




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.06 pm): I rise to support the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill, and I commend the member for Mount Isa for his initiative. He has great concerns in regard to representation, as you would have if your seat is the size of France and it is going to expand even further in the next redistribution. Some wording has been used here that it is all about increasing politicians, but it depends on what wording is used. If we use the wording that there is going to be an increase of four politicians, 'politician' is not a very nice word out there amongst the electorates. If we use the wording that we need more representation for better representation, that wording is a little different.

Some might say that we do not need more politicians. That is fine, but after a redistribution where an elector finds that his member of parliament is 600 kilometres away he might think rather differently of the terminology and that we do not need more politicians when he finds his member of parliament has disappeared. There may have been an electorate office right at his door and all of a sudden it is 600 kilometres away, but this is the reality of redistributions.

Most people here tonight have not been through a redistribution. One minute you have a seat; the next minute you do not have a seat. One minute you have a seat; the next minute you find that your seat has expanded by another 200 kilometres. You might also find yourself battling it out with another parliamentary colleague who is a good mate of yours or one who is on the other side of the fence. This is what it is about.

We have a bill before the House at the moment with regard to four-year terms. If we were to use the language that we want to push for a four-year term while the Bligh government was selling assets, they would race to the ballot box and tick 'no'. Likewise, if we were to push for a four-year term when the Newman government was in power and under the Newman government's regimes, they would do exactly the same thing. However, if we used the wording of a four-year term for better representation and to save financial cost it would be more saleable to the electorate. This is why this bill is before the House: it is about better representation. Back in 1986 we had 89 members of parliament. By the time this is finalised and we go to the polls with regard to redistribution, it will be 2016 or 2017 and we will have 34,000 constituents, yet we still have 89 seats.

I do recall what happened in the last redistribution—Darling Downs disappeared and was merged with I believe the seat of Cunningham; Fitzroy disappeared and Mirani now stretches from Mackay to Rockhampton and takes in a part of that old Fitzroy seat; Mount Isa is now bigger than France; Gregory is now bigger than Victoria; Warrego is now bigger than Victoria; and Cook now stretches down into what they call the Atherton Tablelands, where once it used to be the Atherton Tablelands and now it is the seat of Cook and that is all split up.

So these extra four representatives is about trying to keep the status quo. It will ensure that Mount Isa's 530,000 to 540,000 square kilometres does not become 700,000 square kilometres. It will ensure that Gregory—which is over 330,000 square kilometres—does not become 450,000 square kilometres and wipes out the seats that are on the coast and all of a sudden the seat of Gregory takes in the coast. At some time, we have to make a decision. It is disappointing. We can say that four-year terms are fine, but we could promote it as a four-year term of bad government—and I do not think I will use that terminology.

What we are saying here is that we are trying to use four more politicians. This is about representation. Do other members know what it is like to wake up in the morning and know that you have to get in your car and drive to your electoral office and it is 570 kilometres of driving—and that after this redistribution it is going to be 770 kilometres? That is the reality, and this is about simplifying this process. This is about ensuring that there is a balance. This is about ensuring that we have better governance. We brought this bill back in the House because our people out there are saying that they are sick and tired of seeing these seats abolished and then placed into the city areas. The city areas are going to be impacted as well as a result of this redistribution, but we are trying to get a balance and we are trying to get better representation.

We are trying to keep these places, such as the Burdekin. What once was the seat of Burdekin many, many years ago now stretches from Townsville through to Bowen and through to Collinsville. Hinchinbrook now stretches from Townsville through to Innisfail. It is the same with the seat of Mirani—and these are the small seats. If nothing is going to change, these seat are just going to swallow up other seats. It will come into the territory of other members and it will affect rural and regional seats but it will also hurt the areas of southern Queensland such as Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast.

We are trying to do something sensible here and something tangible to ensure that we have that better representation. The time has come to be sound minded about this. People can say, 'We've got mobile phones,' but it has made the work harder for us because all of our day is spent on the phone when we are trying to get out there amongst the constituents and do the job that we are supposed to do and that we did years ago. We used to be able to represent our constituents. We could be seen and be available and be on call, but it is not the case anymore. People are saying to us, 'We want to see our MPs.' It is physically impossible. Half the time we are on the phone so that we can keep up with this modern world, but then we are told that we are going to get more constituents and get stretched even further and it will be made harder and harder. We have to be sensible about this.

I encourage members in the House to have a good look at what is going on here because your seat is going to go in the next redistribution. We are trying to sustain it, we are trying to hold it intact and keep it all together, and we are trying to ensure that you are available for your constituents—that you are there to communicate, you are there to go to their functions, you are there to go to their deb balls, you are there to open their shows, you are available. It is becoming virtually impossible to do that. I commend the member for Mount Isa and I commend this bill to the House. I ask everyone to support this bill.