

2011 ELECTORAL DISTRIBUTION

Secretary to the Electoral Distribution Commissioners
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Sir

I have read with interest the various submissions made on the proposed electoral boundary redistributions 2011 and feel I must make comment with particular reference to the existing seat of Collie-Preston (the electorate within which I reside and vote).

I understand that it is a difficult task to accommodate all the wishes of all the people and more particularly so when boundaries are being set against a fairly strict population-number criterion. I have some difficulty however in accepting that a district based predominantly upon a population number is the 'way to go' – numbers may add up but commonality of interests of people and myriad issues arising therefrom may well not. I believe that equal to a population number criterion is that of 'community of interest' and it is this factor which I strongly urge the Electoral Commissioners to consider most highly when considering the future of the Collie-Preston electorate.

I have noted from the submissions received (as at 15th April 2011) that two submissions (Liberal Party and Mr Findlay Osborne) promote the abolition of the seat of Collie-Preston resulting in the incorporation of the whole of the Shire of Collie within the seat of Wagin; other parts of the Collie-Preston to be hived off elsewhere. I note as well that the submission from the Shire of Capel also promotes (if necessary) the abolition of the seat of Collie-Preston with the district of the Shire of Collie being incorporated into the "Central Wheatbelt District" although just where within that district is not clear.

The Shire of Dardanup considers that it might be necessary to delete the residential district of Eaton from the seat of Collie-Preston, perhaps to be formed into some new district, with, presumably, the remainder of the seat of Collie-Preston remaining intact.

It is noted that both the Greens and the Nationals favour the retention of the seat of Collie-Preston albeit with minor changes to accommodate the criterion of population numbers and the Shire of Donnybrook/Balingup sees no need for change at all.

MY SUBMISSION:

I must state quite categorically that I am strongly opposed to any proposal to abolish the seat of Collie-Preston (as promoted by the Liberal Party, Mr Findlay Osborne and the Shire of Capel) and for the district of the Shire of Collie to be incorporated into either the seat of Wagin or the Central Wheatbelt District generally.

WHY OPPOSED:

The most obvious reason is that Collie as a township, and the electors of Collie-Preston generally, have NO community of interest with the agricultural areas to the east. Community of Interest can be viewed on numerous factors; some being transport, education, commercial activities, services, proximity to regional centres (and no doubt many more).

Transport

People within the Shire of Collie have no transport connections at all with the districts to our east. The only connection is by way of road service, if private vehicles are available. Collie has bus connections to the west – to the City of Bunbury/Brunswick Junction and through to Perth by bus, rail or private transport. The major highways, South West Highway and Forrest Highway, service via the Coalfields Highway to Collie whereas the only predominant road connection out to the east is along the Collie-Lake King road which, in all reality is not a direction that most Collie people head towards.

Education

There is no compelling reason for Collie residents to look towards our eastern districts for the purpose of education. Collie is serviced by a senior high school, a branch of TAFE, 4 Government primary schools and a Catholic primary school. For further education (such as Manea College, South West TAFE or Edith Cowan University) students from Collie travel to our regional city of Bunbury. In all things educational we turn our minds west to Bunbury or even to the capital city of Perth.

Commercial Activities

Collie has vibrant commercial retailing and light industrial sectors. The town is serviced by two major supermarket stores (Coles New World and Woolworths) and numerous small shops, hotels, cafes, etc. There are no commercial interests that would draw Collie people away to the east to towns such as Wagin or Narrogin.

The Collie district comprises major industry such as coal mining, power stations and alumina refinery. These activities are soon to be complemented by the proposed Perdaman Urea Plant which will inject many millions of dollars into the local economy quite apart from the 3 plus billion dollar construction cost. Collie is not an agricultural district and therefore the industrial and employment activities have no commonality of interest with the agricultural (farming) interests to our east.

Services

The Collie district is well serviced in terms of medical, hospital, police, law courts, community welfare, and a host of other ancillary services and fairly much stands alone in this regard. Any services additional to those provided in the town are secured from either Bunbury or Perth so we are not reliant upon towns to our east for the provision of services.

Proximity to Regional Centres

Collie is part of the 'Wellington Group of Councils' which is an affiliation of local governments with like interests and includes the Shires of Collie, Harvey, Dardanup, Capel and Donnybrook/Balingup. The Collie Shire Council is also a member of the 'Bunbury-Wellington Economic Alliance' whose membership comprises local government, business and industry. The major focus of this Alliance is economic activity within the South West region of which Collie is a major part. It is quite clear that no direct liaison exists with any Councils to the east of the Shire of Collie and it is quite probable that this would continue to be the case should the unfortunate situation arise whereby Collie was lumped in with some electorate from the agricultural region. It is probably true also to say that Collie would have no real interest in being part of any agricultural focussed body as the activities of such a group would have no relevance to Collie.

In terms of regional centres, Narrogin and perhaps Katanning are viewed as regional centres and it is quite clear, viewed from any perspective, that Collie has no affinity with either of these localities. Collie's regional centre is the city of Bunbury and when the make-up of the existing Collie-Preston electorate is viewed as a whole all communities comprising the electorate turn to Bunbury as their regional centre. Again, this is a demonstration that Collie (and other communities within the Collie-Preston electorate) turn towards Bunbury (that is, westward) for regional centre community of interest.

Sporting, social and recreational interests external to those provided for in Collie invariably occur in Bunbury or at least along the (western) coastal strip. There are, to the best of my knowledge, no community activities within the Shire of Collie that engage with like-minded groups from the eastern agricultural areas. This is not because the people of those areas are not liked, it is simply a fact that our community of interest lays elsewhere and it is towards the South West generally that we focus our attention.

Electorate Name

Whilst it is acknowledged that an electorate name is subject to change according to the districts it is representing, it would, in my opinion, be a tragedy if the name "Collie" was to somehow disappear from the electorate names in Western Australia. To the best of my knowledge the name "Collie" has always been included in the name of the electorate representing the interests of the Shire of Collie and I believe this 'tradition' should be carried on into the future.

CONCLUSION

I urge the Electoral Commissioners to reject the notion of abolishing the current seat of Collie-Preston and either merging the district of the Shire of Collie into the seat of Wagin or into some other Central Agricultural Region district. The premise for my rejection of this notion is based upon lack of community of interest between the people of the Shire of Collie and the people of any of the agricultural regions. The interests of the people of the Shire of Collie lay with its immediate neighbours to the west (ie towards the coast) and I believe any population adjustments should be contained within the existing seats representing these areas. I believe also that the name "Collie" ought to be retained for the seat representing the electors of the Shire of Collie; in fact I believe the Collie-Preston electorate should remain and any population adjustments required be obtained from neighbouring electorates.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the submissions received.

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