



Proposed Boundaries Suggestions Submission

to the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel
for New South Wales

THE NATIONALS
for Regional NSW

The Secretariat of the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel
C/- The NSW Electoral Commission
GPO Box 832
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Commissioners

It is our pleasure to submit suggestions and comments to the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel's Draft Determination of the names and boundaries of electoral districts in New South Wales on behalf of the NSW Nationals.

As The Nationals are the only political Party dedicated solely to representing the people living in regional New South Wales, our suggestions and comments on the proposed boundaries are limited to the 27 electoral districts that make up regional NSW.

Further, The Nationals will be making one suggested change in regional NSW which will affect only two electoral districts with minimal population changes. If adopted by the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel, these amended boundaries for the electoral districts of Upper Hunter and Cessnock would not constitute a "significantly different" proposal.

In all other respects, The Nationals have no objections or suggestions to the names and boundaries of electoral districts located elsewhere within the proposed boundaries.

Regarding the potential holding of a Public Hearing in the new year, The Nationals would appreciate the opportunity to be able to bring evidence in support of any aspect of the Panel's draft determination where a suggestion or objection has been lodged by another interested person or party in rebuttal.

In conclusion, we would also like to take the opportunity to once again thank the Electoral Commission's staff for all their assistance to date - in particular, Mr Mel Keenan and Ms Melinda Lee.

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on behalf of the NSW Nationals

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An aerial photograph of a city and its surrounding landscape, including a river, fields, and urban areas. A large, dark green puzzle piece shape is overlaid on the image, with the word 'INTRODUCTION' written in yellow text on it. The puzzle piece shape is irregular, with several missing pieces, particularly in the lower right quadrant. The background image shows a mix of urban development, green spaces, and agricultural fields, with a river winding through the scene.

INTRODUCTION

This Proposed Boundaries Suggestions Submission is made in response to the Chairperson of the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel's invitation to members of the public to submit written suggestions relating to the draft determination.

As The Nationals are the only political Party dedicated solely to representing the people living in regional New South Wales, our suggestions and comments on the draft determination are limited to the 27 electoral districts that make up regional NSW.

Further, The Nationals will be making one suggested change in regional NSW which will affect only two electoral districts with minimal population changes. If adopted by the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel, these amended boundaries for the electoral districts of Upper Hunter and Cessnock would not constitute a "significantly different" proposal.

In all other respects, The Nationals have no objections, suggestions or comments to the names and boundaries of electoral districts located elsewhere within the proposed boundaries.

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

At this stage, The Nationals have no suggestions or comments on any of the electoral districts or names proposed in the following regions:

1. *Newcastle and Central Coast*
2. *Lord Howe Island*
3. *Illawarra-Shoalhaven*
4. *Outer Western Sydney*
5. *North Western Sydney*
6. *South Western Sydney*
7. *Middle Western Sydney*
8. *Sydney - Inner and Eastern Districts*
9. *Sydney – Northern Districts*
10. *Sydney - Southern Districts*

However, The Nationals will be making some suggestions and comments relating to the electoral districts proposed in the following regions:

1. *Far West and Riverina-Murray*
2. *Central West*
3. *New England-North West*
4. *North Coast*
5. *Hunter*
6. *South Coast and Tablelands*

In relation to our suggested minor boundary realignment between the electoral districts of Upper Hunter and Cessnock, the population transfers would be as follows:

FROM	CURRENT ELECTORS	PROJECTED ELECTORS
UPPER HUNTER TO CESSNOCK	1,993 <i>(approx)</i>	2,052 <i>(approx)</i>
CESSNOCK TO UPPER HUNTER	831 <i>(approx)</i>	926 <i>(approx)</i>
TOTAL TRANSFER	2,824 <i>(approx)</i>	2,978 <i>(approx)</i>

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel should be commended for delivering a common-sense and logical draft determination for regional NSW - which is supported by the fact that The Nationals are suggesting only one minor boundary realignment between two electoral districts.

Although The Nationals suggestions for changes between the electoral districts of Barwon and Murray have not been adopted this time around, we acknowledge and support the following approach to regional NSW by the Panel:

"...making limited boundary adjustments with a view to maintaining projected variances from the quotient by 2023 within the allowed statutory margin of +/- 10% in electors between electoral districts".



