

From: Cr Peter Long
To: WA Electoral Reform Submissions
Subject: Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform
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Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

To Whom it may Concern

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Western Australian Attorney General's expressed preference to have one-person/one-vote election to the WA Legislative Council. Australia is a large and disparate nation with the vast majority of its population confined to the capital cities, and Western Australia is the most urbanised of any: we are somehow fearful of the great outback.

However, when our country's founding fathers came together to establish a new nation in 1901, a system of admirable fairness was developed to avoid the "tyranny of the majority" and to ensure that the remote and disadvantaged people living far from the large urban centres received adequate representation.

So in Australia, the lower house – in the national case, the House of Representatives – forms government and enjoys the powers and responsibilities that involves; but to protect the huge regional areas which generate the lion's share of the country's income, the upper house – the Senate – was given equal representation for each State.

Thus, Tasmania, with currently half a million people has the same number of senators (12) as New South Wales with 8 million people. Tasmania's upper house has 16 times the per person voting power as New South Wales – and we don't see vast amounts of Federal money or disproportionate advantage given to our smallest State.

This is the model our nation was formed upon.

In Western Australia, the regions outside Perth, with a population of roughly half a million people, generate some \$150 billion of export income, compared to approximately one tenth of that income (some \$15 billion) generated by the 2 million people in Perth. A ratio of about 40:1 in the regions favour.

Exports are the wealth of the nation. Exports allow us to buy the cars, mobile phones, televisions, machinery – and the crude oil we need to run the nation – and without which we would be poor. Our economy without the regions almost disappears: Harvard University's Economic Complexity scale ranked Australia – by per capita income the 8th richest country in the world – at number 87 in 2018 – just ahead of Burkina Faso and just behind Uganda. This is because our wealth is primarily linked to mineral exports and to a lesser extent to our agriculture exports.

Yet the half a million people spread over some 2640 thousand square kilometres of WA suffer all sorts of difficulties and deprivation due to their far fewer facilities and services.

They earn the money; they get the poorest facilities and services.

The current system where the house of review has equal numbers of city and country/regional representatives provides representation to all: it avoids the tyranny of the majority and oppression of the minority in the regions. It models Australia's Federal system and provides some protection to those who give so much – and so often receive so little, and should be retained.

With regards Group Ticket Voting, which resulted in an individual gaining an upper house seat at the 2021 elections with only 98 votes, it should be outlawed – removed from the current electoral system as it makes our democracy look like a joke.

Thank you for your time,

Peter Long

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