



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Submission OB372

District Council of Streaky Bay

21st April 2026

To the Redistribution Committee,
Australian Electoral Commission
GPO Box 567
Canberra ACT 2601

Submission to the Australian Electoral Commission – Proposed Redistribution of South Australia’s Electoral Divisions from the District Council of Streaky Bay

Introduction

The District Council of Streaky Bay appreciates the opportunity to provide a further submission in response to the Australian Electoral Commission’s proposed redistribution for South Australia.

Council previously made a submission outlining the significant challenges associated with the size, scale, and accessibility of the Division of Grey, and strongly advocated for a redistribution outcome that would improve representation for regional and remote communities.

It is therefore deeply concerning that the proposed redistribution not only fails to address these issues, but in many respects exacerbates them, flying in the face of the principles and concerns clearly articulated in Council’s earlier submission.

More broadly, this proposal represents a missed opportunity to correct a long-standing structural imbalance in South Australia’s federal representation—one that continues to disadvantage regional communities.

Failure to Address Core Representation Issues

Council’s earlier submission highlighted that the Division of Grey spans approximately 904,881 square kilometres—over 92% of South Australia—creating a fundamental structural barrier to effective democratic representation.

The proposed redistribution does not alleviate this burden. Instead, it maintains—and in some respects intensifies—an inequitable model of representation for regional South Australians.

At its core, the issue remains unchanged: it is not reasonable to expect a single Member of Parliament to effectively service such a vast and diverse electorate in a way that ensures equitable access, meaningful engagement, and genuine representation of community interests.

Importantly, this is not simply a question of geography—it is a question of democratic equity. Representation is not meaningful if it cannot be practically accessed. When distance, time, and cost become barriers to engagement, the principle of equal representation is fundamentally undermined.

Failure to Properly Apply Redistribution Principles

Under Section 66 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, redistribution must consider not only enrolment numbers, but also:

- Community of interests;
- Means of communication and travel;
- Physical features and area of electorates.

The proposed redistribution appears to place disproportionate weight on numerical equality (noting we are also disadvantaged in this regard, as outlined in the following point), at the expense of these equally important considerations.

In a division such as Grey—where communities are separated by vast distances, limited transport options, and inconsistent digital connectivity—these factors are not secondary; they are fundamental to ensuring meaningful representation.

Furthermore, the inclusion of metropolitan voters within the Division of Grey, which is otherwise comprised entirely of regional and remote communities, undermines any genuine alignment in community of interest or shared physical characteristics across the electorate.

A redistribution that does not materially enhance accessibility or strengthen community cohesion cannot be considered to fully meet the intent of the Act.

National Inequity in Representation

This redistribution must also be considered within the broader national context.

The average enrolment size of electorates across Australia highlights a clear disparity:

- South Australia: 132,298
- Queensland: 125,866
- New South Wales: 124,600
- Victoria: 121,760
- Western Australia: 119,145
- ACT: 107,812
- Tasmania: 82,750
- Northern Territory: 77,543

South Australia's electorates are significantly larger than those in most other jurisdictions. This results in reduced representation per capita and diminished access to elected officials.

This is not a marginal difference—it represents a systemic inequity that compounds over time, particularly for regional areas where distance already limits access.

Council strongly submits that South Australia requires an additional federal seat to achieve equity with other states and territories. Without this, any redistribution exercise is inherently constrained and unable to deliver fair representation—particularly for regional communities.

Opposition to Expanding Metropolitan Influence

Council is firmly opposed to any redistribution approach that introduces metropolitan voters into predominantly regional electorates.

South Australia is already one of the most centralised states in the nation, with political, economic, and population influence heavily concentrated in Adelaide. Expanding metropolitan influence into regional seats will only further dilute the voice of rural and remote communities.

This is not a neutral change—it materially shifts the balance of representation.

Such an approach risks:

- Redirecting political focus toward metropolitan priorities;
- Weakening advocacy for region-specific infrastructure and services;
- Undermining the ability of regional representatives to speak with a clear and unified voice on local issues.

Regional South Australians deserve representation that reflects their lived realities—not representation diluted by competing metropolitan priorities.

