

NSW Electoral Redistribution

August 2004

Introduction

This occasional paper provides an overview of the proposed changes to the state electoral boundaries in NSW as announced by the Boundary Commission on 4 August. This paper examines the reasons for the redistribution, the findings of the commission and what the proposed boundaries will mean for the March 2007 state election.

The information provided in this paper is not exhaustive and while every effort has been made to ensure accuracy at the time of print – Hawker Britton does not guarantee the accuracy of all information.

Further Information

Online information on the NSW Electoral Redistribution is available from the following websites:

- www.seo.nsw.gov.au
- www.redistribution.seo.nsw.gov.au
- <http://www.cms.dpws.nsw.gov.au/Gazette/Gazette>

Background

New South Wales is divided into 93 state electoral districts. The number of enrolled voters in each district must remain within the allowed margins to ensure each vote carries approximately equal weight.

There are a number of circumstances under which redistribution is required. In this case the existing electoral boundaries have been in place for the last two state elections and according to section 27 (1) (c) of the Constitution Act, this means a redistribution must be carried out prior to the next state election.

The draft determinations of the Electoral District Commissioners are based on the consideration of written submissions from the public and are now subject to appeal, prior to the delivery of the Commission's final determinations on 3 September.

Boundary Changes

Where possible and appropriate the existing boundaries have been kept to avoid unnecessary confusion. Boundaries that have been adjusted, where possible, take in whole local government areas and generally use significant physical features, such as major highways and bodies of water, as borders.

Key Changes

- The number of seats remains unchanged at 93.
- A new quoter of 48,344 electors per seat has been set, with a permitted variance of 3 per cent.
- The Central NSW seat of Lachlan is to be abolished.
- The seat of Wollondilly has been created in South Western Sydney.

Name Changes

Eleven seats have been renamed in the distribution. The changes are reportedly designed to better represent community aspirations, however the commissions desire to delete references to famous individuals, such as Governor William Bligh, has also influenced these changes.

New Name	Previous Name	Comments
Balmain	Port Jackson	The addition of areas such as Haberfield to this seat is likely to improve The Green's chances of winning this seat.
Castle Hill	The Hills	
Gosford	Peats	The former name of this electorate originated from the famous local ferry driver George Peats.
Goulburn	Southern Highlands	
Morriset	Lake Macquarie	
Oatley	Georges River	Changed to remove confusion over the seat's geographic location.
Shellharbour	Illawarra	
Sydney	Bligh	The seat of Bligh will gain the inner city suburbs of Pyrmont and Ultimo, while the normally Liberal-voting territory of Darling Point will be removed. This is a favourable boundary change for sitting member, Clover Moore.
Terrigal	Gosford	
Toongabbie	Wentworthville	
Wollondilly	Camden	Covers the area between Glen Alpine and Picton. Based on 2003 voting patterns it will be marginally Labor, with a margin of about two per cent.

Country v City Electors

A key political issue arising from the redistribution is the perceived disparity between country and urban areas of the state.

The overall increase in the number of NSW electors of seven per cent is largely due to growth in coastal and city areas. In some urban electorates, enrolments have grown by up to 20 per cent, while they have declined by up to 12 per cent in inland seats. This situation has prompted statements of concern (primarily from the National Party) that country NSW is losing power in the parliament.

A key example of this is seen in the contraction of electorates in the Hunter and Central Coast regions toward the coast as population increases in those areas.

The redistribution has prompted called by the National Party for an electoral system which would boost the weight of votes cast in country seats. This would be contrary to the constitution of NSW and would certainly be disputed.

It will be this concern more than any other, which may result in changes to the final boundaries in September.

Possible Electoral Outcomes in 2007

Labor is considered a good chance picking up the newly created seat of Wollondilly. The seat is notionally a marginally Labor seat, (about two per cent based on 2003 voting patterns).

Balancing this is the possibility that Labor could lose the seat of Murray-Darling, which becomes notionally Liberal. The Liberal Party's margin has also been reduced in the seats of Riverstone, Port Stephens and Kiama, and makes the seat formerly known as Port Jackson more favourable for the Greens.

The National Party will lose one seat if Lachlan is abolished, but Ian Armstrong, the current sitting member for Lachlan has indicated his intention to contest the seat of Murray-Darling, which becomes a safe National seat with the boundary changes. The changes also give the Nationals the chance to win Tamworth and Dubbo from sitting Independents.

