



Submission S5

District Council of Streaky Bay

24th October 2025

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

Submission to the Australian Electoral Commission – Concerning the Federal Redistribution in South Australia – Division of Grey from the District Council of Streaky Bay

Introduction

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Electoral Commission regarding the redistribution of federal divisions in South Australia. I write specifically in relation to the Division of Grey, which spans an extraordinary area and presents major challenges to democratic representation and community access.

While the current Member for Grey, Mr Tom Venning MP, is doing an excellent job of travelling across the electorate and engaging with communities, the sheer geographic size of the division means that many constituents have little or no opportunity to meet or interact with their Federal Member in person, and for the Federal Member to be across all relevant issues in their electorate. This is not a reflection on the Member's performance, but rather a structural issue created by the vastness and diversity of the electorate.

Geographic Realities of the Division of Grey

The Division of Grey covers 904,881 square kilometres—over 92 per cent of South Australia's total landmass. It stretches from the state's north-west desert regions to its coastal fishing towns, encompassing hundreds of communities separated by great distances.

South Australia is already the most centralised state in the nation, with the vast majority of its population and services concentrated around Adelaide. In contrast, Grey's population is dispersed across remote, rural, and regional areas, often separated by hundreds of kilometres and limited infrastructure.

From Streaky Bay, for instance, it is approximately 400 kilometres to the nearest Electoral Office. For many residents, that represents a full day's travel each way—making in-person access to their Member or electoral services largely impractical and costly.

Challenges for Representation and Access

The size and isolation of the Grey electorate mean that even with the Member's strong commitment, it is impossible for one representative to regularly reach and engage with all communities.

This challenge is amplified by the demographic profile of many communities within Grey:

- A higher proportion of older residents compared with metropolitan areas;
- Many of whom prefer or rely on non-electronic engagement—face-to-face discussions, paper correspondence, and in-person meetings rather than online consultations;
- Limited internet and telecommunications coverage, which further reduces opportunities for digital engagement.

These factors combine to make traditional democratic participation more difficult. Older residents often express frustration at being unable to speak directly with their Federal Member or access basic electoral support without significant travel. This situation risks diminishing both representation and voter confidence.

Community of Interest and the Redistribution Criteria

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

- Community of interests within proposed divisions;
- Means of communication and travel; and
- Physical features and area of the electorate.

Grey's current boundaries make it almost impossible to meet these principles in practice. The vast differences between northern mining towns, pastoral regions, and southern coastal communities mean that no single Member can fully represent the distinct interests and needs of all areas within such an enormous electorate.

The current structure also challenges the intent of "means of communication and travel." It should not be considered reasonable or effective representation when constituents must drive several hundred kilometres to access their elected representative or an electoral office.

The Case for Dividing the Division of Grey

For true and equitable representation, consideration should be given to dividing the Division of Grey into smaller, more manageable electorates.

A division of this scale might once have been necessary due to population size, but modern South Australia's demographic and technological realities suggest that effective representation requires geographic accessibility, not just numerical balance.

Splitting the Division could:

1. Enhance direct representation, ensuring communities can regularly interact with their Member;
2. Better reflect shared community interests, for instance grouping Eyre Peninsula and West Coast communities separately from the northern outback;
3. Reduce travel demands on both constituents and the Member;
4. Encourage higher engagement among older and less digitally connected populations;
5. Align with the AEC's principles of balancing population equality with accessibility and community cohesion.

The current configuration risks disenfranchising rural and remote Australians who, despite their civic engagement and strong community spirit, are functionally disconnected from the democratic process due to distance.

Conclusion

The Division of Grey represents one of the greatest challenges in the Australian electoral system. Despite the dedication and hard work of the current Member, geography itself has become a barrier to fair and effective representation.

In a state where population and government services are highly centralised, the needs of rural and remote communities cannot be adequately met through an electorate that covers nearly the entire state. It is time to recognise that size does not equal accessibility, and that fair representation requires boundaries that allow Members to genuinely engage with their constituents.

I therefore urge the Redistribution Committee to seriously consider dividing the Division of Grey to create electorates that are more geographically and socially cohesive. Doing so would restore a fairer balance between city and country representation and give residents across regional South Australia a more direct and meaningful connection to their Federal Member.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours faithfully,

CR TRAVIS BARBER
MAYOR
DISTRICT COUNCIL OF STREAKY BAY



ABN: 93 970 509 459

T: (08) 8626 1001

F: (08) 8626 1196

E: dcstreaky@streakybay.sa.gov.au

29 Alfred Terrace

PO Box 179

Streaky Bay SA 5680

www.streakybay.sa.gov.au

