

Mr Bernie Masters; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Day; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr John Bowler; Acting Speaker; Mr Pendal; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Tony Dean; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jim McGinty; Speaker; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2001

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR MASTERS (Vasse) [2.46 pm]: The issue in this debate is electoral reform. The Government's claim that it must follow through with its election promise has been shown to be false and shallow, due to the number of promises that it has broken in the past six months. The claim that a state referendum on this issue is not appropriate also carries little weight. It is unfortunate that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is leaving the Chamber, because she was the person who stated that she wanted a referendum on the one vote, one value issue. Is that correct? In an earlier interjection the minister wanted to know why the Opposition opposed one vote, one value, when the referendum it wanted would be carried out on that basis. The answer is that the Government is scared of the outcome of a referendum, just as the Opposition believes that country people in Western Australia will be disadvantaged by the outcome if the so-called principle that the Government espouses is put into effect. If the Government wants the Opposition to accept the principle of one vote, one value at its level, then it must accept the principle at the Opposition's level. The minister is running away from that as fast as she possibly can.

Before the Minister for Education leaves the Chamber, I would like to comment about an interjection that he made yesterday when the member for Merredin had the floor. I congratulate the member for Merredin, because he provided a real scenario, or prediction, in which vote weighting would still occur after the principle of one vote, one value is applied in the form that has been presented in the Bills before the House. The member for Merredin said that city seats will have an average electoral number of about 20 000 voters, and country seats will have around about 24 000 voters. The Minister for Education interjected along the lines that this will never happen. Roughly speaking, the minister was saying that his Government would never institute a policy, or a process, that would involve that sort of distortion of the one vote, one value system.

I want to take the minister back to the early 1980s. In 1980, I commenced employment with the Department of Environmental Protection. One of my fellow workmates was a chap by the name of Charlie Welker. Charlie Welker was, and still is, a good guy. I have no problems with him in that respect. After I left the DEP in 1981, I lost contact with him for a while, but I met up with him again later on. I had a bit of a falling-out with Charlie, because in 1985 or 1986, he was appointed the Deputy Electoral Commissioner by Brian Burke, the Labor Premier of the day. That in itself does not mean a great deal. However, when I next saw Charlie Welker, he was so enthused by the principles and qualities of Brian Burke - the only Premier of this State, if my memory serves me correctly, who has been behind bars -

Mr Carpenter: No -

Mr MASTERS: One of two, then. However, he is the only Premier who has assisted in losing \$1.5 billion worth - or thereabouts - of taxpayers' money in the WA Inc years. Charlie Welker passed on the role of Deputy Electoral Commissioner to me. His role in 1985 and 1986 was to ensure that in the lead-up to the next election, the electoral boundaries were drawn in such a way as to create a gerrymander that worked against the Liberal Party, and in favour of the sitting Government. Therefore, an employee of the then Labor Government admitted that as the Deputy Electoral Commissioner his role had been to sort the system to ensure that the boundaries would guarantee the Labor Party's return to government. In 1986 or 1987, once those boundaries had been set and his job was done, Mr Welker left his position as Deputy Electoral Commissioner and moved to the Western Australian Planning Commission. Mr Welker admitted that in his role with the WA Planning Commission, he had to ensure that the developments that would bring Labor voters into a geographical area, were located in marginal seats. Alternatively, he had to ensure that the developments that would bring Liberal voters into a new area were located in either safe Liberal seats, or safe Labor seats. That means that for a year or two, while employed by the WA Planning Commission, Mr Charlie Welker was sorting the planning processes to ensure that marginal Labor seats were made safer, and that the variations that were made to safe Liberal seats, and safe Labor seats, were small enough to ensure that they made no electoral difference.

Mr Carpenter: Are those accusations verifiable?

Mr MASTERS: I cannot verify them outside this Chamber. The minister will have to take my word that I am telling him the gospel truth.

Mr Carpenter: What you're telling us is that you have been told this by a particular person.

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Mr MASTERS: I have been told in various ways, including by that person. The Minister for Education said yesterday - as in the RAC advertisement - "It will never happen". Fifteen years ago it did happen. The sort of rotting that the member for Merredin was so concerned about, that would be allowable under the Government's legislation, could occur.

Mr Carpenter: The point the member for Vasse is missing is that it is happening now. This is the kind of rotting the Government is trying to eliminate. The previous Government was elected under a rotted system.

Mr MASTERS: There is no rotting, there is simply vote weighting. We have heard many false and misleading statements coming from government members - for example, the claims that people in metropolitan seats are treated as second class citizens, that the Opposition is rejecting the principle of equal treatment of people, and that the Government has a mandate. I will briefly respond to those matters.

As I said in a previous speech in this House, I agree with the principle of one vote, one value. I do not think anyone could mount a coherent argument against the principle, but there is virtually no principle on earth that any human being upholds in its entirety at all times. Is there anyone in this House who condones the taking of another human life, either by capital punishment or murder, or anything like that? Of course there is not. However, unless members are prepared to tell me that they are all pacifists, and will not fight, should this country -

Mr McGinty: I am a pacifist.

Mr MASTERS: I thank the member for Fremantle for that information, but the rest of the members are not pacifists, and would allow pragmatism to rule when necessary. If Australia were invaded, presumably members would do the patriotic thing, and be prepared to kill to protect our country. Even though respect for human life is arguably the greatest principle that human beings can hold, most of us agree that we are prepared to compromise that principle if the pragmatic situation requires it. The principle, while being desirable, needs to be tempered by realism. The Labor Party accuses the Opposition of corrupting the principle of one vote, one value in order to gain electoral advantage. The truth is that the Government is corrupting the democratic system and the democratic process in Western Australia in the name of upholding a principle. The Government quite deliberately is confusing process with outcome. The principle, unarguably, is one vote, one value, but the question is how to put that into practice in such a way that the outcome is fair to all Western Australians, as the Leader of the Opposition has said. It is important to have a vote weighting process that creates fairness for all Western Australians, rural or urban. The outcome must be the first, last and most important consideration. The principle is a great one but it needs to be modified. The Government, in its own legislation, is prepared to compromise that principle by providing that three or four lower House seats will include dummy voters. The Government is prepared to admit that the principle needs to be modified to take account of pragmatic need. The Opposition is saying that it agrees with the Government on the principle, and the need to modify it, but it is also saying that the Government needs to modify it more, so that all country people have an appropriate vote weighting. The Government is saying that it will not accept that for the majority of country seats, and then tries to claim credit for a decision motivated by principle.

The claim is also made that this Government has a mandate to push through this legislation of one vote, one value. I have listened to all the arguments here, and I have no doubt that, in certain seats, such as Albany, many Liberal Party and National Party supporters were trying to raise that as a major issue at the time of the election to try to get people to vote for the then Government and against the Labor Party. The reality is that people do not vote for oppositions, they vote against Governments. I am quite prepared to accept that the people of Western Australia voted against the previous Government. They probably had very little idea about much of the detail, and even many of the broad policy thrusts.

Mr McGowan: Is the member for Vasse calling the electorate stupid, now?

Mr MASTERS: The member for Rockingham is, but I am not. I am sorry the member for Rockingham was not listening, but I am saying that people do not vote for oppositions, they vote against Governments. On that basis, to a very large degree, they would not have known many of the broad policy issues the Labor Party had in its platform, and they certainly did not know a great deal of the detail of the policy.

Mr Carpenter: On the basis of the argument put by the member for Vasse, his party campaigned in the country almost entirely against one vote, one value, and people voted against it.

Mr MASTERS: I am happy to accept that interjection, because in my electorate, it was a relatively unimportant issue. I hardly raised it at all. No one in my electorate raised it. I am admitting that the Liberal Party did so in certain seats, but that is not the point. The point is - and I will repeat it, because members opposite seem not to

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be listening, or at least not hearing, in which case their brains are not working - people vote against Governments, they do not vote for oppositions. On that basis, I am quite happy to take the Liberal Party's electoral defeat on the chin - to accept that it lost the election because arguably it deserved to, having done so many things wrong as a Government. To say that people voted for the Labor Party, and for the detail of its policies and platforms, is wrong, and I do not believe that the Government has a mandate.

I now move to the issue of costs. How much money will it cost to achieve an equality of outcome - in other words, fairness - should the Bills that are currently proposed become law? I challenge the Minister for Electoral Affairs to provide some detail of how the next member for Gascoyne, or the member for Kimberley, would be able physically to service, in the case of the member for Gascoyne, an electorate of 1.4 million square kilometres. For example, is the minister suggesting that, for an electorate of that size, there will be two extra staff on the payroll, and perhaps one or two extra offices? Will the new member for Gascoyne, who I will assume will be the present member for Ningaloo -

Mrs Hodson-Thomas: A good bloke.

Mr MASTERS: He is an excellent bloke. Let us assume that the current member for Ningaloo -

Mr Carpenter: Here we have the cabal opposing the party leader!

Mr MASTERS: The member for Willagee has jumped into deeper water, and he will drown if he is not careful.

Does that mean that the current member for Ningaloo, who might be the member for Gascoyne, would be given extra funding to have an office, for example, in Wiluna, so that he is located more centrally within his electorate?

Mr Sweetman: Make it Marble Bar; I want to get them a bitumen road.

Mr MASTERS: He should also have an office in Marble Bar, to make sure the road comes through. Is the minister suggesting that the three or four new members for these very large electorates will receive an increase in their charter allowance, car hire allowance, hotel accommodation and so on? If the minister is suggesting that, I have done some calculations on the back of an envelope, and I believe that, for those four seats, the cost to the taxpayer will be between \$200 000 and \$300 000 a seat. In the seats in the agricultural regions, such as Moore, Beverley, Boyup, Albany and Roe, the figure may well be less than that.

I suggest an additional figure of between \$100 000 and \$150 000 so that the members for those electorates can cope with the physical demands of those much larger electorates. I am not talking about the electorate of Vasse; I am talking about the wheatbelt.

Mr Carpenter: Which electorates?

Mr MASTERS: Moore, Beverley, Boyup and Roe. They will each need an additional \$100 000 to \$150 000. They will each need an extra staff member, an extra office, extra air charter allowance, extra car hire and extra hotel accommodation. I have estimated a minimum of \$105 000 for each electorate. Overall, it will cost between \$3 million and \$5 million a year in taxpayers funds for this so-called principle of equality of outcome to be put into practice, so that the seven or eight remote and agricultural members of Parliament can do their jobs properly.

However, in today's *The West Australian* there is an article headed "Greens threat to vote reform". It is written by Anne Burns, and states -

Electoral Affairs Minister Jim McGinty said he opposed the Greens' model because it added two more MPs at great cost . . .

The Greens' model is to have six upper House regions, with six members for each region. My estimate of the cost of a new upper House member of Parliament is \$300 000 to \$400 000 each. The Greens' are therefore proposing the expenditure of an additional \$600 000 to \$800 000 of taxpayers funds. If the minister is to live up to his word and ensure that the eight members in the agricultural and remote areas have the proper physical resources to do their jobs, we are looking at a cost between \$3 million and \$4 million.

The bottom line is that the minister cannot use the same excuse to argue against two different arguments. If the minister wants equality of outcome, it is best achieved through vote weighting. It should not be done with dummy voters in the four remote seats. It should be done throughout rural Western Australia.

I strongly support the member for Merredin's predictions about what will happen if this Bill is put into practice. Most seats in metropolitan Perth will have about 20 000 electors. Most seats outside the metropolitan area will have about 24 000 electors. It will be a reverse of the gerrymander that the Government says currently exists.

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The Government is falsely saying that electoral equality equals democracy. It does not. Democracy is about a fair and equal outcome of the electoral system. For that reason the Government needs to look at the outcome and implications of this proposal, rather than hide behind the facade of a principle that the Government admits is flawed because of the pragmatism required in the legislation. This is the beginning of the end of fair and representative democracy in Western Australia. The Bill is only about re-electing the ALP Government. It is not about electoral fairness or honesty; it is about deceit, dishonesty and electoral greed.

I will quote from two reasonably well known historical figures. J.W. Fulbright was born in 1905. He was an American Democrat politician. The Democrats are on the left side of politics in the United States. Referring to democracy, he said - and I am paraphrasing his words - like medicine, the test of the value of democracy is not in its taste, but in its effects. In other words, it may be unpalatable to accept the principle of vote weighting, but it is the effects of that medicine that is important.

I will also quote Leon Trotsky. He was one of the founders of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and he said -

There is a limit to the application of democratic methods. You can inquire of all the passengers as to what type of car they like to ride in, but it is impossible to question them as to whether to apply the brakes when the train is at full speed and accident threatens.

In other words, one of the ALP's leading lights, Leon Trotsky, admitted that democracy has its limits and one has to be practical. We all know that Trotsky was murdered by one of Stalin's people. Trotsky admitted that one has to modify principles to ensure that there is an equality of outcome.

MRS MARTIN (Kimberley) [3.05 pm]: I want to talk about the Kimberley in relation to this Bill and add my voice to the debate.

Mr Birney: Does the member support one vote, one value?

Mrs MARTIN: I will get around to that. The Kimberley is known for its pastoral industry. The industry has been there for about 70 years. There are some very interesting people in the pastoral industry. They talk a lot about independence and being able to survive in an environment that most other industries cannot. They tell me they are tough; I agree, I have been out there with them. They are very fair. That is one industry that is part of the make-up of my electorate. The pearling industry has been in the Kimberley for about 80 years. It has made a major contribution to this State's revenue. The people who work in that industry are tough and fair. The Kimberley has a tourism industry. It is new, but it is innovative. The people in it take risks and they are very proud of the things they are doing. They are very fair-minded people.

The Kimberley has an indigenous industry. A lot of them are very fair. The mining industry is as tough as nails. It puts a lot of money and resources into our community. The people in it are willing to have a yarn; they are pretty fair. Everybody in the Kimberley agrees that we make a huge contribution to this State in respect of revenue, hard work and the time we spend there. None of us is chained to the Kimberley; we are there because we choose to be there. We live in one of the most remote corners of the State through choice. Choice needs to come into this issue. It is our choice to live where we do, but we resent being seen as the poor cousins. The city gives us a leg-up and, all of a sudden, we are not seen as being equal, but as poor cousins. We are equal to people in the city - do not ever say that we are not. We make our contribution. We do not need a leg-up; we need respect as citizens of this State. One vote, one value is the basis of that. While the city sees us as poor cousins, we will not have the equality that we need to participate as equals in this State. I have been around my electorate. I did not talk to people about Labor Party advertising; I talked to them about advertising from the former coalition Government. I have been answering questions posed by the now Opposition. I asked people what they wanted.

They said they wanted Halls Creek back! There you go. Do members know what I want? I want Halls Creek back for my community. Why? Because it belongs there. It should never have been included in the Pilbara. Do we want a gerrymander? Were we in Government for that gerrymander? Oh dear, I do not think so. I cannot speak against the Bill. My electorate will benefit, because it will become the united community that it has always been. We recognise that and it is about time others did as well. We are not poor cousins; we are equals. The only way we will become equals is through this fundamental principle; that is why I support the Bill. I am not going to waffle on, even though I am pretty good at it.

Several members interjected.

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Mrs MARTIN: I will make one further point. If members want to come for a ride with me in my electorate, we will travel 1 600 kilometres from one end to the other. However, we must go through the Pilbara. That is amazing. I resent that, and so does my community.

Mr Birney interjected.

Mrs MARTIN: The member for Kalgoorlie had his turn and now it is my turn. My community is offended by the fact that it is split. I am here to represent that community - I was elected to do that. When this whole issue came up I discussed it with my community. They are fair-minded people, regardless of their industry or background, and they want Halls Creek home. Let us bring it home. Country members might have to work a little harder. I have never shirked hard work, and I am not about to now. I will represent my community in this House and anywhere that I am required to do so. It is called a duty statement. It is a duty of care to the people who have put their trust in people like me - the country members.

MR DAY (Darling Range) [3.11 pm]: In reality, this legislation is all about transferring some of the representation which currently exists in non-metropolitan parts of Western Australia to the metropolitan area. To be precise, the positions of eight members of Parliament will be transferred to the Perth metropolitan area. As the Leader of the Opposition and others have said, the Liberal Party would not argue with the principle of one vote, one value if it were to provide every individual who is eligible to vote in this State the same ability to influence the outcome of affairs. However, it is not the only issue that must be taken into account. What must also be taken into account is the need for effective and fair representation for all people in Western Australia, including those in far-flung and remote parts of the State. This Bill has been wrapped up in the supposed notion of massive principle. Where is the massive principle that the Minister for Electoral Affairs and others on the government side have argued for? This Bill will not change the arrangements in the Legislative Council in which 50 per cent of the members come from the metropolitan area and 50 per cent from outside it.

Mr McGinty: That ought to be changed.

Mr DAY: If it ought to be changed, why does the Minister for Electoral Affairs not bring in legislation that seeks to change it and see how it goes?

Mr McGinty: You won't support it.

Mr DAY: The Opposition might not support it, but if such an important principle is at stake, why will the minister not bring in legislation that seeks to bring about the changes that he purports to want for both Houses of Parliament? It might get through.

Mr McGinty: You guys would not support it, because the principle is one of equality.

Mr DAY: Much to the delight of the Minister for Electoral Affairs, the coalition does not have a majority in the Legislative Council. Who knows what might get through? If amendments are made in the Legislative Council, the Bill could be brought back here and we could see what is accepted. If this massive principle is so important, why does the Government not demonstrate that by bringing in legislation to genuinely put in place arrangements for one vote, one value? The other area of this argument that the Government falls down on concerns its proposals for the Legislative Assembly. It has proposed that dummy voters be taken into account in the remote parts of the State. It has been argued that it needed to show some recognition of the difficulty of representing and covering large parts of the State. If the Government genuinely believes that, why is it not taking into account the needs of other rural parts of Western Australia as well? It is clear that the argument about principle falls down when one examines the facts.

Mr McGinty: Even you don't believe this.

Mr DAY: It is true. If the Government really believed in the principle of one vote, one value, it would introduce legislation that sought to establish that system in both Houses of Parliament. The minister is hell-bent on introducing change to the Legislative Assembly that will be to the perceived electoral advantage of the Labor Party. If this change was not thought to advantage the Labor Party at the next election, I have no doubt that the Government would not have introduced this legislation.

The core reason the Opposition opposes this legislation is not because it is opposed to the principle of one vote, one value, but because people in non-metropolitan Western Australia have made it clear that they do not want this legislation to go through. Those people do not want a reduction in the number of members who represent them in the Western Australian Parliament. They are strongly opposed to it. The Liberal Party will not turn its back on the country people of Western Australia. There are more Liberal Party country members in this Chamber than country members from any other party. Nine Liberal members, five National Party members,

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eight Labor members and one Independent represent non-metropolitan seats. The Liberal Party has stronger representation in rural, remote and regional parts of Western Australia than any other party in this Parliament. We will not turn our backs on country people when they have strongly argued against this legislation. That is the first point.

The second point is that apart from members of the Labor Party, I am not aware of anyone in the metropolitan area who wanted this legislation to be introduced. Not one person has come to me in my electorate to say that he felt he was under-represented and that there should be more members of Parliament in the metropolitan area. On the one hand, there is a strong negative reaction from non-metropolitan parts of Western Australia to this legislation, and on the other, there is a noticeable lack of desire in the metropolitan area for this legislation to go through. The Liberal Party can see no reason to support it. We will not turn our backs on people in non-metropolitan Western Australia.

