

W A E C
17 AUG 2023

Dear Redistribution Commissioners,

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

The decision to replace another regional electorate with a metropolitan one is both alarming and disheartening. This move serves to further diminish the influence of regional Western Australia, a voice already restrained by government policy and crucially needed as regional communities confront various challenges. This suggested reconfiguration seems to undervalue the essential need to preserve shared community interests. It overlooks countless expressions from regular Western Australians advocating for the retention of sixteen 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 sixteen 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 (examples below)

1. The abolition of the Moore electorate and the abolition of the North West Central electorate and creation of a new Mid-west electorate. This sunders areas with strong community of interest such as Exmouth and Carnarvon from each other.
2. While the Moore electorate maintained connection between communities of interest in a large electorate, the new Mid-West electorate lumps together such a vast variety of communities, it is difficult to see where Commissioners found commonality. The proposed seat would span from Muehea on the outskirts of Perth to just a few kilometres south of Newman in the North. More

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Over 1,000 km from the largest population centre within its boundaries, this is a remarkably difficult electorate for any local member to service and all the more so for any local member to be held to account by their constituents.

3. Potential integration of a regional lower seat as Mount Barker into the Albany electorate raises questions due to the unbalanced population surge in Albany city. The introduction of Mount Barker into an already heavily populated district like Albany does not serve the best interests of its regional community. The concern lies in the potential marginalisation of Mount Barker's voice amidst the concentration of the larger regional centre of Albany. Keeping Mount Barker and the Shire of Fitzgerald within the Mount Barker electorate could better preserve its objectives, as this would allow it to remain aligned with communities of similar size and shared geographical priorities. Such an arrangement stands to foster stronger collaboration and more effective representation of shared interests.
4. The partitioning of regional areas across Western Australia into the mere dozens of a few hundred votes between electorates of 20,000 to 30,000 ignores the regional communities who depend on shared essential services. These communities, which often operate as interconnected units, may face significant disruption due to such electoral adjustments. It is of crucial importance that regional local councils remain undivided, ensuring their ability to continue serving their constituents effectively. Electoral considerations should not override the necessity of maintaining the unity and integrity of these regional communities for a modest shift in votes.
5. The dividing of some of Northampton between MidWest and Geraldton electorates. The communities within the Local Government Area have been divided since the previous redistribution and has suffered the challenge of working with two separate MLA's who represent vast number of areas.
6. The dividing of Shire of Fitzgerald between Peel and Albany electorates. The Shire of Fitzgerald should be maintained as a whole within Mount Barker electorate as it is now.
7. The Shire of Mandurah should remain in Central Wheatbelt. This will keep the Large District Advantage rather than being reduced to one that already has enough voters to achieve LGA with the inclusion of Mooksewin, Quairading and Mulka.
8. The creation of a new Oxford Electorate. As is clear in the data released by the Commission there is no justification for the creation of a new electorate within the metropolitan area as the metropolitan area is already well within an equitable ratio of representation.

I stand with thousands of regional West Australians expressing their disappointment at this redistribution, viewing this a regrettable lost chance. I urge you to reconsider your proposal, ensuring the preservation of the sixteen regional seats.

Sincerely,





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