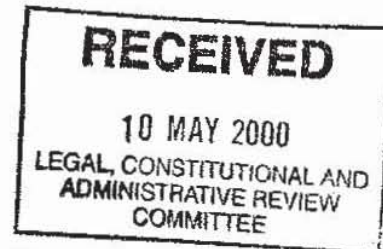


Tania Jackman

From:
Sent: Wednesday, 10 May 2000 13:29
To: lcarc@parliament.qld.gov.au
Subject: Undeliverable: FOUR YEAR PARLIAMENTARY TERMS



Submission No 24
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>From: System Administrator <postmaster@parliament.qld.gov.au>
>To: J.Elliott@uq.net.au
>Subject: Undeliverable: FOUR YEAR PARLIAMENTARY TERMS
>Date: Wed, 10 May 2000 13:16:57 +1000
>MIME-Version: 1.0
>X-MS-Embedded-Report:
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>Your message
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> To: lcarc@parliament.qld.gov.au
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> The recipient name is not recognized
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>;p=Parliament;i=ZENA0005100316K1DPA3C4
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>From: J.Elliott@uq.net.au
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>Subject: FOUR YEAR PARLIAMENTARY TERMS
>Date: Wed, 10 May 2000 13:12:20 +1000
>MIME-Version: 1.0
>X-Mailer: Internet Mail Service (5.5.2650.21)
>X-MS-Embedded-Report:
>Content-Type: text/plain
>
> FOUR YEAR PARLIAMENTARY TERMS
>
> FOR
>
> The case for four or five year terms is strong on...
>
> - administrative and planning grounds
> - fewer elections would cut public expenditure
> - Australia as a country has too many elections
> -short term parliamentary terms can be used as a reason for not
>building up other democratic and control mechanisms
>
>
> AGAINST
>
> This proposal is more than just extending parliamentary terms - it
>can be understood as an attempt
>
> - to curtail the democratic rights of Queenslanders
> - to strengthen the powers of the government
> - to strengthen the power of M.Ps.
> - to make M.Ps. less responsive to the needs of the electorate
>
> There is already considerable cynicism and alienation about the

>parliamentary system as can be seen in the success of the One Nation
>movement , bad publicity about parliamentarians involved in court cases and
>recent events leading to the state elections in Victoria. The vote on the
>Republic suggests that many political parties and leaders were not in
>touch with the electorate. The system can be seen as complacent and lacking
>in understanding and responsiveness to ordinary people, and concerned only
>with self interest and power.

> This problem of lack of faith in democratic institutions is not
>just in Australia. For example, the May 4th 2000, election of Ken
>Livingstone as Mayor of London, suggests that not only was Tony Blair out
>of touch, but also the electorate continued with their long term alienation
>with only a 33.6% turnout. Electoral turnout in the United States is also
>abysmally low and cynicism about the Congress high.

>
> The political history of Queensland with its long periods of the
>same totalitarian governments and weak parliaments and the corruption
>revealed in the Fitzgerald Report and the jailing of top ministers and
>public servants did little to boost confidence in the democratic system
>in this state. Control of the executive is also lessened by the absence of
>an upper house and only one newspaper in the metropolitan region. The
>establishment of independent control bodies such as the CJC and the growth
>of NGOs are signs of a weaker parliamentary system.

>

>

> CONCLUSIONS

>

> Proposals for a four year term would be more acceptable if at the
>same time they strengthened democracy and the parliamentary system. The
>danger and weakness of recent reports and proposals is that they over
>concentrate on legal, constitutional and institutional factors at the
>expense of democratic and parliamentary features.

> Substantial issues of constitutional reform need to be discussed
>within the more fundamental questions of the effectiveness and health of
>our democratic and parliamentary system. Such questions would include:

>

> the role of parliament today
> its declining power
> as against the continual growth in the power of the executive
> the decline in the trust and esteem given to parliament, its
>irrelevance to ordinary people
> the effectiveness of parliament in fulfilling its primary functions

>

> In fulfilling primary functions such as representing the people and
>controlling the executive
>parliament must be :

>

> independent of the executive
> be responsive to the electorate
> have the commitment and power to perform its functions

>

> Issues which could be discussed include:

>

> strengthening the powers of the parliament as against the executive
> more independence, including its procedures, finance and institutions
>including committees

> more committees with more power
> more sitting days (which the executive does not want)
> the Speaker to have more independence
> more power and freedom to the Opposition and independents
> more use of expert agencies
> more scrutiny of the public sector
> M.P.S to be more accountable
> more public education and information about the democratic and
>parliamentary system
> system to be more open and responsive to groups in the community

>

>

> There is a strong case for longer parliamentary terms but at the

>same time
> there is also a strong case to strengthen the democratic
>parliamentary system in Queensland.
>
>
>
>
>
> I write after a life time working, studying and teaching in the
>public sector in Australia and overseas, including senior lecturer in
>government and public administration at the University of Queensland
>1972-98.
>
> Jim Elliott