

## 2015 Electoral Boundary Review

WA Labor acknowledges the preliminary observations of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners. In particular, the observation that due to the "size and spread of the districts outside permissible limits... implementing a minimal change approach would be difficult to say the least".

In this submission, WA Labor will:

- Argue that given there is no proposal to increase the overall number of districts, the Commissioners should consider change where it is required in the non-metropolitan areas;
- Argue that a number of districts in the Mining and Pastoral and Agricultural Regions require a significant increase in electors to be sustained;
- Outline two options for adjustments to the Mining and Pastoral and Agricultural Regions;
- Note the South West Region requires no change. The work undertaken by the Commissioners in previous distributions in the South West Region continues to satisfy the elector requirements and the community of interest, local government boundaries and means of communication tests; and
- Propose a district is transferred into the South Metropolitan Region to address the growth identified in the preliminary observations.

Western Australia has experienced significant growth – an increase of around 100,000 new electors since 2011. Most of the growth has occurred in the districts around the boundaries of the metropolitan regions. The preliminary observations identify a problem with accommodating this growth within the existing 42 metropolitan districts. However, the Commissioners acknowledge that they do not have the power to increase or reduce the overall number of districts from 59.

The ratio of electors in non-metropolitan to metropolitan regions has decreased. There are insufficient electors in both the Agricultural and Mining and Pastoral Regions to maintain the existing number of districts within the permissible statutory variance.

The eight districts in the South West Region are appropriately balanced and, as identified, the region has experienced "relatively stable voter populations since 2011".

In determining the electoral boundaries, the Commissioners must first consider growth with respect to the number of districts in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions. This has been identified in the preliminary observations, *"The Commissioners will have to decide whether the present allocation of 17 districts in the three country regions and 42 in the three metropolitan regions should be maintained."* As such, WA

Labor does not believe it is able to provide detail in relation to the metropolitan district boundaries until this threshold question is determined.

WA Labor submits that the traditional definition of 'metropolitan area of Perth', as defined in Schedule 3 of the *Planning and Development Act 2005 (WA)* and the *Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act*, should be maintained to provide the regions with consistency.

In consequence, WA Labor submits that the transfer of a single district from the non-metropolitan area would be sufficient to address the growth in the metropolitan regions. Further, WA Labor notes that the statistics outlined in the preliminary observations do not warrant the transfer of two districts.

The preliminary observations also note, "The southern boundary appears to be less problematic" and that "in considering a possible extension of the southern boundary, a relevant question might be how far the shared community of interest actually extends, given the spread of high density development well beyond the existing southern boundary."

As identified, the districts of Mandurah and Dawesville have a shared community of interest. The districts come in over quota, although within the allowable variance. The inclusion of these districts from the South West Region to the South Metropolitan Region will contribute little to relieving the pressure of growth on the existing 42 metropolitan districts. It would be deceptive to argue that increasing the number of metropolitan seats from 42 to 44 by this means in any way addresses the metropolitan growth problems identified by the Commissioners as it must necessarily involve the transfer of 51,805 electors from the South West Region to the metropolitan area.

WA Labor sees no merit in increasing the Legislative Council malapportionment by reducing the enrolment in the South West Region by over 50,000 and similarly increasing the South Metropolitan Region enrolment.

The Commissioners have recognised in successive distributions that the community of interest does not require the excision of the districts of Mandurah and Dawesville from the South West Region.

WA Labor notes that the Commissioners have recognised the relatively stable voter populations in the South West Region and the durability of the 2011 boundaries and in consequence sees no necessity to alter the boundaries or composition of the region.

The transfer of a single district from the non-metropolitan to the metropolitan area will need to occur where change is required.

Considering the number of electors and the community of interest, no change is proposed to the Kimberley electorate and relatively no change is required to the Pilbara electorate of the Mining and Pastoral Region. Change is required in the electorates of North West Central, Kalgoorlie and Eyre in the Mining and Pastoral Region and Wagin and Central Wheatbelt in the Agricultural Region.

One possible consideration is to transfer the part of the electorate of Eyre comprising of the Shires of Ravensthorpe, Esperance and Dundas into the Agricultural Region. This will have the effect of bolstering the population of the region by 12,900 electors (including Large District Allowance) to maintain its current four districts. WA Labor notes that the Commissioners have in the past identified this area as suitable for inclusion in either the Agricultural or the Mining and Pastoral Regions and at various distributions have including it in one or the other.

In this option, no change to the electorates of Kimberley or the Pilbara will be required. This will provide stability to the electors and serve to enhance voter turnout and participation. The Shires of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie and the town of Kalgoorlie will be reunited in the district of Kalgoorlie. The Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn, which boast to be gateways to the Wheatbelt, will transfer from Kalgoorlie to the district of Moore. The district of Geraldton will extend to the City of Greater Geraldton boundary creating a natural divider between the districts of North West Central and Moore. This option will also provide sufficient electors to maintain four districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region.

Another possible consideration starts with the transfer of the Shire of Ashburton from North West Central to the Pilbara electorate. The effect of this will be to reunite Ashburton with the Pilbara, extend Moore further north to pick up the Shires of Shark Bay, Carnarvon and Exmouth and uniting agricultural territory. This in effect recreates a district that resembles the earlier version of Ningaloo.

In this option, no change to the electorates of Kimberley, Geraldton and Eyre will be required. The district of Kalgoorlie will extend further west to pick up the Shires of Meekatharra, Wiluna, Cue and Mount Magnet. The Shires of Toodyay, Chittering, Gingin and Victoria Plains will transfer into the district of Central Wheatbelt. The district of Wagin will push north to pick up excess electors from Central Wheatbelt.

In considering either of the two options outlined above, WA Labor submits that no change is required to the South West Region. This is due to the Commissioners' successful work in previous distributions.

For example, over the years the Commissioners have quite rightly recognised that the community of interest of the Shire of Collie lies with the other municipalities that constitute the South West Development Commission and not with the Wheatbelt Shires to the east and ought to continue to give effect to this judgement.

A commendable outcome of the 2015 Review will be to deliver stability to the South West Region by maintaining the current boundaries. The current boundaries satisfy the elector requirements and the community of interest, local government boundaries and means of communication tests.

While the inclusion of one non-metropolitan district in the metropolitan area must necessarily disrupt the principle of maintaining the three metropolitan council regions with absolute equal numbers of districts, WA Labor notes the Section 16H of the *Electoral Act 1907* provides the flexibility to accommodate this outcome.

Further, WA Labor submits that the transfer of a single district in either of the forms outlined above will best serve in relieving the pressure of growth in the South Metropolitan Region. Therefore, the transferred district should be placed in the South Metropolitan Region and other metropolitan adjustments made accordingly.

The Electoral Distribution Commissioners need to determine their threshold position in terms of the number of districts in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions. Given the Commissioners cannot increase or decrease the overall number of districts; WA Labor firmly believes the transfer of a single district will satisfy the statutory requirements.

WA Labor submits that the South West Region satisfies the statutory requirements and the community of interest test and should remain unchanged to provide electors with stability. The Commissioners could consider change, where required in numerical terms, in the districts within the Mining and Pastoral and the Agricultural Regions.

WA Labor therefore presents this submission for the consideration of the Electoral Distribution Commissioners and looks forward to expanding on points by way of oral submission.

Yours sincerely,



**Simon Mead**  
**State Secretary**