The Labor Party has demonstrated that it will put its perceived electoral advantage over and above any other important issue in this State. It is not fazed by the fact that it will reduce access to country members of Parliament or that it will reduce the voice of country people in this Chamber. There is no real demand from the metropolitan area for an increase in representation in the Chamber. The Labor Party is misguided if it is bringing in this legislation on the basis that it thinks it must do so to win the next election. The reality is that it is in government at the moment. It has a substantial majority in this Chamber. However, it did not gain a substantial majority of the popular vote. As other members have pointed out, the Labor Party was elected to government with the lowest primary vote of any party in the history of this State. It received only 37 per cent of the primary vote. Nevertheless, the Labor Party is in government and it has a substantial majority in this place. It achieved that under the existing electoral arrangements. It achieved government in 1989 with less than 50 per cent of the popular vote. From memory, it received only about 48.5 per cent of the two party preferred vote at that time. The Labor Party can win government in this State under the current arrangements. Arguing against the proposed change will not advantage either the Liberal Party or the Labor Party.

The final point is that if the Government is so confident about the demand for this legislation, and that it will be supported strongly by the people of Western Australia, why will it not put it to a referendum? It is the classic sort of issue that could be considered by the people of the State. A general expression of opinion about whether this sort of change should occur could be gained through a referendum. If the Government has the courage of its convictions, it would put this matter to a referendum and allow the people of Western Australia to express their views on it. For all those reasons, I am happy to vote against this legislation, as are all members of the Opposition.

DR CONSTABLE (Churchlands) [3.19 pm]: Over the past two or three days during this debate, I have had to remind myself of which Bill we are debating. It is worthwhile to record that we are debating the Electoral Amendment Bill 2001, which amends the Electoral Act 1907. We are attempting to insert new part IIA titled "Representation in Parliament". The clear objective of this Bill is to have electorates of equal numbers of voters. That is a simple and elegant principle. Having listened to the debate, one would not think that we were debating a simple principle because so many red herrings have been thrown into the debate.

I refer members to the basics of the debate. The Bill addresses an important democratic issue of one vote, one value. In addition, we will repeal the Electoral Distribution Act 1947. Many of the provisions of that Act would be transferred into the Electoral Act 1907 with the inclusion of new part IIA. As a result of this Bill, all of the provisions that relate to elections and redistribution of electoral boundaries would be contained within one Act.

It is important to consider some of the history of this issue in order to come to grips with it. I examined what has happened in other jurisdictions in Australia. The history of change across the other jurisdictions in Australia is an interesting story. It is important to consider where Western Australia stands in relation to the other jurisdictions. Western Australia is clearly out of step with the rest of Australia. It is the only jurisdiction that has not embraced the principle of one vote, one value at least in its lower House.

The electoral systems across Australia have evolved for well over a century. In the early days, land ownership provisions were attached to the franchise and the franchise was restricted to male voters. The electoral system evolved in a universal franchise that first embraced women and later, of course, Aboriginal citizens. Electoral systems have evolved from malapportionment, based on the early history of parliaments in Australia, to the principle of one vote, one value. Tasmania was the first jurisdiction to embrace the one vote, one value system as far back as 1909. It has worked well in Tasmania for almost a century.

In 1975, South Australia embraced one vote, one value, followed by both Houses of the Victorian Parliament in 1982. Only a decade ago, in 1991, the electoral system was reformed to embrace one vote, one value in the New

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South Wales Legislative Assembly. Queensland's electoral system was reformed in 1992. Of all the Australian States, Western Australia is the only State that continues to stand against the trend.

Queensland seems to be the most similar situation to Western Australia. I suspect that when this legislation was drafted, it borrowed heavily from the Queensland equivalent. Queensland is probably the most similar State to Western Australia in terms of geography and demography. It is worthwhile to consider what has happened in Queensland. It is a large State that has major agricultural and mining industries, particularly in its remote and sparsely populated areas. It is a good model for us to examine.

It is noteworthy that the Queensland Electoral Act of 1992 includes a larger district clause for electorates larger than 100 000 square kilometres. The Act allows for vote weighting in favour of those larger electorates to compensate for their size. I note that proposed clause 16J of the Electoral Amendment Bill includes an allowance for vote weighting in the larger electorates; however, the area of the electorates it allows for is not big enough and should be further considered in the consideration in detail stage. The clause makes allowances for electorates that cover large geographic areas; however, the Western Australian allowance is about a quarter of the size of the Queensland allowance. I ask the Minister for Electoral Affairs to consider whether some greater compensation might be made for those remote areas of Western Australia.

The Australian Capital Territory Government introduced the one vote, one value electoral system in 1992. Since the 1970s, the Commonwealth Government has used the system of one vote, one value in the House of Representatives. The representation of the States has been compensated for in the make up of the Senate. Our own Legislative Council should compensate for the remote and the far-flung areas of Western Australia by allowing for gross vote weighting in those areas. We have an interesting parallel with the Commonwealth situation, which is similar to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

I have tried to listen to most of the speeches in this debate. I have not been persuaded by any of the arguments against one vote, one value. There is no reason why, at least in the Legislative Assembly, we should be any different from any other jurisdiction in Australia. Legislation in all other jurisdictions allows their electoral distribution commissioners to take into account certain factors when drawing up the boundaries. Exactly the same situation applies in proposed clause 16L of this Bill.

The proposed clause requires the commissioners to take into account factors including community of interest, means of communication and distance from the capital, physical features, existing local government boundaries and demographic trends. Many of the matters that members have raised in opposition to this Bill are imposed on the commissioners to take into account in their deliberations of the redistribution of electoral boundaries.

In trying to come to grips with the arguments against the one vote, one value system, it appears that the arguments against the proposal fall into four broad areas. First, many members have raised the problems of communication they have in their vast rural and remote electorates. These communication problems seem to be based on factors including distance, time and resources. To some extent at least, those problems can be overcome by extra resources to improve communication and to allow members to travel around their electorates. That would give their electors a sense of being closer to the members through modern communication technology. It is not beyond the wit of any of us to improve the situation for members whose electorates are located in remote and rural areas.

Secondly, it has been suggested that interests rather than people should be represented. I believe that in a democracy, people are represented and that the elected representatives represent the interests of the people. The interests do not come before the people. I am not persuaded that interests should be put before the principle of one vote, one value.

Thirdly, some members have argued that because much of the wealth of the State is created in rural and remote areas, they deserve greater representation than the metropolitan electorates. That argument does not hold water these days. It might have held water 100 years ago when land ownership was one of the criteria of franchise, but it does not hold water in the year 2001. This argument maintains that geography and demographics demand that rural and remote electorates have smaller numbers of electors. That is not a very logical argument.

The fourth and final broad area that I picked up while listening to the debate is that if we have one vote, one value, somehow city interests will swamp rural interests. I find it somewhat insulting as a member of Parliament to be told that I will not have regard to the major interests of this State and that in debating issues we will forget education or health in rural areas. We should not be here if that is the way we are going to behave. It is for all of us to take into account the interests of people throughout the State as well as those in our own electorates.

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It seems to me that the arguments against one vote, one value are not based on principle or concept; they are based on politics, emotion and practical considerations. The practical considerations can be looked at and some relief can be given when individual members in remote areas face particular problems. I urge the Government to ensure that those considerations are taken very seriously and that extra resources are made available to the people in those vast electorates, as I assume this legislation will pass through this Parliament. Neither political motivation nor the emotional response holds water. It is the concept and the principle that we are really looking at in this debate. I can understand why many speakers have become emotional about this issue. I can understand why the Liberal Party is emotional about it. Perhaps it has something to lose politically, but I suspect that it will not. If members are good enough, they will be elected, whatever the system.

Mr Barnett: I do not think the Liberal Party per se will lose out of this. However, my point is that this Parliament will lose out of it.

Dr CONSTABLE: The Parliament will not lose out of this. If good, decent people are elected to this Parliament, the Parliament will not lose, and neither will the State. As I have gone through this in my mind, I keep coming back to the people I represent in the electorate of Churchlands. I do not see why we should continue with the current system of one vote, half value for the people I represent. They should be equally represented with people in all parts of Western Australia. In a democratic system, there is no justification for a situation to exist in which my electors are devalued by that system. For that reason, and for the other reasons that I have mentioned in my brief speech, I support this Bill, the concept of equal representation and one vote, one value. I commend the Bill to the House.

MR BOWLER (Eyre) [3.32 pm]: As the member with the smallest number of electors in this House, it is very appropriate that I speak on this legislation. It is no secret that both prior to and after the election, I spoke against the introduction of one vote, one value. To be honest, I felt some trepidation in voting for the legislation, as doing so will abolish my seat. I also felt some trepidation in standing up to my party on this issue, when there was no doubt that it would introduce this legislation once it came to government. When I looked into it further, it also became apparent that, after eight years of Liberal-National Party neglect, and due to the unfettered fly in, fly out arrangements and a general withdrawal of government services, the number of electors in my electorate and in surrounding country electorates - from Ningaloo in the north to Roe in the south - has fallen to the point at which the seat of Eyre would disappear, even under the existing legislation.

Mr Barnett: You should admit that Keating's fringe benefits tax started it.

Mr BOWLER: The Leader of the Opposition is right; that did not help. However, the federal Government has gone only part of the way towards fixing that. Hopefully, Kim Beazley will go the rest of the way.

Mr Barnett: Do not talk about neglect. Be honest and acknowledge that it was the FBT system.

Mr BOWLER: Exactly; it was both, but the Liberal Party is mostly to blame. Regardless of whether the Labor Party got into power or the status quo remained, one electorate in the mining and pastoral province would go, and my seat would be the most likely candidate. My seat would go no matter who won power.

Despite the orchestrated campaign by the Liberals in the goldfields, this legislation will have little impact. As I said, my seat was going to go anyway. The wailing of the Liberals in the goldfields has misrepresented my position on this issue. However, every time I confronted my critics one on one, in the end they conceded that I had not changed my stance on the issue.

Mr Bradshaw: Are you going to vote with us?

Mr BOWLER: If the member listens, he will find out. I have spoken against one vote, one value for my electorate. That is what I promised and that is what I have done. I will continue to speak against the basic tenet of one vote, one value in remote country areas. If I had my way, I would have had better weighting. However, the concessions that I have are the best that could be expected in the mining and pastoral region. In fact, it is the best in any lower House in Australia. I would have liked a bit more; I am a bit greedy in that regard. However, this is the best I could expect and I will take it. In fact, the goldfields does not have one vote, one value anymore; it has something far better than that which the Liberal Government was going to introduce four years ago. This legislation will involve the loss of eight seats, which is far fewer than the 17 seats that would have been lost if the Leader of the Opposition had his way and abolished the upper House. I would have liked bigger concessions -

Mr Bradshaw interjected.

Mr BOWLER: If opposition members promise to support it, we will move it.

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Mr Barnett: What you need to do in this Parliament is express your views and opinions and not ascribe them to others. It is a debating Chamber.

Mr BOWLER: I said that I would have liked bigger concessions. The Minister for Electoral Affairs was not happy with some of the concessions he had to give us in the end. Truthfully, the Greens (WA) also played a part in those negotiations. However, I probably have the best concessions in the democratic world. I cannot ask for much more than that. What we have here may be called one vote, one value. However, what I have now for the seat of Eyre - or the seat of the goldfields - is not one vote, one value; it is one vote plus 22.5 or 23 per cent.

Mr Day: So we do not have one vote, one value?

Mr BOWLER: I have 23 per cent variance in my area, unlike in the wheatbelt. That is fabulous.

Mr Day: It suits the minister's argument to pieces.

Mr McGinty: Not at all.

Mr BOWLER: My electorate is also part of the federal seat of Kalgoorlie. When this legislation was introduced, the federal Liberal member for Kalgoorlie, Barry Haase, said that I should be ashamed of myself for accepting a 22 to 23 per cent variance. Can members guess what the variance is in Mr Haase's seat? Two per cent.

Mr Bradshaw: That is a disgrace!

Mr BOWLER: Exactly; it is a disgrace. I asked Mr Haase why he did not ask Johnny Howard to give him the same deal that the Labor Party has been able to get for the state seats in that federal seat. He has been strangely quiet. The federal seat has a two per cent variance. That is 11 times less than the variance I can get in my electorate. Mr Haase will toe the party line, as he did on petrol prices and on the Australian Taxation Office problems. He will always toe the party line and he will not care about his electors. We will find out at the federal election later this year what the people of Kalgoorlie think of Mr Haase.

If the Liberals in the goldfields had jumped up and down a bit and complained about the federal seat of Kalgoorlie, they might have a bit of credence when they also complain about the seats of Eyre, Kalgoorlie, Ningaloo and others. Although I remain opposed to the basic tenet of one vote, one value in remote areas, one thing that has amazed me is the false claim that somehow or other this legislation was not in the platform of the Labor Party in the lead-up to the state election.

Mr Barnett: I want to check what you said. You said that you remain opposed.

Mr BOWLER: I am amazed that they could think that, particularly after the major television advertisements.

Mr Barnett: Did you say that you remain opposed to the principle of one vote, one value in remote areas?

Mr BOWLER: Yes, which I do not have. I have one vote, one value plus 23 per cent. The Liberal Party was going to give us only 20 per cent under its proposal.

Mr Barnett: I just want to understand your position. Do you remain opposed to one vote, one value in remote areas?

Mr McGinty: You have heard him say it twice in answer to your question.

Mr BOWLER: If the Leader of the Opposition has any thought that country voters did not know what they were voting for, he should have come to Kalgoorlie and seen the television advertisement - the one with the shotgun going off 16 times - that was run by the Liberal Party. Of course, it got it wrong. It was out by 200 per cent. Only eight seats will be lost. However, it was a pretty close guess for the Liberal Party. There is no excuse. Everyone in the goldfields knew they were voting for one vote, one value, as did everyone in Ningaloo, Roe and surrounding electorates. Country people were left in absolutely no doubt that this Bill would be introduced; yet the Liberal Party wants to waste money on a referendum - I suppose it would cost several hundred thousand dollars - when we had one at the state election of 10 February.

Mr Barnett: You did not get an absolute majority in both Houses. That is your problem.

Mr BOWLER: This is the House that matters.

Mr Barnett: You didn't get an absolute majority. That is why two Bills are before the House. One is a repeal Bill. You did not get a sufficient mandate and an absolute majority, hence the sneaky contrivance of repealing the Act.

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Ms MacTiernan: There is a gerrymander. How can you get an absolute majority with a gerrymander?

Mr BOWLER: I suppose the trouble is that Liberals are so used to breaking election promises. I remember the gold royalty. Did the Leader of the Opposition vote for the gold royalty? He said he would not vote for it. He changed his mind.

Mr Barnett: I introduced the gold royalty.

Mr BOWLER: Should we thank the Leader of the Opposition for that?

Mr D'Orazio: Are you proud of that?

Mr Barnett: Yes; it is just and appropriate. The Labor Party promised to remove it, but it won't.

Mr BOWLER: People are used to the Liberal Party breaking election promises. When the Labor Party does not break election promises -

Mr Barnett: The Liberal Party, as the major party in coalition, introduced the gold royalty. The Liberal Party never committed to reverse that decision. The National Party did; not the Liberal Party.

Mr BOWLER: We promised to introduce this Bill. Shock-horror; we have done that. This Government is keeping its word, and the Liberal Party says we cannot do that; we must have a referendum. It has judged us on its standards rather than our actions. For those who still doubt that the Government has a mandate for this legislation, I quote from a newspaper column by Doug Daws. The Leader of the Opposition knows Doug Daws.

Mr Barnett: Yes.

Mr BOWLER: He is a former Liberal Party member and candidate and a former National Party member and candidate. One could say he is on the conservative side of politics.

Mr Bradshaw: He's a bit versatile.

Mr BOWLER: I think he is back with the Liberals.

Mr Barnett: Let's just call him a goldfields identity.

Mr BOWLER: He is that. I quote -

Like many new politicians John -

He is referring to me -

entered the fray confidently, predicting he would bring about a change to the one-vote one-value proposal from his mainly metropolitan based ALP colleagues.

He's quickly learnt the power of the Caucus and how little the opinions of the individual really count when the party machine is in full flight.

... He did speak up and he has made it clear that he personally doesn't support the one-vote one-value concept as now put before the parliament.

True, he will have to toe the party line and vote for it but that's the way it's always been and he shouldn't be condemned for it.

Frankly, I think those that are so vociferously criticising him are being just a little 'precious'.

There can be absolutely no doubt that the one-vote one-value proposal was clearly contained in the ALP platforms put before the voters in the lead up to the last state election. There can be no confusion about this - It is a fact.

It is equally a fact that ALP was elected to govern this state. That is why Geoff Gallop is now the Premier and not Richard Court.

For those opposed to the one-vote one-value legislation to now suggest that the ALP did not achieve a mandate for it is just crazy.

Mr Barnett: That is fine; it is Doug's opinion. As the member for Eyre, will you support this legislation or your personal view?

Mr McGinty: Clean the wax out of your ears and listen.

Mr Barnett: You said you will vote for it. That is your decision, but do you personally support it?

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The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Dean): I remind members that all interjections are unparliamentary.

Mr BOWLER: Doug Daws is a member of the Liberal Party. However, I have always found him to be truthful and honest, unlike many on the other side of the Chamber. As he indicates, it is crazy to now call for a referendum that will cost Western Australians hundreds of thousands of dollars. I would rather the money were spent in my electorate.

One point I will take up with Doug is that, because of my efforts and those of others in the party room, and the help of the Greens (WA), we will not have one vote, one value in the goldfields; we will have one vote plus 23 per cent value. This will mean that the number of electors in seats like Kalgoorlie, Eyre and Ningaloo will increase by only 3 500 electors, which is much smaller than that originally proposed.

Mr Barnett: How many dummy voters will there be in the new Kalgoorlie seat?

Mr BOWLER: About 4 500.

Mr Barnett: There will be 4 500 virtual voters in this system of one vote, one value. That is highly principled.

Mr BOWLER: I will not have one vote, one value. I will have one vote plus 23 per cent value.

Mr Barnett: You make your point: you will have 4 500 dummy voters.

Mr BOWLER: I know how difficult it is to cover my electorate. The member for Roe last night mentioned how often he travels throughout his electorate. He is my southern neighbour; we cover similar areas. On Tuesday I went to Leonora for a meeting. It took four and a half to five hours to get there. People saw my car and grabbed my attention, and I was there for the whole day. It was late into the night before I left to drive home. I realise the problems of distance. That is why the Minister for Electoral Affairs has given us the concession we in remote seats like Eyre so badly wanted.

The people who know me know that I will always be honest to them and to myself. I promised to speak out against one vote, one value in the goldfields, and I have done that. I will continue to fight for the issues that are important to my people: law and order, health, the native title bottleneck, the mining and exploration downturn and, most importantly, the standard of education in the goldfields. The concession we have won is the best of any lower House in Australia. It is the best I can get, and that is why I will vote for the legislation.

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [3.46 pm]: I express my support for the Bill, and my intention to vote for it on the grounds that, in this day and age, one vote, one value is an unassailable principle. The Government, through the Minister for Electoral Affairs, has already indicated that the position it has arrived at is not ideal and that, like most electoral Bills in not only this Parliament but also other Parliaments, it is the result of compromise. The Government has also made it clear that, if it had had its way, it would have introduced one vote, one value in its purest form - applying to both the lower and upper Houses. That has not been possible, largely, I understand, because the Greens (WA) members in another place have taken exception to a principle which, if applied to them, could well wipe them off the face of the political map in this State.

