



## **Hon Steve Martin MLC**

Parliament of Western Australia

Member of the Legislative Council (Agricultural Region)

Shadow Minister for Housing; Forestry



To the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee on Electoral Reform.

In reference to your question how electoral equality might be achieved for all citizens I would urge you to consider the equality of outcomes for all citizens before recommending any changes that would further reduce the number of regional Members of Parliament.

Regional Western Australians are represented by a minority of MPs in the WA Parliament. The massive concentration of WA's population in the Perth Metropolitan area ensures most of the MPs – in a combined tally of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council – represent Perth.

Any examination of the outcomes of regional Western Australians in terms of health, income, education and access to services indicates they are worse off than their metropolitan relations.

Surely, a WA Parliament in which there is an overrepresentation of regional MPs would not have allowed that to occur.

Any moves to reduce regional representation will make the situation worse.

I would prefer the continuation of the existing region-based model in the LC. It provides a community of interest and offers MPs a chance to build a relationship with their constituents.

If regional WA were covered by a single region covering the area from Albany to Kununurra the task would be impossible. A state-wide model would also diminish the relevance and uniqueness of the regions and will further drive a metro centric focus of the parliament.


Voters in the Legislative Assembly do not have “electoral equality”. For good reasons vast regional Districts such as Kimberley and Pilbara are given a dispensation allowing them one third the number of electors as metropolitan seats. I would make the case Mining and Pastoral, Agricultural and South West Regions in the LC deserve a similar approach.

A further point on electoral equality.

The bicameral system of government – including a house of review – only makes sense if the Upper House does not mirror the electoral make-up of the Lower House. If the numbers are the same in both houses, then the review process will not take place or will be a token effort. In effect the Government, which is formed in the Assembly, will always get their way. The existing system of electing members of the Upper House has allowed for non-government MPs to contribute and amend bills as we saw in the previous term of the McGowan Government.

I would argue for an end to the system of group voting tickets in the Upper House and the adoption of a system like the one recently introduced for the election of the Australian Senate.

Kind Regards


Steve Martin MLC