



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Comment on suggestion 04

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9 pages

Comment on Suggestions Redistribution of Commonwealth Electoral Divisions

Darren McSweeney



Western Australia 2023

This Public Comment on Suggestions was lodged 29 November 2023 by
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an Australian Citizen, resident of Victoria, and member of the Australian Public Service.



I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters throughout Australia, recognise their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture. I pay my respects to their ancestors and Elders, past and present.

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The views, opinions, arguments and recommendations presented in this Comment on Suggestions to the redistribution of electoral divisions of Western Australia are the author's own and in no way reflect the views of Services Australia, the Australian Public Service or Australian Government.

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Exercising this right to participate in public and political debate by lodging this public submission in no way affects my capacity to fulfill my duties in a professional, impartial, and apolitical manner.

This submission complies with conditions of employment in the Australian Public Service (APS) in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*, the [APS Values Code of Conduct and Employment Principles](#), and [Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies](#)

I hold no interest in, and do not stand to receive any benefit or advantage resulting from the outcome of this redistribution. I have written this submission as a private citizen taking a personal interest in psephology and the electoral redistribution process. I am not now, nor at any time in the past been a member of any political party or similar associated organisation.

This submission is lodged claiming political neutrality. No political bias or partiality is implied within this submission and none should be inferred. This submission is lodged in accordance with [guidelines for making public submissions to a redistribution](#). The political implications – if any – of the recommendations have not formed part of the recommendation and should not be inferred.

Division names – including any suggested new names– comply with [guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions](#). Suggested names are based on the individual's merit and contribution to Australian society, and do not imply any political bias towards the eponymous persons. Proposals to abolish or rename a division – if any – do not reflect the performance or character of the current member of Parliament representing that division or the eponymous person, unless specified.

Criticism of submissions or decisions taken as part of this redistribution is based solely on the merit of the arguments and recommendations presented therein and serves solely to improve electoral representation for the people of Western Australia. It is not in any way a reflection upon the character or abilities of any individual, government or community group or organisation participating in this process, nor any member of a Redistribution Committee, augmented Electoral Commission, any other member of the APS, the Australian Electoral Commission, any other Australian Government entity, agency, department or any current or past member of Parliament.

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Introduction

I am providing comment on most of the suggestions submitted for the redistribution of Western Australia electoral divisions.

Ideally, I would provide comments on every suggestion, however, given the number of statewide suggestions, and the short timeframes to provide comments and within the environment of redistributions occurring in New South Wales and Victoria, I do not have time to undertake a thorough analysis of all suggestions in detail.

Therefore, I will focus on some general themes found in the drawing of boundaries, and suggestions for names of the new division.

General themes presented in suggestions.

Most suggestions recommend that a new division be created by splitting most of the existing division of **HASLUCK**. The new division is then created either in the north-eastern suburbs of Perth, incorporating most of the City of Swan or, in most cases, the south, including most of the City of Kalamunda. The remaining parts then constitute the new division of **HASLUCK**.

Of the statewide suggestions, all of **Suggestion 7 - Jeff Waddell** and **Suggestion 12 - Martin Gordon** and **Suggestion 14 - Dr Mark Mulcair** have almost the same general approach as mine, which should indicate our suggestions are logical and reasonable. We seem to agree on most of the inner divisions, with only minor variations on specific borders.

We have taken different approaches for **FORREST** and **CANNING**. I prefer the neatness of **CANNING** in my own submission but acknowledge this leaves **FORREST** with less than ideal boundaries. It would be up to the Committee to decide whether to improve **FORREST** at the expense of either **O'CONNOR** or **CANNING** or vice versa.

Suggestion 8 - Ben Close is similar in many regards, although I feel some of the boundaries applied twist and turn a bit, and his versions of **BURT**, **FREMANTLE** and **TANGNEY** seem disjointed. Meanwhile, **Suggestion 21 - Luke Dixon** seems again similar in some parts, but makes unnecessary exchanges between **FREMANTLE** and **BRAND**, which has flow on effects to **CANNING** and **FORREST**.

I will leave the **Suggestion 16 - Liberal Party of Australia (WA Division)** and **Suggestion 18 - WA Labor** to comment by others, although I will make one observation that they generally align with the submissions of the rest of us, with a few notable (and probably political) exceptions.

