

**QUEENSLAND COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES**

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The Chair
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

By Email

Dear Sir

Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015

I refer to your letter dated 22 July 2015 seeking a submission from the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties ("the QCCL") on the above Bill. I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

The Council is a purely voluntary organization which receives no government funding for its day-to-day operations. It has as its principal objective the implementation in Queensland of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 21 of the Declaration provides:

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

We will address the three issues raised in your letter as numbered in that letter:

1. It is axiomatic that the Redistribution Commission should be independent. From that point of view we can have no objection to proposals to increase the membership of the Commission from 3 to 5 and to make the appointment of the commissioners subject to the approval of the leaders of all recognized parties represented in the Legislative Assembly. However, we wonder why this change is necessary. We are also concerned about this proposal leading to paralysis given the recent problems of agreeing on the appointment of a new Chair to the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commission Committee.
2. This proposal apparently sourced from the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission is to allow the Redistribution Commission to increase the number of electoral districts in the Legislative Assembly by a maximum of five additional electorates. As we understand it the number of seats in the Parliament was last increased in 1986 when it went from 82 to 89. In 1986 there were approximately 2.5 million people in Queensland. There are approximately 4.8 million people in Queensland today. Such an increase in the population must necessitate an increase in the size of the Parliament if people are to be properly represented. However, this should be done by the Parliament not by some statutory authority.
3. This proposal is to allow the Redistribution Commission to have the capacity, at its discretion, to amend the additional large district number currently set at 2% up to 4%. If this change is to be made it should be made by the Parliament.

Watching them while they are watching you!


Under the current legislation the Commission must ensure that the number of electors in a district is within a 10% range. However in the case of electorates of an area of more than 100,000 km² a number is added to the number of electors to bring them within the 10% of the average number of electors for districts. This number is arrived at by calculating 2% of the total area of the elector.

In our submission the weighting should in fact be repealed. It only exists in one other state with an equally distressing history of malapportionment – Western Australia. It is in contradiction to the basic principle of "one vote one value". It is our view that "one-vote one value" is a fundamental principle of ensuring that individuals have an equal capacity to control the government processes. Issues relating to distance in large electorates are best dealt with by the use of modern technology and increased resources and not by distorting the voting system. This change would be nothing more than a step backwards to the system of malapportionment which characterized the Queensland electoral system for most of the last century under both Labor and National Party governments.

Of course, the issue of distance in a large electorates would be considerably reduced if a number of electorates was in fact increased to reflect the increasing population.

We trust this submission is of assistance to you in your deliberations.

Yours faithfully


Michael Cope
President
For and on behalf of the
Queensland Council for Civil Liberties
14 August 2015