

**ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS**

*Motion*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [4.02 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Labor government's plan to reduce regional representation in the state Parliament and calls for a referendum to be held prior to any changes being legislated.

I start this debate by putting on the record what the opposition is not asking for. We are not asking for something that is unreasonable. We are not asking the government to break a promise to the electorate, because it absolutely did not make one before the election, and we are not supporting the continuation of a system that allows preference whisperers to game the system. We have been very up-front as an opposition about the proposals that have been put forward by the government. Given that there is no mandate for this government to pursue the types of reforms that it is asking for and proposes to bring into this house, and the impact this will have for years and years to come, I think a referendum for the people of Western Australia to make that decision with all the facts at their fingertips is a reasonable request. We are asking the government to go to the people of Western Australia to ask them to decide whether we should cut regional representation in this state's Parliament. That is the proposition of the opposition.

The Attorney General will no doubt revert to government talking points that suggest the catalyst for all this was the result that was achieved by the Daylight Saving Party. That has been a very consistent line from the government after it discovered that it had an absolute majority in both houses and could pursue its lifelong ambition to achieve one vote, one value in both houses of Parliament, unfettered by any ability of the opposition to change, amend or impact the outcome of the legislation, other than to bring in these points and put them in this house and in the Legislative Council. We will no doubt be regaled with comparisons of numerical weighting. I know that the government takes great delight in talking about the worth of a person's vote in Wundowie as compared with Wooroloo. Somehow, because everyone on the government side of the chamber seems to have well and truly drunk the Kool Aid, we will emphatically be told that the government has a mandate to pursue this change. That is just not correct. It is disingenuous. It is dishonest.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** It's an outright lie!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** To that claim, in my electorate we call bulldust. It is probably unparliamentary to say it.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That is right. We cannot say that in this place, member for North West Central, so I am trying to be somewhat polite.

In my electorate and all of regional Western Australia, we tend to call it like it is, and every person to whom we actually take the time to explain what this government is intending on doing looks at me with disbelief and says, "How could it be that this government intends to take our representation away when we have so many challenges and so many opportunities facing us that we need the assistance of that representation in the state's Parliament? Why are they doing this? Why are they pursuing this ideological view of the world when we know it will have real impacts on our family, our business and our community?" That is how it appears to them—that it is a numerical, ideological argument versus what the real impact of those changes will be.

The claims and the defence that will be mounted by the Attorney General and members of the government are disingenuous and should be called out for what they truly are. It is a massive breach of the public's trust. It is a massive overreach by a government that has so many other things on its plate to deal with. In the midst of the COVID pandemic, with a health system and housing sector in crisis and key industries unable to attract and retain the workers that they need, we have a government that put up its first piece of business in this house after the election to disenfranchise the people of Western Australia, particularly those in regional Western Australia. It is a policy position so deeply entrenched in the Labor Party that no matter what arguments are put forward by the opposition, and no matter what arguments are put forward by commentators or by the community, that it will pursue it relentlessly. I do not think there will be any hope for this Premier. He is drunk on power and knows that he can get away with it. He hopes that by the time 2025 comes around everyone will have forgotten, even those who represent regional constituencies.

We have asked the Premier twice now to consider giving his regional members at the very least a free vote so that they can come to this house and do what they have been elected to do, which is to put the issues and concerns and reflect the will of their electorates on the floor of this house in relation to legislation.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Leader, even if the Premier allowed for a conscience vote on this matter —

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** A free vote, yes.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** I'm sure that those members who wanted to exercise that free vote will have their preselections put in jeopardy if they vote one particular way.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I have no doubt that would be the case. What we are very clear on now, because we have asked the Premier twice, is that whatever the decision is, whatever legislation comes forward—we know that it will include some form of reduction in regional representation—every regional member of Parliament on the Labor Party side will be voting to support that. Regardless of their personal views—I know that there are some who do not agree with this; some of them have articulated that in public prior to the election—they will be lining up in this Parliament to vote on legislation that will reduce the number of representatives in regional WA and they will thereby disenfranchise some of the most vulnerable and isolated communities that deserve more attention, not less.

Most of these new members who we see in this chamber are riding high on getting elected on the coat-tails of the Premier. The Premier has made it crystal clear in this chamber, yesterday and today, that everyone knows the party rules, and, as the member for North West Central said, even if they got a rush of blood to the head and decided they were going to do what their electorate actually wanted them to do, that would be their last move. They would not be given a free vote.

I am asking members of the Labor Party in regional Western Australia whether, when the time comes, they will put their electorate or the party first. I just ask that everybody remembers what they are here to do. I cannot imagine that they want their legacy to be the disenfranchisement of those they seek to represent in this Parliament. They are the members for Kalgoorlie, Kimberley, Geraldton, Murray–Wellington, Pilbara, Albany, Bunbury—he is a minister, so he will not get a choice because it will be cabinet solidarity—Dawesville, Mandurah, who is also a minister, and Warren–Blackwood. I have no doubt those members are passionate about representing their electorates and are passionate about regional Western Australia, yet they are going to walk into this chamber and vote for legislation that will undoubtedly reduce the number of regional representatives in the Parliament. They have been given no option by the party. They will be voting to cut regional voices in this Parliament, and that is a great shame. I ask: is that what those members, as regional members of the Labor Party, want their legacy in this place to be? Do they want to be part of the team that makes it more difficult to bring to the fore the issues they know exist in our regional communities? As the Premier campaigned before the last election, he was asked on multiple occasions whether electoral reform was being considered. It was not that he was not asked. I return to my first statement: we are not asking the Premier or the government to break a promise because none was made. He said it was not on the agenda. He made no commitments. He could reconsider this and allow it to go to a referendum, as the opposition is asking. He was asked repeatedly about it by a number of journalists and his response was, “It’s not on our agenda.”

Here is the transcript, because I think it is worth having on the record in this place. An interview with Dan Mercer of the ABC in Albany reads, exactly as it was conducted —

**Mercer:** If Labor is returned next Saturday will you pursue electoral reform in the Upper House?

**Premier:** It’s not on our agenda, I’ve answered this question many times, it’s not on our agenda, we care deeply about country WA and the issues of jobs, health, education, important infrastructure other sorts of things that we will implement.

**Mercer:** There’s a difference between something not being on the agenda and committing not to doing something as Labor did with the gold royalty increase. So will you commit, are you committing?

**Premier:** Well I’ll be clear, I’ll be clear again, it’s not on our agenda enhanced regional representation will continue and this is just another smoke screen by the Liberals and Nationals. What the Liberals have shown today with their comments is if they don’t care about regional WA. If they don’t think the Premier of the state shouldn’t go to regional WA they don’t care about regions.

**Mercer:** Do you think that Electoral Reform in the Upper House is something that parties ought to take to an election before ever trying to implement it?

**Premier:** No like I said before it’s not on our agenda.

**Mercer:** So can I take from that the Labor Party isn’t going to be doing it?

**Premier:** It’s not on our agenda we support and enhance regional representation.

**Mercer:** To go back to the question, how significant is electoral reform in the Upper House is it a matter of such importance that a party would need to take it to the voters before trying to implement it do you think?

**Premier:** As I said it’s not on our agenda we support enhanced regional representation.

**Mercer:** The question is do you think it’s a matter that should be taken to voters before being implemented?

**Premier:** As I said it’s not on our agenda, we support enhanced regional representation.

That exchange took place in Albany five days before the election. Hear, hear, for Dan Mercer who kept asking the question, because he knew he was being fed a line by the Premier. He knew the government had anticipated those questions and he knew it would ultimately become a serious issue after the election if the Labor Party had the numbers in both houses of Parliament, because every time the Labor Party has had the opportunity in this place,

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going right back to before the sixties, it has taken the chance to change representation and it has never ended well for regional communities.

As I said, that interview was five days before the election: “Not on our agenda”. I want to quickly put to rest the idea that there seems to be a Trojan horse being built around this issue. There is a veneer of, “Well, we saw the outcome of the Daylight Saving Party and have to deal with all of that.” However, within that is what the Labor Party has been pursuing doggedly for so long; that is, the process of introducing one vote, one value in both houses of Parliament. The fact is that the Daylight Saving Party was elected on a handful of votes, and there is absolutely no disagreement from anybody in this place or in the broader community that we need to look at sensible reforms. The opposition is on record as saying that it supports sensible reforms that target preference harvesters and the ability for people to end up in our Parliament who perhaps received only a very small handful of votes. The true agenda here, this Trojan horse that the Labor Party is building to try to confound the community that it is trying to do the public a favour with, is one vote, one value, and what that means in terms of the reduction of representation in the Legislative Council.

The peanut gallery is going well over there! It is like *The Two Ronnies* on the front bench.

**Mr J.R. Quigley** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is a constant chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp. When the Minister for Police is in the chamber, it is just constant. I hope he is going to get up and regale us with his view on this position. I would love to hear what he has to say, but if he does not, perhaps he could just let those of us who are on our feet deliver our views. If he then wants to respond, he can do that. That is how this house works, minister.

**Mr P. Papalia:** I’m hardly interjecting.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** He is not interjecting. It is a low-level snarking from the front bench.

If we go back over the comments in the transcript, the Premier said seven times that it was not on his agenda and three times that he supported enhanced regional representation. I have to say, at the time everyone was quite confounded about what “enhanced regional representation” meant. The journalists at the press conference asked us what that meant. I said, “You will have to ask the Premier; it sounds like weasel words to me. I am not quite sure what he is referring to.” In the end, it turned out that the government did not intend making any changes to the weighting of regional seats in this place, even though the notion of one vote, one value had already been applied in the Legislative Assembly, but he was very careful to avoid any response that might relate back to any changes in the Legislative Council. Five days before the election, the Premier said seven times that it was not on the agenda and three times he talked about enhanced regional representation.

The first order of business with the newly minted majority in both houses of Parliament was to pretend that these words were never spoken and to forge on with the plan to reduce regional representation. And haven’t they done it with the most extraordinary process—a hand-picked ministerial “expert” committee! I put that in inverted commas for Hansard’s benefit. The committee was stacked with people who have publicly professed support for a pure form of one vote, one value being applied in the Legislative Council.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I am getting there, member. The government set up the terms of reference, which dictate that a certain result be delivered. It is nothing more than a charade and a farce. The Labor Party already knows what it wants to do; it just was not brave enough to do it before the election. I will give it that, because it knew there would be pushback—maybe not enough to change the outcome of the election. I am not sure that we are naive enough to think that, but there certainly would have been interest from certain parts of our community if the government had been up-front and put that on the agenda.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The government should have been honest with those communities. It certainly was not going to admit something like that before the election, because it would have set alarm bells ringing if it had done so.

Sorry, I thought I was going to get there. I read that last night, member for North West Central—three members on the ministerial committee have connections to the Labor Party. Let me get to that. Who are these esteemed committee members? Let me take members back to just before the election. On 20 February, I would say that all members of the previous Parliament received the same letter. The letter was signed by 10 academics, including members of what is now the ministerial expert committee—Associate Professor Martin Drum, Professor John Phillimore and Associate Professor Sarah Murray. The letter that we received outlines an argument for the necessity of reform for the way in which members of the Legislative Council are elected. On receipt of this letter, the Nationals WA spokesperson for electoral affairs at the time, Hon Martin Aldridge, wrote back. I do not know whether anyone else did, because it was in the midst of an election campaign, but this was within his portfolio, and he wanted to provide feedback to these individuals who had written this letter and invite them to understand why it is that we would not

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support the notion that they were putting forward. Anyone who knows Hon Martin Aldridge knows that he is very thorough and precise, and that stood him in good stead to respond to that letter. I am going to read in the response so that it is on the public record. Hon Martin Aldridge wrote back and said —

I refer to your correspondence of 20 February 2019 and apologise for the delay in my response. As you're aware, The Nationals WA oppose any measure that seeks to diminish regional representation in our State Parliament. It will come as little surprise that The Nationals WA reject your assertion that an equal weighting system for each region in the Legislative Council of Western Australia "fails the democratic fairness test".

