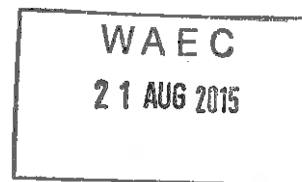




The Greens (WA)
PO BOX 3022
East Perth WA 6892

21 August 2015



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

Re: 2015 Western Australian State Electoral Redistribution

Dear Commissioners

On behalf of The Greens (WA), please find enclosed the following written objections to the 2015 Proposed Boundaries for the 2015 Western Australian state electoral redistribution.

We thank the Commissioners for their work on the redistribution, and hope that our objections will contribute to an improved outcome from the redistribution process.

If you should require any clarification or further information, please feel free to contact me. I can be contacted on +61 433 317 142, or via email at convenors@wa.greens.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Grahame Bowland'.

Grahame Bowland
Co-Convenor, The Greens (WA)

The Greens (WA) objections to the proposed 2015 Western Australia State Electoral Redistribution

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Introduction

We note that the Commissioners provided a document detailing their preliminary observations at the commencement of the redistribution process. The Greens (WA), and presumably the authors of other submissions, were strongly influenced by this document in the areas we addressed in our submission.

We are troubled by some areas of fundamental change suggested by the Commissioners, which were not foregrounded in this document. While the preliminary observations document is clearly not binding upon the Commissioners, we feel that any break from established practice should have been foregrounded so as to allow for public comment.

The Greens (WA) strongly objects to the proposed change in the naming convention of electorates, breaking from the long practice of naming districts after their central suburb. We detail the reasons for our objection below.

Additionally, we object to the proposed transfer of the Electoral District of Mount Lawley into the North Metropolitan Region, and to the reciprocal transfer of the Electoral District of Girrawheen into the East Metropolitan Region.

We note the substantial challenge faced by the Commissioners in drawing boundaries which meet the constraints of the Act, and allow for community of interest. We provide some comments below, and wish to particularly note some areas in which we feel the Commissioners have achieved a substantial improvement in the boundaries by improving community of interest.

Naming of Electorates

Stability argument flawed

The Commissioners have suggested a change in the long established convention for the naming of electoral districts. Districts were formerly named after their central suburb; the Commissioners propose a transition to a new convention along federal lines, naming districts after prominent deceased people of good repute.

The Commissioners argue that this will allow the name of each electorate to be maintained, even as the boundaries substantially change from redistribution to redistribution. The Commissioners suggest that this stability is desirable, presumably to reduce confusion in the electorate.

We respectfully suggest that this argument is flawed. The naming of an electoral district after a prominent person – drawing an example from the proposal, Girrawheen to Erickson – does nothing to reduce the confusion of voters should the boundaries of the district be substantially redrawn. Indeed, if the central area of an electorate changes then a change in the district name is desirable, to make it clear to the electorate that such a substantial change has been made.

Difficulties for the Electorate

While the Commissioners do not suggest the new naming convention by applied to more than a dozen electorates during this redistribution, it is clear that difficulties will arise for electors when the convention is applied to all fifty-nine electoral districts.

Members of the public might reasonably be expected to remember the name of their own electorate, even if not named for their suburb (or a nearby suburb.) However, voters will find it very difficult to remember all fifty nine districts and their approximate geographic location. It is immediately clear which area of the state an MP represents when they are referred to with the title “the Member for Girrawheen”; it is not at all clear who that same MP represents when they are referred to with the title “the Member for Erickson”.

Exclusion of Aboriginal persons from consideration

We strongly object to the Commissioners’ decision to exclude the use of the names of all deceased Aboriginal persons, without pursuing wide consultation with the Aboriginal community. We find this paragraph from the proposal particularly troubling:

“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 Commissioners are of course correct to wish to consult with elders and others within the language groups of the ancestors concerned before naming any district after a deceased Aboriginal person.

However, the need to pursue meaningful consultation with the Aboriginal community should not be used as a reason to exclude all deceased Aboriginal persons from recognition through the naming of an electoral district, while suggesting that a dozen electorates be immediately renamed after non-Aboriginal persons, including colonial settlers.

We feel that the Commissioners should not pursue the renaming of any electorate after an individual, nor the establishment of this new convention, until a further redistribution is conducted during which time can be allotted for meaningful consultation with the Aboriginal community. The current convention has stood for a long period, and there can be no pressing need to rename electorates after non-Aboriginal persons while excluding without consultation all Aboriginal persons.

Lack of consultation

The Commissioners did not foreshadow this change in their preliminary observations, nor was a change in the naming convention suggested by a member of the public or organisation during the suggestions stage of the redistribution.

We do not feel that the Commissioners' suggestion that consultation occur only within the objection stage of the redistribution is adequate. It would be more appropriate to suggest that the idea be taken up by the Commissioners of the next redistribution. Now that the public and organisations are aware of the proposed change, they can engage with it and provide thorough comment – for or against – and should they wish, suggest individuals to be honoured.