**SUGGESTIONS
AND COMMENTS**
IN DETAIL

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE REDISTRIBUTION & ENROLMENT DATA AND QUOTIENT VARIANCE

The Nationals strongly support a large number of the guiding principles contained in the Report of the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel on the draft determination - as they are entirely, or in large part, consistent with our own Suggestions Submission.

In particular, we strongly support Sections:

25. *The decline of the rural population in NSW, particularly in the Far West of the state, is not a new phenomenon, and is likely to continue. It soon became apparent to the Redistribution Panel that a rigid attempt to achieve equal elector numbers among districts would have necessitated a wholesale redrawing of almost all electoral district boundaries across the State. That course also would have resulted in a significant increase in the size of some rural electoral districts. The Redistribution Panel therefore gave consideration to the other statutory criteria in section 21(1)(b) of the Electoral Act, including community of interest, means of communication/travel, and existing electoral districts;*
26. *In the case of large rural electoral districts, the Redistribution Panel adopted the approach of making limited boundary adjustments with a view to maintaining projected variances from the quotient by 2023 within the allowed statutory margin of +/- 10% in electors between electoral districts;*
32. *Electoral districts in rural and regional NSW tend to be of such a size as to encompass more than one LGA, and dividing LGAs between electoral districts may cause administrative complexities. Therefore, in applying the community of interest criterion the Redistribution Panel considers that giving particular consideration to local government boundaries in rural and regional NSW is a desirable approach; and*
38. *The Redistribution Panel considers that not only will the boundary choices referred to above provide clarity to electors, but they will be more*

easily referenced in future redistributions.

Although The Nationals suggestions for changes between the electoral districts of Barwon and Murray have not been adopted this time around, we do acknowledge and support the approach of the Panel to retain Barwon's existing boundaries and to make a minimal change to Murray.

There is no requirement that each Electoral District must be drawn so that their actual enrolment has negligible variation from the quota, or that the projected enrolment should have negligible variation from the average Electoral District enrolment at the 'relevant future time'.

Therefore, we support the Panel's decision to utilise the full permissible variation to allow a large number of existing regional electoral districts - including Barwon, Bega, Clarence, Coffs Harbour, Kiama, Orange, Port Stephens, South Coast, Tweed and Wagga Wagga - to maintain or have minimal changes to their current boundaries. This will assist in minimising voter disruption during the ongoing and unprecedented wide-spread community disruption caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Nationals were also heartened to see the Panel give particular consideration to local government boundaries in rural and regional NSW and agree in its entirety that it is a desirable approach.

As detailed in our earlier submissions, in rural electoral districts LGA boundaries are generally a far stronger indicator of community of interest than elsewhere in the state. By and large, LGA boundaries also reflect the significant natural physical features of the State.

Therefore, The Nationals also strongly support the Panel's determination that electoral districts drawn in rural areas incorporate whole LGAs in the one electorate where possible - subject to the necessary numerical considerations and requirements as set out in Section 21 (1) (b) of the Electoral Act.

FAR WEST AND RIVERINA-MURRAY

As indicated earlier - and although The Nationals suggestions for changes between the electoral

districts of Barwon and Murray have not been adopted this time around - we do acknowledge and support the approach of the Panel to retain Barwon's existing boundaries and to make a minimal change to Murray.

The minimal changes proposed by the Panel to the electoral districts of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Cootamundra are also supported by The Nationals - as they are common sense and logical realignments that manages the necessary enrolments and enhance communities of interest under Section 21 of the Electoral Act.

CENTRAL WEST

The proposed changes by the Panel between the electoral districts of Orange, Dubbo, Bathurst and Upper Hunter is supported by The Nationals, as it allows for the necessary influx of enrolment for the region based on communities of interest - and are consistent with the changes put forward in our Suggestions Submission.

NEW ENGLAND-NORTH WEST

The proposed changes by the Panel between the electoral districts of Northern Tablelands, Tamworth, and Upper Hunter is supported by The Nationals, as it allows for the necessary influx of enrolment for the region based on communities of interest - and is identical to the changes put forward in our Suggestions Submission.

The decision by the Panel to reject a handful of suggestions that the Gunnedah LGA be relocated to the electoral district of Barwon is very sound and a common sense approach on a number of levels.

There are long-standing and unbreakable links that Gunnedah Shire Council has with the Tamworth Regional Council, including being in the same electoral district since 1998.

