



**Wheatbelt Development Commission  
Written Objection to Proposed Electoral Boundaries**

**30 July 2007**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**1. ADJUSTMENT OF BOUNDARIES**

On reading the findings of the Electoral Commission's redistribution, the Wheatbelt Development Commission took some note of the boundaries as they affect various communities of common interest throughout the Wheatbelt region.

The most striking issues were the electoral boundary division separating Toodyay from Northam; the electoral boundary division separating the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu from the Shires of Dalwallinu and Moora; the inclusion of the Shire of Yilgarn (particularly Southern Cross and Marvel Loch) in an electorate based on the Goldfields and the understandable, but debateable electoral boundary that divides Brookton and Beverley.

The Wheatbelt Development Commission understands that, whilst it has a regional perspective on the activities and interrelationships of Wheatbelt communities, that the views of individual communities to an issue such as electoral boundary decision-making is particularly important. On that basis, the commission has consulted with the affected shires the proposals outlined below.

**1.1 Shire of Wongan-Ballidu**

The Shire of Wongan-Ballidu has separately made representation to the electoral commission about its preference to be included in the seat of Moore. The Wheatbelt Development Commission supports the proposal of the Shire on the basis that the communities of common interest within the Central Midlands region of the Wheatbelt, would be far better accommodated by this change.

The Shire of Wongan-Ballidu along with Dalwallinu, Moora, Victoria Plains and Chittering are part of a vibrant and emerging group of local governments, increasingly recognised by the state, most recently in the form of the Central Midlands Strategy. This strategy is being developed in a partnership between the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, the Wheatbelt Development Commission and the five-abovementioned shires.

Wongan-Ballidu's inclusion in the electorate of Moore would provide far greater consistency in its representation.

## 1.2 Shire of Brookton

Given the above, the proposed electorate of Merredin would require the addition of another community to compensate for the loss of Wongan-Ballidu. The Shire of Brookton has not lodged a formal position with the Electoral Commission, but discussions between the Wheatbelt Development Commission and the Shire indicate that it would be amenable to a proposal for its inclusion in the Merredin electorate.

While the Shire of Brookton is traditionally regarded as being part of the Wheatbelt South, based on Narrogin, there are a number of service delivery functions where its relationships look northward. Of particular significance are the planning proposals which will enshrine the Shire of Brookton as part of the Avon Arc along with the shires of Beverley, York, Northam and Toodyay.

Additionally, the Shire of Brookton is part of a Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) common with all other members currently located in the Merredin electorate. Accordingly the interests of Brookton could be better served by including it in the Merredin electorate rather than Wagin.

## 1.3 Electoral Populations

Based on the two alterations above, the commission calculates that the electorates of Moore, Merredin and Wagin would have electoral numbers within the range required by the electoral commission.

### **BOX 1: Electoral Adjustment Calculations**

	Current Electors in the Electorate of Merredin:	20,299
+	Current Electors in the Shire of Brookton:	679
-	Current Electors in the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu:	994
=	Proposed new Merredin Electorate:	19,984

	Current Electors in the Electorate of Moore:	21,453
+	Current Electors in the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu:	994
=		22,447

	Current Electors in the Electorate of Wagin:	20,152
-	Current Electors in the Shire of Brookton:	679
=		19,473

*Source: WA Electoral Commission Website*

### *1.3.1 Wagin*

Assuming no other changes, the seat of Wagin would accommodate 19,473 electors.

Although just above the lower limit, the impending development of a major mine at Boddington is already having a positive effect on population movement and growth within the north-west corner of the proposed Wagin electorate.

The Wheatbelt Development Commission is observing the trend of population movement beyond the Perth Metropolitan Area to an increasingly large arc, which now extends beyond the traditional 2 hour driving time from the Perth Central Business District. The impact of this general trend will be additional to the mine-related population movements in favour of growth around Boddington.

Given that there may be continuing slow decline in some eastern and south-eastern communities in the Wagin electorate, the likely impact would be to keep Wagin within the limits required by the electoral commission.

### *1.3.2 Merredin*

The addition of the Shire of Brookton to the seat of Merredin and the removal of Wongan-Ballidu from the seat of Merredin would produce an electorate with a population of 19,984.

The western end of the proposed seat of Merredin includes the shires of Northam, York and Beverley, all of which are experiencing peri-urban population growth at a medium and sustained rate over a period of years.

Population projections by the ABS to the year 2024, indicate that this pattern will continue and will become more pronounced (see **Appendix 1**).

The Wheatbelt Development Commission believes that the long-term, continuing population growth in the western end of the Merredin electorate, combined with the ABS projections for moderate long-term population growth in shires such as Goomalling and Dowerin, will offset any continuing decrease in population in the eastern end of the electorate.

In total, the addition of the Shire of Brookton and the removal of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu is likely to leave the proposed seat of Merredin comfortably within the limits required by the electoral commission.

### *1.3.3 Moore*

The addition of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu to the seat of Moore, assuming no other changes, would see the seat of Moore with 22,447 electors.

Although this is 1000 electors below the upper limit, the commission acknowledge that the southern end of the electorate adjoining Perth, with the Shires of Toodyay, Chittering and Gingin, is experiencing steady and sustained population growth, based on the continuing growth of the Perth metropolitan area.

The commission also understands that long-term growth in Geraldton and the surrounding areas will be underpinned by major mineral developments in the inland part of the Midwest region.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu with Dalwallinu, Moora and other Central Midlands communities should not be forsaken in the short-term, simply on the basis of long-term growth projections in the electorate.

The commission believes that the above adjustments, if achieved, would provide a fine-tuning of an otherwise reasonable electoral redistribution.

## **2. CHANGE OF ELECTORATE NAMES.**

The commission has noted with interest that only two rural (non-provincial city) electorates are named after individual towns: Merredin and Wagin.

The general principle for electorate naming seems to be based on some sort of regional geographic descriptor, usually rivers or well-known geographic areas.

If the electoral commission has a set of principles or guidelines for the naming of electorates, it would be timely to alter the use of Merredin and Wagin in the Wheatbelt.

The use of single town names reinforces an already robust sense of parochialism and adversarial attitude, which would be countered with different, collective names.

### **2.1 Merredin**

The proposed Merredin electorate appears to be wholly contained within the Avon River basin. The Avon catchment is an extensive physical feature, somewhat larger than the proposed seat of Merredin.

On that basis, given that Avon has already been used as a descriptor for a state electorate, the commission would much prefer to have the seat of Merredin renamed the seat of Avon.

### **2.2 Wagin**

Similarly, the seat of Wagin could be renamed after regional physical features. Whilst a significant portion of the seat is contained within the Upper Great

Southern region of the ABS, that same ABS statistical division has two subdivisions known as Hotham and Lakes.

Hotham refers to the northwestern section of the proposed seat of Wagin and Lakes refer to a geographically large area extending east from Wickepin and south of Lake Grace.

Although neither of these titles accurately embraces the southern third of the proposed seat, either one would represent an improvement over the use of the name Wagin.

On balance, the commission would prefer the use of the title 'Lakes' for the Wagin electorate. The lakes system, which is so physically pronounced and used by the ABS as a subregional title, can also be expanded to incorporate a significant section of the proposed seat of Wagin.

Should there be a need for further explanation or elaboration of these Wheatbelt Development Commission views, please contact the CEO David Singe.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Singe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Singe  
Wheatbelt Development Commission