

# Lock them in for four years? Call to forbid early elections

**Matt Maloney**

FIXED parliamentary terms are being pushed to prevent opportunistic early elections, but political experts say this will not prevent them from occurring completely.

Nelson independent Meg Webb has called for fixed terms to be established to remove the government's advantage in calling for an election for political purposes, as well as to provide certainty over election timing for other parties and members of parliament, the private sector

and the broader Tasmanian community.

"A courageous new parliament has the opportunity to mitigate the disruptive impact of serial early elections by introducing fixed four-year terms for the Tasmanian House of Assembly."

Ms Webb said fixed terms would still allow for an early election to occur, in the circumstances of corruption and no-confidence motions.

The Liberals have said they are open to discussions about fixed-term elections, and Labor has so far declined

to share a view.

Tasmania is the only state that does not have fixed-term elections.

The last state to implement fixed terms was Queensland, which had to hold a referendum to change its constitution to do so.

In Tasmania, the state's Constitution Act is able to be amended in parliament.

Political science professor Richard Ecclestone said there was an argument that fixed-term elections were not as disruptive to the business of parliament.

"If there was a motion of no confidence in the government under the parliamentary system, then parliament would dissolve and there would be an election," he said.

"Just because you have fixed four-year terms, it doesn't mean that the government will necessarily be there for four years.

"It does mean that governments and premiers can't dissolve parliament after two-and-a-half or three years because it suits them."

Election analyst Kevin

Bonham said while fixed terms offered a sense of stability, they could also lead to issues like defections and lack of mandate for elected representatives.

He said governments should have the right to call elections when necessary, and in circumstances of instability in parliament, as was the case in 2021 and 2024.

Dr Bonham said the option of an early election should be available to a government when elected representatives defect from it so they can renew their mandate.

"One of the problems that we get in politics a lot these days is defections," he said.

"We get people who are elected for one party, they defect to defect to another party or the crossbench, and at that point, they have no mandate in terms of who they were originally elected to represent."

Dr Bonham said he believed that the electorate was wise to an opportunistic call for an early election.

"There are many examples of governments being punished for doing that," he said.