⋐ electoral
commission NSW

16 July 2015

Ms Rebecca Gordon
Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gordon

NSWEC submission to the Inquiry into Electoral Education

I enclose a copy of the New South Wales Electoral Commission's (NSWEC) submission to the Inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters into electoral education.

I look forward to discussing this submission with the Joint Standing Committee members.

Yours sincerely

Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner

Submission to the Inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters into Electoral Education

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This submission will focus on providing information about the existing education programs currently provided by the NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC). As well it briefly explores how the delivery of electoral education could be improved within scope of practice and provision of services undertaken by the NSWEC.

Electoral Education

The NSWEC is committed to providing equal access to democracy for all electors in NSW. Therefore, the NSWEC has a particular focus on working with electors with additional needs.

In order to achieve this goal the NSWEC has established three reference groups. These are:

1. Equal Access to Democracy Disability Reference Group,
2. Aboriginal Reference Group, and
3. Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Reference Group.

The reference groups consist of representatives from peak bodies, non-government organisations and government organisations[1] . Reference group members work within a scope of agreed terms of reference and are committed to improving awareness about voting and enrolment and participation in elections for the electors they represent.

The purpose of the reference groups is to establish and foster strategic partnerships with members and their organisation to help support electors who have additional needs. The NSWEC works closely with the above reference groups to identify accessibility barriers to voting, enrolment and election processes and generate solutions to these barriers.

The solutions are targeted to each of the above reference groups and are captured in dedicated Action Plans[2]. The solutions include undertaking community engagement and education.

It is through these partnerships with reference group members and their organisations that the NSWEC can achieve wider engagement with electors throughout NSW. Reference group members are also provided with opportunities to provide feedback and comments on the development of new communication and education resources.

Encouraging feedback and comments from reference group members is critical to ensuring that the language, message and mode of delivery is appropriate to the needs of the electors that we target.

Providing face to face education sessions to electors across NSW is neither possible nor an efficient use of resources within the current NSWEC staffing model. Therefore elector

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[1] Reference group members' organisations:
http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/about_elections/community_education_resources/community_reference_groups
[2] Action Plans:
http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/about_elections/community_education_resources/action_plans

education is provided through reference group member organisations (as appropriate) and through the NSWEC website.

The website provides a suite of resources including:

- Information resources,
- Animations, and
- Information Kits.

Information Resources

A number of information resources have been developed that provide information about elections, voting and enrolment. This includes resources that have been translated into 25 languages and using pictorial and illustrations to communicate key messages about voting and elections.

The pictorial and illustrations describe what happens on election day as well as how to vote instructions. These resources have application across all stakeholder groups and could be used within a classroom environment to generate discussions around elections [3].

Animations

There are five animated videos that provide information on the NSW State Election[4]. The animations provide specific information about voting at a NSW State Election. These animations target electors across NSW and would be suitable for a younger audience. However they are not aligned to the national curriculum.

Four of the animated clips focus on the following areas:

- What happens in a polling place on Election Day
- What happens in a polling place on Election Day night
- How votes are counted (Proportional Representative method)
- How votes are counted (Optional Representative method)

The animations also include an interactive practice voting tool that enables an elector to practise casting a vote.

Information Kits

The targeted audience for the Kits are electors with additional needs however the information contained in the Kits has application for all NSW electors. The Kits focus on voting at the NSW State Election and enrolment within the framework of what, when, where, why and how.

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[3] Picture Story Boards:
http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/191325/Voting_at_the_NSW_State_Election_S E.455B.pdf
http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/191326/Single_Sheet_How_to_Vote_Summar y_SE453B_English.pdf
[4] Animations can be found at
http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/about_elections/community_education_resources/animations

The Kits were developed in consultation with the applicable reference group and therefore focus on the targeted stakeholder groups. However, the Kits could be used within a classroom environment but are not mapped to the national school curriculum or other accredited courses and/or qualifications. The Kits could be used as supplementary resources to assist in raising awareness about voting in NSW.

The Kits have been developed to provide the necessary tools to undertake an election educational workshop and include:

- PowerPoint presentation,
- Facilitator's guide, and
- Handouts.

The PowerPoint Presentation is accessible via the NSWEC website. Stakeholders can request the facilitator's guide and handouts to be emailed or posted to them. The facilitator's guide includes questions, activities and discussion points. The handouts include mock ballot papers to provide participants with an opportunity to practise voting.

Improving the delivery of electoral education

Recommendations relating to improvement of the delivery of electoral education should be informed by an in depth understanding of the specific needs of the audience (teachers and students) and the curriculum requirements.

The design, development and delivery of electoral education for the school sector should ideally be driven by the education sector. This would ensure that the resources, materials and assessments meet the curriculum requirements, as well as meeting the specific learning and communication needs of the students.

The NSWEC promotes a consultative approach in designing, developing and delivering electoral education. This is evident in the engagement practices undertaken with the three community reference groups.

Representatives from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the State and Territory Electoral Commissioners (STEC) periodically come together to participate in an Election Education Network.

It is through this network that the electoral commissions share resources, experiences and learnings relating to community education activities undertaken by each of the electoral commissions across the various states and territories.

This network could be used as a vehicle to bring the electoral commissions together to share information relating to electoral education within the school sector. The network could also explore the possibility of developing a national resource that would assist in meeting the learning objectives and achievement standards of the civics and citizenship curriculum.

As the resource has a national focus it would be beneficial for the AEC to play a key role in the facilitation and governance of this network. Representatives from the school sector with expertise in teaching and assessing the civics and citizenship curriculum should also be invited to participate in the network.

Any resources that were developed should ideally be interactive, engaging, educationally sound (aligned to curriculum and incorporate pedagogy principles) accessible throughout the school sector and easily updatable (to cater for changes to legislation, regulations and/or curriculum) in order to maximise the relevance of the resource.

The resource would also need to complement the current technology that is available within both the school sector and across the different electoral commissions. Furthermore, this resource would need to incorporate the critical differences relating to voting and enrolment across the states and territories.