Mr Bradshaw: Is that a reason to not put it in the Bill now?

Mr PENDAL: I have been in this Parliament long enough to know that many things go in and many things do not go into legislation according to the realities of what will be the outcome.

Mr Bradshaw: You should not presume what the upper House will do.

Mr PENDAL: I will refer to the upper House, because it is the kernel of what I have to say. I am no longer sure that we should have an upper House. I will canvass a proposition that would see us move in a different direction and ultimately achieve what everyone in this Parliament wants - provided that a number of people are capable of jumping over what has so far been an insurmountable hurdle. I will come to that in a moment.

I gently remind some of the members on this side of the House that the pursuit of putting the notion of one vote, one value into law was supported in a bipartisan way until three or four years ago. Many people in this Parliament will be aware that the previous Speaker of this House, a highly respected Liberal member who retired at the last election, was not only a proponent of one vote, one value but also worked assiduously within the Liberal and coalition party rooms to get the Liberal Party to agree to introduce one vote, one value if it were returned to government at the last election. It does not do much for good debate to pretend that period did not exist, because it did. It was spearheaded by the then member for Innaloo, Hon George Strickland, in a way that would have brought about much the same result as this Government's legislation. I do not know whether George Strickland's proposals would have met with the same obstruction as the Greens have brought to bear on this

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matter. Nor can I speculate on the outcome if the Greens had expressed that view to a coalition Government had it survived. I daresay that neither can the member for Murray-Wellington.

My opening remark is meant to indicate that I support one vote, one value. It is an unassailable principle. I will support the Bill; nonetheless, it will have some very adverse impacts on a geopolitical region, which, incidentally, is the largest in the world. That brings us commensurate difficulties, which have been adequately outlined by members in the past several hours. It will not make any difference to the outcome of this Bill. However, I hope that once this Bill is disposed of here and transmitted to the upper House, there will be sufficient intellectual honesty on both sides of the House -

Mr Graham: Sorry.

Mr PENDAL: I mean members on the right-hand side of the Speaker as much as members on the left. The member for Pilbara still has an opportunity to make an influence on the way those things occur, although he tells us with due modesty that he does not. We have arrived at a point in Western Australia when we should be seriously looking at a unicameral Parliament that would not mean the abolition of the upper House or the lower House, but the abolition of both and their re-emergence under our constitutional framework as one House of, perhaps, 85 members.

I ask rhetorically what would be the effect of a one-house system of, say, 85 members, which is the rough equivalent of the number of members now spread over two Houses? I appeal to members to put aside past prejudices. It is difficult because we have all come from set positions over the years.

A unicameral house with 85 members in Western Australia would achieve two things. It would achieve a genuine one vote, one value system. We would divide the 85 electorates into the 1.2 million registered voters on the roll as of December last year. So far, so good. We would have one vote, one value in its purest form.

The second effect of having a unicameral system based on 85 people would be that almost every country seat would survive. In order to make it politically palatable to the electorate, approximately 85 seats, marginally less than the present membership of the two Houses, should be proposed. The quota would be something in the order of 13 800 voters. A few minutes ago I asked the member for Warren what enrolment he enjoys.

Mr Omodei: It is Warren-Blackwood.

Mr PENDAL: He informed me that he has 15 000 voters. Under the system I am talking about of genuine one vote, one value he would lose a little under 1 200 votes. Last night, the member for Wagin made an impassioned plea for country areas, as we would expect. He told me this afternoon that he has approximately 12 700 voters in Wagin. He too would lose a small number of votes, which would be transferred. However, under my proposal the seat of Wagin, like the seat of Warren-Blackwood, would survive.

The other day, the member for Kalgoorlie made a good speech as did his colleague across the border in Eyre today. I asked the member for Kalgoorlie what his enrolment was and he said somewhere in the region of 12 000 voters. I hope the point is made, at least in part, that a unicameral Parliament would achieve the retention of all the current country seats in Western Australia by virtue of achieving one vote, one value. It is a bit like the Demtel advertisements for products that seem to be too good to be true. The promoter says, "Wait, there's more." In this instance there is no more. It is as simple an equation as that.

Some might ask why I would advocate the abolition of an upper House. This might gall some of the members on my left geographically and politically. I lost my faith in the two-House system in 1990. I was a member of the other place who not only advocated and encouraged members to block supply but also voted that way myself. I do not want to enter into a controversy now, but that occurred in the wake of the WA Inc years. If ever there was justification for an upper House to use the undoubted powers it has under our Constitution, it was then.

The National Party members, and I think five members of the Liberal Party, including me, voted to oppose supply because we believed that would have justified the upper House as a House of Review. However, the other half of the Liberal Party, people who have been opposed to change since the year dot on electoral reform, and who had always defended the right of the upper House to exist, did not want to exercise its powers. Some of the best political intellects in the world will tell us that one of the worst abuses of power can sometimes be failure to exercise the power available.

From that point on I decided there was no further argument for retaining an upper House with the capacity to send a lower House to an election if we never had the political courage to do so. If we accept for the moment without argument that we could do away with the upper House and combine both memberships into one reinvigorated single House, members might ask what checks and balances would be imposed on the single

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House. Why not have a committee system like the one in this House. However, rather than a system that is always biased and weighted in favour of the Government, why not evolve the parliamentary tradition a radical step further by adopting a committee system that has a bias towards the non-government parties of the day? That would require probably all of us to take a deep breath, because we would be forgoing the right of unfettered power in all respects. However, it might be a small price to pay, whereby we would seek to achieve the two things that currently are uppermost in members' minds: how do we achieve this principle of one vote, one value, which theoretically sounds acceptable and unassailable; and how do we apply it in a territory as vast as Western Australia. I believe the answer is a unicameral system.

I hasten to add that I am the first to agree that one of the strong points on this subject was made by the Leader of the Opposition several weeks ago. I do not want to congratulate him too much, because I would hate to give him the kiss of death. However, the Leader of the Opposition made a very valid point about a unicameral House several weeks ago. It was to the effect that the combined membership of both Houses, something less than 91 members, will by every definition create a greater pool of talent from which a Government and an Opposition can be formed. That was an argument that played on my mind a lot when I first heard it, because it is a very strong argument indeed for modernising the parliamentary system. Some time ago, on the basis of those suggestions, I put together some possible terms of reference to put these to the test. I will not go down that path now, and I have my reasons not to do so. However, one of the possible terms of reference may well be the facility of a referendum. A referendum has been referred to frequently, sometimes in a derogatory sense and at other times to praise its virtues.

However, in 1983 this Parliament enacted a Referendums Act. That was done by the then Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform, the predecessor of the current Minister for Electoral Affairs. This Parliament passed into law a Referendums Act that allowed one of two things to happen. It allowed an Act that had been passed, but not proclaimed, to be put to the people or, it allowed a Bill that had not been debated to be put to the people. It even had the provision that a Bill that had been adjourned at the second reading stage could be put to the people to determine whether they wanted its contents passed. The crazy thing about it is that the Government enacted that in 1983 and it has not once been activated; not on one single occasion. Yet, all its pluses were sung from the rooftops around Western Australia, and it was given bipartisan support in this Parliament by, I think, the National Party and certainly the Liberal Party. We have had that facility before us, but either we have never been game to use it or we might argue that we have never had the opportunity to use it.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr PENDAL: Whatever happens to this Bill today, and I suspect it will be passed because I shall certainly vote for it, we shall be less certain about what will occur once it gets into the upper House within the next few days. In any case, as I recall we are obliged to undergo a statutory redistribution of seats in the next few months in time for 12 February 2002. However, if the Bill is passed, or if it is defeated in the upper House for reasons that we are not privy to at the moment, the opportunity is still there to look far beyond our immediate future towards the next 50 or 100 years, by the Parliament agreeing to some form of its own inquiry. I have heard around the corridors in the past day or so, and since I raised this some time ago in the wake of the Leader of the Opposition's comments, that the Government inquiry that will consider the 16-year-old voting age will also consider the question of a unicameral House. I hasten to say that that is not adequate, and we should not be remitting to groups outside the Parliament those matters that ordinarily and properly should be decided upon by people within this and the other House. Therefore, there is a good argument - later, not now - for a joint select committee of the Parliament, with representatives from both Houses, that would look at the effects of merging the two Houses and the effects on country people. Again, I cannot plead enough that according to my mathematics, a unicameral House with a membership slightly less than the combined membership at the moment will retain every country seat. That same inquiry would consider whether we could take that almighty leap - everyone would take that leap together - and have the political courage and vision to build into a new system a scrutinising committee process that has a numerical bias towards the non-government parties. Finally, I repeat the point that it would be a great opportunity for us to take between the teeth and use the bipartisan facility, granted by this Parliament 18 years ago but never used, by which we would put that proposition.

In conclusion, that concept requires a huge leap of faith and a level of courage, and every time I have put it to people from the country, as I did late this morning to a group from the farming community who have been lobbying us in the past few days, most say they like the idea that it would retain those country seats, but they cannot bring themselves to agreeing that the upper House should go. If only they would take into account the fact that our upper House can be of value to us only if it is producing outcomes and decisions that are frequently at variance to this House. Otherwise, why have something that is just an mirror image? There is much to be

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gained but, most of all, electoral reform along these lines ought to be driven by people who represent country seats themselves. They are in the best position to say to their constituents locally and globally that there are no mirrors or tricks attached to it, and that one vote, one value in a unicameral House can help retain all those seats for country Western Australia.

We are taking a big step. I do not think we are anywhere near electoral perfection, but our system has been around for 700 to 800 years. There is no comparison between the current Westminster system - the Premier has the habit of calling it the "washminster system" because it mixes together the American and the Westminster systems - and the Westminster system 300 years ago. The two bear no resemblance. There is no resemblance whatsoever even between the current system in Western Australia and the system 200 years ago.

So the system is evolving all the time. Nothing very clever is being done; it is simply going to happen, as long as people have the will to let it happen. In those circumstances, I will support the Bill today, not because I think it is ideal -

Mr Omodei interjected.

Mr PENDAL: Under the system I am talking about? I am not happy about that, and I am not here to defend the Minister for Electoral Affairs' argument. Nothing ever changes. When I look at the map produced by the Electoral Commission, and I see the electorates of Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne and Kalgoorlie, it reminds me of when I was a journalist in the far distant past. We used to refer to the four statutory seats in the Western Australian Parliament. The only difference now is the names. The seats were called Kimberley - the member for Pilbara might help me here - Pilbara, Murchison-Gascoyne, and -

Mr Graham: The others were De Grey and Ashburton.

Mr PENDAL: I thank the member for Pilbara. There were four statutory seats, and they were stacked, but they were stacked because of historic compromise. Vote weighting has not only been supported by conservative members in vast areas. I suspect that the member for Pilbara, one of the speakers who will follow me, will be talking about that. One of his predecessors, Arthur Bickerton, was a staunch advocate of vote weighting in Western Australia, because he represented the Pilbara. No matter how hard the member for Pilbara works - and I know he works very hard - his predecessor Arthur Bickerton had an even more difficult job, because he did not have the modern aircraft, and the other facilities that go with the job in 2001. Nothing has changed. We have an electoral Bill that gives a little bit more, like motherhood. I do not know what motherhood is without the child, but this Parliament will produce another motherhood statement. To be fair to the Government, it is in response to what is going to go on in the upper House. Those members are always going to protect their position, and in a way I do not mind that, because I spent years up there doing that as well. I have given the reason today - that I no longer believe it is appropriate. Western Australia has reached a point in its history at which we can all do ourselves a favour and have real one vote, one value, and achieve it by virtue of a unicameral system.

MS GUISE (Wanneroo) [4.13 pm]: I speak in support of this legislation, which I believe is based on the fundamental principle of democracy. I was very privileged to work with the Australian Council of State School Organisations, in producing a book on civics and citizenship, in response to the work that the Keating, and then the Howard, Governments did on a discovering democracy program for schools. I have gone back and taken the time to search those documents, both those in the schools and those produced for parents, to back up what their children were learning. I have found nothing in any of those documents that states that one vote is worth less than another. Anything less than that is fraudulent, and I worry about what we are presenting to our students.

Democracy is undermined if citizens are unable to exercise their rights, and any of us who watch the nightly news can see evidence of this all the time. I am also reminded by the Attorney General that the term "chosen by the people" appears in the Western Australian Constitution, and has its origins in the Constitution of the United States, where I lived for eight months as a young woman. I believe that modern democracy is best expressed by those words - by the people, for the people. We are all supposed to be equal before the law, so I find it abhorrent that such inequity applies to a person's fundamental democratic right to vote for representation. Voters are equally important, and each vote represents the view of who should represent them in this place. From the members opposite, we have heard about the plea for recognition, and the special needs for rural and remote people, of which I am aware, but at the same time they have spoken about what they call dummy voters, or virtual voters. Nobody has bothered to mention that three out of four of my voters do not count at all. In fairness, that needs to be taken into account.

The other thing that springs to mind as I have listened to the debates over the past day or so is the unfortunate terminology that people used to use when talking about Western Australia: "wait a while". The best thing about

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living here used to be having a ticket out of the place. I believe that Western Australia is a very special place, but we are now in the 21st century, and we are acknowledging the special needs of certain area. At the same time I wonder why we are not prepared to treat Western Australia the same as any other place. The Minister for Electoral Affairs has pointed out the situation that exists in the other Houses in the other States and Territories around this nation. Tasmania has electoral equality, with a 10 per cent tolerance in the upper House; in Victoria, both Houses are equal, with a 10 per cent tolerance, and so on. The exception is Queensland, which is very similar to Western Australia. In Queensland there are four remote electorates, and 84 out of 89 seats are elected on the basis of one vote, one value.

Looking back on the debates that have taken place in this House over the years, it appears to me that ongoing argument has occurred about whether redistribution delivers anything close to one vote, one value. What is glaringly obvious, especially to me as the member for Wanneroo, is that the process has failed, historically, in a seat like mine. In February 1994, Wanneroo had 19 153 electors enrolled. As at June 2000, according to the Western Australian Electoral Commission figures, it had 39 383. Given my latest upgrade, I would challenge even that as an accurate figure. The variation from the quotient is 49.81 per cent, and there has been a whopping increase of 105.62 per cent in enrolments since 1994. The only other seats to have shown a significant increase are Peel, which has increased by 69.64 per cent, Southern River, which has increased by 57.15 per cent, Dawesville, which has increased by 61.41, and Mitchell, which has increased by 50.62 per cent. I am not convinced that redistribution has delivered much in the way of fairness in electoral voting for the constituents of my electorate. I have heard many comments over the past few days about the highest and lowest enrolments. The argument of “mine is bigger than yours” is really a boys thing, so I am not going to go down that path!

I have also taken the time to look back at what has been said in this place by other people. I note the joint media statement that came from the former Premier and the former Leader of the National Party in November 1995, which stated -

However, the Coalition parties have publicly acknowledged that a readjustment of the current level of weighting between the metropolitan and the non-metropolitan areas in the Legislative Assembly will occur as our electoral system evolves.

There were others, at that time, who made comments in support of one vote, one value. I note that even the member for Pilbara made a comment, recorded in *Hansard* of 26 October 1995, on page 9922, and certainly, as the member for South Perth has indicated -

Mr Graham: When did I make that statement? I must have been drunk. What did I say?

Ms GUISE: I will read it out -

Mr Graham: I have no difficulty at all with a one-vote-one-value system.

That statement was made on 26 October 1995.

Mrs Edwardes: Was there a “but”?

Ms GUISE: No “but”; it was quote, unquote.

Mr Graham: I spoke for an hour and a half in 1996 when I said the exact opposite.

Ms GUISE: It did not show up. I have spent some time looking at the comments of the former member for Innaloo, George Strickland. He had some interesting things to say about boundary redistributions, the size of electorates and the changes that would occur under one vote, one value. I noted the comments of the member for South Perth. I heard him speak today of his support for one vote, one value. In 1995 he said he did not believe there was any disadvantage to the National Party. He expanded on those views today.

I was interested in the comments of the former Minister for Transport, Eric Charlton. In November 1995 he said -

We hold as many seats in the Federal Parliament and in the New South Wales Parliament as the Liberal Party does, and those Parliaments operate with one-vote-one-value.

He did not see any problems in delivering one vote, one value for the country. At the same time, the member for Merredin talked about the issue of fairness for country constituents as well as having no difficulty in moving toward the concept of one vote, one value.

A lot has been said about representation. I and a lot of other members have received a letter from the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. The city expressed the concerns and views of the people it represents. The city is afraid of

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missing out on the representation it has had for over 100 years, the loss of a voice in Parliament, and that the representation for the goldfields will be reduced from two members to one member. There are ways of offsetting the tyranny of distance. I understand the problems and there are equally as many problems for members who have large electorates. It is interesting to compare the sizes of different electorates. Some seats comprise only 20 square kilometres. The member for Kalgoorlie's seat is 67 square kilometres. If the electorates of Bunbury and Mitchell were combined they would comprise only 157 square kilometres. If the electorates of Mandurah and Dawesville were combined they would comprise only 231 square kilometres and have 32 029 electors.

A cartoon in the *Midwest Times* of 15 August entitled "Perceptions" depicted a country member in a hammock and a city member drinking a glass of chardonnay in a chair. Each was saying, "I work harder than you do!" We do not need to get into that sort of argument. Most members of this Parliament work very hard.

A lot of has been said about wealth. I acknowledge the hard work that the constituents of Wanneroo undertake to produce the third largest agricultural gross product for this State. Wanneroo comes in behind Carnarvon and Merredin. If we talk about wealth we should think about what is not too far away and the issues that those people have.

Mr Johnson: One of your members said that most of the wealth was created in the city.

Ms GUISE: The member for Hillarys is not listening. In respect of distance, we are talking about representing people, not property. Country people are not stupid. They vote with their minds and their feet. Have a look at the number of country members sitting on this side of the House. Please do not make the assumption that those members who represent electorates closer to the Perth CBD do not care about, or listen to, or will not act on, the concerns of people living in rural and remote areas.

A lot has been said about the seriousness of the drought and the water shortage. As someone who has the Gngangara water mound in her electorate, I share those concerns. There are serious ramifications for the rural sector in Wanneroo because of the water shortage. There are similarities with other situations that should not be overlooked.

An article appeared recently in *The West Australian* entitled "Changing to the Max". The leader of the National Party has stated that his party must engage everyone in the community and not just be the farmers' party. He questions why some have difficulty with the view that all parliamentarians have to engage in the community, not just city folk.

The member for Avon indicated and acknowledged that country people want to have access to things in the same way as everybody else. They want jobs, services, development and growth. A lot has been said about the use of technology, given that, I found it rather amusing that the member and the National Party have undertaken a policy where they will -

... take policy input direct from the voters at these meetings and through an e-mail network he is building up within each electorate. The Nationals' Internet strategy was devised by former e-magazine editor Robert Taylor.

Expensive mail-outs and brochures - the bread and butter of old-technology political campaigning - will be replaced with direct and highly individualised communication via the Net.

Mr Ainsworth: That is good for people who are on the Internet.

