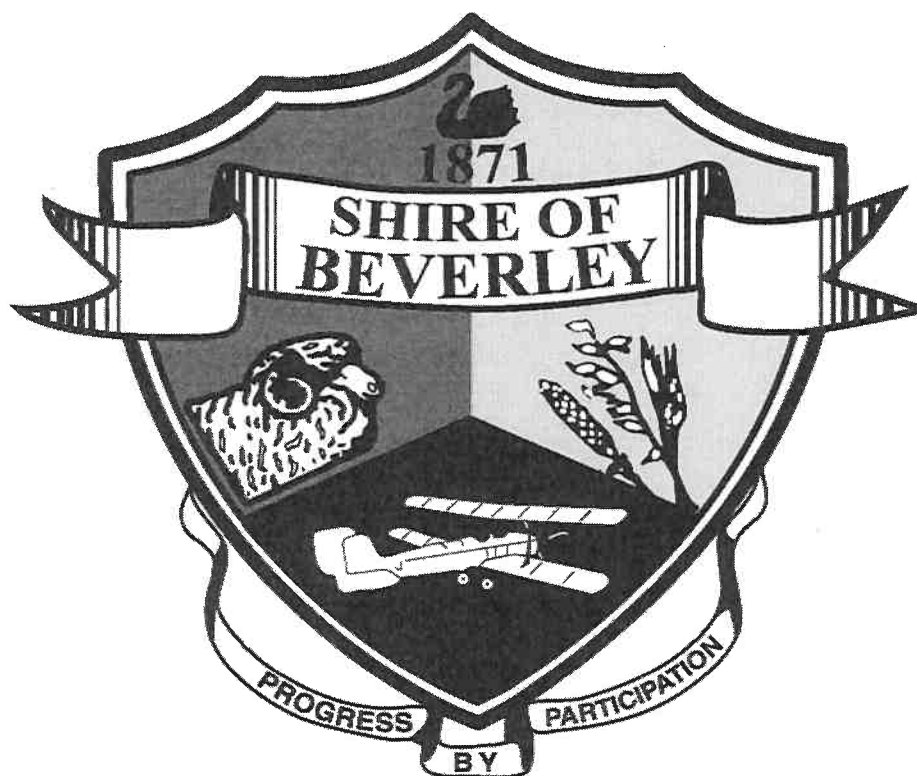


WAEC

24 AUG 2015

WA Electoral Commission 2015 State Electoral Boundaries Review



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WA Electoral Commission 2015 State Electoral Boundaries Review

This submission is made on behalf of the Shire of Beverley. We are appreciative of the opportunity to provide comment to the Commissioners as they review the State's electoral region and district boundaries.

In preparing this submission it is proposed to respond to a number of changes that have been recommended for the rural and regional areas of Western Australia (WA) with particular emphasis on the loss of a rural seat and the significant increase in the size of electorates in the Agricultural Region.

We acknowledge significant population growth across the Perth metropolitan area is the driver for electoral boundary reform, with the redistribution suggested being to increase the number of electorates in the metropolitan region by one and remove an electorate district from rural Western Australia. As a consequence this creates considerable change to the regional boundaries of the Agricultural Region. Such a change will erode electoral representation and is a wholly undesirable outcome for communities living in regional, rural and remote parts of the State.

Loss of one rural electorate

This submission is strongly of the view that rural WA should retain the current 17 seats and in so doing maintain and ensure a more effective representation for rural WA. The Electoral Commission is respectfully requested to retain the current ratio of Country and Metropolitan regions in the 2015 State electoral boundary review.

We support the views contained in the National Party 2015 Electoral Distribution Submission in April 2015 where it commented:

'one vote one value' legislation was introduced, the allocation of districts to country regions was 17 and 42 to metropolitan regions. At that time, the ratio of country electors to metropolitan electors was 25.73% and in 2015 this ratio has decreased slightly to 24.98%.

There may be a perception that the regional population is decreasing as a result of the changing economic climate. State and Regional planning and policies are focused on economic growth and community development in country WA, and even with a lag between planning and development to investment and construction meaning that permanent changes in residential characteristics can take time to be realized, there has been an increased number of electors in regional WA.

The loss of the seat of Eyre and the subsequent transfer of the Shire of Ravensthorpe and part of the Shire of Esperance into the current seat of Wagin does not seem logical, from a community of interest viewpoint, when the majority of services for both these communities are sourced from the Goldfields.

