



NATIONAL SOLIDARITY PARTY

ELECTORAL REFORM PROPOSAL: CONSTITUENCY RESERVED FOR MINORITY SCHEME

BRIEF

- A. The Government has established that multi-racialism is a fundamental tenet of Singapore society and that it is necessary to ensure minority representation in Parliament.
- B. The Group Representation Constituency (GRC) Scheme was incepted to uphold multi-racialism by guaranteeing minority representation in Parliament.
- C. However, the GRC Scheme hinders political competition, fortifies the incumbents and works against democracy.
- D. NSP proposes that the GRC Scheme be abolished, the nation reverts to Single Member Constituencies and the Constituency Reserved for Minority (CRM) Scheme be implemented.
- E. In this paper, we shall explain how the CRM Scheme works.
- F. The CRM Scheme will be as effective as the GRC Scheme to ensure a multi-racial Parliament but without exacting the heavy price on democracy as the GRC Scheme does.

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GLOSSARY:

CMIO	Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others
Constitution	The Singapore Constitution, Cap. 1
CRM	Constituency Reserved for Minority
GRC	Group Representation Constituency
MP	Member of Parliament
SMC	Single Member Constituency



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1. MULTI-RACIALISM – A FUNDAMENTAL TENET OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM

- 1.1 The Government has always affirmed that Singapore is not only a multi-racial society, but also a society which upholds multi-racialism as a fundamental principle.¹
- 1.2 To facilitate its commitment to multi-racialism, the Government mandates all citizens be segregated into one of four race categories: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others (CMIO) - a racial categorisation largely inherited from census taking during colonial period².
- 1.3 The citizen's race is immutably recorded in the citizen's identification documents (birth certificate and identity card).³
- 1.4 This CMIO classification is the foundation for several Government policies relating to education, housing, employment, immigration, welfare and politics.
- 1.5 The Government's stated aim for incepting the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) Scheme was to uphold multi-racialism by guaranteeing that Parliament would always be multi-racial.
- 1.6 Whether Singaporeans should be identified by race and segregated by the CMIO classification are questions beyond the scope of this paper.

¹ Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's speech at Narpani Paravai Dinner (2011), see <http://www.narpani.sg/speech/32-speech-by-prime-minister-lee-hsien-loong>

² 'Governance through Difference in Singapore' by Norman Vasu

³ Children born to parents of different races now have hyphenated race options, but parents still have to indicate a 'prime' race for their children - 'Greater flexibility with implementation of double-barrelled Race option from 1 Jan 2011' Press Release by Immigration & Checkpoints Authority



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2. INCEPTION OF THE GRC SCHEME

- 2.1 The GRC Scheme was first proposed in Parliament on 30 November 1987⁴.
- 2.2 The GRC proposal was debated in Parliament on 12 January 1998 and then referred to a Select Committee.
- 2.3 The Select Committee invited written representations from members of the public, including opposition political parties. The Select Committee presented its report⁵ to Parliament on 5 May 1988, recommending that the GRC Scheme be implemented.
- 2.4 The GRC Scheme came into effect on 31 May 1988.

⁴Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill and Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment) Bill dated 30 November 1987

⁵ Report of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill [Bill No. 23/87] and the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment No. 2) Bill [Bill No. 24/87], Parl. 3 of 1988 (the "Select Committee Report")



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3. **OUR MISGIVINGS WITH THE DECISION TO ENACT THE GRC SCHEME**

3.1 While reviewing the decision-making process by which the GRC Scheme was passed into law, we found several facts which shake our confidence in the 6th Parliament's decision to enact the GRC Scheme:

3.1.1 Chiam See Tong was the sole opposition member at the time when the House was considering the GRC proposal.

During the entire course of the Parliamentary Debates which considered the GRC proposal, there was only one only opposition member in the House versus 76 members from the ruling party. To describe the Parliamentary speeches as “debates” seems a stretch of the meaning of that word.

