



7th October, 2019.

Committee Secretary,  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy & Legal Affairs,  
P.O. Box 6021,  
Parliament House. Canberra. A.C.T. 2600.

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: Fixed Four Year Terms**

My submission concerns any proposals for either fixed four year terms, or extending the current three year terms to four years.

For a Federal Parliament, terms of four years is too long. It does not matter what other countries may do, we should make decisions **that suit us**. Australians are hard to engage politically at the best of times and extending the terms will ensure that no-one takes an interest in politics at all.

Longer terms make governments lazy; knowing they are not accountable to the people at the ballot box for a long time. Governments become lax, deaf and unfocussed. This is amplified when the terms are fixed because there is no pressure to do anything of substance until the last minute when the election date is looming. **This is the case in Victoria with fixed four year terms.**

Voters disengage from politics very easily when they know nothing can be changed or effected. Governments are very adept at voiding scrutiny at the best of times and longer, fixed terms ensure that governments are unaccountable and secure knowing that an election is distant and nothing short of a military coup can unseat them. **This is the case in Victoria with fixed four-year terms. In my experience, general voter interest has reduced to zero between elections. This was not the case years ago when the terms were not fixed.**

In Victoria, the vast majority of voters do not care what the government is doing because they can have no influence on it whatsoever. When terms are not fixed, voters know that if there is a scandal or appalling governance there is at least a chance of forcing them to the polls. Voters then have a vital interest in government

proceedings. Governments take notice, knowing that they may have judgement passed on them sooner than expected. It is a very effective way of keeping governments accountable. Not any more in Victoria. We just suffer another four years of bad government, corruption, scandal and dishonesty after every election.

Four years is far too long. Members of Parliament get far too comfortable and quickly begin to think about themselves more than their electorates and electors.

Good government is not interrupted by an election. When a government is cohesive, has a plan and is truly implementing it, a three year term is no impediment at all. Voters can see if a government is delivering what they promised and they can regularly review their progress and pass judgement. In the private sector staff have **annual** performance reviews and certainly higher executives are very regularly appraised and judged on their performance. Governments should be no exception to regular appraisals. As I say, if they are doing well, even if a project is not complete, voters will see progress and pass judgement accordingly.

Look at the example of the States where fixed four-year terms are now 'the norm'. Have we ever seen more lazy, scandal-plagued, self-serving, disconnected, greedy, corrupt, immoral governments with total disdain for any morals, accountability, honesty and high standards of behaviour? Not in my lifetime! **Are we stupid enough to replicate this at a Federal level?**

Parliamentarians should remember they are first and foremost accountable to God for their actions (or inaction!) The Apostle Paul tells us in the Bible that all people in governments are only allowed to be established by God's power. Therefore, they are to honour God in all their laws and work and discharge their duties for the good of all citizens by upholding godly laws. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Romans 13 v.1 ff)

Rather than seeking to extend their terms, parliamentarians need to address the matters of honesty, integrity and standards of behaviour.

Put simply, we do not want fixed four year terms because they will bring no benefit to the nation and there are proven problems with fixed four year terms in the states.

Yours faithfully

  
Matthew Briggs