




Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.09 pm): I rise to oppose the Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015 mainly on the basis that I fundamentally support one vote, one value. There are a number of inclusions in this bill which must be opposed for no other reason than the fact that it was developed without any information being given to the people of Queensland. It came in after, as the Premier said, we put our first budget down. There was not any widespread community consultation or any independent expert review. Probably one of the most anticipated reports following the Fitzgerald inquiry would have to have been the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission's report on Queensland's electoral boundaries. I clearly remember many organisations, including the Citizens for Democracy, strongly advocating along with the ALP for the fundamental principle of one vote, one value.

Since the implementation of the EARC report on electoral boundaries, which was critical of Queensland's zonal system, finding that it was contrary to a fair system for voters and unacceptable in a modern democracy, Queenslanders have had no appetite to turn back the clock. They have no appetite for terms coming back like 'gerrymander'. They have no appetite for terms like the 'phantom voter formula'. They have no appetite for voting based on size, not people. People vote, not trees or acres of land, but those opposite want to return to bad old days where square kilometres of land count in lieu of voters and people.

Although not totally convinced, the ALP went along with the recommendations of EARC and a two zonal system was agreed to at the time due to the small weightage recommended and, in reality, only six electorates would be affected. The Liberal Party was totally opposed to this, claiming that it was a multizonal system. Where are they now? Where is the member for Mansfield now standing up for what the Liberal Party's values were back then?

The Labor Goss government and the Hon. Matt Foley struggled with the EARC report on this issue as Labor opposed weightage and the zonal system but had a strong desire to deliver Queensland a system based on integrity, honesty and fairness. Although they disagreed with the departure of one vote, one value due to the small amount of weightage—two per cent—and the independent and open redistribution process, the weightage proposed was acceptable mainly due to the fact that the outcome did not favour any particular political party, but this bill turns it all on its head. We hear those opposite saying, 'We are only giving them options'—options of doubling the weightage. If they really want an independent view, why give them any options? Why not leave it open to them to decide what it is they can do? Why stipulate anything at all? Because we know exactly where those opposite want to go.

A small group, not the parliament, is given the option of increasing the number of electoral districts in the Legislative Assembly from 89 to 94. Why 89 to 94? What if they decide there are to be fewer or more? Why not just keep it open? Because we know what is behind this. There are other provisions that can only be described as a means to frustrate the appointments to the Queensland Redistribution Commission.

While I understand the EARC possible reasoning for a weightage in its report in 1990, I believe many of the issues it raised about representation—and even those that are raised here today; yes, there are some rural areas that are very big but you are not going to get 10 members representing that rural area and, other than that, there is no way that you are going to diminish the size of those rural areas—relating to increases and advances in technology are no longer relevant today. Back in 1990 mobile phones were the size of bricks and the internet was only just being established.

Ms LEAHY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. There has not been advances in those rural and regional areas in relation to telecommunications. The member is misleading the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Warrego, there is no point of order. Before I call the member for Brisbane Central, I remind the House that there is a general warning that members are to desist interjecting. The next person to interject will be warned under the standing orders.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, and for the benefit of my rural colleagues, back then mobile phones were the size of bricks, the internet was only just being established, social media was not even heard of, emails practically did not exist and texting was not even in the English language. Things have definitely changed since the 1990s. Communication technology has significantly improved, and to suggest a doubling of the weightage even as an option in this day and age is totally unnecessary and smacks of wanting the good old days of gerrymander back and don't we want them back!

I know the voters of Brisbane Central support one vote, one value and do not accept for one second that their vote is worth any less than those in rural seats and vice versa. I strongly support one vote, one value. This bill is totally unnecessary, and I urge all members in this House to oppose what is clearly a bill that wants to go back to the good old days of gerrymander in Queensland.