

COVER SHEET

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters regarding the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Ensuring Fair Representation of the Northern Territory) Bill 2020*

Submitter:

James F Barlow

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Date of submission:

8 July 2020

My position on the Bill:

In favour

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

JF Barlow

Darwin, NT

8 July 2020

Committee Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

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Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Ensuring Fair Representation of the Northern Territory) Bill 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to the Electoral Matters Committee in support of maintaining two House of Representative seats for the Northern Territory and offshore Indian Ocean Territories. This is the bipartisan position of all four federal representatives from our local major parties (CLP NT and Labor NT).

The maintenance of two House of Representative seats for the Northern Territory demonstrates an appropriate and balanced commitment to both our electorate, and Australia's national interests. Australian Government(s) have engaged in substantial and decades-long rhetoric on the importance of Northern Australia, especially within a defence context. This has in part seen an increase in some defence capability and infrastructure but has also often fallen short of what we might have reasonably expected to have been achieved.

The agreement with our key ally the United States for the Northern Territory to host an annual Marine Force Rotation has been a significant maturing in approach to national defence, especially within a Northern Australian context. Nor has the NT Government been idle, sponsoring a range of defence strategy initiatives including John Coyne's ASPI paper, *'Strong and free? The future security of Australia's north.'*

I attended the launch of the paper, which included a Q&A session. Retired LTGEN USMC John Wissler spoke of his experience in Iraq and Afghanistan noting the lessons the Marines learned in how they trained, fought and sustained their forces. The lesson from the Marine experience for Australia being; we raise and train our forces in our southern states but can sustain and fight them out of the North.

In light of the oft referred '*changing strategic circumstances*' Australia finds itself in, and the recent release of the *2020 Defence Strategic Update*; a focus on building up our defence capabilities in the North will continue to be a political endeavour of significant profile and importance. Within that context, the maintenance of a minimum two divisions for the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives will practically and politically demonstrate Australia values its North.

To that end I commend Senator Malarndirri McCarthy's and Senator the Hon Don Farrell's bill for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

JF Barlow

Darwin, NT