

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SPEECH

BY

The Rt Hon. W. McMAHON, C.H., M.P.

Prime Minister

ON

Redistribution of States into Electoral Divisions

Ministerial Statement

[From the 'Parliamentary Debates', 28 September 1972]

Mr McMAHON (Lowe—Prime Minister)—by leave—I desire to inform the House that as required by the Representation Act 1905-1964, the Chief Electoral Officer has ascertained the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth and the numbers of the people of the several States consequent upon the taking of the census on 30th June 1971. Copies of the Chief Electoral Officer's certificate specifying the said numbers have been tabled. Pursuant to sections 9 and 10 of the Representation Act the Chief Electoral Officer has determined the number of members of the House of Representatives to be chosen for the several States. As a result of that determination the representation for Western Australia will be increased by one member as from the first general election held after that State has been redistributed into electoral divisions. Section 25 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act provides:

25 (1.) A re-distribution of any State into divisions shall be made in the manner hereinbefore provided whenever directed by the Governor-General by proclamation.

(2.) Such proclamation may be made—

(a) whenever an alteration is made in the number of members of the House of Representatives to be elected for the State; and

(b) whenever in one-fourth of the divisions of the State the number of the electors differs from a quota ascertained in the manner provided in this part to a greater extent than one-fifth more or one-fifth less; and

(c) at such other times as the Governor-General thinks fit.

It will be noted that Western Australia qualifies for a redistribution under the provisions of Section 25 (2.) (a).

The Chief Electoral Officer has advised the Government that there is not now sufficient time to give effect to a redistribution of any State before the forthcoming House of Representatives elections. Nevertheless, the Government believes that it has an obligation to set in motion the machinery for a redistribution of Western Australia so as to ensure that that State gains its entitlement of an extra member from the beginning of the 29th Parliament. The Government therefore proposes to recommend to the Governor-General the appointment of distribution commissioners for Western Australia. Although there has been some shift of population in the other States, there is no requirement at present for a redistribution in any State other than Western Australia and consideration in respect of those States will be deferred for the time being.