



**Legal, Constitutional and
Administrative Review
Committee**

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Media Release

VOICES AND VOTES

An inquiry into young people engaging in democracy in Queensland was launched in Cairns today.

The Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Committee of the Queensland Parliament, Dr Lesley Clark MP, launched the committee's inquiry at Smithfield State School.

At the launch, Dr Clark said that, although young people's lives are affected by decisions made by government and by the laws which govern our society, some young people say they don't know enough about politics or how to influence government. Others say they feel ignored and left out by politicians.

Data provided to the Committee from the Electoral Commission of Queensland indicates that at the 2004 State election some 52,000 young people aged between 18 and 20 who were eligible to vote chose not to exercise their democratic right to do so.

Dr Clark said, "That has to change. For a healthy democracy everyone needs to have a say at election time and we need governments to listen and act on the views of young people."

"Through its Voices and Votes inquiry, the committee aims to recommend practical ways to increase young people's interest and meaningful engagement in democracy in Queensland."

The committee wants to hear the views of the people of Queensland, particularly those aged 12 to 25 years.

The committee has produced a range of publications, including a multi-media CD rom. These provide information about young people engaging in democracy in Queensland, with the aim of encouraging discussion, public debate and submissions to the committee's inquiry.

In addition, the committee will talk to young people at workshops all around Queensland in coming months, and will hold a youth jury later in the year. Young people and people associated with young people's organizations who would like to be involved are urged to contact the committee.

Dr Clark stressed the importance of such involvement:

"Young people are active in their communities, but are participating less in formal democratic processes than people in previous generations. If this trend continues, over time there will be a significant decrease in the number of people participating in democracy in Queensland."

Issues on which the committee needs to hear from young people include:

- whether the voting age should be lowered to 17 or 16 years;
- how our voting system might better accommodate the reality of young people's interests and lives;
- how civics education in Queensland might better ensure that young people are well-informed and confident about engaging in democracy;
- how political parties and politicians might restore young people's faith in democracy and encourage their engagement in democracy;
- what assistance and encouragement young people require to have a say in decision-making and to take action about things they are passionate about.

The closing date for public response to the inquiry is 30 November 2005.

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Editor's notes:

- The Legal and Constitutional Committee is a permanent statutory committee of the Queensland Parliament with a broad range of law reform responsibilities including administrative review reform, constitutional reform, electoral reform, and legal reform.
- Further information, including committee publications, is available from: www.parliament.qld.gov.au/LCARC
- Dr Clark is available for interviews on 6 July 2005. Please call her electorate office on 07 4038 2800.
- For further information about the committee's inquiry, please contact Julie Copley at the committee secretariat on 3406 7244.
- Dr Lesley Clark MP, the Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Committee, is the Member of Parliament for Barron River.