

Expert Reference Group on the Size of the Assembly
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Dear Expert Reference Group

Size of ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry Submission

My thoughts fall into line with many of those already represented in the submissions of Martin Gordon, John Trueman, Meg Blackman, Corinne Appleby and John Warhurst.

The ACT is a small jurisdiction in terms of the area of the whole ACT and Canberra City itself. There often much talk about Canberra being spread out and having a large footprint. However, in the overall Australian context the ACT is still very small. It's actually about 36Km from top to bottom (Forde to Banks) as the crow flies.

Thus the concept of applying average of politicians to residents in other State and Territories is clearly not valid given that all ACT members can reach all their constituents in no more than 30 minutes driving time. This possibly can be achieved in some council areas but no other State or Territory can achieve that.

Our concentration thus makes a small Assembly appropriate and more effective rather than having a larger number of members. However it's clear in my mind that you are under pressure due to statements made by local politicians to have some increase.

I feel that around 20 or 21 members spread over four electorates of 5 each or three electorates of 7 members each is a sensible compromise. I like John Warhurst, see no issue with an even number of 20.

I note your estimates of costs for additional members and/or Ministers including capital costs. When you consider the largish increase in living costs being incurred by the majority of Canberrans, through increased rates and territory taxes then a large increase in additional political representation costs will simple add to these cost pressures. It really is time for the Government to cut back on costs. So any increase in costs for additional assembly members should ideally be offset with savings elsewhere.

The Government has been driving costs reductions through efficiency dividends on the public service. Although at a lower level than the Federal sector. Why should the politicians also not feel some pain through efficiency constraints?

Regards
Greg Hutchison