



**Research Director**

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

*23 November, 2015*

Director,

**RE: Queensland Greens Submission to LACSC - *Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015***

Please find attached our submission to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee on the changes proposed by the *Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015*.

If there are any questions or further follow up required, please feel free to contact the Queensland Greens State office.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Cotter  
Queensland Greens Secretary

# Queensland Greens

*Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015 - Submission*

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Prepared - 23 November 2015

## Foreword

The following submission represents the considered position of the Queensland Greens on the *Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015* as well as related issues contained within the intended purposes associated with the bill in its accompanying explanatory notes.

The Queensland Greens would like to thank the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for inviting us to make a submission on the bill. We would also like to thank Mr Robert Katter, Member for Mt Isa, for his efforts on the bill.

## In Response to the Proposed Aims of the Bill

1. *Change the number of electoral districts, and thus members of Parliament, for Queensland from 89 to 93 in order to improve representation*

The Queensland Greens do not oppose in itself an increase to the number of representatives in parliament, and we accept the premise that increasing the number of seats would in a small way relieve some pressure on necessity of increasing the size of the large district seats.

However the proposed changes will not address the fundamental issue of lack of representation or proportionality in the Queensland parliament. Moving to a system of Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), or, less ideally, restoring the Legislative Council, would go a lot further to meeting the goals of making parliament more responsive to the public while at the same time allowing for local representatives supported with list allocated MPs who can support their colleagues in regional areas.

Specifically on the topic of adding seats to parliament, we still question the arbitrary reasoning behind increasing parliament by 4 seats as we did with the arbitrary and relatively small increase in seats proposed in the *Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015*.

Below is a table of parliament sizes and the effects on both the district quota overall, the quota for the 5 large seats as a percentage of that quota and the estimated costs of adding the associated number of MPs as estimated by the Clerk in a previous submission. The highlighted line is the current proposal, it shows a relatively tiny move in the quota percentage for Mt Isa, the seat that is most in question.

Electorate s	Quota <sup>1</sup>	District population (% of Quota) <sup>2</sup>					Cost (est) <sup>3</sup>
		Cook	Dalrymple	Gregory	Mt Isa	Warrego	
89	33,496	88.4%	90.2%	79.2%	58.0%	80.6%	-
90	33,124	89.4%	91.2%	80.1%	58.6%	81.5%	\$0.6m
91	32,760	90.4%	92.2%	81.0%	59.3%	82.4%	\$1.2m
92	32,404	91.4%	93.2%	81.9%	59.9%	83.3%	\$1.8m
93	32,055	92.4%	94.2%	82.8%	60.6%	84.2%	\$2.4m
95	31,381	94.4%	96.2%	84.5%	61.9%	86.0%	\$3.6m
97	30,733	96.4%	98.3%	86.3%	63.2%	87.8%	\$4.8m
99	30,133	98.3%	<b>100.3%</b>	88.1%	64.5%	89.6%	\$6.0m
101	29,516	<b>100.3%</b>	<b>102.3%</b>	89.9%	65.8%	91.4%	\$7.2m

Table 1 - Effect of extra Electorates on Quota & Costs

While it is true that dropping the quota will mean that Mt Isa could theoretically shrink by up to 75,000Km<sup>2</sup> (presuming no transfer of population out of the seat), the seat itself is already 7.96% under quota based on the adjusted quota level as it stands<sup>4</sup>, its quite possible the seat will remain largely the same size if not a little larger than it is now.

Based on those numbers, it's at least questionable if the bill will meet its goal of improving representation in large districts. It is quite likely that Mt Isa and to a lesser extent Gregory could continue to grow in land area significantly as coastal areas and greater south east Queensland far outstrip the growth rate of these seats.

