

Released by Former Premier John Olsen

17/08/2000

World-first Virtual Electorate for South Australia

Press Release

The South Australian Parliament will be the first in the world to move towards creating a "global Virtual Electorate" for expatriates who want to maintain their commitment to their home State.

Information Economy Minister Michael Armitage today announced the electoral innovation which would see the creation of a Virtual Electorate - to which South Australians anywhere in the world may elect their own Member of the Legislative Council in State Elections.

"What this means is that we will launch for public debate a proposed model for legislative change which would see the creation of a new electorate - a Virtual Electorate," Dr Armitage says.

"This model would consist of an Upper House electorate with full Parliamentary representation, but with the electoral roll made up exclusively of South Australians NOT currently residing in this State.

Dr Armitage says the Virtual Electorate model is just one component of Information Economy 2002: Delivering the Future, which, through a series of community-based initiatives, aims to connect all South Australians not only to each other but to the world.

The benefits to the people of South Australia of a Virtual Electorate include:

- parliamentary debates which will be enhanced by global perspectives and information of benefit to the development of public policy and debate;
- direct social and economic returns through being able to tap into a global pool of talented South Australians, linked into activities around the world.

The Virtual Electorate consultation also will attract global attention to South Australia, a State that boasts a proud record of electoral reform, such as granting women the vote in 1894 and being the first to provide the opportunity for women to stand for Parliament.

"We are now seeking community comment and feedback before a final model is put forward", Dr Armitage says.

(To find out more about the Information Economy 2002 strategy, call 1800 072 002 or go to the Information Economy 2002 online address, www.ie2002.sa.gov.au

People can join online discussion at the Government's discussion site, www.talkingpoint.sa.gov.au)

VIRTUAL ELECTORATE – CONSULTATION MODEL

- This proposal sets out a proposed framework for legislation to amend the Electoral Act to create a special "global", extraterritorial Upper House electorate for expatriate South Australians not currently represented as "citizens" of the State.
- The Virtual Electorate will be represented by two Upper House members.
- Eligibility to enrol as an elector in this electorate will be open to a person who is
 - 18 years of age;
 - An Australian citizen;
 - Born in SA but ineligible to enrol under Section 29(1) (c) of the Electoral Act.
 - One method by which an elector can become ineligible under 29 (1) c is if they give up South Australia as their principle place of residence.
- Persons enrolled in this electorate will have no vote in elections for the House of Assembly.

- Enrolment and voting for this electorate will not be compulsory.
- Candidates for election as a member for the Virtual Electorate
 - Must qualify as South Australian electors, either generally or only for this electorate;
 - Occupy the position on the same terms and conditions as any other Member of Parliament.
- The overall model will be reviewed by the Parliament after the inaugural election.
- Legislation will be required to give effect to the creation of a new electorate and provisions for eligibility and representation.
- As a policy position, the Liberal Government will commit to field only one candidate in the inaugural election in order to promote an inclusive, bi-partisan approach to this pioneering initiative.