



**THE FEDERAL  
REDISTRIBUTION  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

# Submission COB3

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Australian Electoral Commission – Grey Redistribution

I have read with concern the AEC proposal to rename and expand the Grey Electorate. As the immediate past Member for Grey (17 years) my understanding of the needs of the electorate and the challenge for any individual to properly service an area already substantially bigger than NSW should be of value.

Grey already encompasses 27 Local Government Areas and portions of 3 more, approximately 115 schools and 157 towns with at least a shop, but this short description only scratches the surface. Every remote indigenous population in the state of South Australia living is within Grey, and these were areas I strove to visit as regularly.

An example is the APY Lands, 1000km from my home to the turn-off to the Far North-East of the state and from there another eight-hour drive to the WA border. Each and every trip to the APY Lands is necessarily a full week. It is essential for the member's understanding of the local issues that they stay in communities and drive the roads.

In addition, the scope of industry within the electorate already makes Grey one of the most complex in the Federal Parliament. Consider, agriculture, pastoral stock runs, mining and processing, fishing and aquaculture, steel making, the lead and complex metal smelter at Pt Pirie, viticulture, irrigated market gardens, tourism, windfarms (Grey hosts more than a quarter of the nation's towers - 849) and more than 350MW of installed solar capacity.

This list is far from complete but gives some insight into the number and variability of industries the Member for Grey should have a working knowledge of. It is important too, the member has similar in-depth knowledge of aged and disability care, education, including tertiary options in every town and community and meets regularly with groups like the Isolated Parents and Children Association.

During my time as member, I averaged around 80,000km a year in a car travelling the electorate and given eighteen weeks a year are spent in Canberra (when the car is parked) most of that driving was crammed into the remaining weeks.

The Member for Grey is afforded three offices and that certainly helps, but less understood is apart from local jobs within 50km of each office, it is difficult and even inappropriate for the member to take staff with them as they may not be coming back past that office (the

home base of the employee) for a week or more. This just adds extra duties what other members might already consider is a full load.

I make the point, that compared to electors who live in urban electorates of less than 1000 km<sup>2</sup>, where their member could reasonably expect to return home each night, electors in Grey are necessarily at a disadvantage – their member cannot possibly be available as often or for as long.

Given these parameters, I believe any expansion of Grey, already covering 92.3% of the state should be resisted. If expansion cannot be denied, every effort to avoid introducing a new raft of issues for the member to become familiar with should be pursued. In particular, the inclusion of the northern areas of the City of Playford would provide a complete set of new challenges for the member to cope with.

Grey is essentially a rural and regional electorate. All efforts should be made to ensure it remains so. Additional workload of this nature can only further dilute the level of service the Member for Grey is striving to achieve.

My records show on average I worked 90 hours a week at my job as member. In my time in Parliament, I was well- aware of other members who somehow were able to continue to play sport and, in some cases even write books while in Parliament.

These are pastimes already well past the grasp of the Member for Grey. I suggest respectfully you consider the already onerous load on the member.

I am not sure why there is a move to rename the seat of Grey as such changes seem to add to confusion and cost. In the current challenging times this would seem one of the least necessary tasks. Grey is a Federation seat and as such a name I would usually assume the AEC would protect. However, Lowitja O'Donoghue was a notable Australian and would be a very worthy person to name a seat when our population grows enough to require a new seat.

Yours Faithfully

Rowan Ramsey

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