Peter Styles, Member for Sanderson

Marrara shift makes no sense

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Member for Sanderson Peter Styles said the proposal by the NT Electoral Commission to put the northern suburb residents of Marrara into the electorate of Fong Lim made no sense and should be abandoned.

Mr Styles today lodged his objection to the Electoral Commission’s redistribution proposal for the seat of Sanderson.

“Under the proposal, the nearest suburb to Marrara within Fong Lim will be The Narrows which, as a city-centric suburb, has no synergy with the residential needs and issues of those living in the northern suburb of Marrara,” Mr Styles said.

“The current proposal completely disenfranchises the northern suburb residents of Marrara.

“Currently the Sanderson electorate office is in Marrara at the Northlakes Shopping Centre where residents have easy access to their elected Member of Parliament. If the new electorate boundary changes are adopted for the Sanderson electorate, residents of Marrara will be completely disenfranchised due to their northern suburb remoteness to the Fong Lim electorate office which is many kilometres away on the other side of the airport near the city within the suburb of Winnellie. “

In his submission opposing the changes Mr Styles said he noted that the current proposal is reasoned on elector numbers and the fact that other scenarios that were considered ‘displaced too many electors’.

“So what is best for the northern suburb residents of Marrara has been ignored to satisfy a problem of numbers,” Mr Styles said.

“The first and foremost consideration for the residents of Marrara should be what provides them best electorate representation in the northern suburbs. The proposed change of moving the Marrara residential area into the NT Parliament’s electorate of Fong Lim will have a serious detrimental effect on effective electoral representation for these northern suburbs residents.

“This decision has been met with considerable anger among the residents of Marrara.

“In the short space of time that this proposal has been available for public consumption my office has been flooded with words of opposition to it by angry residents and a petition has attracted around 250 signatures.
“My Northlakes electorate office has received a similar number of phone calls and emails from other residents opposing the change.

“Even more significant in this number is the fact this voice of opposition has come during school holidays when some residents are absent from the electorate suggesting that their voices would add further opposition to the proposed changes.

“There are many valid reasons being voiced by Marrara residents against moving them into the Fong Lim electorate.

“A move to Fong Lim, creating a northern suburbs island pocket well away from the rest of the electorate, will disenfranchise the Marrara residents in every possible sense.

“Marrara has an aging population and it will cause immediate problems for those who frequently visit the Sanderson electorate office. Many have been there since it was first built in the early eighties. Not all elderly residents own a car with many having to walk to Northlakes Shopping Centre.

“The easy access they currently have to the local Member, staff and office facilities will be gone under the proposed change. Particularly given the lack of quick and convenient public transport from the northern suburbs to travel to the Winnellie Fong Lim office and the cost of travel by taxi to that office.

“My office has fielded calls of opposition from the many community, church, sporting and ethnic groups that rely upon the present Sanderson electorate office for support.

“Confusion will also be created over which electorate office to visit with the long established Sanderson electorate office initially still in Northlakes. If the proposal goes ahead a new office in the electorate will have to be found and all Sanderson residents will then be disadvantaged by having to make themselves aware of the new location. There are no suitable comparable venues available in Wagaman, Anula and Wulagi and the proposed section of Wanguri.

“The cost of setting up another office would be expensive for taxpayers.

“The loss of a central community room at night with adequate security and facilities used by a wide range of sporting and community groups would also disenfranchise residents in the electorate.

“Also not considered it would seem is that there is no suitable venue for a polling booth in Marrara (no school in the electorate) again making it inconvenient and costly.

“I would urge the Committee to drive from the Winnellie Fong Lim electorate office to Marrara and the current Sanderson electorate office and it will get a clear understanding of the serious error this proposal makes.”

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