Gunnedah and Tamworth LGAs are also both located within the same NSW Police Force District, the servicing regional airport for Gunnedah is the Tamworth Regional Airport (next closest airport is in Moree (2hr 20mins away) or Armidale (2hr 13mins))

and both are located in the same NSW Health District (Hunter New England). They are also both in the same print & electronic media markets. Further, over the last three years, the NSW Government has assisted local councils and their local communities to develop 37 Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) across regional NSW.

One of these REDS is the Lower North West Region which encompasses the Tamworth Regional, Gunnedah Shire and Liverpool Plains Shire Local Government Areas LGAs, which was only completed earlier this year.

This Strategy was formed in collaboration with the councils, key stakeholders and the broader regional community - and benefited from economic-analytical assistance provided by the NSW Government's Centre for Economic and Regional Development (CERD).

NORTH COAST

The Nationals were heartened to see that the Panel has acknowledged the relatively consistent growth outlook across much of the North Coast region. The result means that minimal or no change is required to the eight (8) electoral districts that make up the region.

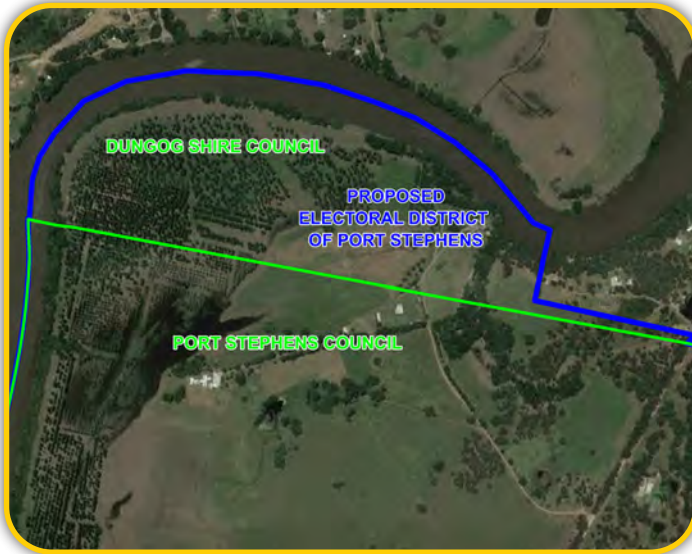
To this end, The Nationals support the Panel's decision to make no changes to the electoral district of Coffs Harbour - and the very minor realignments to Tweed and Clarence - as these changes are consistent with our approach in our Suggestions Submission.

Although The Nationals believe the Panel has missed an opportunity to retain existing boundaries for the electoral districts of Ballina, Lismore, Oxley, Port Macquarie and Myall Lakes - again we acknowledge and support the approach of the Panel as these changes are common sense and do not reduce the communities of interest across these electorates.

Suggestions Submission - Suggestions in Detail

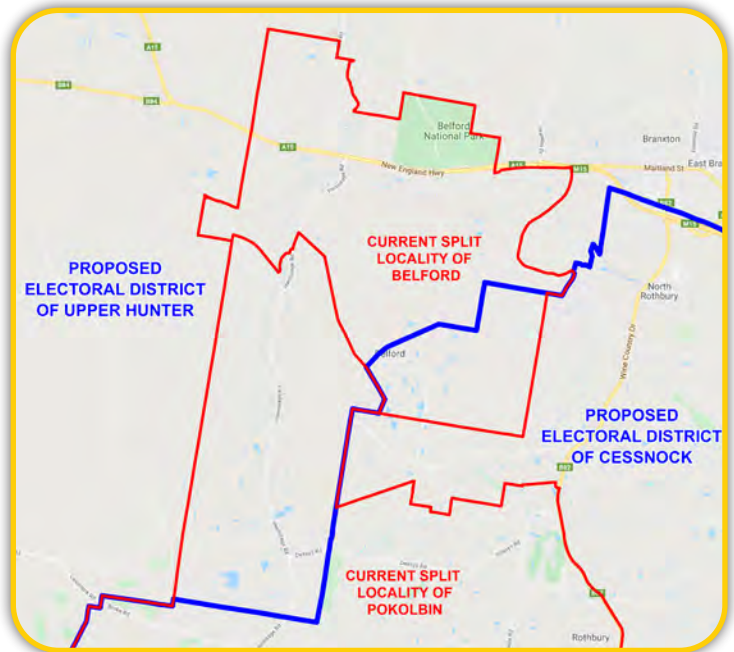
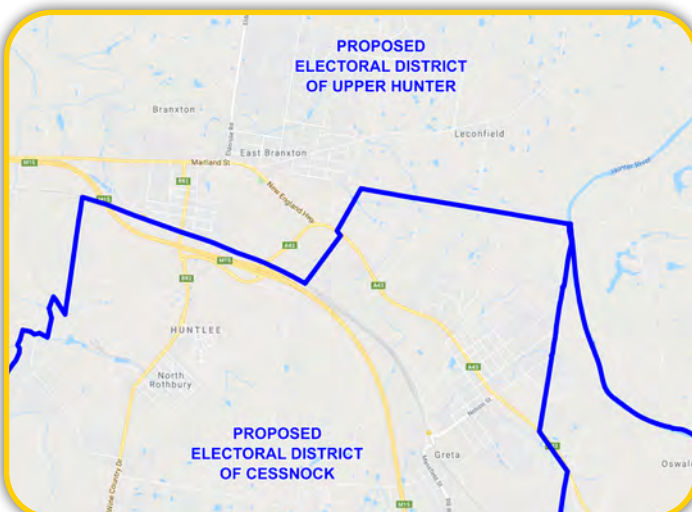
HUNTER