It tends to be the case when the debate of one vote one value rears its head, that there are cries of protest from predominantly city-based academics and politicians. These cries are centred on the notion of equality. Yet at the same time there is a clear inequality in dearer fuel prices for country motorists, a lack of public transport and exorbitant regional airfares. Regional people are likely to achieve a lesser education standard and die earlier than their city counterparts.

The impact of proposed electoral reform in the Upper House—such as that presented at a New Zealand conference by the President of the Legislative Council last year—is to dilute country representation.

One vote one value was achieved in the Legislative Assembly with the passage of the *Constitution and Electoral Amendment Bill 2005*. The Bill recognised the need to compensate what are considered to be large districts by a weighting mechanism known as the Large District Allowance. Your proposal provides no detail on whether you believe our electoral system ought to recognise and respond to the challenges of representing regional and remote Western Australia.

Western Australia is unique. My electorate —

This is Hon Martin Aldridge writing —

of the Agricultural Region has a land mass comparable to Italy with nearly all of it populated. Yet my slice of country Western Australia is relatively tiny when compared to my upper house colleagues in the Mining and Pastoral Region. Spanning more than two million square kilometres, the total geographic area is more than 2656 times that of the South Metropolitan Region and includes Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Eucla and Wyndham.

In April 2005, then Professor Greg Craven, Executive Director of The John Curtin Institute of Public Policy and Professor of Government and Constitutional Law made a fair comment on the *One Vote One Value Bill*:

That bill was introduced by the previous Labor government. The letter continues —

*"I would respectfully argue that, once the Lower House of the Parliament is constituted on a more or less strict One Vote One Value basis, the case for constituting the Upper House differentially as a Chamber where regional interests receive moderately enhanced representation, is strong. This follows from the necessity to ensure that the diversity of interests contained within the State are adequately reflected in Parliament."*

In the same vein, Dr Harry Phillips, Parliamentary Fellow, Adjunct Professor, Edith Cowan University and Curtin University of Technology said in April 2005:

*"In Western Australia the interpretations of the Canadian Courts have tended to be used as support for the 'one vote one value' argument. However, the Canadian Courts, have given thrust to a broader concept of 'effective representation'. The latter provides scope for deviation (sometimes substantial) from voter parity. If one sought to do so I think there would be scope to argue that in many settings, other factors (such as geography), have to be considered for effective representation to prevail."*

It is my view that those living in regional and remote Western Australia have an expectation and a democratic right to be able to reasonably access their Members of Parliament. The proposal advanced by you is incongruent with that expectation and right and would significantly diminish and disadvantage those people from being adequately represented in the State Parliament.

As individuals with expertise in democratic practice, I invite you and your cosignatories to spend some time with my colleagues in their regional constituencies. I think having walked a few days in our shoes will give you a deeper appreciation for the challenge of representing regional and remote Western Australia in a meaningful way. To that end, my Parliamentary National Party colleagues and I invite you to join any or all of us during our electorate travels.

Thank you for considering our views and I look forward to your response. Please don't hesitate to contact my office should you wish to arrange a visit to the electorate with one of our Members of Parliament.

That last sentence is very hopeful.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** They should come with me. I'll take them on a road trip!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That is right. It was really not surprising that the honourable member received no response from the 10 academics who were promoting a reduction in regional representation.

Fast-forward to after the election, and Hon Martin Aldridge started asking questions in the Legislative Council about who the newly appointed panel members of that expert committee were. From the answers that we received, it would appear that they have links to the Labor Party and the government. Who would have thought? It would appear that some of them have worked for Labor governments, ministers and even Deputy Premiers. The question becomes: just how impartial, how unbiased, is this ministerial committee? There is no regional representation on the committee. All the members live in Perth, and they have well-known and regularly articulated fixed views on electoral reform. The question is: how impartial, how unbiased, is this ministerial committee? I have to say that anyone with an ounce of common sense would look at that evidence and say that this committee has been put together to deliver the outcome that the government wants. It is trying to give it a veneer of decency, yet even the most basic interrogation proves that it is trying to dress something up because it knows that this will be deeply unpopular in regional Western Australia. The government needs that recommendation from a committee that already has a position on this. It would not surprise me if the legislation has already been drafted. It is a farce, and actually it is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

The government already has a position on this. It continues with that farce, and it will accept the advice and recommendations as the Premier has outlined to the house over the last two days based on the feedback and the submissions that have been provided. Quite a significant number of submissions have been provided—people do take an interest in this—but I do not think it is broad enough for the general public to understand exactly what it is. Despite the fact that submissions have been made by various stakeholders, I can tell members that I am not sure that the person walking down the street who lives in a regional area and who is asked to once again go to the polls in 2025 actually understands that they will find that they have fewer people to vote for. I do not think that this government will do anything to try to educate that community about that fact. I think it will want to push this through Parliament as quickly as possible.

I can tell members how much stock the government is putting in the submissions that run contrary to its view. They have been filed in the round cabinet under the desk! I am sure that those contributors received a nice acknowledgement, but I have absolutely no confidence that those submissions will be reflected in any of the legislation.

The Attorney General can provide us with some feedback on how the process will run from here and when we are expecting to see the report from this expert committee that already has very fixed views about how one vote, one value and electoral reform should be conducted. They could at least have the decency to end that charade and put some of that back into Parliament today so that we can get on with critiquing what will happen as a result of these moves.

I just want to go back to demonstrate just how long the Labor Party has been pursuing this ideological bent. Mal Bryce wrote a paper in 1987 that shows that the pursuit of one vote, one value is engrained. I draw members' attention to the closing paragraph of this document titled *Electoral reform in Western Australia in the 1980s*. It is by Hon Mal Bryce, who was Deputy Premier and Minister for Industry and Technology; Defence Liaison, Communications; Parliamentary and Electoral Reform. It is a reasonably informative document. It goes through the progress of parliamentary and electoral reform processes from 1983 to 1987 when there seemed to be a significant push for the pursuit of electoral reform. My takeaway from reading this document was that this government—those who were involved in the government of the day when these reforms were going through—came to the conclusion that it would be better to take the reforms to an election. The conclusion was that it was not going to get anywhere by trying to hoodwink voters and it was better to argue its case and win over the voters than do it on the sly, which is what this government is doing. That is saying something because I think the then government involved the likes of Brian Burke and others. It came to the conclusion that, after trying to drive electoral reform over a number of years, it needed to be up-front with the electorate—something this government has not been. The final paragraph in this report states —

Our campaign for reform will continue until such time as vote weighting is removed and the system is capable of electing a Parliament which accurately reflects opinion in the community.

Mal Bryce says that the policy of gradualism is how it will be achieved. Let us look at what the government did. Page 64 of the document shows "Progress of parliamentary & electoral reform proposals 1983 to 1987". It states that in 1983 —

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- Burke Government elected on a platform which included comprehensive proposals for parliamentary and electoral reform.

The Labor Party took the policy to an election. The document continues —

- Legislative Council Reform Bill to introduce a single statewide electorate and proportional representation was defeated in the Legislative Council.
- Parliament Bill to establish means to resolve deadlocks between the Houses of Parliament was defeated in the Legislative Council.
- State/Commonwealth Joint Enrolment Act passed.
- A Bill to require MPs to make a Declaration of their financial interests ...

In 1984 —

- Fair Representation Bill to introduce approximately equal enrolments in Assembly districts and 4 multi-member regional electorates for the Legislative Council was defeated in the Legislative Council.

In 1985 —

- MPs Declaration of Financial Interests Bill was again defeated in the Legislative Council.
- A Bill for the Resolution of Disagreements between the Houses of Parliament ... was defeated ...
- Electoral Districts Act Amendment allowing more public participation in electoral redistributions was passed.

That was a good outcome. It continues —

- An Electoral Amendment Bill lapsed after a disagreement between the Houses when the Legislative Council would not permit the printing of party names on ballot papers.

It goes on. The final part refers to gradualism —

Fundamental to State Labor Party policy and the Fabian approach, is that for faith to be shown in the system of parliamentary democracy —

The Labor Party needs to keep working at it. We can see it is ingrained and ideological. It is ingrained and nowhere in that document is there a discussion about the impact that reducing the number of regional representatives would have. It is simply a mathematical equation for the Labor Party.

Let us go to the 2000s and look at more modern history. In 2005, there was a window of time between the change of government and the way that the Legislative Council used to be set up. The government took its moment to push through one vote, one value for the 2008 state election. As a result, we have one vote, one value here in the Legislative Assembly, albeit with some vote weighting —

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** One vote, one value was applied.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** It's not one vote, one value. How could it be when the member behind you has got all these phantom voters?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Let us be clear: I do not agree with the concept of one vote, one value at all, but that is what we have.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Then don't say we have it.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** We do. That was your legislation. You introduced it.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Do we or do we not have it?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** You have one vote, one value. The government supports it. The Premier said "we support enhanced regional representation". I just read it out 16 times. He said it seven times in an interview with Dan Mercer—"we support enhanced regional representation". That is exactly what that is. That is the government's position.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** That is a different thing than what you're saying. No, you said we have one vote, one value.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** If the minister disagrees with his Premier, that is fine. I will tell the minister what impact of that legislation had. It increased the number of metropolitan seats from 34 to 42. It decreased the number of country MPs and seats from 23 to 17. That legislation, on the back of every other electoral reform that has been pushed by the

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Labor Party to reduce representation of regional WA, significantly altered the number of people who could represent the people of regional Western Australia and it will do it again now. It has a history of disenfranchising regional WA.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Clearly, this member is taking over the debate. If he wants to debate, he should stand up.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens):** There is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

Several members interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Proudly. Put simply, the Labor Party has a history of disenfranchising WA. What does that mean practically? My electorate of Central Wheatbelt is 100 000 square kilometres; it pales into insignificance when we talk about the size of North West Central and other members' electorates. But I can talk with authority because, from my perspective, I have people in my electorate who remember—before the reforms and one vote, one value was brought in in 2008—that there were two seats: Avon and Merredin. Members of those communities still say to me that they used to have such regular access to Hendy and Max as previous members of both those electorates because the electorates were a sensible size; the members could get around and ensure they were across the issues. They had multiple communities in the electorates whom they still had to service, but overnight that seat doubled. There are a significant number of communities in the electorate of Central Wheatbelt and although there might be similar themes, they are all communities that deserve attention. They are all people with individual issues.

Central Wheatbelt has very poor public transport links, as many of our regional communities do. It still has gaps in communications, so we do not have anywhere near equitable access to modern communications as our metropolitan counterparts do. Then we overlay some of the other disadvantages such as limited access to government services and infrastructure. That makes it even more challenging for vulnerable people in those communities to bring those issues to the fore. My electorate offices are in Northam and Merredin. I spend little time in either because when I am in my electorate, I try to go to those communities to afford them the opportunity to meet me face to face because that is important.

We talked about Hon Mick Gayfer this morning during the condolence motion. Our organisation and its members who seek to represent regional communities know the value of being seen and being in those communities. It takes an enormous amount of effort for someone to walk into an electorate office and raise an issue. I do not think we can be effective if people are not able to do that. The bigger we make these electorates, the more difficult we make it for people to engage with their members. It means less of those issues bubble to the top in this place, as we critique legislation and highlight issues in government. The government is talking about permanently changing that for an ideological bent.

