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parliament.qld.gov.au**VOICES AND VOTES****A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO YOUNG PEOPLE'S
ENGAGEMENT IN DEMOCRACY IN QUEENSLAND**

Firstly, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important issue. As a community leader and a decision maker for the community I believe it is vital that young people are actively involved in our democratic processes.

For a Member of Parliament to truly represent their constituency they must provide opportunities to actively seek and listen to their constituents views. This however is not as easy as it sounds. Encouraging people to be actively involved in the political process is a hard task, often with little gain and if we don't engage young people then we will continue to go down this path.

After receiving an email from a teacher at Springwood State High School (see attached) I approached the school to request a forum where I could seek feedback from young people on the issue of involving them more in our political process. This also provided an opportunity to leave them with a discussion paper to complete and to find out more about the democracy curriculum being implemented at the school. (Completed discussion papers are attached)

Since the students have answered the questions in the discussion paper I will not include them in this document. However I will inform you of other comments made during my time speaking with the class.

1. Education – this theme was raised often and in various forms.

- Students stated that they felt very inadequate if they had to vote soon. They believe that the school system gives them some education in grade 7 and others classes may have some lessons in grade 9, however by the time they leave school and vote it is forgotten.

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Daisy Hill, Shailer Park, Loganholme, Cornubia and Priestdale*

- There was wide support for political parties to come into schools (particularly in schoolies week talks) and inform grade 12 students of their policies. This provides opportunities for young people to find out more about the issues that interest them and the thoughts of that political party on the subject and to learn about the political party process.
- Students believe that there is a role for their Member of Parliament to come and address them. This could be in a specific subject on a specific issue or generally.
- In respect to becoming more involved in the community students suggested that community organisations come and address them. This included groups like Meals on Wheels, Landcare, Lions, etc. They stated young people will not go to them – they need to come to the schools. (same for political parties)
- A role for political parties, lobby groups and community groups to address specific issues in specific subjects.
- Mock elections, mock parliaments and visits to the Parliament were also stated as having educational value to students. Many said while they may have gone to polling booths with parents it was not the same as having to do it themselves. They believe it can look complicated and rather than be embarrassed would rather not go and vote.

2. Engaging young people – new technologies and knowledge of how issues or legislation will affect them was raised in the forum.

- New technologies for voting or to get messages about voting to young people.
- New technologies for automatic enrolments. Make it easy. Today everything is about convenience and time. No one has time to spare.
- New technologies to engage them in debate.
- How does it affect them and how do they get their views and messages across to politicians and be heard?

Youth Internet Radio Network: Can we Innovate Democracy?

A paper prepared for the Australian Electronic Governance Conference, Centre for Public Policy University of Melbourne, Melbourne Victoria, 14th and 15th April 2004. (See attached)

3. The language used in getting the message across to young people – 'Why you should give a hoot!' – Also the marketing method used to get the message across.

Comments were made in regards to most political marketing focuses on older people. The advertisements focus on families or issues that relate to people with houses and families. The same issues would have implications for young people yet not often identified.

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4. Most realised that if incentives such as go and vote and get a free concert ticket meant either the taxpayer (them) or the candidate would have to pay. Therefore not free and would encourage only the rich to be able to run for parliament. They did not believe that this was a good way to go.

A journalist from the Reporter Newspaper – Logan also participated in the forum for a short time and a copy of her article is attached for your information and will also provide you with feedback from the students.

I am sure that you will find their feedback very interesting, just as I did. I believe they have identified some areas that can be improved and need to be addressed as well as some practical solutions.

Yours sincerely



Barbara Stone MP
State Member for Springwood
30 Nov. 05

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