Names of divisions

Suggested names for a new division

Suggested name	Named for	Reasoning	Suggestion
Bates	Daisy May Bates CBE	one of the most distinguished scholars on the lives of Western Australian First Nations peoples.	Suggestion 9 - Darren McSweeney
Bates	Daisy May Bates CBE	Not given	Suggestion 11 - Nimalan Sivakumar
Bridge	The Hon Ernest Francis Bridge, AM	Not given	Suggestion 11 - Nimalan Sivakumar
Chaney	The Hon Sir Frederick Charles Chaney KBE, AFC	Teacher, RAAF (WWII), MHR, 8th Administrator of Northern Territory.	Suggestion 7 - Jeff Waddell
Court	The Hon Sir Charles Walter Michael Court AK KCMG OBE	long serving and well-regarded state premier. Architect of several important development initiatives in Western Australia	Suggestion 6 - Peter Stewart CFP AEPS FAFA Dip FP Dip LI JP
Court	The Hon Sir Charles Walter Michael Court AK KCMG OBE	His vision laid the foundation for Western Australia's contemporary economy.	Suggestion 16 - Liberal Party of Australia (WA Division)
Court	The Hon Sir Charles Walter Michael Court AK KCMG OBE and The Hon Richard Fairfax Court AC	Not given	Suggestion 21 - Luke Dixon
Currie	Not given	Not given	Suggestion 8 - Ben Close
Dragun	Charmaine Margaret Dragun	well-regarded journalist and television news anchor	Suggestion 1 - Callan Gray
Dunn	William Dunn OAM	Not given	Suggestion 11 - Nimalan Sivakumar
Endeavour	Not given, possibly for <i>HM Bark Endeavour</i>	Not given	Suggestion 2 - Frank Collins
Farmer	Graham Vivian "Polly" Farmer MBE	honoured West Australian of Noongar Aboriginal heritage who is considered one of the greatest football players of all time.	Suggestion 18 - WA Labor

Suggested name	Named for	Reasoning	Suggestion
Guildford	Locality name	...surrounding suburbs have links to Guildford	Suggestion 1 - Callan Gray
Holman	May Holman	Not given	Suggestion 12 - Martin Gordon
No specific name suggested	first nation name for the majority of the area covered	Not given	Suggestion 4 - Terry Geraghty
Nyitting	word for 'unity' in Noongar language	Not given	Suggestion 3 - Professor Peter Hancock
Rocher	Allan Charles Rocher	Member of the House of Representatives, Senator	Suggestion 1 - Callan Gray
Walsh	The Hon Peter Alexander Walsh AO	recognition of Peter Walsh's distinguished public service to WA and the nation	Suggestion 15 - Peter Kennedy
Winch	Marie Joan Winch	Aboriginal Nurse who founded the Aboriginal Medical Service	Suggestion 1 - Callan Gray
Yagan	Yagan	Not given	Suggestion 11 - Nimalan Sivakumar

I do not support any suggestions that propose a geographic-based name for a new division. Assigning a geographic name for a new division is contrary to the Guidelines for naming federal electoral divisions and therefore cannot be supported.

Of the suggestions for a division named for an individual, I support using the name to increase diversity and honour someone who may otherwise go unrecognised. This therefore means that I do not support a division named **CHANNEY**, **COURT**, **ROCHER** or **WALSH**.

I would support any of the names, **YAGAN**, **BATES**, **BRIDGE** or **DUNN** put forward by **Suggestion 11 - Nimalan Sivakumar** as all of these individuals are worthy of recognition. I note that this aligns with my suggestion for a division named **BATES**. I had also considered a division named **BRIDGE** in my suggestion.

A division named after Graham Farmer

Suggestion 18 - WA Labor proposed a new division named **FARMER** after Graham Polly Farmer MBE. Farmer was first and foremost a footballer and his achievements relate only to his time playing football. While he did create the Polly Farmer Foundation, which was established to help indigenous youth, this achievement in itself is not what he is known for.

Sports persons are not represented in electoral division names and I believe this is for a good reason. Australian society already places a large (some would say inflated) emphasis on sport. Athletes are held in high regard, but their achievements are mostly personal, individual or team-based. Other than the feeling of goodwill, high spirits or a morale-boost, sporting achievements from individuals or teams do not provide any actual benefit or advantage to the greater population. For this reason, I believe sport stars should be appropriately commemorated in the sporting arena, the media, or with statues, monuments or buildings.