Even with two electorate offices with one staff member in each, there is less opportunity for people to access my office than is the case with a centrally located and connected office in the metropolitan area. It is not unusual for me or one of our other regional members to travel for two hours for maybe a half-hour meeting. Compare that with a member in the metropolitan area or a major regional centre, who could potentially get to two or three events in one night. Anything that will make that more difficult is the wrong thing to do and the wrong direction for this government to pursue.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** If I can interject, you said that you have two offices in your 100 000-square-kilometre electorate.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** By legacy, yes.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** My understanding is that after a certain number of square kilometres, you are entitled to two offices. I have a million square kilometres, and I asked the Premier if I could have a second office, given the distance and vastness of the electorate, and it was a resounding no. That gives you a good understanding of what the Premier knows about regional Western Australia.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It certainly makes it challenging. Every member in this place knows how valuable an electorate office and its staff are to the communities that they service. Whether we are present in that office or not, they are an amazing resource for their communities. Accessibility has to be a part of the conversation that we are about to have about electoral reform. It is incumbent on everyone to understand that there is very limited public transport and there are vast distances for people to travel, so there will be fewer people in those sparsely populated areas who will be able to bring issues to the fore. That will be further exacerbated in the Legislative Council, because those electoral regions are significant; they are big. I can speak with authority on that because I have been a member of the Legislative Council as well. I have represented the Agricultural Region. There is a significant variation in the issues that we are presented with in those regions, even within the Agricultural Region and the Mining and Pastoral Region. Therefore, the prospect of having fewer members to cover regional areas and to be available and accessible

is daunting. It will have far-reaching impacts on policy, on focus and on the issues that are raised and debated by the government in the Parliament.

I hear the government members dismissing this, but this is something that we deal with on a daily basis. I cannot for the life of me understand why having fewer people to represent the people of regional Western Australia, when we are already seeing huge challenges in health, housing, education, community services and access to infrastructure, sometimes even the most basic infrastructure, will help bridge that gap. It is not just a regional versus metropolitan argument, because when the regions are thriving, the whole state thrives. The fact that we are having this debate based purely on some sort of mathematical notion of equity as opposed to what it means on the ground for community members is enormously distressing.

I think the government knows that the public will not tolerate its agenda. As I said at the beginning of this debate, the government has created a veneer. There is no argument about dealing with the issues that have arisen as a result of the Daylight Saving Party or other parties of that ilk that have been elected on a small number of votes. We are happy to work with the government on that and other sensible reforms. But we are not happy to support what we know will disenfranchise regional voters. I make the point that it is not about protecting National Party MPs or Liberal Party MPs or even Labor Party MPs.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The minister can bring his own cynicism to this chamber. It is swings and roundabouts, minister. Look how many regional MPs the government has.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** They are great representatives!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** That will not always be the case. The minister knows that; he has been around long enough. It is about making sure that there are enough members out there, of whatever colour political party, to give the people of regional Western Australia, who contribute such a significant amount to our state's economy, the access, representation and advocacy that they deserve, just as much as everyone down here, if not more, because of the challenges they face. The government is talking about removing that democratic right. That is wrong.

I go back to what I said at the beginning of this debate. I urge the regional members in the Labor Party to start having the conversation now, because they will have to go back to their communities and explain why they are supporting something that will fundamentally change their representation in this Parliament. We need to bear in mind that there are two very different roles in this Parliament—one for the Legislative Assembly and one for the Legislative Council. Nowhere in any Westminster system anywhere in the world do we see the pursuit of one vote, one value, or that argument, in the house of review. It is a different house with a different purpose. That debate was had back in 2005 to make sure that our state's geography was reflected in the Parliament, as it should be, because we are such a vastly bigger state than some of the others in this nation. That should be reflected, and that was the compromise that was made at the time. The government is talking about changing that. That will have long-reaching implications. It is absolutely outrageous. That is why we think that the public of Western Australia ought to be given the chance to have its say and to critique what this government wants to do before it legislates to bring in what we know will ultimately be a reduction in regional representation in this state Parliament.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House)** [4.45 pm]: I am very happy to make a contribution early in the debate. I am a product of the system that was put in place during the time of the Gallop Labor government. I was elected to this place in 2001. I was elected when the seat of Mandurah had around 13 000 electors. That was the situation for me when I was elected to this place in 2001. The then seat of Murray, which was the seat adjoining and held by the now late Arthur Marshall, encompassed what is now Dawesville and stretched to just north of Lake Preston and across to Pinjarra and Dwellingup.

I remember very well the debates and discussions that took place about the enshrined values of the Labor Party, which was essentially that one vote, one value should be the basis upon which our democratic system is framed. The Labor Party has never been shy about that. That principle has been held for a significant time. There can be no argument from the other side that this is somehow a new opinion, view or value that is held by the Labor Party; it has been held for some time. Indeed, the issues around gerrymandering and voting malapportionment have been debated long and hard over many years. I remember that former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam used to rail against the fact that Western Australia was, in his view, the last bastion of gerrymandering and malapportionment.

In 2005, there was a process that included electoral reform. In that debate and discussion by the government, the principle of one vote, one value was put forward. In the case of this house, I went from an election in 2001 with about 13 000 voters to an electorate boundary that back then would have been around 20 000 voters in the 2005 election, which of course was a reflection of the legislation that had been put through this place by the former Attorney General in the Gallop government, Hon Jim McGinty. We had an interesting situation in Mandurah. Actually, I think it was in 2008 that the principle was imposed.



**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It was the 2008 election. I remember going to the election in 2005 after my original seat of Mandurah, which I contested in 2001, had been effectively cut in half because it was over the quota of about 13 000 or 14 000 voters. If the principle had continued, there probably would have been about four seats in Mandurah, and that would not have been fair.

Conversations about reforming representation in Parliament go back to when Parliament started. If we look at the returns for a number of seats in the Assembly when it was originally formed, it is interesting to see the seats that were dissolved, including Yilgarn, North Kalgoorlie, South Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. In fact, during the late gold rush times and early last century, there were a handful of seats representing just the goldfields. The reason for that was that more people were living in regional WA and a lot of interstaters had come across to the goldfields in search of their fortune. Of course, they were Australians, and in this case new Western Australians, so they enrolled to vote. The history of this state shows that, in many respects, the goldfields played a key role in the proposal not to secede from the Federation in 1933. I remember having a conversation with the Governor of Western Australia, Kim Beazley, last year when he paid a visit to the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the goldfields when he highlighted the role that the goldfields, and Kalgoorlie–Boulder in particular, played in the vote for Western Australia to be part of the Federation. The voters in the goldfields played a significant role.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Was it signed in Kalgoorlie?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes; from memory, I think the results from Kalgoorlie essentially tipped over the yes vote for joining the Federation.

Our state's history is littered with examples of when our democratic processes have played a significant role. In the late 1890s, there was a debate about Federation, and the role that voters, particularly those in regional Western Australia, played in agreeing to join the Federation was significant. Again, the decision to ultimately not support a motion to secede was also defeated in country areas, particularly around the goldfields.

Mandurah, like many other regional centres, has continued to grow. We need look only at the south west and places like Busselton, which is now a city, where the population continues to grow. That area is subject to the one vote, one value principle, as is Mandurah, the largest regional centre outside the metropolitan area, although no-one believes me anymore. We have seen good growth occurring in some of our regional centres.

From my perspective, it has always been not just about numbers, but about quality. Interestingly, the member for Balcatta highlighted—I had forgotten this—that I, as a then councillor, had made a submission to the Commission on Government process in the mid-1990s. I do not want to set a precedent of quoting myself, because I attacked the member for Moore last night for quoting his second reading contribution on the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021, but I was quite impressed by my comment, so I am pleased that the member for Balcatta reminded me of these words of wisdom!

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** He found it and now I remember. The Commission on Government process included visits around the state. It was a bit like a parliamentary inquiry; people could make submissions. I made a submission, and it is quoted in the historical documents —

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Is this like the submission to get a fuel card for Mandurah?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I lost that argument because we have public transport. I accepted the argument, even though I wrote to Brendon Grylls.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** I think you had a couple of cracks at it.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I did; I came from different angles. But I was rebuffed smartly and logically for a reason. I think the Leader of the Opposition highlighted in her contribution the issues about members getting out and around in their electorates. I think it is important. I am from the country. I am from Northam. I was born and bred in Northam. I can remember the late Ken McIver, who was the member for Northam. He was preceded by Hon Mick Gayfer.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Mick then Ken and then Max.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Did Max defeat —

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Ken.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes, Max defeated Ken. One of the things that I think all members will be aware of, and our regional members will know this very well, is that electors feel a great deal of ownership of members who represent regional communities. This is not a denigration of any metropolitan-based member, but the reality is that

Ms Mia Davies; Mr Shane Love; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Quigley

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in many regional and remote seats, there is a strong identification with the local member; people sort of have this sense that they own those members.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** In the nicest possible way.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is right—in the nicest possible way.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** It can turn on a dime!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** If a member does not turn up to something, they want to know why. That is why I wanted to know why the Leader of the Opposition was not able to go to the centenary celebrations at Northam Senior High School. I was excited about seeing her there. I know she had another event somewhere else.

In August 1995, I was quoted, and I will do something that I try not to do —

**Ms M.J. Davies:** It was the year I finished school, minister.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Did you?

**Mr D.R. Michael:** I was in year 10.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I was a councillor at the City of Mandurah at the time. I will quote from this document —

Mr David Templeman argued for the increased resourcing of non-metropolitan members as opposed to the alternative of weighted rural votes:

How insightful. I am reported as saying —

... I think in regard to technology we can overcome that by resourcing parliamentarians who have a larger geographical seat with extra resources to ensure that their jobs can be done productively and that people in their seats are represented properly.

I thought that was quite insightful and worthy of quoting, member for Moore. I was not quoted anywhere else in the document, so obviously that was the pearler that they chose to enshrine in history!

One of the things that distresses me a lot in any debate is that this is not, and should not be, about country versus city. I think we have to get over the fact that all Western Australians are important wherever they live. There are times when governments will favour populations, or part populations, for a very good reason. For example, this government recognised very early on in the current COVID situation the vulnerability of our remote Indigenous communities. The McGowan government recognised that key group within our population has particular vulnerabilities and needed to be protected and ensured that those communities were supported. In many respects, the boundaries of those communities, where people live and operate, were given enhanced protection, as they should, because there was a very good reason for it. It is evident in budgets, programs and initiatives that it is recognised there are parts of Western Australia that are different and require extra support. In my view, that is recognised through budgets. Whether it is regional schemes or programs in my portfolio areas, there is a response by government to need. Sometimes that need will be in the metropolitan area; sometimes that need will be in the regional areas. I think the premise that someone gets something but someone else misses out, of city against country, is the wrong approach. One of my criticisms of the Nationals WA is that that seems to be the narrative it articulates.

The Nationals WA is in a very interesting position. It now forms the opposition. It is the opposition's responsibility, as it is the government's responsibility, to represent the interests of all Western Australians. There are four Nationals members in this place. It is an undeniable fact that a significant proportion of Western Australians live in the metropolitan area. Those people have a right to be represented and have their interests represented by Nationals members, in this case as the opposition party. If the Nationals come at this with the approach —

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Do you think they are under-represented in this house?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Who is that?

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Metropolitan members of the community.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I think this house reflects broadly the representation of Western Australians. The Nationals have made it very clear that it opposes the Metronet program, for example.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will not talk for very long.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** That's not a fair representation of our position, minister.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The Nationals have bumper stickers that say "Metrodebt". In this place, the Nationals have opposed —

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Nationals members cannot sit on the fence on this one. They cannot jump the fence when it suits them. Historically, the Nationals have opposed the expansion of our metropolitan transport system. The Leader of the Opposition knows I like her but she has opposed it. The Leader of the Opposition promoted throughout her electorate that the government's priority of expanding the metropolitan public transport system is something that she opposes. The Nationals say "they", as in the government in the metropolitan area, are spending all this money on Metronet to the detriment of their communities.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** That's a fair reflection of what's happening.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is not true. The fact of the matter is that it is an investment in infrastructure in the metropolitan area, which stretches out into the regions as well. There are plans to take it further in the longer term, down to Bunbury, which I support strongly, connecting communities, as a good public transport system should. In my home town of Northam, the Nationals did that with *AvonLink*. We have debated before in this house that when in government, the Nationals let the *AvonLink* fall over. The National Party, now in opposition, was going to sit back and allow —

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I want to try to truncate my comments because my family is coming and I am looking forward to having dinner with them —

**Mr R.S. Love:** You can finish now if you like!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** No. If the member keeps interrupting me, I might do an all-nighter. Like you did last night, my friend, without the lubrication!

