

~~Mrs Frecklington interjected.~~

~~Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Member for Nanango, you are warned under standing order 253A for your continuous interjections, which do not appear to me to be relevant.~~

~~Mrs O'ROURKE: Regularly at the cabinet table I raise issues that impact on North Queensland on a daily basis. I have taken submissions that impact on my portfolio areas to cabinet and, as I said, I engage with my cabinet colleagues. If in a region I meet with somebody who has identified a particular issue, I take that matter directly to the appropriate minister. That is my role, that is what I do and it is what I will continue to do.~~

043

~~MOTION~~

~~Suspension of Standing Orders~~



~~Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (11.36 am), by leave, without notice: I move—~~

~~That, Standing Order 87(1) be suspended to enable the introduction of the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, being a Bill for an Act to amend the Constitution of Queensland 2001, the Electoral Act 1992, the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal Act 2013 for particular purposes, such purposes including:~~

- ~~(a) to provide for broader representation on the Redistribution Commission by increasing the membership of the Commission from three to five members and providing approval of those Commissioners by all party leaders in the Legislative Assembly; and~~
- ~~(b) to change the number of electoral districts for the State by increasing the number of members of the Legislative Assembly from 89 to 93 so as to improve representation, particularly in regional Queensland.~~

~~Division: Question put That the motion be agreed to.~~

~~In division—~~

~~An incident having occurred in the public gallery—~~

~~Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask our attendants to remove from the gallery the person to my immediate left.~~

044

~~AYES, 44:~~

~~LNP, 41—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.~~

~~KAP, 2—Katter, Knuth.~~

~~INDEPENDENT, 1—Pyne.~~

~~NOES, 42:~~

~~ALP, 41—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.~~

~~INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.~~

~~Pairs: Stewart, McVeigh.~~

~~Resolved in the affirmative.~~

ELECTORAL (IMPROVING REPRESENTATION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction



Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (11.43 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Constitution of Queensland 2001, the Electoral Act 1992, the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 and the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal Act 2013 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes.

Tabled paper: Electoral (Improving Representation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

Tabled paper: Electoral (Improving Representation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, explanatory notes.

This issue of how Queenslanders are represented and the process of determining that representation is obviously not a new debate to this parliament, but it is an important one. As members on this side of the House have travelled around Queensland what is abundantly clear is that representation for regional Queensland is an extremely important issue, which is why we are seeking to debate this issue for a third time.

The bill that I am introducing today contains parts of the previous LNP bill that was debated last year and parts of the previous Katter party bill that was also debated at the end of last year. In essence, it is a hybrid model of those two bills. The bill seeks to provide for broader representation on the Redistribution Commission by increasing the membership of the commission from three to five members. Those two additional members are known as expert appointees and must have qualifications in one or more of demography, statistics or regional and town planning.

In the interests of transparency on such an important issue, the bill also provides for a process for appointments of the additional commissioners, which are subject to the approval of the leaders of all recognised parties in the Legislative Assembly. The appointment approvals also have consultation processes built into the bill, requiring the minister to consult the relevant parliamentary committee—that being the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

The other key element of the bill increases the number of electoral districts for the states from 89 to 93 members so as to improve representation, particularly in rural and regional Queensland. Both of the key elements in the new bill were scrutinised by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in two separate processes last year.

As a parliament we need to recognise that extra technology, staff or officers will not solve the issues of density and sparse population that communities in remote parts of the state deal with on a daily basis. In many cases the technology is either inferior or does not exist at all.

The numbers of electoral districts in Queensland have not increased since 1986. That is a period of 30 years. Professor Graeme Orr said in his submission on the previous Katter party bill—

... it is preferable that Parliament should at least each generation consider its size in light of the needs of constituency representation and MPs/their electorate staff/technology. This bill is an opportunity for that consideration. Clearly, as the earlier inquiry and report noted, Queensland is not over-governed compared to other states in Australia—especially given its lack of an upper house and the large size (demographically and in some cases geographically) of its electoral districts. Hence an increase in the size of the Legislative Assembly now is justified.

The last time that this issue was considered and amended was in 1986. Queensland also has the second highest ratio of parliamentarians to residents in Australia of approximately one per 53,377 people based on December quarter ABS statistics. That fact, coupled with the fact that we are the most decentralised state in Australia, means that the people in rural and regional Queensland are the ones who suffer under the current arrangements.