Growing Disillusionment in Regional Communities

There is a growing and increasingly evident sense of disillusionment within regional communities regarding the political system.

Many residents feel that governments prioritise winning seats in densely populated metropolitan areas, rather than governing for the nation as a whole—including the regions that contribute so significantly to Australia's economy and identity.

The proposed redistribution risks reinforcing this perception.

When regional voices are diluted and electorates become even less accessible, it sends a clear message that regional concerns are secondary, that engagement with remote communities is not a priority, and that structural inequities are tolerated rather than addressed.

Over time, this erosion of confidence risks disengagement from the democratic process itself—lower participation, reduced trust, and a weakening of the civic fabric that underpins representative government.

This is not simply a representation issue—it is a democratic integrity issue.

Compounding Existing Inequities

Regional South Australians already face well-documented inequities, particularly in:

- Access to healthcare;
- Health outcomes and life expectancy;
- Infrastructure provision;
- Digital connectivity.

These are not abstract concerns—they are measurable and persistent gaps between metropolitan and regional Australia.

The proposed redistribution does nothing to address these disparities. On the contrary, it risks compounding them by further weakening the ability of regional representatives to effectively advocate for their communities.

At a time when regional communities require stronger representation to close these gaps, this proposal moves in the opposite direction.

Representation should serve as a mechanism to address disadvantage—not deepen it.

Concerns Regarding the Proposed Name Change

Council also objects to the proposed renaming of the Division.

While the intention to honour Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG is acknowledged and respected, doing so in conjunction with a redistribution that diminishes the voice of regional and remote Australians is deeply inappropriate.

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's legacy is one of advocacy, empowerment, and elevating the voices of Aboriginal and remote communities. Associating her name with changes that effectively weaken those voices is, respectfully, inconsistent with her contribution and legacy.

Recognition of such a significant national figure should occur in a manner that strengthens representation—particularly for the communities she championed.

The proposed removal of the name Grey fails to recognise its deep historical significance to regional South Australia.

Sir George Grey played a defining role in the State's early development. His contributions were not merely symbolic—he served as South Australia's third Governor from 1841 to 1845. At a time when the colony was on the brink of financial collapse, Grey implemented decisive and often difficult reforms, restoring stability through fiscal discipline and fostering agricultural growth that became critical to the State's long-term success.

The name Grey is therefore far more than a historical reference. It represents a formative chapter in South Australia's history and is intrinsically linked to the development, and identity of regional communities across the State.

A More Appropriate Alternative

Council proposes a more balanced, respectful, and forward-looking approach:

- Retain the Division of Grey in recognition of its historical significance;
- Introduce an additional federal seat in South Australia to address the clear inequity in representation;
- Name the new electorate in honour of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, ensuring her legacy is recognised in a way that strengthens, rather than diminishes, representation.

This approach would both address structural inequity and appropriately recognise one of Australia's most significant national figures.

To reinforce Council's position, we strongly believe Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue should be recognised; however, this must not come at the expense of overlooking the contribution of another significant individual, nor through a redistribution that further diminishes the representation of regional and remote communities.

Conclusion

The proposed redistribution fails to address the core issues raised in Council's previous submission and, in several key respects, worsens them.

Council therefore:

- Reaffirms that the Division of Grey is too large to provide effective representation;
- Submits that the current proposal fails to adequately consider key legislative criteria beyond population numbers;
- Strongly opposes the introduction of metropolitan voters into regional electorates;
- Calls for the creation of an additional federal seat in South Australia to achieve national equity;
- Raises serious concerns about increasing disillusionment within regional communities; and
- Opposes the proposed name change in its current context, while offering a constructive alternative.

This redistribution represents an important opportunity to strengthen democratic representation in South Australia. In its current form, it does not achieve that objective.

Council urges the Australian Electoral Commission to reconsider its approach and deliver an outcome that genuinely reflects the needs, challenges, and voices of regional South Australians.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours faithfully,

CR TRAVIS BARBER
MAYOR
DISTRICT COUNCIL OF STREAKY BAY