The Nationals argue against a major expansion of the Perth metropolitan transport system that is focused on getting people out of cars and onto public transport, and enhanced developments around nodes at those stations. It is good policy. It is how to plan for a modern city that is continuing to grow. Whether we like it or not, a lot of people still choose to live in the Perth metropolitan area. Whether we like it or not, that is what is happening, and we have to plan for that. We also need to support developments and indeed population growth in the regions, and the government is all for that. We want to see the Broomes, Kununurra and Kalgoorlie-Boulders of the world, places down to the south west, thrive. No-one in this place does not want to see that happen. I am so proud that in this place we now have a swathe of people who represent and are from those communities. They are from Collie-Preston, Murray-Wellington, Margaret River, Warren-Blackwood, Albany and the goldfields. They are good people, first, and they happen to be Labor members of Parliament. They will continue to articulate the importance of the regions to Western Australia and argue for important services to be provided. That is their job. But they happen to be Labor people. I am very proud that we have a record number of regional members. I think the Nationals members find that very difficult. I honestly think the Nationals members took for granted the regional people of Western Australia, because they thought they would always vote for them. They thought they would always come across and put the number one next to the National Party member and maybe the occasional number one next to the Liberal Party member. But look at the result of the last election—record numbers of people in the Leader of the Opposition's own wheatbelt catchment voted for the Labor Party. They voted for the Labor Party because they understood, in my view, that this government had a range of policy areas that it was focused on.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The Labor Party had a range of key priorities about services to local communities, about making sure that local jobs were created and that there needs to be an opportunity for industries to restart. Nationals members did not like that, and they are still not over the fact that lots of people—who they would have sat around with at public meetings; knocked on their doors and talked to them as business people—did not vote for them.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** My vote went up.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am talking about the broader wheatbelt.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** You were pointing at me, so let's be clear.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My vote went up, too, actually, and I had a broken leg!

I think the Nationals are on the wrong beam with this us-and-them thing. The Nationals try to drive this wedge between country people and city people whenever they can. Do not forget: there are lots of places in the metropolitan area where people from the country now reside. They reside here for a range of reasons. I know a lot of people who came to Mandurah to live so that they would be closer to Perth because of their health needs. They want to be closer to family. I know lots of people from Albany who live here. They love Albany, but for various reasons they choose to live in a different place.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Well, there you are!

I just want to, because it is important, finish on the hypocrisy of the definitions around fairness. The member for Cottesloe is here and I am sure that he will make a contribution. We know the member for Cottesloe's views on this issue, as they date right back to the 1990s when this debate was going on within the Liberal Party. His comments were very much in response to problems and challenges that existed between the Liberal Party and the then National Party at the time. We know about his comments that supported the principle of one vote, one value because they are documented in a range of newspaper articles and statements on a whole range of matters. For example, back in 1994, the member railed against the new boundaries that were being drawn up by the Western Australian Electoral Commission. I refer to a newspaper article of 5 December 1994 in which the member said that the Labor Party needed to win only six seats with a two per cent swing—Bunbury, Joondalup, Wanneroo, Yokine, Innaloo and Ballajura. The article states —

“Outside those seats, the ALP won't even bother campaigning,” he said.

Then this big debate took place between the member for Cottesloe and senior Liberals at the time, including Richard Court and the then Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Affairs, Hon Norman Moore. Then the Leader of the National Party and Deputy Premier at the time, Hendy Cowan, weighed into the debate on these issues, and a view was then formed by the Liberal Party. I quote another article of 25 September 1995 —

Some Liberals see one vote, one value as inevitable and believe it would be better to bring it in themselves than to have it imposed when the Labor Party might be in office.

We know about all the conversations that used to go on in the lead-up to the previous voting reform. In fact, I think it was the honourable Cadby, I think his name was —

**Ms M.J. Davies:** It was Alan Cadby. He was an Independent.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It was Hon Alan Cadby—he eventually became an Independent, but was a member of the conservatives prior to that—who essentially tipped the vote that way. The article also states —

Some Liberals favour accepting the COG's recommendation to end vote-weighting in favour of rural electorates.

But a move towards the so-called one vote, one value system would draw opposition from the National Party ...

The member for Cottesloe admitted that, in his heart, he agreed with the huge issue of the principle of one vote, one value. He will stand up now and probably say that he has changed his spots or, suddenly, he has changed his mind, but the member knows that the Liberal Party has always seen that one way it can address issues around its problems with the National Party historically is to reform the voting system in a fair way. That is how the member opposite has always argued. I may not be in the chamber when the member for Cottesloe makes his contribution, because I will be with my family, but I needed to highlight that to him.

In terms of the whisperer issue, there is huge evidence that Mr Druery, for example, simply exposed and exploited loopholes in the existing legislation. The result was the most unfair situation that we have seen: a person can get elected to a seat with fewer than 100 votes, essentially because of the sequencing of votes and the leakage from one candidate to another tipping someone over. In a modern democracy, that is not fair. It is important that we always consider the importance of democratic representation—absolutely. Let us not be blinded by unfairness. When there is unfairness, it should be addressed.

My final comments are this. As members know, a process has been completed, and the government will consider its response to that process. Those three people highlighted by members opposite who are part of the task force are very good Western Australians; they are good people. They were given a job to make recommendations, which the government is considering. Decisions based on the report and its recommendations will be made in the best interests of Western Australians, and they will be based, I am sure, and I hope, on fairness. That is an important consideration when we change anything relating to how we represent. I am very proud to have represented Mandurah for the last 20-plus years, and I look forward to continuing that into the future.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [5.15 pm]: I rise to strongly support this motion. As departure from precedent in this place, not only did the Labor Party not want to be honest with the people of Western Australia about its intentions on this matter before the election, but also, quite clearly, the Labor Party does not even want members on this side to articulate concerns. We all know that the convention during private members' business is that the opposition is largely allowed to utilise the time and that typically the responsible government minister responds; clearly, that is not the case here.

I stand to support this motion because, quite frankly, the Labor Party and this Premier were completely dishonest with the people of Western Australia prior to the election about their intentions on electoral reform. It is interesting to note that the Premier clearly sees himself as some great statesperson who is guiding not only this state, but also Australia. We increasingly hear the sanctimonious lectures of this Premier to other state Premiers, and, in

fact, to his federal party colleagues dictating to them how they should be running the Labor Party and configuring their policies in the lead-up to the election—yet this Premier is using the shabbiest ruse to justify this despicable action. It is a despicable action because he has been utterly dishonest with the people of Western Australia leading into the election and subsequently. To say that the concerns about the ticket voting is a sudden revelation is utter rubbish! It is beneath the Premier, who considers himself to be some statesperson now, to use such a shabby, shallow argument to justify what is a betrayal of voters in Western Australia. We know that the Labor Party at least has had a long-term agenda to significantly reduce representation in the upper house. We know that this Labor government has no mandate whatsoever to go through this process. The real question is: how are regional Labor Party members going to vote in this debate? This is a serious matter. This is a fundamental change. Given the way that upper house elections normally go whereby the government of the day does not have control of the upper house, this change is likely to be an everlasting change; it is a profound change to the electoral system in Western Australia.

This process has a range of stakeholders concerned, including the Western Australian Local Government Association. The president of WALGA, whom the Labor Party has seen fit to appoint as its candidate for the seat of Pearce—someone it clearly thinks is a reasonable person—put out this statement. WALGA put out an advertisement in *The West Australian* titled, “Simplistic Solutions Ignore What Makes our State Unique”. I quote —

The WA State Government is undertaking a review of the electoral system, even though leading up to the election such a move was repeatedly claimed not to be on their agenda.

While the government has taken submissions, and is yet to release its position, it is expected that proposed changes will return to the argument for one-vote-one-value in the Upper House. The principle is that the number of electors that select an MLC in the country should be the same as for the city. It sounds fair, but only mathematically.

If you think such a system only affects regional communities, think again. The one-vote-one-value argument has a logic that works only if one is prepared to consider the most blinkered interpretation of democracy.

The concept that every person’s vote should have equal weight proposes that population size is the only variable that should be taken into consideration when determining what is fair. It ignores economic contribution, challenges of distance or even if the resultant representation will actually deliver on the promise of democracy.

I will not quote the entire advertisement, but it is an excellent contribution. As I said, this view is endorsed by the new Labor Party candidate for Pearce. It is not only a concern expressed by people on this side of the house and vast numbers of Western Australians, but also clearly one that the Labor Party’s candidate for Pearce endorses. I will read the last point made in the advertisement. I quote —

One-vote-one-value is an argument that works on a whiteboard but fails to recognise the unique aspects of living in Western Australia. To champion such a move, says that one either does not understand WA or does not care.

What I hate to believe, but I think is the case, is that this government does not care. This decision is purely about the government’s brutal use of numbers in Parliament. It has no mandate whatsoever for this most serious matter—probably the most serious matter this Parliament will consider. No care is given for the fact that a completely illegitimate process is being brought before this house. There is no mandate for this. Let me be clear: there is absolutely no mandate for this. It is not that the Premier was silent on this and, by virtue of that, all members opposite were. In fact, the Premier was asked about it repeatedly. The Leader of the Opposition went through it. The Attorney General would at least understand the whole story of the pieces of silver and the rooster crowing three times after the betrayal of Jesus was denied. The rooster would have crowed two-and-a-bit times in an interview with the Premier because the Premier denied seven times in one interview that any of this was on the agenda. What happened when we came into this Parliament? Surely, it was not a thought bubble that just occurred after the election. This Attorney General suddenly thought, “Here’s our chance. We’ve got the numbers and this Premier. We’re going to come in and rip regional representation away from people in Western Australia.”

As I have said in this place before, I think *The West Australian* has given this government a pretty good run. It has certainly given the government a lot of accolades for what it has done about the COVID pandemic. In an excellent article in *The West Australian* from 6 May, Peter Law has written about electoral reform. It is perhaps the clearest condemnation of this government that I have read in that newspaper. The article is titled, “Mark McGowan should have been upfront about electoral reform plans during campaign”. It starts —

It’s not on our agenda.”

That must have been the most repeated phrase Mark McGowan uttered on the election campaign trail, aside from the Labor slogan to “keep WA safe and strong”.

The reason we heard it so often is because it was the Premier's carefully worded response when asked if his Government would pursue electoral reform of the Upper House in a second term.

Specifically, he was asked repeatedly whether Labor would overhaul the city-country weighting that means a vote cast in some parts of the bush are worth six votes in Perth.

It continues —

It's about McGowan not being honest with the people of WA about Labor's true intentions if the party won total control of Parliament.

As he criss-crossed the State to win votes ahead of the poll, my colleagues and I repeatedly pressed him about this otherwise extremely unsexy topic.

We did so because changing the State's democratic process is an issue of such significance that it should be taken to the people first, as I argued on February 18.

I will not go through the rest of the article, but that is the clearest condemnation of an action of this government that I have read. I thoroughly and totally agree with Peter Law in that article. This government, this Attorney General and this Premier have no mandate whatsoever for any proposal to fundamentally change representation in the regions. In fact, it is quite the opposite. They deliberately and knowingly misled, I believe, the people of Western Australia about their true intentions. I want to go to this because the Leader of the House wasted a half-hour of debate saying essentially nothing, but one point he was keen to make was that this reform is not an attack by the Labor Party on regional Western Australia. However, we have heard exactly the opposite from this government. It has consistently attacked regional Western Australia. What happened at the start of the last term of this government? It tried to close the Schools of the Air. That is like selling Bambi for pet meat! The Schools of the Air is probably one of the most iconic educational institutions in the history of Australia. A Labor cabinet with this Attorney General and this Premier, and the other cabinet ministers who were there at the time, had agreed to shut down the Schools of the Air. Then they tried to close down Moora Residential College. It was only when there was an enormous outcry that the government backed down on those utterly cruel and stupid decisions that attacked regional Western Australians.

