

Media Release



Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee

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Enrolling to vote to become automatic

A Queensland parliamentary committee has recommended that Queenslanders turning eighteen be automatically included on electoral rolls.

The Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee tabled its report - *Voices & Votes* – last week. The report was based on an inquiry which looked at practical ways to increase young Queenslanders' involvement in government.

The committee report made several recommendations on electoral reform issues including automatic enrolment of 18 year olds as well making unconditional pre-poll voting available to all Queensland voters.

The committee also recommended that it be mandatory for all Queensland schools to teach young people how to be involved in Queensland's democratic system. They suggested this could be achieved through several methods including the launch of a Democracy Bus to tour communities in rural, regional and remote Queensland

Other recommendations included improvements in the way governments currently engage with young people.

The Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Committee, Dr Lesley Clark MP, said: 'I consider this to be one of this committee's most important reports because I hope it will lead to the strengthening of representative democracy in Queensland.'

'Such a move won't just benefit young people but all Queenslanders.'

Dr Clark thanked the young people who participated in the committee inquiry and assured them that their voices had been heard: 'It was clear to us that young people are passionate about a wide range of issues and that they want their voices to be heard and acted on by government.'

'But it was equally clear that they do not feel well equipped to achieve this or have confidence that the government will listen and respond to them.'

Dr Clark urged the Government, Parliament and Electoral Commission to adopt the committee's recommendations contained in the *Voices & Votes* report.

She said 'Implementation of the recommendations will also demonstrate that young people's voices were heard and that they can make a difference.'

'This is the key to fostering the formal engagement of young people in our representative democracy.'

Key recommendations from the *Voices & Votes* report include:

- that all Queensland students learn about and experience democracy by way of an Active Democracy program through a mandatory scheme suitable for the middle and senior phases of learning;
- the creation of a Democracy Centre and the launch of a Democracy Bus to tour communities in rural, regional and remote Queensland to support school based education programs;
- conducting 'mock elections' in schools for senior students at the same time as the general state election due in 2010;
- that the voting age should remain at 18;
- introduction of direct, or automatic, enrolment;
- that unconditional pre-poll voting be available to all voters;

- strengthening the observance of the Queensland Youth Charter and ensuring that young people have resources and opportunities to take action in their communities; and
- an annual assessment of democratic engagement in Queensland through a longitudinal study of the effect of the introduction of the Active Democracy program.

Dr Clark told the Parliament that the committee had decided to inquire further into two issues that were young people considered important:

- Proportional representation and/or mixed member electorates for state and local government elections; and
- Electronic voting, with regard to improving access to democracy for rural and regional Queenslanders and Queenslanders with disabilities.

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 a copy of the report, is available from: www.parliament.qld.gov.au/LCARC.
- Dr Clark may be available for interview - please call the committee secretariat on 07 3406 7307.
- Youth Jurors, Casandra Boyle (0419 710 084) and Paul Spearim (0432 656 823) are also available for interview.
- For further information about the committee's inquiry please contact Julie Copley at the committee secretariat on 07 3406 7244.
- An electronic version of the graphic below is available on request – please call 07 3406 7307.



- use of innovative engagement methods by Queensland parliamentary committees;