If we are to reach the goals intended by this bill without always facing the political contentions of adding extra parliamentarians, the introduction of a

<sup>1</sup>

[http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/34525/SGE15-Statistical-Return-v4-Interactive-SingleLow-Res.pdf](http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/34525/SGE15-Statistical-Return-v4-Interactive-SingleLow-Res.pdf) (page 42)

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/LACSC/2015/05-ElectoralRedistAAAB15/submissions/013.pdf> (Page 7)

<sup>4</sup>

[http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/34525/SGE15-Statistical-Return-v4-Interactive-SingleLow-Res.pdf](http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/34525/SGE15-Statistical-Return-v4-Interactive-SingleLow-Res.pdf) (page 42)

formula to be applied at the same time as the redistribution would be appropriate.

As an example, we have developed a simple formula that could be used to meet this goal. Every time a redistribution is held in the state (either every 7 years or when more than 1/3 of electorates exceed the 10% population variance tolerance), the following calculation would be performed to determine the number of seats that should be included in the redistribution.

$$\text{Quota}_{\text{Voters}} = (E_{\text{Prev}} + (E_{\text{Now}} - E_{\text{Prev}}) / 3 \times 2) / EI_{\text{Now}}$$

Where Quota is the number of voters required to make an electorate,  $E_{\text{prev}}$  is the enrollment at the last redistribution and  $E_{\text{Now}}$  is the current enrollment and  $EI_{\text{Now}}$  is the current number of electorates.

In effect, the formula above will add 2/3 of the growth of enrollments to existing electorates and 1/3 to new electorates, with the new number of electorates equal to the calculated quota divided by the electorates rounded down to the nearest whole number.

We have estimated the effects of such a formula applied over many years using the Queensland Government Statistical Office’s low population growth estimate (both are included in appendix A) with the current ratio of population to electors (62.75%). The table and chart below shows the estimated growth in seats and electorate quota for the status quo, the formula described and a scenario where the seat quota is fixed to the current level (33,496).

Review Year	Status Quo	Formula	Fixed Quota
2009	89	89	89
2016	89	92	89
2023	89	95	99
2030	89	99	109
2037	89	102	120
2044	89	104	130
2051	89	107	140
2058	89	109	149

