

Dear Madam/Sir

Reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that the ACT Assembly should not be increased in size at this time.

Our newly-elected MLAs have already undermined the case for the Assembly's expansion; for example, using it as a holding area while scheming for something better, or for back door attempts to institute some form of hagiarchy, or for facile and futile ministerial posturing in response.

Under our present system of voting it is likely that an enlarged Assembly will do little more than bulk up the cross bench and a forever-campaigning opposition. And there is a rather heroic assumption that a couple of extra government members will somehow provide appropriate ministerial material.

The priority of work in this area should be the restructuring of the Assembly into an organisation that utilises whatever talents all MLAs might contribute. In this regard I commend the letter of Mr Harry Evans which appeared in *The Canberra Times*, and reprint it below.

W.A. Reid (Mr)

Bringing in qualified outsiders will soup up Assembly

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Before we get too far with the proposal to increase the size of the ACT Legislative Assembly ("Working group to look at 25 MLAs" December 14, p9), consideration should be given to a better and more economical change to the system.

Even with 25 members the Assembly would be far too small for a Westminster or cabinet system with ministers chosen from and by the majority party or coalition. The ridiculous situation of the frontbenchers outnumbering the backbenchers would likely continue.

We should have a chief executive (however titled) directly elected for the same fixed term as the Assembly, with power to make a limited number of appointments of political heads of portfolios who would not be Assembly members and not necessarily party members. They would appear before the Assembly and its committees as required.

The Assembly would remain at its present size and concentrate on legislating and inquiring, without worrying about shifting the couple of votes to change the government. The chief executive could get on with governing without worrying about losing those votes.

The nonsense of an opposition shadow leader and ministry with the imperative to oppose everything and wage a continuous election campaign would be abandoned.

The ACT (Self Government) Act already embodies significant departures from the Westminster model, having the chief minister formally elected by the Assembly and no equivalent of a state governor. A further departure would be beneficial.

Harry Evans, Page