

My representation to the Inquiry is simple because the issues are simple.

Proposing a minimum of two seats for both territories is clearly fair for the Northern Territory but manifestly unfair for residents of the Australian Capital Territory.

The current population of the ACT is such that subdivision of the electorate into two seats produces seats of approximately 110,000 voters each - the largest two electorates in the whole of Australia by far. If instead the ACT were given a minimum of three seats the number of voters in each would be approximately 75,000 - close, as I understand it, to the median number in electorates Australia-wide. To have less than a minimum of three seats in the ACT is unfair to the people of the ACT in diluting their Parliamentary representation. This does not sit well with the underlying notion in the Australian democracy of "one vote one value".

In the NT the current population is such that two seats of approximately 55,000 result - producing the smallest two electorates in Australia and likely to meet the needs of the NT for some considerable time before three seats might be considered through considerable relatively higher growth in the NT compared to the rest of Australia.

Another dimension is the issue of stability which I understand originally underlaid this inquiry. The notion that with the vagaries of changing populations in the NT and elsewhere may result in the NT moving from one to two seats and then back to one again was not an acceptable arrangement for many fairly obvious reasons. Rather than have a population that just achieves two electorates and then just misses out in turn it would obviously make far more sense to have a minimum of two seats, noting that it is unlikely that the possibility of a third seat in the NT would occur in the next few decades or even beyond.

In the case of the ACT, the issue of instability *has already occurred!* The ACT's population is such that it is likely to hover around justifying two or three electorates in turn for quite a long time. The very electoral representation stability that would be achieved in the NT with a decision to provide a minimum of two seats for that territory would not occur in the ACT without deciding to provide for a minimum of three seats in the ACT. The same arguments that justify a minimum of two seats in the NT justify a minimum of three seats in the ACT.

It is hard to see either logic or fairness in the proposal to have a minimum of two seats for both the ACT and the NT. Providing a minimum of three seats for the ACT and two seats for the NT would be both logical and fair by almost any measure that might be devised.

I strongly urge the Committee to consider making such a finding and recommendation.

