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**From:** YorkHeather <heather.york@loop.wa.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 August 2023 5:01 PM  
**To:** Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox  
**Cc:** Love, Shane  
**Subject:** RE: Objection to WAEC 2023 Proposed Boundaries - Shane Love MLA  
**Attachments:** WAERC Boundary Review Submission.pdf

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**From:** YorkHeather  
**Sent:** Monday, August 21, 2023 5:00 PM  
**To:** boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au  
**Cc:** Love, Shane <Shane.Love@mp.wa.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Objection to WAEC 2023 Proposed Boundaries - Shane Love MLA

Good Afternoon,

Please see attached Shane Love MLA's Objection to the WAEC 2023 Proposed Boundaries, along with objections provided from West Australians to Mr Love, which he submits on their behalf.

Thanks,  
Heather

**Heather York**  
Chief of Staff

**Office of Shane Love MLA**  
Leader of the Opposition  
Leader of The Nationals WA  
Member for Moore

| [heather.york@loop.wa.gov.au](mailto:heather.york@loop.wa.gov.au)



This Submission is made in the name of Shane Love MLA, Member for Moore.

### **WAEC 2023 Proposed Boundaries Objection**

The Western Australian Electoral Commission has proposed to reduce non-metropolitan electorates from 16 – 15 in its proposed 2023 review of electoral boundaries.

This is despite its acknowledgement that the proposed amalgamation of North West Central and Moore is contrary to a large number of submissions and comments that the current number of non-metropolitan seats should be retained. The Commission is also dismissing several submissions and comments highlighting the disadvantage arising for electors in geographically large electoral districts.

In making its determination the WAEC is required to consider:

- Community of interest
- Land use patterns
- Means of communication, travel and distance from the capital
- Existing electoral boundaries
- Existing Local Government boundaries
- Trend of demographic change
- Potential political impacts

#### **Community of Interest:**

Having considered these issues the WA Electoral Commission made a determination that amalgamating the electorates of North West Central and Moore was in some way justified by the excision of the most remote and sparsely populated areas of North West Central, the Shires of Wiluna and Ngaanyatjaraku, and the assumption of a common shared interest in 'primary production industry'.

'Primary industries' is the umbrella term used to refer to activity from Forestry to Mining – the two electorates in question do indeed have this productivity in common, as is the case with most if not all regional electorates in the State. This is not a unique feature of Moore and North West Central, nor reason enough to wipe either from the electoral map.

Under the umbrella of agriculture sits a range of many disparate industries often with few common identifiers. The livestock graziers of the Gascoyne and Murchison pastoral regions have little in common with the broad acre cropping farmers of the Northern and Central Midlands or the Wheatbelt. Nor does intensive animal farming or egg production relate to the banana and mango plantations of Carnarvon's horticulture industries. The range of agricultural practices are many and varied, and are specific to soil and climate constraints.

While the Commission recognises other important yet diverse primary industries throughout the region such as fishing, pearling and tourism, mining (gold, iron, lead, zinc, vanadium, mineral sands, silica sands, gas and oil extraction, ammonia production), and other emerging industries such as green hydrogen production or downstream processing of mineral sands at Eneabba – a project of national significance – the Commission seemingly dismissed the difficulty in representing so many competing voices and priorities.

This has implications for the provision of essential infrastructure in areas such as road, port and rail infrastructure, transport industries, education and training, access to secondary high schools and universities, access to health services and hospital care, telecommunications, electricity and water

provision. Many of these areas are already underrepresented and lack access to essential services, particularly as remoteness increases, in the northern part of the proposed new seat, currently known as North West Central.

The last thing these communities need is less representation. Ensuring visibility of issues and ease of access to local representatives is crucial in providing improved equity of service delivery for the residents of these electorates.

The abolishment of Moore and North West Central to create the electorate of 'Mid West' cannot be justified in these terms.

### **Land Use Patterns**

There are vast differences in land use patterns within the newly proposed seat of Mid West, which stretches from Muchea to Meekatharra and includes a broad spectrum of land use patterns from peri-urban lifestyle blocks to intensive livestock farming, broadacre cropping, pastoral grazing properties and mining operations. Agriculture activity is largely dictated by the diversity of weather patterns in terms of rainfall and temperature and soil types, which largely commands the viability of various agricultural industries. The Gascoyne and Murchison Regions have little in common with the Northern and Central Midlands Regions or the Northern Wheatbelt or peri-urban Muchea.

