

ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS

**540. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

Can the Premier confirm that the legislation introduced today to reform the Legislative Council will remove the reference to the metropolitan boundary from the act thereby removing the requirement for the Western Australian Electoral Commission to have regard for regional Western Australia or regional electorates when conducting boundary redistributions for future elections in WA?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The legislation we brought in deals with the terrible rorting that goes on in the upper house. The vote weighting in some regional electorates within the lower house remains unchanged. That is the situation. The terrible vote rorting in the upper house is an assault on democracy. It is a corrupt system in the upper house. It is corrupt and it offends every democratic principle, what is going on in the upper house. The fact that some people's votes are worth six times that of other people's votes is wrong and offensive to democracy! Democracy should not mean that some people's votes are worth six times that of others. I would have thought that was an easy principle to understand.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The argument that members of the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party put that somehow they are out there representing the regions is also wrong, because half of you have your offices in West Perth when you are members of the upper house, including the Leader of the Opposition. Here we have it in this photo. When she was a member of the upper house, she lived in Perth and her office was in West Perth. That is the fact of it, Madam Speaker. There it is. Her office was upstairs, over the road from Parliament. There she was across the road from Parliament, not representing the people of the regions. That is the truth of it, Madam Speaker.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! It is very difficult to hear the Premier if so many people yell at once. We have had the question and we have had plenty of interjection; please leave it to the Premier to answer the question.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Let us have a look at the other people they have put into the upper house—people like Hon Jim Chown. The Liberal Party put Hon Jim Chown into Parliament as a representative of the Agricultural Region. That is what the Liberal Party did. His office was in West Perth—I wonder why that was? The Liberal Party also puts into Parliament people like Hon Peter Collier, who describes women as “sandwich makers”. I have not heard a word from the Leader of the Liberal Party about that. The Liberal Party and the National Party have put some pretty disgraceful characters into the upper house and they have supported the absolute rorting of democratic principles in the upper house whereby some people's votes are worth six times those of others. Obviously, the system has to change.