

Benjamin Cronshaw

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Submission to the Inquiry into the NT Representation Bill

I support the Bill. Two divisions for the Northern Territory is reasonable to ensure sufficient and equitable representation.

The divisions are relatively low in population (with some 69,000 and 70,000 electors), but combining the two would create a very high population electorate (139,000+ electors). I note the Division of the Northern Territory existed as the sole electorate in the Northern Territory from 1922 to 2001, before being divided between the Divisions of Solomon and Lingiari.

Speaking as an urban Melbournian, I am well represented by my local member and many other members in the Melbourne area. Naturally, there are many electorates around the city area to reflect the greater population. The effect is that the interests and perspective of metropolitan Australians are well represented in Parliament. A change of one electorate have a relatively minor impact on our representation.

However, rural and remote areas across a large territory may feel underrepresented in Parliament. There are fewer members in Parliament who can appreciate the experience and challenges of life in these areas and advocate for them. When you add the Indigenous demographics of the Northern Territory, including the challenges with Closing the Gap, this further underpins the need for adequate representation. Going from two electorates to one would effectively halve their representation in the House of Representatives. Mandating two divisions would ensure good representation for the people of the Northern Territory, including many Indigenous and/or rural and remote communities.

Furthermore, as a territory, the Northern Territory legislature can be overruled by the Federal Government in ways that state legislatures cannot. With this check on their self-determination, it is important that the people of the Northern Territory are represented in the Commonwealth Parliament when the decisions are made.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kind Regards,

Benjamin Cronshaw.