Mining and extraction activity is also varied according to location within the region, with iron, gold, lead, zinc and vanadium more likely to be mined in the arid land of the Murchison hinterlands and oil and gas extraction, mineral and silica sands more likely in the coastal areas of the Midlands, near Eneabba and Arrowsmith. The projected development of the Arrowsmith Industrial Hub will potentially lead to increased job creation and population growth.

The proposed establishment of the 'Mid West' seat by merging sections of the already abolished upper house Agricultural and Mining and Pastoral Regions, is profoundly misguided and detrimental. Unlike the existing electorates of Moore and North West Central, the proposed Mid West electorate lacks common land use, physical features, and relative proximity to the Capital. The coastal and farming communities of Lancelin and Jurien Bay – their character, needs, and challenges stand in stark contrast to remote mining and pastoral settlements like Meekatharra or Gascoyne Junction. The lived experiences of residents in these distinct communities are poles apart.

The Agricultural Region, with its emphasis on crops such as canola, wheat and barley, and the smaller specialty industries of the peri urban area, contrasts sharply with the Mining and Pastoral Region, where mineral extraction and vast pastoral leases are paramount. The move to amalgamate such varied regions threatens the very fabric of representation. It risks marginalising both communities in vital decisions, thereby undermining the essence of democracy: ensuring that every voice is adequately represented, and every concern duly addressed.

Peri-urban development is more significant in the Shires of Chittering, Gingin and Toodyay but is also taking place in the Shires of Dandaragan and Irwin through the development of lifestyle blocks particularly in their coastal locations.

### **Communication, travel and distance from capital:**

Telecommunication services are limited throughout the Gascoyne Region and Murchison sub-region, with vast tracks of land largely unserved by telecommunications and include numerous highway black spots. Most travel throughout the region is undertaken by road, with rail services unavailable for freight throughout much of the proposed 'Mid West' electorate. No passenger rail service is

currently available throughout Midwest and Gascoyne Regions and air transport is limited. Road freight transport is the predominant means of product movement.

The proposed electorate of 'Mid West' has an area of more than 430,000 square kilometres, twice the size of the UK, making it even more difficult for electors to access their elected Member of Parliament and for their elected representative to meet them due to distance, time and communication constraints.

**Distance to Capital by passenger and commercial vehicles:**

Yulga Jinna Remote Community – 880.7 km

Karalundi Remote Community – 813.9 km

Butta Windee Remote Community – 761km

Meekatharra – 756.6 km

Cue – 646.94 km

Mount Magnet – 562 km

Sandstone – 720.99 km

Yalgoo – 405 km

Wubin - 265 km

Dalwallinu – 245.5 km

Kalannie – 252 km

Balidu – 217 km

Cadoux – 211.2 km

Wongan Hills – 174.4 km

Miling – 196.5 km

Bindi Bindi – 179.4 km

Piawanning – 155.1 km

Yerecoin – 150.4km

Bolgart – 124. 8 km

Calingiri – 135 km

Goomalling – 133.8 km

Toodyay – 87.1 km

Gascoyne Junction – 1061.6 km

Murchison Settlement – 647.3 km

Pia Wadjarri Remote Community – 626 km

Carnarvon – 895.3 km  
Mungullah Remote Community – 889km  
Woodgamia Remote Community – 1063km  
Burringurrah Settlement – 772 km  
Denham (Shark Bay) – 827.4km  
Kalbarri – 575  
Northampton – 417.39 km  
Barrel Well Community – 521km  
Wandinooka Community – 469 km  
Dongara – 350 km  
Mullewa – 445 km  
Morawa – 350.3 km  
Perenjori – 341 km  
Mingenew – 361.2 km  
Three Springs – 308 km  
Carnamah – 285 km  
Coorow – 258 km  
Watheroo – 206.5 km  
Coomberdale – 187 km  
Moora – 167 km  
Gillingarra – 133.7 km  
New Norcia – 132 km  
Mogumber – 118 km  
Bindoon – 73.8 km  
Eneabba – 273 km  
Leeman – 238 km  
Jurien Bay– 218.8 km  
Cervantes – 1907.6km  
Badgingarra – 213 km  
Dandaragan – 143 km  
Gingin – 78.5 km

Muchea – 42.6 km

Gascoyne Junction being the most remote centre at 1061.6km and Muchea, 42.6 km, the nearest to Western Australia's capital city, Perth.

