

~~ery from the original police station, which was constructed in the 1880s for the sum of £300. The Police Commissioner was heard to say that it is an architectural showpiece, and I agree with him. The officer in charge at Yeppoon, Senior Sergeant Barclay, has not taken the smile off his face since 8 April, when occupation of the new police station began. The police station took 15 months to construct. TF Woollam Constructions took possession of the building site on 8 January 2008 and the police returned on 8 April 2009. I think it is a credit to those workers.~~

~~On the same day, I attended at the water police headquarters at Rosslyn Bay Harbour, where a new \$3.5 million dollar catamaran named the *Lyle M Hoey* was commissioned. It was built in Tasmania and was brought up here. It was actually christened by a sister of Lyle M Hoey, Mrs Beryl Johnstone. Lyle Hoey was a police constable who was run over by a motor vehicle at a road block in North Queensland in 1975. This is the fourth boat. It is an ocean-going boat which is 22 metres long and it can carry a full SERT team. So I also have the officer in charge of the water police with a smile on his face. This shows how much money has been spent in rural and regional Queensland by the Bligh government in looking after our police officers.~~

~~Interruption.~~

CONSTITUTION (FIXED-TERM PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (12.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Constitution of Queensland 2001 to provide fixed terms for the Legislative Assembly and to make minor and consequential amendments to the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1890 and the Electoral Act 1992. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed-Term Parliament) Amendment Bill.

Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed-Term Parliament) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

Second Reading

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (12.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I submit a bill to fix the term of state parliament for three years. I do this because I believe Queenslanders are sick and tired of turning up at the ballot box every couple of years and they are entitled to see the government serve its full term. We have recently experienced another election called more than six months before it was due. This constant uncertainty inhibits the ability of the government, business and the opposition to make long-term plans. In addition, it delays or puts on hold important major projects in the election lead-up phase, which can occur up to six months ahead of the election date.

I believe that a three-year fixed term will give certainty not only to the people of Queensland but also to this parliament. Parliament can then make decisions in the best interests of the state without being threatened by a possible early election. By supporting this bill, members can show that they are genuine when they talk about the need for stability and certainty. If members think longer terms are preferable, I believe that case would be strengthened if we first have guaranteed three-year terms instead of 2½ years, as the last two terms have been. If there is then evidence after a term or two that the three-year fixed term does not provide enough stability, we can then more plausibly ask the voters for an extension to four years.

Both of the major parties have been talking about extending the term of parliament to four years, claiming it would facilitate better long-term planning by the government and by the business sector. On this issue I stress that, unless the four-year term is fixed by legislation, there is no guarantee that the government would run the full four years because the Premier could still call an early election when they chose.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the member for Nicklin like to incorporate the remainder of his speech?

Mr WELLINGTON: I seek leave to have the balance of my second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

There are two problems with the introduction of 4-year terms.

The first is that, under section 4 of the Constitution Amendment Act 1934, the Parliament cannot make the change without first having a referendum.

The second is, there is no certainty at the referendum that the voters would vote "yes", even if both of the major parties supported it.

Three other States—New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia—already have fixed parliamentary terms. They generally have two kinds of exceptions:

1. That the election can be delayed by a few weeks if the fixed date is impracticable for some reason, and
2. That an early election can be called if the government of the day no longer has the confidence of the Parliament and no alternative government can be formed.

I have copied the best of those provisions into this Bill. The technicalities are explained in the Explanatory Note. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Dick, adjourned.

~~PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS~~

~~Resumed from p.965.~~

~~Lowood, SES Facilities~~

~~Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (12.32 pm): The people of Lowood are set to receive a boost to their emergency services capability with the announcement of a new SES headquarters to be constructed over the next 12 months. I had the pleasure last week of representing Neil Roberts, the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services, at a sod turning ceremony at the new site located in Lindemans Road at Lowood. This new SES headquarters will provide the local volunteers with a facility that is appropriate for their size and the types of activities they undertake so that they can continue to serve the residents of Lowood in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The new facility will be larger than the previous headquarters and will be equipped with a training room and additional drive through bays for their vehicles, trailers and equipment.~~

~~This government is committed to ensuring that the people of Queensland receive the best emergency service care available. We will spend more than \$7 million over the next four years on facilities like this one, as well as providing new and improved equipment for our highly valued SES volunteers.~~

~~There are over 100 active and reserve SES volunteers in the wider Somerset unit, and it is necessary for them to be skilled in a broad range of activities, such as flood response, incident management, search and rescue, storm response, traffic management and agency support. As such, it is also worthwhile to acknowledge that the Lowood unit has not only around 25 active adult members but also 15 SES cadets. I think these young people deserve to be recognised for taking the time out of their busy school lives to provide volunteer services to the community.~~

~~However, to perform these roles well and to provide the best service possible, the SES requires the appropriate equipment and facilities. That is why I am confident that this new facility will mean that the people of Lowood will continue to receive a top class SES service. I should also point out that the \$82,000 grant provided by the Queensland government will be matched by the Somerset Regional Council, which I should also acknowledge has provided the land for the building free of charge.~~

~~Councillor Graeme Lehmann, the Mayor of the Somerset Regional Council, and his council should be congratulated for working so well with the government on seeing this project realised. I believe that this larger and better equipped facility will mean that the Lowood SES unit will now be well prepared to respond to any emergency situation they may face in years to come.~~

~~Benaraby State School~~

~~Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.34 pm): Members of the Benaraby State School P&C Association are very enthusiastic to see their school grow. In particular, they are interested in placing before this government their interest in establishing an early childhood facility in the Boyne Tannum area that will feed the Benaraby State School. Premier Anna Bligh announced funding for six new centres in Central Queensland. The number of students at the school has decreased and in 2008 the school lost a teacher. It has had a reduction of hours in its physical education teaching services and the people there fear the loss of another teacher and some of their programs.~~

~~However, the population in this region is growing. New families often move into the Benaraby area but drive their children to the school they already attend because of the stress involved in changing schools. However, the P&C believe that if they had after school care facilities or an early childhood facility this would be a feeder into their school and would establish a strong feeder system. The teachers~~