Table 2 - Comparisons of seats under different growth methods

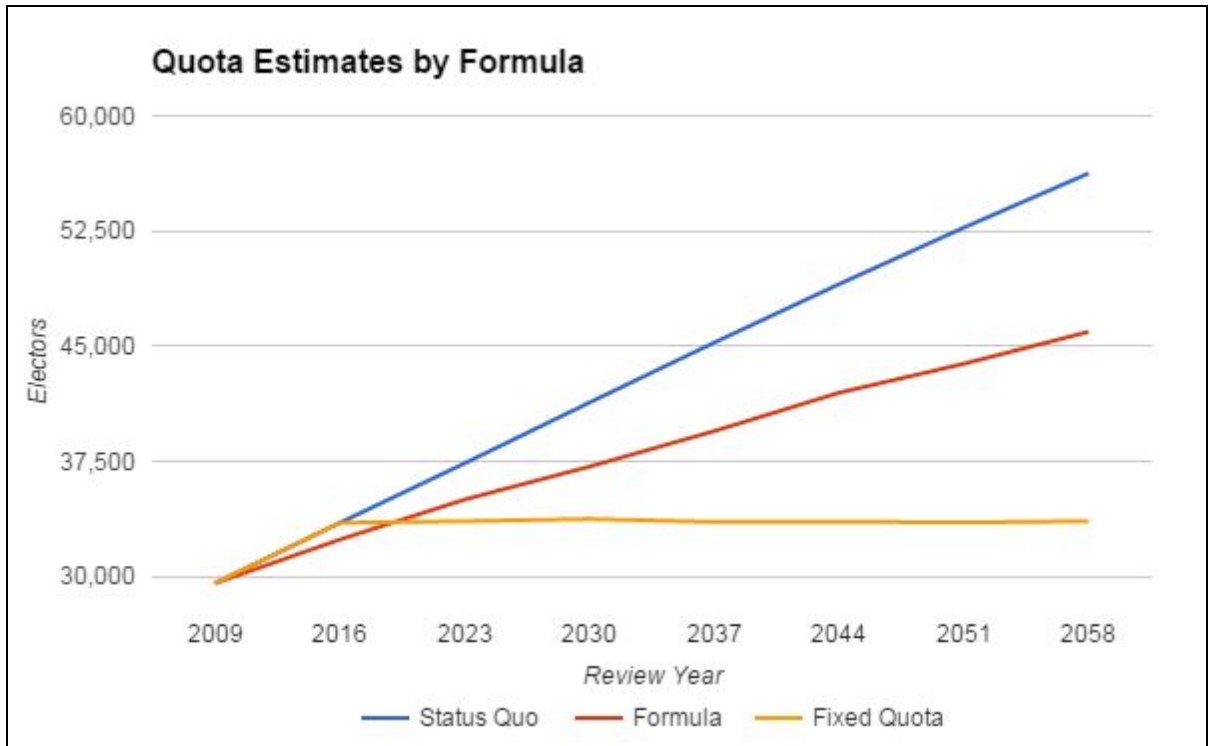


Chart 1 - Comparison of electorate quota over time.

The advantage of using a formula such as this is that it removes political influence from the frame and allows parliament to expand at a consistent rate without politicians needing to be concerned about the perceptions to do with increasing the number of electorates. The major drawback of such a method is that the expansion of parliament would be independent of the ability of parties and communities to find suitable candidates for all of the positions on offer.

We are not directly advocating for a specific formula, but that the committee consider making a recommendation to include such a formula in the legislation to avoid situations like those described in the explanatory notes where inaction has led to electorates that would be difficult for a single politician to represent effectively the electors in the district.

2. *Improve the establishment of an Electoral Commission of Queensland by requiring bipartisan support of a parliamentary committee*

In terms of appointing an Electoral Commission, we are not too concerned with the idea that a parliamentary committee consider and provide support to the Commissioner, Chairman and Non-Judicial appointments. However, as with the similar suggestion in the *Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015* we remain unconvinced that such a measure represents a significant improvement in redressing bias either real or perceived in the appointment of, or duties carried out by, the ECQ.

The bill still allows politicians, who will continue to have a vested interest in the operations of the ECQ deciding its leadership, and leaves non-parliamentary parties which also have a stake in the operations of the electoral system without any effective means of having their concerns addressed. There is also potential for parties through the committee to delay or frustrate efforts to replace a role on the Electoral Commission to apply political pressure or create media opportunities.

If there were to be a preferred model for selecting new Electoral Commission members, we would recommend a committee of electors appointed by sortition be given a brief on the requirements of the role, and to then make the recommended appointment by consensus.

If the idea of having this heard by a committee is retained, then one way to address the concerns raised would be to ask the candidate to present their credentials in a public hearing and then allow any submissions with a concern about an appointment to raise those concerns directly and allow the candidate to address those concerns.



3. *Improve redistribution of electoral districts by appointing a non-judicial appointee to the Commission who has qualifications and experience in applied demography, in place of the current requirement for a chief executive of a state government department.*

The Queensland Greens would not oppose this change, though on reading the exact changes involved we are not entirely sure if this is completely necessary to ensure the effective operations of the ECQ.

On the basis of our experiences with the ECQ in the preparation of materials and statistical data in the past, we are satisfied that they are meeting the expectations that we would hold for any electoral commission. We are just not sure what if anything the changes of appointment are meant to achieve. This is not to say that the appointment of a chief executive of a department is in any way superior, if anything they are largely the same with maybe slightly different focuses.

## Further Commentary

Without wishing to be disrespectful of the drafters of this bill or its sponsors, it appears to us that the bill has a single purpose: to slightly increase the number of parliamentarians.

