



July 11, 2011

Secretary to the Electoral Distribution Commissioners
Postal Address:
GPO Box F316
PERTH WA 6841

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the Western Australian Electoral Commission's 2011 Electoral Distribution Review.

As background, WAFarmers is the State's largest and most influential rural lobby and service organisation. WAFarmers represents approximately 4,000 Western Australian farmers from a range of primary industries including grain growers, meat and wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers, pastoralists and beekeepers.

Collectively our members are major contributors to the \$5.5 billion gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms contributes annually to Western Australia's economy. Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental well being of that land.

In this submission, WAFarmers comments only on proposed changes to the Blackwood/Stirling and Wagin electorates, following discussion at a meeting of members in this region in recent weeks. Our comments here are however, in keeping with WAFarmers broader policy position which seeks recognition that rural Western Australia is one of the least populated landmasses in the world, and that equitable parliamentary representation cannot be based on numbers alone, but rather that electorate size and constituent remoteness from regional population centre amenities have to be given consideration in electorate boundary distribution.

In this, WAFarmers comments that:

- The Plantagenet Shire is more mixed farming, horticulture and forestry than it is broad acre farming, and as such its demographic does not fit that of an agricultural electorate.

- That boundary realignment will see a decrease in access to the representative in the electorate, who have, in the case of the Shire of Plantagenet, enjoyed for a number of years (since the 1950s) access to their local member and an electoral office/centre in Mt Barker.
- Electors in the Shires of Plantagenet and Cranbrook, find that the towns of Albany and Mount Barker form the geographic and economic hubs for the region and it would be more appropriate and equitable for any proposed boundary changes to focus toward the south rather than see electors in these areas disadvantaged through a future boundary to the north.
- Should the proposed changes occur, then without a additional electoral offices and resources from the sitting member, affected residents in the Shire of Plantagenet will have to travel considerable distances to engage their elected representative, a far different situation to that which exists now where existing offices are locally situated and are aligned to major shopping, business and social activities.

Finally WAFarmers would like to clearly state that this submission is not a comment on the existing, or previous elected representatives of these electorates, but rather a reflection of our position that the enormous size and diversity of all country electorates makes effective representation by these people extremely difficult. Increasing the size of these electorates only adds to that difficulty.

WAFarmers thanks you for your consideration of this submission. Should you wish to further discuss the issues raised in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact myself or WAFarmers Director of Policy, Alan Hill on 9486 2100.

Yours sincerely



Mike Norton
President