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Draft Electoral Boundaries suggested name change seat of Girrawheen

I write to request reconsideration to the proposed renaming of the seat of Girrawheen to Erickson.

The reasons for this submission are several:-

- a) If renaming was considered appropriate, there are several other names more readily connected with the locality, some of which are aboriginal in origin;
- b) There is already a level of confusion;
- c) Mrs Erickson has absolutely no nexus to the area; &
- d) It would have been preferable to have a broad community discussion on a name.

Background

There has always been a level of irony in the naming of the suburb of Girrawheen itself. A well-meaning person or committee regarded it appropriate to give the area an aboriginal name. It is not a *Whadjuk Noongar* word. It is believed to be a *Koori* name from NSW meaning "*place of flowers*".

But of all the suburbs in the proposed electorate, it is the oldest (1970s) and most well- established and known.

Alternative names

It is my view that if there is a change of name for the seat it should be substituted for a Whadjuk Noongar word.

For example, **Yellagonga** was the leader of the Whadjuk Noongar on the north side of the Swan River. Colonists saw Yellagonga as the owner of this area. Nearby to the west of the seat are the Yellagonga wetlands including Lake Yellagonga.

The other aboriginal name which has resonance in the area is **Mooro**. The Mooro were a Whadjuk Noongar Indigenous clan, led by Yellagonga who lived in and to the north of Perth, until shortly after European settlement. The Mooro traversed the lakes and wetlands running parallel to the coast, including Yanchep, Lake Neerabup, Lake Joondalup, and as far south as Lake Monger.

Unfortunately the Commissioners dismissed the use of Whadjuk Noongar names on the basis there was not time to consult Elders. I respectfully request that ample time be provided on the next redistribution so that such names can be considered.

Another alternative name which has some resonance in the area would be **Facey** after A.B. Facey, the author of *A Fortunate life*. Although he has connections with many parts of the state he worked on market gardens, the Lime Kilns and set up a poultry farm in the Wanneroo area. His son who was killed in the Second World War is remembered on the Wanneroo War memorial. In this year where we mark the centenary of Gallipoli it would be fitting to honour an Anzac. Facey was in the 11th battalion and fought at Gallipoli.

Other names which have some connection relate to major thoroughfares- **Hepburn** (after a main roads engineer) and **Kingsway** which would cause confusion with the neighbouring seat of Kingsley.

The area also has a diverse population and its multicultural character is a feature in which there is great pride.

Accordingly a name that reflects the contribution of an early migrant or someone active in settlement would have also been welcomed.

Unnecessary confusion

My preferred option however would be no change of name as it generates confusion and uncertainty in the North eastern section of the seat.

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

Moreover, 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 and considerable expense 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*".

At the 2013 State election, at polling booths, party personnel reported voters were asserting they were not in the seat of Girrawheen and equally strongly that they were in the seat of Cowan.

Rica Erickson has absolutely no connection to the local area

It is not in dispute that Erickson was a distinguished artist, botanist, archivist and historian. She received the 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.

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 died in Mosman Park.
- 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; and
- The nature reserve named after her is 15 km south of Calingari.

Broad community acceptance

Moreover I consider that any name change to the seat should be endorsed by the local community and have an obvious connection with the area. Any name would have greater acceptance and better take up if residents had a chance to canvass and debate options.

A radical suggestion perhaps, but as part of an education exercise with a view to engaging youth such a debate could be spearheaded by a schools competition to suggest names?

Conclusion

I thank the Commissioners for the opportunity to comment. For the reasons outlined above I do not regard the argument to change the name to Erickson as compelling.

Nor is it timely to do so when there already exists some confusion in parts of the electorate as to the name of the State seat.

In the medium term, maybe a change of name may be considered which honours the Whadjuk Noongar heritage in the area? Alternatively a distinguished Western Australian who is either connected to the area or whose life works has had a direct impact on our community be considered.

Margaret Quirk MLA
Member for Girrawheen

24 August 2015