



RICK WILSON MP

Federal Member for O'Connor

Att: The Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer and The Hon. Kate Ellis

Email: consultations@finance.gov.au

20th October 2021

Dear Ms O'Dwyer and Ms Ellis

RE: Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017 and Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017 Review Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the IPEA act review, with particular reference to the resourcing of large electorates such as my electorate of O'Connor.

The electorate of O'Connor currently measures 866 000 sq km in the South East of Western Australia with 101 000 enrolled voters living across 38 local government authorities.

The recently completed Western Australian redistribution which saw WA reduced from 16 seats to 15 seats has seen the electorate grow to over 110 000 enrolled voters spread across 59 LGA's (see attached map).

The main population centres of Albany (pop 35000), Kalgoorlie (pop 30000) are 800km apart by road and Esperance (pop 15000) is roughly 450 km by road from these two main centres.

Given the widely dispersed population and incredibly diverse communities in large electorates, a much higher level of resourcing is required to give constituents an even remote chance of achieving similar access to their federal representative that a constituent in an metropolitan electorate would enjoy.

Offices

The three current Commonwealth leased offices are situated in Albany, Kalgoorlie and Esperance and are staffed using 5 of the 6 FTE electorate officers that the electorate is entitled to under the current arrangements.

In addition to the Commonwealth leased offices I have also privately funded offices in the regional towns of Collie, Manjimup and Narrogin, all predominantly in the southwestern part of the electorate and staffed by 1 FTE EO based in Collie and travelling to the other offices (around 100km) 1 or 2 days per week.

In accordance with section 102, I can only claim a refund on one privately funded office (Manjimup @ \$800 per month) of a total allowance of \$20,000 for electorates over 25,000 sq km.

Staff

Allocating staff across 3 Commonwealth funded offices and a privately funded office is necessary to provide a human face to constituents.

In my case I also use a significant amount of the office support (staff Relief) budget to provide additional staff support across the very thinly staffed offices.

Unfortunately, there have been occasions where staff have felt isolated and unsupported, and I have ongoing concerns for staff security where they are alone in an office.

Merredin

As a result of the 2021 Western Australian redistribution, the regional wheatbelt centre of Merredin and 14 surrounding LGA's were included in the electorate of O'Connor.

Given the importance of Merredin as regional service centre, the member for Durack has allocated one of her three Commonwealth funded offices to the town to service the broader region.

The Commonwealth is now in the situation where under the current arrangements, it will have to forego the lease on one of the offices in O'Connor as there will be four offices within the boundaries which exceeds the current cap of three.

While unsure of the fit out cost of the Merredin office, I am aware that the Esperance office(75 sq m) cost \$350 000 as recently as 2018.

I would suggest it would be a poor use of taxpayer resources to abandon the significant investment in office capacity already invested in towns and regional areas that are at least 300 km's from the nearest Commonwealth electorate office.

Recommendation

To resolve this situation which is particular to O'Connor I suggest an addition to subsection 32(2) 71 (2) to include " all electorates over 1 000 000sq km's have an allowance of \$50000 indexed and the allowance able to be allocated to more than one office".

This will allow members to exercise their discretion as to where to allocate resources over and above the 3 Commonwealth leased offices to best serve their constituents.

Staff resources would also need to be increased commensurate with the increased office resource and I would suggest one additional B position and one additional A position along with the appropriate additional ESA.

Thank you for considering the unique issues confronting the Electorate of O'Connor, and for working towards an improved level of access for constituent's, which while never being comparable with city-based electorates, can certainly be enhanced with an increased level of resourcing.

If you require further information or detail I would be delighted to assist.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