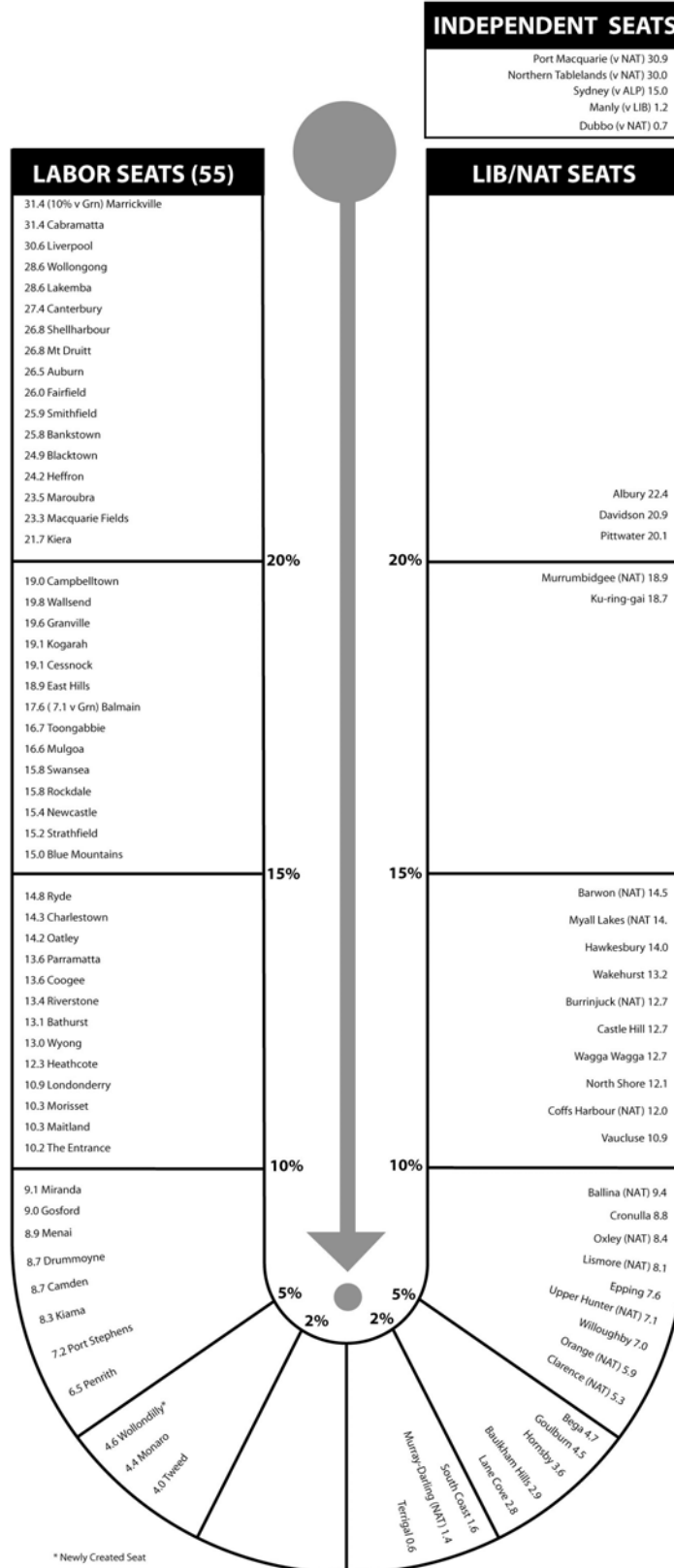
While the Coalition's prospects would improve as a result of gains by the National Party, there is no likely change to the Liberal Party's prospects as a result of this redistribution.

These changes are summarised below.

Party	Possible Losses	Possible Gains	Comments
ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Murray-Darling ▪ Balmain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wollondilly 	Reduced margins in Riverstone, Port Stephens and Kiama
Liberal Party	~ No change ~		
National Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lachlan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Murray-Darling ▪ Tamworth ▪ Dubbo 	
Greens	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balmain 	
Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tamworth ▪ Dubbo 		

Overall, the redistribution marginally boosts the prospects of the Coalition and the Greens, threatening a total of five Labor seats. However, Labor would have to lose nine seats in 2007 for a change of government to occur, leading to a description of the redistribution as a 'status quo' result.

2004 NSW Redistribution (Draft Boundaries)



Hawker Britton

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