

ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [2.57 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That this house condemns the Labor government for using the guise of group ticket voting reform to push through changes to our electoral system that will reduce regional representation.

I understand that there have been discussions behind the chair.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

On motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**, resolved —

To insert after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The SPEAKER: As this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority for it to succeed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [2.58 pm]: I move the motion.

Off the back of the answers we received from the Premier during question time today, I will reiterate the motion, which states —

That this house condemns the Labor government for using the guise of group ticket voting reform to push through changes to our electoral system that will reduce regional representation.

Let us look around the chamber and see which Labor MPs will shortly betray their communities that no less than six months ago put their trust in their leader and his team. Let us get on the record which of these MPs will betray their communities and future generations just six short months after —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sorry, just pause for a moment. Minister for Water and member for Balcatta, your interjections are incessant and I ask you to desist.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Let us get on the record which of these MPs will betray their communities just six short months after they were entrusted to be the advocates, defenders and supporters of their electorates. Every regional Labor MP has turned their back on their constituency to line up and toe the Labor Party line. Shame on the member for Kalgoorlie; the member for Pilbara; the member for Warren–Blackwood—it is a double whammy for the member for Warren–Blackwood because after six months, she has already betrayed them twice—the member for Geraldton; the member for Bunbury; the member for Collie–Preston; the member for Murray–Wellington; the member for Davesville; I will even throw Mandurah in there; and the member for Kimberley. All these members are traitors to their communities, served up as cannon fodder —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I ask for your ruling regarding the imputation on all members with regard to the word that was used.

The SPEAKER: Can you clarify?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member named a number of members and then accused us of being traitors. I am just asking you to rule on that.

The SPEAKER: That is an adverse reflection. You have named individual members, so I would ask you not to continue to do that.

Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Speaker; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

Debate Resumed

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will not say it again.

They have been served up as cannon fodder by the Premier and the Attorney General in their pursuit of a Labor utopia, instead of focusing on the issues that impact their communities.

Several members interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: There are a lot of objections going on over there. It is obviously going to be a very sore point; they are a little bit touchy in these communities. They are slavishly following their Premier who was sneaky and deceitful before and after the election. I did not realise that the Premier had been asked after the election whether the electoral reform that we are about to debate was on the agenda, but he was. He was asked by, I think, Gareth Parker and perhaps another journalist as well. Not only before the election was he asked repeatedly six or seven times by one journalist; then again in the debate before the election; and multiple times in regional media around the state. After the election he continued to tell the people of Western Australia that electoral reform was not on the agenda. Still the Labor Party is standing behind the stalking horse that it says is the reason that the reforms are very much required. It has been rubbished, as we heard in question time today, by political commentators, including Antony Green.

Antony Green said that there is no reason that we need to see the changes to the electoral reform in the Legislative Council to reduce regional representation linked to dealing with the group voting ticket. The government could have done that and it would have had our support. It could have addressed the group voting ticket issue with the support of the opposition and the community, instead of introducing these far-reaching reforms to the Legislative Council electoral system. The bill read in today puts the issue in black and white. The second reading speech in the second paragraph removes the reference to the metropolitan boundaries, so it removes any delineation or requirement for the Western Australian Electoral Commission to have regard to regional communities in future distributions of this place, while at the same time reducing regional representation in the Legislative Council.

The Labor Party has form for it; prior to the 2008 state election, it ripped six electorates out of regional Western Australia and put them into the metropolitan area. We now see it doing it again. Labor is ripping regional voices, muting them in our Parliament when members should be allowed to bring expertise, influence and important issues to this place. Labor is shameless in its pursuit of embedding Labor's power into Parliament for years to come.

The Premier and Attorney General's expert committee was a sham. People have seen the Premier deny and deny that this was an issue before and after the election, and then bring in this legislation. People know that they will not be able to trust him. Labor has done it again with the forestry decision; it did that without asking the people of WA what they think. That is arrogant, and it is now a very slippery slope as we wait to see what else the Premier will decide he can just do without asking the people of Western Australia. It will be a long three and a half years to go. Regional members, take note. Your electors will know exactly how you vote and how you betray them. We will make sure of that. You are about to vote to reduce regional representation and I look forward to you explaining that to your communities.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.05 pm]: I am ready to contribute to this discussion because sitting right behind the Premier is the member for Albany. She was at that infamous radio interview in Albany in which the Premier denied over and again that regional reform, regional redirection and cutting regional representation was on the agenda. Sitting right behind him was the member for Albany and, ironically enough, that same member is sitting behind the Premier today. She was sitting there today as we heard the Attorney General read in this bill that will strip away not only regional representation but also any reference to the regions in legislation whatsoever. The Attorney General knows very well the implications of that because he discussed with me directly that that will mean that the regional seats that we now hold throughout Western Australia can be forced into the metropolitan area, one by one. We will see a lack of regional representation in not only the upper house but also the lower house of Parliament in the future. That is Labor's aim. That is what Labor has been about the whole time.

