

Dear Mr. McCusker,

Congratulations on being appointed to lead the Ministerial Expert Committee on WA electoral reform. It gives me some hope.

I am not in favour of the re-weighting of votes in Western Australia as suggested by the current state government.

Please accept my submission to your work (attached).

Regards,

Brett Hilder

Submission to the Ministerial Expert Committee on WA electoral reform

Date: 11 May 2021

Submitted by: Brett Hilder

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Submission: In order to achieve electoral equality, a *greater* weighting should be given to voters living *outside* the greater Perth metropolitan for the Legislative Council.

The same applies to the distribution of preferences in the Legislative Council's proportional representation system.

Of course this is counter to the intention as implied in the statements listed under, Whereas, contained in the Terms of Reference.

It would be wrong to reduce the weighting of votes of people living in the regions because it would lead to the effective disenfranchisement of those voters.

Reasons: There are 36 MLCs of which 24 are in the Perth metropolitan area (9 of these have offices in West Perth).

If there is a problem which needs to be addressed or an opportunity available in Perth, 24 MPs would be aware of the matter and be able to vote accordingly.

However, if there is a problem in Tambellup it is likely only to be known to one MP with a single vote. The same applies to a problem in any of the shires or towns in other truly regional seats such as those covering Kununurra or Newman.

Most of the news media is based in Perth as well which exacerbates the problem. Regional media outlets content does not reach metropolitan voters or MPs.

Evidence: There is no palliative care facility outside the Perth metropolitan area.

(Not exhaustive) There is no tertiary hospital outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Advanced diagnostic services such as MRI machines are either scarce or non-existent outside the Perth metropolitan area.

There is no advanced intensive care or coronary care unit outside the Perth metropolitan area.

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A woman pregnant with twins must move to Perth six weeks prior to the predicted birth date.

Aboriginal people live in conditions in the regions that would not be tolerated in Perth.

Aboriginal disadvantage is substantially worse outside the Perth metropolitan area.

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There is no university based outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Life expectancy is lower for people living outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Standard of living is lower for people living outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Transport infrastructure is inferior outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Transport costs are higher outside the Perth metropolitan area.

However Western Australia covers an area the equivalent of Western Europe and is a wealthy state in a wealthy nation.

Anecdotally:

On a holiday in the Pilbara I took my two wheel drive car along a gravel road south of Hamersley Gorge heading east-west and returned the same way. Two years later on a return visit, the road was signposted, Four Wheel Drive Only.

It is clear that government provided services are being allowed to decline outside the Perth metropolitan area.

While the state government now charges people entrance fees to national parks, infrastructure and services are declining.

Conclusion:

Even with the current underrepresentation of voters in regional areas in the Legislative Council, these people are not treated fairly. The Daylight Saving Partys anomalous result in the last election does not require a fix that disenfranchises regional voters.

Due to its scale and demographic profile Western Australia poses unique problems when it comes to representative democracy. As a result it requires intelligent thought and sophisticated decisions.

The current state governments intention to introduce, One vote, One value would create *One vote, No value* for people living in our regions. This would only accelerate the decline in living standards in regional WA.

Greater weighting should be given to votes *outside* the greater Perth metropolitan for the Legislative Council.

Submission to the Ministerial Expert Committee on WA electoral reform

The same applies to the distribution of preferences in the Legislative
Councils proportional representation system.

Brett Hilder