

SUBMISSION TO THE EXPERT REFERENCE GROUP INQUIRY REGARDING THE NUMBER OF MEMBER FOR THE ACT ELECTORATES

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My submission is short and to the point.

I reside in the Weston Creek area. Although it has a sizable population, and is growing, the inhabitants have complained for a long time that Weston Creek has been ignored in the provision of government services.

Among other things it lacks:

- A swimming pool
- A library
- A health centre
- The bus routes and times in the southern part of Weston Creek are inadequate
- Too many schools have closed and the state schools system (one high school and three primary schools) are inadequate
- Parking is becoming totally inadequate at the local shopping centre
- The roads are becoming inadequate for increased traffic flow from new developments to the north in the Molonglo valley.

These are among the many complaints by the locals to the politicians and the administration regarding the situation in Weston Creek. Yet the history has been that the complaints have been totally ignored.

Why is this?

I attribute this the shape and size of the Molonglo Electorate.

Molonglo is the largest electorate in Canberra, not only in the number of Legislative Council Members, but also its geographical size - it stretches from Weston Creek to Gunghalin. The area it covers provides absolutely no similarity in interest among the inhabitants of the electorate.

Its shape ie it twists to the right and then heads north around Belconnen until it ends in the far north, means only one thing – this electorate was designed as a Gerrymander, designed actually to keep the Labor Party in power!

You can always tell a Gerrymander by the convoluted shape of the electorate. It is designed so that the Labor voters of the Lyneham area marginally out vote the Liberal voters of Weston Creek, so that Labor gets an extra marginal Assembly Member from Gunghalin. Very clever. I am surprised that the Liberal Party did not spot it, but then.....In the original design, attaching Weston Creek to Tuggeranong and Woden would have been just as easy, even under the old electorates with 21 members in the Assembly.

As a consequence politicians of all parties can safely ignore Weston Creek. The crucial marginal votes are up in Gunghalin - Health Centre, Light rail...

So....

I strongly support the proposal that the ACT be broken up into five member electorates.

In fact I even more strongly support the notion that the ACT is broken up into single member electorates.

But five member electorates will do – as long as Weston Creek is contained in a single electorate and is not divided between two or more electorates. That will really antagonize the people of Weston Creek, whatever their political colour.

My preferences are-

1. Single member electorates.
2. Failing that, five member electorates.

The size of the Legislative Assembly, and their emoluments, can be decided by the politicians. To my mind those issues are of secondary importance.

However electorates larger than 5 members invites the election of minor parties.

Supporters of these parties say this is a good thing, But the experience of the ACT has been that the influence of the minor party in the ACT Assembly, namely the Greens, has been excessive. In order to secure their vote, the Labor government has transferred-

- Over \$67 million to an arboretum from much needed funding for hospitals
- \$400 million to building a light rail
- a hidden sum, reputed to be over \$100 million, to build bike paths.

Whatever the Expert Reference Group's political preferences, it is undeniable that a continued presence of minor parties in the Assembly is very wasteful of taxpayers' funds, and these costs exceed the benefits.

3. Thus a maximum of five members per electorate is the optimal decision.