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To: 2015 Electoral Boundaries Review
Subject: Comments on Submissions regarding changes electoral boundaries

W A E C
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I wish to make comment on several of the suggestions received by the Commissioner regarding future electoral boundaries in Western Australia. There are some common themes expressed in a number of these S005, S009, S013, and S014 which I will address in general terms.

Firstly the approach taken in addressing the growth in the Metropolitan is to reduce the representation in regional WA. This is a flawed approach for a number of reasons.

Both the National and Liberal parties have outlined proposals that do not involve such a radical approach. Both these suggestions demonstrate comprehensively that an outcome that satisfies the required criteria of balanced representation across the state can be achieved without the loss of a regional seat.

It is true that significant growth has occurred in the Metropolitan area, this growth can be addressed in the future not by robbing Peter to pay Paul but to accept that we have a rapidly growing population in WA and that the most appropriate response to this growth is to increase the number of electorates in the State. While such a change is not in the gift of the Commissioner it is a measure that must be discussed as part of the long term alignment of boundaries.

Extending regional seats beyond their current boundaries, in some cases by a very large area does not result in better representation for constituents. I note proposals to greatly extend Agricultural Region seats such as Moore and Wagin. I would point out that in these seats there are very limited opportunities to use air travel, and there are very very many small communities.

The nature of these seats is fundamentally different to most of the large seats in the Mining and Pastoral area which typically have fewer and larger communities usually serviced by air travel. Currently Moore is around 72000 km meaning the local member typically travels 80 000 km per year. This is around 1000 hours per year of driving. Time spent driving which is not available for more productive activity representing the constituents of the seat.

To effectively represent these communities is already a challenge simply by their dispersion, number, and the limited extra resources available to members. Increasing them in size to the point that they will be perhaps 100 000 square km or more will not lead to better representation for this section of the state's population.

Nor has any argument been advanced that demonstrates that reducing the number of seats in the Mining and Pastoral Region lead to better representation in this region. The thrust of the suggestions is simply to satisfy a desire to increase metropolitan representation without meaningful examination of the effect on the regional population.

I would turn now to matters pertaining to specific seats. Firstly the suggestion that Eyre be abolished and Esperance be incorporated in the Agricultural region.

While it is true that Esperance shire is an important farming area it is a distinct farming region from the Wheatbelt and Great Southern regions currently found in Wagin. Esperance is actually quite geographically isolated as evidenced by its region being serviced by Horizon Power on an electricity grid not connected to the SWIS. The grain produced in the region is shipped through its own port and does not utilise the extensive land transport networks that link other farming areas.

Esperance is also an expansive shire that contains large areas not used for agriculture. It is a port for the Goldfields area to its North, a role that will continue to grow in importance through the further development of the Port Link Project. Esperance is also tied to the Goldfields through its inclusion in the Goldfields Esperance Development

Commission Region. Including Esperance in a vast Agricultural seat will not improve the representation of the local population.

There is also suggestion that Northampton be included in North West Central. At present the Northampton Shire straddles both Moore and North West Central. However the current boundary broadly reflects the distinction between the cleared farming lands of the south in Moore with the pastoral lands in the north above the Murchison River being in North West Central.

The pastoral area is largely unpopulated and has large areas of crown land not being farmed or run as pastoral enterprises. It contains no communities other than isolated homesteads.

All towns and the vast majority of the population including the towns of Horrocks, Pt Gregory, Kalbarri, Binu and Northampton as well as many smaller localities are in the seat of Moore. All these communities are interconnected with each other. The largest community is Kalbarri and it lies 104 km to the northwest of the next major community of Northampton town, which is the seat of the local government.

All these communities are strongly linked to other Midwest communities to the south especially to the major regional centre of Geraldton. Kalbarri is 155km from Geraldton, Binu is 122kms and Northampton 51kms. These communities have little interaction with the north including the next service town to the North being Carnarvon, which lies 446 from Kalbarri, 391kms north of Binu and 428 km from Northampton.

There are no regular air travel service to any of the Northampton Shires communities including Kalbarri. It has been suggested that Kalbarri be sundered from the rest of the settled areas of Northampton. This would leave Kalbarri an isolated island and this outcome would dismally fail any application of a Community of Interest test. The only justification being that it is part of the Coral Coast along with Carnarvon and Exmouth. This is a very flimsy justification and ignores the fact that the Coral Coast also includes Cervantes Jurien Bay and Dongara to the south of Kalbarri.

The sporting, commercial, health and education sectors of all the communities of the shire are strongly interlinked with each other, with Geraldton and the rest of the agricultural areas of the Midwest, not with The North West.

Other than to satisfy some mathematical gymnastics there is no justification to the inclusion either in total or town by town, of any community south of the Murchison River in the remote seat of North West Central. Such a move will not improve the representation of the population.

I thank you for your consideration of my comments

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