

The Chair, Mr Malcolm McCusker

Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

Please accept my attached submission on this important matter.

Regards

SUBMISSION TO MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

1. I believe we should understand the role of the Legislative Council before we consider any issues regarding counting of votes for election of its members.

This is a house of review.

We should therefore endeavour to elect to its membership, persons who will have the ability to objectively review and debate legislation put before it.

This would seem to require its members to have some experience of committee work and a knowledge of the issues of the region which they represent.

I therefore respectfully suggest that eligibility for nomination to the Legislative Council be reviewed with a consideration for the following requirements:

- i). Residence: for eligibility for election to a rural region
Must have resided in a rural region for the past three consecutive years

Residence for eligibility for election to a metropolitan region
Must have resided in a metropolitan region for the past three consecutive years
- ii). Must have attained the age of 25 years
- iii). Must have served at least one term as a member of the Legislative Assembly. (This would ensure some understanding of the processes of parliament and some experience on committees).
- iv). Must not be subject to any legal incapacity
- v). Must be an elector entitled to vote at an election of a member of the Legislative Council
- vi). Must be an Australian citizen.

Clearly the most relevant matter in the recent election was that a candidate did not even live in WA at the time of nomination. This is an issue. The matter of overseas electors should be reviewed. A person who lives and /or works outside of Australia for a period of one year should be temporarily removed from the electoral roll.

2. Electoral equality for all citizens entitled to vote for the Legislative Council.

If the government considers that rural residents require a disproportionate number of representatives to take into account the size of the electorate then I doubt any change can be made.

However, if we accept that the Legislative Council is a house of review and that there are 17 members in the lower house to represent the rural electorates then should there not be the same proportion ie 17/59 to represent the rural regions in the upper house?

Appertaining to my point 4. below, Queensland does not even have an upper house and yet the demographic of that state is not dissimilar to that in WA.

The more relevant issue is the suitability of the members to fulfil the role of reviewing legislation. A single issue member with no parliamentary experience is not qualified to carry out his duties effectively, in my view.

3. Distribution of Preferences

Theroretically, each elector in each region has the same voting power but the preferential system interferes with the efficacy of their vote, particularly if they have voted above the line and have no idea how the party they have nominated will distribute their preferences.

The system would be more effective if the *Above the line* system were abolished and electors were only required to mark their order of preference as far as they wished, providing a minimum of six candidates were selected.

4. Do we need the Legislative Council?

New Zealand no longer has an upper house.

Queensland also no longer has an upper house.

I cannot see how this diminishes the effectiveness of government in either jurisdiction.