

SHOOTERS FISHERS and FARMERS



8 Jun. 21

TO: The Chairman, Hon. Malcolm McCusker QC AO
Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform
By email: submissions@waelectoralreform.wa.gov.au

Dear Sir,

The Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party (WA) Inc. (SFF) makes the following submission in relation to the proposal to reform the electoral system for Western Australia's Legislative Council.

The contention that the current system unfairly weights the value of a vote in country regions is flawed. If using the argument that it is unfair that a voter in the Mining and Pastoral Region has a weighted vote 6.22 times that of a voter in a metropolitan region, then parallels can be drawn with the Australian Senate. As outlined in the Discussion Paper, each state (not including the territories) of Australia are each represented by 12 senators. It is therefore a system that has a weighted vote for voters in Western Australia compared with New South Wales or Victoria, SFF contends, that as a state that is arguably the highest contributor to the Australian economy, that Western Australians would not agree to a reduction in this state's Senate representation.

The same argument applies to the three country regions of WA; the Mining and Pastoral, Agricultural and South West regions are the economic power houses of our state. These regions also present significant challenges in the delivery of essential services, including but not limited to - acceptable living conditions, delivery of health services, indigenous interests, environmental management, transportation and freight, employment and educational opportunities. These are vital WA centric issues requiring vigorous representation in the Legislative Council to highlight and argue the unique needs of these regions in comparison to the metropolitan regions

SFF certainly acknowledges that the current system that enables the election of a candidate with just 98 first preference votes requires reform. A system that allows a voter's ballot to be directed, through a complex web of preference flows, that may well elect a candidate that the voter had no intention, or knowledge of supporting, is a flawed system. The argument that voters can always direct their vote below the line is also lost, in that, over 95% of voters vote above the line. The current system also creates a level of frustrating uncertainty for parties and candidates who are unable to determine how preferences will play out. Even with careful preference negotiations and the following lodgement of group voting tickets the process resembles a spinning roulette wheel, with much depending not only on the primary vote achieved by your party but a significant dependency on primary votes achieved by other

parties and their preference flows. This process results in exclusions and redistributions that significantly change the fortunes of parties and candidates, in many cases a few votes may see a candidate excluded, thereby triggering a redistribution that may not only see them excluded but also another unrelated candidate excluded depending on where the redistributed preferences flow.

The question therefore is what system to adopt. The SFF argues that if one vote one value is to be considered then, for the reasons outlined in the first two paragraphs of this submission, the six regions would need to be abolished otherwise it will disadvantage regional representation. A whole of state system similar to NSW would be the only fair alternative to our current system and allow for all members of the community to be democratically represented in the Legislative Council.

Members of the Legislative Council are not confined to dealing with matters only within their electorate or their electorate constituents. This is particularly true where parties may not have representation in all six regions and therefore are approached from individuals or groups from anywhere in the state that see the MLC or party platform and policies aligning with their particular area of interest or matters of concern. Therefore, there is already in practice, a potential for whole of state representation.

As the discussion paper points out NSW abolished its GVT in 2003. Our understanding is that the impetus for the change was similar to that in WA where the use of tactical preference tickets in the 1999 NSW election saw the Outdoor Recreation Party's Malcolm Jones elected to the Legislative Council with a primary vote of 0.19% or 0.042 of a quota. Reference [Group voting ticket - Wikipedia](#)

It is critically important that if a NSW type system is adopted that the number of MLCs in the Western Australian Legislative Council be increased to 42 members as it is in NSW. The reason for this is to lower the percentage of the vote required to achieve a quota. Any change must provide for a balance of community representation from small to medium parties and independents, so that we don't end up with a two party system, where MPs toe the party line, that excludes representation for those that have interests in agriculture, the environment, religion, social matters or recreational pursuits etc.

Should you require any further information we would be pleased to attend in person before the committee.

Rick Mazza
Electoral Matters for
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party (WA) Inc.