



Please address all correspondence to:

THE STATE SECRETARY, ALP (Qld.), PO Box 5032, West End, Q 4101
1st Floor, TLC Building, 16 Peel Street, South Brisbane Q 4101

Tel: 07 3844 8101 Fax: 07 3844 8085 Email: info@qld.alp.org.au

28 October 2015

Ms Di Farmer
Chair
Finance and Administration Committee
Queensland Parliament

By email: FAC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Farmer

Thank you for the Finance and Administration Committee's invitation for the ALP to attend the hearing on 28 October 2015 in its inquiry on four year terms for the Queensland Parliament.

Unfortunately, both I and the ALP Assistant Secretary, Jon Persley are interstate during the proposed hearing and are unable to attend.

I have outlined below some comments that might assist the Committee in their deliberations. I will also make contact with the Committee Secretariat after the hearing to respond to any questions that require further information.

Four Year Terms

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk has outlined Labor's commitment to jobs, secure jobs and the long term economic prosperity of Queensland.

As the State with the most decentralised population, Queensland is a State where capital investment is the key component to economic growth. Projects and business opportunities that provide jobs require certainty of investment conditions and government support.

A move to four year terms would provide a greater opportunity for government to attract direct investment to Queensland and provide new business opportunities. As well, four year terms would also reduce the impact of business and consumer confidence that affects investment decisions during election periods.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland have supported this view in their recent public announcements.

Queensland Labor supports the move to four year terms as part of Premier Palaszczuk's plan to attract investment and jobs to Queensland. Four year terms are already in place for local governments here in Queensland as well as other State governments and have proceeded without adverse constitutional implications.

Integrity and Accountability

The Report of the Fitzgerald Inquiry has highlighted many of the risks to the integrity and accountability of government from a unicameral Parliament. A National Party Government used its majority in Parliament to sack workers, hide corruption and protect government from scrutiny.

Changes made by successive Labor governments have seen significant change in the integrity and accountability of Queensland government including:

- Freedom of Information and Right to Information legislation;
- The introduction of independent corruption investigators;
- Disclosure of political donations;
- The requirement of Members of Parliament to declare gifts and interests;
- The introduction of a Public Accounts Committee;
- The establishment of independent electoral redistributions;
- The introduction of Estimates Committees to scrutinise appropriations;
- The Committee System Review and the current legislative committee structure;
- The introduction of a Lobbyist Register and guidelines;
- Time limits to answers in Question Time; and
- Time for private members' motions and private members' bills.

Unfortunately, many of these reforms were attacked during the period of the Campbell Newman LNP Government. Changes to thresholds for disclosure of political donations meant that 94% of donations went undisclosed. Changes to Estimates Committee hearings limited the opportunity for scrutiny of government appropriations by Members of Parliament, the media and the public.

The election of Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and the restoration of many of the LNP attacks on this integrity and accountability framework provides the appropriate opportunity to support a move to four year terms in the confidence that there are in place opportunities for scrutiny of government between elections. The 2015 State election clearly showed that voters of Queensland are prepared to remove bad governments that attack integrity and accountability processes.

Referendum

The history of referendums in Australia has shown that propositions for constitutional reform that do not have bipartisan support are unlikely to succeed.

If there is bipartisan support for this proposition, there would be an opportunity to hold the referendum with the local government election in March 2016. The limited risk of confusion would be outweighed by the significant saving to taxpayers in avoiding a separate referendum.

Previous referendums in Queensland have been held in conjunction with elections without significant concern.

Election Dates

I have followed some of the evidence provided to the Committee in its earlier hearing. I submit that the Committee should give weight to those submissions from North and Far North Queensland that a March election date does risk the disenfranchisement of some remote communities during the wet season. I know it is also a significant impost on the Electoral Commission to conduct polling in these communities during the wet seasons.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evan Moorhead', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Evan Moorhead
STATE SECRETARY