It is beyond all reasonable expectation that the many and varied communities and industries within this proposed electorate should be represented by only one person. If this objection were limited to practical factors only, it would remain abundantly clear this will deepen adversity and lessen the region's voice. Sheer access to the local representative, including resourcing and location of an office, necessary allowances, and the ease of transport all present great challenges to whomever should take on the task of representing this seat.

It is not an equitable system which allows such outrageous growth in land mass of a seat at the cost of representation – it demonstrates a lack of understanding of the regions and a disregard for the communities whose voices become less in the State's Parliament.

#### **Existing Electoral Boundaries.**

The proposed electorate of 'Mid West' falls within the Federal Electorate of Durack, which is unchanged. The amalgamation of North West Central and Moore However, significantly changes existing electoral boundaries at a State level and removes one regional seat from the Parliament of Western Australia. In addition to the factors already explored, this will result in unequal service delivery in terms of Justice, Law and Order, Health and Education, essential services and infrastructure delivery, further entrenching disparity.

#### **Existing Local Government Boundaries:**

The proposed electorate of 'Mid West' will encompass 24 Local Government Authorities and several Remote Aboriginal Communities including:

Yulga Jinna; Pia Wadjari, Burringurrah; Mungullah; Woodgamia; Karalundi; Butta Windee; Barrel Well and Wandinooka.

It is difficult to reconcile the needs of the remote, geographically isolated towns, communities and families living throughout the Gascoyne Region and the Murchison Hinterland, against those of peri-urban Muchea.

This will increase pressure on local government to step in to provide services, which ought to be provided by State and Federal Government but are not, such as access to General Practitioners and health services, childcare, aged care, and social housing. Many small Local Governments are already grappling with the burden of service provision where the responsible Government has vacated the space, citing 'geographic challenges' or 'duplication of services'. Take the example of a General Practitioner package offered now by multiple regional and remote Local Governments. This is a responsibility which does not fall to those within the reach of the Capital – the challenge of Local Government when far flung or even 'out of sight' is vastly different. The ability of regional Local Governments to fill a space voided by those who are meant to be stumping up for our communities is not reason enough to further burden them.

Their task is made all the more difficult by deficiencies in State Government utility services with unreliable power provision to much of this region within the South West Interconnected System, an increasingly overburdened water supply in the Midwest centre of Geraldton and its surrounding districts, which will fall within the new electorate of 'Mid West'.

The public need for Government services remains the same regardless of geographic location and population. This includes equitable representation.

While the Kimberley and Pilbara Regions are also remote and vast in area, they contain many less population centres in comparison to the proposed electorate of 'Mid West', and fewer Local Government Authorities with the Shires of East Pilbara and Ashburton, the City Karratha and the Town of Port Hedland in the Pilbara and the Town of Broome and the Shires of Derby West Kimberley and Wyndham-East Kimberley, in the Kimberley Region, making them more easily navigated, managed and represented.

#### **Trend of Demographic Change:**

The Midwest and Gascoyne regions, which will comprise the proposed electorate of 'Mid West', are key contributors to the Western Australian economy with the Midwest region currently home to 57,000 people, supporting 26,361 jobs and providing an annual economic output of \$15.951 billion and the Gascoyne home to 10,107 people, supporting 4767 jobs contributing an annual economic outcome of \$2.125 billion.

There are a projected 14 industry developments around Eneabba and Arrowsmith, within the Shires of Carnamah, Three Springs, Irwin and Mingenew. These projects are in various stages of development and are anticipated to drive economic, employment and population growth.

These shires are experiencing accommodation shortfalls in terms of workers accommodation, placing extraordinary pressure on accommodation demand for residents and tourism operators. Continued employment growth is expected for the foreseeable future and with-it population growth in these centres.

