



Please address all correspondence to:

THE STATE SECRETARY, ALP (Qld.), P.O. 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

Submission No 41
Spec 28.1

12 May, 2000

RECEIVED

12 MAY 2000

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW
COMMITTEE

Mr Gary Fenlon MLA
Chair
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Mr Fenlon

Thank you for your letter of 13 April, 2000 inviting the Australian Labor Party (State of Queensland) to provide a submission to your Committee on the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission's recommendation that the maximum term of the Queensland Legislative Assembly be extended to four years with a fixed minimum period of three years.

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond on behalf of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Labor Party ("ALP").

Section 2 of the state *Constitution Act Amendment Act 1890* provides that parliamentary terms in Queensland are to be of three years duration. No minimum term is fixed. As such, Queensland is the only Australian state to retain three year parliamentary terms.

The ALP strongly supports amending the Queensland Constitution to extend parliamentary terms to four years. The Party submits that there are a number of cogent and compelling arguments as to why such a constitutional amendment is necessary for the better governance of Queensland.

The ALP believes that four year parliamentary terms will contribute to improved public policy formulation and implementation by governments. As the experience of all of the other Australian States shows, the implementation of four year terms leads inexorably to an extension of the life of legislatures, and more often than not, to the life of governments. Such an extension of time, the ALP submits, provides a more realistic time frame for government planning and programs.

The ALP believes the extended time available for government decision-making that will result from four year terms is particularly important in a world where dynamic change seems to be the only constant. As new technologies emerge, as the "New Economy", based as it is on information technology, biotechnology, and a range of other new disciplines continues to evolve, governments need effective and appropriate time frames within which to properly respond to emerging issues, as well as to be able to effectively plan and implement projects and programs. The ALP believes that four year terms will contribute substantially to achieving these outcomes.

In such an environment, four year parliamentary terms will also allow for more effective economic planning, thereby providing greater stability for business and the economy generally.

On a more practical note, the ALP believes that four year terms will result in fewer elections, thus decreasing the cost imposed on taxpayers to fund elections.

Four year terms would also align the electoral process in Queensland with a range of other jurisdictions, not only in Australia, but throughout the world. Parliamentary terms in excess of three years do not seem to have had any deleterious effect on democratic processes in those jurisdictions, nor on the accountability of governments.

Thank you once again for providing the Australian Labor Party (State of Queensland) with an opportunity to assist your Committee with its deliberations on this important matter.

Yours sincerely



Cameron Milner
State Secretary