

Submission on Fixed Four year Terms presented by the Hon. John Mickel

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This submission supports a fixed four year term for Queensland State elections and urges the matter to be placed before the people at a referendum at the local Government elections in 2016.

A fixed four year term will bring the Queensland Legislature into line with Queensland Local government requirements and also into line with the majority of states in the Australian Commonwealth.

This submission suggests that a four year term is in the **best interest of developing effective public policy in Queensland.**

Four Year terms enable time for the proper identification of issues, effective research and analysis, the generation of policy proposals, effective consultation, and the evaluation of policy responses and above all effective implementation of those policies.

A policy cycle developed over the four year term would improve public policy development in a unicameral system of Government.

**A four year term will improve accountability of the Executive to the Parliament.**

Over the past four years, the establishment of the legislative Committee system has continued to develop to improve parliamentary debate on legislation and to scrutinize legislation.

In many instances the Executive has accepted the changes recommend by the Committees.

This Legislative Committee process is evolving and will further improve as members become familiar with its power and effectiveness.

In addition, there are the watch dog committee like the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commission, the Ethics Committee and the Estimates Committees which have been restored to their proper oversight function.

All of these Committees require time –time for members to devote, time for proper consideration, time to develop the appropriate skills in an active and proper participation in those Committees.

There has been a loss of corporate memory in the parliament with the election results and the nature of the Premiership over the past three years.

Proper understanding of the important role parliament plays in our democratic process takes time to understand.

The loss of institutional memory and a three year election cycle are not conducive to improving this loss.

For a parliamentary first term, a three year political cycle is segmented into a year of settling in, a second year of beginning to understand and a third year campaigning.

The need to establish an understanding of the workings of parliament and its committees are compelling reasons for fixed four year parliamentary terms.

**This submission supports the holding of the election in March on a set date.**

This will enable the entire community to focus on a particular date in a particular year.

It provides business with predictability and rids the community of the current constant speculation about possible election dates and times.

Having the election in March means that the focus of the first quarter of an election year is on the election and the rest of the year can be devoted to the processes of Governing.

It is for this reason that this submission opposes a three year term fixed with a flexible fourth year.

The uncertainty throughout the fourth year would exist and this would inhibit the proper development of public policy.

**This submission believes that the proposed Bill adequately establishes the protocols to be followed in the event of a loss of confidence and the failure to secure supply by the Government.**

It upholds the Westminster system that a Government must have the confidence of the House and must secure the finances to govern.

It recognizes the role the Governor must play in these circumstances and provides flexibility in exceptional circumstances for the reserve powers of the Governor.

**This submission finds the cost savings of four year terms over three year is an unimpressive argument.**

Rather the emphasis should be about getting value for money out of the parliament that is elected.

The changes in the understanding of the parliamentary processes by members over a longer term and keeping the Executive to account are value for money examples.

It is facile to argue as the paper does that fewer elections would be welcomed by the electors.

The logic of this is that no elections at all would be greeted with euphoria because of the cost savings—a complete nonsense.

**Overall, this submission argues that this is a good proposal** and borrows from other Australian jurisdictions.

It should be seen as a reform of the Legislative Assembly but in many ways a good economic reform especially if it results in the improved formulation and implementation of sound public policy.

It needs to be placed before the people as a referendum question at the first available opportunity which is the Local Government election of 2016.