

1 March 2013

Expert Reference Group on the Size of the ACT Assembly
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Dear Sir / Madam

Review into the size of the ACT Legislative Assembly

The ACT Government holds a unique position in Australia with responsibility for all local government matters, as well as state government responsibilities including health and education.

The challenge for the ACT Assembly is that it is the size of a small local council which must perform the duties of a state parliament.

There has been much debate in recent years about the size of the ACT Assembly and whether it is adequately resourced to meet the needs of the community given its wide range of responsibilities. Comparisons have been made to the Northern Territory and Tasmanian Governments, and it is noted that the Northern Territory has a population of only 235,000 and a parliament of 25 members, while Tasmania has a population of 512,000 people and has a parliament of 40 members.

The Property Council has been concerned for some time that the size of the ACT Assembly is inadequate to meet the requirements and needs of the community, particularly being able to scrutinise in detail through committees the workings of the bureaucracy and to undertake necessary inquiries into various aspects of concern to the community. In our view the ACT Assembly is currently inadequately resourced in this respect.

The Property Council believes that an appropriate size for the ACT Assembly would be 25 members. To ensure adequate representation of minor parties, those 25 members should be elected from 5 separate electorates, each electing 5 members. We believe that an Assembly of 21 members would not provide sufficient numbers to enable proper representation and distribution of workload in the Assembly, and would also lead to an inequitable distribution of members with one 7 member electorate, and 2 five member electorates.

With respect to government portfolio responsibilities, it is clear to us from our dealings with government, that the current legislative restriction on having only five Ministers, imposes too heavy a workload on current office holders. Our view is that enlarging the ministry to seven would more evenly spread the workload and provide the opportunity for Ministers to have a greater commonality of interest within the various areas of responsibility.

Further, it is our view that the electorate system needs to accurately reflect the votes received by each party. We believe that where a political party receives about 15 percent of the vote then that party should be represented in the ACT Assembly.

In summary, we believe that seventeen members in the ACT Assembly is too few, and is inadequate to ensure the proper operation of government. We recommend the size of the Assembly be increased to 25 members, and that the Assembly Committee office be adequately resourced to be able to properly support the work of the parliament.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Carter
ACT Executive Director
Property Council of Australia