



The WA Electoral Distribution Commissioners

Email: boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au

Fax: (08) 9214 0455

Postal: GPO Box F316 Perth WA 6841

Draft Electoral Boundaries suggested name change seat of Girrawheen

We write on behalf of the Landsdale Residents Association (“LRA”) to object to the proposed renaming of the seat of Girrawheen to Erickson.

The reasons for objection are several:-

- i. It will cause unnecessary confusion;
- ii. Rica Erickson has absolutely no connection to the local area;
- iii. There appears to be inconsistency in the policy of renaming seats; and
- iv. If renaming was considered appropriate, there are several other names more appropriate.

We deal with each of these issues below.

Background

All of the suburbs which comprise the proposed revised boundaries were developed in the latter part of the last century.

According to Landgate’s geographic names committee, the derivation/ background of each suburb is as follows:-

Girrawheen

Development of this predominantly public housing suburb commenced in 1970. 'Girrawheen' Aboriginal word meaning 'place of flowers'.

Landsdale

The suburb of Landsdale was approved in 1980. The name is taken from the main road through the area, Landsdale Road. The origin of the road name is not known, although it appeared on maps of the area as early as 1955.

Darch

Named after one of the earliest settler families of the Wanneroo area. The Darch family settled in the area in 1860, and Darch was approved as a suburb name in 1997.

Madeley

The suburb of Madeley was approved in 1998, and derives its name from a Wanneroo Road Board member of 1905 and a landowner in the area in 1914.

Marangaroo

Marangaroo is an Aboriginal word meaning "blue flowers". The suburb was named in 1977.

Unnecessary confusion

Our principal concern about the proposed name change is it will create a level of uncertainty which is unacceptable.

From the perspective of Landsdale residents a name change will cause unnecessary confusion.

At successive elections, the suburb has variously been in the seat of Wanneroo, West Swan and in the last three years Girrawheen. So there has been no consistency in the seat's name.

Added to the confusion in the last three terms there have been different incumbents in the seat. There has been no continuity. This has caused considerable confusion despite numerous attempts by WAEC and candidates leading up to the elections to advise residents of their status.

This compares unfavourably with the suburb's consistent position at a federal level. It has been in the seat of Cowan for many years. Quite often if Landsdale residents are asked what state seat they are in they will cite "Cowan".

Several members of the LRA noticed at last State election at polling booths that people were insisting they were not in the seat of Girrawheen and equally vehemently that they were in the seat of Cowan.

Rica Erickson has absolutely no connection to the local area

Moreover as a grass root community organization, we consider that any name change to the seat should be embraced by the local community and should have connection with the area. Any name would have greater acceptance and better take up if residents had a chance to canvass and debate options.

There is the appearance in the report of the Commissioners that suggested new names in the report were chosen in haste. This is reinforced by the observation that indigenous names were not considered as there had been insufficient time to consult elders.

In this context with the benefit of considered reflection it would be apparent that Rica Erickson:-

- Has no connection to the area having been born in Boulder;
- She lived in her childhood with her grandmother in Kendenup;
- She taught in rural schools;
- The Erickson farm was located at Bolgart;
- The orchid genus named after her, the *Ericksonella*, is prevalent in the Esperance region;
- The nature reserve named after her is 15 km south of Calingari; and

- She died in Mosman Park.

There is no question that Rica Erickson was a distinguished artist, botanist, archivist and historian for which she received the middle ranking Australian Honour as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

If the electorate of Girrawheen were known for its biodiversity of its flora and fauna, then the naming the seat Erickson may make some sense. However in large parts of the electorate, land was cleared early on and operated as market gardens.

Inconsistency in the policy of renaming seats

It is not clear from the report why some seats will retain their geographical nomenclature and others will not. For example, the newly created seat of Baldivis which would have been an ideal candidate for the new policy has not been named after a person.

We consider that where a seat has a regional centre within it, then maintaining a geographical name makes sense e.g. Mirrabooka, Fremantle, Midland etc. It is not clear for others why some are subject to change and others are not.

If renaming was considered appropriate, there are several other names more appropriate

Ideally we consider a competition amongst the community or local school students to find a name would have been a preferable course to take in finding an alternative name.

We are sorry that indigenous names were excluded as there is a rich history in the area, which is *Mooro* country and *Yellagonga* was active in the area. We do note however that Girrawheen itself is not a local aboriginal word.

The area also has a diverse population and we are proud of its multicultural character so a name that reflects the contribution of an early migrant would have also been welcomed.

In terms of geographical names, there is no natural and obvious centre of the electorate.

However *Hepburn Avenue* is roughly in the centre of the electorate and is a major road traversing the whole. Hepburn was a roads engineer and accordingly although geographically significant, it is arguable his contribution was not so significant as to deserve additional official acknowledgment.

Likewise another major road and also a major shopping centre, *Kingsway* has some resonance although less so with the Southern end of the electorate.

Conclusion

The LRA appreciates the opportunity to comment. For the reasons set out above we consider the *status quo* should be maintained with the current name of the seat Girrawheen for this election. To proceed with the suggested name would compound existing confusion.

In the medium term we consider a change of name may be appropriate but that it should honour a distinguished Western Australian who is either connected to the area or whose life works has had a direct impact on our community. We also believe that appropriate indigenous Western Australians should not be excluded.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Domenic Zappa', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Domenic Zappa
President
Landsdale Residents Association

19 August 2015