

**THE ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

<http://effectivevoting.wordpress.com/>

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Mr Andrew Wallace MP

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House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

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Constitutional roundtable on fixed four-year parliamentary terms

The Electoral Reform Society of South Australia supports fixed parliamentary terms.

Since South Australia moved to fixed terms, this has removed the uncertainty of when the next election will be called. This has meant the government of the day has not been able to take advantages from springing an election when it suited them. It has resulted in a more level playing field for all political parties and candidates, and indeed for the electors. Having a fixed date has also allowed the Electoral Commission SA to be better prepared in advance for running each election.

One difficulty with fixed terms, is determining the date for the election.

South Australia now has its election date on the third Saturday in March every four years. This can mean no sittings of Parliament from November to after the election in late April/May of the next year. This is far too long with no Parliament. Based on this experience, it may be better to hold the election later in the year. The other issue for South Australia is that Adelaide has a "Mad March" with many activities during the election campaign including a long weekend, Festival of Arts, Womadelaide, and Adelaide's 500 car race that distracts the electors and makes it difficult to even make electors aware that there is an election as well as the difficulties of campaigning effectively.

The roundtable also needs to consider whether four-year terms are appropriate.

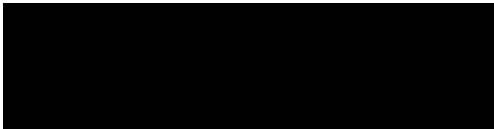
If there was a shorter term (perhaps three-years), the Government and Parliament may be more responsive to the electors, though with a shorter electoral cycle this may not necessarily give good

government. With four-year terms for the House of Representatives, this means a consequential eight- years for the Senate which for many is considered far too long.

While the House of Representatives consists of single-member electorates, there is also not a suitable method of replacing early retiring members without by-elections. The Electoral Reform Society of South Australia supports proportional representation, which in this instance would allow recounts to be used to ensure that the wishes of the electors as indicated at the last general election were maintained. Recounts are successfully used for the Tasmanian House of Assembly whenever there is a retiring member.

We wish the roundtable well in its deliberations.

Yours sincerely

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Deane Crabb