

8 June 2021

The Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

11 Floor Dumas House

2 Havelock Street

West Perth WA 6005

To Whom It May Concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the **Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform**.

In the Wheatbelt, business owners were part of rural Australia's contribution towards half of the nation's growth in the years following the Global Financial Crisis. In fact businesses in the Wheatbelt regularly fulfil an important "smoothing out" role during periods when the state and national economy is challenged, with regional Australia's economy demonstrating greater stability than Australia's metropolitan economy¹.

Western Australia's rural economy has always played a large part in the health and prosperity of both the state and the national economy, with the state's mining, agricultural and fishing sectors all making significant contributions. However this important role and how businesses and their communities contribute to the state's overall wealth and health are often forgotten in discussions around such issues as electoral reform.

Changes to electoral reform have the potential to significantly change this economic contribution from the region where I live and work, the Wheatbelt.

In a region such as the Wheatbelt which is highly dispersed in its population and businesses, having access to key decision makers such as members of Parliament (Legislative Council) are critical. Rural businesses and the communities in which they operate already face significant challenges and disadvantages which we have to overcome and changes to the electoral reform will only make this harder.

I do not support the option of electing members of the Legislative Council from an electorate consisting of the entire state of Western Australia.

Access to members of Parliament, having a voice and gaining the understanding of the nuances and unique situations which helps businesses navigate through government red tape, inefficiencies and bureaucracy will be significantly impeded should changes to electoral reform be instigated. Businesses need to have access to these decision makers to make a difference, progress and keep turning the wheel for the state's economic prosperity.

¹ Talking Point: The Economic Contribution of Regions to Australia's Prosperity, PricewaterhouseCoopers Geospatial Economic Modelling, IMF World Economic Outlook database, Reserve Bank of Australia as published by Regional Australia Institute, Barton ACT 2600.

Additionally, as State Governments continue to pull services and funding to the regions of WA which in turn pull people from living and actively contributing to rural communities, the importance of political representation becomes more and more important. Rural WA is a significant contributor to the wealth of the state, yet consistent Governments continue to pull services, funding and infrastructure from us and now our vote. It will only further add to the inequality of Western Australians and may only see greater urbanisation.

In addition, a reduction in the number of local members of Parliament representing the regions will further increase the pressure on remaining representatives to cover vast ground to appropriately service their electorate.

However, in regards to Group Ticket Voting there should be reform to remove the group voting ticket from the Legislative Council voting system. This has been long overdue and the recent results in the State Election demonstrate reform needs to occur. I understand the majority of voters "vote above the line" and there is a clear lack of transparency with where preferences are allocated. The reform should be aligned to the Federal Parliament Senate Reforms in 2016.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this.

Kind regards,

Mrs. Caroline Robinson