

Submission to Parliamentary Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
23/11/15

Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015

In my opinion, the three main objectives of this Bill will improve Queensland representation significantly for the following reasons:

1. Changing the number of electoral districts, and thus members of Parliament for Queensland from 89 to 93 will improve substantially Queensland constituent representation.

It has been almost 30 years since the last increase in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, with the seats rising from 82 to 89, serving a population of 2.5 million. Today there are over 4.8 million Queenslanders.

NSW by comparison has 93 electoral districts in the lower house and an upper house of 42 members, a total of 135 elected members. Victoria has 88 electoral districts but an upper house of 40 members, a total of 128 elected members. Neither New South Wales nor Victoria has the huge land mass and huge distances that we have here in Queensland.

The proportionate increase in major urban areas have led to an expansion in many rural seats which can least afford it.

The replacement of the role of an Upper House with an enhanced committee system has increased the workload for many Members of Parliament, reducing the time available for electoral matters and face to face time with constituents.

Many Ministers and Shadow Ministers are away from their electorates a substantial part of their time. Additionally the growth in electronic communications has expanded the workload of Members, with an increased expectation and a diminished timeframe for replies. This is not healthy for parliamentary members, their families, or good governance.

Electorates over 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> represent a massive amount of time spent travelling, and due to their size have limitations on the options for travel.

2. Moving the Electoral Commission of Queensland to an independent body that is appointed with the approval of all political parties provides the transparency and accountability that the Fitzgerald Inquiry report and subsequent EARC process – demanded.
3. Expanding the resources available to the Redistribution Commission by appointing a non-judicial appointee to the Commission who has qualifications and experience in applied demography to replace the chief executive of a state government department will bring about a far better result overall.

This is a huge job and the Redistribution Commission needs the man-power, ability, resources and tools to act in the best interest of all Queenslanders. By refusing to appointe

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this essential member to the Commission for partisan purposes acts against the best interests of all Queenslanders.

I urge the Members of the Queensland Parliament to pass this Bill enabling the Redistribution Commission to be set up with reasonable resources and guidelines before the Electoral Boundary Review commences next year. It is in Queensland's best interests to provide a transparent, open and fair solution without being dragged along by the shadow of partisan politics.

Joyce Newton

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