This is not in itself problematic, parliamentarians have the right to argue for an increase in their numbers. What is surprising is the apparent need to weigh down those deliberations with what seem to be cosmetic changes to the electoral system. The only reasonable conclusion we can draw for this is that politicians are extremely concerned about the public perception of such changes.

This bill, and the *Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015* share this fear of public reaction, either by deferring decisions to unelected committees or through making minor changes to take attention from the increase. In this submission we made a recommendation about setting a formula for seat increases, and that is one way to solve this issue but we would like the committee to think of the broader picture.

A Lowy Institute study from 2014 reported that only 60% of all Australians and a mere 42% of Australians aged between 18-29 believe that democracy is preferable to any other method of governance<sup>5</sup>. An ANU/Social Research Centre report from 2014 suggests that satisfaction with democracy has slumped to 72%, and that only 43% of people believed it made a difference which political party was in power.<sup>6</sup> Increasingly this is not a problem about the number of politicians but a more fundamental disquiet about the way our democracy functions.

The Queensland Greens are calling on the committee to make a recommendation to parliament to hold a convention on democracy and electoral matters to canvass broadly for new ideas and concepts to invigorate our democracy. It's also an excellent chance to bring people into government by advising them how it works and what it can do for them separate from the day to day political arguments that dominate our news cycle.

The next election is due to begin in 2018 presuming no early dissolution, if time was spent discussing and agreeing to changes, by the close of 2016 there will be

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<sup>5</sup>

<http://www.lowyinstitute.org/news-and-media/press-releases/2014-lowy-institute-poll-confirms-australian-s-ambivalence-about-democracy>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-11/poll-data-reveals-waning-interest-in-politics/5662568>

sufficient time to implement changes. Ideal timing for a broad based review that focuses on participation and bringing people back to the system.

## Conclusion

The Queensland Greens support the reasoning behind an increase in the number of seats proposed in this bill and the reasoning for that increase provided by Mr. Katter. The other changes proposed in this bill at best represents a very minor change to the overall workings of democracy in Queensland and if passed will mark almost no change to the electoral system but are in themselves inconsequential and are not opposed by the Greens.

We are calling on the committee to consider a broader approach to democratic reform moving forward to address broad-based concern about the system taking into account public concerns about how we are governed to develop approaches to redressing apathy and disenfranchisement around our government.

We would like to once again thank the committee for its work, and thank Mr Robert Katter, Member for Mt Isa for his efforts on the bill.

## Appendix A - Calculations for Seat Formula

Review Year	Estimated electors	Growth	Quota per seat	Number of seats
2009	2,630,840		29,560	89.0
2016	<b>2,981,145</b>	350,305	32,184	92.6
2023	3,326,214	345,069	34,668	95.9
2030	3,678,230	352,016	37,113	99.1
2037	4,025,657	347,427	39,451	102.0
2044	4,364,374	338,717	41,663	104.8
2051	4,692,118	327,744	43,749	107.3
2058	5,006,723	314,605	45,705	109.5

Table 3 - Breakdown of calculations for formula using low population growth est.

