



# Premier of Queensland

For reply please quote: CS/AT – TF/14/3275 – DOC/14/29708

12 MAR 2014

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil".

Dear Mr Laurie

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Thank you for your letter of 13 February 2014 to the Premier enclosing petitions 2215–14 and 2199–13 which were tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 11 February 2014.

The petitioners have requested that a referendum be held on the reintroduction of an upper house in the Queensland Parliament, and have proposed a makeup of 59 members in the lower house and 30 members in the upper house with the boundaries of both houses to be determined by the Electoral Commission Queensland.

As you and the petitioners appreciate, Queensland's Legislative Council, or upper house, was abolished in 1922 and an upper house cannot be re-established unless it is supported by Queenslanders at a referendum.

In early 2013, the Queensland Government released a discussion paper and sought the views of Queenslanders about a range of electoral reform matters. As part of this consultation process, the restoration of an upper house was raised in a few submissions.

Following on from the discussion paper process, the Government decided that there was not a compelling argument to support the restoration of an upper house in Queensland. The Government remains of this view, and we do not support holding a referendum on this issue.

The petitioners may also wish to note that the issue of restoring an upper house was not listed by delegates at the Brisbane summit as an issue for inclusion in *The Queensland Plan: A 30 year vision for Queensland*. More than 70 000 Queenslanders have had their say as part of this process.

With Queensland's unicameral legislature, our parliamentary committee system makes an important contribution to enhancing parliamentary and legislative processes, while also scrutinising government action.

As you are aware, a number of key reforms to the Parliament's committee system were introduced in 2011 with bipartisan support. This followed an all-party inquiry and report on how the parliamentary oversight of legislation could be enhanced and the parliamentary committee system strengthened to enhance accountability. These reforms, including the establishment of portfolio committees that cover all areas of government activity, have been maintained in the current Parliament.

These committees include government, opposition and other non-government members, and they can call for public submissions on proposed legislation and they can conduct public hearings at which ministers, public servants or other persons can be questioned about these proposals and the effects that they may have on the community.

Another reform, as part of this process, was the provision of increased time for opposition and other non-government members to raise issues and debate matters in the Parliament. These reforms also continue to operate in the current Parliament.

Furthermore, upon coming to office, the Government acted to enhance the independence of the Queensland Parliament by fully including the position of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on the Parliament's key decision-making committee, the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. This Government also reversed the decision of the previous government by, again, making lying to the Parliament a criminal offence.

This Government is committed to a strong and accountable system of government and it is working hard to ensure that parliamentary committees operate effectively as part of this process. Furthermore, the Opposition has been provided with opportunities and significant public funding and resources to assist them to hold the Government to account.

While the Government does not support the holding of a referendum as requested in petitions 2215-14 and 2199-13, I appreciate that the petitioners have exercised their right to participate in the democratic process by providing their particular thoughts to the Parliament in this way.

Again thank you for forwarding these petitions to the Premier. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**JEFF SEENEY**  
**ACTING PREMIER**