

26 July 2007

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

Dear Justin

COMMENTS ON DRAFT REDISTRIBUTION BOUNDARIES

The Liberal Party commends the work of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners in their proposed division of the State of Western Australia into 59 districts of the Legislative Assembly and 6 regions of the Legislative Council. We regard these boundaries as not only fulfilling the criteria of the Electoral Act but also providing a 'level playing field' between the two sides of politics. Such an outcome, while outside the requirements of the Electoral Act, is nonetheless highly desirable in a healthy parliamentary democracy.

The Liberal Party accepts all the major decisions that have been made in the determination of these boundaries, including those proposals where we have argued a different view in earlier submissions. It is understood that large-scale changes will affect a number of districts to the detriment of community of interest and numerical balance.

Although this distribution inevitably creates some major changes, it is appreciated that where possible existing boundaries have been respected, and the movement of electors minimised. In the metropolitan area, 15 districts will be composed entirely from current electors. In the country, 8 entire current districts become the cores of new seats.

In the metropolitan area, local government boundaries where practicable have been used to a greater extent than previously, adding clarity to the process. It is also appreciated that the Metropolitan boundary remains unchanged.

This submission will comment on these proposed boundaries under the headings of each Legislative Council Region.

AGRICULTURAL REGION

The proposed boundaries of this region and its four Legislative Assembly districts are logical and uphold community of interest. Any critics of these regional boundaries should realise that the districts of Blackwood-Stirling and Albany cannot be included within the Agricultural Region. Blackwood-Stirling is dominated by

“coastal and forest areas” that according to the Electoral Act belong in the South West Region, and it largely surrounds Albany.

There is no imperative for the South West and Agricultural Regions to have similar numbers of electors and the same number of Legislative Assembly districts. It should rather be noted that the Agricultural Region with 82,479 electors is now comparable to the Mining and Pastoral Region with 73,776 actual electors.

The Liberal Party accepts the decision to remove Ravensthorpe and Esperance Shires from the Agricultural Region. This allows the proposed district of Wagin to comprise the majority of Great Southern Shires.

The other three districts enjoy similar community of interest. All of the current district of Moore provides the basis of the new district, while Dalwallinu and Perenjori Shires have previous associations with the Moore and Greenough districts.

In regard to the proposed names of districts, it is noted that the proposed district of Merredin contains slightly more electors from the current Merredin seat than from the current Avon seat. On the other hand the name ‘Avon’ has not only applied to a York-Quairading based seat 1950-74 and to a Northam-based seat since 1974, but was also the name of the central core of the present Merredin seat from 1911 to 1950.

MINING AND PASTORAL REGION

These proposed boundaries recognise community of interest and historic associations, balancing the numbers of electors against the Large District Allowance, and avoiding the creation of districts that deviate more than 10.0% below the average district enrolment, or where the LDA outnumbers actual voters.

The Liberal Party does not support criticism of certain of these boundaries that were expressed in the media. The proposed boundary of the Kimberley district restores its historic boundaries.

The proposed Pilbara district includes all four major inland mining towns of Pannawonica, Paraburdoo, Tom Price and Newman. The Shire of East Pilbara is united in the one district for the first time since the 1980s. The Pilbara district also regains the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku that was part of the Pilbara district in 1996-2005, and thus has a demonstrated affinity for a Port Hedland based district.

It is appreciated that the locality of Boulder is proposed to be united in the district of Eyre, as the new boundary between Goldfields and Eyre follows this suburb boundary. The proposed district of Goldfields will draw nearly 84.0% of its electors from the current seat of Kalgoorlie; conversely 89.0% of current Kalgoorlie voters will now be included in Goldfields. We would suggest that on this basis, the proposed name of ‘Goldfields’ revert to Kalgoorlie, a district that has existed continually since 1901.

SOUTH WEST REGION

The Liberal Party appreciates some inherent difficulties faced in reducing the current 11 districts to 8 proposed districts and supports all these proposed boundaries, noting that there is exact agreement with the submissions of the Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party in the proposed boundaries for Albany and Vasse.

The restoration of the Shire of Boyup Brook and part of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes to the South West Region is to be welcomed.

We support Dr Steve Thomas MLA in requesting a review of the proposed name 'Collie-Preston' in consideration of the fact that 43.7% of the electors of the new district are drawn from the current Capel district, compared with 34.2% drawn from Collie-Wellington. Conversely 59.8% of Capel electors and 50.0% of Collie-Wellington electors are transferred to the new seat.

Furthermore only a quarter of the electors of the proposed Collie-Preston are enrolled within the Shire of Collie, now less populous than both the Dardanup and Capel Shires, while the town of Collie is increasingly challenged by Eaton as the major urban centre in this district. There appears to be a strong case for either including Capel in the name of this district or using a neutral geographic name. We would advocate that the name 'Preston' be adopted.