Although The Nationals do not understand the reasoning behind one of the three minor changes to the boundary of the electoral district of Port Stephens - given that it splits Dungong Shire LGA (see below) - we still support the intent of this determination to make no major changes to this electorate.



Regarding the proposed boundaries for the electoral districts of Upper Hunter, Maitland and Cessnock, the Nationals broadly supports the approach by the Panel.

Having said that, the Panel's proposed boundary between the electoral districts of Upper Hunter and Cessnock, currently splits the twin highway localities of Branxton and Greta - as well as splits the localities of Pokolbin and Belford in half - going against the intent of Section 21(1)(b)(i) of the Electoral Act (*see below and across*).



The Panel's statistical summary of the composition of the proposed electoral districts also currently has Upper Hunter at +4.37 on current electors and +4.1 on projected - while Cessnock is closer to the statewide average at -0.85 and +1.86.

Therefore, The Nationals would like to suggest making two minor boundary realignments between the electoral districts of Upper Hunter and Cessnock, which would not constitute a “significantly different” proposal, would improve the sharing of enrolment and will help to improve the communities of interest in both electorates.

To this end, The Nationals suggests reverting the proposed boundary between Branxton and Greta back to the current electoral boundary. This will result in ensuring that these twin highway towns that share so much in common, are located within the one electoral district. The Nationals also understand that this change would be strongly supported by both these local communities.