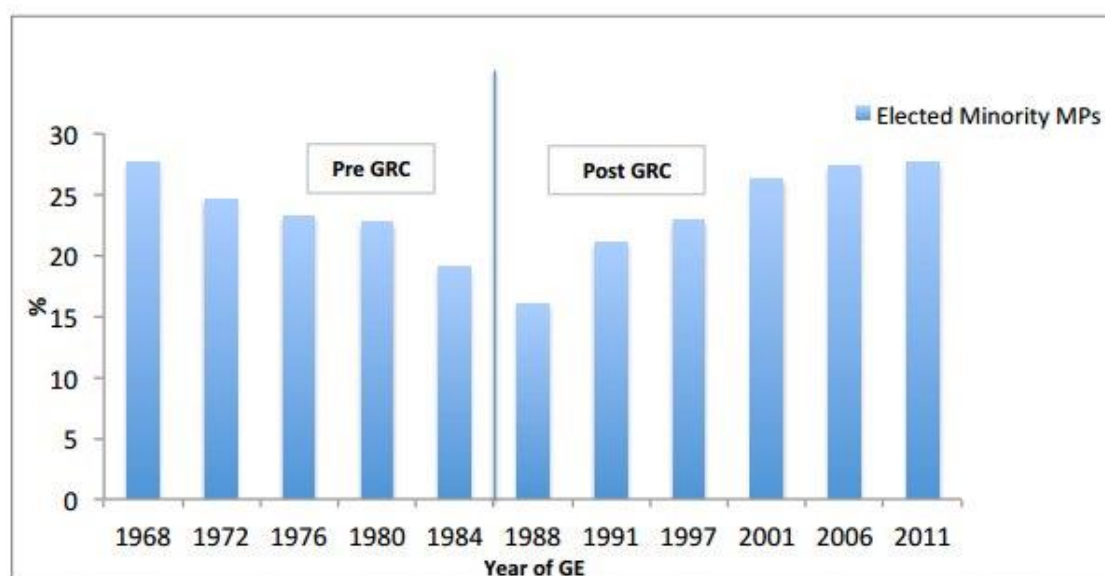
3.1.2 Prior to the introduction of the GRC Scheme, minority representation in Parliament was not particularly imbalanced.

Analysis of statistics from past General Elections [see **Picture 1** below] show that before the GRC Scheme was introduced, representation of Malays, Indians and non-Chinese MPs was between 19% to 27.6%, which approximated the then prevailing racial composition of Singapore.

Despite the fact that Singapore was not facing significant under-representation of minorities in Parliament, the PAP Government decided that a major change in the electoral system was warranted to ensure against a single-race Parliament.

Picture 1:

Graph 1: Total Elected Minority MPs in Singapore (%), 1968-2011



Ethnic Groups (%)	2th Parl. 1968-72	5th Parl. 1980-4	6th Parl. 1984-8	7th Parl. 1988-91	8th Parl. 1991-7	9th Parl. 1997-01	10th Parl. 2001-6	11th Parl. 2006-11	12 th Parl. 2011-
Chinese	42 (72.4)	58 (77.3)	64 (81)	68 (83.9)	64 (79)	64 (77.1)	62 (73.8)	60 (72.3)	63 (72.4)
Malays	9 (15.5)	9 (12)	9 (11.4)	8 (9.9)	10 (12.3)	11 (13.3)	12 (14.3)	13 (15.7)	12 (13.8)
Indian	4 (6.9)	7 (22.7)	5 (6.3)	5 (6.2)	7 (8.6)	8 (9.6)	10 (11.9)	8 (9.6)	10 (11.5)
Others	3 (5.2)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	0	0	0	0	2 (24.1)	2 (2.3)
Minority MPs	16 (27.6)	17 (22.7)	15 (19)	13 (16.1)	17 (20.9)	19 (22.9)	22 (26.2)	23 (27.3)	24 (27.5)
Total National Ethnic Minority	18.7 (1966s)	21 (1980)	-	22.3 (1990)	-	23.3 (2000)	-	25.1 (2008)	25.9 (2011)
Total MPs	58	75	79	81	81	83	84	84	87

Source: Data from Singapore Parliament website.

Note: This picture is taken from *“Winner-Takes-All”: A Study of the Effects of Group Representative Constituencies (GRCs) in Singapore* by Netina Tan (2012)



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3.1.3 Did the Select Committee give sufficient consideration to the CRM proposal?

- (a) The CRM Scheme that we are proposing is not a new one. It was one of the several alternatives to the GRC proposal presented to the Select Committee in 1988 for consideration.⁶
- (b) All the alternative proposals, including the CRM proposal, were rejected by the Select Committee as being unsuitable.
- (c) The Select Committee reported that they had considered all the alternative proposals but none of them were better than the GRC proposal.
- (d) The Select Committee's Report discussed the CRM proposal briefly, focussing on their reasons for rejecting the same. The brevity by which the Select Committee's Report dealt with the CRM proposal raises doubt as to whether the Select Committee had sufficiently considered the merits of the CRM proposal before rejecting the same.

