117, 140, 149, 163, 485 and 554 objected to the removal of Killarney Heights, Forestville and Frenchs Forest from Warringah and noted the deep connections between those areas and the other areas in the Division. Similarly, objections 283, 321, 445 and 628 objected to the Committee's recommendation to remove Dee Why and Curl Curl from Warringah also noting those connections. I fully support the reasoning and commentary in these submissions. As I argued in my objection to the proposed redistribution these excisions represent unnecessary elector disruption in Warringah.

I note that 17 objections suggested that Warringah be re-named North Sydney. This suggestion is the same as that made by the Liberal Party in its original submission to the Redistribution Committee. Although the Liberal Party itself did not make an objection, these objections might be seen as proxies.

Objections 493 and 521 make a number of tenuous and false claims in support of the re-naming of the Division covering Mosman, Manly and their surrounding suburbs.

Objection 493 states as a reason in support of the name change that North Sydney was represented by a former Prime Minister. However, the same argument can be made for Warringah. Both objections mention that prior to 1922 the area now covered by Warringah was in the Division of North Sydney. In fact, in 1901 North Sydney covered an area as far north as Gosford, Wyong, Morisset and Lake Macquarie. At Federation only 65 Divisions were established and in 1922 there were only 75. All areas now covered by newer Divisions were originally in other Divisions. It makes little sense to re-name a Division, merely because over a century ago, it was named something else as part of a far larger Division.

Objection 493 makes the false claim that the proposed redistribution of Warringah anchors the electorate around the North Sydney CBD. A cursory view of the map of the proposed Division of Warringah will demonstrate that this claim is simply not true. While North Sydney CBD is within the proposed redistribution of Warringah it is near the proposed Division's western boundary. Objection 493 also claims that the proposed redistribution of Warringah covers the whole of the North Sydney LGA. This too is false. The Division of Bradfield contains part of the North Sydney LGA. The many false and misleading claims in support of a name change to the Division of Warringah demonstrates the shallowness of the written reasons and the political motivation that lies behind the suggestion.

The actual, but unexpressed, reason for the name change is the loss of Warringah by a former Liberal Prime Minister to an Independent in 2019 and the Liberal Party's failure to re-capture the seat in 2022. Although history cannot be changed, it can be smudged and this is what the Liberal Party hopes to achieve by changing the name of the Division.

The suggestion to rename the Division conflicts with two of the AEC's guidelines for the naming of Divisions, the retention of Indigenous names where possible and the preference that when divisions are combined the name of the new division should be that of the old division which has the greatest number of electors within the new boundaries.

It is also at odds with the fact that there has been a Division since 1922, covering areas north and east of the North Sydney CBD, named Warringah. As I noted in my objection to the proposed redistribution the precise boundaries have varied since the creation of the Division. However, the core of the Division has always been Mosman, Manly and their surrounding suburbs. There is no valid reason to rename the Division that represents these areas.

2. The proposed abolition of the Division of North Sydney

I wish to support and draw the Committee's attention to the objection by the Member for North Sydney, Kylea Tink (Objection 686) that provides many reasons and cogent arguments against the Committee's proposal to abolish the Division of North Sydney and for the merger of the Divisions of Bradfield and Berowra.

As Ms. Tink argues, there has been a groundswell of public opposition to the proposal to abolish North Sydney. Far from the comments made in Objection 493 this does not show a contempt for the Australian Electoral Commission. Rather it demonstrates the active involvement of the North Sydney community who do not wish to lose their representation in Parliament. It is in the best traditions of participation in an active democracy, one that represents people rather than political parties. As Objection 618 stated in commenting on

the proposal to abolish North Sydney, “preserving engaged electoral communities is crucial for maintaining the strength and integrity of our democratic system.”

Objection 686 makes a number of sensible and practical proposals that assist the Committee in their work. It achieves the aim of reducing the Divisions in New South Wales from 47 to 46, meets quota numbers, makes fewer consequential boundary changes and improves the communities of interest in the northern Sydney region, with an almost equal movement of electors in NSW as in the proposed redistribution.

In particular Ms Tink’s proposal creates a much better bond between the areas immediately north of the North Sydney CBD, St Leonards, Crows Nest and the commercial centre of Chatswood than that in the proposed redistribution which splits these fast growing areas between three Divisions. Her suggestion aligns the Federal, State and Local Governments in this area. This would reduce the many planning problems caused by an overlap of government areas and link the major commercial and office centres of the North Shore, the North Sydney and Chatswood CBDs.

I wish to repeat the contention I made in my Objection that the Committee has not given sufficient weight to all the considerations and keeping communities of interest together in the proposal to abolish North Sydney.

I urge the augmented Redistribution Commission to review Objection 686 and supporting objections to the proposal to abolish the Division of North Sydney and consider all the factors; the wellspring of opposition to the proposal, the fact that the area will have significant population growth in the near future, the communities of interests that Ms Tink has demonstrated exists in the Division and the realistic and viable proposal that she has made in her Objection.

3. Summary

Once again, I wish to acknowledge the complexity of the task faced by the Redistribution Committee for NSW. There are many complex considerations faced by the Committee.

However, I urge the augmented Electoral Commission to take note of the objections to the proposal to remove electors in Dee Why, North Curl Curl, Frenchs Forest, Killarney Heights and Forestville from Warringah. I also urge the augmented Electoral Commissions to consider Objection 686 from the Member for North Sydney. In my view it merits serious consideration as an alternative to the proposal to abolish North Sydney.

I request that I be able to appear before the augmented Electoral Commission if it holds public hearings on the redistribution for NSW and thank the Committee for the opportunity to comment on objections to the proposed redistribution.

Yours sincerely,

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Zali Steggall OAM MP
Member for Warringah