



Objection 26

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4 pages

Att: WA Redistribution Secretariat
Australian Electoral Commission
Locked Bag 4007
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Submitted electronically

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Dear Commissioners,

Objection to redistribution proposal – names of proposed Divisions of Moore and Pearce

I write to propose that the Federal division names *Moore* and *Pearce* be retired, and that new names commemorating significant Indigenous figures be given to these Divisions.

Historical context

Since the abolition of the Division of Kalgoorlie in the 2008 redistribution, no Western Australian division has been named for an Indigenous person or word. While I welcome the Commission's proposal to acknowledge Sadie Canning MBE in the name of the Division of Canning, this change only raises the proportion of Western Australian divisions named for an Indigenous person or word to 1 in 15, or 6.7%. This is well below the current national figure of 15.2%.

In its history, Western Australia has only had two divisions named for an Indigenous word, the geographic names of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie (now both retired). No Western Australian division has ever been named for an Indigenous person. As only 19 names have ever been used for Western Australian divisions, it is clear that the current pace of change cannot be relied upon to provide acknowledgement, in the Federal electoral system, of Western Australia's past and present Indigeneity.

Recent precedent exists for retiring a divisional name in order to honour a neglected historical figure, as when the Tasmanian Division of Denison was renamed the Division of Clark in that state's 2019 redistribution. Accordingly, the Australian Electoral Commission's divisional naming guidelines, which state that "[n]ames of divisions should not be changed or transferred to new areas without very strong reasons", do not pose a barrier to the renaming of the Divisions of Moore and Pearce in favour of an Indigenous person of historical note.

Reasons for change

I propose that the names *Moore* and *Pearce* be retired for the following reasons:

- both divisions are named for localities which, under this Commission's proposal, no longer fall within the boundaries of the proposed divisions;

- the character of the Division of Moore has changed drastically since its establishment, and the same will be true of the Division of Pearce if it is constituted on the Commission’s proposed boundaries;
- the name *Moore* is also borne by a Western Australian State electoral district named for a geographical feature;
- under the Commission’s proposal, fewer than 50% of electors in the extant Division of Pearce will be retained in the proposed Division of Pearce;
- the existence of major localities, such as the Moore River and RAAF Base Pearce, bearing these names ensure ongoing recognition of their namesakes.

Further detail on the inadequacy of the current divisional names follows.

Division of Moore

This divisional name was established in the 1949 redistribution, roughly contemporaneously with the State electoral district of the same name. I understand that, at the time, the two electoral districts covered related territory north of Perth.

Successive Federal redistributions have seen the Federal Division of Moore move south into the Perth metropolitan area. The extant Division of Moore is wholly metropolitan, and the abolition of Stirling draws the proposed Division of Moore even further into well-established urban residential suburbs. By contrast, the State electoral district remains rural and regional in character, and includes localities named for George Fletcher Moore, such as the Moore River and Moore River National Park.

It is clearly ridiculous for Western Australia to contain two non-overlapping, demographically divergent electoral districts which are both ultimately named for George Fletcher Moore. As Western Australian electoral districts are uniformly given geographical names, the Federal Division name is the most appropriate candidate for change to remedy this confusion.

Division of Pearce

This divisional name dates from the establishment of the Division in the 1989 redistribution. The name appears to have been selected due to the presence of RAAF Base Pearce within its boundaries; the base is named for Senator George Pearce, a long-serving Western Australian Senator and Minister for Defence, and has borne this name since its establishment in 1939.

On the proposed boundaries, RAAF Base Pearce will be transferred to the Division of Hasluck. This is a known peril of naming divisions for fixed localities and, under current AEC naming guidelines, a strong reason to avoid locality-based divisional names. Moreover, the transfer is part of a much greater proposed transformation in the character of the Division of Pearce, which will become entirely metropolitan for the first time in its history.

Under this Commission’s proposed redistribution, more of Pearce’s current electors will be transferred to a new division (63,066) than retained within the proposed Division of Pearce (62,422). Given the very significant demographic and geographical changes proposed for this Division, and the severing of the link with RAAF Base Pearce, I submit that a change of name is necessary.¹

Replacement names

I propose that the Commission choose new names honouring significant Indigenous figures to replace both *Moore* and *Pearce*. Alongside the Division of Canning, this would lift the proportion of Western Australian divisions named for an Indigenous person or word to 3 in 15, or 20%, commensurate with the current national average of 15.2%.

Of those names already considered by the Commission, I submit that the names *Abdullah*, *Brennan*, *Colbung*, *Davis* and *Harris* are most suitable to replace *Moore* and *Pearce*. The notable Indigenous figures bearing these names have a known, significant connection with the Perth metropolitan area, and as such their names are most appropriate for a metropolitan division.

However, this still leaves the issue that, as the Divisions of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie were both rural and regional, no Perth metropolitan division has ever borne a name originating from an Indigenous language. Indeed, all of Western Australia’s sixteen current divisional names appear to be Anglo-Celtic in origin. I accordingly wish to submit one additional name for the Commission’s consideration.

Yellagonga (? – 1843) was a renowned Whadjuk Noongar leader who bore significant authority in what is now Perth’s northern metropolitan area. Historical records indicate that *Yellagonga* was widely respected by both Indigenous people and settlers alike. As *Yellagonga* was also a contemporary of George Fletcher Moore, renaming a northern suburbs division to honour him would retain the link to this period of Western Australian history.

I would like to emphasise that, in proposing the name *Yellagonga* for a division, I do not propose a connection to the regional park which already carries this name. While *Yellagonga* Regional Park is fortuitously contained within the boundaries of the proposed Divisions of *Moore* and *Pearce*, *Yellagonga*’s significance in this region extends well beyond the park. Accordingly, unlike the link between the Division of *Pearce* and RAAF Base *Pearce*, there is no barrier to any future Division of *Yellagonga* being subsequently redistributed not to overlap with *Yellagonga* Regional Park.

Summary

The lack of Federal divisions named for Indigenous people in Western Australia is entirely inadequate to recognise this land’s Indigenous past and present. While the proposed recognition of *Sadie Canning* MBE partially addresses this failure, further action by the

1 While a similar argument could be mounted for renaming the Division of *Cowan*, which also cedes a large proportion of its current electors, it is far less compelling on the basis that a) the character of the Division is wholly metropolitan both before and after the redistribution, and b) the Division was not named for a locality which was itself named for *Edith Cowan* MBE. As far as I am aware, the campuses of *Edith Cowan* University and the Division of *Cowan* have never overlapped – and indeed *Cowan* is not the only Western Australian division to be named for a person who is also the namesake of a Western Australian public university.

Redistribution Committee is needed to compensate for the 120 years Western Australia has spent without a division named for an Indigenous person.

This redistribution, being the first at which the net number of divisions in Western Australia has decreased, is by necessity one of great upheaval within the state's system of Federal divisions. It is therefore a prime opportunity to make changes to divisional names, which in other circumstances might be considered the most drastic part of a redistribution.

I urge the Committee not to miss this chance to give appropriate further recognition to important Indigenous figures in Western Australian history.

Sincerely,
Daniel Ortlepp