



Our ref: EDOCS 2015-01837(P1)  
Your ref: 11.1.1

28 January 2016

Research Director  
Committee of the Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000  
By email: [cla@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:cla@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Queensland Ombudsman  
ABN 257 657 579 00

Level 17, 53 Albert Street  
Brisbane Q 4000

GPO Box 3314  
Brisbane Q 4001

P 07 3005 7000  
1800 068 908  
(outside Brisbane)

F 07 3005 7067

E [ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au)

W [ombudsman.qld.gov.au](http://ombudsman.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to the Speaker's letter of 15 December 2015 inviting me to make a submission to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly (COLA) review of the parliamentary committee system and thank the committee for the opportunity to make a submission.

In making my submission, I have considered the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) report 'Inquiry into the introduction of four year terms for the Queensland Parliament, including consideration of Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015 (the report)' and particularly recommendation nine regarding entrenchment and recommendation ten regarding a review of the parliamentary committee system.

I agree with the reasons set out by the FAC for recommending the adoption of a fixed four year term for the parliament and see no negative impact upon this Office of making such a change. In addition, I also believe that a four year term would support more stable and better planned administration across state agencies. I base this on the premise that agencies would have a more predictable parliamentary timetable and, potentially, additional time to both design and implement changes to programs during the term of each parliament.

I also agree that the parliament's committee system is a vital element in maintaining the confidence of the people, particularly in the State's unicameral system of government. The proposed committee system's role in the estimates process and in reviewing legislation will, in my view, enhance the credibility of the State's budget process and improve the legislative process. I agree with the FAC recommendation that the committee system should be entrenched in relevant legislation to further enhance its operation and the confidence of the people.

As well as responsibility for budget estimates and reviewing legislation, current committees also have the vital role of overseeing independent parliamentary offices, including the Auditor-General, Information Commissioner and Ombudsman. I believe that the arguments made in support of entrenching budget estimates and review of legislation as key roles for future committees can be extended to include oversight of independent offices. I believe that parliamentary committee oversight of independent offices enhances the reputation of these offices and the confidence of the people in their independence from Executive Government. I therefore recommend to the COLA that it consider including oversight of independent parliamentary offices (and name those offices) as an

essential responsibility for the future parliamentary committee system. In the case of my own office, I believe oversight should include direct responsibility for regular statutory review as currently provided for in ss.83-85 of the *Ombudsman Act 2001*.

I would be pleased to provide any additional information to assist the committee in its deliberations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Clarke', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phil Clarke  
Queensland Ombudsman