

PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



**TERRY REDMAN** MLA  
MEMBER FOR STIRLING



OUR REF:JT799/Sub-34

17 May 2007

Mr Justin Harbord  
Secretary to the Electoral Distribution Commissioners  
GPO Box F316  
PERTH WA 6841

Dear Justin

Please find enclosed my comments on the written suggestions regarding the 2007 Electoral Distribution for consideration by the Electoral Distribution Commissioners.

Thank you for the opportunity to further comment on this very important issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Terry Redman'.

Terry Redman MLA  
MEMBER FOR STIRLING

Encl

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## **Introduction**

The current electorate of Stirling is widely acknowledged as one of those likely to be most impacted by the 2007 redistribution. Therefore, the comments detailed in this response to the submissions, are largely confined to those proposals for electorates that either encompass, or neighbour, the current Stirling electorate and so have either a direct or indirect impact on it.

In preparing The Nationals WA submission for an electorate of Great Southern, a concerted effort was made to ensure that the proposed boundaries reflected careful attention to the full range of matters requiring consideration by the Commissioners.

The sheer size of the electorates necessitated by the implementation of the 2005 legislation, indicates that some compromise of those tenets on which the boundaries are to be formulated is inevitable. However, the Nationals have been mindful, to the greatest possible extent, of the necessity of utilising all guidelines, including community of interest, land use and existing government boundaries, in order to formulate proposed electorates that have a natural and logical foundation. It is from this basis that our comments regarding other submissions will be made.

In formulating our proposal, we gave much weight to a definition of “community of interest” formulated by the New Zealand Local Government Commission, and expressed as;

*“ indicating the area to which one feels a sense of belonging and to which one looks for social, service and economic support. Geographic features and the roading network can affect the sense of belonging to an area. The community of interest can often be identified by access to the goods and services needed for ordinary everyday existence.”*

Our primary concern with the proposed boundaries in a number of other submissions, is that sufficient weight has not been given to the intrinsic, natural and logical links that are required in order to encompass a number of communities into one electorate that “makes sense”, to the electors and the communities within it.

Following then, is a detailed summary of our comments regarding boundaries as proposed in other submissions.

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## **REGIONS**

### **Agricultural Region/Mining and Pastoral Region**

The argument that Esperance and Ravensthorpe both have a natural synergy with the mining and pastoral region has many strengths, and indeed these are presented very clearly in the Shire of Esperance's own submission.

We submit that the Goldfields-Esperance link is widely acknowledged governmentally, commercially and publicly, and that those submissions that contend otherwise have overlooked all the evidence to this effect.

This link is clearly formalised by the state government's Ministerial portfolio of Goldfields-Esperance, and other governmental examples such as recent state budget announcements of specific funding for projects designated as being in the Goldfields-Esperance region.

The existence of administrative and other bodies such as the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission, the Goldfields-Esperance Area Consultative Committee, the Goldfields-Esperance Local Government Area, and the Goldfields-Esperance Police District and ABC Goldfields-Esperance, is a very clear indicator of the accepted interlocking of both Esperance and Ravensthorpe with the Mining and Pastoral Region.

Esperance and Ravensthorpe are obviously very isolated geographically, from other parts of the State, thereby making it a difficult argument to draw synergies with the unrelated regions to the west and north west that have clear commerce and government service links to either Albany, Narrogin or direct to Perth.

Drawing valid links between Esperance and Plantagenet, or Esperance and Narrogin, as proposed in other submissions is untenable. Even the claim of land use commonalities is a tenuous one, particularly between Plantagenet and Esperance/Ravensthorpe, the former being central to the Great Southern's wine and plantation timber industries, the latter with a focus on cropping and grazing, and increasing mining and exploration involvement. Community of interest, commercial links, communication paths, and historical boundaries all act to isolate Esperance as a centre, from the agricultural regions to the west. Clearly, a much stronger and more compelling case exists for Esperance and Ravensthorpe to be included in the mining and pastoral region, with which it has intrinsic and logical links.

The submission from the Shire of Esperance reinforces the very strong links it has with the mining and pastoral region. It no doubt carries weight that Esperance as a community, views itself as synonymous with the Mining and Pastoral Region.

Esperance's inclusion, along with Ravensthorpe, into the Mining and Pastoral Region, is supported by the two respective local government authorities and would be consistent with legislative guidelines, as both mining and pastoral land uses exist within these two Shires.

We note that the submission by the Liberal Party in reference to the Agricultural/Mining and Pastoral region boundaries is both contradictory and confusing, as exemplified by these two conflicting statements;

*“the distinction between pastoral and agricultural land firmly precludes the inclusion of the Shire of Esperance or indeed any other rural Shire with the Mining and Pastoral Region”*, (a view clearly at odds with the one submitted by the Shire of Esperance), and then;

*“it is not possible to avoid combining broad acre farming with other forms of land use given the larger size of the districts”*.

We contend that the first statement entirely overlooks the entrenched land use, community of interest, historical and all other links between Esperance/Ravensthorpe and the Goldfields, which are so fundamentally recognised by government, business and the community.

