

Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

Submission No: 063

Submission By: Project:herSELF

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Submission to the Committee

Inquiry into the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

From: Project:herSELF

To the Committee,

Project:herSELF welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. We write to express our opposition to the proposed changes outlined in the Bill.

Voting is a fundamental democratic right. Any reform that risks restricting participation, particularly for people who are already marginalised or systemically excluded, undermines the integrity of our democracy and weakens community trust in public institutions.

About Project:herSELF

Project:herSELF is a Queensland-based social impact organisation working alongside women and families with lived experience of incarceration, poverty, and systemic disadvantage. Our work is grounded in peer-led support, advocacy, storytelling, and community education.

We exist to address the social and structural barriers that limit people's ability to participate fully in civic, economic, and community life. Many of the women we support have experienced criminalisation, homelessness, family separation, and deep disengagement from formal systems - often as a result of trauma, violence, or poverty rather than intent to cause harm.

At Project:herSELF, we believe that justice, fairness, and inclusion are not abstract ideals; they are practical conditions that shape whether people feel seen, valued, and able to contribute to society. Civic participation, including the right to vote, is a critical part of that inclusion.

Concerns with the Proposed Amendments

The proposed amendments raise significant concerns for our organisation and the communities we serve. Based on our frontline experience:

- Any barriers to enrolment or voting disproportionately affect people with lived experience of incarceration, who may already face challenges such as unstable housing, lack of access to documentation, or limited understanding of complex electoral processes.
- Restrictions framed as "integrity measures" often have the unintended consequence of exclusion, particularly for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living in poverty, and those with limited digital access.
- Disengagement from civic systems is already high among the communities we work with, not because of apathy, but because of repeated experiences of being excluded or punished by systems that claim to serve the public good.

Rather than restoring fairness, measures that narrow participation risk entrenching inequality and silencing the voices of people most affected by government policy.

The Importance of an Inclusive Democracy

An inclusive democracy requires more participation, not less. Electoral systems should be designed to encourage engagement, rebuild trust, and recognise the realities of people's lives particularly those who have been historically marginalised.

From our perspective, true electoral fairness means:

- Protecting and expanding access to voting
- Ensuring processes are simple, accessible, and trauma-informed
- Recognising voting as a civic right, not a privilege contingent on compliance with complex administrative requirements

Conclusion

Project:herSELF does not support the proposed changes outlined in the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. We urge the Committee to consider the real-world impact of these reforms on people who are already underrepresented in our democratic system.

Safeguarding democracy means safeguarding participation—especially for those whose voices are often unheard.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Sincerely,

Project:herSELF

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