




Speech By  
**Craig Crawford**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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**CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL;  
CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) REFERENDUM BILL**

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (11.20 am): I rise to make a short contribution in support of the bills. I was proud to be part of the Finance and Administration Committee that toured Queensland with 11 forums to receive feedback from Queenslanders. I certainly thank the other members of my committee and the parliamentary staff that assisted us. As we know, this began as an interesting topic after some tweets and statements from various leaders and ended up with us sitting in public forums around Queensland talking to Queenslanders about what they wanted for the future. I was quite cognisant of the fact that we were talking about changing something that would affect us not just for the next few years but for a very long time.

It was good to have the education sessions from the Clerk. I learned quite a lot about constitutional arrangements in Queensland, how we have come to the position we are in, what happened with the upper house in Queensland all those years ago and why we have to go down such a road as we are going down at the moment.

As other committee members have done before me, I acknowledge the bipartisanship on this issue. There was never any doubt in the committee about the feelings on particular subjects. We began with a few issues, but by the time we had finished the committee tour and the forums there had been an increase in the number of topics we had to discuss and the recommendations we had to make. The key issues we began with were whether Queenslanders wanted a three- or a four-year term, whether they wanted that term to be fixed or unfixed, what time of the year they wanted that election to be held and when they would like the referendum question to be posed to them. Intertwined with that, naturally, was a discussion about an upper house in Queensland. At pretty much every forum that topic was raised and discussed.

It became quite clear to us very early in the piece that there was a definite move in wanting a fixed term of government for Queensland. In terms of whether the term should be three years or four years, there is no doubt that people were leaning quite strongly towards four years. Certainly, it was the fixed term that Queenslanders wanted most. That came from pretty much everyone we spoke to. It came from businesspeople talking about wanting stability in government—knowing when there would be a scaling down of government leading up to an election—and about overseas investment and trade, and it came from farmers talking about trade and overseas investment. People wanted to know when the next election would be. They were quite concerned about the current system whereby the media starts having conversations about when the election will be. As a result, there can be a period of six to nine months in which a lot of business and industry scales down and maybe stops employing extra labour. They spoke about the effect that was having on them. We also spoke to a lot of ordinary Queenslanders out there. They really want to know when an election will be. They want to be able to plan their lives—their weddings and so on—and know when an election will be held.

In relation to the timing of the election, the original proposal we took to Queensland was for March. Particularly North Queenslanders and Western Queenslanders outlined the issues that would cause in terms of the wet season and other weather events. A number of people cited examples of previous elections over the years where some issues had been caused. We kicked around the idea of a May election. In the end, the committee decision was to recommend the last Saturday of October. That idea seemed to resonate fairly well with Queenslanders and the committee felt that was best.

There were some good arguments put forward in relation to the timing of the referendum. The overwhelming reason to hold the referendum at the same time as the local government elections related to cost savings. It would cost a number of millions of dollars extra to run a stand-alone referendum. We were also cognisant of the fact that we would potentially be bringing Queenslanders out a third time in 2016 to cast a vote as they already have to vote at local government elections and may have to vote in a federal election. We were quite mindful of reducing the number of times people had to go out to vote.

During our 11 forums we discussed this topic with a number of current members of parliament on their own particular patches. I thank those members, because they did quite a bit of work to get the word out in their communities and to bring people in. It was not stacked by one particular side of politics, either. Members were very good about getting the word out to their chambers of commerce, their parties—on both sides of the fence—

**Mr Crandon:** I think Emerald was particularly good, wasn't it?

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Emerald was very good. I thank the local member. We also spoke to some former members and some representatives of local government.

We had an interesting situation in Mount Isa. The member for Coomera mentioned it briefly, but I want to expand on it from a personal perspective. After we had arrived in Mount Isa, Qantas unfortunately had to cancel the plane out of Mount Isa that night, so there was a bit of last-minute running around. It worked out that we could get the members for Bulimba and Coomera on a last-minute plane up to Cairns and the rest of us would stay in Mount Isa overnight and fly to Cairns the next day. I want to thank the check-in agent at Mount Isa airport. When the member for Bulimba tried to check in her bag she was told that she could not take it on the plane because it was too heavy. The member for Bulimba proceeded to say, 'This is the same bag I brought up from Brisbane this morning and there were no problems then, so why can I not take it to Cairns?' After a long discussion, it turned out that it was not the bag of the member for Bulimba; it was actually my bag. I thank Qantas for not sending my bag to Cairns. If they had, the next day I would have had to rely on the wardrobe of the member for Bulimba, and that would have been quite interesting!

In summary, a fixed term was definitely the key with Queenslanders and they were definitely more in favour of four years. The call for an upper house was quite minimal. I thank the Attorney-General and the member for Mansfield for the bipartisan way in which they have acted on this subject. I certainly support the bills.