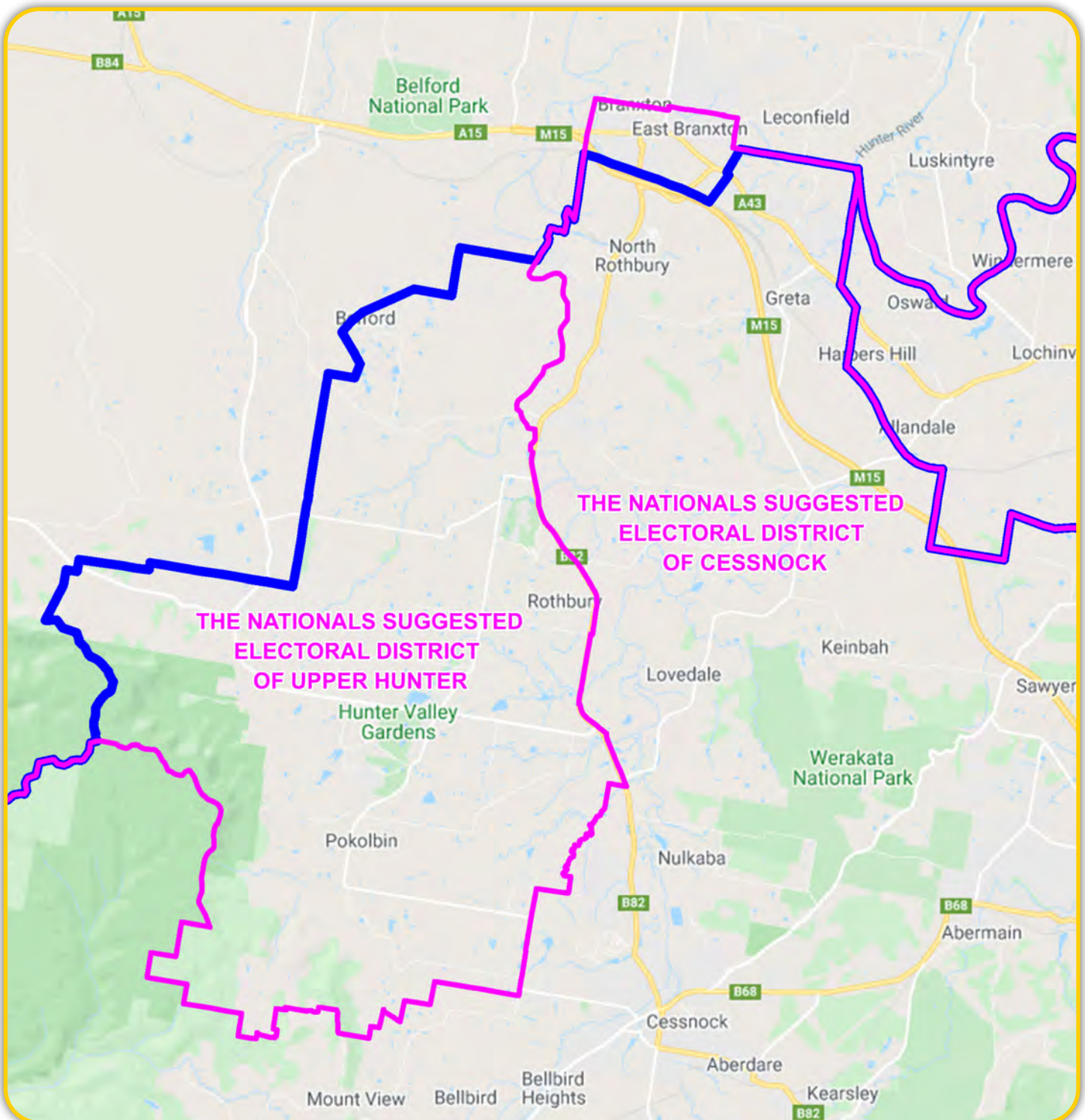
Secondly, The Nationals suggest relocating and reuniting the split localities of Pokolbin and Belford - along with the locality of Rothbury west of Wine Country Drive - from the electoral district of Cessnock to Upper Hunter.

Suggestions in Detail - Suggestions Submission

Following the adoption of these two minor realignments, the new enrolments and elector transfers for the electoral districts of Cessnock and Upper Hunter would be:

ELECTORATE	MAR 2020		APRIL 2023	
	ENROL	VARIANCE	ENROL	VARIANCE
ALL NSW	5318924	-	5509652	-
AVERAGE	57193	0.00%	59244	0.00%
Cessnock	57902	1.24%	61509	3.82%
Upper Hunter	58374	2.07%	60449	2.03%

FROM	CURRENT ELECTORS	PROJECTED ELECTORS
UPPER HUNTER TO CESSNOCK	1,993 <i>(approx)</i>	2,052 <i>(approx)</i>
CESSNOCK TO UPPER HUNTER	831 <i>(approx)</i>	926 <i>(approx)</i>
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SOUTH COAST AND TABLELANDS

The Nationals support the Panel's determination to retain the existing boundaries for Bega, Kiama and South Coast as it is exactly what we proposed in our Suggestions Submission. We also support the part transfer of Hilltops LGA (Boorowa and surrounds – the former Boorowa Council) to the electoral district of Cootamundra from Goulburn.

However, the one puzzling boundary change proposed by the Panel is in relation to the transfer of parts of Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (Collector, Currawang, part of Tarago, and part of Lake George) from the electoral district of Monaro into Goulburn.