The Commission's two main reasons:

There are two main reasons behind the proposal to split the Shire of Esperance. First, the predominant land use in northern and eastern parts of the Shire is mining and (or) pastoral and this allows them to be included in the Kalgoorlie district of the Mining and Pastoral Region. Secondly, if the whole of the Shire were to have been included in Roe the geographic area would exceed 100,000 square kilometres and the Commissioners feel it is preferable not to have one only of the four districts in the Agricultural Region with an LDA.

as outlined on page 20 of the Electoral Boundaries 2015 Report, for splitting the Shire of Esperance and transferring that part of the Shire and the Shire of Ravensthorpe into the Agricultural Region is questionable.

Considering the strong link these communities have to the Goldfields there seems to have been no account taken of the community of interest that these communities share with the Goldfields with the decision seemingly being taken solely on the number of electors.

If the seat of Eyre is retained and the imaginative thinking as outlined on page 3 of the National Party submission is considered, 17 electorates in the country can be retained by adjusting the electorates in the following manner:

1. *That the allocation of 17 country seats be maintained;*
2. *That the Districts of Albany, Bunbury, Colie-Preston, Dawesville, Geraldton, Kimberley, Eyre, Mandurah, Murray-Wellington and Vasse remain unchanged;*
3. *That the locality of Newman is transferred to the District of North West Central;*
4. *That the Shire of Sandstone be transferred to the District of Kalgoorlie;*
5. *That the localities of Morangup and Hoddys Well be transferred to the District of Central Wheatbelt; and*
6. *That the Shire of Boyup Brook be transferred to the District of Wagin, and that the Agricultural and South-West Regions' boundaries be adjusted accordingly.*

The reasoning behind these suggestions is outlined in the National Party Submission.

These changes would give an Average District Enrolment for all electorates within the permissible limits.

It would seem that the Commission has adopted the simplistic approach that the increasing number of electors in the metropolitan area is solved by reducing the number of electorates in rural WA. Maybe another option is for the Commission to leave the current status quo as proposed by the National Party rather than to recommend a change to the number of electorates across WA. This would then give the Parliament in the next term the challenge to take such an action if so required.

In conclusion on this point whilst mindful of the significant population increases in the metropolitan area and ensuing challenges with boundary distribution, boundary changes within the metropolitan area are unlikely to have as significant impact on effective representation, relevant community of interest communications and community engagement as would be the case in country districts within the Mining and Pastoral, Agricultural and South West regions where distance alone affects all of the matters just noted.

Size of non-metropolitan electorates

Extending non-metropolitan electorates beyond their current boundaries in some cases to create very larger electorates is unlikely to result in better representation. The Commission was very careful to avoid including the whole of the Shire of Esperance in the electorate of Wagin as this would have exceeded 100,000km² and put it at odds with the rest of the Agricultural Region as well as allowing the electorate to have a Large District Allowance (LDA).

It is difficult to accept this logic when the electorates within the Agricultural Region have been significantly increased in size and the Central Wheatbelt is proposed to be less than 3,000km² from being classified as an LDA.

It is interesting to point out that the Agricultural electorates are generally not serviced by regular air travel routes and so to get around much of the electorate, and even more so if they are enlarged, charter flights and/or long distances of road travel is required.

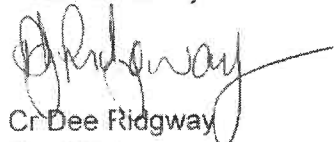
The nature of Agricultural Region electorates is one of dispersed communities unlike those in the larger Mining and Pastoral electorates which have fewer and larger communities that are generally serviced by regular air transport.

Effective representation, already challenging due to distances, will be even more demanding with an increased electorate size. The sheer size of the proposed re-aligned electorates will mean less opportunity to meet with community representatives, less opportunity to attend the various functions and activities, and less contact with rural and regional residents. All aspects which constituents in the metropolitan area take for granted.

In summary there seems to be no rational argument advanced for increasing the size of the electorates as is being proposed, and especially as it will cut across community of interest. The Commission seems to have been focusing on the need to satisfy a desire to increase metropolitan representation without meaningful examination of the detrimental effects this will have on the rural and regional communities of WA. A proposal has been submitted (by the National Party) which would enable the Average District Enrolment for all electorates to remain within the permissible limits.

The Shire of Beverley is appreciative of the opportunity to make this submission to the Electoral Commission's 2015 review of the States electoral region and district boundaries and is of the view that there be no reduction in the number of rural and regional electorates and minimal increases to electorate sizes.

Yours sincerely



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