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Councils out of touch on redistribution – Andren.

The Lithgow and Bathurst Councils are out of touch with the wishes and needs of their communities if they don't vigorously oppose the attempt to force the two cities into the Blue Mountains based federal seat of Macquarie, according to Member for Calare Peter Andren.

“Lithgow councillors overturned a recommendation from their General Manager to oppose the new boundary recommendations, while Bathurst appears only concerned with having its area split between the redrawn electorates of Macquarie and Calare” Mr Andren said.

“I strongly suspect the Labor-dominated Lithgow Council has fallen into line with instructions from Labor Head Office not to oppose the redrawn boundaries because Labor thinks it has a good chance of winning a seat based on Katoomba and Bathurst.

“Well I warn the major parties that whether it's me or someone else, there's likely to be a strong independent running for Macquarie, whatever its boundaries, at the next election.

“Lithgow Council's GM, in a report to the last council meeting clearly stated that ‘conflicts will arise in the proposed Macquarie division due to the diverse communities and access to services’. Yet the councillors threw out the recommended objection to the boundary changes and resolved that no action be taken on the matter.

“In Bathurst the council has effectively given the green light to being lumped in with the city-orientated Blue Mountains area by failing to object to the redrawn Macquarie boundaries.

“Of course the Electoral Commission should never have suggested splitting the Bathurst Regional Council area between the seats of Macquarie and Calare. But Council should also be arguing that its council area remain in the regionally-based seat of Calare and not the metropolitan electorate of Macquarie.

“Both councils have let down their constituents, many of whom have contacted my office to lodge their complaint about being forced into a new electorate with which they have little if any community of interest.

“I have lodged my objection to the new boundaries today, and have called for the Boundaries Commission to conduct an inquiry in Bathurst so local people can argue why the AEC's suggested boundaries discriminate against country voters.

“Not only are Bathurst and Lithgow being forced into a Blue Mountains seat, the suggested new Calare boundaries including seven major towns also has major logistical and community of interest problems for any member, while the abolition of the Gwydir seat is an insult to the bush.

“With the Calare seat split by the suggested changes, I will not decide on where I run until the final boundaries are announced later in the year. In the meantime I urge electors in the Bathurst and Lithgow areas and elsewhere in Calare to make their thoughts heard by lodging an objection before close of business this Friday 28 July. You can contact my office for further details,” Mr Andren said.

For further information: 026332 6229 or 0419 612 891