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Boundary objections demand rethink – Andren

With almost two thousand objections lodged to the proposed redistribution of NSW federal electorates, there is a compelling argument for the Electoral Commission to sit down and start again, according to Member for Calare Peter Andren.

“The National Party, the Farmers Association, western NSW councils and many hundreds of individual submissions clearly demonstrate the concern over the loss of the seat of Gwydir and the lack of community of interest in suggested changes to seats like Calare and Farrer” Mr Andren said.

“The objections by Cabonne and Parkes Shires are typical of the well-informed assessments from country NSW. Parkes Council says it is very much opposed to the alteration of current boundaries because of diminished representation for rural and regional communities.

“Like me, Parkes Council argues the inclusion of Forbes, Weddin and Parkes Shires into Calare makes no sense because they do not share geographic, climatic, employment profiles or production outputs with tablelands centres like Orange and Bathurst.

“In line with many submissions Parkes Shire rightly rejects both the abolition of Gwydir and the reduction in country representation and the splitting of the community of interest between Bathurst and Orange in the proposed new Calare and Macquarie boundaries.

“Similarly objections from the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury areas strongly criticise any move to separate the lower Blue Mountains from Macquarie and extend a metropolitan seat to a point west of Bathurst.

“Even given the fact one NSW seat had to be abolished, this response to the proposed boundaries is extraordinary but not unexpected.

“Many submissions point out the Electoral Commission could easily have removed one Sydney seat with nothing like the disruption and loss of representation their proposed redistribution will cause.

“The proposed seat of Parkes, containing the remaining 93,000 voters and 48% of the state after the AEC completed the other 48 proposed seats might as well be called ‘What’s Left’ for all the sense it makes.

“I totally reject John Anderson’s suggestion that in the event the Commission decides to abolish a country seat it should redraw Parkes to include Orange, Cabonne, Cowra, Blayney and *part of* Bathurst Regional Council area. That would simply be a cynical quick fix to suit the National Party.

“Mr Anderson should not be conceding the loss of *any* country seat and should argue that the seven existing seats west of the divide be drawn first, and that any seat loss should occur in the city which can easily adjust its electorate boundaries to accommodate such a change” Mr Andren said.

“I thank all individuals and organisations for their carefully considered objections to these proposed changes, and call on the Commission to conduct public hearings in country areas before reconsidering their currently ill-founded proposals for boundary changes” he added.

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