

Weston Creek Community Council

your local voice

RECEIVED
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ACT ELECTORAL
COMMISSION

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Mr. Phillip Green
ACT Electoral Commissioner
The ACT Electoral Commission
PO Box 272
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

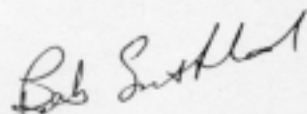
Dear Mr. Green

1. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed changes to ACT Legislative Assembly electoral boundaries. The Weston Creek Community Council has made submissions to the Commission when the boundaries were last reviewed.
2. The Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) is a voluntary, non-political lobby group that lobbies government and bureaucrats for services and facilities for the residents of Weston Creek.
3. The WCCC functions irrespective of the government of the day. In fulfilling its role the WCCC acts on behalf of residents (or groups of residents) to take issue with the government. In many cases residents or groups wish to remain anonymous and the WCCC lobbies on their behalf.
4. The Community Council has consulted widely among residents of Weston Creek seeking their views on the proposals put forward by the Electoral Commission. To this end the Community Council sought input from residents through its regularly published newspaper columns in the *Valley View* and *Southside Chronicle*. In addition a radio broadcast on 2CN, and a pamphlet circulated to nearly every household in Weston Creek, invited anyone interested to our regular monthly meeting (February) to discuss the electoral boundary issue, amongst other things. Approximately 100 people attended the public meeting in the Royals Football Club auditorium.

5. At that meeting two members of the Legislative Assembly were invited to put their concerns and both addressed the meeting outlining their point of view. The consensus of the meeting was that Weston Creek has a strong sense of community and various agencies and businesses within Weston Creek work actively to maintain that community focus and identity. For that reason people attending the meeting argued that the top priority was to maintain the present political status of Weston Creek being treated as a whole for electoral purposes. Weston Creek is geographically distinct and people strongly relate to the sense of location and community spirit.
6. In putting forward this point of view both residents and the WCCC have kept in mind the fact that other communities in the ACT might also want to be considered as individual communities. The Community Council urges the Electoral Commission to avoid splitting communities in setting political boundaries.
7. Many meeting participants also questioned the wisdom of adding Weston Creek to the Ginninderra Electorate as the Commission's fourth proposal suggests. The feeling was that Weston Creek was geographically remote from these northern suburbs and that the differences in the communities; age groups; aspirations; education needs; planning priorities were so different as to make co-representation by MLA's extremely difficult and perhaps incompatible.
8. On the other hand a minority of speakers at the meeting said that Canberra was not so large that any particular community was really very far from another. These speakers conceded however, that if all the members returned from the Ginninderra Electorate, came from the northern suburbs then Weston Creek could be in a difficult position with no elected representatives.
9. **In conclusion the WCCC, on behalf on all those residents who either contacted the WCCC or attended our meetings, submits the following preferred option: That electors in Weston Creek remain in the Molonglo electorate and the Molonglo electorate be retained as a seven-member electorate.**
10. Should this option not be adopted the view of the meeting was that Weston Creek should join the Brindabella electorate as a whole and make this the seven member electorate.
11. The meeting agreed that the least preferred option is that Weston Creek should remain intact and join the Ginninderra seven member electorate as outlined in the Commission's fourth electoral boundaries proposal.

12. The executive of the WCCC is available to discuss the above at a mutually convenient opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bob Sutherland', written in a cursive style.

Bob Sutherland
Chairman
WCCC

6th March 2000

Appendix

Background to the Weston Creek Community Council

The Weston Creek Community Council was formed in 1991 as a result of community concern about the then ACT Government's decision to close certain public schools in the district. The Community Council has been in continuous existence since then and has lobbied the ACT Legislative Assembly on a wide variety of matters of concern to Weston Creek residents. Membership of the Community Council is open, free of charge, to all residents of Weston Creek. Funding to run the council is provided by an annual grant from the ACT Government and the work is done by volunteers.

The system of government in the Australian Capital Territory is unique in Australia because the ACT Government combines the responsibilities of state and local government in one body. The Community Council supports this model and its present policy is that there is no need for local government on the model that exists in the States. However, the ACT model leaves a gap for local comment and lobbying and this is the gap that the Community Council tries to fill.

The main activity of the Community Council is its regular monthly meetings which are important public forums for the airing of views, complaints and recommendations directed to the ACT Legislative Assembly and the ACT Government. Our activities receive support from individual government, opposition and independent MLA's from the seat of Molonglo who often attend our meetings.

In addition to these meetings the Community Council lobbies ACT politicians and bureaucrats and the WCCC regularly invited to comment on planning matters, on reports of inquiries into such matters as the location of shopping centres and the ACT Government's budget process, etc. These comments are often followed up with visits by the WCCC to individual members of the ACT Legislative Assembly.

In recent times the Community Council has considered such issues as:

- The possible replacement of the Woden Police Station with a shopfront station
- The "oceanic" headquarters for the Sukyo Mahikiri organization in Holder,
- Traffic calming and road safety in our district,
- The future of our local shops, rejuvenation of the Weston Creek Group Centre
- lobbying the Government on Holder High School (now the Grant Cameron centre),
- the reorganization of ACTION bus services and
- The Collocation of the Defence Forces Staff Colleges.

The Weston Creek Community Council currently has an executive of nine and regularly advertises meetings through 3 to 4 letter box drops each year to 8,500 households in Weston Creek. Attendance at our meetings varies from 10 to 100 depending on the issue to be discussed. We have never claimed to be representative of the total population of Weston Creek despite our best efforts to achieve this status by publicising our activities through letterbox drops and newspaper, radio and television publicity.