

Limit parliamentary terms to three-years only

Summary

This paper outlines the negative aspects of increasing parliamentary terms in the House of Representatives in the Australian Federal Parliament.

Introduction

There is no evidence that longer terms would bring about any change or benefit to our democracy.ⁱ

The Australian character has been strong enough to withstand most forms of national corruption over the years. A longer incumbency could increase the opportunity for corruption to seep in.

Integrity and complacency issues have become more widespread with longer term governments around the world. The Australian public are already complacent on political issues.ⁱⁱ Fisher et al. 2019. Going to a four-year term would increase that complacency. “The proportion of Australians who say they are interested in news has dropped from 64% in 2016 to 58% in 2019; and 65% of Australians say they have a low interest in politics” Digital News Report: Australia 2019.

Argument

Maintaining a fixed three-year parliamentary term in the House of Representatives will...

1. not extend MPs entrenchment and concentration of power
2. have a positive influence on politicians getting their job done on time. “Working longer hours is not a sign of efficiency but working smarter is”.ⁱⁱⁱ
3. help increase a more diverse parliament through regularly bringing in younger members to the house of reps. Because as the Pew Research Center shows, “‘Post-Millennials’ on Track to Be Most Diverse, Best-Educated Generation Yet”.^{iv}
4. bring in new members who can activate fresh ideas and aren’t obligated to maintaining old ways
5. help expose MPs to a wider professional experience. Politicians struggle with post parliamentary life. “Leaving the House: the challenges former MPs face after leaving Parliament”^v
6. encourage politicians from not becoming complacent and help keep policies and the state of the country fresh
7. maintain voter rights over when they can choose their politicians
8. keep the control of power with voters to decide on when un-performing governments should be replaced. Longer terms would tend to weaken this control.
9. prevent members from being re-elected despite serving long past their primes, because politicians come in and out of favour with the public
10. help reduce the potential for corruption and integrity issues.^{vi}

Conclusion

This paper has shown that increasing parliamentary terms will deplete the power of the people to choose their governments and raise the likelihood of integrity and corruption issues. It has also shown how increasing terms will increase political complacency in Australians.

ⁱ Four-year Terms for the House of Representatives, 2019, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp0001/01RP04

ⁱⁱ Fisher et al. 2019, <https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia-2019>

ⁱⁱⁱ Severson, D 2018, <https://www.inc.com/dana-severson/want-to-get-more-done-in-less-time-science-says-you-should-do-these-5-simple-things.html>

^{iv} Parker, K, Fry, R 2018, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/11/15/early-benchmarks-show-post-millennials-on-track-to-be-most-diverse-best-educated-generation-yet/>

^v Theakston, K, Byrne, C 2017, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-political-afterlife-the-challenges-former-mps-face-after-leaving-the-house-of-commons/>

^{vi} Freedom in the World, 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019/democracy-in-retreat>