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NSW Electoral Redistribution: public hearings next week

The Redistribution Committee for NSW will hold two public inquiries, in Sydney on Thursday and Narrabri on Friday next week, into its proposed changes to federal electoral boundaries, according to Peter Andren, Member for Calare.

“The Redistribution Committee has agreed to listen to the objections of country people and will be holding one of its two public hearings in Narrabri, which is the least it can do given the detrimental impact the proposed redistribution will have on representation for country NSW,” Mr Andren said.

“The other hearing is scheduled for Sydney on Thursday, August 24th, and I urge all those interested and able, to register with the Electoral Commission so they can voice their objections to the committee in person.

“This is the most critical stage of the redistribution process. The Redistribution Committee has been expanded and will now be chaired by a judge, the Hon James Burchett QC, who has the authority to order the Committee to re-examine any aspect of its proposed boundary changes.

“The judge has not been involved in any part of the process until now, so it is very important those who are opposed to the changes make their arguments to Justice Burchett directly – it is virtually the last opportunity we have to protect fair democratic representation for country people.

“I will be attending the Sydney hearings to reiterate the argument that I made in my original submission – that the electoral boundaries **can** be changed without the loss of a country seat and that the Sydney metropolitan area is best placed to absorb the loss of an electorate.

“The abolition of a city electorate will have a far less impact than the Committee’s proposal to abolish the seat of Gwydir and include it in a greatly enlarged seat of Parkes that takes up 48% of NSW, and causes significant changes to other country seats including Calare.

“The suggested changes to Calare, which essentially split it in half with the eastern section moving into the Blue Mountains seat of Macquarie and the western section taking in parts of Gwydir and Parkes, flies in the face of the community of interest principle.

“The inclusion of Forbes, Weddin and Parkes Shire into Calare makes no sense as they don’t share geographic, climatic, employment profiles or production outputs with Tablelands centres like Orange and Bathurst.

“Similarly, splitting Orange and Bathurst between the posed new electorates of Calare and Macquarie breaks up regional cities that are very closely linked in all areas – economically, socially, sporting and culturally.

“These are the things the Committee needs to hear first hand. I will be raising my objections in Sydney next week and I urge as many local organisations and people to do the same,” Mr Andren said.

For further information: Peter Andren – 02 6277 2341 or 0419 612 891/Tim Mahony – 0427 480 825.