

Media Release



Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee

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Jurors in Queensland's first 'youth jury' have made thoughtful yet practical recommendations to a parliamentary committee.

The Legal and Constitutional Committee of the Queensland Parliament convened the youth jury as part of its *Voices and Votes* inquiry into young people engaging in democracy in Queensland. The issue considered by the jury was, *How can democracy better serve young people in Queensland?* Over four days, twelve jurors heard evidence from a range of people with expertise in young people and/or democracy, then deliberated on that information to form recommendations relevant to the issue.

The jurors, aged between 16 and 21, have said the *Voices and Votes* jury was an important and life-changing experience. One juror said, 'It has given me faith that our voices can actually be heard.' Another commented, 'It was a great opportunity for leadership to be developed and to realise the difference young Australians can make.'

Yesterday, in the Red Chamber of the Queensland Parliament, the jurors presented their recommendations to the committee, in the presence of government Ministers, Members of Parliament and representatives of government and community organisations who work with young people.

The twelve recommendations made by the jurors called for:

- regular youth juries to inform Members of Parliament about issues important to young people;
- distribution to first-time voters of an A4 sheet outlining the beliefs and policies of all political parties, in language accessible to young people;
- formation of an umbrella youth organisation, 'Get Young People Involved' - *GYPI*, to educate and engage young people on democracy;
- a compulsory unit, taught in Years 10 and 12 English, on the basics of democracy and politics in Australia;
- a campaign to raise the awareness of adults who influence/have contact with young people about the value of engaging in democracy;
- enrolment, via ticking a box, on forms such as for a drivers' licence, 18+ card or tax file number;
- an information pack for young people on enrolment;
- the creation of more opportunities for young people to have a say, such as a time to 'Have Your Say' in the Queen Street Mall;
- an enrolment and democracy van to visit schools and other places where young people are, including Schoolies' Week;
- non-partisan advertising campaigns to encourage young people to vote; and
- Indigenous Youth Ambassadors to assist the engagement of Indigenous young people.

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 regarding the *Voices and Votes* inquiry, is available from: www.parliament.qld.gov.au/LCARC.

- Young people who participated as jurors who may be contacted for interview include:

- Ms Claire Ogden (17 years old, tertiary student)
ph 3869 2717

- Mr Paul Spearim (20 years old, employed, Indigenous) ph 0432 656 823

- Ms Casandra Boyle (18 years old, tertiary student)
ph 0419 710 084

- Dr Clark is available for interview. Please call (07) 4038 2800 or 0412 117 742.

- Photographs, such as those attached, are available in electronic form. Please call (07) 3406 7241.

The twelve jurors were unable to reach consensus on a final issue: lowering the voting age to 17.

Dr Lesley Clark MP, Chair of the committee, says, 'We were impressed with the interest, dedication and desire to make a difference demonstrated by these young people.'

'The jurors' recommendations will be contained in the committee's report on the *Voices and Votes* inquiry, which will be tabled in the Parliament in coming months.'