

From: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox
Sent: Tuesday, 22 August 2023 1:11 PM
To:
Subject: 234 Ob - FW: Central Country Zone | Objection to Proposed Boundaries
Attachments: CCZ - 2023 Objection to Proposed Boundaries.pdf

From: Tony Brown <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, 21 August 2023 12:59 PM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Central Country Zone | Objection to Proposed Boundaries

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Good Afternoon

Please find **attached** an objection to the Commissioners' proposed boundaries for the 2025 State General Election on behalf of the Central Country Zone of WALGA.

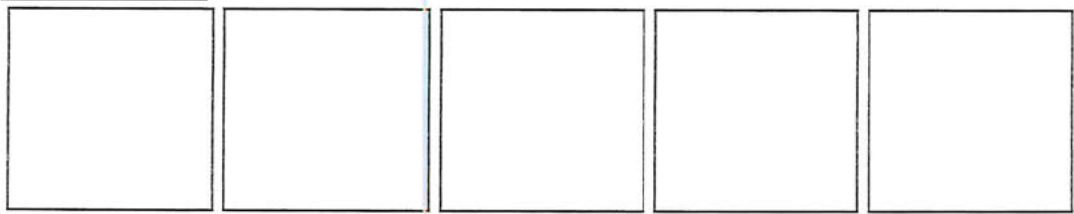
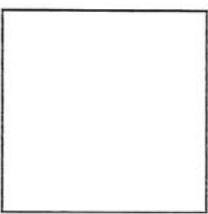
The Zone consists of 15 Local Governments in the Central Wheatbelt of Western Australia.

If you have any queries about the objection or require more information, please refer to the contact details on page 2 of the document.

Kind regards

Tony

Tony Brown | Executive Director Member Services | WALGA
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WALGA acknowledges the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture and community. We embrace the vast Aboriginal cultural diversity throughout Western Australia, including Boorloo (Perth), on the land of the Whadjuk Noongar People, where WALGA is located and we acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present.

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CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE

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CB.
234



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Shires of:

- Beverley
- Brookton
- Corrigin
- Cuballing
- Dumbleyung
- Kulin
- Lake Grace
- Narrogin
- Pingelly
- Quairading
- Wagin
- Wandering
- West Arthur
- Wickepin
- Williams

Objection

Proposed Boundaries

for the 2025 State General Election

August 2023

About the Central Country Zone

The Central Country Zone consists of President's, Councillors and CEOs of 15 Local Governments in the Wheatbelt region. The Zone meets to consider regional issues and provide input to WALGA's Advocacy positions.

The Local Governments in the Zone are as follows:

Shire of Beverley;
Shire of Brookton;
Shire of Corrigin;
Shire of Cuballing;
Shire of Dumbleyung;
Shire of Kulin;
Shire of Lake Grace;
Shire of Narrogin;
Shire of Pingelly;
Shire of Quairading;
Shire of Wagin;
Shire of Wandering;
Shire of West Arthur;
Shire of Wickepin; and
Shire of Williams

Contacts

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Overview

The Central Country Zone and its Members object to the proposal to reduce the number of non-metropolitan districts by one as the reduction in political representation will negatively impact rural and regional communities.

Basis of Objection

Diminished political representation

As a representation of the 15 Local Government communities within the Zone, the Central Country Zone recognises the importance of political representation. With demographic and other forces pulling people and resources away from some regions towards the metropolitan area, political representation becomes increasingly important.

The Commissioners' proposal to reduce the number of non-metropolitan districts by one, will significantly reduce the political representation of regional communities. This reduction in representation is compounded by the 2021 change to the Legislative Council regions to create a whole of state electorate. The Central Country Zone also made a submission at the

time of the 2021 review opposing the 'one vote, one value' reform on the basis that the voice of regional, rural, and remote communities would be overwhelmed by the relative number of voters in metropolitan Perth and more populous towns.

The perspective of many regional communities is that, without sufficient political representation, their concerns will be "out of sight, out of mind", swamped by the sheer weight of voters in metropolitan Perth and large regional centres. Regional communities need effective representation to ensure that the unique needs and challenges of people living outside the metropolitan area are adequately addressed at a State level.

Increased pressure on regional Local Governments

As political representation of non-metropolitan communities at the State level is diminished, the political representation provided by Local Governments will become even more important. This additional responsibility will be challenging for many non-metropolitan Local Governments such as those within the Central Country Zone, already stretched beyond their current capacity and resourcing.

The service provision expectations and requirements of Local Governments have increased considerably, rarely with commensurate increases in funding and resourcing. This has led to Local Governments, particularly in rural and remote parts of Western Australia, providing services previously the responsibility of other spheres of government. Contemporary examples include the provision of primary health care; aged care; housing; and economic development. Diminished political representation, requiring Local Government to fill another gap, will further stretch capacity and resources.