Population Estimates						
Year	QGSO - Population Estimate <sup>7</sup>			Elector Estimate (62.75% of Population)		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
2015	4,805,079	4,842,117	4,873,450	3,015,187	3,038,428	3,058,090
2016	4,889,453	4,946,319	4,995,388	3,068,132	3,103,815	3,134,606
2017	4,972,910	5,055,027	5,124,559	3,120,501	3,172,029	3,215,661
2018	5,055,843	5,160,698	5,254,382	3,172,541	3,238,338	3,297,125
2019	5,138,188	5,266,328	5,384,798	3,224,213	3,304,621	3,378,961
2020	5,219,853	5,371,823	5,515,712	3,275,458	3,370,819	3,461,109
2021	5,300,740	5,477,082	5,647,020	3,326,214	3,436,869	3,543,505
2022	5,380,713	5,581,959	5,778,568	3,376,397	3,502,679	3,626,051
2023	5,460,858	5,687,528	5,911,417	3,426,688	3,568,924	3,709,414
2024	5,541,090	5,793,696	6,045,482	3,477,034	3,635,544	3,793,540
2025	5,621,340	5,900,407	6,180,671	3,527,391	3,702,505	3,878,371
2026	5,701,568	6,007,578	6,316,877	3,577,734	3,769,755	3,963,840
2027	5,781,712	6,115,134	6,454,009	3,628,024	3,837,247	4,049,891
2028	5,861,721	6,223,014	6,591,992	3,678,230	3,904,941	4,136,475
2029	5,941,551	6,331,172	6,730,776	3,728,323	3,972,810	4,223,562
2030	6,021,167	6,439,576	6,870,343	3,778,282	4,040,834	4,311,140
2031	6,100,538	6,548,220	7,010,674	3,828,088	4,109,008	4,399,198
2032	6,179,653	6,657,110	7,151,759	3,877,732	4,177,337	4,487,729
2033	6,258,502	6,766,241	7,293,608	3,927,210	4,245,816	4,576,739
2034	6,337,083	6,875,615	7,436,274	3,976,520	4,314,448	4,666,262
2035	6,415,390	6,985,247	7,579,804	4,025,657	4,383,242	4,756,327
2036	6,493,413	7,095,177	7,724,268	4,074,617	4,452,224	4,846,978
2037	6,571,142	7,205,434	7,869,750	4,123,392	4,521,410	4,938,268
2038	6,648,567	7,316,041	8,016,317	4,171,976	4,590,816	5,030,239
2039	6,725,688	7,427,038	8,164,065	4,220,369	4,660,466	5,122,951
2040	6,802,508	7,538,464	8,313,081	4,268,574	4,730,386	5,216,458
2041	6,879,011	7,650,333	8,463,435	4,316,579	4,800,584	5,310,805
2042	6,955,178	7,762,668	8,615,226	4,364,374	4,871,074	5,406,054
2043	7,030,987	7,875,507	8,768,545	4,411,944	4,941,881	5,502,262
2044	7,106,419	7,988,855	8,923,494	4,459,278	5,013,007	5,599,492

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/tables/proj-pop-series-qld/index.php>

2045	7,181,467	8,102,700	9,080,106	4,506,371	5,084,444	5,697,767
2046	7,256,118	8,217,035	9,238,408	4,553,214	5,156,189	5,797,101
2047	7,330,353	8,331,875	9,398,415	4,599,797	5,228,252	5,897,505
2048	7,404,137	8,447,210	9,560,135	4,646,096	5,300,624	5,998,985
2049	7,477,479	8,563,076	9,723,679	4,692,118	5,373,330	6,101,609
2050	7,550,394	8,679,439	9,888,991	4,737,872	5,446,348	6,205,342
2051	7,622,869	8,796,256	10,055,996	4,783,350	5,519,651	6,310,137
2052	7,694,904	8,913,494	10,224,618	4,828,552	5,593,217	6,415,948
2053	7,766,505	9,031,123	10,394,781	4,873,482	5,667,030	6,522,725
2054	7,837,683	9,149,118	10,566,518	4,918,146	5,741,072	6,630,490
2055	7,908,456	9,267,465	10,739,818	4,962,556	5,815,334	6,739,236
2056	7,978,841	9,386,231	10,914,580	5,006,723	5,889,860	6,848,899
2057	8,048,858	9,505,442	11,090,731	5,050,658	5,964,665	6,959,434
2058	8,118,527	9,625,080	11,268,217	5,094,376	6,039,738	7,070,806
2059	8,187,859	9,745,125	11,447,057	5,137,882	6,115,066	7,183,028
2060	8,256,860	9,865,562	11,627,322	5,181,180	6,190,640	7,296,145
> 2061	8,325,532	9,986,381	11,809,027	5,224,271	6,266,454	7,410,164

Table 4 - Population Estimates (QGSO) and Elector Estimates