

From: John Warhurst
Sent: Tuesday, 19 February 2013 2:29 PM
To: JACS, Size Of Assembly Inquiry
Cc: John Warhurst
Subject: Submission from John Warhurst

SUBMISSION FROM JOHN WARHURST TO SIZE OF ACT ASSEMBLY INQUIRY

1. The comparative evidence suggests that increasing the number of members of the ACT Assembly is justified. Larger numbers of members would make the work of the Assembly more effective and efficient and allow for a greater number of ministers. Therefore I support an increase.

2. Having said that I think there is a danger in exaggerating the strength of the comparative case by the inclusion of local government representatives in other jurisdictions in the supporting Tables. Not only are local government representatives and members of parliament different, but also I think local government should be discussed as a separate matter. There may be a case for some local government in the ACT to offset some, but not all, of the need for a larger Assembly.

3. The four guiding principles from the ACT Electoral Commission need close scrutiny because if they are to be strictly adhered to they effectively rule out a number of possible combinations of electorates that may be suitable for other reasons, such as 4x5 (20 members), 3x5 and 1x7 (22 members) and 4x7 (28 members). I am not convinced as an absolutely binding principle that each electorate should necessarily have the same number of members or necessarily have an odd number of members. The Australian Senate, admittedly an Upper House, works with even numbers in each jurisdiction and effectively has 6 members per election in each state.

4. The size of each electorate is not just a technical question but also a political one as electorates with larger numbers of Members give minor parties and Independents a greater chance of being elected because the quota is lower. Electorates with smaller numbers of Members favour the major parties over minor parties. So you can't keep politics out of this decision.

5. From the options that meet the guiding principles I recommend 5x5 (25 members) on balance. I think any change should be large enough to be worth doing and should also look to the future by erring on the larger (more members) side. For that reason I rule out 21 Members (too small). I also rule out 27 Members - 3x9 - (I think that 9-member electorates have too many members). However, I think that another version of 27 Members - 4x5 plus 1x7 - is worth consideration.

6. This is only a short submission. I am prepared to expand on any point if that is deemed to be helpful.

John Warhurst
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19 February 2013