RICK WILSON MP

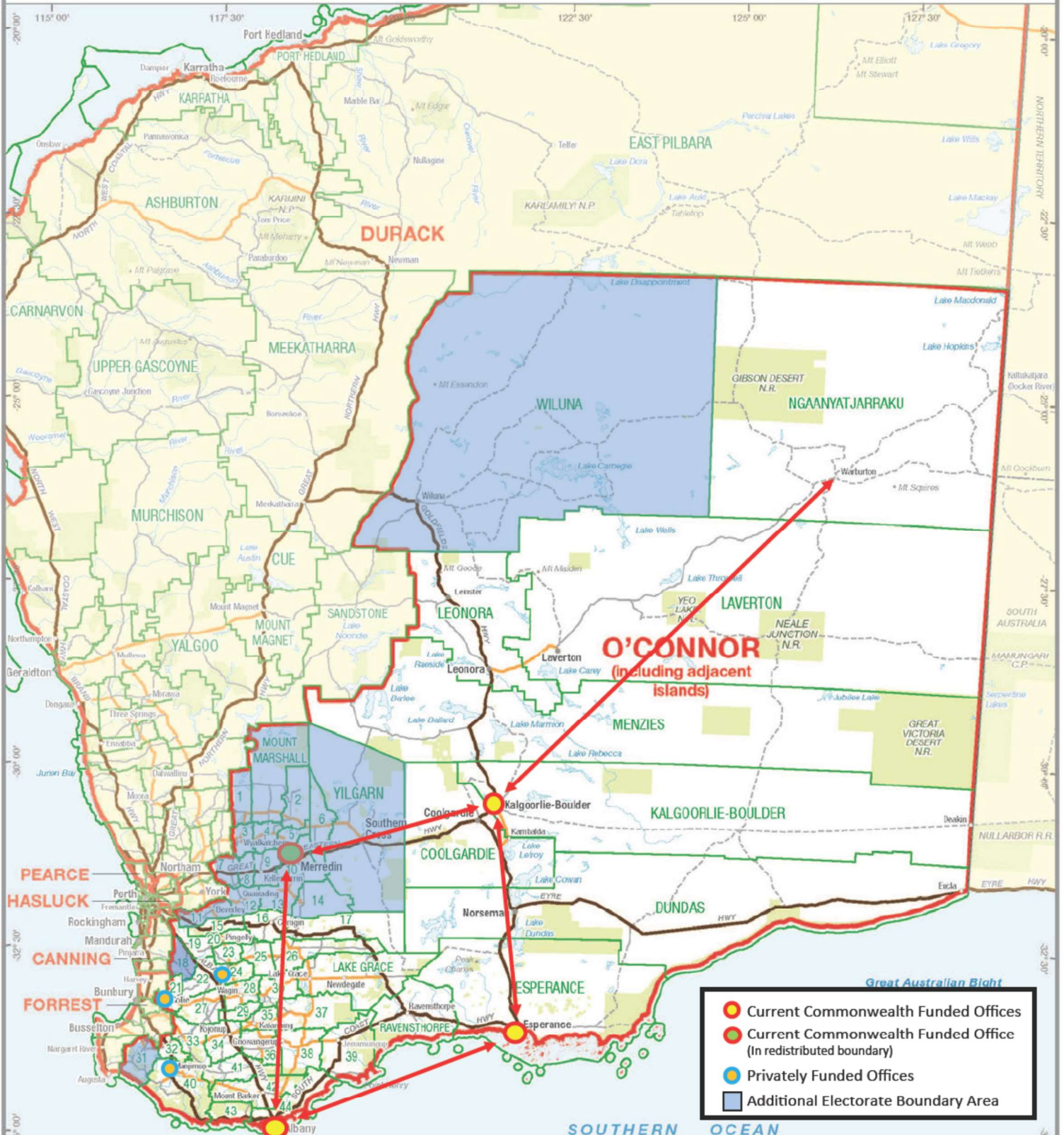
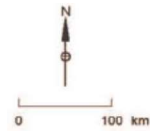
Federal Member for O'Connor



August 2021 MAP OF THE COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL DIVISION OF **O'CONNOR**

Name and Boundary of
Electoral Division
Names and Boundaries of
adjoining Electoral Divisions
Names and Boundaries of
Local Government Areas (2021)

O'CONNOR
DURACK
WILUNA



- Current Commonwealth Funded Offices
- Current Commonwealth Funded Office (In redistributed boundary)
- Privately Funded Offices
- Additional Electorate Boundary Area

Travel Distance
Kalgoorlie to Esperance (392.1km / 4hrs 16mins)
Esperance to Albany (481.3km / 5hr 18mins)
Albany to Merredin (468.3km / 5hr 13mins)
Kalgoorlie to Merredin (332.6km / 3hrs 31mins)

SOURCES
This map has been compiled by CartDeco from data supplied by the Australian Electoral Commission, Geoscape, Geoscience Australia and OpenStreetMap contributors.
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|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 KOORDA | 12 QUAIRADING | 23 CUBALLING | 34 KOJONUP |
| 2 MUKINBUDIN | 13 BRUCE ROCK | 24 NARRIGIN | 35 KATANNING |
| 3 WYALKATCHEM | 14 NAREMBEEN | 25 WICKEPIN | 36 BROOMEHILL-TAMBELLUP |
| 4 TRAYNING | 15 BROOKTON | 26 KULIN | 37 KENT |
| 5 NUNGARIN | 16 CORRIGIN | 27 WEST ARTHUR | 38 GNOWANGERUP |
| 6 WESTONIA | 17 KONDININ | 28 WAGIN | 39 JERRAMUNGUP |
| 7 CUNDERDIN | 18 BODDINGTON | 29 WOODANILLING | 40 MANJIMUP |
| 8 TAMMIN | 19 WANDERING | 30 DUMBLEYUNG | 41 CRANBROOK |
| 9 KELLERBERRIN | 20 PINGELLY | 31 NANNUP | 42 PLANTAGENET |
| 10 MERREDIN | 21 COLLIE | 32 BRIDGETOWN-GREENBUSHES | 43 DENMARK |
| 11 BEVERLEY | 22 WILLIAMS | 33 BOVUP BROOK | 44 ALBANY |