

**Submission
No 14**

INQUIRY INTO STATE SENATE BILL 2015

Name: The Hon Amanda Fazio

Date received: 30 April 2018

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Hon Paul Green MLC
Chair
Select Committee on the State Senate
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Paul,

I apologise for lateness of this submission on the proposal to rename the Legislative Council as the State Senate. I served in the Legislative Council from 2000 to 2015 and for many years held the position of Chair of Committees/Deputy President and later as President. I value the history and role of the Legislative Council. I do not support the proposal to change the name of the Legislative Council.

History

As you are no doubt aware, the NSW Legislative Council is the oldest parliamentary chamber in Australia dating from 1823. The Council has a proud history and fulfils an important function as a house of review which continues to this time despite the efforts of the current government to circumvent the powers of the Council to hold the government to account.

Rationale

From my understanding of the establishment of the Select Committee on the State Senate, the name change has been proposed in order to reduce confusion about the standing and the role of the Legislative Council especially when members travel overseas and in particular to the United States of America.

I do not think that this is an appropriate or substantive reason to change the name of the Legislative Council. I have outlined my reasons below.

1. Upper Houses in every other state in Australia, except Queensland which rather foolishly abolished theirs, are called Legislative Councils. To alter this in NSW would make no sense, would leave us out of step with other Australian jurisdictions and would only lead to confusion.
2. To have a State Senate in NSW would cause confusion with the Australian Senate.

3. The American population are notoriously ignorant of matters outside their borders. This is evidenced in many research reports. I will refer you to one by George Barnett, Ph.D., communications researcher and professor in the School of Informatics at the University at Buffalo. Professor Barnett has reported: *"People from other countries and any well-traveled, well-read U.S. citizen know that, as a group, Americans are virtually ignorant of anything beyond our own borders".*¹

To pander to this ignorance rather than simply explain, as I have done on many occasions, the role of the NSW Legislative Council is a folly. Failing the inability of the person with whom I have spoken to comprehend these simple facts I usually resorted to explaining that it is the "equivalent of a State Senate".

4. As a member of the Legislative Council, I had far more contact with members of parliament and legislators from Commonwealth countries who are familiar with the term Legislative Council and know what the role of the Council is. Again changing the name to State Senate would be confusing.
5. There appears to be no justification for the proposed name change apart from the views of one member of the legislative Council. This raises the question as to why the time and resources of the Legislative Council have been allocated to such a whimsical inquiry. I wish I had known that it was so easy to have a Select Committee established to pursue a personal hobby horse. There are many niche interests of mine that would have made for much more interesting and relevant inquiries than this one.

Conclusion

There is no justification to change the name of the NSW Legislative Council to the State Senate and to do so would leave this important legislative body open to public ridicule. I urge the Committee to reject this proposal.

I do not wish to be called as a witness to this Inquiry as I believe that the holding of public hearings would leave the Council and this Committee in particular open to being ridiculed. I am sure that the resources would be better spent elsewhere.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Hon Amanda Fazio

¹ <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2004/09/6899.html>