Boundaries of Metropolitan Regions

Transfer of District of Mount Lawley to North Metropolitan Region, and the Transfer of District of Girrawheen to East Metropolitan Region

The Greens (WA) object to the proposed transfer of the District of Mount Lawley to the North Metropolitan Region, and the reciprocal transfer of the District of Girrawheen to the East Metropolitan Region.

In the proposal, the Commissioners provide the following reason for the transfer:

“... it is proposed to incorporate the district of Mount Lawley into the North Metropolitan Region, noting its close connection to the district of Perth which is also in this region. This will be balanced by incorporating the district of Girrawheen (Erickson) in the East Metropolitan Region as it shares an affinity to localities immediately to the east.”

While the Commissioners emphasise the close link between the District of Perth and the District of Mount Lawley, we would suggest that this link is only significant at the border of the districts (where it is to be expected.) The link is much reduced in suburbs such as Inglewood and Yokine, which form a greater part of the District – and in turn have closer ties with the Districts of Maylands and Morley than they do with the District of Perth.

When mapped, the net effect of the proposed redistribution is to move the boundary of the East Metropolitan Region westwards, with north-western extent of the electorate stretching far closer to the coast, almost to Wanneroo and Joondalup. Under the 2011 boundaries, the westernmost point in the north was the edge of the District of Mirrabooka.

The transfer of Girrawheen to the Eastern Metropolitan Region contributes greatly to this western shift in the boundary, bringing a large population of electors who live in Perth’s central northern suburbs into the electorate.

Turning to the Act, we find this advice on the division of the metropolitan area into regions:

16H. (1) (a) 3 contiguous regions, to be known, respectively, as the North Metropolitan Region (being a region that is generally to the north of the Swan River), the South Metropolitan Region (being a region that is generally to the south of the Swan River) and the East Metropolitan Region (being a region that includes the hills and foothills of the Darling Escarpment)

It is clear the Act intends the Eastern Metropolitan Region to have a strong affinity with the regions to the east of the metropolitan region, as defined by the natural geographic boundary of the Darling Escarpment. The transfer of Girrawheen into the East Metropolitan Region runs against this, bringing a suburb which is clearly part of the central northern suburbs into the region.

The Act emphasises that regions should be drawn as to reflect communities of interest. We suggest that at the scale of legislative council regions, community of interest can be best achieved by prioritising the incorporation of key infrastructure such as railway lines and major roads within the regions they service.

Residents of the District of Mount Lawley have an interest in infrastructure shared with the East Metropolitan Region which greatly outweighs the significance of the relationship between the District and any of its neighbours. Notably:

- The District of Mount Lawley is serviced by the Midland railway line, as is much of the northern part of the East Metropolitan Region. Issues of security, reliability and capacity on this line are held in common with much of the East Metropolitan Region.
- Major arterial roads, including Guildford Road, Beaufort Street and Alexander Drive pass through the District of Mount Lawley. The utility of these roads – including the effects of development elsewhere in the Region upon congestion – is of great interest to electors in the District of Mount Lawley.

Additionally, the residents of the East Metropolitan Region have an interest in infrastructure contained within the District of Mount Lawley. Significantly, the Mount Lawley campus of Edith Cowan University is the only University campus within the East Metropolitan Region. Residents of the region as a whole have an interest in this educational facility.

The Commissioners suggest that the District of Girrawheen shares an affinity to localities immediate to the East. It is not clear how this affinity extends to an affinity with the rest of the East Metropolitan Region. We suggest instead that the District has a greater affinity with the North Metropolitan Region, due to significant shared infrastructure:

- Major east/west roads service the District and neighbouring Districts in the North Metropolitan Region. These roads include Beach Road, Hepburn Avenue and Ocean Reef Road.
- Wanneroo road, a major road linking Perth's northern suburbs (and the North Metropolitan Region) passes through the District.
- The aforementioned roads are linked to the Mitchell Freeway, a key transit route from the northern suburbs both north to Joondalup and south the Perth CBD. Residents of the District are likely to make substantial use of the Freeway, and have a common interest in it with other residents of the North Metropolitan Region.
- The Joondalup Train Line services the District, and represents another major piece of North/South transit infrastructure in which residents of the District have a shared interest.

We feel that community of interest in the legislative council regions is best served by retaining Mount Lawley in the Eastern Metropolitan Region, and Girrawheen in the North Metropolitan Region.

Comments upon district boundary modifications

Creation of District of Baldivis

While The Greens (WA) suggested a new district be created within the North Metropolitan Region, we recognise that it is equally valid to create the new district in the South Metropolitan Region. Both regions have seen significant population growth since the last redistribution.

The Greens (WA) are supportive of the proposed district and its boundaries. The district serves a clear community of interest in an area undergoing sustained population growth.

Changes to the District of Vasse

We are pleased that the Commissioners have achieved a substantial improvement in community of interest within the District of Vasse, unifying the township of Margaret River in a single district. The Greens (WA) support the new district boundaries.

Changes to the District of Kalgoorlie

We are also pleased to note that the Commissioners have been able to accommodate the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder within a single district.