



Objection 307

D Haywood

3 pages

Objection to Electoral Redistribution

I am writing to object to the current electoral redistributions on the grounds that the method of determining the quota used to determine the number of House of Representative seats results in an unfair allocation of seats to all the States.

Under section 24 of the Constitution, the quota is determined by dividing the number of people of the Commonwealth as shown by the latest statistics of the Commonwealth by twice the number of Senators. The initial paragraph of the Constitution states that “the House of Representatives shall be composed of members directly chosen by the people of the Commonwealth”. This introductory paragraph makes it clear that “people of the Commonwealth” refers to the people who are eligible to elect members for the House of Representatives.

The term “people of the Commonwealth” implies that the people to be included in the count of people are not just any person who happens to be residing in the country, but people who have some permanent attachment or belonging to the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures used by the Electoral Commission are the Estimated Resident Population which includes large numbers of temporary residents who have no Australian citizenship. These population counts include large numbers of revolving door residents such as overseas students and workers on temporary work visas.

It is absurd and outrageous that the number of seats in our House of Representatives is being determined by large numbers of people who have no Australian Citizenship. Recently, I compared the number of people that the AEC believes should be on the electoral roll (approximately 16 million) with the number of people 18 or over in the Estimated Resident Population (approximately 18.3 million).

If the proportion of non citizens was spread evenly across the States, a case could be made for the continued use of the Estimated Resident Population figures in calculating the quota. Sadly, this is not the case, and the large difference across the States introduces a weighting in favour of those States with a higher proportion of people who are not citizens.

State	AEC Estimated Voter population	ABS ERP for people 18 and over	% Difference
NSW	5,319,640	6,121,038	13.1
Victoria	4,240,868	4,942,129	14.2
Queensland	3,180,694	3,775,589	15.6
Western Australia	1,698,037	1,986,457	14.5
South Australia	1,240,039	1,357,583	8.7
Tasmania	389,894	408,231	4.5

Table 1: Comparison AEC Estimated Voter population with ABS ERP data for 18 and over

Source: AEC data http://www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/Enrolment_stats/national/2017.htm

ABS data Estimated Residential Population Cat 3101.0

To see the way the proportion of non citizens distorts the quota calculation. I have done the calculation using the AEC estimated voter population figures.

Quota= 16,069,172/144 = 111,591.472

State	AEC Number of Seats	Revised number of seats
NSW	47	48
Victoria	38	38
Queensland	30	29
Western Australia	16	15
South Australia	10	11
Tasmania	5	5

Table 2: Number of House of Representative seats calculated by AEC and by using population of eligible voters

Source AEC data: <http://www.aec.gov.au/media/media-releases/2017/08-31.htm>

While efforts to introduce the principle of one vote one value has been obstructed by conservative politicians it is still widely regarded as a principle to be followed and is one of the reasons for conducting electoral redistributions in the first place.

However, we now have a situation in the country where an uneven distribution of people who are not “people of the Commonwealth” is distorting the calculation of the quota so that states such as South Australia are about to lose one House of Representative member simply because they have a lower proportion of revolving door non citizens than a state like Queensland.

I request that the AEC set aside the current determination of the number of seats in the House of Representatives and introduce revised procedures for the fair apportionment of House of Representative members.

Under the current broken procedures for determining quotas and the number of House of Representative seats, the proposed redistribution entrenches an objectionable malapportionment of seats for the States. Given that current laws require people to vote at elections, at the very least, the AEC should be taking all steps to make sure that voting is fair.

The proposed redistribution will result in South Australia with an average of 120,133 voters per electorate while in Western Australia, an average of 101,163 voters will be needed per seat. It is disgraceful that this proposed redistribution will result in South Australian voters requiring 19% more voters to be stuffed into a seat than in the adjoining State.

State	Voters on Roll	Number of Seats	Average number/seat
South Australia	1,201,334	10	120,133
Western Australia	1,618,611	16	101,163

Table 3: Average number of voters per House of Representative seats

I understand that due to the flawed system we have in this country, while there are laws to make sure roughly the same numbers of voters are in each seat within a State, there is nothing that ensures ridiculous malapportionment such as proposed in this redistribution from occurring. Having a voting system where 5 votes in Western Australia are worth the same as 6 votes in South Australia is very far from the standard of fairness expected in a democratic country and it is a disgrace we are expected to vote in a system as unfair as this.

South Australia will be deprived of a seat because the “population” falls about 13,000 people to short . Given the small number of people and the likely errors in the Estimated Resident Population, I believe it would be prudent to allow South Australia to retain all its seats and thus avoid any serious damage to the electoral system which would be seen as grossly unfair if the redistribution were to proceed.

Some of the matters raised in this objection were raised with the AEC in emails earlier this year. While I accept that I incorrectly sent the objection via your website for complaints and feedback (https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Contact_the_AEC/feedback.htm), I believe that this email should have been forwarded to the appropriate part of the AEC rather than being summarily rejected.

When I replied to say that I was considering not voting due to my conscientious objection to the unfairness of the proposed voting changes, I was advised that I “if you fail to participate in the process you can’t complain about it.”

I find it highly objectionable that staff from the AEC feel they are entitled to tell me what political action I can take as a conscientious objector to an unfair voting system.

Please be advised that I will be continuing to campaign to improve the fairness of the voting system in this country.

Respectfully yours

D Haywood