

Pleas find attached my submission to the **Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform**.
Regards, Allan Marshall

SUBMISSION TO THE **MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM**

I am Allan Marshall aged 72 years, a third generation Lake Grace farmer and business person and have been involved in many community organizations during my lifetime and just to declare any interest or association that I may have in relation to this issue, I have been fortunate to be granted life membership of the WA National Party and the local football club and am currently a Lake Grace Shire councilor. As a result I have been exposed to the machinery of politics, both state and federal and how that affects our lives in regional Western Australia.

The issues of health, education and transport have always been at the fore in running a business and raising children so I feel it is my duty to respond to the WA Government instigated enquiry into the structure of representation of the WA Legislative Council (LC).

The term 'Equal Representation' has different interpretations depending on what you want from the description.

Equal Representation as a purely numerical definition means that the group of representatives for a particular region represents an equal number of electors per elected representative in all the upper house regions throughout the state. This is a simplistic version of that definition and is sometimes used by political parties to shore up their voting power in the parliament.

Equal Representation as defined when access by the elected members and by the electors to the issues affecting their lives in remote areas has completely different connotations. For instance take the extreme situation of the LC Mining and Pastoral Region which extends for some 3,000 kilometers from the South coast to the to the very North of the state of WA and includes most of the mining and gas export industries critical to the state's and nation's economy. The six elected members of this region have knowingly put their hand up to service this immense area which is a huge task with most of their time taken up in travelling and being away from family etc when not attending parliament. Equal representation based

on the numerical version would mean a diminished ability to visit and represent the electors and who would want that pressure on their lives but the critical factor here is, are these electors going to be serviced adequately? An LC member in the Metro regions can service their electorate within 30 to 60 minutes travel time from their home whilst a Mining and Pastoral Region member could be away from home for weeks with travel times of several hours between major towns and aboriginal communities in order to meet the concerns of their constituents. Is this fair and equal representation? I think not.

Another major region which would be affected by a numerical definition is the Agricultural Region which extends from Kalbarri in the North to Israelite Bay in the South East and includes all of the Southern agricultural area also vital to the state's finances exporting some 15 million tonnes of grain per annum in addition to the livestock and associated products exports.

The third and less remote region is the South West Region which extends from Bunbury to Albany and has a higher population ratio but equally important for its horticultural, dairy, livestock, fishing and tourism industries which also have a very important part to play with the state's economy.

I believe that the boundaries of these regions should reflect as much as possible the industries encompassed within their boundaries.

My big concern is that if people who live and work in these regions do not have adequate access to their elected representatives how will they grow and flourish as 'EQUAL' citizens of Western Australia. The other important issue here is that will we get the appropriate candidates to put their names forward if the workload is accelerated by fewer members trying to service these regions.

A WHOLE OF STATE ELECTORATE MODEL DOES NOT SATISFY THESE NEEDS

WA cannot be compared with some other states in Australia or indeed other countries around the globe who may have used a numerical equality to determine representation. Who else has such large areas of remote and low population areas but with such a vital contribution to provide for the wealth which

underwrites the necessary health, education, law and order and services for all West Australians.

An example of the numeric definition is the Lower house seat of Roe which was re-configured after the 2005 'One vote-one value' legislation was passed in the parliament in order to eliminate vote weighting for regional legislative assembly electorates. Roe now extends some 7000 kilometers from West Arthur in the West to Israelite Bay in the East. The elected member is expected to visit the many communities in between to attend electorate offices, school student presentation nights and local Shire councils when possible. They can't just go home for dinner and drive for 10 minutes to attend a school presentation and go back home to their families as is the case for a metro electorate representative. This is just another example how the 'fair and equal' interpretation can be misconstrued by those who feel it suits them to use the numerical method for pure political advantage.

I ask you to consider these arguments in your recommendations to government.

In relation to the issue of vote harvesting and consolidation of small parcels of votes to elect a member as has been the case at the recent March 2021 election, I would suggest that the best method may be to place a quota of say xxxx thousand of primary votes on candidates and if that level is not reached then those candidates are eliminated from the pool. This may be more palatable than say raising the nomination deposit to xxxxx dollars which could be considered as discriminatory.

Thank you for your consideration.

Allan Marshall