We know this is a very longstanding tradition with the Labor Party. We do not even have to look as far back as the Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference of 2018. Hon Kate Doust did a presentation when she was the President of the Legislative Council and put forward option C: whole-of-state electorate. Guess what the Labor Party has gone with? It has gone with exactly what the then President put up to the conference way back in 2018. It has been on Labor's agenda for a very long time, but it has denied it.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [3.06 pm]: This government has absolutely no mandate for what it is about to do, and I can do no better than to quote —

Several members interjected.

Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Speaker; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Thank you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I can do no better than to quote the excellent article by Peter Law in today's *The West Australian* —

McGowan's brief press conference was the latest example of his Government's dishonest and underhand approach to an issue which impacts every West Australian.

Furthermore, the article continues —

The Government has no mandate as it refused to ever honestly answer questions about its aspirations for electoral reform during the election campaign for fear of losing votes in the bush. It's now running scared from a referendum which would likely succeed, but also put the issue at the forefront of mind of regional communities.

That is the truth of it. We have a dishonest government and a dishonest Premier who has gone to the people of Western Australia without it on his mind. What did we observe in this chamber today, members? All of a sudden we have a one vote, one value warrior out there spruiking with great passion the whole point that this is somehow an equitable approach. This is the largest state in Australia and one of the largest electorates in the world. In fact, it would be the largest electoral region in the world, and Labor is going to strip away the specific regional representation in those areas. The Premier has no mandate for this whatsoever. It is quite obvious now that the Premier misled the public of Western Australia before the election and, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, after the election as well. That is deceit of the people of Western Australia. We heard yesterday the Attorney General—again, someone utterly mute before the election; someone who never bothered to whisper a peep of this—tell us that it was a 120-year goal of the Labor Party. The Attorney General does not have a shred of decency in this matter. He did not mention it to the people of Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: All those regional members in this chamber whom the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out hid behind that lie. If you support this, you will betray your community. This is an absolute disgrace. The Premier should be ashamed; the Attorney General should be ashamed; and every regional member in this house should be ashamed of your government.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Dr D.J. HONEY: You should be ashamed of your government. The simple truth is that you have no mandate for this whatsoever.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [3.09 pm]: The government will not support this motion. I will explain why. Firstly, prior to the state election, the idea that someone could get elected with 98 votes was not something we had considered, but, obviously, if we did not deal with that issue, people would be criticising us.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I did not interject on the Leader of the Liberal Party —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: But I will.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Here I have the report about the Liberal Party, Leader of the Liberal Party. It describes you in all sorts of terms in the WhatsApp group by a member of your party who is in the upper house.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party!

Mr M. McGOWAN: You refused to deal with them.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Do you know why you do not deal with them? It is because you do not have the strength and you do not have the courage. You do not have the courage to take on Hon Peter Collier, who describes women as “sandwich makers”.

Several members interjected.

Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Speaker; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: You will not say anything about it.

We need to reform the upper house. Clearly, what occurred with Mr Wilson Tucker was a blight on democracy—that someone could be elected with 98 votes and displace other people who got many thousands of votes. It needs to be reformed. It is a blight on democracy. We commissioned Mr Malcolm McCusker and an eminent group to do a review into these matters. They have made some recommendations that also deal with the blatant rotting and corruption of the voting system in the upper house. The reforms we are bringing to Parliament will ensure that regional people will have 37 upper house members representing them as opposed to six. That is what will occur.

It will also make it easier for people across the board to get elected if they get—what is it?—2.6 per cent of the vote, as opposed to the current 14.5 per cent. It will better reflect the will of the people. That is what democracy is. It is the will of the people. It is only people stuck in the 1800s, like the Liberals and Nationals in Western Australia, who do not understand that.

Dr D.J. Honey: Why didn't you let the people decide?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will you please be quiet! No-one listens to you, Leader of the Liberal Party!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party, you have had your say!

Mr M. McGOWAN: No-one listens to you! I will tell you what, Leader of the Liberal Party, I will tell you a home truth. You are the first Leader of the Liberal Party I have ever met who could walk down the Hay Street Mall and no-one would know who you were. He is the first one I have ever met.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is how insignificant you are!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Your role in this Parliament and your role in Western Australian history will be nothing more than a footnote.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can tell you what: we have the evidence that in the 1990s you were out there backing one vote, one value.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Mr M. McGOWAN: And here you are, coming in here, saying exactly the opposite to what you had to say back in the 1990s, Leader of the Liberal Party.

