




Speech By  
**Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

---

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2015

**ELECTORAL (IMPROVING REPRESENTATION) AND ANOTHER ACT  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (5.14 pm): I rise to make a short contribution on the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I will be opposing the bill. With the greatest of respect to the member for Mount Isa, I say that this bill must be opposed for three key reasons—firstly, there is no overwhelming demand by the public to increase the size of this parliament; secondly, this bill does not significantly achieve the stated aims of improving access to democracy and representation; and, thirdly, the bill contains amendments that would either delay the redistribution or expose the redistribution to legal challenges.

Before I touch on that point, I want to respond to a comment the member for Mansfield made in his contribution tonight that related to some of the provisions he had in his private member's bill which was debated by this House a couple of months ago. In that contribution, the member for Mansfield stated that one of the objectives under his bill was to create a mini EARC. But in respect of that particular point, it is important to draw the distinction between what the member for Mansfield was hoping to achieve in his bill and also the fundamental role of EARC in the 1980s and 1990s. The proposal in the member for Mansfield's bill would effectively outsource the decision-making powers of this parliament to the Queensland—

**Mr WATTS:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask you to rule on relevance. The member is discussing a bill that has already been debated in this House. I would like the member to debate the current bill.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise on the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Mansfield quite extensively reflected on and made comments about the bill that was previously debated and I sought no objection because these bills have very similar provisions. The Speaker made a ruling that this could be debated and he did not rule this bill out of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I think you should follow the Speaker's guidance and allow some latitude, as your predecessors did for the member for Mansfield.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): There is no point of order. I call the member for Morayfield and ask him to stick within the guidelines.

**Mr RYAN:** I am talking to the points about redistributions over time, which of course is one of the central principles of this bill. The proposal that the member for Mansfield put would effectively outsource the decision-making powers of this parliament to an unelected, democratically unaccountable body, which was the QRC in respect of Mr Walker's bill. There is no precedent for an extraordinary approach like that, nor is there in my view an appropriate framework established under Mr Walker's previous bill to safeguard key democratic principles.

I make that point because it is really important when we are discussing redistributions that we do have a transparent and accountable approach, and it is important when we are discussing redistributions that we make sure the people of Queensland have faith in the process and that the

process can achieve its stated aim. That comes back to my first point I was making before. When the member for Mount Isa introduced this bill, he stated that the bill would address issues of population density and distance which are seen to limit the effectiveness of representation in the Queensland parliament. He said that one of the stated purposes was to improve representation, and there were also some statements made about how increasing the number of members of this House—as proposed in the member for Mount Isa's bill—would effectively keep the size of those large electorates stable or even shrink them to some extent. There was no evidence presented to the parliamentary committee which considered the member for Mount Isa's bill that said that would be achieved. In fact, there was some evidence by one particular witness that said it was questionable whether the stated purpose would actually be achieved. Some of the evidence presented by that witness actually highlighted that, if anything, the quota in state electorates around Queensland would probably only reduce by about 1,000 voters.

So to say that this bill achieves a purpose of significantly increasing representation of electors in Queensland probably overstates that particular point quite significantly. The committee concluded on page 6 of its report—

It is unclear how legislating for an increase in electoral districts by four will achieve any improved representation for the existing large, remote electorates in the short term ...

If one of the stated purposes is to improve representation, there is no evidence to say that this bill will achieve that. In fact, there is some evidence which was produced by witnesses to the committee that suggests that it will not achieve that purpose at all.

The other point I want to make relates to the provision in the bill to change the representation of the Redistribution Commission. There is some quite significant comment there by one of the witnesses, and that was the Crime and Corruption Commission, which said that if that proposal is indeed enacted, there may be some uncertainty about the validity of the existing appointments of the members of the Queensland Redistribution Commission. In fact, if this bill is passed without amendment, there are some quite serious questions about how the Redistribution Commission will be able to do its job of conducting the redistribution, which is due to start next year. Also, if it did do that redistribution without being reconstituted, it opens up the whole process to legal challenge, which again delays any potential redistribution and, in fact, may undermine the redistribution entirely. So the bill itself does not achieve its stated goals. In fact, it creates some quite serious legal problems if it is passed without amendment. For those reasons alone the bill should be opposed.

The other point relates to whether or not there is any overwhelming demand in the community to increase the size of the parliament. I am on the parliamentary committee which considered this bill and also considered Mr Walker's private member's bill. In respect of Mr Walker's bill we conducted some quite significant public consultation. In respect of Mr Katter's bill, we did put the call out for public submissions again and there were very few responses in respect of the proposal to increase the size of the parliament, whether as proposed by Mr Walker or Mr Katter. In the absence of any particular demand by the public, I struggle to see how this bill will not only satisfy the requirements of the people of Queensland for a parliament that is representative of them but also achieve its stated goals.

When we conducted our inquiry in respect of Mr Walker's bill, there was some evidence that was provided by witnesses which suggested that they would support additional resourcing for members of parliament so that those members of parliament can be more appropriately connected to their communities. I am pleased to see that the recent decision of the Independent Remuneration Tribunal does go to some extent to increasing that resourcing, which hopefully will mean that members of parliament who are representing those larger electorates are able to do so more effectively.

I acknowledge the contribution that the member for Mount Isa has made in this debate. It is with the greatest of respect that I do say that the bill must be opposed.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): Order! Before calling the member for Mundingburra, I welcome to the public gallery the former member for Burdekin, Rosemary Menkens, and her husband, Ray.