



Referendums

The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines a referendum as *the principle or procedure of referring or submitting measures proposed or passed by a legislative body to the vote of the electorate for approval or rejection*. Therefore, a referendum is an example of direct democracy in action.

Referendums may be held to alter the State Constitution or to seek opinions from electors on a particular issue. Normally, the referendum is worded so that it can be decided as a Yes/No question that is directly voted on by the people.

A referendum is passed when a majority of people statewide vote in favour of the Yes/No proposal. Several proposals for change have been put to a referendum; with the issue of alcohol prohibition in Queensland having been submitted twice.

Queensland Referendums

Queenslanders have participated in eight state-sponsored referendums since the establishment of the Queensland Parliament in 1860. The first was in 1899 and the last occurred in 2016. The 1899 referendum coincided with similar referendums held in other Australian colonies regarding the need for federation. Since then, referendums have been on state-based issues.

Referendums are notoriously difficult to pass. Only the first two referendums, the Federation (1899) and Religious Instruction (1910) referendums, of the seven questions submitted to public vote have been passed. And despite the failure of the Abolition of the Legislative Council referendum in 1917, the government went ahead and abolished the Legislative Council in 1922.

Details of the eight state-initiated referendums are outlined below:

Referendum	Question	Yes Votes	No Votes	Outcome
Federation Referendum 2 September 1899	Are you in favour of the proposed Federal Constitution Bill?	38,488 (55.4%)	30,996 (44.6%)	Approved
Religious Instruction in State Schools 13 April 1910	Are you in favour of introducing the following system into State Schools namely - The State schoolmaster, in school hours, teaches selected Bible lessons from a reading book provided for the purpose, but is not allowed to give sectarian teaching; Any minister of religion is entitled, in school hours, to give the children of his own denomination an hour's religious instruction on such days as the School Committee can arrange for; Any parent is entitled to withdraw his child from all religious teaching if he chooses to do so? If you desire Religious instruction in State Schools, vote thus - YES. If you object to Religious Instruction in State Schools, vote thus NO.	74,228 (56.7%)	56,681 (43.3%)	Approved
Abolition of Legislative Council 5 May 1917	I vote for /against the Bill entitled A Bill to Amend the Constitution of Queensland by Abolishing the Legislative Council.	116,909 (39.3%)	179,105 (60.7%)	Failed

Queensland Parliament Factsheet

Referendums

Referendum	Question	Yes Votes	No Votes	Outcome
Prohibition (Brewing manufacture) 30 October 1920	Are you in favour of- A. State management of manufacture, importation, and sake if fermented and spirituous liquors? B. Prohibition of manufacture, importation, and retail of fermented and spirituous liquors, to take effect in July, 1923? C. Continuance of the present system of manufacture, importation, and retail of fermented and spirituous liquors?	Note: Not a Yes/No vote A 28, 294 B 145,516 C 175, 620		A and B Failed C was the continuation of the current system
Prohibition 6 October 1923	Are you in favour of- A. State management of manufacture, importation, and sake if fermented and spirituous liquors? B. Prohibition of manufacture, importation, and retail of fermented and spirituous liquors, to take effect in July, 1925? C. Continuance of the present system of manufacture, importation, and retail of fermented and spirituous liquors?	Note: Not a Yes/No vote A 16,622 B 136,075 C 222,806		A and B Failed C was the continuation of the current system
Four-Year Parliamentary Terms 23 March 1991	Do you approve of a Bill to extend the maximum term of future Parliaments from three to four years?	772,647 (48.9%)	811,078 (51.1%)	Failed
Daylight Saving 22 February 1992	Are you in favour of daylight saving?	744,686 (45.5%)	892,119 (54.5%)	Failed
Fixed four-year parliamentary terms 19 March 2016	Yes or No - A Bill for an Act to provide for fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly in Queensland.	1,302,398 (52.96%)	1,157,043 (47.04%)	Approved

Legislation

In Queensland, the *Referendums Act 1997* provides for the publication of the details of the cases for and against the question to be put to electors to decide.