In 1986 the ratio was one parliamentarian per 29,762 residents. I will repeat those respective ratios. The ratio is presently one parliamentarian per 53,377 residents. In 1986 it was one parliamentarian per 29,762 residents. When ERAC made its recommendation in 1986, 41 per cent of Queenslanders lived outside build-up areas. That percentage has now decreased to 29 per cent. Only 29 per cent of Queenslanders now live outside the heavily settled areas.

We have all heard of some of the extreme examples and the lengths that members such as Robbie Katter, the member for Mount Isa, and Lachie Millar, the member for Gregory, go to to represent their constituents. There are many other members in this House who do the same thing. It is not something that they do on an extraordinary basis it is done by them on a regular basis. I do not think that it is neither fair for these members nor fair for the residents living in these parts of the state to simply put up with this because it is the expectation that it just has to be done.

The Clerk of the Parliament in his evidence to the committee referenced a paper he produced in 2009 suggesting that the parliament needed another 10 seats and the consequences if nothing changed. He said—

It needs to be made clear, however, that the status quo (i.e. no extra seats) will mean that each redistribution will result in less country and regional seats. This will result in less representation in the Queensland Parliament of country and regional people.

This issue is timely, members, because the commencement of the next redistribution is imminent. This is an important issue now because we believe that the Redistribution Commission which considers the bill should be considering the next redistribution in the context of the particular changes that we propose in this bill.

015 In the interests of timeliness of the consideration of that process, which is due to commence, and the fact that this bill has effectively been considered by two committee reviews last year, it means that sending this bill off to a committee for a third review would be a pointless exercise and a waste of time for that committee. This is also not a new issue and one that received much consideration and public debate last year on two separate occasions. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (11.49 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Declared Urgent



~~**Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (11.50 am), by leave, without notice: I move—~~

~~That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to:~~

- ~~(a) enable the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to pass through its remaining stages at this week's sitting; and~~
- ~~(b) enable consideration of the bill to take precedence over all other business following private members' statements this Thursday.~~



~~**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.50 am): What we have seen here this morning is an extraordinary overturning of the rules and standing orders of this House. What we have enshrined in the standing orders of this House is a commitment to ensuring—~~

~~**Ms Simpson** interjected.~~

~~**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Maroochydore. I do not need your assistance. You will have an opportunity to speak, if you choose, later on. I am listening to the Leader of the House.~~

~~**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** What we have here is a situation where the practices and understandings and, indeed, the standing orders that specifically prohibit the reconsideration of a matter that has been considered by the parliament, by this the 55th Parliament, have been overturned, taking advantage of a shift in numbers. This is simple politics which ignores the reasons why we have the rules. I am not surprised. We saw on so many occasions in the 54th Parliament those opposite, having a dominance of numbers, ignore the rules and throw them asunder. We have seen that.~~

~~**Mr Cripps** interjected.~~

~~**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Hinchinbrook, those interjections are not appropriate. You are warned under standing order 253A.~~

~~**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Here we are at the beginning of a parliamentary sitting week and we have a range of very important matters before the House that need to be dealt with in a timely way. We have matters that relate to domestic and family violence. We have matters that relate to the delivery of certainty around significant major investments in our state. We have matters that relate to the operation of the Crime and Corruption Commission. We have matters before the House that relate to our very important—and I hear so many opposite saying how important it is—racing industry and how we can ensure that integrity is established and delivered in relation to that industry.~~

~~We also have matters in relation to the environmental management of our state and the environmental management of resource projects, ensuring that those people who are responsible for those sorts of projects are held responsible for the damage that they may have potentially done. We also have private members' business that is before the House and that this House has agreed quite broadly to see debated this week in relation to the taxi industry. What we see here today is an attempt to throw that all of that into a spin, to throw that to one side, and make this parliament debate again something that has been debated and very clearly determined by this House. This House has made a decision in relation to the reintroduction effectively of some form of gerrymander.~~

~~**Mr WALKER:** Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the comments of the Leader of the House in respect of gerrymander offensive and I ask that he withdraw.~~

~~**Mr SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. It was not reflecting directly on you, as I understand it. I did not hear the comment, but did it reflect on you specifically, member for Mansfield?~~