

REVIEW on the SIZE of the ACT ASSEMBLY ENQUIRY

1 I do not support any increase in the number of elected members to the ACT Assembly.

No case has been put forward by the backbench members that they suffer from a work overload. Indeed the majority of their work is Local Government issues from constituents – as it should be. But it is a false premise to state that the electors of the ACT are underrepresented in terms of ratios of elected members to the number of electors on the state electoral rolls. Academic ratios do not take into account the fact that the ACT has no manufacturing industry or factories, no mining industry and no coastline or ports to administer. That is why the founding fathers for our constitution wanted the Limestone Plains as the location for the new Capital Territory - to administer the Parliament and the services it requires to efficiently function . There was no case then and no case now, to have equal status to the other States of Australia by creating the ACT as a state.

However the discussion paper does offer the view that there is a problem with COAG business. No one has defined a satisfactory statement of Self Government for understanding by the electors of the ACT. Everyone understands what Local Government is but have little understanding of how the ACT fits into the COAG framework. There is no debating in the ACT Assembly on COAG issues so no work there for backbenchers in formulating ACT positions on COAG business. It's only Ministers who go the various committees of COAG. But to have to increase the number of Ministers through having an increase in the number of backbenchers does not increase the workload of the ACT Assembly.

I have read the submission by Ted Quinlan to this Enquiry and agree with his views. – There is another way to increase the experts required to be Ministers from the ACT on COAG business. I would support extra resources from government to make this happen.

2. I do support a change in the number of ACT electorates from the present 3 to 5 with no increase in the number of elected representatives. The Electoral Act requires the Commissioner to take into account the geographical boundaries of the regions of the ACT. These clearly are : Gungahlin , Belconnen , Central Canberra (Inner North , the CBD & the Inner South), Woden & Weston Creek (plus the emerging Molonglo Valley) and Tuggeranong. The Commissioner cannot do this without at the moment without a change in Variation of the Quotas Required for each electorate to be raised from the current +/- 5% to a more realistic +/-10% . This larger figure of 10% is used in other states plus the Federal election for the House of Representatives.

It is quite ridiculous for electors in some suburbs in some regions having to be grouped under the smaller quota variation of +/-5% in regions that has absolutely no relationship to those suburbs. Our regions were carefully planned to have green belts and geographical features between the regions to reflect this dispersion. It should be reflected in our electoral boundaries.

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