

1st October 2015

Ms Di Farmer
Chair
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Ms Farmer,

Submission – Inquiry into Possible Changes to Queensland Parliamentary Terms

I note with enormous concern that the Government is seriously considering the introduction of four year parliamentary terms in Queensland. I strongly believe and recent experience confirms, there are a number of significant faults inherent in the proposal.

1. Electoral Loss of Faith

It is clear from the growing emergence of the minor parties and independents at both State and Federal levels that the electorate has lost its respect and trust not just for politicians but more alarmingly, for the institution of government itself. When a nation has five Prime Minister's in six years and State governments are being thrown out after just one term in office, it is clear there are fundamental issues at play largely driven by political self-interest, that are not being addressed.

It is submitted that the introduction of a four year parliamentary term will do nothing to restore lost electoral faith in government. On the contrary, if anything the proposal by effectively giving politicians another year in office, is more likely to reinforce the electorate view of yet another government being driven by the self-interest of the participants.

2. Parliamentary Term Duration is Unrelated to Good Government

As the prime example, the instability and lack of good government in the Federal sphere in recent years has been and is, clearly driven by a lack of political and managerial competence sufficient to meet the aspirations and needs of the electorate. Every poll demonstrates the electorates concern with these failings. This lack of competence is totally unrelated to the duration of the parliamentary term of the Federal Government and the responsibility for incompetency rests with the elected representatives themselves.

Closer to home the electorate of Queensland voted unequivocally to remove the Newman Government on the basis of its poor and damaging performance. Again, this had nothing to do with the duration of the electoral term. The huge turn

around at the last election indicated that had a four year term been in place, the prospect of that Government having another year in office, would have been devastating for many electors.

3. Parliamentary Term Duration is Unrelated to Stable Government

It has been frequently stated by politicians that they would be better able to govern and provide stability if four year terms of government were introduced.

The lie to this statement is illustrated again by recent history particularly at the federal level, where the nation has had five Prime Ministers in six years, where legislation is regularly thwarted, where the economy is on standby, no clear vision for the future exists, let alone any plan to implement the significant changes required.

4. No House of Review in Queensland.

Every State in Australia, except Queensland and the Northern Territory have recognised the fundamental need in a democratic society to have bi-cameral parliaments to provide a counter where necessary, to the possible excesses of government which are not in the best interests of the state or nation.

With the exception of the Northern Territory, every state which has four year parliamentary terms has an Upper house of Review. Queensland does not.

Without an Upper House of Review the only real chance that an electorate has of influencing an elected government is at the ballot box. In recent years it has been made clear that a government can do a lot of damage and harm to the electorate in a very short period of time. Without an Upper House of Review in place it would be too high a risk for the electorate were the government to establish a four year term for itself and its members.

I submit that a four year parliamentary term has nothing to offer the people of Queensland and everyone would be better placed if the Government concentrated on pursuing productive measures to achieve good governance and good government. Please recommend to the Government accordingly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Burke', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Burke