

From: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox
Sent: Tuesday, 22 August 2023 12:59 PM
To:
Subject: 230 Ob - FW: Shire of Meekatharra – Boundaries Review Objection
Attachments: WAEC Boundary Objection SoM 20-8-23.pdf

From: Kelvin Matthews <[REDACTED]@meekashire.wa.gov.au>
Sent: Sunday, 20 August 2023 12:04 PM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Cc: Harvey Nichols <[REDACTED]@meekashire.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Shire of Meekatharra – Boundaries Review Objection

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Dear Commissioners, please find attached submission from the Shire of Meekatharra – Objection to Boundaries Review of the North West Central Legislative Assembly seat by the due nominated closing date of 21/-8/23. A hard copy of the attached has also been mailed thank you.

Kind regards

Kelvin Matthews
Chief Executive Officer
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Our Ref: GR.SL.008
Your Ref:
Enquiries: Kelvin Matthews

20 August 2023

Western Australian Electoral Distribution Commission
Level 2, 111 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Commission Members

**SHIRE OF MEEKATHARRA SUBMISSION – NORTH WEST CENTRAL
BOUNDARIES REVIEW**

Following the submission made by the Shire of Meekatharra to Commission Members dated the 29th of April 2023, I submit the following objection on behalf of the Shire of Meekatharra as endorsed by Council at its meeting dated 19th of August 2023, and in collaboration with all the Murchison, Mid-West and Gascoyne Region local governments within the Legislative Assembly seat of North West Central. In doing so, the Shire of Meekatharra recognizes that the WA Legislative Assembly electorate of North West Central has experienced declining demographic (voter) numbers over many years. However, the basis of Councils original submission was to raise factors to be taken into account in the final review of boundaries for the electorate of North West Central, and specifically the Community Interest, Mean of Communication, Means of Travel and Distance, and existing Local Government Boundary factors. In this regard this remains the basis of Councils objection (as appended) to the proposed changes to the WA electoral boundary of the Legislative Assembly electorate of North West Central.

Should you have any further queries regarding the matter please do not hesitate to contact Councils Chief Executive Officer (Kelvin Matthews) on 9980 0600 or ceo@meekashire.wa.gov.au Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Cr Harvey Nichols
Shire President



The Western Australian Electoral Commission
The Hon. Eric Heenan
Mr Robert Kennedy
Mr Tom Joseph
Level 2, 111 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

20 August 2023

Dear Commission Members

**OBJECTION SUBMISSION TO THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO WA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES REGARDING THE RETENTION OF
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTORATE OF NORTH WEST
CENTRAL - SHIRE OF MEEKATHARRA**

Following the submission made by the Shire of Meekatharra (Council) to Commission Members dated the 29th of April 2023 regarding the above, Council submits the following on behalf of the Shire of Meekatharra and in collaboration with all the Murchison, Mid West and Gascoyne Region local governments within the Legislative Assembly electorate of North West Central.

Introduction and Background

The Shire of Meekatharra (Council) recognises the underlying principles of the redistribution of electoral boundaries as required by Part IIA of the Electoral Act 1907 that requires the WA Electoral Boundaries Commission to undertake a review of all district boundaries once during each electoral cycle and where the objectives are for an equalisation of the number of voters in each electoral district. That is, where the overriding determinant in all cases is elector numbers and the total enrolment in each district (inclusive of the LDA in large districts) must be within the permissible limits.

Council also recognizes that the Legislative Assembly electorate of North West Central has experienced declining demographic (voter) numbers over many years. That is, where the variation from Average District Enrolments is -23.45% from the 2019 electoral review¹.

Notwithstanding the above, the basis of Councils objection to the proposed boundary changes will address the factors to be taken into account in the review of boundaries for the electorate of North West Central, and specifically the Community Interest, Means of Communication, Means of Travel and Distance from the Capital, and existing Local Government Boundary factors. That is, in accordance with section 16I of the Electoral Act 1907 whereby in making the division of the State into districts the Commissioners shall give due consideration to²—

- (a) *community of interest; and*
- (b) *land use patterns; and*
- (c) *means of communication, means of travel and distance from the capital; and*
- (d) *physical features; and*
- (e) *existing boundaries of districts; and*
- (f) *existing local government boundaries; and*
- (g) *the trend of demographic changes.*

Community Interest Factor

Community of Interest can be defined as it applies to regional and remote WA as a population that shares common social and/or economic interests that should be included within a single supervisory district for the purposes of its effective and fair representation. Furthermore, and in the context of representative democracy, where the franchise of representative democracy is central to the idea of representational outcomes. The Community Interest Factor is therefore intended to reinforce the principles of representative democracy. In this regard, the community of North West Central have a strong affinity and representation from their Legislative Assembly member. This is especially given the recent changes to the WA Legislative Council where the recent abolition of the Legislative Council (Upper House) Regions effective at the 2025 State elections, will further diminish regional representation for the community in regional, remote and rural WA.