Here we are at the start of another term of this government and the first thing it does is attack regional Western Australians by trying to reduce their representation. I want to be very clear about this. We hear about the great and resounding victory for Labor Party members and the seats that they won. How many of those seats would Labor Party members have won if they had been honest? If the Premier had had a shred of decency and been honest with the people of Western Australia—not just regional Western Australia, but all of Western Australia—about his intentions to slash regional representation, would the Labor Party have won the Kimberley? Would the Labor Party have won Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Albany or Murray-Wellington? I tell you what: I have visited every one of those communities and the people there feel utterly betrayed. During the campaign, the member for Kimberley said that she would fight like a “chi-chuana” to retain regional representation.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** She said she would fight like a “chi-chuana” to fight for regional representation.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** A “chi-chua”. I stand corrected on the pronunciation of the dog. She would fight like a “chi-chua”; they are fierce fighters!

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** That is her words; do not blame me! They are her words, members, if not her pronunciation. She was going to fight like a “chi-chua” —

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** A Chihuahua!

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you!

**Mr D.R. Michael** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** No, I did not do the puppy farming bill. She would fight like a Chihuahua for regional representation! Despite the merriment, members—I understand your merriment; no doubt I will live to hear it again—she said she would fight for that. Where is that member? I know with absolute certainty that those Labor regional members in the upper house would not have won as many seats if this plan had been known to the voters of Western Australia. That is why it is very important; those voters did not have the chance to make the decision on this matter because although voters were happy to reward this government for its performance in managing COVID in this state—that

was widely across the state and I have recognised that in this chamber—they did not vote for this government to change regional representation. It is not just regional voters. During my by-election, my electorate had a couple of big issues, including traffic density. The third-largest issue in my electorate during my by-election was the closure of Moora Residential College and the attempted closure of the Schools of the Air. That is how important people in the city regard people in the regions, and there is a good reason for that. Inside part of a day, I can walk from this place to any household in my electorate. I can do that. I can walk from this Parliament to any house in my electorate, and that means that my electors have good representation.

A government member: A “chi-chua”!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I tell you what: if you get fixated on the pronunciation of a dog’s name, that is the measure of your care about this, because this is a serious matter, members. This is a serious matter about people in Western Australia having their representation reduced. Their opportunity to have their issues heard is diminished and it is this Labor government that is intending to do it. Again, let us be very clear about this legislation: if all members of the Labor Party who are members of the upper house who are representing regional electorates oppose this legislation, it will not pass. This is within the control of the Labor members of the Legislative Council. The Labor MLCs have the opportunity to defeat this legislation.

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** What legislation?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The legislation that the Attorney General is bringing forward. Do you know what, Attorney General? We know that you have prewritten it. We know that you have selected a committee that is absolutely hand-picked to come out with the result that you want. You have selected the three members of that committee who, as late as February this year, put out a joint paper decrying what they call the malapportionment within the upper house and recommending that that be reduced. They put down six models for the reduction of regional representation. You know that, Attorney General. You know that because you know all these people personally and well. You know their views on this particular matter, and that is what they are bringing back to you. You hand-picked them to bring back the result that you wanted. It is shameful!

Imagine if we on this side of the house did that. Imagine if we were looking at any other issue and we hand-picked people like you have hand-picked those people for this. You would be screaming the house down, and saying it is a completely improper process.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** This is a sham process, and the Attorney General should be honest with the public of Western Australia. If we look at the process that the Attorney General has put forward, as I said, he has his expert panel. He has chosen the people that he wants in there. He knows all those people personally. He knows that they have views that are utterly opposed to the current electoral system in the upper house and he knows that they will come back with recommendations to reduce that representation. The Attorney General knows that they have already put forward six models for that, all of which reduce representation in the regions. Therefore, this is a sham process that does the Attorney General and the Premier no good. I will not go through that any more. I think that point has been well made.

Why is it important that we have regional representation? Why is it important that we have a good number of members representing regional Western Australia in the upper house? The reason is that people cannot get a proper representation of their issues and ideas if they do not have someone they can talk to or present them to, if they cannot go into someone’s office to talk to them and if they cannot get a response to a letter. In all the models that we have seen, that is made harder.

We can look at the issues that face this state. Let us look at power prices. The other day I asked the Minister for Energy a question that he did not bother giving a proper response to. In July—the coldest, wettest month of the year—Horizon Power, which has only 48 000 customers, disconnected 606 customers. It disconnected 1.3 per cent of its customers. Synergy, which has a million customers, disconnected 587 customers. The Minister for Energy responded, “Oh, well, that’s because they’ve got different types of metering. That’s because it’s easy to cut them off and so on.” The point is: there has always been a difference and that is about four times—this is 20 times. How do those people get those issues represented in this Parliament if I am not representing them and, more particularly, if they do not have other people who they can go to? We know that a large number of the communities that were affected by those power cut-offs were Aboriginal communities out in those areas, and it should concern any member in this house. When the government talks about reducing regional representation, it is talking about reducing representation for all those isolated Aboriginal communities, all through the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the north west of this state and other areas. Therefore, that is the sort of issue that we need to have represented in this Parliament.

Look at the housing crisis that this state faces. I have been to pretty well every part of the state since I was elected as the Leader of the Liberal Party. I have been from Kununurra to Esperance and a great majority of the points in between. In every one of those communities, they have the most enormous issue with the supply of housing. They

Ms Mia Davies; Mr Shane Love; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Quigley

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have the most enormous issue with social housing in those areas. It is an issue that is causing the most enormous hardship. In Esperance, on any given night, about a dozen people are sleeping rough because they cannot get housing. Businesses cannot expand or, in fact, operate because they cannot get labourers in because there is nowhere for those people to live. How do we expect those issues to get proper representation when the Attorney General and the Premier are determined to cut representation for regional voters?

We highlighted the issue in Geraldton where there is a massive housing shortage. Around a thousand people are looking for public housing in that area. Currently, 130 houses are boarded up in that town, and we have had no satisfactory answer from the Minister for Housing on resolving that matter. Again, why do we need representation in the Parliament from regional representatives? Today, the Minister for Housing attacked the Leader of the Opposition about the fact that, apparently, she oversaw the sale of 40 houses. I have an article here from *The West Australian* of Friday, 13 August 2021, which states that the state government—that is your Labor government—has shed more than 600 homes reserved for police officers and teachers over four years. That is in this term of government. The Minister for Housing attacked the Leader of the Opposition over 40 houses being sold, apparently, when she was a minister. Under this Labor government, over 600 homes reserved for police officers and teachers have been shed over four years. There were 5 512 Government Regional Officers' Housing abodes as of June 2016; however, as of mid-last year, that number had sunk to 4 911 under the McGowan government. The biggest decline was seen in the south west, from Harvey to Pemberton, where Government Regional Officers' Housing plummeted by 23 per cent, from 242 properties in 2016 to 186 properties in 2020. That is the sort of issue that will get even less airing and be covered even less. The people suffering that hardship will have less of a voice in this Parliament if this government reduces regional representation. We will have a situation in which it will be impossible for the MLCs in a reduced Parliament to properly represent and cover their areas.

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** Might I ask a question?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** You may, Attorney General.

**Mr J.R. Quigley:** Do you support the notion that there be a referendum?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I absolutely support the notion. If the Attorney General is using the excuse and saying that this government has a mandate from the people of Western Australia to reduce regional representation, it is patently clear that it does not. It is patently clear. Not only was this issue not raised before the election, but also the Premier on numerous occasions went out of his way to mislead the public of Western Australia that there was no intention whatsoever to do this.

If the government is going to do this, I see only two honourable and decent choices for it to follow. If the government is determined to do this soon, the most immediate choice is to hold a referendum and ask the people of Western Australia, because I am confident that the people of Western Australia will not support that. I am confident that the majority of city voters will not support the reduction of regional representation in the upper house, but put it to a test. If the government does that, at least it will have a mandate to do it. Otherwise, go to the next election with this as a policy, because I know as a matter of fact that there are a number of regional Labor Party members sitting in this house who would not be re-elected and would lose their seat over this issue alone. The government should do one of those two: make the immediate choice and go to a referendum; otherwise, take it to the next election and get its mandate.

I have said in this place that this Premier has an absolute mandate for the way he has been handling the COVID crisis. There is no doubt whatsoever. That was the sole issue of the election, and the Premier had a resounding mandate. At my polling booth, people told me that. People who would normally vote Liberal but did not vote Liberal this time came and saw me and were quite up-front about it. They said, "I'm voting for Mark McGowan"—not the Labor Party—"because he has done a good job of protecting this state from COVID." That was it. That was the mandate.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** There were lots of mentions of it, can I say, overwhelmingly positive, in my electorate, minister.

**Mr P. Papalia:** What was your swing?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I did have a swing against me, which was six per cent, but I tell the minister that it was half of the next swing, so clearly my electors liked that. I take no pride in that. I would have liked no swing at all; in fact, I would have loved a swing towards me on my two-party preferred vote, but next time.

We have major health issues right across this state. Our health system is in absolute crisis, and, again, how do we have representation for regional communities on these issues? I find out the issues in Geraldton only because I go there. This government spent \$2 million on a new driveway into the emergency department unit. It has bollards on it. It is blocked off, because there is nothing behind it. There is no department for people to go into behind it. No money has been spent on that. Money has been spent on a car park and a driveway. That is typically the problem that the regions have. Their issues are not taken as seriously. Their problems are not taken as seriously. We are



seeing it right now. It has taken this government all this time—here we are, more than 18 months into this COVID crisis—before it has recognised the need to have purpose-built facilities to bring workers into this state. People in regional Western Australia from Kununurra to Esperance are experiencing hardship because they cannot get workers into those communities, and that has been ignored by this government. For over a year, we have been calling for purpose-built quarantine facilities to safely bring workers who are needed into this state. We have a Premier who is in the national cabinet. We have a Premier with a \$5 billion surplus that he can spend for the people of Western Australia. This government has absolutely no mandate for this sham process that has commenced. It clearly has an outcome in mind. As I said, if this Attorney General and the Premier have any decency or honesty, they will take the change to an election process or to a referendum before the next election to get a decision.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [5.45 pm]: I certainly rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It is very much a case of “take it to the people”. That is all we want. Take it to the people; take it to a referendum. If the people vote that way and decide that they want less regional representation, then the people have spoken.

I am very curious to see how our regional members within the Labor Party react, because I actually feel sorry for them. They are going to be squeezed between what they are meant to be doing—representing their regional constituents—and a career-limiting vote. If they vote in favour of reducing regional representation, it will be career limiting, as we know. We know the way the Labor Party works.

As has been pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Party, “It’s not on our agenda.” These were the comments of the Premier prior to the election. Journalist Dan Mercer asked the Premier seven times. He used to sit up there in the gallery. He knows how the Premier works. He knows the questions to ask. He asked those questions seven times in that interview, and the Premier would not answer the question. Then he tried to tell us that this was a smokescreen being put up by the Nationals WA and the Liberals.

I also refer to the article written by Peter Law on 6 May. I thought it was a very good article and a very accurate article. He refers to the Labor slogan to “keep WA safe and strong”. He wrote —

The reason we heard it so often is because it was the Premier’s carefully worded response when asked if his Government would pursue electoral reform of the Upper House in a second term.

Specifically, he was asked repeatedly whether Labor would overhaul the city-country weighting that means a vote cast in some parts of the bush are worth six votes in Perth.

As Peter Law pointed out, his comment was not about whether such rebalance of the voting system would see more metropolitan MPs at the expense of regional representation; it was about McGowan not being honest with the people of WA about Labor’s true intentions.