The contributions of non-metropolitan regions

In considering political representation it is important to acknowledge the economic contribution of non-metropolitan districts to the wealth and standard of living in Western Australia.

Regional Western Australia makes a significant contribution to the WA economy. As of July 2023, the regions accounted for 35 percent of Gross State Product. Regional WA is also a significant employer, with more than 300,000 jobs located in regional WA – around 25% of the state's total workforce. Many of these jobs are located in the agriculture and mining industries.¹

Regional WA is home to many of the state's key export industries, including the mining and agriculture sectors. WA is an exports-based economy, and accounts for around half of the national goods exports total each year. Goods exports currently account for 61 percent (\$247 billion) of Western Australia's gross state product. As the prevalence of fly-in-fly-out has increased, it is crucial that the permanent residents of communities that host the bulk of WA's export industries remain politically represented.

The impacts of Fly-In Fly-Out (FIFO) and Drive-in Drive-out (DIDO) workers within the regions need to be considered.

There are some 300,000 workers within the regions which represents some 25% of the State's workforce however no consideration is given to including these numbers in the statistical data when defining boundaries. FIFO and DIDO workers essentially 'reside' within

¹ WA Economic Profile – July 2023, [Western Australia's economy and international trade \(www.wa.gov.au\)](http://www.wa.gov.au)

the Local Government boundaries and town centers and, in most cases, spend more time living and working in the regions than they do in the electorate in which they are registered.

If the analysis were to include these numbers within the current electoral boundaries we would see a completely different picture of how our population is dispersed, particularly within the electorates of Moore and North West Central.

It is therefore important that the State Government is aware of the need to consider all aspects of an electorate and not just focus on numbers of registered voters. Representation should be available to all and in light of the size of our State and its diversity both economically and geographically, special consideration should be made when casting the net to capture population numbers.

Population Dispersement

Western Australia has an uneven dispersement of the State's population. Unlike most other States, Western Australia has always been capital city and broader metropolitan area populous, particularly compared to its regions. This historical and factual situation results in a very unbalanced, almost inverse relationship between Perth and all other parts of the State. This is made even more complex given the large geographical size and remoteness of WA. So a 'one vote, one value' approach around State-wide electoral representation doesn't create a balanced situation where whole of State needs are met. The economic and social requirements of people living in WA are as diverse as the State geography and its landscape.

Basing electoral distribution solely on population numbers only exacerbates the current imbalance. A State as unique and diverse as WA requires a more flexible and rounded electoral distribution system that recognises the challenges and needs of all Western Australians, no matter where they live. A multi-faceted basis and approach for establishing electoral boundaries should be established which also recognises broader socio-economic criteria (& need).

Matters to consider when dividing the State

The proposed amalgamation of North West Central and Moore does not give due consideration to the factors in section 16l of the *Electoral Act 1907* (WA). The proposed new Mid West district will cover an estimated 70 townsites and a broad spectrum of land use patterns, from urban fringe development, remote communities, livestock farming, broad acre cropping, and pastoral and mining operations. Factors such as community of interest and land use patterns do not seem to have been taken into account in this proposal to amalgamate urban fringes (peri urban) with regional and remote communities. It is essential that all aspects of an electorate be considered when determining boundaries, not just the number of registered voters.

Resourcing of electorate offices in the regions

Even before the proposed reduction of non-metropolitan Legislative Assembly districts, there was a need for additional resourcing in the regions to improve the capacity of State representatives to service their electorate. This is particularly true for those electorates that cover a large geographical area. Any reduction in overall regional representation will only exacerbate this problem.

Resourcing for electorate offices in the regions needs to be significantly increased to improve the capacity of representatives to engage with communities within their electorate. The ability for a State Member to effectively represent the interests of their electorate is reliant upon

their ability to effectively communicate with and hear from their constituents. An increase in resources, including staff, is needed for electorate offices in non-metropolitan districts, particularly those covering vast distances.

Conclusion

The Central Country Zone acknowledges the challenges and limited scope inherent to the Commissioners' task to propose electoral boundary changes. Nevertheless, the Central Country Zone supports strong and effective political representation for the non-metropolitan districts to ensure that regional WA is supported to continue to generate export and employment opportunities that benefit us all.

Any further reduction in political representation at the State level will necessarily lead to an expectation that regional Local Governments will expand to fill this gap, a role that may stretch Local Governments beyond their capacity and resources.

Representation for non-metropolitan districts (especially those covering large geographical areas) also needs bolstering by increased resources for electorate offices.

The Central Country Zone's objection to the proposed boundaries are on the basis that the reduction of non-metropolitan districts will:

1. Further diminish political representation for regional communities;
2. Increase pressure on regional Local Governments; and
3. Fail to recognise the contributions of non-metropolitan districts to the WA economy.

The Central Country Zone and its Members support increased resourcing for electorate offices in non-metropolitan districts, particularly those that cover a large geographical area, to ensure effective political representation at the State level.