3.1.4 The Select Committee's Objections to CRM proposal were unconvincing

The Select Committee raised two objections⁷ to the CRM proposal. Both objections contain fallacious reasoning.

1st Objection:

"The residents in the reserved constituency will have no choice but to accept only Malay candidates. The non-Malay residents are unlikely to like being forced to have a Malay MP."

However, as we will elaborate at **Paragraph 4.4** below, GRC residents may not be served by an MP of their choice. As this "detriment" is also being experienced by GRC residents, the GRC Scheme would not be superior to the CRM proposal in this respect.

⁶ Paragraphs 24 to 38, Select Committee Report

⁷ Paragraphs 36 to 38, Select Committee Report



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2nd Objection:

“To overcome this problem, it was suggested that such reserved constituencies be rotated after each election. In other words, a constituency reserved for Malay candidates will not remain so reserved at the next general election. Other constituencies will be given the “opportunity” to have a Malay MP. While the rotation of the reserved constituencies may overcome objections from non-Malay residents that their constituencies are permanently singled out, it will be inimical to the interests of both the Malay MP and the affected constituents. They will not be able to build any lasting relationship of trust and confidence.”

- (a) It appears that the Select Committee had an in-built bias for the incumbent. By worrying that the prospect of rotation might hamper the MP's efforts to build lasting relationship with his constituents, it seemed as if the Select Committee was concerned to protect the incumbent's advantage.
- (b) Was the Select Committee worried that the prospect of rotation might affect the incumbent's chances of being re-elected to the same constituency? If so, how would that be detrimental to voters?
- (c) Once an MP is elected, his duty is to serve his constituents for the duration of his term. How would the prospect that he might not be re-elected to the same constituency affect his ability to build a relationship of trust and confidence during his term?
- (d) The concern of the Select Committee should have been to ensure that voters are not limited in their choice of candidates at the next election.
- (e) An incumbent MP of a reserved constituency would be at liberty to seek re-election to the same constituency, even after it has reverted to a non-reserved constituency. If he had served his constituents well, he should have a good chance of being re-elected.

- 3.2 Considering the facts discussed in Paragraph 3.1 above, we doubt the wisdom of the 6th Parliament to radically change our electoral system by introducing the GRC Scheme.



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4. THE GRC SCHEME – HOW IT WORKS

4.1 Objective of the GRC Scheme

The GRC Scheme is premised on the desire to prevent a single race Parliament. The GRC Scheme was introduced to guarantee a minimum representation of minorities in Parliament. As explained by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong⁸:

"... in 1988, we introduced the Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) scheme to guarantee a minimum representation of minorities in Parliament and ensure that we always have a multi-racial Parliament and never have a freak result when suddenly you have Parliament all of one colour or of one faith, and we have a crisis."

4.2 Outline of the GRC Scheme

4.2.1 The Executive decides which geographical areas in Singapore would be delimited and designated as SMCs or GRCs⁹, subject to adhering to the following parameters prescribed by law¹⁰:

- (a) There must be at least eight SMCs;
- (b) At least one-quarter (1/4) of the total number of MPs must be representatives of GRCs; and
- (c) At least three-fifths (3/5) of the total number of GRCs must include a Malay MP.

Within those parameters, the Executive is empowered to exercise its discretion as it deems fit.

4.2.2 A few months before a General Election, a Parliamentary Elections (Designation of Group Representation Constituencies) Order is made declaring the areas to be designated as GRCs in which at least one of the candidates in the group must be a person belonging to a minority community.

⁸ President's Address: Debate on the Address, Parliamentary Debates 27 May 2009 (Vol. 86 Col. 514)

⁹ Sections 21 and 39A of the Constitution and Sections 8(1), 8 (2) and 8A(1) of the Parliamentary Elections Act, Cap. 218

