

Electoral division process – overview

The Act requires that the process to review the boundaries of electoral regions and districts should commence as soon as practicable after the date (defined in the Act as the ‘relevant day’) that is two years after a general election. The relevant day was 9 March 2015 and this review formally commenced on 30 March 2015.

On 24 July 2015 the Commissioners published proposals for the 2015 division of the State into electoral regions and districts. The proposals were announced in an edition of the *Government Gazette* on 24 July 2015 and in advertisements in *The West Australian* distributed throughout the State on 25 July 2015. Full details of the proposals (including maps) were posted on the Electoral Boundaries WA website (Office of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners) www.boundaries.wa.gov.au and were made available in hard copy at the office of the Western Australian Electoral Commission. The proposals publication (the 2015 Proposals Report) contains background information that is relevant for a proper understanding of the process by which the final boundaries have been set. In particular, the 2015 Proposals Report referred to Fact Sheets also available on the website and contained detailed information about:

- the statutory scheme under the Act for electoral divisions
- the Commissioners’ Preliminary Observations
- the timetable and procedure for the 2015 electoral division.

In the interests of economy and efficiency (and except for the summary that appears below) the Commissioners do not propose to repeat the background information that is contained in the 2015 Proposals Report. Accordingly, it would be useful for a person reading this report to view the [2015 Proposals Report](#), either in electronic or hard copy form, for a more complete view of the process.

There are, however, some features of the process that it is advisable to summarise. They include the following matters.

The role of the Commissioners

The primary role of the Commissioners is to set the boundaries of electoral regions and districts. In doing so they are required to ensure that the number of electors in each district is within the permitted tolerance range. They are also required to consider a number of factors listed in section 16I of the Act, namely:

- community of interest
- land use patterns
- means of communication, means of travel and distance from the capital
- physical features
- existing boundaries of regions and districts
- existing local government boundaries
- the trend of demographic changes.

Subject always to the need to ensure elector numbers in each district are within the permitted tolerance range, the Commissioners are called on to weigh the considerations and strike what is sometimes a delicate balance between competing factors. In electoral divisions of this nature not all factors can be accommodated or applied in exactly the same way. Changes can seldom be confined to the districts whose boundaries must change and alterations in one area will almost inevitably cause a flow-on effect to neighbouring districts. This may result in many district boundaries being altered.

Regions, districts and elector numbers

For electoral purposes the State is divided into 59 electoral districts in six electoral regions. Each district returns one member to the Legislative Assembly. Each region returns six members to serve in the Legislative Council. The Commissioners have no power to alter the number of regions and districts: that is solely the province of Parliament.

In setting district boundaries the Commissioners must have regard to 'the average district enrolment' (ADE). It is determined by dividing the total number of electors in the State on the relevant day by the total number of districts. The ADE for the 2015 division is 24,923.

Subject to an exception, the boundaries must be set so that the number of electors in each district is between minus 10 per cent and plus 10 per cent of the average district enrolment. The exception is for districts that have a geographical area of

100,000 square kilometres or more. These districts are subject to a 'large district allowance' (LDA) and in those instances the boundaries must be set so that the elector figures (including the LDA) are between minus 20 per cent and plus 10 per cent of the ADE.

The extent to which the number of electors in a district differs from the ADE, when expressed as a percentage, is called the 'variation from average district enrolment' (VFADE). It is the VFADE that must be within the permitted tolerance range.

The Act does not prescribe where the boundaries between the six electoral regions are to be set. Nor does it prescribe how many districts are to be located in each region, although it does specify that each of the three metropolitan regions ought to have approximately the same number of districts. An electoral district must be wholly situated within the boundaries of an electoral region.

Preparation and provision of information

A geographical information system (GIS) was used to assist the Commissioners in their decision-making. The GIS integrates the Western Australian Electoral Commission's elector numbers with census boundaries from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, along with data from Landgate and other State agencies.

Copies of all media statements, submissions (including objections) and publications relating to the determination of electoral boundaries have been made public and are available on the Electoral Boundaries WA website.