Ms GUISE: I have the same problems. During my experience as the president of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations I travelled to the Pilbara and the Kimberley. I heard the same sorts of concerns. Everybody wants a fair go. They want education, health and policing. They are concerned about their quality of life. Those issues affect us all. It is presumptuous to assume that the Labor Party will gain an outcome from this electoral reform. The big winners will be the people of Western Australia. They can be assured that their vote has the same value as anyone else's. People want quality, not necessarily quantity. There were no guarantees under previous arrangements. One need only consider the sale of Westrail Freight.

I reiterate that I believe a democratic Parliament should be elected on the principle of one-vote, one value. The argument is simple; everyone should have a vote and the vote should be equal. I commend the Bill to the House.

MR GRAHAM (Pilbara) [4.28 pm]: I oppose this legislation. I will commence my speech on one vote, one value where the member for Wanneroo left off and where many other speakers from the Labor side of the House have started. I am talking about the sanctity and, as they call it, the fundamental principle of one vote, one value. In their view, it is a fundamental and unchanging principle of democracy that everybody's vote is equal. I have a copy of the rules of the Australian Labor Party. I will quote from the section entitled "Basis of Representation".

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Rule 6.3.1.2 of the Australian Labor Party constitution and rules provides -

80 Political delegates to the State Executive, made up of:

- One delegate from the FPLP (WA)

There is no one vote, one value for that delegate. Regardless of the number of members of federal Parliament that are returned, they are entitled to one vote. The rule continues -

- One delegate from the SPLP

Regardless of the number of members of the State Parliamentary Labor Party, it is entitled to one delegate. It continues -

- Up to six (6) delegates from the direct Sub-branches
- The remaining delegates elected by Electorate Councils

That makes up the 80 political delegates to the state executive, to which 120 union delegates from affiliated unions are added to make up the state executive of the Australian Labor Party. It is a permanent, in-built, unbalanced and vote-weighted system. It is permanent by rule and constitution of the Australian Labor Party. The fundamental principle of one vote, one value does not apply to the Australian Labor Party in any way, shape or form.

I will move on to the rhetoric of the public debate about one vote, one value. The Government is claiming that it has a mandate to introduce this change. It is true that one vote, one value has been a policy of the Australian Labor Party since its last state conference. When I last spoke in this House on the issue of one vote, one value, which was in 1996, I was a member of the Labor Party. I made the point at that time that if I were to vote for one vote, one value, I would be in breach of the rules of the Australian Labor Party. For years, the policy of the Australian Labor Party has been vote weighting of plus or minus 10 per cent. This is the first time the Labor Party has come in with a clear position on one vote, one value. If I were still with the Labor Party, I would part company with it at this point, because I will not support this legislation. In the past I was bound, as many other members of Parliament have been, by my membership to an organisation and political party. Members of a political party must compromise their own personal views and the views of their electors and must adopt the views of the party. I will not support this legislation in its current form. The Government has no mandate. It does not matter whether that point is addressed in technical terms, as the Leader of the Opposition put it, or through political rhetoric. The Labor Party has argued that because the Liberal Party campaigned during the election on this issue and said that the Labor Party would reduce country representation if it won government, it has given the Labor Party a mandate. It has not been given a mandate unless it campaigned actively on that issue and explained its proposal in detail to the good voters around country Western Australia. It did not; it is not open to the Labor Party to claim that. I will not go through it chapter and verse, but I have a handful of newspapers containing every political advertisement that appeared in northern newspapers during the election campaign. No Labor Party candidate mentioned the introduction of a system of one vote, one value. A newspaper article dealt with the issue and was headed "Gallop claims scare tactics on vote focus". It was part of the launch of the campaign for the member for Burrup. There was a very good article about royalties from the member for Pilbara above it! It was reported that -

Dr Gallop said the issue of electoral reform was not a priority with regional West Australians.

"This issue is clearly a scare campaign from a Government which has privatised and downsized health and education services," . . .

Be that as it may, that is not what a leader of a political party says when he is seeking a mandate; it is what a leader of a political party says when he is trying to play down an issue in an election campaign. That is exactly what happened in the north west of this State. Not one of the Labor Party candidates put out a publication advocating the removal of members of Parliament from the mining and pastoral region.

There has been more rhetoric since the election, much of which has come in recent times. I will deal with some of that rhetoric. It is interesting to consider how Labor Party members are dealing with one vote, one value and the spins they are putting on the issue. I am pleased the Minister for Electoral Affairs is back. I was filling in until he returned.

Mr McGinty: You had a certain effect on me.

Mr GRAHAM: I suspect that it is mutual. The Minister for Electoral Affairs said in a press release issued on 20 August that -

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... he is appalled by the lies and misinformation being circulated to country people about the Government's move to give all people in Western Australia an equal say in electing their Government.

That is not what the legislation does.

Mr McGinty: Yes, it does.

Mr GRAHAM: No, it does not. It does not give all people an equal say, because vote weighting will be provided in remote areas of the State. I am not satisfied with that level of weighting.

Mr McGinty: A small accommodation has been made for four or five seats. This is a gigantic step forward from the malapportionment of the current system.

Mr GRAHAM: Is it a question of lies or misinformation? Will this legislation give all people in Western Australia an equal say?

Mr McGinty: This is dead right.

Mr GRAHAM: Are you giving all people an equal say?

Mr McGinty: There is a 10 per cent variation. It is not precise. It is as close to equality as we can get.

Mr GRAHAM: Okay. Not all people are getting an equal say in government. It is not a one vote, one value system.

Mr McGinty: It is, really.

Mr GRAHAM: I am wrong on that?

Mr Carpenter: Yes.

Mr GRAHAM: Okay, I will accept that. I will not argue the point because it is not a major one. I still think the Government is wrong, but I will leave that to one side. I will go on to the next point. The Minister for Electoral Affairs issued another press release on the same day. I object to the press release, titled "Electoral reform set to unite the Kimberley," which said -

The four Kimberley Shires will be united for the first time under proposed changes to Western Australia's electoral laws.

Is that a fact?

Mr McGinty: It is certainly the first time in recent years.

Mr GRAHAM: It did not actually say "first time"? Was it supposed to imply that it is the first time in recent years?

Mr McGinty: When was the last time an electorate of Kimberley was based on the four Kimberley shires?

Mr GRAHAM: 1998.

Mr McGinty: No.

Mr GRAHAM: The Electoral Commission advised me of that today. I am happy to explain.

Mr McGinty: It cannot have been 1998. You are wrong.

Mr GRAHAM: According to the information I have received, the southern electoral boundary for both the Kimberley and Pilbara in 1981 was the Tropic of Capricorn. Those electorates were separated by a straight line running from the mouth of the De Grey River to a point on the Tropic of Capricorn just south of Ashburton Downs. Kimberley was a unique seat in 1981.

Mr McGinty: No.

Mr GRAHAM: Kimberley was a unique seat. It contained the four shire councils that made up the Kimberley.

Mr McGinty: What was the southern boundary?

Mr GRAHAM: It was separated by a straight line running from the De Grey River to a point on the Tropic of Capricorn just south of Ashburton Downs station.

Mr McGinty: So the Kimberley included a certain amount of the shire of East Pilbara?

Mr GRAHAM: It included the four shire councils that make up the Kimberley.

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Mr McGinty: And?

Mr GRAHAM: There is no "and". It included the four shire councils that make up the Kimberley.

Mr McGinty: Plus?

Mr GRAHAM: I will move on.

Mr McGinty: You are wrong.

Mr GRAHAM: I am not wrong.

Mr McGinty: It included the Kimberley and half the Pilbara.

Mr GRAHAM: I am not wrong.

Mr McGinty: Yes, you are.

Mr GRAHAM: No, the Minister for Electoral Affairs is talking about 1988. I will move on to 1988. The electoral boundaries of the seat of Kimberley followed the shire boundaries and contained the shires of Wyndham, East Kimberley, Broome, West Kimberley and Halls Creek.

Between at least 1981 and 1988, the Kimberley was united.

Mr McGinty: No, it was not.

Mr GRAHAM: This Government claims that it is uniting it for the first time - 20 years after it happened. From 1998 onwards, the seat of Kimberley included part of the shire of East Pilbara, but the four shire councils were still in it. It was still an intact Kimberley seat. To use the words of the Minister for Electoral Affairs, it was a gerrymander.

Mr McGinty: You are playing semantics.

Mr GRAHAM: I am not being semantic. The Government is putting a spin on it. The Government wants to transfer eight country seats to the city and it is putting a spin on that in the Kimberley by saying that the four councils will be united for the first time; that is not true. The electoral commissioner advised that in the 1994 election, for the first time the Shire of Halls Creek was included in the seat of Pilbara. It has contested two elections in the past 20 years in which the Shire of Halls Creek has not been in the Kimberley, or the Kimberley has not been entirely in one seat. However, the Government says that it is doing it for the first time.

Mr McGinty: The member is playing semantics.

Mr GRAHAM: Is semantics the same as misinformation?

Mr McGinty: No, semantics are what you are playing.

Mr GRAHAM: I will read a press release by the Minister for Electoral Affairs that states -

The four Kimberley Shires will be united for the first time under proposed changes to Western Australia's electoral laws.

Am I playing semantics? It happened 20 years ago. It has happened twice in every election for 20 years. Is that semantics, not lies and misinformation?

Mr McGinty: Yes.

Mr GRAHAM: That is interesting. I will explain why I will not support this legislation, semantics or otherwise. This legislation will take eight seats from country Western Australia and transfer them directly to the city. That is unacceptable to country people. In my area of interest, the north west of the State, this legislation would abolish two seats from the Mining and Pastoral Region and would transfer them directly to the city. The Government's spin on the effect of the legislation is either one of three things: first, the Government is uniting the Kimberley; second, it would have happened anyway and; third, the Liberal Party would have done worse.

It takes a lot of work to be a member in a big electorate. Every year on average I drive some 80 000 kilometres, I travel some 250 000 kilometres by aeroplane and I spend some \$15 000 to \$20 000 to charter vehicles and aircraft to get around my electorate.

Mr Johnson: The Government will give you a new computer though.

Mr GRAHAM: The argument for technology is interesting. If this debate were about technology and improved communications, which it is not, the city members could be replaced with an interactive web site because the

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improvements in communications have been most dramatic in the city. Some people I represent cannot get Internet connections.

I became a member of Parliament to advance the case of some of the worst-off people in this State. If this legislation were about taking vote weighting off people of entrenched privilege, which the Labor Party's rhetoric suggests, I could be talked into supporting it. If it were about taking lorded gentry off their lands and passing it on to common folk, as the ALP policies and platform profess, I could also possibly be talked into supporting it. However, the effect of this legislation is to disenfranchise outback Aboriginal people.

Those city members who have spoken about the need to improve services and the need for improved education and health do not understand that rural people do not have the choice of four emergency outlets for their health problems.

Mr Pandal: Neither do the metropolitan people, my friend.

Mr GRAHAM: They do have that choice. They might not operate well, but that is better than no system at all. Some towns in my electorate have not had a doctor for 100 years and others have a medical clinic that was built in the 1950s. That is the level of standard of service to which I refer. Unless city members travel in those electorates and experience the problems faced by rural people, it does not have the same impact as it does on country members who must deal with it every day.

To make matters worse, the north west meets all of the objectives that the city says it should. We are productive people. We produce wealth and pour money into the State Government's coffers. We pay royalties on all the minerals that we produce. If it could be put in economic terms, we have a trade imbalance between the area that I represent and the Kimberley, and the city. We have a serious trade imbalance. We produce more wealth than it costs to run those places.

There is no economic argument for this measure; it is a political argument. It is not a political argument about removing privilege; it is a political argument about taking away power from the poor people and those in our community who most need the services of members of Parliament.

Devolution was introduced into the United Kingdom, but I am not that interested in that at this stage. However, an examination of the history of the northern regions around the world shows that there has been a move in the past 50 years for those areas to be given more autonomy and more ability to influence their own events than currently happens in Western Australia. If the Government has a mandate, although I do not believe it does, it is to improve things in the country, not remove them.

The now Premier campaigned the length and breadth of this State about how things would improve with the election of a Labor Government. He said that the Government would involve people and bring them into the system of Government. He also said that the Government would listen and consider the views of the people who live in the bush. The then Opposition Leader did not mention that a Labor Government would remove country members of Parliament.

Last week I did an interview with the *Sunday Times* and I talked about statehood. Members get a little bit of shellacking in this game. I did not propose statehood, and I do not back away from it. Statehood in the northern half of Western Australia is an inevitable outcome. It will happen in 10, 15 or 20 years, or whenever; but the genesis of the movement to separate Western Australia into two halves is this piece of legislation. If we believe the Government's rhetoric, the Mining and Pastoral Region will no longer have six members of Parliament, but four. The Government has already publicly committed to one of those members being dedicated to the Kimberley and one to Kalgoorlie. That leaves two members of Parliament to cover the rest of red Western Australia. For those members of Caucus who are not aware of it, the Government does not actually dictate how the electoral boundaries will come out other than in the Act. All the maps that they have been given have as much validity as would a map I might draw for them. I have been through the process of redistribution twice and on neither occasion has the maps that have been drawn up by the Labor Party been the maps that came out after the redistribution. It has never happened. In the last redistribution, I missed one meeting, and parts of the old seat of Eyre were very quickly carved off the seat of Eyre and inserted into my seat. I was happy to have them there; they were good folk. They voted for me, and I continue to go out and see them. However, it was not in any map; it just happened because I was not at a meeting. That is how the electoral boundaries were shaken out. I tell members of Caucus that the view of the Labor Party strategists is not necessarily the view that the Electoral Commission will come up with. The Electoral Commission will come up with a proposition that is drawn up on the Act, and that is the legislation we are debating at the moment.

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I will finish on the discussion, debate and deliberation that the member for South Perth raised about whether we should have a bicameral or a unicameral system and all of those issues. I happen to agree with that argument, and have for years.

Mr Barnett: There is also a wider issue being promoted by the Greens (WA), the Democrats and probably people within both major parties at a federal level about getting rid of the States. This legislation is fundamental to the long-term survival of the States, particularly Western Australia. You are right; there are bigger games to play in this issue.

Mr GRAHAM: I agree. Constitutionally, it is nigh on impossible to get rid of a State. Curiously, the founding fathers allowed for the formation of new ones, which is an interesting argument. They are wider issues and interesting arguments. The point I wanted to make about the member for South Perth's speech is that they are interesting, but that is not what we are here for. We are here to debate this piece of legislation.

Another reason that I object to the direction we are taking is that this deal has been cooked up in secret. I say that for this reason: I know the Minister for Electoral Affairs moderately well; we are close personal friends. To give him credit, he and the Leader of the Labor Party have always been of the view that we should have a system of one vote, one value. Anyone who knows either of them can have no doubt about that. I missed a caucus meeting at one stage and a levy of \$2 000 was imposed on us to pay for the one vote, one value High Court challenge that was not going to cost us anything. I still have not paid it and I am not going to because, if the minister remembers rightly, it was not going to cost us anything because it was not a Labor Party case; it was a personal case. The difficulty I have with this issue overall is the secretive nature of what is happening between the Australian Labor Party and the Greens (WA), whoever they might be at this particular time. The Minister for Electoral Affairs makes no bones about it. He wants a system of one vote, one value. We heard that in his speech and in his interjections. However, that is not the Greens' position. The Greens' position is that they have five members and they want to change the system, but they are not sure how; they just want to change it. However, when confronted, the Greens say that they do not support this legislation. When the Labor Party's members in the upper House are confronted in the bush, they say that they do not support any legislation that will diminish regional input. On 21 February, two weeks after the election, incoming mining and pastoral MLC Jon Ford said that although he supported the ALP's one vote, one value policy in principle, he would wait and see exactly what was proposed before voting for any electoral change. He was reported as saying -

I accept a one-vote, one-value policy means a loss of representation in regional WA but at the same time, I'll have to take into account the area I'm now representing before making a final decision . . .

I hope he does, because he certainly has not been knocking us down with his presence. He has not been knocking on people's doors and asking them what they want him to do about one vote, one value. I have seen neither hide nor hair of him. I have been told that the journalist had to ring him five times to get that quote.

I turn now to the Greens, because that is where the problem lies. Robin Chapple, who is the member for the Mining and Pastoral Region for the Greens, was elected on the preferences of everybody else. If there were no preferential system, he would have lost his deposit. That is how low his vote was in the Mining and Pastoral Region. He said that the Greens (WA) support the essence of equity of votes. So do I. I support the principle of one vote, one value; I just do not support the application of it. However, he did not support it in a manner that would disadvantage regional communities. That is what the Greens mining and pastoral member says publicly, when he is sitting down in secret with the Government and negotiating to take seats out of the bush and put them in the city. It is similar to the comments made by the Minister for Electoral Affairs about uniting the Kimberley for the first time. It is nearly, but not quite, right. Mr Chapple is reported as saying -

In concert with this, we'd propose the Legislative Assembly have a proportional representation by region . . .

I have never heard of that one before. I ask the Minister for Electoral Affairs whether that has been on the negotiating table.

Mr McGinty: It was raised because it is part of their policy.

Mr GRAHAM: Did the minister rejected it out of hand?

Mr McGinty: Yes.

Mr GRAHAM: Good, and so he should. It is absolute nonsense. However, Chapple's view is that both of those models would more readily reflect the will and the intent of the people and would incorporate equity in voter

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value. What a load of nonsense from a person who would have lost his deposit. In my electorate of Pilbara he got about 200 votes. He would not have been elected to any shire council in the north west.

Mr Barnett: What was his primary vote percentage?

Mr GRAHAM: It was about 2.7 per cent of the vote, and yet he claims that it is a fundamental principle that we have equal voting! With whom is the Labor Party negotiating? It is not negotiating with any member who got an absolute majority in his or her seat.

DR WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [4.58 pm]: I will vote for this Bill because I am duty bound to represent the wishes and the interests of the people in the Alfred Cove electorate. They should not be expected to accept that their votes should have less value than those of any other Western Australian. Nonetheless, I point out, as have many others, that this Bill does not provide the same value to the votes of every Western Australian. The persisting aberrations must be explained more fully to the community by the Government. I would prefer that such an important change to our parliamentary system were first presented to the community through a referendum.

My major concern is the influence the Greens (WA) members of Parliament have had on this Bill. We are all aware that they hold the balance of power in the Legislative Council. They achieved that position at the last election because not only did they increase their primary vote, but also liberals for forests asked its supporters to vote for them in the upper House and deliberately refrained from running candidates against them. It is likely that those voters expected the Greens to use their influence in the Parliament to make a difference to the environmental policies that affect us all. They must be as sadly disappointed as I am that they appear to be so ineffectual on environmental issues. However, they have no hesitation in using their position to force changes to this Bill. Those changes seem to focus on trying to improve the electoral chances of Greens' candidates rather than the basic principles of democracy. It saddens me, and I believe it would sadden many supporters of the environment, that the Greens have chosen to put their own party political interests ahead of the community and, most importantly, do not seem to care about the people who voted them into Parliament.

I support this Bill, but I would prefer community consultation on these parliamentary changes, followed by a referendum.

