

Proposals for the 2015 division – a reprise

It may also be useful to remind the reader about the proposals that were published on 24 July 2015. Most of the factors that are recited here remain relevant and applicable to the task of setting final boundaries.

The Commissioners took into account the 19 written suggestions and the 29 comments on suggestions that were received. They had regard to elector numbers and to the other factors that, by virtue of section 16l of the Act, they are required to consider.

There were 12 districts in which elector numbers were outside the permitted tolerance range on the ‘relevant day’ and whose boundaries must be the subject of change. Of the 12 districts that were outside the permitted tolerance range, 10 were in metropolitan regions and their VFADEs were all above 10 per cent. The two country districts outside the permitted tolerance range were in negative territory. There were many other districts that were close to the upper or lower permitted tolerance range.

Following the 2011 division, there were 14 districts in each of the three metropolitan regions, five in the Mining and Pastoral Region, four in the Agricultural Region and eight in the South West Region. The only districts to attract an LDA were the five districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region.

In developing the proposals the first and most critical question that the Commissioners faced was whether it was possible to retain the present allocation of 17 districts in the country regions and 42 in the metropolitan regions or whether it was necessary to increase the number in the latter, with a consequent decrease in the former.

The Commissioners noted that, although the raw number of electors had increased both in country and metropolitan regions, the rate of increase was much greater in the latter and the disparity between the average VFADE in country and metropolitan regions had increased markedly. They came to the view that they had little practical alternative other than to increase the number of districts in the metropolitan regions by one. This would facilitate the drawing of rational boundaries where metropolitan districts were within the permitted tolerance range and the electoral map of the entire state would be a closer fit with a strict, literal application of the so-called ‘one vote one value’ principle. The Commissioners recognised that this amounted to fundamental change to the electoral landscape.

As a result of the decision on that critical question and looking more broadly at the issues confronting them, the Commissioners decided to publish proposals that included the following elements:

- There would be no change to the demarcation line between the country and metropolitan regions
- There would be 16 districts in the country regions and 43 in the metropolitan regions
- The district of Eyre would be abolished, with the result that there would be four districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region, four in the Agricultural Region and eight in the South West Region, and that the boundaries of the Agricultural Region would be expanded to include some of the territory previously included in Eyre

- The four districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region would be the only ones with LDAs
- There would be a new seat created in the South Metropolitan Region centred on the locality of Baldivis, resulting in 15 districts in the South Metropolitan Region
- The district of Girrawheen would be transferred from the North Metropolitan Region to the East Metropolitan Region and the district of Mount Lawley transferred from the East Metropolitan Region to the North Metropolitan Region, leaving the number of districts in each of the North and East Metropolitan Regions at 14 and unchanged
- There would be changes to the boundaries of all six regions and all but eight of the 59 districts.

Traditionally electoral districts in Western Australia have been named after localities, generally those that are more significant or central within the area that the district encompasses. Noting that it was becoming more difficult to achieve stability in the naming of districts, as changes in population centres become more fluid and more frequent, the Commissioners proposed a change in convention of how district names were selected. Instead of locality names, districts could be named after prominent persons or events in Western Australian history. The Commissioners did not suggest wholesale change to names but rather a gradual shift over time to the new approach of identifying districts.