



Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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**ELECTORAL (REDISTRIBUTION COMMISSION) AND ANOTHER ACT
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.39 pm): I rise in the Legislative Assembly chamber this evening to oppose the Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill introduced by the member for Mansfield and supported by the Liberal National Party opposition. Let me be very clear on what this bill will do. This bill will take Queensland back to the bad old days. Make no mistake: if this bill is passed, it will return Queensland back to the days when electoral malapportionment allowed one party to rule Queensland with an outright majority—the then National Party, which secured 49 seats out of 89 at the 1986 election—while receiving under 40 per cent of the vote. Old habits die hard. That was when Queensland was the laughing stock of the rest of Australia. This bill seeks to return Queensland to that time.

The people who will be most disenfranchised if this bill is passed will be people in electorates such as my own electorate of Woodridge. In 1989, when the late Wayne Goss was elected as Labor premier of Queensland—one of our state's finest premiers—he represented the state electorate of Logan, a seat which covered much of what is now the electorate of Woodridge. At the 1989 election, Logan had 29,192 electors, while the previous premier who lost his position at that election, the then National Party member for Roma, Russell Cooper, represented an electorate with 8,221 voters. In many ways this was a symbol of what changed in Queensland at that election. A premier who had been elected by 8,000 voters was replaced by a premier who had been elected by 30,000 voters. In that election, the votes of electors in one state electorate were worth more than three times the value of Queenslanders living in another part of our state.

The Goss government set about establishing fairer electoral boundaries which have worked well for Queensland since that time, and members opposite can hardly complain about them. In 2012, on those boundaries, they secured the largest parliamentary majority in Queensland political history. Of course, they destroyed all of that at the last election, which is, of course, what this bill is all about—obtaining and then entrenching power for those members opposite by any means necessary. This bill is not about fairness for Queenslanders. It is not about better electoral representation. It is all about getting back into power.

What I find greatly disappointing about this bill is that it is being moved and sponsored by the member for Mansfield. I respect the role the member for Mansfield played in the Liberal Party back in the 1980s, when he urged the Liberal Party to stand up to the Nationals. In fact, the member for Mansfield was the one who moved the motion at the Liberal Party state executive to disband the coalition. At that stage there were some Liberals who had principles—people like Terry Gygar, Ian Prentice, Angus Innes, Rob Akers and Rosemary Kyburz. I ask the member for Mansfield: does he remember them? He should—he was among their peers at that time. In fact, this is what the honourable member for Mansfield had to say about those times in his first speech in this very chamber—

In 1983 I was a member of the state executive of the Liberal Party when tension between the coalition members reached breaking point. Although always supporting the view that a cooperative coalition was the best form of government for Queensland, when the tough times came I was a strong supporter of the Liberal cause.

The member for Mansfield was someone who stood up to the worst excesses of the National Party when it was in office back in the 1980s. But how things have changed. The other urban based LNP members who once were Liberals should also hang their heads in shame over this attempt to turn back the clock to the days when Queensland was run by a rotten government elected under a rotten electoral system. I look forward to hearing the contribution of Liberals like the members for Indooroopilly, Clayfield, Surfers Paradise and Caloundra. I look forward to them defending the Liberal tradition of one vote, one value.

What this bill effectively does is take away representation of people in electorates such as my own. We have heard from those opposite about the time and effort involved in servicing large electorates in Queensland. I respect the work ethic of those honourable members who service those electorates and have to travel very long distances. In early July I travelled for a number of hours on the Atherton Tablelands with the honourable member for Dalrymple, who then faced many hours drive from Ravenshoe back to Charters Towers. I congratulate the honourable member for Mount Isa in seeking to obtain a pilot's licence to better service his electorate.

But, as members of this parliament, if we do our job properly—a job we all do voluntarily, because none of us are forced to be here—we all work hard. Some of us represent incredibly diverse electorates, electorates that face incredibly diverse challenges. Some of us have up to 17 people waiting in our office at any one time, waiting for a simple JP signature, many of them refugees and migrants—people who have next to nothing, people who are sometimes not even citizens of our nation—and for some of us that happens day in day out, month in month out. In Woodridge the doors of the electorate office are open to all. Those people seek our assistance to improve their lives and we give it to them.

But we do not make our democracy better if those MPs faced with the challenge of geography are advantaged over the rest of us. The simple and undeniable truth is that Queensland's population is growing most quickly on coastal areas and in particular in areas such as Logan to Brisbane south and in the Moreton Bay Regional Council area to the north of our capital. This bill seeks to disenfranchise those people. In a decade and a half, an additional 300,000 people will live in the areas to Brisbane's north and south. This bill will seek to permanently disenfranchise those people. The member for Mansfield, in introducing this bill, said—

Given the degree to which Western Queensland's population is growing compared with other parts of the state, it is clear that the west would pay the price to give the south-east corner in particular those new seats.

I would like to turn that proposition around—and that is that, under the LNP's bill, it will be the people of South-East Queensland who will be paying the price to provide greater representation to those Queenslanders living in regional and rural parts of this state.

I want to be quite clear. I have enormous respect for my fellow Queenslanders, citizens who live in the western and northern parts of this state, many of whom face the daily burden of a cruel, relentless and unremitting drought. As health minister, I have visited Roma, Longreach, Barcaldine, Isisford, Mount Isa, Bamaga, Weipa and Saibai. Earlier this year I visited the central west with my own sons so they could better understand the size of our state and the challenges communities in the west now face. But this bill seeks to disenfranchise people in seats such as the one that I represent in this place. If the system it seeks to reintroduce became entrenched, it would inevitably lead to perverse electoral, political and public administration outcomes of the type that were common in the 1980s. Like so much of what the LNP proposes, it takes us forward to the past. This bill must be opposed.