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6 July 2011

The Hon. Neville Owen
Chairman
Electoral District Commissioners
GPO Box F316
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Commissioner

Proposed 2011 Electoral Distribution Boundaries – City of Mandurah Submission

Thank you for your letter to the City of Mandurah on 14 June, in response to the City's written submission on the 2011 Electoral Distribution, provided on 29 April. This letter constitutes the City's formal submission in response to the recently announced proposed electoral boundary changes.

The City notes that the Office of the Western Australian Electoral Distribution Commissioners' proposed State electoral boundaries include:

- That there be no change to the electoral district of Dawesville
- That the electoral district of Murray-Wellington gains from Mandurah the part of the Shire of Murray not presently within its boundaries
- That the electoral district of Warnbro cedes the localities of Golden Bay and Singleton to the electoral district of Mandurah
- That there be 15 electoral districts (including the district of Mandurah) in the South Metropolitan Region.

Whilst the City of Mandurah is pleased to learn that the electoral district of Dawesville will remain unaltered, it is extremely concerned by other proposed changes to existing electoral boundaries.

Whilst not generally supportive of the proposal, the City is not strongly opposed to the transfer of Golden Bay and Singleton into the Mandurah electoral district, although its preference would be for these two localities to remain within Warnbro to maintain existing Local Government Authority boundaries. The City is also not necessarily opposed to the transfer of the localities of Barragup and Furnissdale to the Murray-Wellington electoral district, again to realign existing LGA boundaries, and to balance elector numbers.

However, the City is vehemently opposed to the proposed transfer of the Mandurah electoral district from the South West electoral region to the South Metropolitan electoral region.

In response to the Office of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners' proposal, at the City of Mandurah's 28 June Council Meeting, Council unanimously resolved to:

Provide a written submission to the Office of the Western Australian Electoral Distribution Commissioners, prior to 11 July, outlining the City of Mandurah's opposition to the inclusion of Mandurah electoral district in the South Metropolitan Region:

I note with extreme concern the Commissioners' justification for transferring the Mandurah electoral district into the South Metropolitan electoral region, outlined in your correspondence:

"The Commissioners took into account a number of factors that appear to support the proposed changes, including but not limited to the extent of the metropolitan rail system and the Kwinana Freeway, distribution of community newspapers and the likelihood of electors travelling north rather than south for government and medical services not otherwise available within the electorate."

I am somewhat perplexed by your rationalisation for the proposed change, and will endeavour to respond to each statement individually:

- *Extent of the metropolitan rail system and the Kwinana Freeway* - Whilst the Perth-Mandurah Railway terminates within the Mandurah electoral district, the New Perth-Bunbury Highway (including the Kwinana Freeway component) bypasses Mandurah altogether. This argument appears to lack any rational basis, as neither transport route delineates an existing physical boundary (e.g. LGA, electoral district or electoral region).
- *Distribution of community newspapers* - Mandurah currently has two local community newspapers, the *Mandurah Coastal Times* and the *Mandurah Mail*. The *Mandurah Coastal Times* is distributed within the City of Mandurah (as far south as Dawesville), part of the Shire of Murray, as well as the City of Rockingham localities of Singleton, Golden Bay and Secret Harbour. The *Mandurah Mail* is distributed within the City of Mandurah, the City of Rockingham's southern localities, and parts of the Shires of Murray and Waroona. Again, local newspaper distribution boundaries do not align with proposed new electoral boundaries.
- *Likelihood of electors travelling north rather than south for government and medical services not otherwise available within the electorate* - This statement appears to be stating the obvious, as it is common practice for Mandurah residents to travel to Perth for services that they cannot obtain locally. However, this does not mean that Mandurah and Perth share a community of interest.

Your statement about the availability of government and medical services also touches upon another subject of particular sensitivity to the City of Mandurah – that of the level of government services within Mandurah and the broader Peel Region. Because of its long-term rapid population growth, Mandurah is faced with a range of socio-economic challenges, including an ageing population, a low youth base, limited education opportunities, high unemployment, lack of industry diversity, and a scarcity of government infrastructure and services, including health services.

However, rather than simply allowing Mandurah to become another dormitory suburb of Perth, the City instead launched its *Southern City Strategy* in November 2008. The Strategy is designed to reverse Mandurah's historically high unemployment levels, and to position Mandurah as the 'economic anchor' to the south of Perth, primarily by diversifying its employment and industry base and enhancing its education and training opportunities.

The Strategy also aims to ensure that Mandurah residents can continue to live, learn and work locally, by enhancing secondary and tertiary education opportunities, creating additional 'high-end' local jobs, and expanding the level of locally-available government services. However, the Commissioners' recommendation to amalgamate part of the City of Mandurah within the South Metropolitan electoral region directly threatens the objectives of the *Southern City Strategy*.

For the Strategy to be successful, it is imperative that Mandurah maintains its regional identity. The City of Mandurah is included in the *Peel Region Scheme* under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*. The City of Rockingham, on the other hand, is located within the Perth Metropolitan Region under the *Metropolitan Region Scheme*.

Any attempt to integrate the Peel Region and Perth Metropolitan Region boundaries would result in a loss of Mandurah's regional identity and autonomy, as well as a loss of community of interest. Further, it could also potentially render the City of Mandurah ineligible for State and Federal Government grants to regional communities.

The transfer of the Mandurah Electoral District from the South West Region to the South Metropolitan Region could preclude Mandurah's eligibility for State Government *Royalties for Regions* funding, as well as the Federal Government's *Regional Development Australia Fund* (RDAF), the *Regional Infrastructure Fund*, the *Promoting Regional Living Program*, and the *Building Better Regional Cities Program*. These funding programs provide millions of dollars annually to regional areas for essential community infrastructure, planning and services. This includes funding that assists the City of Mandurah to achieve its strategic objectives.

As part of the Peel Region under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*, the City of Mandurah is located within the State's Peel Development Commission (PDC) boundary, as well as the Federal Government's Regional Development Australia (RDA) Peel boundary. It is imperative that the entirety of the Mandurah LGA remains within the existing PDC and RDA Peel boundaries, as well as the new Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical area levels that will be utilised during the 2011 Census, as this removes any doubt about Mandurah's regional status.

The Commissioners' proposal also threatens Mandurah's existing community of interest. We understand that under the *Electoral Act 1907*, the Commissioners are required to give due consideration to community of interest and existing boundaries of regions. This includes existing Local Government boundaries, to ensure that those regions generally reflect recognised communities of interest. The Commissioners' proposal to divide the City of Mandurah in half appears to directly contravene the requirements of the Act.

Further, it is our understanding that under the *Electoral Act 1907*, a requirement exists that the three Perth Metropolitan Regions must each consist of approximately the same number of complete districts. Therefore, it would appear that the current balance of 14 electoral districts per region would be best maintained by leaving the Mandurah electoral district within the South West electoral region.

The proposal by the Office of the Western Australian Electoral Distribution Commissioners to transfer the Mandurah electoral district to the South Metropolitan electoral region directly threatens Mandurah's regional status, its regional funding eligibility, its autonomy, and its community of interest. The City of Mandurah strongly opposes the Commissioners' proposal, and urges the Commissioners' to retain the entirety of the Mandurah LGA within the South West electoral region.

Yours sincerely



Mark R Newman
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Hon. Dr Kim Hames MLA
Member for Dawesville

Hon. David Templeman MLA
Member for Mandurah

Hon. Nigel Hallett MLC
Member for South West Region

Hon. Dr. Sally Talbot MLC
Member for South West Region