



**From:** Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 22 August 2023 1:20 PM  
**To:** 5  
**Subject:** 239 OB FW: Objection to WAEC Electoral Distribution Commissioners proposed changes to WA electoral boundaries

**From:** Jamie Criddle <ceo@chapmanvalley.wa.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 August 2023 4:44 PM  
**To:** Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Objection to WAEC Electoral Distribution Commissioners proposed changes to WA electoral boundaries

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Please be advised that the Shire of Chapman Valley recently resolved to OBJECT to proposed changes by the Commissioners in the creation of a new district in the south metropolitan area, and the merging of the regional districts of Moore and North West Central. This change directly impacts the effective representation of the Shire of Chapman Valley, as the Shire sits in the Moore electorate.

**Resolution**

That with respect to the WAEC Electoral Distribution Commissioners proposed changes to WA electoral boundaries, Council resolve that:

1. The Proposed changes do not represent the best interest of the Shire of Chapman Valley or country WA.
2. If the proposed changes are to go ahead then the State Government must invest in more regional electoral offices and Ministerial outreach to regional WA
3. Holistically the State’s electoral methodology needs to be reviewed with a terms of reference to focus on equality of representation and services based on more than just population, to account for the value proposition of regional WA
4. Direct the CEO to provide the Shire’s endorsed position as a submission to the WAEC Electoral Distribution Commissioners prior to 21 August 2023.

**DETAIL**

The Electoral Distribution Commissioners have proposed significant changes to Western Australia’s State electoral boundaries. The most significant changes proposed by the Commissioners are the creation of a new district in the south metropolitan area, and the merging of the regional districts of Moore and North West Central. This change directly impacts the effective representation of the Shire of Chapman Valley, as the Shire sits in the Moore electorate.

A notice for Objections Invited was distributed on 21 July 2023, which calls for written objections, comments or suggestions in response to the proposals to be lodged no later than 5:00pm on 21 August 2023.

The WA Electoral Commission (WAEC) generally reviews electoral boundaries based on population distribution, which in itself will favour representation towards areas with population mass or growth.

In 2021, the Shire of Chapman Valley opposed the Electoral Equality Bill that implemented a one-vote, one-value electoral system to the upper house. The bill abolished metro and regional upper house tickets in favour of a statewide ticket. At the time it was claimed by the State Government that under the old system a vote from some regions was worth six times one from a metro counterpart.

At the time the review was aligned to a report into electoral reform headed by former WA Governor Malcolm McCusker, however the terms of reference of the review centered around equality of votes as a determinant of electoral equality. The counter argument was made across regional areas that this mathematical view of equality ignored the vast gap between the regional and metropolitan areas in terms of healthcare, education, transport, telecommunications, welfare, and other support services. It was argued that the increased regional weighting to votes ensured some form of advocacy and representation for the underpopulated and underserved areas of the State.

In terms of the lower house, effective on 20 May 2005, the Electoral Amendment and Repeal Act 2005 (No.1 of 2005) abolished the country-metropolitan distinction for the Legislative Assembly, but all seats then in place remained until the following election on 6 September 2008.

A redistribution of seats announced by the Western Australian Electoral Commission on 29 October 2007 placed 42 seats in the Perth metropolitan area and 17 in the country area, with a variation of  $\pm 10\%$  from the average population normally permitted. The only distinction for rural seats is that any seat with an area of 100,000 square kilometres or greater (that is, 4% of the State's land area) may have a variation of  $+10\%$   $-20\%$  from the average, using an adjusted population based on the seat's area in square kilometres.

The current WAEC proposal will essentially reduce the number of seats in country areas further and add an extra metropolitan seat.

This change combined with previous one-vote, one-voice changes represents a reduction in country representation in both State houses of parliament.

On a principal basis, the Shire should object/challenge the proposal regardless of the fact that the modification affects the local Moore electorate, although that makes the stance even more important, given the change will reduce country representation and this representation is required to implement strong advocacy and outcomes for regional areas across the State.

Any reduction of regional seats, would only exacerbate the existing challenges faced by regional communities, making it harder for their voices to be heard and their issues addressed.

Regional areas require strong and effective representation to ensure that their unique needs and challenges are adequately addressed. A reduction in regional seats would result in fewer representatives with a thorough understanding of the issues and challenges faced by regional communities, leading to a lack of effective advocacy and representation.

Furthermore, the merging of regional seats will result in larger electorates, making it more difficult for constituents to access their local Member and for Members to engage effectively with their communities. The larger the electorate, the more difficult it becomes for Members to provide the necessary support and advocacy that their constituents require.

The state economy is dominated by its resources and services sector and largely driven by the export of iron-ore, gold, liquefied natural gas and agricultural commodities such as wheat and it is these resources that generate much of the State's income and strong financial position.

**Interestingly, the State government continues to argue at a Federal level for a fair share of GST, even though the WA population size maybe does not warrant the investment, the State government argues that it is only fair that the State receive a fair share of the income it generates back. If this argument is applied to WA as a State, then potentially the regional areas should be demanding a fair investment and representation based on the fact that much of the State Governments income from exports and royalties is generated from the regions not where the populous areas are.**

The above stands as an example of how a value proposition based holistically around population may not ensure appropriate representation and equality for the State, and potentially a continuation of the population driven electoral reform will lead to decision making that hinders the economic prosperity of regional WA and the State as a whole. It will not be easy to place an appropriate value on the contribution of regional WA to the State prosperity but potentially a review with a terms of reference around equality of living and the value of access to members on the State's economic output.

**The commission simply should not base electoral distribution upon population, but include a variety of factors with particular attention around Economic generation and distance disability factors.**

On behalf of the Council and Chapman Valley Community.

**Jamie Criddle | CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



SHIRE OF  
**Chapman Valley**  
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