



13 May 2015

Office of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners
Level 2, 111 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000

RE: 2015 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STATE REDISTRIBUTION – LIBERAL PARTY COMMENTS ON SUGGESTIONS

Commissioners,

Please find attached comments on behalf of the Liberal Party of Australia (WA Division) Inc.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ben Morton', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ben Morton
State Director

LIBERAL PARTY COMMENTS ON SUGGESTIONS TO THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REVIEW MAY 2015

We note that the majority of submissions are either couched in general terms or address localised concerns. Only the Liberal Party, the Greens, Dr Mulcair, and the anonymous writer of Suggestion 9 have put forward comprehensive state-wide submissions. The Nationals have continued their practice of making a full submission for the non-metropolitan seats. The Australian Labor Party (WA Labor) has made only a generalised and partial submission.

WA Labor has stated that it “does not believe that it is able to provide detail in relation to the metropolitan district boundaries” until the Distribution Commissioners inform them as to whether they intend to abolish a country district, and that they will then make a fuller private oral submission.

We consider it improper that any organisation or individual should seek such a firm statement from the Distribution Commissioners at this early stage of the Review process. It is for the Distribution Commissioners to formulate their initial proposals in their own time *after* the full consideration of submissions.

It is undesirable for a major political party to delay putting forward a full submission until it can effectively do so in secret. Moreover it is possible that WA Labor may bring forward more detailed arguments in this Comment stage of the Review process that also cannot then be subject to public debate and counter-argument. The entire approach foreshadowed by WA Labor threatens to undermine the process laid down under Section 16F of the *Electoral Act 1907*.

As the writer of Suggestion 9 has chosen to remain anonymous, we are left to question why they would seek to conceal their identity, and we trust that they are not linked to an organisation that is also making a submission.

The Liberal Party most strongly rejects the argument of WA Labor and of other submissions that propose the abolition of a non-metropolitan seat. We submit that as there are sufficient electors with the Large District Allowance to maintain five districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region, and sufficient electors to maintain 12 districts in the other country regions, that no consideration be given to the abolition and transfer of any non-metropolitan district.

We deplore suggestions that the district of Eyre be abolished through the transfer of the Shires of Esperance, Ravensthorpe and even Dundas to the Agricultural Region, in order to create a very extensive farming district. The Shire of Dundas has never formed part of an agricultural district and would have no community of interest whatsoever with Boyup Brook, Mount Barker or Katanning.

These proposals would reverse the well-considered initiative of the Distribution Commissioners in 2007, when they recognised the strong community of interest that

Ravensthorpe and Esperance share with the remainder of the wider Goldfields region, and noted the importance of the mining industry to these communities. The Commissioners explained their decision:

“The districts of Kalgoorlie and Eyre reflect the concentration of electors in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the inclusion of two shires which were previously placed within the Agricultural Region. Having regard to the land use descriptors in section 16H of the Electoral Act and the other factors specified in section 16I, the Commissioners have included the shires of Esperance and Ravensthorpe in the Mining and Pastoral Region. The inclusion of these areas in the region received strong local support, with submissions expressing the importance of the links between those shires and the Goldfields. The decision also appropriately reflects the mining and pastoral activities that are carried out in those areas.” (Emphasis added).

It is a fallacy to argue that the current boundary between the districts of Eyre and Kalgoorlie is somehow artificial. For over a century Boulder and the Kalgoorlie city centre have consistently been in different electoral districts. No electors or community groups in the City of Kalgoorlie seem anxious to have their parliamentary representation diminished in this way.

The effect of abolishing Eyre is certain to disrupt the links between Kalgoorlie and the northern Goldfields communities. In 2007 the Distribution Commissioners deliberately included the major part of the Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku in the district of Kalgoorlie:

“in recognition of the community of interest between the shire and Kalgoorlie and to facilitate representation for the majority of electors within this shire.”

The submission of the Greens shows that the Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku would instead be isolated within a vast Carnarvon-based district, with only 8691 actual electors.

