



SHIRE OF NORTHAM

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The Secretary
Office of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners
Level 11, 111 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Our ref: 1.2.1.3/O5245
Enquiries: Gavan Troy

Dear Mr Secretary

Naming of Agricultural Region Districts - Merredin

I am writing on behalf of the newly formed Shire of Northam, in my capacity of Commissioner, seeking your Commissioners' further consideration on the naming of the proposed Merredin District.


The following matters are brought to your attention.

- There is no evident consistency in the naming of the Districts that are within the Agricultural Region.
- The use of Moore for the northern most District reflects a predominant river catchment area whilst the centrally located towns of Three Springs and Carnamah are ignored together with other centres within the District.
- The argument for the Geraldton District to be named as such may be acceptable because of the concentration of population in that area, but alternatives are available should that principle of identification not be warranted for reasons of consistency.
- The naming of the southern most District as Wagin appears to focus on the most central location within the District. No geophysical association is used despite the widespread application of this association in the northern most Agricultural District and many other proposed District names.
- The central District, currently named Merredin, fails to recognise the population distribution within the District that is largely focussed on Northam and the western boundary. It fails to recognise the key commercial centre for the District, Northam, and furthermore Merredin is not geographically central to the District but located on the eastern extreme of the District. The relationship with some geophysical attribute such as the Avon River or Avon/Mortlock is suggested as a more appropriate District name.

- The application of the name Merredin fails to recognise the population growth patterns currently evident and forecast for the future within the District.
- The continued usage of former Electorate District names of Moore, Merredin, and Wagin fails to signify the change in electoral boundaries whilst maintaining a potential advantage for the incumbent Member. Every effort should be made to avoid this unfair nexus wherever possible in the political process.
- The four Electoral Districts of the South West Region, Murray, Collie Preston, Vasse and Blackwood-Stirling are a reflection of the geophysical aspects of the Districts and does not identify individual towns in these areas. Each are well known geographical names similar to Avon and Mortlock in this region.
- A further factor that is particularly distasteful for the new Northam Shire at this current time is that the merger of two Northam local government authorities, Northam Town Council and Northam Shire Council, has only just occurred reflecting the Government's strong desire for structural and electoral reform. This merger has very significant implications for the new Northam Shire Council and the supportive role expected of that body within the central Wheatbelt region. The loss of the term Avon or Northam in the current proposed Electoral District naming is a significant and unfortunate occurrence at this time.
- The new Shire of Northam favours the name Mortlock/Avon as their first preference for their associated Electoral District name. Alternative names acceptable to the Shire are Central Wheatbelt, Mortlock, C Y O'Connor or O'Connor, or the retention of Avon.

In summary we believe the name Merredin is inappropriate as it does not represent the dominant issues or features of the new District, and furthermore every effort should be made to avoid the retention of previous electoral district names and the advantage that offers to incumbent Members. The electoral process should be without bias or favour to any candidate.

Yours sincerely


HON. GAVAN TROY
COMMISSIONER
SHIRE OF NORTHAM

GT:FLW

17 July 2007