EAST METROPOLITAN REGION

It is regretted that the communities along Great Eastern Highway in the Shire of Mundaring have been divided among four proposed districts, but equally it is recognised that this cannot be avoided without a wholesale redrawing of boundaries. The revised western boundary of this Region is eminently logical as for example are the splitting of the current Ballajura district and the redrawing of Darling Range as a large outer suburban and semi-rural district.

Two changes are proposed, each of them involving a transfer of electors that involves only two districts:

1. An adjustment of the proposed boundary of Kalamunda and Forrestfield to reunite the locality of Gooseberry Hill.
2. A realignment of the eastern boundary of Armadale to exchange a part of the suburb of Kelmscott with the suburb of Mount Richon.

Gooseberry Hill is a not very populous but homogenous suburb. It is currently split between the Midland and Darling Range districts along a series of minor roads. Whereas the adjoining suburb of Maida Vale will now be united in the Forrestfield district, this division of Gooseberry Hill continues, forming a salient of Forrestfield between the Midland and Kalamunda districts.

It is proposed to transfer this detached section of Gooseberry Hill to the proposed Kalamunda district. The north-western boundary of Kalamunda would extend north of Gooseberry Hill Road along Watsonia Road, briefly eastwards along Ridge Hill Road and then north along Sadler Drive to the local government boundary of the Kalamunda Shire. The boundary would then run south-east along this boundary line to Ridge Hill Road, then northward along Ridge Hill Road to the boundary of the Shires of Kalamunda and Mundaring, then eastwards along this boundary and north to Helena Valley Road to link with the proposed boundary of the Kalamunda district.

In effect the western and northern locality boundary of Gooseberry Hill would be co-extensive with the northwest boundary of the Kalamunda district. The number of enrolled electors of the two CCDs involved in this suggested transfer is 746. This number while increasing the number of electors in Kalamunda leaves this proposed district within the permissible 10% tolerance. The proposed district of Forrestfield would have some 21,500 electors, still slightly above the average district enrolment.

Over the next four years Forresterfield is likely to have a higher enrolment growth than Kalamunda.

As proposed the Darling Range district encompasses the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale and a number of outer suburban and rural communities in the Armadale, Kalamunda and Mundaring local governments. This community of interest is lessened by the inclusion of a section of Albany Highway containing the urban centre of Kelmscott. This central section of Kelmscott between the railway line and the Canning River has a clear affinity with the Armadale city centre and related suburbs. Kelmscott is a larger suburb that is proposed to be split, with its western section already remaining in the Armadale district.

It is suggested that the suburb of Mount Richon, part of the foothills of the Escarpment, be transferred to Darling Range to maintain the numerical balance of these proposed districts. The eastern boundary of the Armadale district would follow the South Western Highway north from the local government boundary between Armadale and Serpentine-Jarrahdale until its junction with Albany Highway. It would then follow the boundary as proposed, along Carradine, Canns and Paterson Roads and Hill Street. It would then extend to the Canning River, and follow the river downstream until it reaches the boundary between the Cities of Armadale and Gosnells.

There would appear to be a similar number of electors in that part of Kelmscott east of the railway line but west of the Canning River generally equal to the 1400 electors in Mount Richon. This suggested transfer of electors would not seriously alter the proposed enrolment in either district. The changed boundary would be fixed along the line of a river and a major road, the South Western Highway, which is better understood than the ESL boundary that is now proposed.

All proposed names for the 14 districts are supported.

NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION

The proposed boundaries of these seats adhere to the line of the Mitchell Freeway except at its northern and southern ends. It is noted and appreciated that greater use is made of local government boundaries, so that the districts of Mindarie and Wanneroo fall entirely within the City of Wanneroo, while the four districts of Ocean Reef, Joondalup, Kingsley and Hillarys fall within the City of Joondalup.

The decision to retain the current names of 12 seats, and to name the new districts as Scarborough and Ocean Reef, is highly logical.

SOUTH METROPOLITAN REGION

Here again the proposals of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners are entirely supported. It should be acknowledged that it is again sensible to use the eastern boundaries of the Cities of Rockingham and Cockburn, and the Town of Kwinana, as district and regional boundaries. What are essentially coastal areas will no longer be designated as 'East Metropolitan'.

The Commissioners have acted wisely in not using a local government boundary where such a decision would have split the suburb of Canning Vale. Instead, this suburb constitutes the core of the proposed district of Southern River.

The Liberal Party agrees with the choice of names for these 14 districts. The renaming of the current Peel district as Warnbro should be widely supported.

CONCLUSION

While the Liberal Party is putting forward very limited objections to the proposed electoral boundaries we would nevertheless appreciate an opportunity to meet the Electoral Distribution Commissioners to discuss our proposals and any other matters that may be relevant. We regard these proposals not only as conforming to the Electoral Act but as fair and reasonable. Any major changes proposed in other submissions may threaten this integrity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Neeham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Neeham
State Director