

261 Ob

From: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox
Sent: Wednesday, 23 August 2023 1:45 PM
To: [Redacted]
Subject: 261 Ob - FW: Objections to the proposed boundaries - Shire of Morawa
Attachments: 230811 Objection to 2023 Electoral Boundary Changes - Shire of Morawa.pdf

From: Scott Wildgoose <ceo@morawa.wa.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 16 August 2023 8:49 AM
To: Electoral Boundaries Review Mailbox <boundaries@waec.wa.gov.au>
Cc: Executive Assistant <ea@morawa.wa.gov.au>; Cr Karen Chappel <karen.chappel@morawa.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Objections to the proposed boundaries - Shire of Morawa

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Good Morning,

Please find attached the written submission from the Shire of Morawa objecting to the 2023 proposed electoral boundary changes.

The submission is signed by the Shire President on behalf of the Morawa Shire Council and in the interest of the Morawa community and more broadly regional WA.

Kind regards,

Scott Wildgoose
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Morawa



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| W.A.E.C. RECORDS | |
| FILE No. | <u>DST 0152</u> |
| DATE: | <u>16 AUG 2023</u> |
| ACTION BY: | _____ |

The Shire acknowledges the traditional custodians, the Yamatji people, and recognises the contribution of Yamatji elders past, present and future, in working together for the future of Morawa.

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Acknowledgement of Country: The Western Australian Electoral Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our electoral activities take place. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



11 August 2023

Electoral Distribution Commissioners
Level 2, 111 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6841

Dear Commissioners,

OBJECTION TO THE 2023 PROPOSED ELECTORAL BOUNDARY CHANGES

The Shire of Morawa wishes to make an objection to the proposed changes to the WA electoral boundaries.

The Shire acknowledges the significant body of work that has been undertaken by the Commissioners so far, and appreciates the Commissioner's providing their reasoning for the proposed changes, and providing a 30 day period for submissions regarding the proposed changes.

At the Ordinary Meeting of the Morawa Shire Council on the 10 August 2023, Council voted unanimously that:

- 1. The Proposed changes do not represent the best interest of the Shire 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**

Councillors and the Shire have engaged with the Morawa to form the above opinion, and it is clear that there is widespread community support for the objection to the proposal.

In 2021, the Shire of Morawa 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. 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, the Electoral Amendment and Repeal Act 2005 abolished the country-metropolitan distinction for the Legislative Assembly, and a subsequent 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.

Statistically the Perth Metropolitan Area covers an area of 6,418 sqkm and includes approximately 30 Local Government Areas. In contrast regional and country WA covers an area about 410 times bigger than the Perth Metropolitan area and includes approximately 110 Local Government Areas. The proposal to create a Mid-West Electorate by merging the Moore and North West Central electorates will significantly impact representation and community access to elected politicians. From a statistical point of view the Mid-West electorate would be approximately 65 times bigger than the Perth Metropolitan Area and include 24 Local Government Areas. Regardless of population density, the Shire believes it is imperative to ensure equal access and representation, and one State politician having to travel, engage with residents across, and represent an area as large as the proposed Mid-West electorate will diminish their effectiveness and understanding of the communities they are elected to represent.

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 objects to the proposal regardless of the fact that the modification affects our local Moore electorate, as the broader problem is the continued reduction in country representation. This representation is required to implement strong advocacy and outcomes for regional areas across the State.

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, exacerbating the existing challenges faced by regional communities.

Furthermore, the merging of 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 may 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 the State's dominant industries are all based in 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 of Electoral Boundaries with a terms of reference around equality of living and the value of access to members on the State's economic output would provide a better standard of living and representation for all West Australians.

At a minimum retaining the current number of regional seats is critical for ensuring that regional communities have adequate representation and support in the Western Australian Parliament.

If the Commissioners decided to make the electoral boundary changes as proposed then the State Government should review the electoral district sizes and the travel distances between regional offices and consider implementing a maximum distance or travel time between offices. This would likely trigger the investment in more electoral offices and at least provide a conduit by which regional residents can access their local member or at least one of their representatives.

Yours faithfully,

Cr Karen Chappel
Shire President