I am very disappointed in the Attorney General that this has been brought on as almost the first order of business. The Attorney General brought on 59 bills, I think it was, in the previous Parliament. I am sure he has another 59 stashed away there. He has already read in quite a few, and put a couple through, but—lo and behold—the first item of business was to bring this out. The day after the opening of Parliament, the Attorney General brought this up as part of the business that he is going to rollout. To be honest, as a member of the opposition, I cannot believe it. I do not know how many members of the government were aware of it, either, or those regional members who were out there in their electorates saying, “Vote for me, I’ll represent you, I’ll do a great job.” As Peter Law points out, it was sensitive, because the prospect of reducing regional representation could have cost Labor support at a time when it was campaigning to win the marginal seats of Kalgoorlie, Albany and Geraldton, as well as boost its vote in the upper house. This is the deceit. Peter Law also pointed out that in the leaders debate the Premier looked down the barrel of the camera and said —

“But I just want to make the point, it’s a democracy, people can vote and they shouldn’t have these sort of scaremongering ... ideas put forward. People can vote and, if in four years time they don’t like the government ... they can vote again.”

What about telling the truth? What about giving the voters of Western Australia the truth before they go to the polling booth on 13 March 2021? That was all that was required. That was the smokescreen. The smokescreen was not the Liberals and the Nationals. The smokescreen was the Premier and the Attorney General who brought it on as the first order of the day after Parliament started. I absolutely agree with Peter Law’s final comment, which is —

... I’d also argue politicians who mislead the public before an election are also guilty of harming trust in our democracy.

I think that sums it up very well. The classic case has been pointed out once again. The decisions on Schools of the Air and the Moora Residential College were two of the most disappointing and deceitful things that were done in the previous term of government, and we saw the response. We saw the response in not only the regions but also the metropolitan area, to the point at which within three weeks, the Premier and the Minister for Education and

Training were backing away as fast as they could. The people of Western Australia do not appreciate deceit. They do not appreciate being misled. I fully support the Leader of the Opposition's call for a referendum. Let the people of Western Australia have the opportunity. All of us have agreed to a reform of the ticket voting system to eliminate preference harvesting; we are quite in agreeance with that. This is part of the smokescreen.

I must hand it to the Attorney General for the way that the Labor government goes about this. The smokescreen is all about the Daylight Saving Party and its 98 votes and all those associated issues. That is about five per cent of it. The other 95 per cent of it is reducing regional representation. As it goes, our regional members in the lower house all work hard and do a massive amount of miles. I just cannot begin to tell members how difficult it is to cover the electorate. It is disappointing that the member for Mount Lawley is not here because, as I like to say, my electorate is 5 912 times the size of the member for Mount Lawley's electorate. It is similar to the member for Central Wheatbelt's electorate. The member for Mount Lawley can probably drive across his electorate in 10 minutes and it takes about nine to 10 hours to drive across mine. It is a challenge.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** How many voters has the member for Mount Lawley got?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is a challenge to say the least, member for Fremantle. There is such a range of diverse issues. I can see what will happen. The proposal will probably have one great big area for the whole state; it will have 36 members of the Legislative Council, mainly focused in the metropolitan area. I notice quite a few of them are starting to move their offices towards the metropolitan area. We need those members of the Legislative Council, especially the regional ones, to get out there and help us cover those issues. I will be at the Newdegate field days in a couple of weeks; a lot of the information that is put out there by regional constituents is gathered by our Legislative Council members because it is almost impossible for a lower house member to cover it all. We just cannot underestimate the challenges.

We had a massive amount of submissions. We had 16 individual shire submissions. We had the Western Australian Local Government Association's Great Eastern Country Zone submission and the WALGA submission, which represents the collective 137 local government areas in WA and is led by its president, who is now a Labor Party candidate in the federal election. They all rejected the option of members of the Legislative Council being elected from an electorate comprising the entire state. I would like to see what the Attorney General thinks about this. The Mayor of Karratha, Peter Long, wrote —

I wish to express my strong opposition to the Western Australian Attorney General's expressed preference to have one-person/one-vote election to the WA Legislative Council. This approach is contrary to the bicameral system of government Australia has enjoyed from its inception—a system which requires that the two houses of the legislature be constituted on different bases to be properly representative, and to be an effective check upon each other.

...

In the Commonwealth of Australia, the lower house forms government and enjoys the powers and responsibilities that involves. But to protect the disparate States and the enormous, sparsely populated regional areas, which suffer lower outcomes on nearly every liveability scale, the upper house—the Senate—is given equal representation for each State.

The number of senators for Tasmania and Western Australia is the same. I am very curious to see the argument that the Attorney General can form on that basis. Peter Long also points out —

Yet the half a million people spread over regional WA suffer all sorts of difficulties and depravation due to their remoteness and far fewer facilities and services.

“Adequate representation of a modern society, with its geographic, social and economic variety, can be realised only by a variety of modes of election. This is best achieved by a bicameral parliament in which each house is constituted by distinctive electoral process.

...

The current system whereby the house of review has equal numbers of city and country/regional representatives provides representation to all: it avoids the tyranny of the majority and oppression of the minority in the regions. It models Australia's Federal system and provides some protection to those who give so much—and so often receive so little. It should be retained.

I could not agree more with Peter Long. I think that sums it up perfectly. As I said, I am very curious to see how the Attorney General can justify one system but not the other.

**Mr D.R. Michael** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Another submission was received from Hon Andrew Murray, who originally wrote some of the GST legislation, by the way, member for Balcatta. He said —

The practise of enhanced regional representation in democratic Parliaments, particularly in legislatures that have an upper house, is well established.

**Mr D.R. Michael** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** He is a Rhodes scholar, member for Balcatta, and I think he has a pretty good handle on things. He understands that we need enhanced regional representation in order to understand the issues in the regions. When I look at my electorate and at places like Esperance or Ravensthorpe, I agree that some of those issues will not be picked up.

The Leader of the House summed it up pretty well when he said that being a regional representative brings with it an expectation that if there is an event such as a football grand final, a school concert, a hockey grand final or a swimming final, we will turn up and listen to our constituents. From my perspective, when I look at the 50-odd schools in my electorate, I realise I have picked up so much information from them over the years because I have had the opportunity to talk to my regional constituents. When I think about Hon Colin de Grussa and Hon Martin Aldridge, our members in the other place for the Agricultural Region, I think of the hundreds of schools to cover. We have a roster, and we conscientiously try to make sure that we get to as many of them as we can. We are there to not only turn up and watch the school concert and the like, but also listen to the issues. This is where we pick up information about what is happening. Whether it is a school or a sporting club, these are the opportunities that we have as regional members. Our regional members of the Legislative Council are incredibly important because they bring back those issues to not only our lower house members but also our party room and the like.

I want to refer to what Trevor Whittington from WAFarmers pointed out in his article in *Farm Weekly* about High Court decisions. This was back in the days of Hon Jim McGinty. He states —

The majority findings in the case McGinty V Western Australia that the interpretation of sections 7 and 24 of the Australian Constitution did not require that all votes hold the same value should be referenced in the Commissions final recommendations.

It is coming from any number of areas that the one vote, one value scenario that the then Attorney General was getting ready to roll into town is not the way to go. Much of this state's income comes from the regions. But that seems to have been forgotten in the argument.

One of the biggest things that I want to point out is the, I guess, inequality in the likes of our education system. This is probably the main point that I would like to make today. I am the shadow Minister for Education. Some of the education outcomes in our regional and remote areas are nowhere near good enough. What I want to know from the Attorney General is: who in the Labor Party is going to look after the remote Indigenous communities?

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Who is going to go out there and look at the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy results? The mean scale in the NAPLAN results for year 3 reading is major city, 433.7; remote, 392.4; and very remote, 346.7. There we are.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am very curious about the attention that will be focused on remote communities. I am very concerned. I know what is happening. I have seen it already. I have seen some of those Mining and Pastoral Region Labor members of Parliament. They are already starting to move their offices up to central areas in the metropolitan region in preparation for the Attorney General's legislation. They will be propped up here in West Perth, and the remote Indigenous communities will get very little attention from this government. Those educational outcomes —

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** This government has been in office for nearly five years. It is struggling to get teachers in remote communities. I want to know what the government is going to do about that. I am quite disturbed about the equity and access for our remote communities and for those children. We have talked about the housing and health crisis. We cannot seem to get housing for our teachers out there, and we cannot even get teachers out there. What is this government doing about it? It is seeking to centralise the members of the Legislative Council into the metropolitan region. This is about equity. This is also about deceit. The voters of Western Australia have not had any opportunity to consider this issue. The Premier said prior to the election, "It's not on the agenda. It's not an issue. It's a smokescreen by the Liberals and the Nationals." What did we get? The first day back after the opening of Parliament, the Attorney General wheeled it out.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [6.06 pm]: I was not ready for the member for Roe to terminate his speech! It was very quick. I would like to make a contribution to this important motion that the Leader of the Opposition has brought to the house. The motion states —

That this house condemns the Labor government's plan to reduce regional representation in the state Parliament ...

We know that this plan was hatched before the election. We know that there was a level of concern about that plan. We know that the Premier was quizzed about this several times, and we heard the same retort that the idea of reduced regional representation was not on the agenda. However, as soon as the election concluded, we heard that we need to have so-called electoral reform. Lo and behold, as we will see as we go through some of this, key to that is reduced regional representation. There is no doubt about that.

The other part of this important motion states —

and calls for a referendum to be held prior to any changes being legislated.

Why that is important in our view is that the people of Western Australia were deceived at the election into believing that electoral reform was not on the agenda. We had repeated assurances from the Premier that it was not on the agenda. That would have led regional people to cast their vote in the knowledge that a vote for Labor would not be a vote for a reduction in their voice to Parliament. However, we found immediately after the election that that is not the case, and that there is a push by the government to engage in developing legislation that will ultimately lead to reduced representation for regional Western Australians.

For that reason, we believe that there must be a referendum. There must be an opportunity for the people of WA to have a direct say on this matter. There is very good reason for the government to take this back to the people. If the government thinks this is something that the people of Western Australia wholeheartedly support, why would it not seek a mandate for that action? We are talking about a remarkably important piece of legislation.

It is probably being crafted at the moment—in fact, it was probably written before the expert panel had its so-called consultation rounds. We know the government has a predetermined outcome in mind. We know that because there are very tight terms of reference outlined in the electoral reform discussion paper that was put out when submissions were sought from people in the community. There are two main branches: the first is how electoral equality might be achieved for all citizens entitled to vote for the Legislative Council and the second is about the distribution of preferences in the Legislative Council's proportional representation system. We know that there was an extremely short period in which people could make submissions and that a quick outcome was expected from this inquiry. The website that contains this discussion paper also has what is called the minister's opinion, which is actually the opinion piece that was printed in *The West Australian* of 3 May. That opinion piece is attributed as the minister's opinion on the website.

As the Leader of the Opposition has said, the opinion piece starts with this Trojan Horse or smokescreen that it is all about the election of the member of the Daylight Saving Party and that being some sort of affront to democracy that needed a reaction. We know this because the minister's opinion piece refers very much to that. In fact, most of the words in the minister's opinion piece are devoted to discussion of the surprise election of one person in the other place. Then it gets to the heart of what the government really wants—a discussion about so-called equality of the electoral power of voters in the different regions. It refers to votes and their worth. I assume that the only measure of worth that is being referred to is the relative number of voters needed to elect an MP. The opinion piece then refers to the formation of a committee that was expected to report by the end of June. Members should bear in mind that this was printed on 3 May, so I think anyone would see that as being rushed. If that is not something that is predetermined and planned, I will eat my hat. It was a short time frame and the government already had the terms of reference that it wanted.

It seems to me from reading the discussion paper that it was an exercise in nudging people into putting in submissions of a particular nature. It virtually outlines what people should say, how they should say it and what the committee would listen to. It even refers to particular models that exist in other places in Australia and to the merits of those models. Very clearly, the committee was seeking submissions on which model—the whole-of-state model or the region-based model—would be preferable to achieve electoral equality. That is a choice of A or B, guys—tick one or the other. It is hardly a meaningful call for submissions. The committee was also seeking submissions on the strengths and drawbacks of each model; whether any other electoral models not covered in the discussion paper would be better to achieve electoral equality, despite the way that people were nudged along to do exactly what the government wanted to happen; and what changes should be made to the distribution of preferences in the Legislative Council's proportional representation system, including group voting tickets.