The unequal size of the proposed electoral seat of *Mid West* creates the question of whether the community of the newly proposed seat will enjoy equal democratic representation by population. Pure representation by (voter) population creates distinct disadvantages for the community of North West Central, giving rise to frequent debate about how to balance the population size of the proposed electoral seat against its geographic size. This is supported by the WA Electoral Distribution Commission – Proposed Boundaries report whereby *the Commissioners acknowledge that this proposal is contrary to a large number of suggestions and comments received during the public consultation process. Altogether, 12 suggestions and 68 comments submitted that the current 16 non-metropolitan districts should be retained, with a combined 72 suggestions and comments specifically submitting that the district of North West Central should be*

preserved. A further 6 suggestions and 15 comments noted the disadvantages that arise for electors and members in geographically large electoral districts³.

Several Murchison, Mid West and Gascoyne local governments have made submissions based on the Community of Interest factor reiterating that the community will be further disenfranchised by the expansion of the proposed electorate with only one elected Legislative Assembly member.

Means of communication, means of travel and distance from the capital

The proposed changes to the current North West Central electorate will result in a geographical land area of 431,224^{sqkm} and include 24 local governments⁴. As noted above, while WA electors who reside in major urban centres typically live within short commuting distance of their State (or federal) representatives constituency offices, a regional or rural resident is generally located hundreds, or in the case of the proposed *Mid West* electorate, over a thousand kilometres from the elected representative's office that incur significant costs and diminished representation. In contrast, urban districts such as the proposed new seat of Oakford in the south metropolitan area is to be only circa 140 square kilometres (140^{sqkm}). Conversely, a regional politician who represents dozens of geographically dispersed small towns must normally incur much greater travel expenses, being forced to drive for several hours, or even to travel by air, in order to visit parts of their own electorate —and may even need to maintain more than one constituency office in order to properly represent all of their constituents.

Local Government Factor

Electoral districts in rural and regional WA tend to be of such a size as to encompass more than one LGA and therefore dividing these LGAs between electoral districts may cause administrative complexities. Accordingly, in applying the community of interest criterion the Commission is requested to consider giving particular consideration to local government boundaries in rural and regional WA as a desirable approach.

In the event that the WA Electoral Distribution Commission determine that the electorate of North West Central final electoral boundaries be adjusted that may result in the electorate of North West Central being 'absorbed' into, or separated out of surrounding electorates (ie Pilbara, Kalgoorlie and Moore), this submission requests that consideration be given to ensuring the LGA's already within the current electorate remain fully within a single State electorate. That is, no division of a single LGA into other State electorates such as that proposed for the Shire's of Northampton and Victoria Plains.

Conclusion

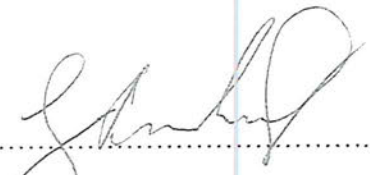
The Shire of Meekatharra understands that the review of WA electoral boundaries is/has been undertaken in accordance with the current provisions of Part IIA of the

Electoral Act 1907 as prescribed. Notwithstanding this, Council requests that the WAEC recommends a review of this section of the legislation in its final report. In particular, section 16G of the Electoral Act 1907 regarding how Districts in the State are to be divided based on *actual electors*. This approach is based on adjusting electorate boundaries by only considering electors that does not necessarily take into account the concept of representative democracy where the franchise of representative democracy is central to the idea of representational outcomes for all of the total population.

This could be achieved by considering the electorate boundaries in such a way that the total population of each electorate is as close as possible to the *quotient* obtained by dividing the total electoral population as determined by the census. No electorate (total) is therefore permitted to have a population smaller than 75% of the quotient or greater than 125%. This process is used in overseas examples. This approach differs from the current legislation (section 16G Electoral Act 1907) that determines how State districts (electorates) are to be divided. The combined current census total population of the electorate of North West Central is circa 25,135 inclusive of all current LGAs in the electorate.

Thank you for considering Councils submission

Signed in accordance with Council resolution from its ordinary meeting 19/8/23.



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Cr Harvey Nichols
Shire President



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Kelvin J Matthews
Chief Executive Officer

References

1. *Enrolment Levels at 13 March 2023 and Variation from Average District Enrolment Country Districts Map - Electoral Boundaries WA.*
2. *Section 16I WA Electoral Act 1907 – State Law Publisher WA.*
3. *Western Australian Electoral Distribution Commission Proposed Boundaries Report - July 2023 – page 9.*
4. *Shire’s Reject Mid West Seat -Mid West Times Article – 2 August 2023 – page 2.*

