

CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL EQUALITY) BILL 2021 — TIME LIMIT

592. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question.

Premier, why is your government gagging debate on this important piece of legislation when there are three years before the next election and many other pieces of legislation that should take priority given that he did not take this to the election and has denied the people of Western Australia an opportunity to have their say?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

There has been fulsome debate on the bill, as I said; it has been 15 hours. If members cannot make their points in 15 hours of discussion, there is something wrong with them. Obviously, the government has a very full legislative agenda and the Attorney General has many things that he will be dealing with, one of which is legislation to deal with outlaw motorcycle gangs, which we will be dealing with shortly.

One thing I have noticed over my two decades here is that tedious and repetitious debate is the staple of the Liberal and National Parties—filibustering is what they are known for—and it is often poorly researched and often without any substance.

Ms M.J. Davies: There was an article written about one of your speeches the other day being tedious and repetitious.

Mr M. McGOWAN: They have been provided with many opportunities.

Ms M.J. Davies: One of the media was commenting on it, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sorry?

Ms M.J. Davies: He said that he heard one of your speeches several times before; this was when you were at a function the other day. The media are starting to comment that you are a little bit tedious and repetitious.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sorry I missed that article. Which journalist was it?

Ms M.J. Davies: You have plenty of people in your media team, Premier. I have never seen so many people who trawl through the history.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I find it hard to believe that a journalist would write that! I am shocked! If a journalist has written that about me, I would be appalled. I would like the Leader of the Opposition to tell me his or her name so I can follow up fulsomely with that journalist, if that is what they say about me. It is shocking that that would be written about me, because, of course, nothing negative is ever written about me! As I noted the other day, I go to the football and get criticised. I note that the Leader of the Opposition went to the football and was not criticised. Obviously, people are out to get me, Leader of the Opposition!

In terms of the bill, we are doing the right thing by the people of the state. We are the last hold-out of a Parliament in Australia that is not democratic—the last hold-out. Parliaments around Australia over the last 150 years have become democratic. It is now accepted practice that people's votes are equal irrespective of how rich they are. No matter where they live, how much property they own or what sex they are, their vote is equal. Each person above the age of 18 should have an equal say about who is in government. Just because someone is richer than someone else does not mean that their vote should be worth more. Just because a person's occupation might be regarded broadly as having some greater value than someone else's occupation does not mean that their vote should have greater value. It is archaic thinking that that should be the case. If the natural conclusion of the Leader of the Opposition's argument is that people who are wealthier should have more votes, then there should be more votes in Cottesloe than in other electorates around the state. I hear that argument raised regularly—that those people who produce more wealth should get more votes. That is the argument I hear members opposite raise—that those who produce more wealth should get more votes. If that is the case, why do we not give billionaires thousands of votes and people who do not have any money half a vote? That is the argument the opposition runs. Then it runs the argument that it is based upon regional representation. Why is it that someone's vote in Northam, an hour from the city, is worth four times someone's vote in Augusta, five hours from the city? Why is that? Why is it that the vote of someone in the member for Mandurah's electorate is worth one and a half times the vote of someone in the member for Warnbro's electorate when they live next door to each other? Those things are past. They make no sense. Clearly, it needs reform. Our view is that it should be reformed, and that is what we are doing.