We know that the issue of group voting tickets has been addressed in a number of other legislatures, and it is not controversial to anybody, except the preference whisperers out there. It extends from an election in the late 1970s or early 1980s when the voting paper was said to be the size of a tablecloth and was confusing for electors. In a way, it was based on trying to ensure that the system did not make casting a vote into a marathon and did not penalise people if they got it wrong. It was expected that that system would reduce the number of informal votes and, to a good

extent, it succeeded, as I recall, but the unintended consequence of it was that the preference harvesting system developed. Obviously, there needs to be some tinkering of that, and we are not opposed to that at all.

The fundamental thing we are opposed to is the move to effectively reduce regional representation in Parliament. Why is that important? It is important because it is pretty hard for some people in the regions to have their voices heard. We heard the member for Roe talk about the issues that he faces in his electorate. It is not just the number of kilometres that he has to drive around his electorate; he has a substantial drive just to get to his electorate offices. His home and his offices are located a long way away from each other. It is not a daily commute; it is a lengthy exercise for him. That limits the amount of time he can spend in his electorate. That becomes exponentially more difficult in some of the bigger electorates.

The Mining and Pastoral Region is a huge area to cover, even with six MPs in places like Kalgoorlie, Broome, Karratha, Port Hedland and a couple of other major centres in the region. They are very necessary to ensure that the people in that vast area have access to an MP's office. If people do not have that access, they will find it very difficult to discuss their issues and concerns with someone. As we know, there are only four lower house seats in that region. Only six MPs from the upper house represent that vast region, which starts at Kalbarri and goes down to the other side of Southern Cross and takes in the vast majority of the rest of the state. Yes, they are relatively few in number, but they cover a vast area that makes a large contribution to the economy of this state and this nation. We have heard the Premier talk about the importance of Western Australia during the COVID recovery in keeping the economy of the whole country going. Guess what? Most of that comes from the Mining and Pastoral Region, yet this government apparently begrudges its constituents having a reasonable level of access to MPs so that they can have a voice in Parliament about the problems that occur in that region. A huge amount of wealth comes out of the Mining and Pastoral Region; it is keeping this country going.

I am holding a document that was published by the Western Australian Country Health Service, which covers all of regional WA, with the exception of some of the more remote areas of the Peel. It indicates that the life expectancy of WA country people is two years lower than those in the Western Australian metropolitan area, but in remote and very remote communities—this is the Mining and Pastoral Region, which the government wants to particularly target in stripping away representation—the mortality rate is 30 per cent higher than it is in cities. Life expectancy is also much lower for Western Australian Aboriginal people and people suffering from chronic and persistent mental health conditions. The burden of disease is higher. I am saying this because despite the vast amount of wealth that exists in that area, the socio-economic indicators for people right across that area are disastrously low. In fact, six per cent of residents in the whole of the WACHS area, which is most of regional WA, live in the least disadvantaged areas—in other words, the best serviced, the richest and the most amenable places—as opposed to 57 per cent of residents in the metropolitan area living in those places. Conversely, 39 per cent of country residents live in areas of highest disadvantage—that is, those areas that are classified as one or two on the index. This measure is common not just in Western Australia but across the whole nation, and 39 per cent of people who reside mainly in the area from which the government wants to take away representation are living in disadvantage. They have the ability to vote and that is probably the only way that they will be able to have their stories heard and get some change and not be forgotten. What will happen to these people into the future if they have less representation in Parliament and fewer people to stand up and argue on their behalf?

This disparity is not just about health and socio-economic indicators. Some of the differences across the goldfields, the great southern, the Kimberley, the Gascoyne and the wheatbelt lay out the disadvantages for country people, and very good reasons why those people deserve to have a voice, not least of which is that the region they live in is propping up the city and the country, and deserves a strong level of support.

I will return to the issue of mandates. A report in *The West Australian* of 10 July by Paul Murray references those discussions that the members for Roe, Central Wheatbelt and Cottesloe spoke about—that is, the Premier's denial of electoral reform being on the Labor Party's radar. The article states —

“Well, I'll be clear, I'll be clear again,” McGowan said under questioning just days before the election.  
“It's not on our agenda. Enhanced regional representation will continue and this is just another smoke screen by the Liberals and Nationals.”

The only smokescreen is the reference to regional representation being enhanced. I think that refers to the continuation of the large district allowances in the lower house—that is about all it will mean in the future. Certainly, that will be the only level of enhancement for any regional representation when this lot have finished their work.

How do we know what the final model will be? One only has to look at the history of the people involved. I am not referring to the chair of the committee in any way; I am talking about the academics involved. I have no doubt that they are eminent people in their field, but they have a preconceived idea of what the problems are and what the solutions might be. I refer to an article published in *National Affairs* of 23 February 2021, titled “An affront to anyone who believes in democracy”, with the sub-headline —

Former Labor leader Jim McGinty isn't the only one concerned about Western Australia's electoral system. Three of the four authors of this piece are members of the committee—John Phillimore, Sarah Murray and Martin Drum. The article goes on to say —

A combination of premier Mark McGowan's record popularity levels —  
This was written just before the election —

... the highest in Newspoll history) and the turmoil among the Liberals ... makes victory for Labor at the 13 March state election close to certain.

... attempts to update the electoral system—described by former WA Labor leader Jim McGinty as “an absolute affront to anyone who believes in democracy”—continue to fall victim to the non-government majority in the state's upper house, the Legislative Council, and its own lack of ambition.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The article then falsely claims —

Modest changes to the political donation and campaign expenditure rules failed to pass the Legislative Council in December 2020, just before parliament was prorogued.

On the basis that that was somehow the fault of parties in the other place when, in fact, the government did not bring on the bill. It did not come on, so it could not go through. It was not that the bill failed to pass; it was not in a position to be passed. It is a bit of a misrepresentation of the facts. The article continues —

The structural imbalance—or “malapportionment”—between city and country in the upper house ...  
This is their view of the world —

Following the last major attempt to tackle the issue ...

The article talks about the formation of the regions and goes on to say —

Also like the Senate, these metropolitan and country regions were allocated the same number of representatives despite vast differences in their voter numbers, just as Tasmania receives the same number of senators as New South Wales despite having less than one-tenth its population.

I will say that again: it is not unique for an upper house to have a different voter base and a different method of being elected from the lower house. It is not all that unusual; look at Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. There is not necessarily a view that the type of electorate determinations that lead to the vote for upper and lower house members should be exactly the same. It is only in the view of the world put out by three of the four members of the government's committee—surprise, surprise that they were selected! I think they are saying exactly what the government would like to see happen. Again, the government is heading towards a predetermined outcome by selectively stacking the committee with people whom it knows think a certain way because they have put out papers on the subject. In fact, one of the papers was published while the committee was undertaking deliberations. It is not in any way an unbiased view of the world; it accords very much with what the government wants to achieve.

Interestingly, by doing that, the government has denied the committee the opportunity to look at some more fundamental differences between the two houses, and what their roles might be, and to look at other changes that could get to the heart of what the government wants to achieve. If the government wants to continue to have the upper house as a house of review, in my view, and that of others I have read or discussed this matter with, there is a very good case for that house to have a different electorate base and selection method from the lower house. Having it simply as a mirror of the lower house does not enable it to review the functions of executive government terribly well. It is probably better to be a bit remote from government. There could be an opportunity to look at other ways of achieving a house of review that does not necessarily have that same voter base, but may have a different range of powers. For instance, the Legislative Council cannot institute money bills. Maybe there needs to be more discussion of other matters to do with the different roles of the houses, rather than worrying about whether people in poor, disadvantaged communities in remote areas of the state have someone to represent them in a way that they can gain reasonable access.

It seems to me that is a rather negative, nasty and quite limited view that comes from the fact the government has jumped to one off-the-shelf product after reading the opinions of these three academics. Therefore, it knows what they think and I believe the government is going to bring in legislation in line with their thinking. The question is whether it goes with A or B—whether there is one house or a number of regions and how that would work. I believe that is what we will see the government come up with. When that happens, for the reasons that I have outlined already, it is my view that the government needs to go back to the people of Western Australia and seek a proper

mandate to undertake this work. The Attorney General will probably get up and say that there are legal reasons why or whatever. We are asking the government to seek a mandate. A referendum is a way to go to the people. The government could outline a number of options or a variety of ways in which the roles of the houses could be enhanced. But it has not done that.

The government has held such a narrow line of inquiry in such a short period of time. It already knew the thoughts of the academics it employed on this matter because they have published paper after paper as a group; they work together in a group! I read a publication put out by the University of Western Australia entitled, *Going further, faster*. Again, Benjamin Reilly, who is one of the cohort that wrote the article titled “An affront to anyone who believes in democracy”, virtually outlines the same arguments in this publication. He then said, “Lo and behold, we have a paper coming out shortly”, which he has written with the other three experts and is the same paper that showed up during the time of this so-called consideration being undertaken by this so-called expert committee. I do not doubt that they are experts, and I do not doubt what they are going to tell government—a person could just pick it off the shelf. I do not think that government members are going to listen to much else because that group’s expert opinions are well known. The members of that group publish their expert opinions over and again. Government members have read them and that is why they were selected. The government knows exactly what it is getting. It set out to get it from the very start. This is a sham of a consultation process. The terms of reference are so narrow and the time to respond is so short that there could not possibly be a proper consideration of the issues.

Actually, what are the underlying issues? Members opposite have already determined in their opinion what the issues are. I do not think that they have done anything more than a very shallow reading of the range of opportunities that might be available to make some changes. They have not really delved down to look more fully at what could be done to ensure that the houses can have not only separate roles, but also separate points of view that do not unnecessarily frustrate the government but enable legislation to be properly reviewed and for other views to be heard.

There is a case for members other than those of the major parties to have a place in a Parliament. I am afraid that this government is going to bring in other changes that will lead to, if you like, a two-party system entrenched forever in both houses. I do not think that the people of Western Australia actually want that. I think that the people of Western Australia and the people of Australia are quite happy to see a diversity of opinion in the upper houses of their Parliaments. If this government brings in a system that threatens that diversity, the Parliament and the process of making law will be all the poorer for that change. When the Attorney General brings legislation into this house, in which his party has a majority, he gives scant regard to the inquiries made by opposition members about the legislation and why it is drafted in a particular way and suggestions that we might make on how to improve it. For this term of government, the situation in the other place is exactly the same as this place in terms of its make-up—who’s who in the zoo—and we have already seen a restriction on the speaking time that members in that house have to scrutinise legislation. Some of the earlier suggestions were to restrict the members to shorter speaking times than we are entitled to in this house, which is ridiculous. There are 36 members there. There are not that many of them and they need to be able to properly interrogate the legislation. What they do is vitally important to the making of good law.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The Attorney General knows full well what I am talking about. The other place goes through a proper process with the legislation to ensure that there are no unintended consequences. There are people in that place who are very skilled at reading legislation in the same way that we in this place spend our time thinking more about politics than the nitty-gritty of lawmaking and the review of law. We do not actually provide that level of scrutiny. We trust the judgements of executive government because we have to; that is the way this Parliament is structured. We will end up with the other house doing exactly the same as this house. That is not advancing democracy. This is a failed attempt to reform not only the electoral system, but also the operation of Parliament. It is a sham and it should go back to the people of Western Australia for their judgement.

**MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Minister for Electoral Affairs)** [6.35 pm]: I will start by going to the motion itself, Madam Acting Speaker. It states —

That this house condemns the Labor government’s plan to reduce regional representation in the state Parliament and calls for a referendum to be held prior to any changes being legislated.

My criticism of the motion is this: members opposite are presupposing that it is Labor’s plan to reduce regional representation, and they are presupposing this before the report of the McCusker Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform has even been tabled in this Parliament. As the Minister for Electoral Affairs and Attorney General, I give an undertaking that that report will be published for debate in here in advance of legislation. That is our plan. How can the opposition speak to a plan, when the report has not even been tabled, and demand that the Labor government be condemned for something that is not even on the table? This is fatuous nonsense. They have shot too early. They should wait until the report comes and then go to the plan or possible plans contained in the report.