MR DEAN (Bunbury) [5.01 pm]: I add my weight to electoral reform in Western Australia. I broached this topic in my maiden speech when I announced my intention to represent 100 per cent of the City of Bunbury, not just 33 per cent. That is on the record and I am beholden to that position. There has been much talk over the past couple of days about the reasons behind the Bill, and I will not outline the philosophical reasons I believe in one vote, one value. Members from this side, and the Independents, particularly the members for Churchlands and South Perth, have adequately addressed that issue. One vote, one value is based on equity, fairness and opportunity of access. I am not talking about country people; it is the city people who do not enjoy equity, fairness and equal opportunity of access to members. I pity the city people because, like the member for Kalgoorlie, I represent a metropolitan region; it just happens to be situated 300 or 400 kilometres from the city of Perth. In five years, we will look back on this debate and wonder what all the fuss was about. In 12 years, when I am still a member, those opposite will look back and wonder why they put so much heat and energy into this. As the Leader of the Opposition has acknowledged, what we are doing is just.

My professional working life has been spent in the country. There are some illusions on the other side that a few of us are Johnnies-come-lately and do not know what the country is about. I know what the country is about. I lived in the member for Moore's electorate for eight years. He never came to see us. I also lived in the member for Warren-Blackwood's electorate for three years.

Mr McNee interjected.

Mr DEAN: The Labor Party in Kondinin had a good technique for the old seat of Mt Marshall: it would alternate the distribution of preferences.

I have spent my professional life in the country. I take umbrage at suggestions that we know nothing about the country. We have firm roots in the country.

Over the past eight years, the City of Bunbury has seen nothing but diminished services: Main Roads has gone, Westrail has been decimated, and the port authority has been privatised. We in Bunbury have seen nothing but diminishing government services. The member for Moore told the story of his constituent who must drive 112 kilometres five days a week so his child can catch the school bus. The member for Nedlands said she was hard done by when she lived on a station in the pastoral region. One would think that after 100 years of a

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gerrymander, country people would be living in paradise. They are not. After 100 years of malapportionment, service provision in the country is disgusting. Yet, members opposite want to continue with that arrangement. I refer to the *Sunday Times* article in which the member for Pilbara was quoted as saying -

We already have second-rate services, lower education outcomes and poorer health services,

He obviously was referring to the Pilbara. One hundred years of gerrymander has not fixed those problems. If the system does not work, we should fix it. If the member for Moore had a tractor that did not work, he would fix it. He would not continue with his old grey Massey-Ferguson.

I refer to the election results in my area. We have already had a referendum on electoral change - the election. I have shown this House the advertisements the Liberal Party distributed in Bunbury during the election. The flier I hold is a doozy. The colour is misleading - it is a brilliant red. It is that colour because it mentions brothels - shock-horror. The flier also said -

Labor will SLASH parliamentary representation for country voters. 16 country MPs will go . . .

What a mob of hypocrites. The Liberal Party said 16 members of Parliament would go. It was a bit loose with the truth. This one flier referred to parliamentary representation, brothels and three-strikes legislation. A dirty campaign was run in Bunbury and Mitchell. Another flier - it is probably the back of the other - states -

Labor's Electoral "REFORM" will disadvantage Bunbury . . .

It says that the current system provides fair representation, and refers to the challenges of living in the country. I do not consider living in the country to be a challenge. I think the people of Perth face the challenge. People in the city are terribly disadvantaged. Bunbury has sealed roads - it is astonishing! My previous job required employing teachers. A teacher from the city once asked me if Bunbury had real estate agents and sealed roads. That is the misunderstanding city people have about the country. We have already had a referendum, which, in Bunbury, clearly supported electoral reform.

I do not know how much money the Liberal Party spent on its Bunbury campaign; I imagine it was about \$60 000 to \$70 000. The number of its first-preference votes fell by 1 062. It is a conclusive referendum when a member's primary votes fall by 1 062. To achieve my majority I had to poll 1 400 votes, which I did. It was a massive swing. My seat of Bunbury is a boutique seat of about 26 square kilometres and of which I am very proud.

Ms Radisich interjected.

Mr DEAN: Yes, the member for Swan Hills is dreaming. I can walk from the coast east to Bussell Highway in 15 minutes on a hard day, as long as land or sea breezes are not blowing. I can walk from Marsden Hill to the Capel boundary in about 30 to 35 minutes as long as a north west wind is blowing.

My electorate is very small, very neat and easy to manage, and it comprises about 12 000 voters. Under this proposed system I look forward to the parks in Mitchell - Carey Park, Rathmines and Kinkella Park - becoming part of my electorate. It might then take me half an hour to cover my electorate walking from east to west. However, I will still have a small electorate that I would not be afraid to work. The member for Mitchell already has a seat with 17 000 voters.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: I have 18 000 voters.

Mr DEAN: He has 50 per cent more than I do. If I walked from Bunbury across Bussell Highway I would be in Mitchell. If I chased the cat back, I would end up back in Bunbury again. This malapportionment is ridiculous. Under this Bill, Bunbury would continue to be a small seat.

During this debate reference has been made to the number of local governments members would represent. I will continue to represent only one local government. I have been on the Bunbury City Council - not the town or the shire council.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: How do you know that?

Mr DEAN: Bunbury has been a city for 21 years. It celebrated its birthday last year with a magnificent celebration. I was a member of the Bunbury City Council for seven years. The member for Mitchell shared some of that time with me. They were interesting years; I will tell members about them one day. I can count on one hand the number of times the members for Mitchell or Bunbury showed up at our council meetings or had input into our decision making. I will ask other members what involvement they have with their local

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authorities. Bunbury City Council was ill-served by the member for Mitchell and the previous member for Bunbury.

Mr Bradshaw: Are you going to tell the council how to run it now?

Mr DEAN: Some liaison does not go astray, as the member for Murray-Wellington knows.

I am sure members are aware of Commission on Government recommendation 42, clauses 1 and 2, in report No 5 of August 1996. The member for Mitchell is keen to flash around COG reports with his yellow stickers. We all know that recommendation 42.1 reads -

The present metropolitan and non-metropolitan zones for the Legislative Assembly should be abolished.

Mr McRae: Is it also true that the member for Mitchell proposes to be two members at the same time, one who will be clean-shaven and one wearing one of those little hook-on beards and noses?

Mr DEAN: Are we talking numbers here? Members should not talk to me about numbers. The city of Bunbury had a redistribution when the member for Mitchell was on the Bunbury City Council in 1995-94. The Liberal Party brought out a map when I think the -

Mr Barron-Sullivan: The Electoral Commission did.

Mr DEAN: No, it was the Liberal Party's submission, which included Withers in the seat of Warren - Blackwood, but which is in my electorate. It was a gerrymander, and we told the member for Mitchell so. I will quote from *Hansard* of 24 October 1995. The former member for Bunbury, Ian Osborne, is a nice fellow and we get on well. I do not think anyone should say an unkind word about him because he is a gentleman. He said when referring to the Commission on Government recommendations -

As I said, I am very pleased to be involved with these recommendations because I have always been a supporter of the principle of one-vote-one-value. . . . During the 1993 election campaign, I remember being on the public record, in the Press and on the radio, as a supporter of the introduction of one-vote-one-value in the Western Australian Parliament. That was not only as a person who represented a seat where I could not understand how a quota half the size of the metropolitan area could be sustained - that is, the City of Bunbury where there are no disadvantages associated with rurality. The city is so close and is of such an urban character that there are no such disadvantages. One must add to the fact that in this day and age the problems of isolation and poor communication do not exist to the extent that they ever existed in Western Australia. I support the one-vote-one-value concept and I am pleased to see that it has been introduced.

What happened? Where did it go? It must have been flushed down the toilet.

I support one vote, one value, or electoral reform as I prefer to call it. I spoke of my support for it in my maiden speech, and I have not backed away from that. It is not an issue in the seat of Bunbury. The member for Mitchell might bring out his public relations machine and send out a few more surveys and questionnaires and he might get five per cent of them back and say it is an issue. However, it is not. Not one person has come into my office and chastised me for supporting one vote, one value. It is not an issue.

I look forward to the days when the people of Carey Park, Rathmines and Kinkella Park vote for the Australian Labor Party.

MR BRADSHAW (Murray-Wellington) [5.17 pm]: I oppose this Bill. It is a disgrace and a blight on Western Australian society. Representatives from the farming community were here today. It would be interesting to hear what some of the people on the government side said to them.

Mr McRae: Wait until I tell you what they said about you lot.

Mr BRADSHAW: It will be interesting to hear what members opposite said to them. They are probably a bit like the member for Eyre who told people in his electorate he opposed one vote, one value. However, what will he do in this place? He will vote for it. Members opposite would have been saying that they were sorry for the farmers; they did not really want to reduce their representation and that they should get themselves an Internet licence so they can communicate with everyone. The farmers are not concerned about Internet connections. They are concerned about services, representation and a voice in Parliament. This Bill will reduce their representation dramatically.

Several members interjected.

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Mr BRADSHAW: Hon Kim Chance is a fantastic fellow and says many things, but we have not seen any action yet. We should see some results in another three or four years.

Several members interjected.

Mr BRADSHAW: I said he was a top fellow, for whom I have much respect. At this stage we have not seen much action. The jury is out until we see some action. He said he would do things and I hope he does because I represent country people. If Hon Kim Chance gets his way in Cabinet, he will do much for country people.

Mr D'Orazio: You said, when you were arguing about it, that they said to us that your mob did absolutely nothing and this is the first Minister for Agriculture who has actually done something.

Mr BRADSHAW: I will tell the House what the previous Minister for Agriculture did. Back in the 1980s, when I asked a question about how many people work in the Department of Agriculture, I was told there were 1 800 at that stage. Of these, about 1 200 worked in South Perth. After the member for Stirling became the minister, he decided to reverse that, and moved most of those people back out into the country, where they belong. That is a start for getting services and help for those country people. One of the things that Brian Burke tried to do was to get some of the public servants out of Perth and down to Bunbury. He had an office tower built, and it cost an arm and a leg. I have to give him credit for trying to get the public servants. How many did he get to move down there? None - they would not leave Perth. So there were all these empty floors down in Bunbury. Even after they spread everyone out to make it look a bit better there were still empty floors. The Water Corporation was moved into the tower. It was spending \$60 000 a year in rent on its previous office, but it cost about \$160 000 to move into the tower. So the taxpayers paid for that. To give credit to Brian Burke, he did try to get some public servants out of the city. It is very difficult to do. Monty House, the then member for Stirling, did it. The Government should not try to tell me he did nothing for country people.

I will return to this one vote, one value rubbish. I was talking today to some people from the country. They are suffering very badly. One woman told me that last year their farm had lost \$180 000, and the year before they had some overflow of losses. This year they are going to be in the same position. Those sorts of debts cannot be sustained for too long. Things need to be done to help those people, and taking away their representation is not one of them. One of the things they asked me was what percentage of representation there would be out in the country, and I replied that it would probably be about 30 per cent under this arrangement. Around 65 per cent of the population live in the metropolitan area, and that leaves about 35 per cent. Then they asked about places like Bunbury, Mandurah, Albany and Geraldton. Members representing such places will be urbanised, and will not represent true country people. If the larger regional centres were taken out, it would mean that country people would probably have about five per cent representation in this House. The representation will be so insignificant that it will not even be thought of. I have heard the word "principles" from the members opposite for two days now.

Mr McRae: You will never have heard it on your side.

Mr BRADSHAW: The Government has great principles, has it not? They have a member over there who in public opposes one vote, one value, but in here he meekly toes the party line. The member for Pilbara gave chapter and verse on how the system in the Labor Party works. It was fantastic to hear.

Mr Graham: I am not a member of the Labor Party.

Mr BRADSHAW: I know the member is not. I said that he had told us how the Labor Party system works. Members should read in *Hansard* what the member for Pilbara said, because he read out of the booklet. Interestingly, in Victoria, when eligible ALP members vote in a local plebiscite, some members are each accorded 50 per cent of the final candidate selection decision by a vote weighting process. This is how the Victorian Labor Party preselects candidates. This is the principle of the Labor Party. Its members do not have one vote, one value in their own party and yet they want to force that on the people of Western Australia. The current system is obviously fair because the Labor Party won office under it. It is not as though Labor cannot win government under the current system.

An article in *The West Australian* states that Labor proposes to deny the principle of one vote, one value, which it professes to espouse, by allowing exceptions in big remote regions where it holds seats. The Labor Party has therefore recognised there is a need for vote weighting in certain areas. The article goes on to state that this principle can be sustained only if it applies uniformly to all voters; anything else would be an electoral manipulation. The Labor Party is therefore manipulating the system and has no principles.

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The article also states that Labor asserts that it won a mandate from the people to carry out these electoral changes but the people have no say in the dubious means that are now proposed to achieve these changes. Furthermore, a primary vote of just over 37 per cent can hardly be claimed as a mandate. Labor's having a primary vote of 37 per cent and claiming a mandate is a load of rubbish. The article goes on to state that the vast majority of people gave their primary votes to parties with different electoral policies from those of Labor. It also states the electoral reform agenda looks increasingly like an exercise in securing political advantage and cementing Labor in office. That is what this is all about: it is certainly not about principles but about staying in government as long as Labor can manage it.

The former member for Kalgoorlie was quoted in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 12 February 2001 as saying that one vote, one value and native title had also been an influence on the swing away from Labor. Obviously Ms Anwyl believes that country people do not want it.

Back in 1996 - I guess times change - the then Leader of the Opposition, Dr Geoff Gallop, said in a press release that under his \$19 million accountability package - I like the sound of the accountability package - Labor would, if elected, empower people by holding a people's convention to assess fundamental changes to the State's constitution, such as citizens' initiated referenda, a bill of rights, resolution of parliamentary deadlocks and electoral rights. Those principles of giving the people the chance to say something have gone out the window.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: They will ram this through Parliament.

Mr BRADSHAW: Yes, and they do not even have the decency to say that they wanted to change the upper House. They have not even brought in a Bill containing such a provision. They have already done their little deal with the Greens (WA). They cannot upset the Greens by putting such a provision in a Bill and making them vote on it in the other place. Where are the principles? I believe they are out the door.

Mr Hyde: What is the difference between our talking to the Greens and your talking to the National Party and having a coalition?

Mr BRADSHAW: The upper House is another House. We cannot presuppose how it will vote. If the Labor Party had principles, they would be in the Bill. Some members say that vote weighting does not exist in other parts of the world. There is vote weighting in the Senate.

Mr McRae: Federation.

Mr BRADSHAW: That has nothing to do with it. It still uses vote weighting. In the European Parliament, vote weighting is used and is considered important to ensure that the larger countries do not dominate the smaller countries. It takes 829 000 Germans to elect one member to the European Parliament. By comparison, it takes 681 000 Britons, 399 000 Portuguese and only 70 000 Luxembourgers to each elect one member. Europe uses vote weighting.

Mr McRae: Sounds like the Labor Party.

Mr BRADSHAW: No, the Labor Party has principles!

Mr O'Gorman: It is an entirely different situation in Europe.

Mr BRADSHAW: They still vote for representatives in the European Parliament.

There is no perfect system of voting in the world. Should this Bill introduce non-compulsory voting? It is a debatable principle.

Mr Johnson: People have a democratic right to vote or not to vote.

Mr BRADSHAW: That is right. We are talking about principles and democratic rights. Should voting be non-compulsory? Should voting be first-past-the-post as it is in Britain?

I do not support this legislation. It is a disgrace that country members on the other side of the House are not standing against it. They should stand up and say they are not prepared to allow their electors' representation to be reduced in the Parliament. The less representation country electors have, the more they will be ignored. It is important that we bear in mind the hard times being experienced in the bush. People from the farming communities have told us of their hardships. They all told us that they do not want their representation in the country reduced. They would have said the same thing to members on the government side of the House. The Government obviously took no notice. It is a disgrace. Country members on the government side have failed to look after their electors.

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I have an indicative model from the Australian Electoral Commission that takes in my electorate and that of Collie. It makes one hell of a big electorate. My electorate is relatively small compared with some further out, but it still takes a lot of time to get around. I travel about 60 000 kilometres every year. The member for Collie will soon find that he will be doing a lot of kilometres over the next few years. The indicative model shows the proposed electorate taking in all of Collie and extending to Serpentine-Jarrahdale. It takes in Wagin, all of Harvey, Waroona and the shire of Murray. It is a big area for one person to represent. Labor will have trouble holding it. It will be very difficult to service. Over the years I have had a number of electorate offices. I had one in Pinjarra that I used to pay for and I had one in Harvey supplied by the Government.

In such a large electorate, it will be difficult to service the needs of those communities properly because members will be forever driving around; I will bet that the Government will not provide an allowance for air travel. It will mean that people will get less representation. I oppose this legislation. It is a disgrace, and I will vote against it.

MR MURRAY (Collie) [5.35 pm]: I add my support to the proposed electoral reform on the basis that no person's vote should be worth more than another person's. I refute the claims made by the member for Avon that it is my intention to remain in Parliament for only as long as it takes to ram through electoral reform legislation. That is not true. I have worked with the Collie community for over 13 years in my endeavour to represent the people of the electorate of Collie in Parliament. To be honest, I am lucky to be here. If the National Party had supported the Collie region, I would not be here. It was the National Party's neglect of that electorate that helped me get into Parliament. I was elected on a platform of one vote, one value and I do not walk away from that.

I do not have my electorate office in Harvest Terrace; it is in the middle of the Collie electorate. I do not work according to the boundaries. I represent people from Wagin and Kojonup; if they want to come into my office I will work on their behalf. My office has no boundaries, and that puts an extra load on my staff. When people say that their local member will not support them because they live at the far end or in the middle of their electorate, we say that is fine and we do the work. Our job as elected representatives is not about where we are or about the electoral boundaries; our job is to represent the people.

Mr McNee interjected.

Mr MURRAY: On my way back from Collie I will pick up Mr McNee's paper and drop it off at his office in Harvest Terrace.

Many members of the National Party have attacked me over the past few weeks, but I can cop that. I stand by the principles of the Labor Party, one of which is equal representation. How is it fair that one seat with 30 000 people has equal vote weighting to another seat with 10 000? That is not democracy. The electoral reforms proposed by the Government will even out the representation in the whole of Western Australia, so that people are given a fair go. That is what country people pride themselves on, but apparently not in this House.

I was returning from Kojonup, which is outside my electorate, and I called in to see one of the cockies down that way. Members know the story: a bit of string comes out and they say "give us a hand". I was proud to help. It was twin lambs - no worries at all for a bloke from the middle of the Collie electorate. They are the type of things that people in the country do. I am sure a lot of people in city electorates do not understand that. However, it comes back to representation. The member on the ground must represent the people. We should not worry about the boundaries; we should get out there and do the work.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is a bit frightened of the challenges he will face with the boundary changes. He has had it pretty easy down there. There will be challenges because of the Opposition's reluctance to come into the new world - a world in which everyone is equal. I am sure that once people have a good look at what is being proposed, they will realise that everyone's vote should be equal. I am sure that is where some of problems lie on the opposite side.

Several opposition members injected.

Mr MURRAY: One of the main interjectors from the other side has an electorate office in the middle of the city. How the hell will he do the job he is supposed to do? Talk about travelling! No wonder he runs up a lot of kilometres in his car; he must travel from the city to see his constituents. Why does the member for Moore not deliver the newspapers on the way out instead of travelling back in to town to get one? He should pick the papers up in Hay Street and drop them off as he goes through. That would be a lot easier.

Mr McNee: I could be over on Rottnest Island and still beat you lot.

