

From: [Diana Cholewska](#)
To: [Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee](#)
Subject: Submission to the Electoral Reform Amendment Bill
Date: Friday, 17 January 2014 3:22:18 PM

Dear Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee,

I urge you to reconsider the suggested electoral reform by Queensland Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie which would require voters to provide adequate identification at the polls on election days.

Queensland voters are lucky to be part of the broader Australian democracy, in which each person eligible to vote is expected to vote. The compulsory nature of voting in Australia is in fact one of the strongest points of our democracy. The existing system encourages participation and responsibility from its voters.

The proposed laws as part of Mr Bleijie's January 2013 Discussion Paper would effectively discriminate against those who are unable to seek "traditional" forms of identification, and specifically will discriminate against racial minorities who have never had these forms of identification (i.e. Aboriginal Australians), those who do not have fixed addresses (homeless, frequently-moving renters, students, remote communities) and those too poor to afford a particular form of identification (18+ cards, drivers licences, and passports are prohibitively expensive).

I urge the Committee to consider the percentage of people from these groups who would be unable to vote if the laws were introduced. I would also ask that the Committee considers whether this figure is different to existing statistics on voter impersonation in Queensland. As the Discussion Paper notes in section 3.1, there is no existing evidence of electoral fraud in Queensland and as such introducing potentially discriminatory photo identification laws could be a "disproportionate response" to the potential risk.

In a state as geographically and economically diverse as Queensland, the population who will be unable to vote due to ID laws would be significantly higher than in other states due to an overall disparity in health, wealth and access. The proposed changes would remove the existing equal opportunity for all to vote. By making voting more inconvenient (identification requirements, longer queue times at polls) the Queensland Government would be participating in a simple form of voter suppression unfortunately biased against the groups mentioned above.

It is unnecessarily discriminatory, in our existing democracy, to change laws which currently work sufficiently to their original purpose. I am lucky enough to live in a beautiful state and feel empowered by the responsibility to participate in elections at a local, state, or federal level. The mandatory nature of our electoral system is a privilege, especially when compared with countries elsewhere in the world. As such, it would be against the existing fairness of our democracy to begin placing obstructive requirements before those of our population who voices are just as, if not more important, than the voice of the rest of us.

Once again, I urge the Committee to strongly reconsider the laws proposed by Mr Bleijie. Thank you for your attention.

Kind regards,
Diana Cholewska

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