




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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ELECTORAL (IMPROVING REPRESENTATION) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (5.37 pm): I rise to contribute to this debate on the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill. A number of members in this debate have commented on their understanding of where the member for Mount Isa is coming from on this legislation. The concerns about the very large size of the electoral division of Mount Isa and some of those other large seats is something that we do appreciate is very challenging and difficult. That is why there are extra resources and assistance in place to assist the members who represent those electorates.

I have to note that the government opposes this bill because we do not think the measures put forward in it are appropriate. They do not, as the title seems to imply, seek to improve representation. They undermine some of the principles of representation and they do not necessarily result in the outcomes we would like to see. If I had had the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate on the Electoral (Redistribution Commission) and Another Act Amendment Bill, I might have wanted to make a few points in that context, but those points do apply to the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill. That is, as the member for Mount Isa pointed out in his introduction, we do not see any attempts to further fiddle with the weightage that applies to those larger electorates. I think that is a good thing. This is an improvement on other bills we have debated in the 55th Parliament. But the very nature of the existing weightage is in fact part of the problem. The way it provides the existing weightage—by effectively making it easier for redistribution commissions to add extra real estate rather than to add extra voters—partly creates the very large, unwieldy and difficult-to-service electorates such as Mount Isa.

I have great sympathy for the member for Mount Isa. I can assure the member that we as a government and those associated with this government who make submissions to the Redistribution Commission will make representations based upon wanting to see communities of interest put together in the way these redistributions are undertaken.

From various speakers we have heard a few comparisons with federal electorates. Federal electorates in this state are subject to a 10 per cent tolerance. It is genuine one vote, one value. The weightage issue is not applied to it. We do not hear the same sorts of criticisms and concerns expressed by members representing very large federal electorates, partly because those redistributions use better communication lines and better communities of interest. You will see—I have had this discussion with the members for Mount Isa and Dalrymple—those federal seats reaching east-west across the state. One of the great challenges we have had with the current system in Queensland is that we have seen redistribution commissions create seats that go north-south and so do not follow the traditional lines of communication in the state. Anyone who has any understanding of this state's history will appreciate that the key communication lines and the key communities of interest run east-west along those rail

lines and those major highways that service our ports. That is one of the things that is very important. It is very important to deal with the issue of communities of interest. We should be looking at that to try to overcome these issues.

Rather than going down the track that is not being called upon by the broader community—that is, increasing the number of members in this parliament—

Mr Molhoek interjected.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that interjection from the member for Southport. I think the fact that we saw five submitters to the committee inquiry on this bill—not even a majority of them were supportive of the idea of increasing the size of the House—shows that that is not the case. There is not a great clamour for this.

I encourage those opposite and the progenitors of this bill before the House to influence those who stand alongside them in the Liberal National Party, Katter's Australian Party and any of those other activists in our political system to make submissions to the Redistribution Commission to redistribute the 89 seats provided for in our Constitution to ensure better recognition of communities of interest. I would be quite happy to see those electorates completely broken up and reshaped. That is necessary, I think, to see a better set of electoral divisions and boundaries in this state that are reflective of traditional communities of interest that would allow members like the members for Mount Isa and Dalrymple to better represent their communities. They would have the ability to get around those communities.

Unfortunately, frankly, the malapportionment that is part of our system—what I think is one of the regrettable parts of our system—perversely creates these larger seats. As I said earlier, it is much easier for the redistribution commissioners to add real estate and hit the magic number than to corral the communities into creating the electorates that are required.

Mr Cripps: You do not have a demographer on the commission. The bill asks for more expertise.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook. We saw submissions to the committee on this particular matter—that providing a narrowcast of persons who could be appointed to the commission, in the form of a particular demographer, would be narrowing the field of people who could provide some understanding of these processes. I do not think that would help.

Thankfully, while I think the commission can do a better job of making sure it corrals communities of interest, I do think we have a much better system based on the 1991 Electoral Act, which provides who those commissioners are and how they do their job. It is a whole lot better than when it was done in 1986, up in room B28 in this House, when the ministers of the Crown of the day got together and cobbled together what the appointment would be.

Ms Simpson interjected.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): The members for Maroochydore and Chatsworth will cease interjecting.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I want to conclude my contribution to the debate on the Electoral (Improving Representation) and Another Act Amendment Bill by reiterating why this government opposes the bill. We oppose the bill because we do not believe there is the demand in the community to have extra politicians. We are the party that has been accused this very week by those opposite about being all about jobs for us. The party opposite is about extra jobs for politicians. I also believe that this is not the way to achieve the best outcome for Queenslanders.

(Time expired)