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24 August 2006

## **Andren critical of NSW Redistribution public hearing**

The NSW Redistribution Committee's public hearing in Sydney today, on its proposed redistribution of the state's federal electorates, seemed an ineffective process with committee members not even questioning witnesses over their objections, according to Peter Andren, Member for Calare.

"I was very disappointed in the whole process of the public hearing. I would have at least expected the redistribution Committee members to challenge witnesses on their objections to the proposed new electoral boundaries," Mr Andren said.

"Whilst I was at the hearing, five witnesses, including Roger Fletcher, voiced their objections about the boundary changes and not one was questioned or had their arguments challenged by the committee.

"The lack of engagement from Committee members was surprising and disappointing. They very much seemed to be just going through the motions.

"I would have expected to be asked to defend the basis of my objections to the abolition of Gwydir and the splitting of Calare in half," he said.

"I hope that the committee members will show a lot more interest in the objections of country people to the ill-conceived proposed redistribution and question those witnesses who appear at the Narrabri hearings tomorrow.

"With 16 witnesses heard in Sydney and 30 due to appear tomorrow, I again urge the Committee to hold further inquiries – that actually engage the witnesses – in regional NSW, before they sit down to rethink their illogical boundary suggestions.

"Every piece of evidence I heard today underlined the fact rural NSW is being severely disadvantaged with this proposed redistribution in comparison to metropolitan areas, and this is the very problem that plagues governance in this country," Mr Andren said.

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