

~~**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for the question. The member for Springwood has been a strong ally of the community campaign to have the southern Gold Coast beaches and surf breaks declared a world surfing reserve. The member, along with the entire Palaszczuk Labor government, recognises the economic value of surf tourism and the jobs it creates in Queensland. I am pleased to report to the House today that the community campaign, powered by deep passion and tireless effort, has achieved a key milestone. Last Friday, my office received a phone call from Councillor Tom Tate, the mayor of the Gold Coast, advising that the Gold Coast City Council will be supporting the Gold Coast world surfing reserve nomination. The Gold Coast City Council made a very considered decision to stand with the Palaszczuk Labor government and the community in supporting the upgrade of the Gold Coast national surfing reserves to world reserve status. Before the last state election, the Palaszczuk government committed to working with the community and the City Council to progress the nomination to have the southern Gold Coast beaches declared a world surfing reserve.~~

~~The Gold Coast is renowned the world over for its surf heritage. Many of the world's best surfers have grown up riding the surf breaks from Burleigh Heads to Snapper Rocks. The surf industry alone brings in \$1.4 billion to the Gold Coast economy and supports more than 20,000 jobs. More importantly, the community-driven campaign shows that surfing means much more to the Gold Coast community. It is a way of life for those who spend time enjoying the coast's world class ocean, beach and surfing amenity. The bid for world surfing reserve status recognises this. I would like to make special mention of Andrew 'Andy Mac' McKinnon, chairman of the Gold Coast world surfing reserve, who has been a champion of the nomination.~~

## <CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction



**Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (11.56 am): <I present a bill for an act to amend the Constitution of Queensland 2001 >to provide for fixed terms for the Legislative Assembly and to amend the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1934 and the Electoral Act 1992 for particular purposes, and to repeal the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1890. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015.

*Tabled paper:* Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.

In February 2015, to ensure that Queenslanders are served with a more accountable parliament, we in the LNP announced that an LNP government would conduct a referendum on fixed four-year parliamentary terms during the current parliamentary term. Our proposal ensures that Queenslanders would have a direct say in how their governments are elected and the manner in which elections are called. As I referred to in the explanatory notes, New South Wales was the first Australian jurisdiction to adopt a four-year fixed parliamentary term in 1995. Since that time, most Australian parliaments, apart from the Commonwealth and Queensland lower houses, have followed suit. Since 2008, local governments in Queensland also now have fixed four-year terms.

Currently, the Premier of Queensland can call a general election at his or her whim, subject to the agreement of the Governor. Since 2004, the average term of parliament has, in fact, been just two years and nine months. Obviously that gives the government the political advantage of being able to call an election at a time that is in its political interest. Often this can undermine both business confidence in the economic certainty and direction of the state and also the public confidence in a government that governs in the interests of Queenslanders and not itself.

As I stated in the explanatory notes, there are a number of significant advantages in having fixed four-year terms of government. First, it provides for better government and better public policy making because decisions can be made in the interests of outcomes and better services for Queenslanders, rather than short-term political gain or what may be in the news that day or that week. Secondly, it removes the constant speculation from the political process and provides fairness to all political parties, rather than what is in the interests of the government of the day. Thirdly, it provides confidence and certainty in government from the public and also from the business community, which drives investment, economic confidence and job creation.

We in the LNP have been consulting with Queenslanders about this important issue and discussions have commenced with academic and legal bodies such as the Queensland Law Society, the Bar Association of Queensland and various district law associations. In terms of the specific detail, the bill provides that a general election must be held on the second Saturday in March in the fourth

calendar year after the calendar year in which the last election was held. This is the process which fixes the specific date on which the election would be held every four years. The 2015 election was due in March and the 2012 and 2009 elections were held in March.

The bill provides for exceptional circumstances in which the Governor can and must dissolve the Legislative Assembly and issue a writ for a general election prior to that four-year period. This includes motions of no confidence in the government, a rejection of supply and also other established constitutional conventions. There is also a provision for which the polling day can be postponed by up to 35 days for exceptional circumstances such as if a federal election were called for the same date as the due date for the state election or if there were a natural disaster, such as a cyclone or flood, which made it impossible to hold the election on that date.

We have also provided a process whereby this particular bill is not presented to the Governor for assent unless it has obviously been passed by the Legislative Assembly but also after it has been approved by a majority of electors at a referendum held on a Saturday at least two months after this bill has been passed by the Legislative Assembly. Finally, the bill provides that should the bill be passed by the Legislative Assembly and approved at a referendum it would not commence until after the next general election, meaning that the 57th Parliament would be the first to have a fixed four-year term. We are presently in the 55th Parliament.

Queensland has a unique democratic system whereby we have a unicameral parliament, the only one in Australia. While we do have a more robust committee system, it does not replicate what is seen as an upper house or house of review that is in place in other jurisdictions. While this bill is not providing for the re-establishment of an upper house, the issue of representative democracy and confidence in the government are fundamentally important issues for Queenslanders.

Finally, we note that the government has announced an inquiry into this issue, to report back to the House on 9 November. While we understand the notion of proceeding down this path, the LNP believes that there is no better time for this issue to be looked at and, more importantly, acted upon than the present. The local government elections in March next year would perhaps be an opportunity for a statewide referendum on this issue.

We look forward to the government's support of this bill and also its support on working towards a referendum on this issue in the near future. I commend the bill to the House. >

### First Reading

**Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (12.02 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Grace): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

## ~~<CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) REFERENDUM BILL~~

### Introduction



~~**Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (12.02 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for a referendum on the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.~~

~~Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015.~~

~~Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015, explanatory notes.~~

~~As indicated in my earlier speech, this bill would follow upon the passage of the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015. It provides for a referendum to be held under the Referendums Act 1997.~~

~~The bill provides that any such referendum should be held on a day appointed by the Governor in Council that is at least two months after the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill~~