¹⁰ Section 8A, Parliamentary Elections Act, Cap. 218



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- 4.2.3 The Committees of each of the Malay, Indian and Other Minority communities then invite applications to be submitted to it. Those who receive certification from the respective Committees are deemed to be eligible to stand as minority candidates for the GRCs designed for the minority community they belong to.¹¹
- 4.2.4 For purposes of the 2011 General Election, the Executive decided to have 15 GRCs, each to comprise between four to six members and in total represented by 75 MPs. The Executive also decided that of the 15 GRCs, nine were to be designated to require the inclusion of a Malay MP.
- 4.2.5 As before, the Executive did not provide more than minimal explanation for how or why it arrived at its decision:
- (a) to have 12 SMCs and 15 GRCs;
 - (b) for certain GRCs to have four, five or six members; or
 - (c) which among the 15 GRCs would comprise the nine GRCs requiring a Malay MP.
- 4.2.6 NSP is concerned about the extent of the Executive's discretionary powers in relation to electoral matters. However, this will be the subject of another paper.
- 4.3 The GRC Scheme is not intended to ensure proportional minority representation.
- 4.3.1 *"The purpose of the GRC scheme has never been to prescribe a fixed number of MPs from minority communities. It is to guarantee a minimum representation of minority community in Parliament, so that minorities are never excluded from Parliament, by some chance election result in which no minority candidates at all are elected from the single-member constituencies."*¹²
- 4.3.2 For this reason, legal provisions governing the GRC Scheme mandate that at least one-quarter (1/4) of the candidates must be returned from GRCs and that at least three-fifths (3/5) of all GRCs must include a Malay candidate.

¹¹ Singapore Government Statement on General Election dated 19 April 2011

¹² Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Second Reading of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment) Bill 28 October 1996 (Vol. 66 Col. 759)



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- 4.3.3 The following hypothetical example will show that Malays, which comprise 13% of resident population¹³, are only guaranteed roughly 5.7% of the Parliamentary seats under the GRC Scheme:

Hypothetical Example

- (a) Say there are in total 88 parliamentary seats to be returned in a particular General Election.
- (b) To comply with the rule that at least one-quarter (1/4) of the candidates must be returned from GRCs, the maximum of GRCs derived from 22 MPs is seven GRCs (six three-member GRC and one four-member GRC) and 66 SMCs.
- (c) To comply with the rule that at least three-fifths (3/5) of all GRCs must include a Malay candidate, it will suffice that five of the seven GRCs be designated for a Malay minority candidate.
- (d) In other words, in a House of 88 parliamentary seats, the laws regulating the GRC Scheme only guarantee five Malay MPs (5.7% representation).

- 4.3.4 The fact that the GRC Scheme does not ensure proportional minority representation has never posed any issues because the Executive has been exercising its discretion to have more GRCs than the minimum prescribed by law.¹⁴

4.4 Each GRC MP is assigned to take charge of a division

- 4.4.1 The physical map of every GRC is divided into areas of responsibility or 'divisions'. The number of divisions corresponds to the number of MPs for that GRC.
- 4.4.2 Each MP of a GRC will be assigned to take responsibility over a division and to serve the constituents residing within that division. For example, in Chua Chu Kang GRC, the five MPs and their respective areas of responsibility or divisions are as follows:

¹³ Singapore Department of Statistics, Population Trends 2013 at http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications_and_papers/population_and_population_structure/population2013.pdf

¹⁴ Section 8A(2), Parliamentary Elections Act. Cap. 218



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Division:

Member of Parliament:

Chua Chu Kang
Keat Hong
Yew Tee
Bukit Gombak
Nanyang

Mr. Gan Kim Yong
Mr. Zaqy Mohamad
Mr. Alex Yam
Mr. Low Yen Ling
Mr. Alvin Yeo

Picture 2:



source: Jurong GRC website

Picture 3



Mr Alex Yam Ziming
MP for Chua Chu Kang GRC (Yew Tee)

Meet-The-People Session			
Day / Time	Branch	Address	Contact Details
Every Monday, 8pm	Yew Tee	Block 608 Choa Chu Kang Street 62 #01-103 Singapore 680608	Tel: 6760 6233 Fax: 6760 2133 Email: ytmps@yewtee.org.sg
Street		Blocks	
Choa Chu Kang Street 51		501-518 523-533 534 (Limbang Shopping Centre) 535-537	
Choa Chu Kang Street 52		540-552 562-569 570-574 (U/C)	
Choa Chu Kang North 6		553-561 631 632 632A 633-637	
Choa Chu Kang Street 62		601-616 620-623 624 (Yew Tee Square) 625-627	
Choa Chu Kang North 7		617-619	
Choa Chu Kang Street 64		638-643	
Choa Chu Kang Crescent		656-668 668A 669 670 670A 671 671A 672 672A-B 673 673A-B 674 674A 675 676 676A 677 678 678A 679-682 683A-C 684A-D 685A-C 686A-D 688C 690A-D 691A-B 692A-B	
Choa Chu Kang Drive		687A-D 688A-B 689A-B	
Private Estates			
Regent Grove			
The Quintet			
Windermere			
Yew Tee Residences			

