

**REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS BILL  
(SECOND READING)  
20 September 1923**

**Edith Cowan spoke in support of the Redistribution Bill. Commendation was made of the Commissioners. However, she expressed her reservations about continued malapportionment of the Western Australian electoral system. Again she argued for the educative benefits of compulsory voting.**

*Mrs COWAN:* (West Perth) [5.30]: It has been extremely interesting to listen to the debate on the Bill. One realises what perfect constituencies we should have had if only we had been consulted in regard to the boundaries, and in respect of what is known as community of interest. I feel that my own constituency could, in this manner, have been made a perfectly safe one for all time. Although many of us are not satisfied with the work of the Commission, I deprecate strongly the criticism that has been levelled against the members of the Commission who dealt with the matter. Two of them are civil servants—indeed the three of them are civil servants—and it would appear that they are not able to do anything that will give satisfaction to this House. I am convinced that the three Commissioners did their very best in this matter and that at any rate they tried to do what was right. I hardly like to think, even, of the suggestion made more than once in this Chamber that influence was brought to bear on one of the Commissioners. The metropolitan area is entitled to many more seats than it has. Three to one in quota has always been regarded as the proportion allotted, that is to say, we in the metropolitan area represent three people to one represented outside that area. That, however, does not give us the one vote we value that we hear so much about in this House. The member for Claremont (Mr J Thomson) has just shown us that in many cases it means nine votes for one value. Nevertheless, I think, members are to blame in the matter. I do not know how many helped, as every one of us was asked to help, the Commissioners. The Electoral Department sent notices to members asking them to assist to put names on the roll and to see that they were in correct order. It was in the interests of members to do that, and those who did not comply with the request suffered. In fact, even those who did, suffered, the member for Perth (Mr Mann) and myself amongst the number, although we did try to help in every way possible. I am very sorry that we cannot have compulsory voting in connection with this Bill.

*Hon. P. Collier:* A Bill to provide for that could be introduced this session.

*Mrs COWAN:* I wish we could do so. As one who has done a lot of canvassing I realise that compulsory voting would be very valuable for stirring up political interest. Compulsory enrolment does not enable us to sit back and say we have no duties in the matter of getting voters on the roll, nor does it enable us to say that we should not help our electoral officers in the way of getting the electors to do their duty to the country and to themselves. We have heard a great deal directly and indirectly with regard to the amount of favouritism shown in the Bill towards this side of the House. That is not so, because it favours this side so much less than it does the Opposition side.

*The Premier:* Only the juvenile members of the House have said that.

*Mrs COWAN:* We must consider the bill from the point of view of the general good and accept it as a Bill which is as fair as it can be made. I intend to support the second reading.

*Hon. P. Collins:* This is a soft of Salvation Army meeting today—everybody is testifying. Capt. Carter will now testify.