




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2015

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

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (8.58 pm): I may be new to this parliament, but I know that the Queensland people have a very long memory and a deep suspicion of any attempts to undermine our electoral system. For too long Queensland lived in the shadow of a gerrymander, but we cleaned up this state and we must remain vigilant against slipping back to this dark past.

There has been no justification put to support the introduction of this bill, other than it is—and I acknowledge it is—very difficult to cover a very large electorate. I have no doubt that it is very difficult. I have no doubt that consulting with constituents is difficult when the drive between houses is hours and not minutes. It would appear that the 150 members of the federal parliament whose electorates are even larger and the 76 senators, who represent an entire state, are able to manage.

I believe that this bill is a distraction and a distortion of the priorities for this parliament. I recently attended the Youth Parliament and what struck me as I sat in your chair, Mr Deputy Speaker, was the diversity on display in this chamber. As I told the group of talented young leaders, I long for the day that our own parliament reflects the diversity of our great state. I believe it is a much higher priority for all of us to ensure that we reform our political structures to deliver the election of more women, more Indigenous people, more culturally and faith diverse people to this House.

I am constantly asked at events how can we get more women, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally diverse people into this parliament. Not one person has ever raised with me the need for smaller electorates. And certainly no-one has ever said to me, 'You know what we need? More members of parliament—more of the same.' Coming from an incredibly diverse electorate based in Logan, I know the efforts required to service people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, people with low literacy and vulnerable families.

Honourable members interjected.

Ms FENTIMAN: Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Logan and member for Lockyer—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer, I understand that you have been previously warned. If you persist you will be warned. The minister has the call.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not disrespecting distance as a real issue, but I think these additional needs that I have just listed are just as important, and they cannot be fixed by more politicians or by changing weightings for determining electoral boundaries. Given Queensland's very recent history and the long memories of Queenslanders, I urge all members of this House to think

very seriously before a move back in time in the direction of malapportionment. Do we really want to tell the voters of Everton or Clayfield or Aspley or Mansfield that their vote is worth less than those who live in Warrego or the Southern Downs? I would need to see a better justification for interfering in our electoral system than geography and population density. With 225 cultural groups creating Queensland's multicultural society and contributing to the success of our state, a much higher priority for me is making our parliament reflective of our community and relevant to our community.