source: Chua Chu Kang Town Council website

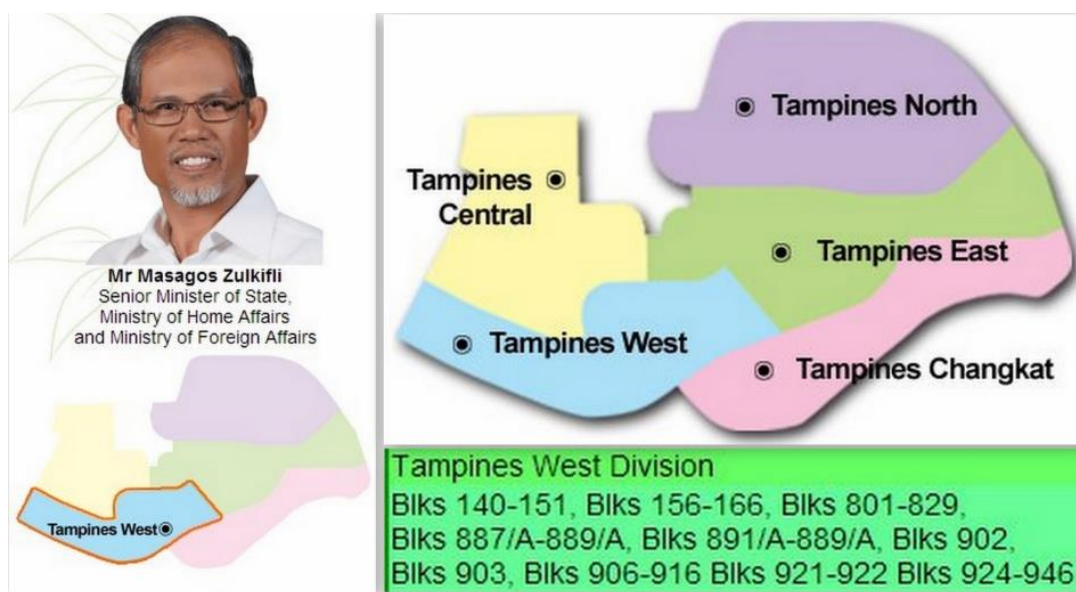
- 4.4.3 The assignment of divisions to respective MPs in a GRC is neither prescribed by law nor under the purview of Parliament.¹⁵
- 4.4.4 Residents of a particular division will be served by the MP assigned by the GRC to that particular division. For example, residents of Yew Tee residents are directed to see Mr. Alex Yam, the MP for Yew Tee division, for their issues.

¹⁵ <http://www.freewnewspos.com/news/article/a/156526/today/parliament-clerk-there-s-no-law-prescribing-division-of-duties-of-grc-mps>

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- 4.4.5 While MPs apparently do not turn away citizens who come from other constituencies,¹⁶ no MP has denied the fact that priority would be given to constituents in their own division.
- 4.4.6 Reports have been received of constituents having to wait in long queue for long hours in order to meet their MPs at the Meet-the-People-Sessions (MPS)¹⁷. Even if MPs do see constituents from other divisions, such instances are likely to be few and as an exception.
- 4.4.7 By assigning each division to an MP, it means that a particular division within a GRC will have a minority MP serving it regardless of the wishes of the voters of that particular division.
- 4.4.8 For example, Mr Masagos Zulkifli the elected minority candidate for Tampines GRC and has been designated as the MP in-charge of Tampines West division. Voters of Tampines GRC have no say in this designation. Mr Masagos has been the MP in Tampines West division since 2006.

Picture 4:



source: Tampines Town Council website

¹⁶ "at my MPS sessions, i have residents from even out of marine parade GRC coming to see me. This week alone, there were people from as far as Woodlands..do we turn them away? NO... because they have travelled all the way to see us. We explain to them, make their case representation and cc to their own MPs" - Dr Fatimah Lateef's Facebook entry dated 18 April 2013

¹⁷ 'MPs: No previous violence involving queues' by The New Paper dated 22 January 2012



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5. MERITS OF THE GRC SCHEME

- 5.1 Despite its shortcomings, the GRC Scheme has served its purpose of ensuring the minority communities in Singapore that they will always be represented in Parliament.
- 5.2 The GRC Scheme has also served to entrench multi-racialism in our political system.



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6. CRITICISMS OF THE GRC SCHEME

6.1 Much has been written about the weaknesses and drawbacks of the GRC Scheme. It will suffice for the purpose of our Paper to highlight the following.

6.2 Constituents may not be served by the MP of their choice.

6.2.1 It should be noted that under the GRC Scheme, each GRC MP is assigned to serve a particular division within the GRC. The assignment is decided on by the GRC MPs without the voters in that particular GRC having any say over it.

