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From: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox
Sent: Thursday, 24 August 2023 1:49 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: 307 FW: Response to Suggestions - Boundaries

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From: Jacquie Utber <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, 16 August 2023 3:55 PM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Response to Suggestions - Boundaries

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Dear Commissioner,

I wish to respond and object to electoral boundary suggestions published on your website.

The decision to replace another regional electorate with a metropolitan one is both alarming and disheartening. This move serves to further diminish the influence of regional Western Australia, a voice already restrained by government policy and crucially needed as regional communities confront various challenges. This suggested reconfiguration seems to undervalue the essential need to preserve shared community interests. It overlooks countless expressions from regular Western Australians advocating for the retention of 16 regional seats. Disappointingly, it also dismisses thoughtfully crafted proposals that present a clear case for preserving the current level of regional representation in compliance with the Electoral Act.

Regional electorates, which already cover larger areas, demand regional MLAs to navigate greater distances, represent more diverse communities, and judiciously distribute their funding allocations across more expansive areas. The merging of regional seats risks voter exclusion due to the increase in already sizable constituencies. It also threatens to centralise power in metropolitan areas, causing an imbalance in representation where urban concerns overshadow regional interests. The proposed boundaries disregard the need to preserve the unity of our communities and dismiss public advocacy for the continued existence of the current 16 regional seats. This move signals the continuation of a worrying trend that has stripped regional voters of 18 crucial upper house representatives. Since the 1987 redistribution, 12 lower house seats have been stripped from regional WA. These considerations necessitate a rethink of these boundary alterations to secure fair representation for all Western Australians.

Of the many changes proposed, I object most strongly to (examples below)

1. The abolition of the Moore electorate and the abolition of the North West Central electorate and creation of a new Mid-west electorate. This separates areas with a strong community of interest such as Exmouth and Carnarvon from each other.
2. While the Moore electorate maintained connection between communities of interest in a large electorate, the new Mid-West electorate lumps together such a vast variety of communities, it is difficult to see where Commissioners found commonality. The proposed seat would span from Muchea on the outskirts of Perth to just a few kilometres south of Newman in the north. More than 1,000km from top to tail and no large population centre within its boundaries. This is a remarkably difficult electorate for any local member to service and all but impossible for any local member to be held to account by their constituents.
3. The partitioning of regional shires across Western Australia - such as Victoria Plains - for the mere transfer of a few hundred votes between electorates threatens to rupture tightly knit regional communities who depend on shared essential services. These communities, which often operate as interconnected units, may face significant disruption due to such electoral adjustments. It is of utmost importance that regional local councils remain undivided, ensuring their ability to continue serving their constituents effectively.

Electoral considerations should not override the necessity of maintaining the unity and integrity of these regional communities for a modest shift in votes.

4. Under the proposed boundary changes, residents of the Shire of Chapman Valley and Mullewa would be included in the electorate of Geraldton, there being no degree of commonality with respect to land use patterns.
5. The dividing of the Shire of Northampton between Mid West and Geraldton electorates - the communities within this Local Government Area have been divided since the previous redistribution and suffered the challenge of working with two separate Members of Parliament who represent vast areas.
6. The creation of a new Oakford electorate. As is clear in the data released by the Commission, there is no justification for the creation of a new electorate within the metropolitan area as the metropolitan area is already well within acceptable limits of representation.

I stand with thousands of regional West Australians expressing their disappointment at this redistribution, viewing it as a regrettable lost chance. I urge you to reevaluate your proposal, ensuring the preservation of the 16 regional seats.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Utber

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Acknowledgement of Country: The Western Australian Electoral Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our electoral activities take place. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.