It is noted that the Australian Democrats, strongly contend, as the Nationals have done, that the Esperance and Ravensthorpe Shires share a community of interest with the Mining and Pastoral Region.

### **Agricultural Region/South West Region**

As has been highlighted by submissions from both the Liberal and Labor Parties, the boundaries between the Agricultural Region and the South West Region are not as clearly defined. Therefore scope for greater flexibility exists in determining boundary configurations in order to capture the required quotient of voters.

Given the very large size of the districts in the Agricultural Region, there is a necessity to draw together Shires that can be geographically some distance apart. In order to make up the required quotient, both major parties found it necessary to compromise considerably along what is, it must be said, an increasingly blurred line defining the forests of the South West and the agricultural areas to the east. Our submission has sought to minimise any compromise and to keep the districts compact and in line with other criteria of commonality.

The Liberal Party submission neglects the considerable forested and agro-forestry areas in the Plantagenet and Cranbrook Shires, which are both currently within the South West Region, and submits that they should both be in the Agricultural Region. It then proposes that the Shires of Williams, Narrogin, Wagin, Woodanilling, Cuballing and West Arthur, comprising what are widely considered heartland areas of the current Agricultural Region, should be incorporated within the South West Region. We would contend that there is no logic to either of these proposals, other than to juggle numbers in order to arrive at a quotient.

The Labor Party's submission demonstrates considerably greater consistency in its proposal for the regions of Agricultural and South West. One notable inconsistency however, is its insertion of Augusta/Margaret River, Nannup, and indeed Manjimup, into the Agricultural Region. This is an unusual proposal given that they have traditionally, electorally and governmentally been part of the South West Region. A further concern is that the Labor Party's submission divides the Shires of Broomehill and Tambellup, both of which have submitted their request to be included within one electorate on the basis that they are considering amalgamation.

It becomes more appropriate in the Agricultural Region, to centre proposed districts on a commerce centre, or centres, as a logical step to preserve as much commonality and community of interest as possible given the size of the districts. This has been one of the bases of The Nationals' submission, with Albany servicing the "Great Southern", Narrogin servicing "Central Lakes" and Northam and Merredin servicing "Wheatbelt."

Albany is a clear centre of commerce for the Great Southern Region and this is a significant rationale for The Nationals submission drawing Gnowangerup and Jerramungup into the proposed Great Southern electorate.

Whilst Manjimup is a commercial centre, it does not have the same strong links to surrounding towns that Albany has. For example, there is a considerable forest barrier between Manjimup and Nannup / Augusta, whereby Nannup and Augusta commerce is more likely to be directed towards Busselton. Likewise, Donnybrook, Balingup and Boyanup will more likely conduct commerce and business in Bunbury. If there is to be a compromise in the districts, we are of the view that it is far less random, and more logical to have Manjimup combine with the Great Southern than to have Denmark and Walpole in a seat in common with Capel, and Augusta - Margaret River.

## **Districts**

### **Roe – Liberal Party Submission**

Of all the submissions, the Liberal Party's proposal for an electorate of Roe is among those we consider to have most obviously bypassed the majority of criteria for electoral redistribution as set down in Section 161 of the Electoral Act 1907.

The Shires of Katanning, Broomehill, Tambellup, Cranbrook, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup and Plantagenet are clearly not a natural fit with the Shire of Esperance. These shires are all focussed towards the Great Southern and particularly in the case of Katanning, Broomehill, Tambellup, Cranbrook and Plantagenet, traditionally and currently have almost no tangible community of interest, communication, historical or other commonalities with the Esperance Shire.

This argument is summed up in the Shire of Esperance's own submission in which it states that:

*"the Shire believes that the electorate catchment within which Esperance is included, should be aligned to a Goldfields-Esperance model, due to the obvious links between the two regions. It is considered that the same linkages do not exist with respect to models that propose either a catchment based on a south coastal region, linking Esperance to Albany; or the central/eastern wheatbelt region."*

The Liberal Party's drawing of boundaries for its Roe proposal is perfunctory to say the least. It provides very little detail to support its proposal. As an example, in regard to its inclusion of Dumbleyung and Plantagenet, it simply states that they are not "*extensive further inclusions.*" It is doubtful that the electors within the Shires of Dumbleyung and Plantagenet would concur with that statement or see any valid justification for their inclusion into an electorate that extends across to Esperance and contains no natural links.

In fact, the Shire of Plantagenet has indicated that of the boundary submissions lodged, it has chosen the proposal (submitted by The Nationals), which encompasses neighbouring Shires sharing common interests. To attempt to combine Esperance, which was historically in the Mining and Pastoral Region with Plantagenet, traditionally and currently in the South West Region, is we would contend, very cumbersome indeed. In our view, this would link Shires at two extreme ends of the spectrum.

### **Warren Blackwood (Liberal Party submission)**

We hold the view that this proposed electorate draws into its boundaries, a number of Shires that have no apparent current or traditional links. Encompassing Denmark, Augusta-Margaret River and Capel within one boundary results in an electorate with no community of interest, as too many disparate areas have been drawn together, simply in order to arrive at a quotient.