6.2.2 Moreover, a particular division within a GRC will have a minority MP serving it regardless of the wishes of the voters of that particular division.

6.3 A by-election is not required in the event of vacancy in a GRC.

6.3.1 Under the GRC Scheme, where a member of a GRC team resigns, passes away or otherwise vacates his/her office, there is no legal requirement to call for a by-election to fill that vacancy¹⁸.

6.3.2 This means that the other remaining MPs in the GRC would need to cover the duties of the vacated member. When that happens, the constituents of that GRC will be short-changed because each MP will have to see more constituents.

6.3.3 Past instances where GRC seats have remained vacant are as follows:

- 2 GRC seats vacant for 3 years and 5 months until the 1997 General Election

On 5 August 1993, MP for Eunos GRC, Dr Tay Eng Soon passed away. Also in August 1993, MP for Toa Payoh GRC, Ong Teng Cheong resigned from PAP to run as Singapore's first elected President. Those two GRC seats remained vacant for the next 3 years and 5 months until the 1997 General Election. Parliament which started with 81 seats, carried on with two seats less than its full cohort of elected MPs till it was dissolved the 1997 General Election.

¹⁸ Section 24 [2A] of the Parliamentary Elections Act, Cap 218.



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- 1 GRC seat vacant 1 year 10 months until the 2001 General Election

In December 1999, MP for Jalan Besar GRC, Choo Wee Kiang resigned from his MP position and PAP membership before pleading guilty to cheating charges in court. With Choo's resignation, then Acting Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said the other Jalan Besar GRC MPs would continue to serve the constituents. The GRC seat was left vacant for the next 1 year 10 months until the next General Election held in October 2001.

- 2 GRC seats left vacant for 2 years 10 months and for 7 months until the 2011 General Election

In July 2008, MP for Jurong GRC, Dr Ong Chit Chung passed away. His seat was left vacant for 2 years 10 months till the next General Election held in May 2011. On 27 September 2010, MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC, Dr S. Balaji passed away. His seat was left vacant for 7 months till the 2011 General Election. As those seats were not filled, the total number of elected MPs in Parliament dropped from 84 to 82.

- 6.3.4 It has been pointed out¹⁹ that if a minority MP in a GRC passes away or resigns, this will test the GRC Scheme which was introduced to ensure multi-racial representation in Parliament.

6.4 The GRC Scheme is prima facie unconstitutional.

- 6.4.1 The GRC Scheme adulterates the “one-man-one-vote system”. There is a lack of parity between the weight of the vote cast by a GRC voter and by a SMC voter. This breaches the equal protection clause entrenched in Article 12 of the Constitution.²⁰

- 6.4.2 It has been said in Parliament ²¹:

“Sir, the GRC scheme actually derogates from Article 12 of the Constitution which safeguards equality under the law. Section 42(1) of the PEA maintains the form of “one man one vote” while section 42(1A) states that a voter in a GRC “shall have one vote and may vote for any one group of candidates...”

¹⁹ Professor Thio Li-Ann in an article, “By-Elections Pragmatism or Principle”. Published in The Straits Times on 1st August, 2008.

²⁰ “Winner-Takes-All”: A Study of the Effects of Group Representative Constituencies (GRCs) in Singapore by Netina Tan (2012)

²¹ Nominated Member of Parliament Professor Thio Li-Ann, Parliamentary Speech on 27 August 2008



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While voters in GRCs and SMCs each get one vote, these differ in voting strength. The weight of your one vote depends on where you live, as your vote may potentially help elect one, four, five or six MPs. This is a form of discrimination based on geographical residence. Clearly, the disparity in individual voting power raises Article 12 equal protection concerns.

The GRC scheme is, thus, prima facie unconstitutional.”

6.5 Other weaknesses of the GRC Scheme may be summarised ²² as follows:

- (a) the lack of evidence that Singaporeans are voting along racial lines;
- (b) arbitrary increases in GRC sizes exacerbating an uneven playing field;
- (c) the constant rise in electoral deposit from S\$500 in 1968 to S\$13,500 in 2006 for a single candidate which makes it difficult for opposition to raise funds to compete in bigger six-man GRCs which require a total of S\$81,000;
- (d) excluding independents from contesting in more than three-quarters of the constituencies;
- (e) the use of gerrymandering that allows hotly contested SMCs to be swallowed into a GRC;
- (f) GRCs diluting the representative link between the Government and the voter;
- (g) GRCs being too closely tied to local para-political institutions such as the Community Development Councils (CDCs); and
- (h) GRCs allowing greenhorn PAP candidates to ride on the coat-tails of heavy weight PAP candidates to enter the House.