The alternative proposal of WA Labor to abolish the district of North West Central and to include Exmouth and Carnarvon within the district of Moore would have the effect of creating a grotesque mixture of pastoral and agricultural shires that would not remotely resemble the former district of Ningaloo. That district was not Geraldton-based and did not include agricultural shires.

In contrast the Liberal Party and the Nationals have both come to the same conclusions in their suggestions for the Mining and Pastoral Region. The Liberal Party reiterates that Section 16G(3) of the *Electoral Act 1907* seeks to maintain five districts in this Region through both the Large District Allowance and a special tolerance of 20.0% below Average District Enrolment. This was legislated in 2005 by the Australian Labor Party with the support of the Greens.

We reject city-centric proposals that may be based on a rigid concern for numerical equality, or political partisanship, in advocating the lessening of non-metropolitan representation. Section 16G(2) of the *Electoral Act 1907* requires that districts should have their enrolment

set within 10% of Average District Enrolment: it clearly does not require any tighter degree of numerical equality of the kind mandated under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

We note the observations from Mr Martin Gordon in respect of representation in the Mining and Pastoral Region, and the reported comments of Professor David Black on ABC regional radio on 5th May referring to the political implications of the abolition of the district of Eyre.

The Shire of Ashburton provides a strong and reasoned argument for the retention of five districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region. While Suggestion 3 from Mr George Levissianos is impractical in seeking to reinstate separate Karratha-based and Port Hedland-based districts, it implicitly argues that this Region should retain its current representation.

The suggestion and subsequent comments of the City of Armadale, seeking the abolition of three country districts and the arbitrary extension of the metropolitan area, shows a total disdain and disregard for non-metropolitan communities. This submission ignores the Preliminary Observations of the Commissioners, which affirm the clear demarcation provided by the existing northern and eastern Metropolitan boundaries.

The Liberal Party agrees with the suggestion of the former Mandurah Mayor Ms Paddy Creevey, with the comments of the City of Mandurah and of the Shire of Murray, and with other submissions that oppose the inclusion of the City of Mandurah within the South Metropolitan Region. Proposals for such an inclusion disregard the character of the Peel Region that is regional rather than suburban, and the City of Mandurah and the Shire of Murray provide firm argument in support of the distinct character of the Peel Region, that is not simply a part of the Metropolitan area. The Liberal Party also considers that the inclusion of the City of Mandurah in the Metropolitan area would create an extreme imbalance of enrolment for the Legislative Council.

We note that with the exception of Dr Mulcair, relevant submissions do not support the transfer of the district of Albany from the South West region to the Agricultural Region.

The Liberal Party considers that the suggestions of the Nationals in regard to the Agricultural Region provide insufficient electors for the districts of Central Wheatbelt and Wagin. The addition of the Shire of Boyup Brook and the bisection of the Shire of Toodyay will only just suffice to keep these two districts within quota. We note both the wish of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes to remain within the South West Region, and the comments of the Warren-Blackwood Alliance of Councils that the Shire of Collie could be transferred to the Agricultural Region.

The submission from the Shire of Denmark makes a very strong case on the grounds of community of interest for its continued inclusion within the district of Warren-Blackwood and the South West Region. It is nonsense for Dr Mulcair to state in his comments that his proposed "Stirling" would be "more compact" than the current district of Wagin and that Denmark has any community of interest with Esperance. The Liberal Party supports the central argument of the Shire of Denmark but reiterates that the Agricultural Region

requires a greater number of additional electors than are contained within the Shire of Boyup Brook.

The Liberal Party equally agrees with Hon Terry Redman MLA in his argument that the Shire of Denmark has little community of interest with the district of Wagin and forms an integral part of the district of Warren-Blackwood. We would however point out that the Shire of Donnybrook has been included with the Shires of Capel and Dardanup in the same district as recently as 2008-13, and that Capel and Donnybrook have in past years had a similar electoral association. There is a community of interest between Donnybrook as a predominantly rural Shire and the rural components of the Shires of Dardanup and Capel.

