

The Secretariat of the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel
c/o NSW Electoral Commission
GPO Box 832
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Commissioners

2020 redistribution – Response to suggestions affecting the Sydney Electorate

I write to respond to proposed changes to the boundaries of the Sydney electorate made in other submissions.

Apart from the Liberal Party of Australia, which proposes an extensive redrawing and renaming of the inner-Sydney and eastern suburbs electorates, all suggestions propose only minor changes to the Sydney electorate. .

Several suggestions support one or both of the key elements of my submission:

- Uniting the suburb of Surry Hills within the Sydney electorate
- Uniting the suburbs of Edgecliff and Woollahra within the Vaucluse electorate.

SUPPORT FOR MY SUGGESTION:

Support for the Surry Hills proposal

Uniting the whole of Surry Hills in the Sydney electorate is proposed by the Australian Labor Party, Liberal Party of Australia, J. Waddell and M. Gordon.

Support for the Edgecliff/Woollahra proposal.

Uniting the whole of Edgecliff and Woollahra within the Vaucluse electorate is proposed by the Australian Labor Party, Liberal Party of Australia and M. Mulcair.

M. Gordon also proposes new boundaries that would unite the whole of Woollahra in Vaucluse. However this new boundary would divide Paddington and Edgecliff.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

Inclusion of Moore Park and Centennial Park in the Sydney electorate

The Australian Labor Party, National Party and C. Magee propose transferring Moore Park and Centennial Park from Heffron to Sydney, with Labor noting that these areas were within the Sydney electorate prior to the 2013 redistribution.

The Sydney electorate was established at the 2007 NSW election, incorporating much of the former Bligh electorate, including Moore Park and Centennial Park. Along with Paddington and Surry Hills, Moore Park and Centennial Park had been included within Bligh since the 1980 redistribution.

I do not oppose incorporating Moore Park and Centennial Park within the Sydney electorate, however the reunification of Surry Hills within the Sydney electorate should be a higher priority.



Transfer of Ultimo to Sydney

M. Mulcair proposes bringing the whole of Ultimo into the Sydney electorate. This would result in changes to the Balmain electorate. By contrast the Australian Labor Party, Liberal Party, National Party, C. Magee, J. Wadell and M. Gordon propose no change to Balmain.

I do not oppose reuniting Ultimo within the Sydney electorate, however the reunification of Surry Hills within the Sydney electorate should be a higher priority. This prioritisation takes into account Section 21 (1) (b) (i) of the Electoral Act which requires the Commission to give due consideration to community of interests within the electoral district, including economic, social and regional interests.

As set out in my initial submission, strong community of interests unites the suburb of Surry Hills. Surry Hills is separated from much of the Newtown electorate by the railway line and shares little community of interests with the suburbs to its west.

The same cannot be said of the suburb of Ultimo. Suburban boundaries can sometimes obscure rather than reveal strong community interests.

Harris Street is currently the Sydney/Balmain boundary. It also effectively separates the predominantly residential part of Ultimo from its primarily commercial and city-focussed areas. This separation is revealed in the current and projected enrolments for Ultimo.

There are currently 2,740 voters enrolled in Ultimo, of which 2,301 (83.97 per cent) reside in Balmain. The remaining 439 (16.02 per cent) are enrolled in Sydney. By 2023, the number of Ultimo voters in Balmain is projected to increase slightly to 2,323 (84.35 per cent) while the number of voters in Sydney is projected to decrease to 431 (15.65 per cent).

Those Ultimo residents living west of Harris Street make extensive use of Wentworth Park, their closest large park and the Broadway Shopping Centre. Both are within the Balmain electorate. Those currently living in the Sydney electorate part of Ultimo are more likely to use and are geographically closer to Tumbalong Park and the Harris Street shopping precinct around Union Square, both within the Sydney Electorate.

Retaining the existing boundaries of the Balmain electorate, as supported by several submissions, would be in keeping with the intention of Section 21 (1) (b) (v) of the *Electoral Act 2017* which requires due consideration to be given to existing electoral boundaries.

M. Gordon's suggestion

M. Gordon suggests a new Sydney/Vaucluse boundary running south along Cascade Street, west along Paddington Street and south along William Street to Oxford Street. While this boundary would bring the whole of Woollahra into Vaucluse, Edgecliff would remain divided between Sydney and Vaucluse. It would also divide Paddington between the two electorates.

The whole of Paddington has been within the Sydney electorate since 2007, and the former Bligh electorate for many years before that. At the local level, Paddington is a discrete ward within the Woollahra local government area.

I do not support this proposal.

Liberal Party suggestion

The Liberal Party proposes a radical restructure of inner Sydney and eastern suburbs electorates, with one electorate, Heffron, being abolished and three new electorates – Woollahra, Waverley and Botany Bay being created. Dramatic changes to Sydney and Newtown are also proposed.

As such, it strongly differs from all other suggestions, which retain all existing inner Sydney and eastern suburbs electorates with only modest changes. Unlike the Liberal Party suggestion, these suggestions have due regard for Section 21 (1) (b) (v) of the Electoral Act.

The Liberal Party seeks to justify its suggestion by referring to the strong community opposition to the Baird Liberal Government's attempt at forced amalgamations, noting that Woollahra Municipal Council most aggressively resisted change with litigation. The suggestion observes:

"It was indicative of an explicit community of interest understood and valued in these communities."

The submission goes on to argue that under the proposal:

- The whole of the Sydney electorate would be within the City of Sydney
- The whole of the Woollahra LGA would be within the proposed new Woollahra electorate
- The whole of the Waverley LGA would be within the proposed new Waverley electorate.

