

From: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox
Sent: Tuesday, 22 August 2023 1:18 PM
To:
Subject: 238 Ob FW: OBJECTION TO BOUNDARY CHANGES

From: Stan Scott <ceo@cuballing.wa.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 21 August 2023 2:47 PM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Subject: OBJECTION TO BOUNDARY CHANGES

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Dear Commissioners

I am writing to object to the proposed boundary changes, and in particular the loss of a regional electorate. The loss of a country member will further amplify the recent change to the electoral system for the upper house in WA. As I indicated in my submission such a change is premature. The representation of rural WA, where most of the State's wealth is generated will be further diminished. It was possible for the Commissioners to achieve the required rebalancing without the loss of a country electorate. Some of this change seems to be in anticipation of future changes in population.

Political representation is far more important for regional residents. Changes to government policy disproportionately affect country people and a lack of representation makes it more difficult to advocate for better outcomes. Changes that will impact on rural communities include:

- End of live sheep exports;
- End of coal mining
- Changes to forestry
- Locking up rural land to offset clearing in metropolitan Perth;
- Locking up rural land for solar and wind power generation
- Locking up rural land for carbon sequestration; and
- exporting metropolitan waste to rural landfills.

In addition to the changes in government policy, rural areas are also subject to political neglect. In many cases Local Governments are left to pick up the pieces for services and issues that are clearly the responsibility of other levels of government. This includes 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 challenge of managing a large rural electorate cannot be overestimated. The need to travel large distances to attend community events and function and meet with constituents in the communities in which they live is challenging and time consuming. We will have less members doing more.

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

This disconnect is one that has occupied the minds of the statisticians within the ABS but does not seem to have filtered through to the electoral processes. People can for all intents and purposes choose their electorate, whereas for census purposes it is the place where they spend the most time. 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.

The assumption that rural voters will share a community of interest is not in all cases correct and some of the new boundaries throw mining, pastoral, agricultural and peri-urban together with no consideration of the lack of similarity.

It is my view that the proposed changes be reconsidered and the balance between metropolitan and regional electorates be restored. If the population predictions are realised at the next statutory review changes can be made then. Removing a regional electorate in the same electoral cycle as the unmandated changes to the electoral system for the upper house would be one blow too many. It will be seen as a cynical attempt by an incumbent government to lock in its electoral advantage for decades to come. This review could stand above that perception by maintaining the status quo at least for this electoral cycle.

Please contact the undersigned if you require any further information.

Best Regards

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