



New Research Proposes Models For A Queensland Upper House

Publish Date:

October 2020

A new research report released today by the Institute of Public Affairs argues an upper house should be re-introduced into Queensland's parliament because it will lead to more accountability, better democratic representation, and a greater say for regional Queenslanders.

"The voice of regional Queenslanders must be heard loud and clear on George Street," said report co-author Daniel Wild, Director of Research at the Institute of Public Affairs.

The research assesses the best available domestic and international evidence on upper houses, and analyses three potential upper house models for Queensland:

1. Population-based representation model, where the upper house is comprised of a single state-wide electorate such as in South Australia and New South Wales.
2. Geographic-based representation model, where the upper house is comprised of representatives from certain regions across Queensland, such as Local Government Areas.
3. Mixed model, which is a combination of models one and two, and can be given effect



through mechanisms such as multi-member electorates, such as in Victoria and Western Australia.

The report argues that the biggest structural challenge facing Queenslanders is the growing dominance of the South East region, and that action is needed to correct the imbalance.

The geographic-based upper house, called the Regional Council, is the most significant and far-reaching model analysed in the research report.

Members of the Regional Council would be called Regional Representatives, with voters from each of the 77 Local Government Areas across Queensland voting for one Regional Representative.

“Issues of concern for regional Queenslanders, such as jobs, small business, and freedom of speech, are too often drowned out by the niche preferences of a small metropolitan elite in the state’s South East,” said Mr Wild

“Queensland has a long and proud history of decentralisation and regional autonomy. Making north Queensland its own state remains very popular. The Regional Council model provides a circuit breaker to this debate.”

Under the model, while the state’s South-East (which includes Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, and Brisbane) is currently home to some 69% of seats in Queensland’s Legislative Assembly, it would contain just 14% of seats in the proposed upper house. This means that across the two houses combined, the South-East would lose its majority and account for just 44% of all seats. Conversely, 56% of all seats would be located outside of the state’s South-East.

“The Regional Council model will shift the balance of power back to the regions,” said Mr Wild.

The biggest beneficiaries under the proposal would be Queenslanders living in the state’s Far North who would gain 24 seats in the new 77-seat upper house chamber. This would see their representation increase close to six-fold, from 5 to 29 seats, and the total percentage of seats in the Far North would increase from 5% to 17%.

“The only way to break the strangle hold that the South-East has over the regions is to implement far-reaching, institutional changes to the structure of Queensland’s parliament,” said Mr Wild.

[Download](#) the report.