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Mr MURRAY: The other thing I wanted to bring to the attention of the House is that the electorate of Collie is unlucky in many ways because of its heavy industries. It does not have the rate weighting that it should. The shire suffers from a lack of rate base. Big industries only pay minimal rates. The shire decided that that was not on, because those industries wanted full services for minimal rates. Those services take up a lot of the shire's budget. We invited the present Leader of the Opposition down when he was in government. That was great. It was one of the few times I have seen him in the country. Over a period of eight years, I saw him down there three times. He is the country people's champion! That was a great effort.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Are you saying he hasn't done anything for Collie?

Mr MURRAY: Yes.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: You are joking.

Mr MURRAY: No. He came to Collie and spoke to the shire. I was part of that group. He told the Collie Shire Council that country people should not expect any favours just because they live in the country. It is a disgrace that he can sit over there now and say that things have changed and that one vote, one value does not really hold weight, especially with him. On previous occasions, he has said that country people should not expect any favours. What a farce he has turned out to be.

Before the last election, the Liberal Party spent a huge amount of money on shock-horror television advertisements on the Golden West Network, which is the country people's television station. I was asked about that and I took a bit of a straw poll. The Labor Party was still voted in, despite the scare tactics that were used. Those advertisements, which said that country people would lose 16 seats, were on every time a person turned on the television.

Mr Johnson: Your vote went down by more than six per cent.

Mr MURRAY: What happened to the National Party?

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Your vote went down.

Mr MURRAY: Yes. I thank the Liberal Party for its 103 direct preferences, which put me in power. The people of my electorate voted knowing that there would be electoral change. People in other electorates knew that as well; they were bombarded by television advertisements. However, it did not change the result. I am a long-time country person. I understand the needs of country people.

Mr McNee: If you did, you wouldn't be voting for this.

Mr MURRAY: I live in the middle of my electorate, so I probably have a better understanding of what goes on in it.

Mr McNee: What sort of rubbish is that? Don't you think I live in my electorate?

Mr MURRAY: No, the member for Moore drives down. In the time it takes him to drive down, he could be working. For the member for Moore to say that country people will be disadvantaged, when he lives in the city, is a joke. It goes beyond all logic.

I support this legislation. I will be one of the members most affected by this legislation and will probably lose my seat, but I will live with that because I am standing here and representing the basic principle of one vote, one value. I do not have a problem with that.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Can you explain how your electorate will benefit under this policy?

Mr MURRAY: Everyone will have an equal say. It will not be influenced by lobby groups, as has happened in the past. Everyone will be able to feel that their vote has counted.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: You are saying that, at the moment, people in your electorate have a greater say, so it must be reduced to give them an equal say.

Mr MURRAY: Yes. They should have an equal say. I do not have a problem with that. It is about everyone in Western Australia having a say. Some members from the northern suburbs represent 30 000 constituents, yet they get the same vote as those members whose electorates have only 10 000 constituents. My electors are as diverse as they come: they are involved in gold, coal, bauxite and sandmining, along with broadacre farming, horticulture, viticulture, aquaculture and tourism. Under the previous Government we lost all our services out of Collie. Under a conservative Government we lost the Department of Mines, the Water Corporation, Main

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Roads, Homeswest, Westrail, the School of Mines, police licensing and the Department of Conservation and Land Management - and people wonder why members stand up in this place and say, "The Libs don't worry about the country people." I doubt that the Liberal Party members are friends of country people. If electoral reform means that I have to go, I can stand here and proudly say that I stood up, I have been counted and I am voting for equal principles and equal rights.

MR JOHNSON (Hillarys) [5.45 pm]: I am probably one of the last members on this side of the House to contribute to this debate; I do not know whether any other members will. I am sure members opposite will be delighted to know that I will not repeat everything that has been said - I just want to pull members up on a few things.

First, I want to compliment some members who have made wonderful speeches. I want to compliment the member for Moore, who has a passion for this particular subject and looking after country people, particularly people in his area. I am not looking forward to the day when the member for Moore decides to leave this place and retire, because he will never leave any other way. The Labor Party will never kick him out of his country area; he will be here until he wants to retire and look after his sheep. He is a great member of Parliament.

I also compliment the leader of our party, who always puts forward a good argument, and our deputy leader. I pay a compliment to the Independent member for South Perth, because he has put forward some very good arguments today - some arguments that I had not really thought about - for a unicameral system. I will explore some of his comments a bit more before I make a final decision. The only flaw I can see immediately in that system is that every seat throughout Western Australia would have 10 000 or 12 000 electors. That is neither here nor there. It would be a part-time job for a metropolitan member to look after 10 000, 12 000, 14 000 or 16 000 electors. I look after 27 000 electors; the member for Joondalup looks after about 27 000.

Mr O'Gorman: It is 30 000.

Mr JOHNSON: It has gone up a bit. The only person I heard complain yesterday about the workload was the member for Roleystone. He is looking after 27 000 electors, and he complained that he thought that was too many. I could not believe it. Some federal members look after about 80 000 electors. In that system local councillors would be looking after more people than members of Parliament. Frankly, everybody should take a half cut in their pay. I do not think that is what the people of Western Australia want. The Speaker is shaking his head vigorously. I am sure most members in the House would agree with you, Mr Speaker. Notwithstanding that, it is something we could look at. This legislation has been put before the House by the Labor Party, together with a nominal redistribution, should the Bill be passed. Government members keep telling us that the Electoral Commission did this; of course it did; it was given details of the Bill and told to come up with a nominal redistribution map. Let us be honest and ask the Labor Party and the minister to come clean. They are doing this not for the people of Western Australia - that is total hypocrisy - but for the Labor Party. They are very foolish because in one respect they are like another group of people many years ago who thought they had the right to rule for one thousand years. I am sorry, but they came unstuck.

The Labor Party will come unstuck because the community will not like this Bill. The Government keeps saying that it has a mandate to pass this legislation. The members of the Government do not have a mandate. The first choice of 63 per cent of the voters was to not have a Labor Government. They did not want this Government.

Mr Hyde: Go to the High Court then.

Mr JOHNSON: We will talk about the High Court in a minute. The member for Fremantle knows that the High Court threw out his submission. The High Court said that fairness had to be taken into account. Parliament should be about fairness. The Government does not have a mandate to pass this legislation. The Labor Party campaigned on other issues, including the problems in the finance broking industry. Those issues got Labor elected to government through the preferences of the Greens (WA). Labor's main theme was to save the forests.

Ms Radisich: We did.

Mr JOHNSON: I know that Labor did, and I accept that. However, the Government should not tell us that it campaigned on the issue of one vote, one value. The Labor Party kept quiet about that issue. It was only when we brought it to the attention of country voters that it became active. Megan Anwyll issued a leaflet that said that Labor would not abolish 16 country seats - eight in the upper House and eight in the lower House - which is what the now Premier wanted.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: Members were talking about semantics earlier, and this is a classic case.

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Mr Birney: Labor also put out a glossy brochure in my electorate that said that Labor would always have two members of the Legislative Assembly in the goldfields.

Mr JOHNSON: Megan Anwyl said that there would always be two goldfields MLAs. Where are the goldfields under the proposed redistribution? Earlier we heard from the member for Rockingham who gave us a good history lesson about the early and mid 1800s. He informed us that a system of vote weighting was in place to help the landed gentry or other systems of government. It is 2001 - we have come a long way since then. The Premier's good friend Tony Blair, and my colleague the member for Joondalup, said that things are different in Europe. They are no different from the situation in Western Australia. There is a deliberate discrimination against English voters as opposed to voters in Wales, Northern Ireland and especially Scotland.

Mr McRae: What about the Isle of Wight?

Mr JOHNSON: That gets a big weighting. The Western Isles seat has 21 800 while the largest English seat has over 80 000 electors. Tony Blair, the Premier's mentor, is one of the best conservative leaders Britain has had in a long time! He has upset the unions because he will not let them have a say. I commend him for some of the things he has done. The member for Nollamara, on the other hand, is a puppet of the unions and will let them do what they want.

The United Kingdom Labour Party has 90 out of 112 combined Scottish and Welsh seats. The Welsh seats are also weighted. Labour has 34 out of 40 Welsh seats, and the Conservative Party has only one seat in Scotland and none in Wales. What has Tony Blair done? He is happy with the weighted system. He did not alter it, because he knew that he had a lot of weighted Labour seats in Scotland.

Stop being so hypocritical! Members opposite should be honest and say that if they can ram this through Parliament, they will have their best chance of winning the next election, and possibly even the election after that, and of being in government again in three and a half years.

Mr McRae: Is that why you oppose it?

Mr JOHNSON: No it is not, actually. I am happy to look at all the options. I am happy to look at the proposal from the member for South Perth, and I would like to debate that in more detail, and I will do that. Do not be hypocritical about it. We know, and members opposite know, that if there were no redistribution other than the one that always takes place after every second election, we would win back the seat of Joondalup; and I think the member for Joondalup knows that too, although he will not admit it. I accept that we would not win back the seat of Wanneroo, because that has to be split anyway, to some extent, because it is too large. We would win back Collie, Bunbury and Albany. We would definitely win back Riverton, and probably also Southern River. We would stand a very good chance of winning back many of those seats.

Ms MacTiernan: Hillarys!

Mr JOHNSON: Members opposite would not have a hope in hell! The Labor Party came close, I agree, and I know why it came close: it was involved in a dirt campaign against me. I will bring that to the attention of this House one day, and it will not make the Labor Party look too good.

Ms MacTiernan: What was it?

Mr JOHNSON: I will tell members about it another time; today is not the day. Talk about dirt and smear campaigns! The Labor Party made three attempts to do it on me, and it could not quite make it. One of those attempts came out of Geoff Gallop's office when he was in opposition.

Mr Hyde: Back to one vote, one value! We are interested!

Mr JOHNSON: I will give members opposite the story another day, when it suits me, not when it suits them.

The Labor Party says it has a mandate. Let us look at some of the seats that gave the Labor Party this mandate. I have said that 63 per cent of the population voted against the Labor Party as being the party that they wanted in government. In the country seats that the Labor Party holds, its vote went down. In Albany, the Labor vote went down by 2.15 per cent from 33.75 per cent to 31.6 per cent. In Collie, the Labor vote went down by 6.02 per cent.

Mr McRae: Tedious repetition!

Mr JOHNSON: The member for Riverton is the biggest pain in this Parliament. He has been here five minutes -

Mr Hyde: What about me?

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Mr JOHNSON: Both those members are! They are Tweedledum and Tweedledee! Those two members have interjected more times in this Parliament than most members have spoken in the past 20 years! We would love them to get up and speak a bit more.

Mr Hyde: We would like that too!

Mr JOHNSON: I know, but the Executive Government does not want members opposite to speak too much, because it wants to ram these electoral Bills through. It will allow one or two members to speak -

Mr Graham interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: And the member for Pilbara is my friend!

Mr Graham: I think we might get along.

Mr JOHNSON: Absolutely!

In the seat of Eyre, the Labor vote went down by 14.82 per cent. In the seat of Geraldton, the Labor vote went down by 8.21 per cent. Where is the mandate? It is a big furphy! The Labor Party has no mandate. It got 37 per cent of the vote; 63 per cent of the people voted against the Labor Party as being the party that they wanted in government.

Mrs Hodson-Thomas: The member for Riverton wants you to do his seat.

Mr JOHNSON: I will come to that. That is not a country seat. I am talking about the weighting in the country seats. We have met a lot of the farmers today and over the past few days, as have some members opposite, because they wanted to meet as many members of Parliament as possible. I heard some of the stuff that came by way of interjection earlier that said we had done nothing for farmers in the past eight years and they are looking to the Government to do it. That is not true.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: That may be what members opposite want to believe. I saw members opposite when the farmers were talking to them - they were all nodding like Noddy. The farmers know they will not get anywhere with this Government.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I am the member for Hillarys, not Whitford.

The first thing that the farmers who are here today wanted to talk about was one vote, one value.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: No, it was not; not to us.

Mr Logan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: The first thing they spoke with me about was one vote, one value. They wanted to ensure that we supported the fair representation that they get at the moment. They did not want it diminished. They were adamant that they did not want to travel miles to talk to their member of Parliament. We have seen how big some of the seats are likely to be under the Government's scenario. One of them will be a million square kilometres.

Mr D'Orazio: Equality!

Mr JOHNSON: We would never get it from the Government's side of the House. The member must be joking!

Mr Hyde: Farmers voted Green for the first time ever.

Mr JOHNSON: Most government backbenchers did not think they would even get here. They thought it was Christmas Day on election night when they actually scraped in here. How did they get in here? Many of them got in on the backs of the Greens (WA) and One Nation. The member for Joondalup got in with One Nation preferences.

Several members interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: He certainly did not turn them down. Where is the principle? The members got the preferences from One Nation, but they did not say, "No, I cannot accept them; I will resign." That would be the principle.

Mr Templeman: Were they last on your card?

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Mr JOHNSON: They were last on my card.

Mr Templeman: Your friends?

Mr JOHNSON: They were last on my card. They were last on the card of every Liberal member.

Mr Templeman: Will they be last next time?

Mr JOHNSON: That is a debate for another day. I will have a debate on that with the member with pleasure.

Returning to my point, the farmers were concerned about the hardships they have suffered. That is why they want as much help as possible. They want access to their local members of Parliament - they certainly will not be local under the Government's proposals - so they can get some help and have a voice in Parliament. That is why they are totally opposed to this system of one vote, one value. Let us get rid of this mess about the value of votes. Every vote has a value. Of course one vote has one value. We are talking about fairness and equity, so we can represent people in regional and rural areas. It takes almost as much time to get from the bottom end of Western Australia to the very top end of Western Australia as it does to fly from London to Moscow. That is how far it is. The United Kingdom would fit into Western Australia 20 times. Do members think it is fair that the people in those regional areas, who work really hard -

Mr Logan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I accept that interjection; it does. I was there recently and I experienced that.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr JOHNSON: Those people need as much help as they can get. They are suffering hardships. They suffer all of the elements of the weather that God can send them. They have had it tough in the past four years; they have had it tougher than any city or metropolitan person has had in that respect. It is hard graft working on the land, but members opposite do not care about that. It is not an issue to them. They want the certainty of winning the next election, and probably the one after that, because as sure as eggs are eggs and as sure as the sun comes up in the morning, after enough time has passed, the people of Western Australia will see what members opposite are like. They are no different from the previous Labor Government; it is just a new Government. The time will come when the ministers will start - some of them already have - doing things they should not do. They are letting down the side. We are only six months into this Government. What will it be like when we are 18 months or two years in? If members think that some of their ministers will help them win their seats in three and a half years, they should think again. If I were the member for Albany, I would keep my bike oiled because I might need it. The member for Collie will need to go back to his old teaching job.

I will say one last thing. I am disgusted with the Premier of this State, because he has shown a drastic amount of hypocrisy. When the Commission on Government brought down its report, I was the Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commission on Government, and at that time the Premier was a member of that committee. When in opposition, it is very easy for people to say that they agree with everything, and that is what the Premier did - apart from three or four things. One was the Robson rotating ticket for the upper House in Tasmania, I think, which was a loopy idea anyway with which nobody would agree, and there were three others. However, the Premier said that he agreed that a significant change to the electoral system in Western Australia should be enshrined in the Constitution and should go to a referendum. The Premier has promised that he will do other things - for instance, hold a people's convention. We have not heard hide nor hair of that, guys. When will he have that? What about the royal commission into the police? I suppose he will get around to that when it suits him, but, as some members have said, how far back will it go? The Premier will not implement all the COG recommendations, yet he criticised the previous Government for not doing so.

The main issue here is this Bill before the House. On electoral reform, the Premier agreed with the recommendation that it is so significant it should go to a referendum. What we saw yesterday was a sight that I did not think I would ever see in this Parliament, when a Labor minister - the Leader of the House - pulled on some boots and, after about only one hour, suddenly gagged debate on an issue that is so important to this State; that is, electoral reform.

Ms MacTiernan interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: No, the Labor Party made it clear yesterday that it will not go to a referendum.

Ms MacTiernan: You had two whole days to debate the issue.

Mr JOHNSON: Did the minister want to cut us short on that?

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Ms MacTiernan: We are debating it now.

Mr JOHNSON: I am talking about a referendum, though. The Opposition wants to give the people of Western Australia the opportunity to have a direct say on this matter. This is supposed to be the Government of consultation. It said that it would be open and accountable and would talk to the people. There has not been a bit of it. Labor says that when it is in opposition, but when it is in government it does the exact opposite. Yesterday we had a wonderful opportunity to send this issue to the people to decide by way of a simple referendum, whereby the people could say yes or no. Labor held a referendum on daylight saving, for goodness' sake - a trivial matter like that - yet on a matter as significant as electoral reform it will not do so. It does not have the courage.

Mr D'Orazio interjected.

Mr JOHNSON: I have been in business all my life, my friend, and I voted for daylight saving.

Mr D'Orazio: You called it trivial.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I said that it is trivial in comparison with this issue, my friend; it is not trivial in many other respects.

Mr Graham: Your leader won a by-election on daylight saving, because that was going to revolutionise business when he came in.

Mr JOHNSON: Sometimes it is very difficult to talk to people in the eastern States because they knock off earlier than we do. A lot of businesspeople tell me that. Many businesspeople would like daylight saving. However, that is another subject. This is a significant change, yet yesterday the Leader of the House gagged the debate and the opportunity for members in this House - the people's House, as the Government keeps calling it - to have a proper debate on whether this issue should go to a referendum. It frightened the Leader of the House, the Labor Party and the Premier. I do not think the Premier was all that happy that the debate was gagged so soon, because he did not look happy when he came into the Chamber to vote with his party. The Premier was probably a bit embarrassed because it was a very early stage to gag debate on such a significant issue.

I do not in any way support this Bill in its present form. I support the people in regional Western Australia. People say that nobody in the metropolitan area worries too much about the country people or one vote, one value. Not one person from within or close to my electorate has come into my office, phoned me or written to me to say that we should have one vote, one value in the way the Labor Party wants it.

Mr McRae: They have in my office.

Mr JOHNSON: I bet they have - from all the Labor members in Collie or wherever. However, people in not only my electorate but also many metropolitan electorates have shown a tremendous amount of compassion. When the Moora people suffered as a result of the devastating floods in their area, people in my electorate raised money and donated goods, such as refrigerators, and services. Even Whitford City Shopping Centre, which I think is the largest shopping centre in Western Australia, held a special event just before the -

Mr D'Orazio: Whitford City is not the biggest shopping centre in Western Australia.

Mr JOHNSON: I think it is. We will argue that another time. Whitford City Shopping Centre held a special function to raise money. It also donated 150 to 200 Christmas trees, which were sent to the people of Moora.

I have spoken to people in my electorate about their opinions of electoral reform. They tell me how well I represent them. They believe the proposed rural and regional electorates would be so vast that members would not be properly able to service the same number of people. I do not want to service a smaller number of people, even though it would be an easier life. I am happy with 27 000 constituents. In fact, I could cope with another 10 000. The member for Roleystone may not like to have 27 000 constituents, but I am very happy.

A government member: He did not say that.

Mr JOHNSON: He did; the member should read the *Hansard*. People in the metropolitan area have tremendous sympathy for the Western Australians in rural and regional areas who work hard under the scorching sun and suffer through the terrible hurricanes and other adverse weather conditions.

Ms MacTiernan: Hurricanes - you are on the wrong continent.

