

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Ob 62 - FW: Objection to the 2023 proposed electoral boundaries for the seat of Geraldton
Date: Monday, 7 August 2023 11:06:51 AM

Objection 62.

From: Mark & [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, 5 August 2023 12:30 PM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Objection to the 2023 proposed electoral boundaries for the seat of Geraldton

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Dear Commissioners,

I hereby lodge an objection to the 2023 proposed changes to the electoral boundaries of the seat of Geraldton in the Legislative Assembly.

The Electoral Distribution Commissioners proposed changes to the electoral boundaries of the seat of Geraldton satisfy the requirements of the Act in regards to the overall distribution of electors for the State. However, I consider that the proposed changes do not give enough weight to the Section 16I requirements of the Act in respect of community of interest, land use patterns and a trend of demographic changes that impact the seat of Geraldton.

The existing seat's boundaries reflect the natural and historical community of interest, where the Geraldton acts as a "metropolitan" area for the surrounding agricultural hinterland. These two areas have their own distinctive identities, which are well established at the local level. The hinterland's land use is largely broad acre farming, with a few small towns in the districts. This contrasts with the city of Geraldton and associated localities that offer an extensive range of urban activities. While there is some agricultural land use within the existing boundaries, this is of a subsidiary nature to the overall character of the existing seat.

The Commissioners note in their Explanatory Statement that:

"After reviewing the approaches in detail, the Commissioners concluded that, while there was no objection to pursuing a course of action that created hybrid districts, factors of community of interest, land use patterns, existing local government boundaries and the physical location of townships and communities weighed in favour of retaining a distinction between metropolitan and non-metropolitan electoral districts. The hybrid approach was consequently discounted from further consideration."

While this statement pertains to the usual notions of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, I contend that on the local level, the proposed boundary changes will result in a hybrid seat. Geraldton functions as a "mini-metropolis" in the Mid-West area, which the existing boundaries

reflect. The addition of a huge area of agricultural area with a minor increase of electors may satisfy the numerical balancing act the Commissioners must do but does not reflect the lived experience of the residents impacted by the proposed changes. This is particularly so for the small number of additional hinterland electors who will be taken away from their natural community of interest by these changes.

In regards to demographic factors, the Commissioners also noted that:

“Similarly, the district of Geraldton has experienced elector population growth of 7.80 per cent since the 2019 Distribution and contains a significant population centre that can only be distributed by extending the boundaries to some extent into Moore.”

A media report in the “Midwest Times” (2 August 2023) noted data from the Commonwealth Bank and Regional Australia Institute showing that *“Geraldton recorded a 395 per cent growth in internal migration...”* and this meant it *“was the fastest-growing regional city in the past 12 months”*. Additionally, *“it was the only city in the top-five list to record an increase in growth of 6 per cent in the June quarter”*. The mayor noted that the population had increased to 42,000 over the last two years.

Given this rapid continuing growth, it is likely that another boundary distribution will be required within a shorter rather than longer time frame, thus undoing the effect of the current proposed changes and making for unnecessary work.

In closing, I maintain that the existing boundaries of the Geraldton seat should either be left untouched or a minor adjustment made to better suit the requirements of community of interest, land use patterns and demographic factors.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Gilligan

 Waggrakine, WA 6530

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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.