

To: The Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

On the subject of: WA Legislative Council electoral reform

1. I am strongly in favour of removing group ticket voting, I believe the reforms to the federal senate voting system in 2016 have led to a much fairer system, and WA should at the minimum try to emulate the above-the-line preferential voting to avoid confusion.
2. Below-the-line voting needs better savings provisions/optional preferencing to reduce the amount of informal voting, once again similar rules to the federal rules would be a step in the right direction.
3. The malapportionment problem has gotten considerably worse as population distributions have changed and the region structure must be changed. I am strongly in favour of 1 vote 1 value in all electoral systems.

I think people would be less content with the current system if they could better conceptualize how unfair it is. For example, if in the same polling booth, people from Kalgoorlie were handed 6 ballots to fill out while people from Perth were handed just 1, no-one would call that fair.

My ideal proposed solution to malapportionment would be completely reforming the system to have equal-population multimember electorates with Hare-Clark STV and Robson Rotation. This would keep the council proportional while still allowing minor parties and independents a viable pathway to be elected to the council.

The Robson Rotation would make members of the council more accountable to the wishes of the West Australian people, rather than rely on being placed in favourable ticket positions by internal party preselections.

My proposed structure would be to create 6 regions of equal population based off 9-10 adjacent legislative assembly electorates. With each region electing 7 members using Hare-Clark. 7-member electorates have the advantage of being more representative, while still allowing parties to reach majorities if they achieve a high enough proportion of the vote.

The increase of council members from 36 to 42 would allow for adequate representation in rural areas while still moving to a less-malapportioned system. The number of members in the legislative council has not been increased in line with population growth (in 1896 21 members for 100k population vs 2021, 36 members for 2667k population). I personally would like to see some future planning for increasing the number of representatives in both chambers of government in line with future population growth.

Another potential system I would be content with if the WA Legislative Council were to emulate; would be New South Wales/South Australia, the whole state as a single electorate structure is a reasonable compromise, as it still gives smaller/emerging parties opportunities to be elected to government.

I would prefer if the staggered election of members was not emulated as 8 year terms reduces the accountability of elected members.

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