



## WA Labor response to submissions Western Australian Electoral Boundary Review

WA Labor's initial submission to the Western Australian Electoral Boundary review acknowledged the Commissioners' preliminary observations that it would be difficult to implement a "minimal change" approach to the 2015 boundary review "due to the size and spread of the districts outside permissible limits".

The preliminary observations articulate a need to consider whether the number of districts in the non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas is satisfactory. There is significant growth in the northern, southern and eastern suburbs of Perth.

The Commissioners outline the ratio of non-metropolitan to metropolitan electors has decreased, particularly identifying a number of districts in the Agricultural and Mining and Pastoral Regions that are outside the permissible variance requirements. It is also clearly identified by the Commissioners that the South West Region is stable and all districts meet statutory requirements.

WA Labor notes the Commissioners' canvassing of breaching the southern South Metropolitan Region boundary in an effort to ease the growth pressure on districts in the metropolitan area. WA Labor's initial submission dismissed this notion.

Further, as WA Labor's initial submission has acknowledged, the Commissioners have previously dismissed this idea and quite rightly proposed sufficient district boundaries in the South West Region which have stood the test of time and can be maintained for this boundary review.

The districts in the South West Region satisfy community of interest, population requirements, give due consideration to local government boundaries and means of communication tests. The Commissioners have delivered stability to the voters in the South West Region. This is commendable because it will enhance voter participation.

In considering the preliminary observations and the submissions from all other parties to the Electoral Boundary Review, WA Labor sees absolutely no logical or reasonable argument to dismiss the definition of the 'Perth metropolitan area'. The definition is clear in Schedule 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2005 (WA) and the Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act.

The Commissioners are bound by the Act and there is no justification to oppose the will of the Parliament by changing the definition of the metropolitan area in order to allow for an unsatisfactory and unstable change to WA district boundaries.

The proposals submitted seem to vary in their acceptance of the Commissioner's preliminary observations. Some proposals acknowledge the need for significant change and propose revised boundaries that seek to provide stability where possible. For example, the Liberals submit that no change is required to a number of districts, such as Albany, Armadale, Bunbury, Dawesville and Kimberley. Similarly, the Nationals propose no change to the districts of Albany, Bunbury, Collie-Preston, Dawesville, Kimberley, Mandurah, Murray-Wellington and Vasse. This is supported by WA Labor.

While the other submissions to the review appear to have a number of suggestions that WA Labor would not oppose, there are some fundamental flaws in the concepts proposed.

WA Labor agrees with the Liberal Party submission that the district of Mandurah and Dawesville ought to remain in the South West Region and not be transferred to the South Metropolitan Region.

Although the Liberal Party submission seems to agree that fundamental change is required, their submission proposes 10 pages worth of "incremental change". The Liberal Party's "incremental change" proposal which seeks to transfer the localities of Golden Bay and Singleton from the metropolitan to non-metropolitan area is nonsensical. The Greens also propose a similar idea.

WA Labor does not agree that it is desirable to transfer the locality of Golden Bay and Singleton to the South West Region to offset the removal of the Shire of Collie. This will give metropolitan electors a greater say in the country - this idea is not fair on non-metropolitan electors, it is not logical or sustainable.

In their submission the Liberal Party comments that it, "emphatically rejects the notion that there is any need to abolish a country district". However, their proposal to move

metropolitan electors into a country district effectively abolishes a non-metropolitan district by stealth. That is, the district of Collie-Preston.

As they have done before, the Commissioners need to dismiss outright the notion of easing the pressure of growth in metropolitan districts by transferring metropolitan electors to non-metropolitan districts.

Further, any proposal to shift Golden Bay and Singleton into the South West Region will not satisfy the numerical requirements. Moving Golden Bay and Singleton into Mandurah would shift 3,415 electors from the metropolitan region, this would leave 364,226 electors in the South Metropolitan Region and, from a numerical point of view this would mean an average 26,016 electors per district. This proposed transfer would require a more significant change than that proposed by the Liberal Party and leave districts at the higher end of the allowable limit meaning more significant change in future boundary reviews and less stability for electors in the South Metropolitan Region.

The Liberal Party's proposal completely disregards community of interest in seeking to siphon the Shire of Collie into the Agricultural Region. This proposal has already been dismissed by the Commissioners in previous reviews.

WA Labor notes the Nationals' submission that the districts of Albany, Bunbury, Collie-Preston, Dawesville, Mandurah, Murray Wellington and Vasse should retain their current boundaries as drawn in the 2011 distribution. The Nationals believe that in their current form, the communities within these districts have clear and identifiable binding characteristics. These districts are provided with the means of effective parliamentary representation and their average district enrolment is well within the permissible limits as defined by the Act.

