



HASS SA Submission to Inquiry on Electoral Education

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About HASS SA

HASS SA acts as a meeting point for educator associations in the Humanities and Social Sciences and disseminates information on activities, resources and events of interest to over 650 educators through an online newsletter.

For the information of the Inquiry, we include the Name, Purpose and Objectives from our Constitution, which frames our perspective on the issue of Electoral Education (refer Appendix 1).

This submission is based on a review of the services and resources available and data collected from an online survey, made available through our newsletter. The timing of the submission date in combination with school holidays has limited the responses available.

Electoral education services provided to schools, students and teachers

A review of the services and resources available highlights the diverse support and coverage in different states and territories. This obviously does not affect services and resources relating to the federal level of government, but it does suggest that Australian students' learning experiences relating to the state level of government may be advantaged or disadvantaged according to their geographical location.

Electoral education services

When visiting Canberra, South Australian educators value the programs available. Within South Australia, educators appreciate the services and support of SA Parliament House, local State Members of Parliament and Local Councils. There were expressions of regret that the Electoral Commission of South Australia no longer assists schools with elections, indicating that awareness of available services needs to be clarified. The availability of this service, along with other excellent programs, is clearly stated on the websites in some other states. Participants of the online survey echoed the need for professional development for educators.

Greater consistency focusing on excellent practice across states and territories is required to meet the achievement standards set out in the national Civics and Citizenship Curriculum.

Electoral education resources

Most resources reviewed are available online and free of charge. Many are easily accessed on the Australian Curriculum website via Scootle, however this is not the case for State

focused resources. In searching for resources we found that some valuable resources required diligent and explicit searching to locate, presenting a challenge for teachers who may be new to the Learning Area.

As noted with electoral education services, there was a significant range of quality in resources, however the following need to be addressed: difficulty in identifying and locating Education resources, outdated information, broken links and the focus on print based resources. Federal government resources are generally easy to locate and use, although there are opportunities to diversify the range of resources using multimedia and other technologies.

Some State resources have taken advantage of newer pedagogies and technologies and include interactives, quizzes and videos. Others, however still provide worksheets for students to complete, which are much less engaging and juxtapose the goals of the Melbourne Declaration. It is highly likely that some educators are using resources from other states which better support teaching and learning, but may be misaligned with practices in their own state. Teachers in our on-line survey suggested that resources (such as video clips) demonstrating the actual voting process, lobbying, news reports, TV shows and debates were needed.

The discrepancies noted offer an opportunity for improving the quality of resources and therefore support quality teaching and learning in electoral education. We suggest that the Commonwealth Electoral Office liaise with states to provide both state and federal education information rather than each state having to prepare all their own materials as there must be much in common, but note there are also council and other elections, e.g. unions and schools which would require local amendments.

The teaching methodology and results of the national Civics and Citizenship Curriculum

At this stage of implementation of the curriculum the provision of electoral education support is very important - in particular to support the Year 5 Civics and Citizenship curriculum that directly addresses electoral education via the following content descriptors:

- * The key values that underpin Australia's democratic system of government
- * The roles and responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia's democracy
- * The key features of the Australian electoral process

Teachers of Year 5 are also required to assess and report on student achievement in regards to their understanding of "the values that underpin Australia's democracy and explain the importance of the electoral process." - Year 5 Achievement Standards

For quality teaching and learning to take place in regards to the above electoral/democracy aspects of the curriculum it is critical that schools and teachers have resources (human and material) to support their engagement and understanding of the processes and concepts involved.

Critical literacy skills, information literacy skills and media literacy skills play an important role in the Civics and Citizenship curriculum. The South Australian Association for Media Education, one of our sister educator associations, provided the following information to highlight this role:

Media Education Manifesto

Education about the media is essential –

1) to create citizens who can effectively participate in our system of democracy...

Discussion between South Australian educators indicates that most students will have had some experience of elections in a student governance context well before Year 5, which is acknowledged in the 'Implications for teaching, assessment and reporting' in the Civics and Citizenship curriculum.

Evolving technology and new platforms for delivering electoral education

Suggestions for enhancing the delivery of electoral education are given below:

- Provision of platform agnostic software for schools to manage and conduct their own student elections. At a higher level, results could be reported using different counting methods (i.e. 'first past the post' vs 'preferential voting'), analysed and interpreted.
- As there has been discussion at various times on the introduction of electronic voting, an opportunity exists for the Electoral Commission to trial possible systems within schools. Students are future voters and have greater exposure to evolving technologies. The feedback provided would be useful to the Commission without influencing the results of an election.
- The development and implementation of an online "broadcast channel" in the lead up to elections with student friendly reporting and information. This could include student presenters and segments aimed at different cohorts. Programs such as "Behind the News" provide an exemplar and could be included. Participation by schools could be facilitated using interactive elements and social media.

Appendix 1 – Constitution of HASS SA (relevant section)

HASS SA CONSTITUTION August 2014

HASS SA Constitution: RULES.

1. Name

1.1 The name of the incorporated association is HASS SA, as derived from Humanities and Social Sciences of South Australia. HASS SA was formerly known as South Australian Studies of Society and Environment Council, called SASOSE.

2. Purpose and Objectives

2.1 Purpose. To represent South Australian member associations and groups, link them, promote them, support them and serve them, in pursuit of quality education in Humanities and Social Sciences.

2.2 Objectives:

- i) To allow for an expression of a common voice on matters concerned with Humanities and Social Sciences, in the interests of member associations and groups.
- ii) To provide a forum and common meeting ground for member associations and groups to promote greater cooperation and understanding between associations and groups.
- iii) To act as a body representing member associations and groups collectively in initiating and responding to communications with relevant government Ministers, departments and appropriate bodies.
- iv) To act as a representative of member associations and groups collectively in seeking sources of funding and managing professional development and curriculum materials projects.

Appendix 2 – Resources reviewed for this Submission

Australian Capital Territory Electoral Commission 2015, *Elections ACT*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.elections.act.gov.au/>>.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2015, *Civics and Citizenship*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/humanities-and-social-sciences/civics-and-citizenship/rationale>>.

Australian Electoral Commission 2015, *AEC for schools*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://education.aec.gov.au/>>.

Education Services Australia 2015, *Civics and Citizenship Education*, accessed 17 July 2015, <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/cce_home,9068.html>.

Electoral Commission Queensland 2015, *Electoral Commission Queensland*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/>>.

Electoral Commission of South Australia 2015, *ECSA: Electoral Commission SA*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.ecsa.sa.gov.au/>>.

New South Wales Electoral Commission 2015, *Electoral Commission NSW*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/>>.

Northern Territory Government of Australia 2011, *Northern Territory Electoral Commission*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.ntec.nt.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>>.

Parliament of South Australia for Schools, 2015, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/education/Pages/Welcome.aspx>>.

South Australian Association for Media Education 2015, *Media Education Manifesto*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://saame.wikispaces.com/Media+Education+Manifesto>>.

Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2015, *Tasmanian Electoral Commission*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://tec.tas.gov.au/>>.

Victorian Electoral Commission 2015, *Victorian Electoral Commission VEC*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/>>.

Western Australian Electoral Commission 2015, *Western Australian Electoral Commission*, accessed 17 July 2015, <<http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/>>.