Secondly, I caution the opposition to recall what it should have learnt as children: that is, be careful what you wish for, it might come true. Each member opposite has demanded that there be a referendum in advance of any legislative change. In Western Australia there are about 1.3 million or 1.4 million voters on the roll in the metropolitan area and about 420 000 voters on the roll in regional areas.

Does anyone in this chamber doubt that if this government took to a referendum the proposition “Should your vote at an election be equal to every other citizen’s vote?”, when we have 1.32 million people in the metropolitan area and 425 000 in the regions voting on that question, that there would not likely be an overwhelming response with everyone saying, “We want our vote to be equal”? The opposition would probably like a referendum that had vote weighting in itself and therefore would not be a true referendum of the people. If members opposite recall what they should have been taught—be careful what you wish for, it might come true—this system would blow up because it would be overwhelmed in a referendum by people in the metropolitan area. At the election the Premier promised to maintain and enhance regional voting. Why would we want to go to a referendum when the result would almost be inevitable? Then we would be forced to abide by the people’s will and introduce equal voting for every seat in both houses of Parliament, as instructed by the people in a referendum. Electoral reform is far more nuanced than that. I will come to that in a moment.

The member for Moore said that there should have been a longer discussion with the people about electoral reform and the way that the two houses of Parliament operate in respect of each other. That is a good point because what happens in situations of deadlock when legislation has passed here but is rejected in the upper house? Should that not be discussed? There was an attempt by this Parliament to do just that—to have a wideranging and lengthy debate. In 1984, a royal commission was established for the very purpose of discussing the relationship between the chambers and discuss how it should work. The royal commissioner was Professor Eric Edwards, and his counsel assisting was a constitutional expert, Mr Jim Thomson, SC. What happened? The Liberal Party and the National Party boycotted the royal commission. They would not attend and would not make a submission to it. They would not engage with it. They stood it up because they knew the upper house could block any reform that was recommended by a royal commission. They were not fair dinkum. The member for Moore was not fair dinkum when he came forward and said there should be broader debate. An attempt was made to have such a broad debate, but the National Party and the Liberal Party stood it up and would not participate in it.

It was reported in yesterday’s *The West Australian* that the Leader of the Opposition said —

“West Australians deserve to have their say on laws which would ultimately affect how they are represented in the Legislative Council and the Parliament,” ...

That is exactly what we have done. We commissioned a ministerial expert committee and gave it terms of reference. The terms of reference are as follows —

At the 2021 election for the Legislative Council:

The Daylight Saving Party won one seat in the Mining and Pastoral region, having received 98 first preference votes, which is equivalent to just 0.2% of all formal votes in that region;

AND

The Greens in the North Metropolitan Region received 27,077 first preference votes, or 7.4% of all formal votes in that region, but did not win a seat;

How could that be? The terms of reference go on —

AND

In the Agricultural Region, the Nationals received 22,999 votes and won two seats;

AND

In the South Metropolitan Region, the Liberal Party —

It won three times that number! —

received 67,000 votes but won only one seat;

How could that be? —

**The Government now asks the Committee to review the electoral system for the Legislative Council and provide:**

Recommendations as to how electoral equality might be achieved for all citizens entitled to vote for the Legislative Council;



Ms Mia Davies; Mr Shane Love; Acting Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Dr David Honey; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr John Quigley

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AND

Recommendations for the distribution of preferences in the Legislative Council's proportional representation system.

The members were to be Hon Malcolm McCusker, QC, AO, a former Governor of Western Australia; Professor John Phillimore; Professor Martin Drum; and Dr Sarah Murray. The term of appointment was for seven weeks. It advertised and sought submissions. In other words, it was exactly what the Leader of the Opposition asked to be done—that Western Australians deserve to have their say on laws that will ultimately affect how they are represented in the Legislative Council and Parliament.

But that has not always been the position of the conservative members of this Parliament. For example, in 1977, Sir Charles Court introduced the Constitution Acts Amendment Act—I will call it the Court bill. It lapsed but was reintroduced in 1978 with one amendment about the timing of the referendum. The amendments entrenched: for the Office of the Governor and the houses of Parliament, members must be chosen directly by the people; there could be no reduction in the number of members in either house; and that certain provisions of the Constitution Act 1889—including section 73, the embedding provision—is required to amend any of these entrenched positions. This included section 73 itself, requiring a referendum. In other words, Sir Charles Court amended the Constitution and then amended the Constitution Act without the need for a referendum. He entered our Constitution and changed it, then, when he left, he locked the door behind him so that no further amendment could ever be entrenched in the way he had done it.

Did he go to the people and seek a referendum? No, he did not. They controlled both houses of Parliament and passed it. Western Australian electors were not consulted on any of these constitutional amendments and Parliament cannot change these entrenching rules introduced by the Court bill without first going to a referendum. All these amendments benefited the conservative parties and were all done without a referendum.

At this point, members might be interested to know that Western Australia has held 11 referendums since 1900. One was split on three questions asked, and two of the 11 had a clear vote in favour of the questions that were posed. However, if all Western Australians voted on the proposition, “Do you want your vote to be equal with everybody else’s vote?”, I posit that the vote would be overwhelmingly in favour of, “Yes, we do want our votes to be equal.” We do not want the situation to exist any longer like that which exists in North West Central whereby the electorate has about 10 900 real voters, but with a large district allowance—because the electorate comprises 800 000 square kilometres—it is multiplied by 1.5 per centum to come up with 12 000 phantom voters! When working out whether that seat is equal to the other seats, the real voters are added to the phantom voters and we ask whether it equates to something like a metropolitan seat. It is just an enhanced voting to the limit, and the Premier has promised to maintain enhanced voting for the regions. Therefore, member for North West Central, thou shalt not tremble in your boots. The member for North West Central has the Premier’s promise that he will have his 1.5 per cent multiplier, over his large district allowance, and he will be protected.

The member for Moore says, “Look, these regional seats are the economic engine room of the country and the economic engine room of the state.” In districts like Karratha, South Headland, Onslow—this is where the wealth is produced. Where those workers and their families live is overwhelmingly in my electorate of Butler.

**Mr P. Papalia:** And mine!

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** And in Warnbro, the electorate of my colleague the Minister for Police.

The electorate of Butler has the largest —

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** At least you are not a hypocrite. You are not going away; you are coming out there, calling across the chamber. We did not do that, member.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** Yes, you did!

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** No, we did not! You said that we were not interjecting; we were talking to ourselves. Once the spotlight goes on what you are saying, you squeal, and that is what you are doing at the moment. Once the spotlight is turned to your argument, you squirm and you squeal.

The electorate of Butler is the largest constituency in this chamber, and the member for Warnbro has the second largest constituency. In my electorate, I am well over quota. Even with the last district allowance, when we add together the real voters and the phantom voters of the electorate of North West Central, it comes to about 24 000 voters—over half of them being phantoms. In Butler, there are 33 000 real people and they get up regularly and fly up to the regions to produce the wealth of this state whilst their families are back here in Butler. Why should they not have an equal vote?

We recognise that electoral reform is more nuanced than that and that there has to be sufficient number of regional members to look after the people in the regions. We are not arguing with that. The question was put to us, rhetorically: who will look after the people in those remote communities? I tell members who will look after the people in the remote communities: the Labor member for Kimberley will look after the people right throughout the Kimberley and down to the East Pilbara. Who will look after the people right out into the Martu country, beyond Newman? The Labor member for Pilbara will look after them, and does look after them. The honourable Kevin Michel, the Labor member for Pilbara, does a terrific job at looking after them. Who will look after those people out to Laverton and east of Kalgoorlie? The Labor member for Kalgoorlie will look after them, and she does a fantastic job. We are not seeking to diminish their role at all. Why are there so many Labor members in the regions? It is because people know that we respect the regions. They know that we look after services in the regions.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** I did not interrupt you once, member for Moore, during what was your pollywaffle—not once! Back to your pollywaffle bar, member. I did not interrupt you once.

The people who look after these people in the remote communities —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** Those erstwhile Labor members who have been elected by the people in these remote communities entrust that the McGowan Labor government will deliver services to them and deliver safety to them. The government will keep them safe from COVID. We will not be like New South Wales where remote or regional Indigenous communities are now being infected with COVID-19, and just letting it run wild. No! We went to the regions on two promises: we are going to keep WA safe—and is that not the truth! We saw that at the Dockers game last weekend. Not only did 51 000 people attend, shoulder to shoulder, we kept it strong and the Dockers won. What a strong performance they put in—fantastic! What are we to make of these self-serving pollywaffle arguments? Let us go to the comments of Mr Dave Grills, a former National Party member for the Mining and Pastoral Region.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Former.

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** Former, that is right. He said —

“Under this system, you don’t get the best candidate available. You get the candidate who’s been able to manipulate preferences.”

That was the National Party member. What about the number one National Party candidate, “Big Nick”? Its standard bearer out there in the goldfields was “Big Nick” Fardell in the Mining and Pastoral Region. He was the number one candidate. He is closely aligned with the member for North West Central. On Monday, 3 May, “Big Nick” was asked on ABC Goldfields–Esperance radio about the review into electoral reform. “Big Nick” said that the review does not go far enough because it has ruled out abolishing the Legislative Council!

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY:** That was the number one ticket holder for the Legislative Council for the Nationals. The Nationals candidate said —

I’m a fan of actually scrapping it.

That is not what Labor has in mind. Labor has in its mind what question was asked of the ministerial expert panel. This is what “Big Nick” says —

It works in other places. We’re the most over represented population ...

...

I’m going to do a petition to say who wants to save \$50 million and get rid of 36 politicians altogether.

That is the National Party spokesperson for the Mining and Pastoral Region. He also said —

A lot of the people in the upper house are nameless people and faceless people. So we don’t know about them.

“Big Nick” was the National Party’s spokesperson out there and he did not get elected because he wanted to abolish the upper house. We do not want to do that. We respect the regions, as I have already said. That is why if we look around the regions of Western Australia, we can see that the party the people turned to in these times of challenge is the Australian Labor Party. People from the regions elected overwhelming numbers of members in this chamber and in the other chamber.

As I said, when we go through further reforms, we see that the Barnett government did not hold a referendum in 2011 when it introduced the Electoral and Constitution Amendment Bill 2011 to fix the date for general elections, nor in 2014, when it introduced the Electoral Amendment Bill to change the powers of Electoral Distribution Commissioners and include matters for their consideration when fixing boundaries. It did not go back to the people and say that it wanted a referendum on this. The Barnett government introduced the legislation and passed it.

Much has been said by members of the opposition in trying to demean and diminish the people who made up the ministerial expert panel, calling them academics. Name one electoral commentator who does not say that the current system needs reform. Malcolm Mackerras, Antony Green and local journalists all say that it needs reform; it is just a matter of what sort of reform. The McGowan government went to the people and asked them to put in their submissions. Sir Charles Court did not do it and Colin Barnett did not do it. Not only did we go to the people and ask for their ideas, but also we published them all on the website so that everyone could see what people were submitting. We could not have been more transparent.

The member said, “Oh, the Attorney General.” It was not until I was given this portfolio that I came to realise or was introduced to the fact that the people in Kalgoorlie have a vote that is three and a half times more than the value of the vote of the people in Albany. What is so special about Kalgoorlie that it should outvote Albany? A train goes to Kalgoorlie every day. Big aircraft fly in there once or twice a day. It has a big hospital. It has more services than Albany does, but the votes are worth three and a half times more. Why should the people of Kalgoorlie, which has all those services I described, have one and a half times more votes than the people of Esperance? The people in Esperance are in a remote area; they are down in the member for Roe’s electorate. Why should his electors have a much smaller vote than the electors in Kalgoorlie? He has not even approached that. Why do the people in Wundowie on the Great Eastern Highway on the way to Northam have a vote that is four times the vote of the people in Wooroloo, which is 8.9 kilometres away? Where is this big driving distance from Wooroloo to Wundowie that justifies this malapportionment? It is just not there. It is a fiction.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.