The submissions of Dr Mulcair, Suggestion 9 and the Greens all advocate a variation of the southern border of the Metropolitan Area. The Liberal Party, the Greens and Dr Mulcair all propose the inclusion of the localities of Singleton and Golden Bay within the district of Mandurah: we do not however support the additional inclusion of Secret Harbour as proposed by Dr Mulcair. The Greens are also in general agreement with the Liberal Party in regard to the inclusion of Lakelands and Parklands within the district of Murray-Wellington.

Here we would note that the City of Mandurah "is not necessarily opposed to the proposed transfer of Golden Bay and Singleton from the Warnbro district to the Mandurah district", but is strongly opposed to the additional suggested transfer of Secret Harbour as its community of interest "lies predominantly with Rockingham rather than with Mandurah". We note that in contrast to Mr David Templeman MLA the City of Mandurah does not object to the transfer of Furnissdale and Barragup from the district of Mandurah.

The comments of the City of Mandurah reinforce a general consensus that the boundaries of the district of Dawesville should remain unchanged. There is no need to consider renaming Dawesville as suggested by Mr Templeman.

The comments of the City of Mandurah reinforce a general consensus that the boundaries of the district of Dawesville should remain unchanged.

While disagreeing on the need for an additional metropolitan district, we appreciate that three other submissions provide full recommendations for the three Metropolitan Regions, making suggestions that deserve consideration.

The submissions of Dr Mulcair and Suggestion 9 agree with the Liberal Party's proposal for the district of Balcatta, and Dr Mulcair is also in agreement in regard to the district of Kingsley.

However we strongly disagree with the proposal of Suggestion 9 for a radical redrawing of the district of Kingsley that would cross the Mitchell Freeway to add the suburbs of Padbury and Craigie. Kingsley is a district with established and self-defining boundaries.

The suggestion of the Greens in regard to the district of Perth supports our contention that the Mount Lawley district should cross Walcott Street to include sections of the locality of

Mount Lawley. However there is no good reason to alter the existing boundary between the districts of Fremantle and Cottesloe that has been in place since 1962.

In regard to the East Metropolitan Region, Dr Mulcair's proposals are in accord with our suggestion that the district of Morley should gain the remainder of the locality of Dianella and that the district of Mirrabooka should in turn expand into the locality of Ballajura.

We note that no submission now proposes that the district of Belmont should cross Perth Airport and extend into the district of Forrestfield. Dr Mulcair would also excise part of the southern section of the district of Forrestfield and the Greens would leave Forrestfield unchanged. However the proposal of Suggestion 9 by removing Maida Vale would sunder communities of interest within this district.

In respect of the comments of the Shire of Mundaring, the Liberal Party has sought to minimise disruption to what is described as "the relatively sparsely settled villages and semi-rural areas" in the east of the Shire. Our submission will retain most of this area in the district of Swan Hills and avoids the three-way split that occurred in 2007.

There is a broad agreement between the Liberal Party, Dr Mulcair, the Greens and the City of Armadale that the district of Armadale should remain unchanged or be minimally amended. Apart from the Greens, the other three submissions all advocate the removal of at least part of North Coogee from the district of Fremantle. The Greens, the Liberal Party and Dr Mulcair all agree on the transfer of the remainder of the locality of Spearwood to the district of Willagee.

All four submissions keep the district of Jandakot based east of the Kwinana Freeway on the core localities of Leeming, Atwell and Aubin Grove. The proposals of Suggestion 9 advocating the removal of Bibra Lake, North Lake and South Lake is in fact identical to those of the Liberal Party in respect of this district.

The Liberal Party, the Greens and Suggestion 9 all propose that the district of Southern River achieves a reduction in enrolment through the transfer of at least part of the locality of Huntingdale to the district of Gosnells. The Liberal Party and Dr Mulcair have both made the same suggestion that the remainder of the locality of Cooloongup be included in the district of Rockingham.

In response to Dr Mulcair's comments criticising our suggested southward extension of the district of Cockburn, we would note that we are suggesting a similar boundary to the 2005 boundary between Cockburn and the former district of Peel.

We conclude by restating our belief that the Liberal Party submission is not minimalist but is incremental, by suggesting changes that are designed to maintain all districts within quota, while avoiding the diminution of non-metropolitan representation or the unnecessary scrambling of Regional and district boundaries.