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From: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox
Sent: Friday, 25 August 2023 1:08 PM
To: s
Subject: 366 OB
Attachments: Proposed Redistribution Objection - Julie Freeman.docx

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DATE:	17 AUG 2023
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From: juliefre [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 17 August 2023 6:54 PM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Objection to the Boundary Redistribution

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Please find attached my letter of objection to the proposed electoral boundary redistribution.

Thank you for your consideration

Julie Freeman
PC
Mullewa WA 6630

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.

Dear Redistribution Commissioners,

I object to the electoral boundaries you have proposed for the Legislative Assembly.

On every measure of prosperity and well-being, regional West Australians have worse outcomes than people who live in the metropolitan area. Representation in parliament has always been critical to the slow but vital task of improving the quality of life, infrastructure and access to services which are so necessary to redressing the balance between metropolitan and regional.

Due to changes to Legislative Council representation at the next election, regional West Australians will lose 18 dedicated regional representatives as a whole-of-state electorate is established, leading to the very real possibility that every member of the Legislative Council could be based in the metropolitan area with little or no knowledge, or interest, in regional matters.

It is of utmost importance that this loss of representation in the upper house is not made worse by reduced Legislative Assembly representation. I therefore urge you to maintain the current number of regional Legislative Assembly seats in the coming boundary redistribution.

So soon after the changes to the Electoral Act have seen dedicated regional representation removed from the Legislative Council, and before there has been an opportunity to assess the impact this will have on regional WA, you have proposed that we lose yet another regional voice from parliament.

“Out of sight and out of mind” is the biggest threat to regional, rural and remote West Australians who already struggle to have their challenges considered by decision makers and acted upon with any urgency. How is it possible for one elected member to see, know and advocate effectively for such a vast geographic area with such diverse communities? How can one person be expected to be in touch with the critical issues of an electorate the twice the size of Victoria and represent them with the same effectiveness as a metropolitan colleague can drive across their urban electorate in 20 minutes? The scale of the task you will create will act as a deterrent to good people thinking of entering politics who are not willing to spend every waking moment on the road and never have time with their family. The scale of the task you will create will set up good people to burn out and fail as they try to achieve the impossible.

The rigid adherence to a numerical formula is not fair and equitable. It is too simplistic to discuss electoral equality without also considering electoral **equity**.

Australians accept that achieving equality in many areas of society means actively removing the barriers which create disadvantage and protecting the conditions which make access and participation fair. We do not apply equality in a numerical sense, that is, ‘giving everyone the same’, when it comes to addressing disadvantage in disability inclusion, gender diversity, educational outcomes or cultural diversity because we know that applying a one-size-fits-all formula to disadvantaged groups will only create further disadvantage. In these circumstances we recognise that achieving equality means recognising the unique challenges of each group or individual and applying supports or removing barriers. In non-metropolitan Western Australia, the greatest barrier to participation in parliamentary process is low population. The decision to replace another regional electorate with a metropolitan one is both alarming and disheartening.

The suggested reconfiguration undervalues 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 the abolition of the Moore electorate and the abolition of the North West Central electorate and creation of a new Mid-west electorate. While the Moore electorate maintained connection between communities of interest in a large electorate, the new Mid-West electorate lumps together a vast variety of communities, without obvious 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.

I also object to residents of the Shire of Chapman Valley, Mullewa and Northampton being included in the electorate of Geraldton under the proposed boundary changes. The amalgamation of the former Shire of Mullewa with the City of Geraldton-Greenough to create the City of Greater Geraldton has been an abject failure as the small rural community is utterly ignored and left to decline at the expense of a large regional centre. I see no reason why the Member for the proposed electorate of Geraldton would waste any time concerning themselves with two small rural communities, one of which doesn't even have a substantial town, when the majority of voters live in the large centre of Geraldton.

As a resident of Mullewa, our voices have already been silenced at local government level and this proposal would also see our voices silenced at state level.

I stand with thousands of regional West Australians expressing their disappointment at this redistribution. I urge you to reevaluate your proposal, ensuring the preservation of the 16 regional seats.

Yours sincerely

Julie Freeman

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