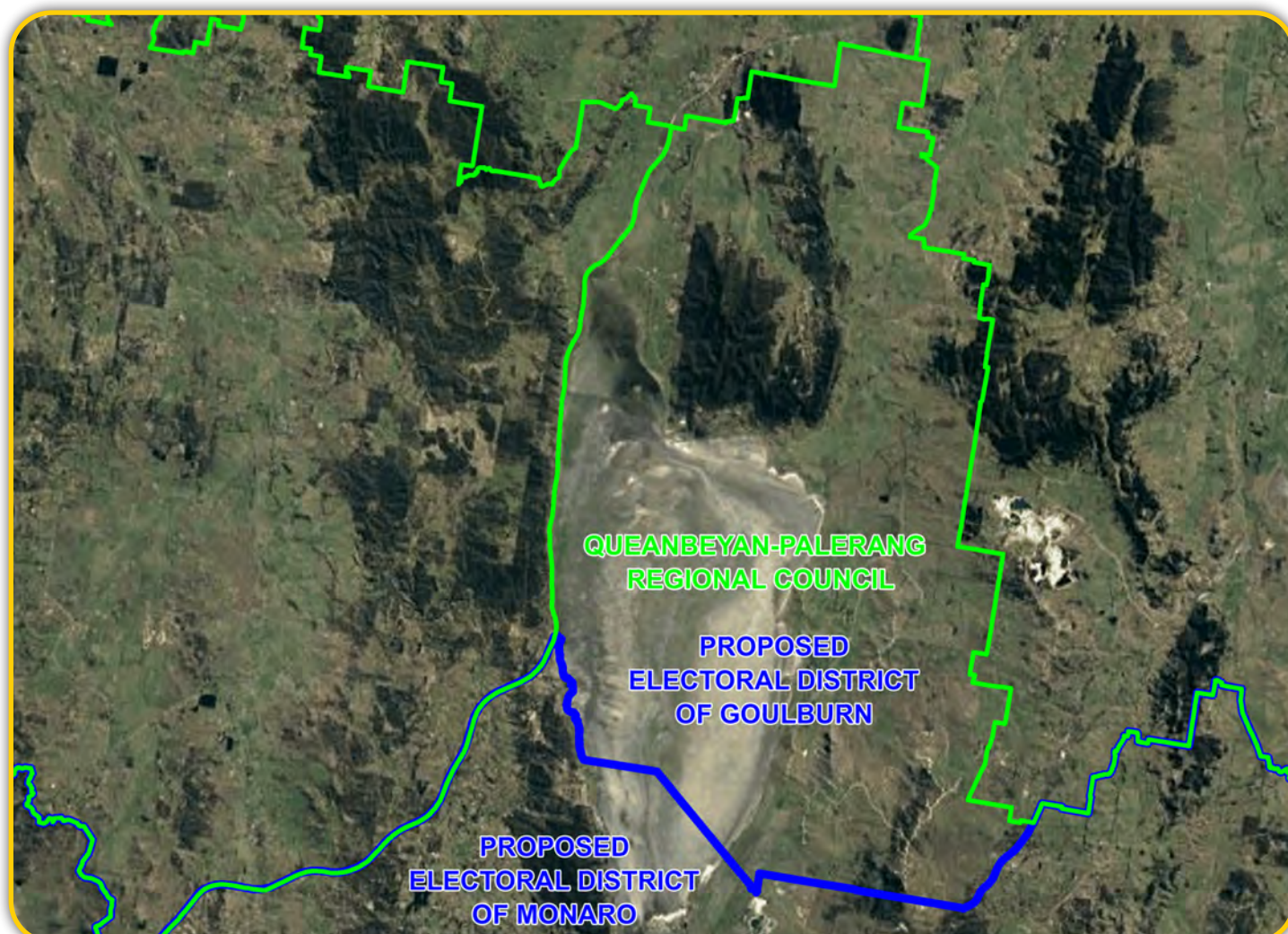
In Section 32 of its determination, the Panel clearly states that:

Electoral districts in rural and regional NSW tend to be of such a size as to encompass more

*than one LGA, **and dividing LGAs between electoral districts may cause administrative complexities.** Therefore, in applying the community of interest criterion the Redistribution Panel considers that **giving particular consideration to local government boundaries in rural and regional NSW is a desirable approach.***

With this mind - and knowing that the electoral district of Goulburn would be at approximately -2.21 on current electors and -1.98 on projected should this particular change NOT have been made - we are struggling to understand the necessity of this change.

Therefore, The Nationals request that the Panel review this particular change again to see whether it is actually necessary and also what impacts it would cause the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council when undertaking their administrative activities.





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