

2016 STATE REFERENDUM

A Bill for an Act to provide for fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly in Queensland

The “NO” Case

The case for voting ‘NO’

To a Bill for an Act to provide for
fixed four-year terms for the
Legislative Assembly in Queensland

Referendum on Saturday, 19 March 2016

To ensure Queensland has a strong and robust Parliament that represents the people, the best protection is to **retain** the current three year term.

The Legislative Assembly in Queensland (commonly known as the Queensland Parliament) is presently elected for a term no longer than three years.

This Bill proposes to change Queensland’s constitutional law so that politicians are elected for an extra year.

The Case for Voting ‘No’

By your vote, you decide whether to re-elect, or remove a government or MP based on their performance.

A good government should not be afraid of being held accountable after three years of service.

Four year terms in Queensland are a bad idea, for a range of reasons:

- × **Less democracy and voter control**
- × **Wrong for a state without an Upper House**
- × **Less responsive and more complacent governments and politicians**
- × **No guarantee there will be better planning and policy**
- × **Increased social cost to Queenslanders**
- × **Puts politicians job security ahead of voters’ rights**

Professor of Law, Graeme Orr, argues that:

It is naive to think that just by changing to four-year terms you are going to improve the culture of executive government.

× **LESS DEMOCRACY and VOTER CONTROL**

Queenslanders will have to wait longer to vote-out a bad government.

Longer parliamentary terms water down democratic standards and reduce accountability of politicians to you, the electors.

Poor government decisions stay in place for an extra year.

Remember the ALP Bligh Government?

In 2012 Queenslanders swept it from office because of its asset sale agenda.

Remember the LNP Newman Government?

In 2015 Queenslanders swept it from office because it was arrogant.

Four year terms will dilute your right to vote out underperforming politicians.

× WRONG FOR A STATE THAT HAS NO UPPER HOUSE

Queensland is the only State without an Upper House to review laws or question the actions of the government.

Three year terms were entrenched in the Constitution of Queensland to protect your rights in the absence of an Upper House.

Queensland currently has a parliamentary committee system that, to a degree, looks at government legislation and questions government decisions. This is the ONLY safety mechanism in place. It is far from flawless.

The government can ignore parliamentary committee recommendations. The government can remove committee members. And major party MPs rarely show independence from their party leaders.

In any event, any government can remove the parliamentary committee system with a stroke of a legislative pen.

The Parliamentary Committee that recommended a move to four-year terms also recommended that this change be accompanied by a referendum to strengthen the parliamentary committee system.

Yet the Bill you are voting on does not give any protections to the parliamentary committee system. **TRICKY!**

Without an Upper House to review laws or question the government, what the government wants, the government gets.

Unlike the US, UK, Canada, NZ or even Victoria, Queensland has no Bill of Rights either. So the courts can't review bad laws.

Until we reform those problems, regular elections are the only protection we have.

As Michael Cope, President of the Council of Civil Liberties said, in 2016:

Given that Queensland has no upper house, no human rights act and a well-known history of authoritarianism, parliamentary terms should not be increased until democracy and public accountability in this state have been significantly improved.

× INCREASED SOCIAL COST TO QUEENSLANDERS

A bad or unpopular government guaranteed a four-year term is capable of costing the Queensland community far more than the cost of an election.

Planning, policy formulation and productivity

There is no guarantee that the State will benefit from less frequent elections.

Other forces, such as overseas markets, exchange rates, commodity prices and the policies of the Commonwealth and other governments affect government planning, usually without warning.

There is no guarantee that four year terms will increase productivity. In fact governments are equally likely to become less responsive and more complacent.

Longer terms will just give poor governments, like the last couple, an extra year in power.

Remember this! Vote 'No'.

× PUTS POLITICIANS' JOB SECURITY AHEAD OF VOTERS' RIGHTS

Who is pushing for four year terms?

In 1991, Queenslanders like you voted against 4 year terms.

Who is pushing this unnecessary referendum today?

1. **The ALP Government.**
2. **The LNP Opposition**
3. **Politicians**

Why?

It gives all politicians more job security.

And it gives government more power, more time and less accountability.

The right for all to vote was won, just over a century ago:

- To ensure we, the people, could recall bad governments and MPs.
- And to ensure that every person had a say in government and policy.

Longer terms **will** mean politicians hear our voices less often. In our silence, powerful lobby groups will have greater say.

Four year terms dilute the power of the people to hold the Queensland government and politicians account.

The ability to vote is the birthright of every citizen. Don't weaken it.

The government of the day dominates Parliament

Longer terms will give the Premier and Government of the day virtually total power.

Who benefits if we vote less often?

Not you.

On March 19 Vote 'No'

CONCLUSIONS and SUMMARY

Queensland must retain three yearly elections so that government performance can be measured frequently by the people the government represents.

Politicians stand to gain more than voters if four year terms are introduced through this premature referendum.

We urge Queenslanders to **vote 'NO'** in this referendum and hold on to the opportunity that affords them their constitutional right to have a timely say in who represents the voice of their electorate, and Queensland.

**For democracy and good government's sake ...
retain your right to hold politicians accountable every three years.**

Vote 'No'.

As one of our Premiers said:

"If you can't get it done in three years you don't deserve a fourth"