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure keeps interjecting. I thought she would want to drive her car home and have a couple of chardonnays.

Ms MacTiernan: I love hearing you speak.

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Mr JOHNSON: I promise she will hear much more from me. I am getting back into gear and I shall have much more to say in this House.

Ms MacTiernan: Are you moving out of reverse?

Mr JOHNSON: The minister's colleague will tell her what I am talking about. I will have much more to say about the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. I am building a dossier on her. People write to us and tell us things. I did not realise how much information opposition members receive from the public. It is amazing. I am sure government members got stacks of it when they were in opposition. They will not get as much now; we receive it. The next three and a half years will be interesting. That will be the term of this Labor Government; hopefully it will not be longer.

Mrs Hodson-Thomas: I have a lot of information about the minister.

Mr JOHNSON: I know. I think a few of us do.

I do not support this Bill in its present form. I hope the members of this House will stand up for the people in regional and rural Western Australia and vote it out. The Government should instead hold a referendum.

MR TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [6.12 pm]: I am pleased to speak on this historic legislation, which will finally give all Western Australian citizens an equal say in electing the Government. This significant and historic legislation will acknowledge the special circumstances of those large and remote electorates, enshrine in Western Australian law the principle of true democracy, and finally introduce the principle of electoral equality to the Western Australian Parliament. As has been eloquently put by many speakers, particularly those on this side, but also the Independent members, this issue is very much about the principle of equality. The Australian Labor Party has stood for this principle for over 100 years and we are finally at a point at which we can go forward with it through the processes of legislation.

We have heard from many members and have heard many arguments for and against electoral reform. We have also heard some graphically illustrated comparisons between seats. The member for Roleystone, who had a historic victory at the 10 February election, was able to clearly demonstrate some of the furphies that have been put forward over the past two days. This poster is one of the best displays of cutting and pasting I have seen - even throughout my teaching career. It is a fine, graphic example of how a number of so-called country electorates can fit into one metropolitan seat. We have heard about those country electorates over the past couple of days.

I am very proud to represent my electorate, which is on the map I am holding up for members to see. At the last election there were 14 000 very fine electors in Mandurah. Yet, the people in the locality of Singleton, two kilometres north of Madora Bay, which is the northernmost locality in my electorate of Mandurah, are in part of the member for Peel's electorate. Those people in Singleton, two kilometres from my northernmost locality, have less value in their vote than the people in Madora Bay.

Mr Graham interjected.

Mr TEMPLEMAN: That is possibly true. The fact is, it is not fair. The member for Hillarys talked about fairness. Roleystone has two voters for every one in some of the seats I have highlighted on the map I am holding up for members to see.

Let us consider the seat of Wanneroo. The member for Wanneroo is not present in the Chamber. However, she represents a seat, like Mandurah, whose population has expanded rapidly. The people in her electorate share many issues and concerns with many members of this House, such as providing young people with good opportunities, finding employment for them and ensuring the delivery of quality health and educational services. The electorate of Wanneroo at the last election had almost 40 000 electors. When one compares the issues of the people in that northern seat of the metropolitan area with the issues in Mandurah, my voters have three times the say of the member for Wanneroo. That is not fair. It is not fair that the issue of fairness has been thrown about.

Another issue that has been thrown about was mentioned to me by one of the rural farmer representatives of one of the groups that were meeting with some members today. In the meeting with you that I gatecrashed, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Andrews), the representative said that the word "country" had been bandied about in an inappropriate manner. We in this place represent our communities to the best of our ability and I believe the issue of "country person" and "non-country person" has been bandied about inappropriately in many cases. Many members' roots are in the country and many have much respect and feeling for people irrespective of where they come from. The member for Kimberley put it very eloquently this afternoon when she said that the Bill is about treating people equally and about ensuring that we recognise that no matter where people live in this

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country or in this State, they have a right to ensure that their vote is worth the same. That is fair. This legislation before us is about fairness.

There has been talk of mandates and questions about why the Government is not putting the matter to a referendum. The simple fact is that during the election campaign the people of Mandurah and Dawesville were subjected to offensive, bang, bang type of advertisements. These advertisements were about scaring people by using a gun - which was not a good analogy to use. They were relentlessly broadcast over our local radio stations. As "shortly" as I stand here, not one person in the seat of Mandurah during the election campaign spoke about the issue of one vote, one value. However, when I knocked on their doors, went to their meetings and met them in the street, they wanted reassurances that they would have good health services, the right number of police on the beat and a good education system and that the Labor Party would bring the promised rail link to Mandurah. We will deliver that to the people of Mandurah.

That bang, bang, bang advertisements they thrust at us did not work. They were firing blanks. I have never heard more blanks fired. They did not hit any mark; it was an attempt to blow a few holes around the place with the bang, bang, bang theory. However, it did not work; it failed dismally. The Liberal Party lost the seat of Mandurah because it was out of touch. Its members did not know what they were doing. They elected me as their representative and the Gallop Government because they knew that we would listen very carefully to their concerns about issues. The Liberal Party almost lost the seat of Dawesville. I have great respect for the member for Dawesville, who unfortunately is not here today. The coalition almost lost that seat, which was considered at the time almost unlosable. The bang, bang, bang theory did not work there either.

Mr Hyde: When will the big bang happen?

Mr TEMPLEMAN: It is yet to come. The member for Churchlands made some excellent points, particularly that this Bill is about people, not their interests. The passage of this Bill will be exciting. I am looking forward to it because I hope that some of the really important parts of the City of Mandurah will become part of my electorate, where they belong. I look forward to representing the people of Coodanup, who have been through and are continuing to have a very difficult time. I want to represent them; they will get good representation. I also want to represent the people of Greenfields, Riverview, Riverside Gardens and Nairns. I want them to be included in the electorate of Mandurah because I am excited about my electorate gaining a few more people. We will get the community moving. Most importantly, we will have equal representation, and the people of Mandurah will accept that because they know it is fair.

MR McRAE (Riverton) [6.22 pm]: I support this Bill. It is important that we put on the record some of the views of the city-based representatives in this Parliament. I will refer to a couple of themes floated by previous speakers. I am a 44-year-old member of this Parliament. I lived in country towns and rural parts of Australia for 27 years. For people to suggest that we come to this place without a rural background and a love and long-held desire for the betterment of rural and regional Australia is a great myth and wrong. Like the seat of Bunbury, Riverton is an electorate of 26-square kilometres. However, rather than having 12 000 electors, it has 25 000.

It is interesting when we hear people talk about the bang, bang, bang campaign leading up to 10 February this year. People raised that campaign and electoral reform with me directly. Every person who spoke to me about that wanted us to implement it and wanted equity in our electoral system. The bang, bang, bang campaign backfired. It was not firing blanks, because it blew up in the coalition's face.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: You won only eight out of 23 seats after that campaign, and that was with a gerrymander.

Mr McRAE: I said I want to put on the record the views of a city-based representative in this Parliament. Members opposite might not be interested in hearing what Perth people want to say about our electoral system.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: The bang, bang campaign was a country-based strategy.

Mr McRAE: As with railways in this State, the Labor Party will deliver equity. The task of extending democratic rights to communities throughout Western Australia is a responsibility this party takes on with great pride. It has had that goal for more than 100 years. The demise of rural towns, the cancer of salinity, the loss of government services and the decline in the school system have all accelerated over the past eight years while we had a malapportionment of votes and a Liberal-National Party Government that purported to represent these people. It is a disgrace to hear that lot opposite - some of whom cannot move their electorate office for the convenience of constituents -

Several members interjected.

Mr Bernie Masters; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Day; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr John Bowler; Acting Speaker; Mr Pendal; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Tony Dean; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jim McGinty; Speaker; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett

Mr McRAE: It is a disgrace that they come into this place and say they have the recipe for the improvement of regional Western Australia. They deceived the people for eight years, and in February the people said that they had had enough.

I will reflect on some comments made to me by constituents over the past three or four months. The comments of five or six people have stuck in my mind because they were not the standard issues raised - that is, education, health, community services and public transport. The owner of a haberdashery on High Road in Riverton wanted to talk about the Government's efforts to combat salinity. This person, who sells school uniforms and buttons and beads, was flabbergasted that the National Party and the Liberal Party - newly elected to the opposition bench - had failed to join the Government in lobbying the federal Government to come to the party on addressing salinity. He was flabbergasted that members opposite were continuing to suggest that a Labor Government had not been instrumental in making incredible improvements that have been a model for the rest of the country. It is time that they acknowledged that a Labor Government initiated the first salinity program in 1989.

A geologist in Riverton wanted to talk to me about native title. In the sunny seat of Riverton - in southern metropolitan Perth - a geologist was absolutely appalled that a Government that had been charged with representing the interests of all Western Australians for the past eight years had set up native title as a point of conflict and division. He was not a standard Labor voter - he voted Labor for the first time in many years this year when he voted for me. He said he was fed up with the former Government's confrontationist approach to native title. I would like members to reflect on whether native title seriously impacts on someone living on a suburban block in Riverton. The connection might not be obvious.

Members opposite who have suggested that city people have no intelligent thoughts about what is going on in the rest of the State are doing a disservice to the people of Western Australia. That man knew precisely the best bet for him and this State and, accordingly, he voted Labor. He knew that a Labor Government would resolve the native title issue by reaching agreements. A Shelley mother of three - and a local environment group volunteer, I might say in this year of volunteers - was very pleased with the Minister for Education's reforms, but apart from the issues of her children's education, she was concerned about employment opportunities for young teenagers leaving school in regional Western Australia. So somebody who has children of her own, living in a southern metropolitan seat, and involved in a volunteer environment working group, wants to talk about regional employment and training for young Western Australians.

Mr Omodei: I can imagine what you told her about the reforms your Government is introducing.

Mr McRAE: That is a disgrace on the part of the member for Warren-Blackwood, to denigrate the people in metropolitan Perth.

Mr Omodei: I am denigrating you.

Mr McRAE: The member for Warren-Blackwood is denigrating the people who have an interest in the wellbeing of the children of this State, and he is not interested in the fact that they want a Government that does something for regional Western Australia. A worker who brings me one of the best curry laksas that can be bought anywhere, from the Malaysia Garden restaurant in the Riverton Forum, wanted to talk to me about the drought. That is a very interesting connection as well, and again it reflects the fact that city people are well able to have an interest in rural and regional affairs, and a desire for a government, and city-based representatives, to have those things in their heads as well.

This Bill, this reform, this move for equity and justice, is essential for good governance in this State. The Government's action to make each person's political power the same, regardless of where they live, is part of the development of our democracy. It follows on from the changes in the franchise that saw non-property owners acquiring political power, but only if they were white men. It follows on the extension of the franchise to women, as long as they were white. It follows the extension of franchise to indigenous Australians. It occurs at a time when Australia is moving to allow dual citizenship, a further extension of the political franchise in our country. My children, and people of their age have grown up in a system of universal franchise, and they find it passing strange and absolute hypocrisy, lacking any logic, that we are operating under an outdated system developed in the nineteenth century. This reform will give all Western Australians equal power and equal responsibility. That is why it is a critical ingredient for improving governance in this State. Just for the record, if members are interested, what did the rural delegates say to Hon Graham Giffard and me this afternoon, when we met them?

Mr Bradshaw: They told you to vote against the Electoral Amendment Bill.

Mr Bernie Masters; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Day; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr John Bowler; Acting Speaker; Mr Pendal; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Tony Dean; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jim McGinty; Speaker; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett

Mr McRAE: They said that last. I can tell the member for Murray-Wellington what they said before that; I have the list here. They began with freight subsidies, and said they desperately needed them, because after the last Government sold off Westrail Freight Pty Ltd, they were stuck with an agency with which they cannot negotiate. They asked how much the freight service was making, and I said it was about \$40 million a year. It has been sold off for a short-term gain, and the previous Government has sold out the people of rural Western Australia. The Opposition stands damned for that. The second issue they raised was training and education programs for young Western Australians. They recognised that this needed a cooperative approach between the state and federal Governments. They gave the example of the son of 19 years of age who had left school at age 17, and for the last year or so had been working as an unpaid worker on the family farm. The family farm needs that labour, and cannot operate without it. I undertook, along with Hon Graham Giffard, to make representations on their behalf to the federal Government to give consideration to allowing a period of work for the dole - which the country people supported - for young people who are prepared to work on the family farm without wages. It was said that would be particularly appropriate if the farm had been declared as part of an exceptional circumstance or as drought-affected. That argument has some merit and I am happy to pursue it.

Privatisation was next on the list. Surprise! Surprise! Guess what those people wanted to talk about? It was the contracting out of cleaners in local schools. My predecessor said that cleaning would take about two and a half minutes per classroom. Look at the silent little birdies on the wire.

Mr Board: Those farmers could be starving to death from the worst drought in history. They would be lucky to have food on their table, yet they are talking to you about schools. What does that tell you?

Mr McRAE: If members want to check on this, they might like to ask the member for Greenough and a couple of other people who immediately followed Hon Graham Giffard and me. I am sure the same issues were raised with them.

I am also prepared to take up travel support for parents. Country members might be interested to hear about the suggestion that if we were to run the isolated patients travel and accommodation assistance travel scheme, we would need to think about whether there is not some validity in extending the provision for isolated parents to those travelling to visit children who are forced to go to boarding schools because there is no local high school. Where parents have the option of a local high school, nobody is arguing that it should apply.

Mr Hyde: Did the coalition do that during its eight years?

Mr McRAE: No, it did not. The coalition made absolutely no move on these issues.

Mr Logan: They are expecting us to do it.

Mr McRAE: Indeed. One would think it passing strange that the rural delegation wanted to speak to Labor Party members about the issues of services, governance and the wellbeing of their communities.

I am happy to record the views of my constituents and the people of today's rural delegation. I fully support the Bill and I am very pleased to be part of a Government that has introduced it. I commend the Bill to the House.

MR MCGINTY (Fremantle - Minister for Electoral Affairs) [6.37 pm]: This is a historic debate and will hopefully lead to the passage of historic legislation through this Parliament. We have had over the past two days a long and gruelling debate in which 34 members have participated and put different points of view.

At the outset I want to pay tribute to people who are truly remarkable Western Australians and who I think history will judge very fairly and also accord them the title of being remarkable Western Australians. They are those members of this Parliament who will take a step that will either cost them their jobs or very significantly add to their workloads. I pay tribute to that notion of selflessness and of putting principle ahead of self-interest. I identify in particular the members for Albany, Collie, Mandurah, Eyre, Kimberley and Bunbury, all of whom have participated in this debate and said that for them the principle of equality for which they stand is far greater than any self-interest. Their actions in voting for this legislation will mean in some cases that they will lose their jobs and in other cases they will significantly increase their workloads. That makes them great parliamentarians.

We have heard a large number of country members talking about the issues that confront them in their electorates: the problem of isolation, the lack of services, the distances involved and things of that nature. A large number of members on both sides of the House have observed that those are the circumstances in which they find themselves. Members on the other side of the House have taken that to mean that they should have a measure of vote weighting to compensate for those difficulties. I assure country members that those of us in the

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city - particularly those who represent either inner urban areas or lower socioeconomic areas in the metropolitan area - also have our difficulties.

For the benefit of country members, I want to talk about an issue that I spend a lot of time on in my electorate office. I deal with homelessness. I know all members do, but I deal with it significantly. Someone came into my electorate office in Fremantle earlier this year. It was fortunate that I was there. The person had been sleeping out and was high on drugs. He was a regular drug abuser and had recently slashed his arms from his elbows to his wrists. I sat with him and I had to bring him down to the extent that I could talk to him rationally. That is not an everyday occurrence, but it is a reality for many members of Parliament - country and city. Inner urban areas, where there is a concentration of commonwealth and state government services, attract people with acute mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems and homelessness problems. Members in inner urban areas have to deal with those sorts of issues.

Mr Trenorden: As we do.

Mr McGINTY: I know. I am not saying the member does not. I make the point that we deal with homelessness. During question time today, I said that the waiting time for a Homeswest house in Fremantle for a poor person is between eight and 10 years.

Mr Trenorden: It is two years in Northam.

Mr McGINTY: I know. That is the point I am trying to make. In other country towns it is a lot less. It creates its own social problems with which we all have to deal. I have to deal with it. Poor people have to wait almost a decade to get state-provided housing, and that creates additional problems.

Mr Graham: In their suburb of choice.

Mr McGINTY: In my electorate.

Mr Graham: It is not as though your electorate is the only electorate in the metropolitan area.

Mr McGINTY: The member is right. I said that was the reality in my electorate.

Mr Johnson: There is state housing available in other areas.

Mr McGINTY: Sure. Members should listen to what I am saying and stop trying to put me off with red herrings. I am talking about what I deal with in my electorate.

A side effect is antisocial behaviour. All members have to deal with that. Such behaviour is emphasised in some of the inner urban areas of the State. Some members may disagree. We have seen the existence of street gangs in some of Perth's northern suburbs and Northbridge - apologies to the member for Perth. That is another problem that must be dealt with. In that respect, I am talking about metropolitan members of Parliament and the matters on which they must represent their constituents. The incidence of crime is a problem for all of us. It is more acute in some areas of the State than others. The incidence of home invasion, burglary, sexual assault and murder are more acute in some areas than others.

In some electorates there is a far greater concentration of people from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are problems that go with that. From my own circumstances I know that a great number of people who come to this country, particularly those who have arrived in recent years, have been tortured in their own country. That makes it hard for them to function completely when they first arrive in this country. That is the reality. Many members have to deal with the consequences of that in all of its social ramifications in our electoral offices.

Mr Barnett: You are talking about Fremantle. North Fremantle is in my electorate and I coped competently with North Fremantle. I lived there for seven years. There are all sorts of complex issues in rural areas.

Mr McGINTY: Judging from his reaction, if the Leader of the Opposition would let me get to the point I am trying to make, he might agree with me. Other areas - particularly some of the blue collar suburbs of Perth - are faced with massive unemployment. For instance, at the moment the engineering fabrication industry in this State is going through a rough time. Large scale unemployment, and all of the problems associated with that, is being thrust onto particular electorates or communities.

Mr Trenorden: Are you saying that is not happening in rural WA?

Mr McGINTY: I am not saying that. I ask the member for Avon to bear with me, because I am making an important point. I have listened to what people have said in this debate - I know it anyway, having been brought up in the country.

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Mr McNee: Here's one of those chickens that was born in the chook house.

Mr McGINTY: I spent a large portion of my life living in country areas - including the electorate of Avon.

The metropolitan area, more than anywhere else, is subject to pollution and the stresses and problems caused to our environment and to the community by urban expansion. We deal with those sorts of issues through our electorate offices every day. Working under fly in, fly out arrangements in country areas, while spouses and families remain in Perth, generates its own particular social problems.

Mr Graham: Every one of your candidates campaigned to stop fly in, fly out.

Mr McGINTY: Nonetheless, we need to deal with the social problems associated with it. The debate has tended to focus on the problems of distance, isolation and lack of government services in the country. Every member in this House deals with significant problems. What weighting should be put on those urban problems that I spoke about?

Mr Trenorden: We have already agreed that we all have problems.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Let the people of the State decide.

Dr Gallop: Do not give me that rubbish; it is a concocted argument.

Mr Barnett: A referendum is rubbish? Is that your view of democracy?

Dr Gallop: It is concocted because you cannot decide on a position. You have no leadership, that is why.

