

## Submission to the inquiry into the size of the ACT Assembly

By Gösta Lyngå

### *My background*

I am grateful for the opportunity to present my views on the size of the ACT Assembly. The following is to some extent based on my experience from politics in Europe, where I was a member of the Swedish Parliament, 1988-91.

### *Comparisons with European parliaments*

One basic difference between most parliaments in Europe and those in Australia is the common occurrence of multi-party parliaments in Europe, giving opportunity for new ideas to come forward through new parties. In Sweden there is a threshold of 4% of the votes, above which a party will be represented in the parliament. Some other countries have a threshold of 5%, still much lower than the quota of 12.5% which is relevant to an electorate with seven members. To dis-endorse a party supported by less than one voter of eight does not seem democratic to me, particularly as most ACT voters will only vote inside the ticket of one party and thus not pass preferences outside their own first choice.

Because of the multi-party parliaments the governments in Europe are frequently coalitions or minority governments increasing the need for decisions to be based on collaboration between politicians of different background. This is a democratic advantage.

### *Arguments in favour of 5 electorates each with 7 members:*

Arguments in favour of 35 MLAs rather than fewer MLAs:

1. The ratio of enrolled voters to members would still be the highest in Australia (7,348) and this ratio increases as population grows.
2. Workload for 7 or 9 ministers would amount to 2 or 3 portfolios each, giving more opportunity for adequate involvement in each area than 4 – 6 portfolios as currently.
3. With fewer portfolios per minister there is less need for a large number of staffers, to some extent offsetting the cost of an enlarged parliament.
4. For selecting 7 or 9 suitable ministers the assembly size of 35 MLAs would be an advantage.
5. Making an increase now from 17 to 35 MLAs means that the issue does not have to be revisited for some time even as Canberra grows.

Arguments for 5 electorates with 7 members rather than 7 electorates with 5 members:

1. A quota of 12.5% of the votes rather than 16.7% gives better opportunities for new parties with new ideologies.
2. Each of the five electorates would be large enough to have an identity of its own. Examples:
  - a. Belconnen
  - b. Gungahlin – North Canberra
  - c. Central Canberra

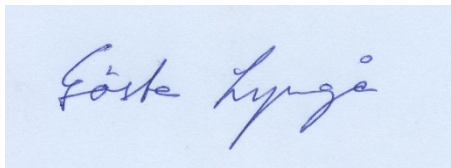
- d. Woden - Weston Creek - Molonglo
- e. Tuggeranong

### *Conclusion*

For the reason presented above I am of the opinion that an ACT assembly based on five electorates, each electing seven MLAs would be able to well serve the ACT community.

I am happy for this submission to be publicly available.

Canberra, 18/1 2013

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Gösta Lyngå" in a cursive script.

Gösta Lyngå