



Office of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners
GPO Box F316
PERTH WA 6841

Our ref: 1.2.1.3/O36170
Enquiries: Jason Whiteaker

Dear Commissioners

Objection – Review of Western Australian Electoral Boundaries

This objection is made on behalf of the Shire of Northam (Council) on the proposed redistribution of Electoral Districts and Regions of Western Australia.

While the Council acknowledges the challenges in developing representative models for electoral boundaries the Council has formed the view that on this occasion the proposed amendments to the Central Wheatbelt Region fail to adequately consider a number of key criteria.

Wheatbelt Communities are centred on a number of 'regional towns' which provide services and facilities to their sub regions. For example the communities of Goomalling, Dowerin, Cunderdin and Toodyay gravitate naturally towards Northam. Conversely communities such as Williams, Wandering and Pingelly gravitate towards a town such as Narrogin, whilst Darkan has its natural linkages with the Collie Community.

In the case of Northam and Toodyay, as a specific example, these are two communities less than 20 minutes' drive from each other, are strongly linked by both road and rail and share a strong community of interest. With the inclusion of York, Goomalling and Victoria Plains these community's also form the area known as the 'Avon Valley'. With Northam as the regional centre these three communities share much in common when it comes to sporting, shopping, medical and local government services. This being the Council does not support a further breaking up of the 'Avon Valley' sub region into separate electoral areas. In fact, given the points made above there would appear to be a strong case for the Toodyay area to actually be included in the Central Wheatbelt District.

In order to achieve such an outcome and still maintain the required Average District Enrolment variation, adjustments between the Wagin (Roe) and Central Wheatbelt District could be considered. These adjustments could include removing the areas of Wandering, Williams, Boddington, Pingelly, Corrigin & Darkan from Central Wheatbelt and including them in Wagin (Roe). This would be offset by the reallocation of Goomalling and Dowerin back into the Central Wheatbelt whilst also including Toodyay. This adjustment would provide a better 'fit' from a district and community of interest perspective and it would not, on the assessment of the Shire of Northam, result in the Average District Enrolment variation of +/- 10% being exceeded. Based on the broad assessment undertaken by the Shire of Northam it would result in a net gain of less than 500 (in population terms) to the District of Roe.

The Commissioners should also give strong consideration to the growth trajectory being targeted by the Council for Northam which is far more aggressive than the Government published WA Tomorrow document. In the Shire of Northam Regional Centres (Supertowns) Growth Plan, endorsed by the State Government and incorporated in the State Planning Strategy 2050, there is planning provision for a doubling of the population from 11,000 to 22,000 within 20 years.

In the Growth Plan (2012, p.6) the Wheatbelt Development Commission states;

The Regional Centres Development Plan (Supertowns) will greatly assist in the expansion of necessary industry, services and infrastructure to ensure the Avon sub-region's readiness to support a population growth to 50,000.

While population and representation is obviously critical, it is the view of the Council that geographical District size and subsequently serviceability is also a strong consideration.

In the background papers relating to the Agricultural Region comment is made in relation to the treatment of the Shire of Esperance and the issues around geographical size;

There are two main reasons behind the proposal to split the Shire of Esperance.

First, the predominant land use in northern and eastern parts of the Shire is mining and (or) pastoral and this allows them to be included in the Kalgoorlie district of the

Mining and Pastoral Region. Secondly, if the whole of the Shire were to have been included in Roe the geographic area would exceed 100,000 square kilometres and the

Commissioners feel it is preferable not to have one only of the four districts in the Agricultural Region with an LDA (Large District Allowance).

While the above comments are considered to be appropriate the Shire of Northam would also contend that the proposed new Central Wheatbelt geographical area is 97,669 sq km, which is a considerable area of land for one (1) Elected Member to represent.

In country electorates, particularly of the proposed size of the Central Wheatbelt, the physical capacity of a member who is endeavouring to provide equal representation across the region will be a significant challenge. Consequently the geographical size of an electorate needs, in the view of Council, to be limited. The last redistribution combined Northam and Merredin making the electorate much harder to cover. Any further increase in size will make equal representation very difficult.

The above objection is submitted respectfully and the Shire of Northam looks forward to the outcomes of the review process.

Yours faithfully



JASON WHITEAKER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

JBW:AM

24 August 2015