²² “Winner-Takes-All”: A Study of the Effects of Group Representative Constituencies (GRCs) in Singapore by Netina Tan (2012)



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7. NSP'S PROPOSAL

- 7.1 While the GRC Scheme has served its aforesaid purposes, the GRC Scheme has serious flaws, some of which have been discussed above.
- 7.2 NSP proposes another scheme - the Constituency Reserved for Minority (CRM) Scheme. The CRM Scheme will ensure a multi-racial Parliament just as well as the GRC Scheme but without most of its major flaws.
- 7.3 NSP proposes the following:
- (a) the GRC Scheme be scrapped;
 - (b) the nation reverts to a First-Past-The-Post Single Member Constituency electoral system; and
 - (c) the CRM Scheme be implemented.



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8. CRMScheme - HOW IT WORKS

- 8.1 In the proposed CRM Scheme, all constituencies will be SMCs, some of which will be designated for minority MPs under the CRM Scheme.
- 8.2 Currently, the Executive decides which geographical areas in Singapore would be delimited and designated as GRCs²³. Under the CRM Scheme, instead of demarcating GRCs, the Executive²⁴ will demarcate CRMs.
- 8.3 Currently, the respective minority Committees invite candidate applications to be submitted to it. Likewise, in the proposed CRM Scheme, those who receive certification from the respective minority Committees will be deemed eligible to stand as minority candidates in a CRM designated for a Malay MP, or a CRM designated for an Indian and Other Minority MP.
- 8.4 Currently, the minimum number of SMCs, the minimum number of MPs who must be representatives of GRCs; and the minimum number of GRCs which must include a Malay MP, are prescribed by law.²⁵
- 8.5 Likewise for the CRM Scheme, the minimum number of CRMs and the minimum number of CRMs to be designated for a Malay MP, would be stipulated by law. For instance, it may be considered to set the minimum number of CRMs to not less than 20% of the total number of constituencies. This would ensure that at least 20% of the House will comprise of minority MPs.
- 8.6 The 3:2 ratio between Malay MPs and Indian/Others MPs currently applied to GRCs may be similarly applied to determine the number of CRMs designated for a Malay MP, or CRMs designated for an Indian / Other Minority MP.
- 8.7 The candidate elected through the First-Past-The-Post electoral system, becomes the MP of the CRM.
- 8.8 As in the current electoral system, the CRM Scheme does not prevent the fielding of minority candidates in non-CRM constituencies.

²³ Section 8A(1), Parliamentary Elections Act, Cap. 218 read with Section 21 of the Constitution.

²⁴ We would prefer that boundaries be demarcated by an independent Elections Committee but, for the purposes of this paper, we assume prevailing laws and practices still apply.

²⁵ Section 8A(1A), (2) and (3), Parliamentary Elections Act, Cap. 218



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- 8.9 When Singapore reverts to an all-SMC system, constituencies may group together to form a town council to enjoy economies of scale. *“After an election three MPs, although they are voted in separately, can get together to form a town council.”*²⁶

²⁶ Goh Chok Tong, Second Reading of the Parliamentary Elections Bill, Parliamentary Debates 11 January 1988 (Vol. 50 Col. 184)



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9. ADVANTAGES OF THE CRMScheme

- 9.1 The CRM Scheme will ensure minority representation in Parliament.
- 9.2 The CRM Scheme considers the bureaucratic CMIO assignment and its implications. Hence, the CRMSchemeupholds the principle of multi-racialism.
- 9.3 Under the GRC Scheme, residents of certain GRC divisions will be assigned a minority MP to serve them. With the CRM Scheme, voters residing in a CRM will get to vote for the minority MP they wish to be served by.
- 9.4 The CRM Scheme works within the current socio-political constraints. Only minimal changes would be required to be made to adapt the obligations and duties currently entrusted to the respective Committees of the Malay, Indian and other minorities Communities under the GRC Scheme to the CRM Scheme.
- 9.5 The 'one-man-one-vote system' is not adulterated asCRM voters will be on par with voters of other SMCs.
- 9.6 Hotly contested SMCs will no longer be liable to be swallowed up by large GRCs, thus lessening allegations of gerrymandering.
- 9.7 The CRM Scheme will not allow greenhorn candidates to ride on the coat-tails of heavyweight candidates to enter Parliament.
- 9.8 The current politico-social climate makes it highly improbable for a minority candidate to win an election just by appealing to the voters on the basis of his ethnicity. The situation today is better than the situationin 1984 where a minority candidate reportedly²⁷ could not win an election by depending only on minority votes. The CRM Scheme is unlikely to perpetuate communal politics.