Whilst Manjimup is a commercial centre, it does not have the same strong links to surrounding towns that Albany has. For example, there is a considerable physical forest barrier between Manjimup and Nannup/Augusta, with the result that both Nannup's and Augusta's commercial trade is more likely to be directed towards Busselton. Likewise Donnybrook, Balingup and Boyanup are more inclined to transact with Bunbury. If there is to be some compromise in this area, we are of the view that it is far less random and much more logical to have Manjimup combine with the Great Southern, than to have Denmark and Walpole in a seat which also encompasses Capel and Augusta- Margaret River.

This proposal divides Denmark from the western districts of the Municipality of Albany to which it is strongly linked, and from Plantagenet with which it shares equally strong plantation timber and wine industry links. All three districts have been included within The Nationals' proposal for an electorate of Great Southern. The three are equidistant from each other and share a deeply entrenched community of interest.

In common with other shires proposed for inclusion by The Nationals in an electorate of Great Southern, Denmark is focussed on Albany as its business centre. We submit that it is not possible to demonstrate tangible historical, commercial, governmental or other links between Denmark and Nannup, Denmark and Augusta, or Denmark and Capel or Margaret River.

### **Collie-Wagin (Liberal Party submission)**

This proposal attempts to link another somewhat heterogeneous grouping of Shires.

The Liberal electorate of Collie-Wagin appears to be a considerable compromise against most criteria, in particular that of Community of Interest. We would contend that if it is necessary to transfer what have traditionally been Agricultural electorates, into the South West Region, then some cohesive and logical links must still apply. For that reason, our view is that the most homogeneous approach would be to include Kojonup, Gnowangerup and Jerramungup, into a Great Southern electorate and thus into the South West Region. These three shires each have demonstrated and long standing links to the proposed Great Southern electorate.

We consider that the inclusion of Wagin, West Arthur, Williams, Narrogin and Kojonup into an electorate with Collie, Harvey and Dardanup involves significant compromise on the matters of interest requiring consideration under the Act. One of the most significant of these is that of land use. The Shires of Narrogin, Wagin, Cuballing, West Arthur and Williams, all proposed by the Liberal Party for inclusion in their Collie-Wagin electorate and therefore in the South West Region, are all situated in the state's wheatbelt. In fact all come under the auspices of the government's Wheatbelt Development Commission, and of the state's Minister for the Wheatbelt. It therefore seems incongruous to attempt to include them in the South West Region.

### **Roe (Labor Party submission)**

As with our view of the Liberal Party's Roe submission, we believe that this proposal is based more on numerical expediency than on the required criteria.

For all the reasons we have outlined in our comments regarding the Liberal Party's Roe submission, we contend that Esperance and Ravensthorpe have an inbuilt affinity with the Goldfields and that by every assessment criteria they fit into the Mining and Pastoral Region and therefore into a district within that region.

As there is virtually no detail provided to support the Labor Party's proposal for this electorate, we do not know the justification for incorporating Shires as diverse and geographically removed from each other as Esperance and Narrogin, or Esperance and Williams. Therefore we can only conclude that it is based solely on numerics. We would contend that there are no criteria, that would support such a proposal, and that instead, the criteria supports Esperance and Ravensthorpe being encompassed in the Mining and Pastoral Region.

### **Warren (Labor Party submission)**

Whilst the Labor Party's submission for an electorate of Warren is more cohesive than that of Warren-Blackwood, submitted by the Liberal Party, it still compromises the criteria significantly on several major points.

Importantly, Labor's proposal for Warren does allow for Kojonup, Plantagenet, Cranbrook and Denmark, all closely linked and serviced by Albany, to be encompassed within one electorate. However, it separates the shires of Broomehill and Tambellup that are considering amalgamation and have submitted their requests to be included within one electoral district. The Nationals' submission does allow for both to be included in a Great Southern electorate.

It is also an unusual approach to suggest that the proposed electorate of Warren should be included in the Agricultural Region when the majority of shires in it, have traditionally been and are currently in, the South West Region, as predicated by their land use practices. Agro-forestry is a predominant industry in the Plantagenet and Denmark shires linking them firmly with Manjimup. Cranbrook and Kojonup also have increasing plantation numbers. The Shires of Denmark, Plantagenet (Mt Barker and Porongurup wine sub-regions) and Cranbrook (Frankland wine sub-region) are known world wide for their wines and this again links them all firmly to Manjimup and to South West Region land use criteria.



## Summary

Country people will bear by far the greatest impact of the electoral changes that will be brought about by the 2007 redistribution.

As a regionally focussed party, we have the interests of people in the regions uppermost in our thoughts and our actions, and it is for this reason that we have put so much research and attention to detail into our proposal. We have undertaken to formulate our proposals along the boundaries we consider be the fairest and most logical possible, whilst paying utmost attention to the criteria.

All parties are aware that there are no perfect formulae for an electoral redistribution of such magnitude, and that compromise on criteria is unavoidable.

Our intention in all of our commentary on other submissions has been to highlight the proposals that we believe do not adequately reflect the redistribution criteria, or the interests of the communities within the proposed electorates.

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