With respect to the district of Collie-Preston, the Nationals quite rightly note: *"mining, power generation and supporting industries are major contributors to the local economy, and provide the bulk of employment opportunities in the district. Collie has an important strategic transportation link to the Port of Bunbury, which is located only 60km away. Collie is well positioned to support the growth and development of a number of large industrial sectors due to its proximity to power, water and port facilities... Collie-Preston's average district enrolment is currently -1.66% and represents these communities on the outskirts of Bunbury sufficiently whilst maintaining a common sense of community."*

The significant points against the transfer of Collie into the Agricultural Region are well articulated by the Shire of Collie in previous submissions.

From the Shire of Collie on 6 March 2003:

*“Collie has more of an affinity (community of interest) with towns and districts to the west of our town. Collie in turn is frequented by people to the east of our town but rarely do Collie people themselves have cause to look eastwards for services, commercial or otherwise; our community of interest therefore focuses towards Bunbury and the coastal strip. We share a commonality of interest through mining and its associated service industries. Collie is not an agricultural area and therefore we share an even less community of interest with those districts to our east.”*

These points are further reiterated in the Shire of Collie submission on 27 April 2011.

*“There is a strong community of interest argument for retaining the Shire of Collie in the South West. The community of interest that Collie has with Bunbury and the South West is reflected in a number of organisations at a state and federal level (e.g. the South West Development Commission and Regional Development Australia), the existing administrative regions (e.g. Department of Planning, Department of Environment and Conservation etc.) which are then reflected in a number of key documents that cover the administrative regions in each Department.*

*The community of Collie also has strong ties with the South West with much movement of people between Collie and Bunbury and its hinterland for employment, regional recreations (e.g. Collie Motorplex), and to access services. Relative to the South West there is very little connection with communities to the east.”*

WA Labor does not identify Collie as merely a part of Greater Bunbury but notes that its economic, local government and development commission links are all within the South West Region, rather than the Agricultural Region. Indeed its industry and land use do not fit the statutory definition pertaining to the Agricultural Region.

The Nationals also propose to transfer the Shire of Boyup Brook into the Agricultural Region from the district of Warren-Blackwood. WA Labor notes that the Shire of Boyup Brook has previously submitted arguments stating the close links, community of interest, similar land use patterns, and means of communication, physical features, and trend in demographic changes for the purpose of retaining the Shire of Boyup Brook in the South West Region.

In consequence, WA Labor argues that Collie ought to remain in the South West Region. WA Labor also argues that there is no change required in the South West Region and that

the definition of the metropolitan boundary defined in Schedule 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2005 (WA) and the Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act

ought to continue to constitute the boundary between the South West Region and the South Metropolitan Region.

As stated in WA Labor's initial submission, the Commissioners must determine their threshold position in terms of the number of districts in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions before considering the shape of metropolitan districts.

Once this threshold position is determined, section 16I of the Electoral Act 1907 requires that due consideration is given to the following:

- Community of interest
- Land use patterns
- Means of communication and distance from the capital
- Physical features
- Existing boundaries of regions and districts
- Existing local government boundaries; and
- The trend of demographic changes.

The Liberal Party submission in relation to the East Metropolitan Region suggests some boundary changes to address what are significant and systematic “problems” for the region. The Liberal Party proposals create confusing boundaries that are not sustainable in any way, and have complete disregard for communities of interest.

As identified by the Commissioners, the district of Belmont needs a substantial increase of electors. The Liberal Party submission states that High Wycombe cannot be transferred into the district of Belmont although High Wycombe has previously been included in Belmont.

This area has already experienced significant growth and there is more development in the pipeline. For example, in a Parliamentary debate on Thursday 21 August 2014 the Liberal Premier, Colin Barnett, referred to “the Forrestfield-airport-Belmont rail link”. Mr Barnett stated, *“What distinguishes this [Forrestfield-airport-Belmont rail link] is that it is not simply a railway to the airport, it serves both the Belmont and Forrestfield areas – the rapidly growing eastern suburbs.”*

The Liberal submission states that “communities of interest and communication links were ill served in 2005 when the Belmont district reached across Perth Airport to include the locality of High Wycombe”. Today, this comment is simply not accurate. Even the Shire of

Kalamunda, in their submission to the WA Local Government Advisory Board in response to proposed Local Government district boundary changes, state that *“the existing interface between the Shire of Kalamunda and City of Belmont in the suburbs of High Wycombe, Belmont, Kewdale and Forrestfield already have a sense of homogeneity as housing stock and socio-economic backgrounds are relatively aligned.”*

WA Labor submits that the communities of interest are ill served with the inclusion of the South Guildford locality within the district of Belmont. There is no doubt of the strong community of interest between the localities of South Guildford and Guildford. The Perth Airport can serve as a strong natural boundary in the north of the Belmont district. It would make no sense to expand on the lack of community of interest as proposed by the Liberal Party.