The Shire of Irwin anticipates 750 workers will need to be accommodated with all available accommodation currently taken. This includes tourist accommodation and caravan parks, which is negatively impacting the local tourism industry.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Estimated Resident Population figures (the most accurate count of total population) show population growth for the Shire of Irwin at 3.6 per cent, with other Shires also showing growth. The Shire of Gingin – 2.5 per cent, the Shire of Chittering – 3.3 per cent, The Shire of Toodyay 2.1 per cent and the Shire of Dandaragan 2.5 per cent.

While many families of remote workers, employed in the mining industries of the Midwest, Murchison regions, live in peri-urban areas around Chittering, Toodyay, Gingin and Muechea - which has been greatly facilitated by the North Link extension to Tonkin Highway and the access it provides to Perth Airport - their everyday interests and needs are as remote and disparate as the camps in which they work.

There is evidence of increased building applications and approvals as well as evidence of aging population also increasing in these centres. The Shires of Dandaragan and Irwin are showing similar trends. Increasingly, peri-urban shires have a high percentage of pre-retirees and older age brackets among those seeking a sea-change in their retirement. This brings challenges in relation to housing options, home and aged care and health services provision.

The Shire of Chittering has experienced population growth of 34 per cent over the past 10 years. In 2021 ABS data reported Chittering to have a population of 5,900 people. The Shire's Economic Development Strategy estimates its population will grow to between 7000 – 8000 by 2031 with



increased worker participation heavily linked to the Muchea Industrial Park, which is predicted to offer employment to 1000 workers.

The completion of the North Link extension to the Tonkin Highway coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic saw an immediate increase in people moving to the Shire of Chittering from the metropolitan area. This growth is expected to continue but has significant demand pressures due the attraction of families and FIFO workers.

### **Population Changes:**

Since 2019, peri-urban shires such as Chittering, Gingin, Toodyay, Dandaragan, and Irwin have seen remarkable population growth, with increases of 15%, 10.9%, 10%, 9.5%, and 4.5% respectively. These peri-urban areas are not only some of the fastest-growing within the proposed 'Mid West' electorate but are also forecasted to maintain high growth rates in upcoming years.

It's crucial to note that, for many of these peri-urban areas, many essential services, especially schooling and health, are predominantly serviced within or from the Perth urban area, underscoring these communities continued reliance on the capital's infrastructure.

There is a stark disconnect between the requirements of these expanding peri-urban communities and the rest of the proposed 'Mid West' electorate. As these peri-urban areas continue to grow, their ties to Perth's services will intensify, further distancing them from the concerns and lived experiences of the north's remote settlements.

Combining such disparate regions into one seat threatens to dilute the unique challenges each faces. With the expected continued growth in the peri-urban shires, their issues, closely tied to Perth's amenities, will dominate the electorate's discourse, potentially sidelining the more remote northern regions. It's imperative for fair representation that each region's distinct needs and connections are acknowledged and catered to.

The point raised in The Nationals WA submission regarding the under-enrolment of Indigenous West Australians, which is intrinsically linked to remoteness, underscoring disproportionate representation in regional electorates. The recent surge in enrolment across several regions, as highlighted by The Nationals WA, reinforces the need for a boundaries determination that genuinely mirrors the electorate's evolving profile, ensuring fair representation for all communities.

### **Section 16I of the Western Australian Electoral Act 1907:**

The current proposed creation of the 'Mid West' electorate is at odds with the guiding principles outlined in Section 16I of the Western Australian Electoral Act 1907. The merging of areas such as the Midwest and Gascoyne—key economic contributors—disregards the "community of interest" principle that the Act emphasises. By consolidating the unique challenges of peri-urban regions like Chittering and the remote northern settlements, the proposed changes further blur both existing district and local government boundaries. The inclusion of 24 Local Government Authorities and numerous Remote Aboriginal Communities in the proposed changes seems to contravene Section 16I of the Western Australian Electoral Act 1907, particularly in terms of community interests, land use patterns, communication means, and existing district and local government boundaries. Such a broad amalgamation risks undermining specific regional concerns and diluting accurate representation. This same argument stands for the proposed changes to the electorates of Roe and Central Wheatbelt.

