

MOUNT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

The Electoral Commission Commissioners
New South Wales Electoral Commission
GPO Box 832
SYDNEY NSW 2001

1 July 2013

Dear Sirs

The Mt Wilson Progress Association urges you **not to separate the Upper Mountains communities of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine from the State electorate of Blue Mountains** and move the communities' voting members to the electorate of Hawkesbury. As the submission states: there are strong historical and emotional links in the communities of The Mounts with the localities of the Blue Mountains, especially the Upper Mountains. Please revise your proposal and retain The Mounts in the electorate of Blue Mountains.

Our submission follows:

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The Mt Wilson Progress Association cognisant of Section 17A(1)(b) of the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* responds to the State Electoral Boundary Commissioners with comments on each of the areas to be given due consideration by the Commission in relation to its determination of each district boundary as follows:

1. The community of interest within the electoral district, including economic, social, and regional interests:

The 173 current electors in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine are members of tightly knitted communities highly focused on issues exclusively the province of the Blue Mountains and with an unusually close association with the Blue Mountains City Council. The Mt Wilson Progress Association as agent for the BMCC is responsible for the general maintenance of the public areas of Mt Wilson including the reserves, walking tracks and road verges. So well-knitted is the Mt Wilson community that 70 per cent of the approximately 186 residents are members of the Mt Wilson Progress Association. The "mountains" focus of the communities is demonstrated by the very active Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Rural Fire Service Brigade, a local resident-based First Responders paramedic team that works closely with the nearby Lithgow Ambulance Service, an Historical Society with firm links with other Blue Mountains historical societies, and a long-established Bush Care group that works locally with BMCC staff. The local RFS brigade is so closely linked with the Blue Mountains RFS Katoomba Command Office every vehicle movement and action is reported to them.

There are no similar community links with the Hawkesbury District other than with the operational requirements of the Bilpin RFS brigade.

A relevant issue for Mt Wilson in the context of Section 17A(1)(a) of the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act* provision that requires the Commissioners to have regard to demographic trends is the outlook for the number of voters likely to be registered in our communities during the full period of the redistribution cycle. In November and December 2012, the Mt Wilson Progress Association undertook a survey of the community for input for a submission in response to the request of the Blue Mountains City Council for a contribution to the development of Council's Community Strategic Plan: Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025. The submission stated: Of the current population one third are permanent residents. The remainder have their main residence elsewhere, mainly Sydney. The typical age of residents is over 65, mostly retired with independent children. With increasing age, limited ability for activity and health concerns often cause people to leave. The survey response revealed this age distribution: 1 – 20 > 0%, 21 – 30 > 1%, 31 – 40 > 4%, 41 – 50 > 8%, 51 – 60 > 22%, 61 – 65 > 16%, 66 – 70 > 17%, 71 – 75 > 17%, 76 + > 15%. A similar age profile exists in Mt Irvine. In the absence these days of other than gardening-related full-time jobs in Mt Wilson it is likely that as properties come on the market they will be purchased by Sydney-based people seeking a weekender while retaining their Sydney residence as their principal residence and Sydney located electorate. Should this trend develop then the number of 173 voters presently enrolled in Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine may well decline making baseless any rationale based on the outlook for enrolled voters for the Hawkesbury boundary to be moved to include the villages.

2. The means of communication and travel within the electoral district:

A Google Maps search shows it takes about 45 minutes to travel the 42 kilometres from Mt Wilson to Katoomba – the LGA centre for the Blue Mountains electorate.

The search shows it takes about 1 hour and 8 minutes to travel the 68 kilometres from Mt Wilson to Windsor – the LGA centre for the Hawkesbury electorate.

Residents of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine generally shop and find other services they need in Katoomba and Lithgow – not Windsor or Richmond.

The state member for the Blue Mountains can, and does, regularly travel to the villages and does so more easily than would be possible for the member for Hawkesbury with many more remote localities to support and further to travel.

3. The physical features and area of the electoral district:

Mt Wilson (1,008 metres) and Mt Irvine (850 metres) are in the high furthest north east populated area of the Blue Mountains and endowed with rich volcanic soil. The area is unique in NSW with its well-tended gardens and large exotic trees along village roads that often lead toward mountain rain forest walking tracks. These physical characteristics of the area are a primary reason for an increasing number of visitors to come to the area to see the gardens in Spring and Autumn.

The physical attributes of The Mounts make them as chalk and cheese to the characteristics of the Hawkesbury plain localities.

4. Any mountain and other natural boundaries:

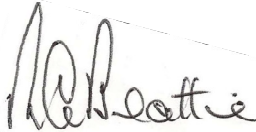
As mentioned above, Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine are completely different localities to those on the Hawkesbury plain separated by the long and winding route of The Bells Line of Road.

5. The boundaries of the existing electoral districts:

The boundaries of the existing electoral districts as far as Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine are concerned link the two village communities physically, economically and socially with the commonalities they have with the communities of the electorate of the Blue Mountains, while there is virtually no similarity of

commonality with the communities of the Hawkesbury electorate. It would be accurate to say there are also strong historical and emotional links in the communities of The Mounts with the localities of the Blue Mountains, especially the Upper Mountains.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Beattie', written over a faint, light-colored rectangular stamp or watermark.

Richard Beattie
President

Mt Wilson Progress Association
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