The Liberal proposal for the district of Midland fails to acknowledge that the Glen Forrest locality has always been included in a Hills based seat. And there is a strong community of interest between Midland and Guildford. Their proposal to divide the localities of Guildford and Midland is misdirected and seeking to transfer the locality of Glen Forrest into the district of Midland is politically inspired.

It is worth noting that the district of Forrestfield is made up of a number of localities that are divided by industrial land. This makes the localities within the district easier to transfer. The change required in this eastern suburbs corridor can be accommodated by a significant boundary review of the Forrestfield district.

WA Labor further submits that there is a strong need for Kalamunda to become a hills-based district, better servicing the eastern hills. The localities at the foothills should be transferred into a more suitable district. The rivers along the north eastern border of the district of Gosnells also provide a strong natural boundary.

The Liberal Party proposal for the districts outlined above does not fix community of interest and is politically based on the need to constrain the district of Belmont.

The proposal put forward by the Liberal Party to transfer electors from the district of West Swan to Mirrabooka also does not serve the community of interest test. The Liberal Party states that “in order to keep Mirrabooka within quota and avoid creating a boundary that runs along minor suburban streets, it is proposed that Malaga and the southern section of Ballajura, south and east of Cassowary Drive and Bellefin Drive, be transferred to Mirrabooka with the North West section of Ballajura will revert to West Swan”. There are a number of problems with this proposal such as the creation of a significant split in a

community of interest, with the south east portion of the locality of Ballajura being transferred into the district of Mirrabooka.

The Liberal Party's proposal seeks to bridge electors on the western and northern sides of Malaga. Malaga is an industrial precinct, with almost no electors. This proposal does not serve community of interest. The current boundary linking Alexander Heights electors to their neighbours in Ballajura has a stronger community of interest. However, it is preferable that the locality of Ballajura is not split at all. This issue has been resolved in the past with the existence of a Ballajura district that stretched to localities directly south.

West Swan has two distinct population centres with defined communities of interest. Seeking to split one of those distinct population centres within the district is not sustainable.

The district centre of Ellenbrook and the locality of Aveley have a direct community of interest and their split is not sustainable. Cullacabardee and Whiteman Park should be considered a natural boundary. This will also strengthen the community of interest in Swan Hills by reuniting the localities of Ellenbrook and Aveley.

The Liberal Party submission has a number of contradictory and inconsistent arguments. The Liberal Party seems to oppose the use of minor roads as boundaries but they also propose a number of minor road boundaries. They also appear to oppose and support splitting localities to suit their political motives. These contradictions are particularly noticeable in their proposals for the districts within the North Metropolitan Region.

WA Labor notes that the districts along the coast within the North Metropolitan Region are established and there is minimal or no infill and growth experienced in these areas.

Also, the coastal suburbs in the North Metropolitan Region do not grow as fast as the suburbs inland. WA Labor notes there is merit in the proposal from Dr Mark Mulcair to accommodate the growth in the district of Perth by transferring excess West Perth electors to the district of Nedlands. WA Labor therefore also submits that the growth within the North Metropolitan Region needs to be accommodated by significantly reviewing the boundaries of coastal districts and shifting one district from the coast to the inland. This in-effect reduces the number of coastal districts in the North Metropolitan Region, south of the district of Butler, from six to five electorates.

As such, WA Labor notes there is some value in the proposal from the Greens to develop a seat in the northern suburbs of Perth around Carramar, to accommodate growth in the region and to alleviate the growth in the districts of Wanneroo and Butler.

WA Labor further submits that the existing boundary between the districts of Ocean Reef and Butler is strong and, if anything, can be improved by adopting the City of Joondalup northern boundary as a common border between the two districts. The district of Joondalup continues to be relatively stable, has required very minimal change since the 2008 boundary review and does not require any significant change in this review. The inevitable consequence of this, as outlined by the Greens and by Dr Mark Mulcair, is that the districts of Girrawheen and Mirrabooka would move generally south.

In WA Labor's initial submission and earlier in this comment, WA Labor has clearly outlined the need for the creation of a new district in the South Metropolitan Region. The proposal from the Liberal Party in relation to the southern suburbs ignores the growth in the region and fails to address the challenge set down by the Commissioners in the preliminary observations.

As stated in WA Labor's initial submission, the Commissioners must determine their threshold position in terms of the number of districts in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions before considering the shape of metropolitan districts. WA Labor looks forward to expanding on points by way of oral submission.