



Caught in a Bind: Fixed Term Parliaments in Tasmania

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Central Question

Can fixed-term parliaments deliver stability within Tasmania's Hare-Clark system?



Historical Stability

16 of the last 37 parliaments have been minority or became minority governments.



Recent Instability

Four elections in seven years; early elections in 2021, 2024 and 2025.



Current Constitutional Framework

Maximum four-year term but Assembly may be dissolved earlier.



Representative Government

Hare-Clark prioritises representation of diverse political views.



Responsible Government

Executive remains accountable to the parliament via confidence.



Dicey and Dissolution

Dissolution tests whether Parliament still reflects the electorate.



1989 Accord

Stability and fixed terms central to the ALP-Green Accord.



Governor Bennett

Concerned fixed terms would unduly fetter reserve powers.



The Constitution (Parliamentary Terms) Bill 1990

Attempt to codify the right for the Premier to advise a dissolution where effective government did not appear possible.



The 1992 Experiment

Single fixed-term parliament enacted with confidence-motion safeguards.



Why Only One Term?

Political caution and concerns over reserve powers.



1998 Reform Alternative

Reduction from 35 to 25 members pursued as a stability mechanism.



Renewed Interest Since 2006

Multiple proposals; reform agreements; no legislation.



Arguments For Fixed Terms

Certainty, collaboration, transparency, accountability, lower election costs.



Arguments Against

Flexibility, renewed mandates, defections, democratic responsiveness.



The Bramich Precedent 1956

Dissolution used to allow voters to assess a changed parliament.



Practical Design Questions

Confidence motions, money bills, reserve powers.



Entrenchment Options

Political entrenchment, supermajority provisions or referendum model.



Assessment

Fixed terms may reduce instability but cannot eliminate minority-government dynamics.



Conclusion

Tasmania remains caught between stability and democratic flexibility.