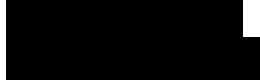


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Malcolm Mackerras AO



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Ms. Kate Thwaites MP, Chair
Senator James McGrath, Deputy Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Kate and James

I write further to my letter of 25 August that was published on the JSCEM website on 7 September as Submission Number 5.

As you would have gathered my strong opinion is that the present Senate voting system is dishonest and I want it replaced by an honest system. That is what I care about, but an important characteristic of my reform proposal is that the size of the Senate would rise from 76 to 89.

I have always been aware that there is a by-product to my proposal to have an honest Senate voting system. That by-product would be the creation of 24 more seats in the House of Representatives. I did not discuss it in my first submission, but I do so now.

I have studied the *Report on the conduct of the 2019 federal election and matters related thereto* which was the JSCEM report published in December 2020. I have noticed, in particular, that pages 159 and 160 are devoted to this topic: "Number of Senators and Members".

In my opinion the then Committee got it back-to-front. It expressed no hostility to the present dishonest Senate voting system with its deceitful and manipulative instructions on a voter unfriendly ballot paper, but the Committee did express approval of the idea that more seats should be created in the House of Representatives. That being so I deal now with this subject that would be a mere by-product of the creation of a decent Senate voting system.

On balance I agree with the then Committee's view that more seats should be created in the House of Representatives which is why I deal with it in this supplementary submission.

Attached to this letter is a table. Its source is the table on page 160 of that report. I have added to it by making calculations for Canada in 2019 and Australia in 2022. What will be noticed is that even with the extra 24 Australian seats the average number of electors per member of the House of Representatives/House of Commons would be higher in Australia than in Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The numbers are 98,450 for Australia, 80,985 for Canada, 72,423 for the United Kingdom and 29,580 for New Zealand.

In my opinion an important effect of the increase would be to move Australia closer to the ideal of “one vote, one value”, so I have taken out some recent statistics to illustrate what I mean.

The extent to which Australia departs from “one vote, one value” can best be seen by the fact that there are two privileged jurisdictions, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

At the May 2022 federal election Solomon (NT) had the smallest number of electors at 71,843 while Lingiari (NT) had the second smallest number at 74,008.

For Tasmania the numbers at May 2022 were 74,697 for Clark, 79,322 for Bass, 80,243 for Franklin, 82,424 for Braddon and 85,166 for Lyons.

The states most disadvantaged were New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia where there had been no recent redistributions of seats. For example, the most recent figures show that there are 132,123 electors in Paterson (NSW), 130,767 in Mayo (SA) and 130,151 in Adelaide (SA).

Meanwhile, the average for Australia as shown by the table is 114,099 electors.

As demonstrated below there is no need for redistributions during the 47th Parliament in the ACT, Northern Territory or Tasmania but redistributions will be needed in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. In my opinion the state most in need of a redistribution is South Australia, to bring down the number of electors in seats like Adelaide and Mayo. However, there would only be a redistribution in South Australia if there were (as I propose) to be an increase of two House of Representatives seats.

So, I now go through the states one by one, beginning with New South Wales which presently has 47 members. If my plan were adopted that would increase by eight to 55. If my plan is rejected that 47 would drop by one to 46.

Victoria presently has 39 members. If my plan were adopted that would increase by five to 44. If my plan is rejected that 39 would drop by one to 38.

Queensland presently has 30 members. If my plan were rejected that would increase by one to 31. If my plan were implemented that 30 would increase by five to 35.

Western Australia presently has 15 members. If my plan were adopted that would increase by four to 19. If my plan is rejected that 15 would increase by one to 16.

South Australia is the most interesting case. It presently has 10 members. If that number stays at 10 then in 2025 Mayo would have about 146,000 electors, twice the average of the two Northern Territory seats of 73,000. By contrast, under my plan South Australia would gain two seats (to 12), a redistribution would occur during the present term and the seats now most bloated in numbers would have their numbers reduced.

So, there is considerable merit in my plan, but I conclude on this note. I would denounce the increase in size of the House of Representatives if the Senate voting system were to keep its worst present features.

The worst features of the present Senate voting system are the deceitful and manipulative instructions on the ballot paper and the general voter unfriendliness (but party machine friendliness) of the ballot paper.

These sum up a system that is dishonest, one that has a ballot paper concocted by party politicians looking after themselves and the machines that gave them their seats. They do not care about the voters. Their attitude is that the people are not there to be helped, nor are they there to be served. The people are there to be manipulated.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Mackerras

Ratio of Electors to Members

| Country | Election Year | Electors | Members | Average number of electors per member |
|----------------|---------------|------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Australia | 1984 | 9,866,266 | 148 | 66,664 |
| Australia | 2019 | 16,424,248 | 151 | 108,770 |
| Australia | 2022 | 17,228,900 | 151 | 114,099 |
| Australia | 2022 | 17,228,900 | 175 | 98,450 |
| United Kingdom | 2019 | 47,074,800 | 650 | 72,423 |
| Canada | 2015 | 25,939,742 | 338 | 76,745 |
| Canada | 2019 | 27,373,058 | 338 | 80,985 |
| New Zealand | 2020 | 3,549,564 | 120 | 29,580 |