



**CHINESE LITERARY ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND
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‘Keeping our Culture & Traditions alive’

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**Chinese Literary Association of Christmas Island’s Submission to the
JSCEM Inquiry on the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Ensuring Fair Representation of
the Northern Territory) Bill 2020**

The Chinese Literary Association is an incorporated association on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean which sits in the Lingiari Electorate for federal voting. Its aims are to pursue prosperity for all Christmas Islanders and to pass on and maintain Chinese social, heritage and cultural practices to the young generation on the island. There has been a CLA type association since the first days of colonisation on Christmas Island by the British with indentured Chinese coolies at the end of the 19th century. We have an active membership today and are in pursuit of our organisational goals energetically.

One of the greatest struggles the CLA fought with all Islanders in the 20th century was the right to be recognised as equals to mainland Australians. There was an active discrimination regime on the Island set up by the British and continued by the Australian Government after it took over in 1958, making us part of the nation. The battles were won and we are Australian citizens today with equal rights to mainlanders, something our ancestors could never have dared to dream. We no longer have a separate bus to the whites. We no longer have a separate school. We can own property. We can run for Parliament. We can vote.

And we can have our voices heard in submissions such as this.

The Chinese Literary Association of Christmas Island is against the change announced by the Australian Electoral Commission today that the Northern Territory shall move from two electorates to only one. This drastically reduces our representation federally.

We understand that the AEC count for demographics for two seats falls short by a few thousand. This we think is not enough of an argument to reduce representation by half.

Perhaps it is a little over-represented with two seats by a count of a few thousand, but it is **definitively grossly** under-represented with just one.

The Chinese on Christmas Island have a keen sense of what is unjust and unfair with the bulk of our communities' life on the island being oppressed by the system that brought us here. We remember that it was only in 1984 that we could vote for the first time in Australia.

We also have an understanding that the indigenous peoples of the NT, which number 25%-30%, have similarly also been late to receive electoral rights because of racial reasons and consider the fact that reducing the NT to one electorate would drastically reduce their say in Canberra which is perhaps more needed than ours.

How can Australia Close The Gap with people of colour in remote regions of the nation if it denies them adequate representation in the House?

The Christmas Island Chinese Literary Association considers keeping the two seat status to be the best way of maintaining the limited representation that we do have. If we had to share our representatives with 70,000 more people in the NT Solomon Electorate as it joins our Lingiari Electorate, we would experience significantly less representation compared to mainland metro counterparts.

Yours sincerely

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Gee Foo

Secretary of the Chinese Literary Association