

I would like to provide a short submission to the review into the size of the ACT Legislative Assembly.

I am in favour of expanding the Legislative Assembly to between 27 and 35 MLAs. An increase to 21 or 25 MLAs is insignificant enough to be of little value to either governance or representation in the ACT, and will ensure this matter is revisited again in the not too distant future.

The assembly should be expanded for the following reasons:

- A higher number of MLAs will allow for an increased number of Ministers in the Executive. The current work load of Ministers is too high to the detriment of governance in the ACT.
- A higher number of MLAs will allow for an increased pool of members available to perform Committee work. The absence of an upper house means much of the scrutiny of Government is performed by Assembly committees. The current workload for MLAs involved in serious scrutiny through the committee process is too high, to the detriment of governance in the ACT.
- A higher number of MLAs will lower the quota required for election within each electorate. This is good for representative democracy and will enable a broader range of interests to be represented in the Assembly through the election of third parties and independents. The higher the quota necessary for election, the more consolidated the power of the ALP and Canberra Liberals, to the detriment of representative democracy in the ACT.
- Residents of the ACT are currently the least represented constituents in Australia. The absence of local councils and the poverty of federal representation for the territories significantly limit our access to elected representation. An increase in the size of the Legislative Assembly from 17 members to between 27 and 35 members will mean ACT residents remain the least represented constituents in Australia, but it will go some practical way to minimising the disadvantage.

The ACT Executive should be increased to a minimum of 8 Ministers. The current Executive of 5 Ministers is patently inadequate to deliver appropriate oversight of both local and territory level governance as well as constituent representation, intergovernmental representation (such as COAG), policy innovation and the numerous other demands on their time.

Several submissions to this review currently available on the Elections ACT website canvass ideas such as the appointment of non-elected, non-voting Ministers. This is a radical departure from the current Westminster principles. Any such change to entrenched laws would have to be subject to a referendum and I would caution against it.

It is not necessary for all electorates to return an equal number of MLAs. An electorate containing a significantly larger number of registered voters can return a higher number of MLAs and retain the principle of votes of equal value. A mixture of electorates that return

different numbers of MLAs allows for more incremental changes in the overall size of the Assembly.

It is not necessary for each electorate to return an odd number of MLAs, only that the Legislative Assembly contains an odd number of MLAs in total.

Assembly electorates should be organised by communities of interest. 5 electorates of equal numbers will realistically require communities of interest to be divided between electorates to the detriment of governance in the ACT.

Any increase in the size of the Legislative Assembly could be phased in over a period of time (eg: 27 MLAs for 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly, 35 MLAs for 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly), however some meaningful increase should be underway in time for the 2016 Territory election.

The obvious extra costs involved in any increase in the size of the Assembly or the Executive could be mitigated by a pay freeze for MLAs and Ministers for a period of several Assemblies.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Logan McLennan