



## The proposals – naming of districts

Traditionally electoral districts in Western Australia have been named after localities, generally those that are the more significant or central within the area that the district encompasses. It is becoming more difficult to achieve stability in the naming of districts as changes in population centres become more fluid and more frequent. An example from the 2011 distribution is the former district of Mindarie. As a result of the distribution the suburb of that name was no longer within the boundaries, necessitating a change of name (Butler). Following on from the Commissioners' proposals for the 2015 distribution the locality of Butler, which was reasonably central in the old district, will now be close to its southern boundaries. The districts of Ocean Reef and Gosnells also find themselves in a similar predicament to Mindarie in the 2011 distribution.

In the interests of stability the Commissioners propose a policy change in the way district names are selected. Instead of locality names, districts could be named after prominent figures or events in Western Australian history. The Commissioners are not proposing wholesale changes at this stage but, over time, there can be a gradual shift to names selected according to this policy.

The Commissioners believe that it is appropriate to name districts after prominent deceased people of good repute, with a strong connection to Western Australia and who are generally acknowledged as having had or achieved:

- a record of service to the state, its people and (or) the nation; or
- prominence in the arts, cultural pursuits, community, sport or business.

Where it is possible, the person or event after whom the district is to be named should have some demonstrable connection to the geographical locality in which the district is situated. However, the Commissioners acknowledge that there will be many occasions on which the nature of the contribution made by the person will make it difficult to achieve that criterion.

The Commissioners do not favour the use of names that already designate federal electorates (for example, Durack, O'Connor, Stirling, Brand, Hasluck, Cowan and Curtin). The reason for this is to avoid confusion between federal and state electorates. In saying this, the Commissioners acknowledge that there is already naming overlap (Perth and Fremantle) but that is long standing and geographical in nature, and ought not to be disturbed. They also feel that it would be better to avoid the name of a person who had a strong connection with a political party or group that is still active.

In these proposals the Commissioners have not suggested the use of names of Aboriginal persons. This is because they feel it would be discourteous to do so without having consulted widely with elders and others within and from the language groups of the ancestors concerned. Time did not permit appropriate inquiries to be made. The Commissioners hope that in future distributions those consultations will be pursued.

The criteria for selecting names ought also to recognise the desirability of achieving gender balance and ethnic diversity.

The proposals contain suggestions for renaming some of the existing districts. The Commissioners hope that members of the public will take the opportunity during the objections phase of this process to comment on the proposed names and on the criteria mentioned in this section.