

Citizens' Assembly

Work Programme Item 5: Fixed Term Parliaments

Weekend 11 (final weekend)

Detailed Conversation Starters: Facilitators and Note Takers

General Instructions for Roundtable Discussions following presentations:

- Hear from everyone and as you do, enforce the ground-rules, firmly and with good humour. In particular, encourage people to be respectful of others and to share the airtime.
- Remember that the speakers are available for any questions or clarifications if required during the discussion. The Secretariat is also available for any clarification.
- Spend the last 5-10 minutes recapping the conversation to ensure that the key points are captured for inclusion in the table summary.
- As members may still be nervous/ uncomfortable with speaking in the public Q&A session on this topic later, you should also capture the top 3 questions which emerge in the discussion, and should be prepared to ask them on behalf of the table if called upon to do so by the Judge.
- Complete the standard feedback template sheet based on the last 5-10 minutes of conversation. Retain the feedback sheet for collection at the end of the discussion.
- Please remember that the roundtable discussions in the afternoon (after sessions 3 & 4 and 5 & 6) must include discussion on possible issues arising for the Assembly's recommendations and for inclusion on the draft Ballot Paper and time needs to be set aside for this.

Saturday Morning

Sessions 1 & 2: 'Explanation of current law' and 'Practice and History of political practice in Ireland' on the summoning and dissolving of Dáil and Seanad Éireann

In this roundtable discussion the members will discuss the material covered by the first two speakers.

As always, the purpose of this round table discussion is to:

- help members understand the information they have heard
- embed that knowledge and to document key themes arising from the conversation.
- capture the key questions which emerge during the discussion.

However, this session will also be used to obtain feedback from the members on the issues they want to see included on a ballot paper.

You'll have **25 minutes** for this part of the meeting.

Conversation Starters/ Suggested Questions to guide discussions:

1. How well do you understand how the Dáil is summoned and dissolved under the current constitutional arrangement?
2. What is the role of the President in relation to the length of the Dáil term currently?
3. What impact, if any, do you think the current arrangements for how the Dáil is summoned have had on the Irish system?
4. Are there any advantages/ disadvantages in the fixed term parliaments or semi-fixed term parliaments that you have heard about in other jurisdictions?

Sessions 3 and 4: Fixed Term Parliaments- Experience and practice in other jurisdictions and What if they were introduced in Ireland? Pros and cons, implications and issues arising

In this roundtable discussion the members will discuss the material covered by each of the four speakers.

As always, the purpose of this round table discussion is to:

- help members understand the information they have heard
- embed that knowledge and to document key themes arising from the conversation.
- capture the key questions which emerge during the discussion.

You'll have **40 minutes** for this part of the meeting.

Conversation Starters/ Suggested Questions to guide discussions:

1. What do you think are the advantages/ disadvantages of the fixed term parliaments or semi-fixed term parliaments that you have heard about in other jurisdictions?
2. In the case of semi-fixed term parliaments, what do you think of some of the options for permitting the early dissolution of the Dáil? Do you think these would work in an Irish context?

However, this session will also be used to obtain feedback from the members on the issues they want to see included on a ballot paper.

Ballot Paper Discussion:

1. Are there any issues in particular which you have heard from either of the speakers which you would like to be able to vote upon tomorrow?