Mr Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, when I am on my feet you should stop the cross-conversation. The level of cross-conversation was outweighing the minister's speech. I want to listen to what the Attorney has to say, please show him some courtesy.

Mr McGINTY: Although some members opposite have denied the principle of electoral equality - of one vote, one value - a significant number acknowledged the principle. Some of the more thoughtful members opposite said that no-one can disagree with the principle of electoral equality. However, they went on to say that there is more to it than that and we must ensure that the representation is effective. A number of members opposite said that; and it is to those people that I want to address this question. Those members who find the principle of electoral equality anathema will never agree with me, so there is no point in trying to pursue a dialogue with people who are diametrically opposed to that. Those people who support the principle of electoral equality, but want to factor in other things to ensure effective representation, referred to the need for vote weighting for isolation, distance from Perth, travelling time and lack of government services in the rural areas. What weighting do members place on the urban problems that I just mentioned? What weighting should I get in my electorate for those social issues that I must deal with day in, day out in my electorate office to effectively represent my constituents? Maybe there are one or two members from the well-heeled western suburbs who do not face those issues, but I think most of us have major issues that we must deal with in our electorates. We come into this Parliament to vote to effect the people we represent - their life circumstances and experiences.

Mr Omodei: There is absolutely no difference. We do not have enough resources for mental health services in country Western Australia.

Mr McGINTY: Neither do I in Fremantle. The courthouse is 200 metres from my electorate office, the mental health hospital is half a kilometre away and the Centrelink office is a couple of hundred metres away. In its own way, that generates enormous issues for me to deal with in my electorate.

Mr Barnett: You have made an argument for social problems in urban areas. Everyone acknowledges that they exist. Social problems are generally associated with low income. The reality is that income levels are lower in regional areas, while the level of disguised unemployment and underemployment is far higher. If you want to run a social argument, it is best exemplified in rural areas. They are the areas of greatest deprivation, lowest income and highest levels of unemployment.

Mr McGINTY: My point is that members may want to weight particular factors that contribute to their electorate workload. I do not mean this in any disparaging way to the member for Avon, but with the rolling green pastures of the Avon Valley and the beautiful historic towns that he represents, perhaps he should have a loading, rather than a reduction in the number of people he represents. Frankly, while the Leader of the National Party and I have different problems to deal with and represent, I cannot see any reason that I should have more or fewer people in my electorate than he has.

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Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr Trenorden: That is why we had this debate; you cannot understand that reason.

Mr McGINTY: Having previously lived in the member for Avon's electorate -

Mr Cowan: That is exactly what this Bill will do.

Mr McGINTY: That is the purpose of the Bill.

Mr Cowan: It will put more people in the member for Avon's seat than in yours.

Mr McGINTY: I met with the National Party and discussed this issue. From memory, the member for Stirling asked how the National Party would feel about a provision to direct the electoral commissioners to pitch seats with static or slowly declining populations at the lower end of the tolerance scale, rather than at the higher end. I am sympathetic to that.

Mr Trenorden: You sound it!

Mr McGINTY: No.

Mr Cowan: It is not there.

Mr McGINTY: That could well be. No-one from the National Party came back to me.

Mr Trenorden: You told us not to bother. You did not want to hear our point of view.

Mr McGINTY: No, the Leader of the National Party is misrepresenting the situation. I left the National Party office on the basis that I would welcome input and suggestions. This is the closing speech on the second reading debate. It is not the time for recriminations. I understand the point of view put by the member for Merredin during this debate. He was concerned that the wheatbelt seats would be pitched at the upper end of the scale, compared with urban seats. I can understand and completely support the addition of a seventh criteria to direct the electoral commissioners to deal with that issue.

Mr Cowan: You have taken them all out.

Mr McGINTY: No, they are all there.

Mr Cowan: No, they are not.

Mr McGINTY: Yes, they are.

Mr Cowan: You have taken them out. Take a look at the Bill.

Mr McGINTY: The member for Merredin is wrong. He should look at proposed section 16L. It is exactly the same criteria that currently exist. It is still there. It would not be hard to include a clause that dealt with that issue.

Mr Cowan: It tells the commissioners to make sure that the trend of demographic shifts does not shunt everything else to one side.

That is one of the six criteria that is there at the moment. The thrust of what the member was saying can be incorporated, because it would make only a marginal difference - not the extreme difference that was mentioned. It is not something that we on this side of the House are unsympathetic to at all.

Mr Graham: What the member for Merredin is saying is that, of the six criteria, it is the sixth that is given weighting by the Electoral Commission - the demographic trends - and if you apply some weighting to that, the other five are ignored or diminished.

Mr McGINTY: The member is right. The member for Merredin is also right to this extent: one of the changes this Bill requires is that the quota be fixed on a projected enrolment four years hence. That will exacerbate the problem that he is talking about. That can be ameliorated as a detail.

Mr Omodei: You were also talking about local government boundaries. It proposes to cut to bits the Shire of Donnybrook and the Shire of Margaret River.

Mr McGINTY: We have asked - as has the member's party, the National Party and the Greens (WA) - the Electoral Commission to do some indicative maps. I would not be too worried about things that are purely indicative; they will not be the final maps; they are purely there to give people an idea of what things might look

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like if the commission applied that criteria in a broad sense, as we understand it. I would not be too concerned or excited about that at this time.

If members want to put a weighting on those country issues - if I can broadly refer to them as that - of isolation, lack of government services, distance and the like, why not put a weighting on some of those other issues that are extremely pressing?

Mr Barnett: Youth suicide in country areas?

Mr McGINTY: There is a whole raft of issues that are acute in the city; others are less acute in the country.

I call upon those members opposite who have said that they support the principle of one vote, one value to put some sort of weighting on the factors that affect particular electorates -

Mr Barnett: It does not justify vote weighting. This is the argument the Minister for Electoral Affairs is putting.

Mr McGINTY: I am throwing out a challenge to the Leader of the Opposition as someone who has said that he supports the principle of one vote, one value. Perhaps it is qualified. If so, I understand that, and I am not trying to make a cute point. I am throwing out to the Leader of the Opposition a challenge to come up with some criteria and then we can have a rational debate. To simply say that every metropolitan electorate is the same and deserves the same weighting, and every country electorate is the same and deserves the same weighting, shows the need for reform of our electoral system. A country-city divide does not exist, in the same way that great uniformity does not exist between various suburbs of Perth, which is the basis of our current electoral system. I could understand it if someone came into this House and said, "Take these 20 factors and weight them and take them into account". For instance, the member for Girrawheen might have a far smaller electorate than the member for Nedlands to which exactly that criteria applies, but that is not the case. In fact, the member for Girrawheen most probably has a significantly larger electorate than the member for Nedlands. That is the problem with our system.

The system at the moment must change because it is so distorted that it cannot be said to have any rational foundation. There are nearly 40 000 electors in the Wanneroo electorate, one of the largest in the State - in terms of being above the 50 per cent mark - compared with just over 9 000 for Eyre, most of whom are city dwellers -

Mr Johnson: But that will change after eight years anyway.

Mr McGINTY: That is the situation with which we are dealing. As members know, the current electoral laws require that there be 34 seats in the city and 23 in the country regardless of the population. If rational criteria were applied, that would be one thing; however, a basis of where people live is not a rational criterion. That is the problem with our system. It is wrong to have the extremes of Wanneroo and Eyre that have been illustrated today.

Mr Omodei: What were those numbers?

Mr McGINTY: When the redistribution occurred, it would have been at least a two to one ratio rather than the four to one ratio that it is today. There is no rationale for having a two to one ratio.

The value of city votes is being debased. As the member for Kimberley so eloquently asked in this House, why should country people feel as though they are second-class citizens who need vote weighting as a basis for their citizenship and for their participation in the democratic process? It makes them feel like second-class citizens. That is not fair, and that is why I say that the fundamental basis of this legislation is the notion of equality.

The system must change. Some people would prefer a more gradual pace of change, and I can understand that. In the past -

Mr Barnett: Hansard has been interesting this week.

Point of Order

Dr GALLOP: I am interested in the comments of the Minister for Electoral Affairs on this Bill but the Leader of the Opposition wants to engage me and the Deputy Premier in debate. He should be called to order.

Mr BARNETT: For the public record, I note that this is the first time that the Premier of Western Australia has engaged in this debate on electoral parliamentary reform, and it is about time - although it was a trivial point.

The SPEAKER: The level of interjections is not as high as it has previously been; however, it makes it hard for members to listen to the Minister for Electoral Affairs.

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While I am speaking and most members are here, I bring to the attention of members that over the past week there have been two instances in which unparliamentary language was used. If I were in the Chair at the time, I would have asked for those comments to have been withdrawn. I ask members to respect this place and to be moderate in what they say across the Chamber, because sometimes it is picked up by the Hansard reporter; members should be careful of that.

Debate Resumed

Mr McGINTY: As I have said, some people would like change to occur at a slower pace than this legislation proposes. As I recall, in the time of Sir Charles Court, the electoral system was amended to reduce the discrepancy between country and city enrolments by increasing the number of people in the city without reducing the number of people in the country. That was a gentle way of moving towards the principle of equality. There are other ways of achieving that. This legislation is designed to achieve equality within the extent to which this Parliament is likely to approve it in one move. That is the nature of the legislation before members; however, previous legislation was headed in the same direction.

I made the point earlier about the need for electoral change in this State. Not only is the 40 000 and 9 000 enrolment of Wanneroo and Eyre an extreme example of the problem, which takes the election process outside what is called "elected by the people", but that measure of distortion also interferes with the quality and value of the votes that are exercised. Does anyone opposite believe that people who live in the city of Mandurah require a vote weighting of two to one? I do not think that any member does. Mandurah is a city with city facilities. It will soon have a train service to link it with the city. Mandurah is very close to the city. However, even if we accept that Mandurah does not need vote weighting, the current law requires it. Therefore, the current law must be reformed. What about the people of Bunbury and its outlying suburbs? Why do they need vote weighting? Does anyone want to put a case for vote weighting in favour of the city of Bunbury and its approximately 35 000 residents? I do not think anyone does, but the law requires it. I can say the same about the cities - I emphasise that - of Geraldton, Albany and Kalgoorlie. My friend the member for Vasse is not here, but I can say the same about that member, who represents the affluent wine-growing areas to the north of Margaret River, and about the member for Warren-Blackwood, who represents the chardonnay coast at Margaret River and further south. Why do the people in those areas need vote weighting? I make that point because I have dealt with a large proportion of the country electorates in what I have just described. I do not think anyone would seriously argue that those country cities should be the beneficiaries of vote rigging or vote weighting. They should be treated the same as people in Perth. There should not be any argument about that.

The electoral laws of this land must be changed. Members may not be happy about what we are doing, but please at least acknowledge that the current system is broke and must be fixed.

Mr Birney: The redistribution will fix that.

Mr McGINTY: The redistribution will not fix that, because the structure is contained in the Electoral Distribution Act. That structure must be altered, and that is what this legislation is seeking to do. I held out in discussions with all of the major parties, except One Nation, the offer to participate and to see whether we could agree on a process. My friends the Greens (WA) have also been engaged in discussions with the Liberal Party, and I believe the National Party, to try to work through an acceptable new electoral system for this State, because the current system is broke and must be fixed. We have almost finished the second reading debate; we still have the consideration in detail stage to go through. I extend an offer to the parties opposite that if they want to make constructive contributions, as the National Party member for Merredin has done, and if they want to formulate that in an amendment, we will be happy to look at that.

Mr Cowan: Can you guarantee to bring on the debate outside the time that the Dowerin field day is on?

Mr McGINTY: That is another issue. I think, to be fair, we offered that, but I will not get into that argument now.

Many members opposite have said that this legislation will be the end of the civilised world as we know it, it will cause the demise of the State Parliament, and it will cause people to secede from Western Australia. I assure members that will not be the case.

Mr Birney: If Kalgoorlie and the Pilbara were to secede, that would be the end of the civilised world!

Mr McGINTY: Mr Speaker, the member for South Perth referred to your predecessor, George Strickland, who advocated one vote, one value within the Liberal Party and had a significant measure of support for that within the Liberal Party before the last election, when he was still in the Parliament. I remind the member for South

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Perth that we need to go back only two Speakers on the Liberal side to Ian Thompson. Ian Thompson was a Liberal and later became an Independent, and he was a great advocate for the principle of electoral equality. He supported the adoption of a law such as the one that we are proposing. The law that we are proposing is no different from the law that George Strickland talked about during the past four years as a Liberal. Ian Thompson as Speaker supported a law of this nature to give one vote, one value in the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: So does the current Speaker, of course.

Mr McGINTY: I am very pleased to hear that. There is a great tradition of Speakers supporting democratic principles and institutions. A number of members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, have said they support the principle of one vote, one value. Five years ago, the member for Merredin was a joint signatory with Richard Court, the then Premier, to say that they supported one vote, one value in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Cowan: With a single quota for the Assembly -

Mr McGINTY: A single quota for the whole of the State.

Mr Cowan interjected.

Mr McGINTY: I can understand why the member would prefer it. If that was necessary to get the support of this Parliament for significant electoral reform to achieve one vote, one value, we would be happy to sit down and talk it through with the member. However, that would still fall short of what I regard as the principle. I make the point that it is not the end of the earth. Very significant leaders of the conservative side of politics in this State have supported exactly what we are trying to do.

Dr Gallop: There was a Liberal leader in this State in the 1930s by the name of T.L. Davy who supported one vote, one value. He was a young Liberal leader, who, unfortunately died playing cards at one of the hotels in Hay Street.

Mr Barron-Sullivan: A Labor Leader of the Opposition in 1947 said that it was evil.

Dr Gallop: Who?

Mr Barron-Sullivan: Wise.

Mr McGINTY: It is very significant that all three conservative Independent members of this House have spoken in this debate, and every one of them has supported this legislation. I say by way of reassurance to conservative people that a great number of other leaders on the conservative side of politics, and people who are now Independents on the conservative side of politics, support this legislation. Members might want to make changes to it.

Dr Woollard: I certainly stated that I would like it to go to a referendum, because I do not think the community has had adequate consultation on the issue. It was not part of your election platform.

Mr McGINTY: For a more complete statement, I should have said that the member for Alfred Cove put a qualification on it. The member for Churchlands also put a qualification on it; that is, she would like the large area weighting significantly increased. She does not regard it as enough to properly give effect to it. The member for South Perth also spoke in support of the legislation, but in terms of a need for restructuring the Parliament altogether. All members had qualifications and their own points of view, but they support the legislation; that is the bottom line. It is true to say that a large number of people from the conservative side of politics do likewise.

For those members who think this Parliament should retain a measure of regional vote-weighting representation, I say that I am not one of them. I support the principle of one vote, one value in its purest form.

Mr McNee interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Moore!

Mr McGINTY: I thank the member for Moore. My view is pure one vote, one value in which every citizen is truly equal. We have not been able to achieve that. Both the Greens and a number of our backbenchers lobbied for the large area loading. That will affect four or five seats, but I am happy that that gets us to within an ace of, or as near as is practically achievable, the question of electoral equality in this State so far as the Legislative Assembly is concerned.

Mr Cowan: The modelling has been done for six seats.

Mr Bernie Masters; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Day; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr John Bowler; Acting Speaker; Mr Pendal; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Tony Dean; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jim McGinty; Speaker; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett

Mr McGINTY: It could go out to six seats, depending on where the boundaries are drawn, but it is more likely to be four or five. I agree with the member for Merredin on that.

For those members who want to argue that there should be regional representation, I will tell them what the Greens have been saying to me and, again, I reject this. The Greens have said that regional representation will be effected in the upper House. This is the House in which every citizen will be treated equally. If this legislation is passed, the Liberal Party will still retain a significant stranglehold on government - that often happens in the upper House when the Labor Party is in power - because a Labor Government never has control or a majority in the upper House.

Mr Bradshaw: You control it now.

Mr McGINTY: I wish we did.

Mr Bradshaw: The Greens are just an extension of your party.

Mr McGINTY: If we did, this State would have pure one vote, one value; but we do not. Two mechanisms in this legislation will give effect to regional representation; that is, the status quo in the Legislative Council and the vast area weighting for those seats in the Mining and Pastoral Region, and maybe some in the Agricultural Region, in which the areas are greater than 100 000 square kilometres.

Mr Graham: Can you explain to me how the status quo in the Mining and Pastoral Region provides regional representation?

Mr McGINTY: Yes. Essentially, this Bill retains the existing boundaries between the three country regions; that is, South West Region, Agricultural Region and Mining and Pastoral Region. Five Legislative Councillors will be retained in the Mining and Pastoral Region. There will also be five Legislative Councillors from the Agricultural Region, seven from the South West Region, and the status quo will remain between the three Legislative Council regions in the city. If this legislation is accepted, more Legislative Councillors will represent the Mining and Pastoral Region than will members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Graham: Thank you. That is what I was hoping you would say.

Mr McGINTY: That is clearly the situation, because, under this legislation, other than some gentle tinkering around the edges, we are not changing the thrust of the structure in the Legislative Council.

I want to make a final point to members who have advocated a referendum. It would cost \$5 million to conduct a referendum according to the advice I obtained from the Electoral Commission. Therefore, members should be aware that if they want to spend \$5 million of taxpayers' money on this issue -

Mr Barron-Sullivan: That is what the Premier said. Your Premier said that he would hold one on the Government's position. He is on the record as saying that.

Mr McGINTY: No, he did not; the member knows that. It must be remembered that it will cost \$5 million to conduct a referendum. I ask members to think seriously about that. In the light of the way in which this debate has evolved, and some of the offers that have been made, I say to the Liberal and National Parties, which are represented in this Parliament, that they should pick up the Government's offer to sit down and seriously negotiate a new electoral system before we come back to debate this Bill during the consideration in detail stage next week. It is a genuine offer from the Government, as it has been all the way through. The only ones who have been prepared to sit down and engage in, at this stage, inconclusive negotiations have been the Greens (WA). I have not been able to achieve what I set out to achieve with them, although I think this legislation is a giant step forward for democracy in Western Australia.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Thursday, 23 August 2001]
p2963c-3002a

Mr Bernie Masters; Mrs Carol Martin; Mr John Day; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr John Bowler; Acting Speaker; Mr Pandal; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Larry Graham; Dr Janet Woollard; Mr Tony Dean; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jim McGinty; Speaker; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Colin Barnett

Ayes (33)

Mr Andrews	Ms Guise	Mr McRae	Mrs Roberts
Mr Bowler	Mr Hill	Mr Marlborough	Mr Templeman
Mr Brown	Mr Hyde	Ms Martin	Mr Watson
Mr Carpenter	Mr Kobelke	Mr Murray	Mr Whitely
Dr Constable	Mr Logan	Mr O’Gorman	Dr Woollard
Mr Dean	Ms MacTiernan	Mr Pandal	Ms Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr D’Orazio	Mr McGinty	Mr Quigley	
Dr Edwards	Mr McGowan	Ms Radisich	
Dr Gallop	Ms McHale	Mr Ripper	

Noes (16)

Mr Barnett	Mr Day	Mrs Hodson-Thomas	Mr Sullivan
Mr Birney	Mrs Edwardes	Mr Johnson	Mr Trenorden
Mr Board	Mr Edwards	Mr McNee	Mr Waldron
Mr Cowan	Mr Graham	Mr Omodei	Mr Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)

Pair

Mr Kucera

Mr Ainsworth

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.