

MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

**73. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Electoral Affairs:**

I refer to the consultation process for the ministerial expert committee charged with making recommendations on the government's plans to reform the Legislative Council.

- (1) Why is it such a short four-week time frame for submissions for such major reform when a routine electoral boundary review by the Western Australian Electoral Commission typically takes six months or more?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the committee is publishing a discussion paper this Friday, leaving only two weeks for the public to consider this and make a submission before 30 May?

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:**

- (1)–(2) This reform process is not a rejigging of the seats like in the Legislative Assembly where we have to try to fit new boundaries within provinces, which is a very difficult task. This approach is a more basic task: how can we achieve equality amongst voters? For example, the member for Roe's voters in Esperance only get half the vote weighting as the voters in Kalgoorlie. I do not know how the member for Roe reconciles that with the people in Esperance when their vote is only worth half of the vote of the people in Kalgoorlie. We think that this is unfair on the people in Roe. Similarly, we think it is unfair that the people in Albany only get a quarter of the vote that the people in Kalgoorlie get, or that the people in Wooroloo only get a quarter of the vote that the people eight kilometres up the road in Wundowie get. We are asking the committee: how can we achieve equality? We want equality for all these people, from Esperance in the member for Roe's electorate, to Kalgoorlie. We want suggestions on how we might achieve equality.

Mr McCusker has advised that the committee intends to publish a discussion paper on how equality might be approached and achieved. There might be a number of ways, I do not know, but he is going to publish a discussion paper and ask people to comment on the discussion paper. At the end of the month, the committee will consider all of that material and advise the government on how it might proceed next. This is a pressing matter. We do not think that the people of Esperance, who are more remote from Perth than the people of Kalgoorlie—Kalgoorlie has an airport that jets can land at, a train that goes there every day, a major hospital—should be prejudiced by having half the vote that the people of Kalgoorlie have.