



## **PREMIER SETS STATE ELECTION DATE AS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY EXTENDED**

Premier Anna Bligh has set the date for the State election as March 24 - almost exactly three years since she became the first elected female Premier in Australia on March 21, 2009.

Ms Bligh said her government would enter caretaker mode on February 19 and would seek to move the upcoming local government elections to late April or early May.

The Premier made the unprecedented announcement after receiving a request from the Floods Commission of Inquiry for an extension of time until the 16<sup>th</sup> of March to complete their work.

“The Commission and the Commissioners have my full support in their decision to hold further hearings and in their request for an extension of time,” she said.

“I established this inquiry because I wanted answers about the circumstances of the floods. I said I would leave no stone unturned and I meant it.

“My family and the people I love, live in this city and, like every other Queenslander I want the truth about what happened last year.”

Ms Bligh explained that it had been her intention to call the state election for a March 3 or 10 poll date - after the COI report had been due for release, giving the public the opportunity to consider the report and the responses of the major parties to the recommendations.

“It is not now possible to do that without denying Queenslanders the opportunity to consider the Commission of Inquiry Report,” she said.

“So, I intend to call the 2012 State election for Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> of March – giving the public time to consider the findings of the inquiry.”

The Premier said she intended to visit the Governor on Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> of February to ask her to dissolve the Parliament and issue the writs for a 24<sup>th</sup> March election.

“This would make the State election date just one week prior to the scheduled Local Government elections on March 31,” she said.

“I don’t believe that would be fair to local candidates or to the public and the LGAQ themselves have described the prospect of simultaneous state and local government campaigns as disastrous.

“Local government is entitled to be consulted on this proposed change and I have instructed the Attorney General and Minister for Local Government to do so today.

“But I will make it clear that the deferral of local government elections will be for the shortest reasonable period - most likely to be late April or early May and a final date will be agreed before the end of this month.

“For local government, I understand that this will cause some political inconvenience and I regret that these unusual and unpredictable circumstances have given rise to this decision.

“However, for those who suffered in the floods and are still living with the consequences, there is much more at stake here than mere inconvenience.

“What is at stake here is the truth about the cause of our floods and that matters to its victims. It also goes to the heart of the future safety of our State and its people.”

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