While this realignment may be superficially attractive, it would significantly disrupt strong existing communities of interest for little practical benefit.

Paddington residents see themselves as part of the inner city and like Darlinghurst and Surry Hills residents are likely to rely on services in the CBD and Oxford Street. Their predominant transport services are the Oxford Street buses and the 389 which are also used by Darlinghurst and Surry Hills residents.

Key priorities for all Paddington residents are heritage protection and unsympathetic development proposals given the unique heritage significance of the entire area. Keeping Paddington united ensures effective representation on these matters.

Negative impact of the 2011 postcode area

The proposed Woollahra electorate extends beyond the Woollahra LGA boundaries. The proposed boundary with Sydney divides the 2011 postcode area at Macleay Street. This ignores the requirement to give due consideration to community of interests including economic, social and regional interests, and means of communication and travel within the electoral district. (Section 21 (1) (b) (i) and (ii) of the Electoral Act).

The 2011 postcode includes the suburbs of Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Rushcutters Bay and Woolloomooloo. With this region known as Kings Cross, all suburbs share strong community interests. All of Potts Point, Woolloomooloo and Elizabeth Bay, and the residential areas of Rushcutters Bay are within the City of Sydney Council area. Policing of the area is entirely provided by the Kings Cross Local Area Command. Businesses within in the 2011 postcode are represented by the Potts Point Partnership and resident groups seek to represent people living on both sides of the proposed Macleay Street divide.

The 2011 postcode area is a very unique health precinct, with the area and its socially diverse residents serviced by the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre, the Kirketon Road Medical Centre which supports sexual health and injecting drug users, and St. Vincent's Hospital, as well homelessness support services including the Wayside Chapel, Rough Edges, and Lou's Place. Separating these services into two electorates risks disrupting important coordination through one local member for vital state government related services.

Similarly the area is a unique night precinct, with unique licensing laws, one shared Liquor Accord, and residents groups. Late night trading remains a key priority issue for people living in the 2011 postcode and this strongly connects them with Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and CBD communities.

The area is served by the 311, 324 and 325 bus routes and Kings Cross Station.

The 2011 postcode area has largely been within the same electorate since the creation of the former Bligh electorate at the 1961 redistribution.

The proposed Sydney southern boundary

The Liberal Party suggests extending the Sydney electorate boundary south to include not only Surry Hills (which concurs with my submission) but Chippendale, Redfern and Waterloo.

While the Liberal Party's proposed boundaries follow suburb boundaries, it divides the Green Square urban renewal area, which according to the City of Sydney map covers parts of the suburbs of Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Rosebery, Waterloo and Zetland.

Key to this urban renewal project is the Green Square Town Centre which is providing a strong community focal point for the residents of these suburbs. A library and community arts centre are already serving these residents and an aquatic centre, new parks, boulevards, retail and commercial services are planned. The City of Sydney estimates that 61,000 people will live in Green Square by 2030.

In my initial submission, I suggested that, given this, the projected enrolments for the Heffron electorate may be underestimated and encouraged the Commission to avoid the risk of Heffron becoming malapportioned following the completion of the redistribution.

Extending the Sydney electorate boundary to include part of the Green Square urban renewal area would likely transfer some of the risk of malapportionment to the proposed Sydney electorate.

Given the projected population growth, it is possible that electorates covering the Green Square may be malapportioned by the time of the 2027 NSW election. The redistribution which will follow that election (assuming a special distribution is not triggered before 2027) will need to address this malapportionment. This is likely to require a significant realignment of inner Sydney and eastern suburbs electorates. It is questionable whether the Liberal Party's proposed boundaries would survive such a realignment.

This would mean inner Sydney and eastern suburbs residents would suffer two significant electoral disruptions, along with the resulting confusion and uncertainty.

Given this, it would be preferable to proceed with modest changes as proposed in all other submissions, knowing that significant change almost certainly will be required post 2027. Population growth is likely to have stabilised by then, with future redistributions to require adjustments of electoral boundaries, rather than dramatic restructures.

A further consequence of the Liberal party submission is major impacts on the neighbouring and recently created seat of Newtown. While annexing all of Surry Hills within the Sydney electorate is supported, other proposed changes to Newtown beyond including Erskineville to address possible malapportionment (as suggested elsewhere) are confusing and inappropriate.

Lord Howe Island

The Liberal Party has again proposed including Lord Howe Island in the electorate of Sydney, to reflect arrangements at the Federal level. It is currently within the Port Macquarie electorate.

I did not support this proposal when it was suggested in 2013 arguing lack of community of interests between Lord Howe Island residents and inner city Sydney residents.

I note however that the Liberal Party has pointed out that the only year-round services from mainland NSW to Lord Howe Island are from Sydney Airport. This means Lord Howe Island residents wishing

to meet with their local member must first fly to Sydney then travel to Port Macquarie or limit such meetings to the days Parliament is sitting. Alternatively, their Local MP must travel to Sydney first and then onto Lord Howe Island to visit constituents out of parliamentary sitting weeks.

I acknowledge that this is an impost that other New South Wales citizens do not face and which could be remedied by transferring Lord Howe Island to an electorate closer to Sydney Airport and the NSW parliament. I also acknowledge shared values around sustainability and environmental protection between inner city communities and Lord Howe Island residents.

Apart from recent years, Lord Howe Island and the Sydney CBD have been included in the same state and Federal electorates.

For these reasons, I do not oppose the inclusion of Lord Howe Island in the Sydney electorate or another electorate with close proximity to Sydney Airport.

Yours sincerely,