

Submission No 38

12-5-00

The Research Director,  
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee,  
Parliament House, George Street, Brisbane, Qld. 4000



Submission re Four Year Parliamentary Terms

Dear Sir/Madam,

Members of the community have recourse from some shonky tradesmen because many tradesmen need a licence. If the work is particularly poor the licence may be revoked.

Politicians can only have their work "licence" revoked by the community at the ballot box. This review needs to be able to be done on a regular basis. Four years is too long to tolerate what the community considers to be a bad government.

A solution to the desire for longer terms and my desire for accountability is the introduction of Community Initiated Referenda. If the people can review a particularly bad decision of the government of the day then the need for a three-year term is diminished. Governments do sometimes get out of touch with the people they are representing. C.I.R. can check if a decision is representative. The reality of Australian C.I.R. is that in the few places that have it, it is very rarely used.

The envelope containing the call for submissions was post-marked 8-5-00. Submissions close 12-5-00. That gives the appearance of not wanting the community to be involved and later citing the lack of involvement as approval for your proposal.

The report contains a lot of rubbish. "It is often said in overly simplistic terms that governments spend the first year of office settling in, the second year making decisions, and the third year planning for the next election. What this highlights is the relatively short period during which Governments may feel confident about making decisions in the public interest without giving-in to particular electoral pressures."

It is as if parliamentarians have such a low capacity for making decisions that they are only capable in the middle year of a three-year term

Many governments have multiple terms so they do not need a year to settle in. yet I have not noticed any improvement as a result of it. Surely Governments make

good and bad decisions for the entire term, and therefore need to be able to be reviewed. Either the entire government, or a particularly bad decision.

Gympie used to have annual elections for Mayor many years ago.

One of the first decisions by the new Council in it's first four year term was to vote toward giving itself a 25% pay rise. Hardly a good advertisement for four year terms. They may well deserve more money but the way they are going about it is suspect.

"6.1 Arguments for" concludes with "Finally, there are likely to be fewer elections with consequent savings for the public purse." Bad Governments are capable of costing the community far more than an election. Australians went to war to preserve our freedoms, including freedom of speech. Delaying the opportunity to speak at the ballot box diminishes that freedom.

Please no four-year term unless there is something similar to a Community Initiated Referenda system to compensate. Only if C.I.R were tied to it would I support the introduction of four-year terms.



Frank Lightfoot