The varied land use patterns, the wide-ranging distances to Perth (from Muchea's 42.6 km to Gascoyne Junction's 1061.6 km), and the difficulties in transportation and communication across these expanses raise concerns about maintaining consistent access to capital and services. The Act places emphasis on these vital factors for a reason— to ensure equity and representation. The disparities evident in the proposed changes, including the potential under-representation of Indigenous West Australians in such vast areas, risk deviating from the Act's foundational intent, possibly leading to unequal representation.

#### **Potential Political Impacts:**

The potential political impact of the proposed boundary redistribution is the loss of one non-metro electorate. This, when taken in conjunction with the structural change to the Legislative Council, through the removal of the Regions, which had offered Senate style safety, is likely to be a significant loss of voice for all who live beyond the Southwest corner of Western Australia.

Without appropriate or equitable representation in Parliament, Government services to remote, less populated area will deteriorate even further, creating a quality-of-life division based primarily on distance from the metropolitan area and the devaluation of the people who live regionally and remotely.

#### **Potential Mitigation Strategy for the Loss of Regional Representation:**

As a proposal to losing a regional seat, it is with a heavy heart I propose the creation of a hybrid seat which will contain some of the rural areas such as the cities of Swan and Mundaring including communities such as Wooroloo and Gidgegannup, as an alternative proposal to losing a regional seat, it is with a heavy heart I propose the creation of a hybrid seat which will contain some of the rural areas such as the cities of Swan and Mundaring including communities such as Wooroloo, Gidgegannup and Bullsbrook. There is precedent in the former seat of Mundaring. This would be combined with the current wheatbelt shires of Moore which would retain its current name. It is my view there is more of a community of interest with between the wheatbelt shires of Moore and these outer metropolitan rural communities than exists between those shires and the remote communities of the proposed Mid West seat. This proposal would be a more modest way for the commission to address population increases in the city rather than a complete loss of a regional seat. All these communities are in a two and half hours driving time from Perth and utilise services in the Perth including Fremantle as the port for their industries.

#### **Conclusion:**

The proposed boundary shift to create a Mid West electorate by abolishing North West Central and Moore present more than just logistical challenges; it threatens the very essence of equitable representation in Western Australia. The sheer geographic vastness, ranging from proximate locales like Chittering to remote areas like Gascoyne Junction, elucidates a region brimming with varied needs and distinct challenges.

Current resources, from staffing to office provisions, are utterly insufficient to bridge this vastness, further exacerbating the unequal representation. With the 'Mid West' electorate potentially encompassing 24 Local Government Authorities and numerous Remote Aboriginal Communities, local governance structures are anticipated to bear undue pressures, particularly when the needs of geographically isolated areas are juxtaposed against peri-urban communities like Muchea.

The economic prowess of the Midwest and Gascoyne regions, coupled with anticipated growth around Eneabba and Arrowsmith, paints a picture of prosperity. Yet, the looming shadows of accommodation shortfalls and the subsequent pressures on tourism underscore the impending challenges. The rapid population spikes in peri-urban areas, especially given their deep-rooted ties to Perth's infrastructure, further accentuate the disconnect with remote northern settlements.

One of the most glaring oversights is the under-enrolment of Indigenous West Australians, which The Nationals WA aptly highlight in their objection. Such discrepancies, intrinsically linked to remoteness, emphasise the region's disproportionate representation.

The most ominous political implication remains the potential loss of a non-metro seat. When paired with the Legislative Council's structural shifts, this will manifest as a substantial diminishment in the voice of regional communities. The imminent danger is the creation of a two-tiered society, where distance from the metropolitan hub becomes the primary determinant of quality-of-life, underscoring the devaluation of regional and remote residents. I trust the Commission will consider my suggestion of a seat which contains elements of the Wheatbelt region and the more rural communities of the outer metropolitan area.

These proposed changes risk not just diluting the voices of distinct communities but also sidelining the unique, multifaceted challenges they face. For Western Australia to truly embrace its diverse fabric, there is an urgent need to revisit these draft electoral boundaries, ensuring they maintain 16 non-metropolitan electorates to mirror the realities on the ground, facilitating genuine and equitable representation for all.