²⁷ 'Resettlement decision was the right move' The Straits Times dated 23 January 1988



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10. POSSIBLE CRITICISMS OF THE CRM SCHEME AND OUR RESPONSES

10.1 *That CRM voters will be unhappy that their choice of MP is restricted to minority candidates only.*

However, under the current GRC Scheme, constituents of certain divisions are already restricted in that a minority MP will be assigned to serve them. With the CRM Scheme, CRM voters will determine who should be their MPs and will not have to settle for a designated MP.

10.2 *That CRM Scheme will accentuate communalism – minority candidates would appeal to their own minority race and their sentiments for support, causing such to live in separate enclaves, and not integrate into the mainstream of life in Singapore.*

- (a) NSP believes that this concern is no longer valid in today's context.
- (b) The GRC Scheme was introduced in 1988 as being the best policy at that time to prevent perpetuation of communal politics.
- (c) This concern about perpetuating communal politics was understandable then, for in 1987, a Malay MP reportedly noted ²⁸ that "*Malays were segregating themselves despite government efforts to integrate the various races in housing estates.*" That MP also stated that, "*Malays tend to form enclaves when they buy second hand flats, (and that) this trend towards segregation is compounded by Malay parents sending their children to schools where there is a high percentage of Malay student.*"
- (d) Now, about 25 years later, with racial integration policies like the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) in place, policy gaps which allow for the forming of enclaves in Singapore have been better plugged.
- (e) Today, a minority candidate who appeals to the sentiments of his own community for support in an election, will in all likelihood lose that election as the candidate would have alienated the majority voters, and voters of other racial groups.

²⁸MP concerned over Malay tendency to form enclaves' The Straits Times dated 9 June 1987



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- 10.3** *That the CRM Scheme may benefit the incumbents more, as they would be able to field minority candidates more acceptable to the voters because of their symbiotic relationship with institutions like Unions and other grassroots organisations.*

However, with the CRM Scheme, there will be a fair contest in all SMCs albeit restricted to minority candidates only in CRMs. The electoral results of the CRM Scheme would be more acceptable as it is a fairer way to ensure minority representation in the House and one which will benefit all citizens.

- 10.4** *That once a SMC is designated as a CRM, it may remain as a CRM indefinitely. If so, the constituents of that CRM would be "less fortunate" than other "normal" SMCs, meaning that constituents of a CRM would not have parity with those in other "normal" SMCs.*

- (a) This criticism wrongly assumes that a minority MP is less able to serve the constituents just because he is a minority. NSP does not subscribe to this view at all.
- (b) This criticism also wrongly assumes that once the electoral boundaries are drawn, the demarcated constituency remains static, i.e. the boundaries are not tampered with any further. That is not true as the following instances show:
- Pioneer SMC and Sengkang West SMC never existed before and were created in the last General Election.
 - SMCs like Joo Chiat, Mountbatten and Whampoa, which existed in the past, were scrapped for a period of time; then re-surfaced by the Elections Department, but with boundaries marked differently.
 - Before the 2011 General Election, Kaki Bukit division was part of Marine Parade GRC, but for the 2011 General Election, it became a part of Aljunied GRC.
- (c) Under the current electoral system, there is no guarantee that an MP elected in a particular constituency will be able to seek re-election to serve the same constituency in the next General Election, because electoral boundaries are subject to change. Therefore, under the proposed CRM Scheme, voters are no worse off than they are now.



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11. **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 An enduring criticism of the GRC Scheme is the way it has served to entrench the incumbent, by making it very difficult for opposition candidates to get elected.
- 11.2 The lack of opposition MPs in Parliament will be favourable to the incumbent, but it is certainly not beneficial to Singaporeans.
- 11.3 What is beneficial to Singapore is for voters to have a choice of candidates to vote for in each election and for each contest to be a fair fight between the opposing candidates.
- 11.4 It is important to the democratic process that our electoral system facilitates and not hinder a healthy degree of political competition.
- 11.5 The GRC Scheme should be abolished because it does not serve Singaporeans well.
- 11.6 The CRM Scheme will ensure a multi-racial Parliament, but without exacting the heavy price on democracy as the GRC Scheme does.
- 11.7 Thus, the CRM Scheme should be adopted as it will better serve Singaporeans.

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