What occurred with Mr Wilson Tucker was a blight on democracy. Mr McCusker has presented a report that shows that the upper house is clearly in need of reform, and we are going to reform it to make it more democratic. Imagine having two parties in modern Australia opposing a more democratic system; they are actually opposing a greater level of democracy. They are arguing against democracy. All over the world, people fight and die for democracy. Wars are fought over these things, yet we have the Liberals and Nationals in this Parliament arguing against it. They are arguing against more democracy in our state—that is, people's votes should be equal; when people run for office, their votes should be equal. When people run for anything—I gave the example of shareholders in question time—such as a committee position in an organisation, a club or whatever it might be, they are elected based on how many votes they get. That is the way these systems work. That is the essence of democracy, and the Liberals and Nationals are saying that somehow that is wrong—that some people's worth is less than others. That is what they are saying: some people's worth is less than others. Frankly, that offends the basic principle of being an Australian.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Liberal Party! Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will tell members what, the Leader of the Nationals WA stood up there and talked about betraying communities. When she was first elected to Parliament, she occupied an office over the road from Parliament.

Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Speaker; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

You were taking the money as a member of the regions, as a member for the Agricultural Region, while sitting over the road from Parliament, never seeing a constituent in your community, like Hon Jim Chown, who was also over the road from Parliament, and who the Liberal Party endorsed, sitting over the road there from Parliament for all those years. I think now we know that whilst on that committee, he opposed the reappointment of Mr McKechnie, and I think there needs to be a bit more inquiry about why that took place. If you want to talk about corruption, have a look at that issue. You were betraying your community, Leader of the National Party, when you occupied an office over the road from Parliament whilst representing the Agricultural Region.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party!

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was a shocking thing that you did, a disgraceful thing that you did, having your office over there. My electorate office is in my community where it has been for more than 20 years.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr M. McGOWAN: You could not even show your electors the dignity of having your electorate office in your community, because you just wanted to escape from that day-to-day work of meeting the needs of your community.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, you have had your say. It is time for the Premier to respond.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are reforming to remove the corruption of the upper house. Obviously, there will continue to be some support in terms of weighting in this house for some regional MPs, including you, Leader of the National Party. There was an extraordinary level of vote-weighting and —

Mr D.J. Kelly: Malapportionment!

Mr M. McGOWAN: —malapportionment, which is the proper term. It is basically a distortion of democracy. It is not democratic, to be frank, when some people's votes are worth six times that of others. It is just not democratic. It is the stuff we would see in a dictatorship, which would say it is somehow democratic, but it gives some people six times the votes of other people. Basically, that needs to be reformed, and that is what the government is going to do. We will ensure that regional people all over Western Australia have 37 MPs versus six.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [3.17 pm]: New members, I just want to outline a bit of history. In about 2018, we had the same Liberal Party and the same National Party that came into this house, targeting new members every day—the member for Wanneroo, the member for Mount Lawley, the member for Bickton, the member for Kalamunda and the member for Swan Hills—saying that they were going to lose their seats. They were threatening and bullying the new members every day. Do members remember the former member for Churchlands and the former member for Dawesville? They were targeting. Do members know what our members did? They went out there and represented their electorates. They doorknocked, they represented their views and then the government delivered to all of Western Australia. They were targeting the member for Pilbara all the time. Do members know what the member for Pilbara did? He went out there and he worked for his electorate and he represented its views, because that is what the people want. People want members working for them and representing their views.

Do members know what? All those people who were targeted got back in, and the people who were targeting them lost their seats, because they were lazy and arrogant. This is exactly what the opposition is doing today—sitting here, defending Hon Peter Collier and Jim Chown. Opposition members are standing up and somehow arguing that someone like Hon Jim Chown was representing his electorate because of the style of the electoral system. Because of the electoral system, someone like Jim Chown was somehow working so hard on behalf of his electorate. It is false. It is about members working for the state for all communities. That is what we intend to do and that is what we are doing.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There is the false National Party. I get sick of hearing people who have never actually worked on a farm lecturing us about agriculture, day in, day out. People all know they are false. Again, the poor Leader of the Liberal Party is sitting in the chamber. He has to take that position because Hon Peter Collier and Hon Nick Goiran told him to! They are the puppeteers. I mean, honestly, all the power rests in the other house. The Leader of the

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 16 September 2021]
p4122b-4127a

Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Speaker; Mr Shane Love; Dr David Honey; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Rita Saffioti

Opposition's numbers rest in the upper house. Both leaderships rest on the power in the upper house, so, of course, they will defend the status quo.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (5)

Ms M.J. Davies
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (40)

Mr S.N. Aubrey
Ms H.M. Beazley
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms L. Dalton
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms K.E. Giddens
Ms E.L. Hamilton

Ms M.J. Hammat
Ms J.L. Hanns
Mr M. Hughes
Mr D.J. Kelly
Ms E.J. Kelsbie
Dr J. Krishnan
Mr P. Lilburne
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr D.R. Michael

Mr S.A. Millman
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr S.J. Price
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr D.A.E. Scaife
Ms J.J. Shaw

Ms R.S. Stephens
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr K. Stratton
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.