But not in electoral divisions. I feel that electoral division names should reflect those members of society that often go unrecognised. Contemporary candidates in social, political, scientific, artistic, academic, economic or other fields, should be honoured. Sports stars are well-recognised already in their own arena. Should a sports star become involved in one of these other fields either during or after their time in sport, that their contribution in these fields alone warrants recognition, then I have no problem honouring them with a division name.

Farmer's name is given to the Graham Farmer Freeway in Perth, he was named in one of the 150 bronze tablets commemorating the WAY 1979 celebrations. He has been inducted into the AFL and WAFL Hall of Fame and teams of the century for the three teams in which he played. As such, there are significant legacies dedicated to his memory and I don't believe a division should be named **FARMER** in his honour.

A division named after Charles Court

Suggestion 16 - Liberal Party of Australia (WA Division) as well as **Suggestion 6 - Peter Stewart CFP AEPS FAFA Dip FP Dip LI JP** and **Suggestion 21 - Luke Dixon** all propose a new division named **COURT** after the premier of Western Australia the Hon Sir Charles Walter Michael Court AK KCMG OBE.

This is not the first time **COURT** has been suggested as division name in a Western Australia redistribution, the Liberal Party has now made this suggestion three times, seemingly unable to find a single other individual in Western Australia worthy of nomination for an electoral division.

I had previously objected to a division named **COURT** on the basis that the name could be confused for his still living son. Richard Court, being a more recent premier, and a somewhat controversial figure, could lead to objections about the name. This would be similar to the proposal in 2006 to name a new division in Queensland after poet Judith Wright. Objections to the division of **WRIGHT** were based on the association with the name. The local prominence of

a disgraced politician with the same surname was enough to reject the name at that redistribution.

I believe the associations of the name **COURT** with Richard Court would be very real in this case. I believe this may be further compounded with Charles's daughter-in-law, Margaret Court leading to even greater confusion. Her recent commentary, in particular in relation to marriage equality, could also lead to associations not appropriate for a division name. These reasons alone would be sufficient to not support a division named **COURT**.

However, when looking more closely at the conduct of Charles Court himself, I feel that he does not deserve a division named for him on merit.

Charles Court was a state premier of Western Australia. He never represented Western Australia in the federal parliament or in an administrative role, such as a governor, governor-general or diplomat.

State premiers have featured in electoral division names, but they should not be automatically considered. Only twelve divisions named for a state premier (who didn't also serve as a prime minister or High Court judge) exist today. Of these, only **DICKSON** and **SOLOMON** were created after the creation of **BRAND** in the 1984 expansion of Parliament. I would suggest that state premiers should now only be considered for a division name where their service was longevous, extraordinary or otherwise remarkable.

Charles Court's premiership was neither of these. He was the sixth longest serving premier, which itself is hardly remarkable. His achievements in opening the state to mining opportunities may be well received, however I believe his conduct and behaviour in two areas disqualifies him from holding the distinction of a division name.¹

Court was a staunch opponent of Aboriginal land rights. He played a significant role in the infamous Noonkanbah land-rights dispute. Despite evidence that the Yungngora people's Noonkanbah pastoral station in the Kimberley held anthropological and spiritual significance, Court insisted that exploration and drilling go ahead, leading to violent confrontation and protests. This chapter has been viewed by some as a problematic legacy of Court's premiership.

Secondly, Court introduced laws to restrict public gatherings. Changes to the Police Act, prevented gatherings of more than three persons without police permission. This was controversial at the time, and would still be considered controversial today. Indeed, similar laws in Queensland were repealed, and there were protests over this type of restriction, albeit temporarily, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, Court was an avowed anti-centralist and opposed federal government encroaching upon what he believed to be the rights of states. While there is no issue with this attitude, it would become somewhat ironic that a federal electoral division bears the name of a state premier with views that were not favourable toward a federal government.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Court#Court_government

Conclusion

Overall, most suggestions work toward achieving the same outcome, using similar approaches. There are few suggestions that provide unrealistic outcomes. This should make the work of the Committee a lot easier.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide suggestions and comments, wish them good luck in their deliberations. I look forward to the proposed redistribution report being released.