

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2006

Question: F63

Outcome Outcome 1, Output 1.1.4

Topic: 2005/06 Queensland and New South Wales federal electoral boundary redistributions

Written Question on Notice

Senator Nash asked:

On the QLD and NSW redistributions.

You appear to have placed high importance on the equality of numbers when determining the QLD redistribution? Doesn't the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* at s.66(3)(a) allow for a 'projection time' tolerance of plus or minus 3.5 per cent of the number of electors when considering a redistribution? Why then did you decide to place such a high importance on the equality of numbers?

How did you consider the community of interest (economic, social and regional) for the new electorate of Flynn and also for the existing electorate of Farrer?

- In your draft determination you make reference to the history and heritage linkages of Gladstone with western Queensland.
 - Could you explain to the committee those history and heritage factors that assisted your final determination.
- Does the act require an electorate to have a coastal link with an inland region (eg Gladstone with Emerald)?
- What was the Commission's thinking when considering the community of interest in linking Cameron's Corner (the geographic point that links QLD, NSW and SA state borders) to Albury in the seat of Farrer as opposed to say Broken Hill in the new seat of Calare?

In your NSW redistribution deliberations did you put any weight on the heritage / Federation value of the retaining the name Gwydir?

Answer:

Redistributions of Commonwealth electoral boundaries are carried out under an independent process by two independent bodies (the Redistribution Committee and the augmented Electoral Commission) appointed under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act).

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The redistribution process is set out in detail in the Electoral Act, and includes an extensive public consultation process involving the receipt of suggestions, objections and the holding of public hearings. The two bodies are not under the direction of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) nor of the relevant Minister.

The Redistribution Committee for Queensland explains its proposed redistribution in the report it published on 23 June 2006. This report is available on the AEC's website at: <http://www.aec.gov.au/content/why/redistributions/2005/qld/report/index.htm> .

The Redistribution Committee for New South Wales explains its proposed redistribution in the report it published on 30 June 2006. This report is available on the AEC's website at: <http://www.aec.gov.au/content/why/redistributions/2005/nsw/report/index.htm> .

In the public announcements of their proposed redistribution published on 11 and 13 September 2006, the augmented Electoral Commission for Queensland and the augmented Electoral Commission for New South Wales provided the substance of their conclusions. These announcements are available on the AEC's website at: <http://www.aec.gov.au/content/why/redistributions/2005/qld/annoucement.htm> and <http://www.aec.gov.au/content/why/redistributions/2005/nsw/annoucement.htm> respectively.

The reports of both augmented Electoral Commissions were tabled in Parliament on 30 November 2006 and are available on the AEC's website. Gazettal of the boundaries occurred on 22 November 2006. Both augmented Electoral Commission reports detail their reasoning and conclusions.