



**Constitution (Parliamentary Terms) Amendment Bill
3 May 2001**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I rise in support of four-year parliamentary terms. However, the election should be held in March of each year. This change is expected to be long term; therefore, it needs to be carefully considered so that it is held at the optimum time for the greatest convenience for the people of the state, not just for current expediency for either side of the House for the next election. It should be not just for the convenience of public servants and city businesses, as suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but also for regional communities.

My large rural electorate produces a considerable amount of the state's export income from grain produced on farms clustered around small regional towns. In late October through to January, depending on the weather and on the location of the farm, many of my farmers are preparing for harvest if, indeed, they have not already commenced. Harvesting can be a stressful time, with farmers being at the mercy of the elements. The weather can be unstable often with hot and dry days suitable for reaping, but on occasion, the weather being as fickle as it can be, it can be cold, wet and windy. Farming families and, indeed, rural communities whose livelihoods depend on getting grain into the silos are totally focused on getting the crop out of the paddock and into the silo. They do not need—nor should they be distracted by—a state election. It would be an unnecessary burden to inflict a state election on them during this time.

There is little time to think about the issues and to discuss them. People who would normally be happy to man the booths or hand out how-to-vote cards will be busy and the burden will fall even more heavily than it does already on the elderly retired people within our communities. Manning booths in towns such as my home town of Lock in the middle of a cold or indeed a hot day in October can be very unpleasant. By March, the weather is usually much more moderate and the younger members of the community are available. University and senior students, many voting for the first time, would be severely disadvantaged with an October date as they are preparing for examinations. An election held in March would be suitable for all constituents in city and rural electorates: the Christmas and new year festivities are over, children have returned to school and the year's activities have settled into a routine. A fixed date for an election would be factored into daily lives as are the seasons.

The Premier has made it clear that he intends to go to the polls in March next year, as he currently legally can; therefore, there will be no additional advantage to the government than there is already under the current system. I support a fixed term of four years with the election held in March.