

Executive. J Bath.AL
Reference:
Phone: [REDACTED]

31 July 2020

The Honourable Justice Arthur Emmett AO QC
Chairperson
NSW Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel

via email: redistribution@elections.nsw.gov.au

Dear Chairperson

CITY OF NEWCASTLE COMMENT - NSW ELECTORAL DISTRICTS REVIEW

Thank you for the invitation to participate in the NSW Electoral Districts Redistribution Review.

City of Newcastle (CN) understands that a review is necessary due to the uneven distribution of population growth across NSW. Indeed, the City of Newcastle local government area (and Greater Newcastle more generally) are undergoing a period of growth and transformation. City of Newcastle currently has a population of 160,700, and is expected to grow to 199,700 people by 2041. Of this population, total enrolments at July 2019 were 120,486, approximately equal to two state electoral districts.

Presently, CN is represented in the NSW Parliament by the Electorates of Newcastle, Wallsend and (partially) Charlestown. CN notes projections from the Electoral Commission that the population of both Wallsend and Newcastle is expected to grow above quota (4.52 and 3.02%, respectively) by 2023, while Charlestown is expected to be under quota (4.8%).

	Current Enrolment 2020	% Above/Below Quota 2020	Projected Enrolment 2023	% Above/Below Quota 2023	Area of District (sq km)
Newcastle	59435	3.92	61920	4.52	121
Wallsend	59509	4.05	61033	3.02	117
Charlestown	55665	-2.67	56401	-4.8	66

As a result of population growth within the Newcastle local government area, CN – in close consultation with the NSW Electoral Commission and our local community – recently undertook a redistribution of Ward boundaries under the *Local Government Act 1993*. Community feedback very strongly indicated a preference to keep suburbs together, and separate areas based on natural boundaries (including main roads, railway lines, and geographic landmarks).

There are a number of areas where the boundaries of the CN Local Government Area align with the boundaries of the NSW Electoral Districts and/or Commonwealth Electoral Divisions. This is a desirable result as it reinforces the community's understanding of the boundary and reduces resident's confusion about the district in which they will be voting for the various levels of government.

CN recommends that the NSW Electoral Commission consider similar boundaries to these Ward boundaries when modifying Electoral Districts. City of Newcastle recommends that the Electoral Commission consider boundaries for the District of Newcastle to broadly align with the combined area of City of Newcastle Wards 1 and 2, and boundaries for the District of Wallsend to align with the combined area of City of Newcastle Wards 3 and 4.

These boundaries have a number of key benefits:

1. The Ward boundaries follow natural boundaries and suburb demarcations as closely as possible
2. The combined areas have a population equivalent to that required for each electrical district
3. Aligning the boundaries with minimises confusion and maximises representation for electors

We would encourage the NSW Electoral Commission to consider similar boundaries for the Districts of Wallsend and Newcastle. Should you seek further information, please contact me via

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Bath
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER