




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2015

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (9.29 pm): I rise to support the Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill. I acknowledge that over the last two elections about 90 MPs have passed through the parliament. Most of the MPs who have spoken tonight, particularly on this side of the House, would have never been through a redistribution. I know that the member for Mirani has been through a redistribution. His seat was abolished in 2008, but he is a good member of parliament and as a number of elections have been held he has regained a seat.

I fully support this bill that has been put before the House by the opposition. One of the reasons why is that in the last redistribution we saw three seats in rural and regional Queensland abolished and placed in Brisbane. We are fighting tooth and nail to try to keep open our railway tracks, hospitals and schools. One of the frustrating things is that, as we are seeing a lot of closures and cutbacks in rural and regional Queensland, there is also that real decline. Because of the closures and cuts we see many constituents move from the rural areas into the city areas. Then because so many people have moved from the rural areas, a number of seats are abolished because the number of constituents no longer reaches 34,000. So they are abolished and merged with other rural seats and another seat is created in Brisbane. In rural and regional areas we have had that proper representation from the beginning, but we have to travel further and further and it becomes harder and harder.

In the last redistribution the seat of Fitzroy was abolished, which was then held by the current member for Mirani, Jim Pearce. There was also the seat of Charters Towers, which was mine. It merged with the seat of Tablelands and is now called Dalrymple. The seat of Cunningham and, likewise, the seat of Darling Downs were also merged to become the seat of Condamine. As we saw those seats abolished, they were not put back into rural and regional Queensland. They did not equalise the balance so that we would have that fair representation. Instead, they abolished those seats in rural and regional Queensland and they put them into Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast.

I say this because I continually hear about the gerrymander. However, politics is normally about what suits someone and is in their best interests at that particular time. I remember when Peter Beattie went to the 2001 election and he campaigned 'just vote 1'. He did that supposedly because it was in people's best interests and he wanted to allow the candidates to choose the party they wanted to vote for and not have preferences go to anyone else. I remember when the Liberal National Party merged. With regard to the campaign of 'just vote 1', some people would vote for the National Party, some people would vote for the Liberal Party and some people would vote for the Labor Party. So the Liberal National Party would find their vote split and a Labor MP would get over the line. That was when we saw Beattie win 66 seats back in 2001. When the Liberal National Party merged, it was just 'vote 1 for the Liberal National Party'. The Labor Party then had a bit of a problem because they campaigned on 'just vote 1' and they saw the Greens vote and other particular votes; people were looking to where they would put their vote and they realised that the Greens were also saying 'just vote 1'. So they came up with this

great theory of bringing in compulsory preferential voting—this was under the Bligh-Beattie government—because they thought it would advantage them. Here they were promoting ‘just vote 1’ because it benefited them, but then they started to promote the compulsory preferential voting because the Liberal Party had merged. With regard to redistributions, the one vote, one value argument does not stack up because we have massive electorates out there.

I support this bill because of seats like Gregory. In the last redistribution we saw five seats abolished, and when it all stacked up three seats were merged into Brisbane and we in rural and regional Queensland were left with three fewer seats. Then we saw seats like the Burdekin stretch from Townsville right down to Bowen into Collinsville, Hinchinbrook stretch from Townsville to Innisfail and, likewise, Mirani stretch from Mackay to Rockhampton. We have another redistribution coming up and I believe electorates are going to contain an average of 34,000 constituents. I could pick up another 2,000 or 3,000, the member for Mount Isa will probably pick up another 3,000 and, likewise, the member for Cook and the member for Gregory. Quite a number of rural seats will have to pick up those numbers.

Honourable members must remember that over the years we have seen cutbacks and closures so we are fighting. That is why we keep coming here and fighting for rural and regional Queensland’s interests to keep jobs and to keep the regions sustainable. We are fighting against rural decline. We get less and less and then we get fewer seats and when it comes to our representation in parliament there are fewer and fewer of us but there are more in the city. I have no problem with regard to the city having their fair share because they have their fair share of votes. However, we do not want to keep going backwards. That is why I wholeheartedly support this bill before us.

Back in 1985 or 1986 there were 82 seats here in Queensland. The Electoral Commission acknowledged that each member of parliament had the issue of representation because it was a very difficult job. I say this and I mean it; it is a difficult job to represent our constituents with a large majority. They acknowledged that and at that time there were about 17,000 constituents per seat and there were 82 members of parliament. So they increased it to 89. That was 30 years ago. We are now in 2015 and are going through another redistribution. We are still at 89 seats 30 years later and nothing has changed. If this bill is not supported tonight, we are probably going to see five seats abolished again in rural and regional Queensland. We will probably see Gregory come into the area of Mirani, which the member opposite now represents. We will see seats like Mount Isa go into the seats of Gregory. Likewise, the seat of Warrego will start taking in parts of seats on the coast. Members of parliament on this side of the House will be affected and affected severely.

This bill is about a common-sense approach. The Electoral Commissioner uses his discretion with regard to the number of seats and whether it will be increased by one, two or three or up to five and, likewise, the weighting system. If the boundaries stay as they exist currently, the member for Mount Isa, who has 550,000 square kilometres, which is bigger than France, will have 750,000 square kilometres, which is almost the size of Europe. Likewise, the seat of Cook at 219,000 square kilometres is going to increase to 260,000. The seat of Gregory, which is about 330,000 square kilometres will increase to about 450,000. It is not going to end. The parliament needs to look at this with a bit of common sense and bring a little bit of balance and a bit of sensibility to ensure that we have fair representation. Honourable members may know what it is like. Rural and regional members may travel for 1,000 kilometres from one function to another and there will be no mobile phone coverage in between. Yet people say that we have technology now and this is representation. That is an illusion. In the two seconds remaining I say that I commend this bill to House and I fully support it.

*(Time expired)*