

Thomas Maxwell

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Ms Thwaites – members of the committee

I would like to make a submission to the joint standing committees' inquiry into the 2022 Federal Election.

The Terms of Reference does state that "supporting enfranchisement generally" is a relevant matter of inquiry for the committee, I believe my thoughts on the further enfranchisement of young people in this nation does pertain to this.

Australia has been a hub for transparent and open democracy for quite some time. I personally pride Australia in its enduring drive to keep our democracy strong.

The enfranchisement of women and first nations peoples have long since passed, I think our next wave of enfranchisement should happen soon. This being the enfranchisement of younger peoples in our nation.

A high school student, who is to be of voting age by mid-November 2026, I am commonly, and I state this in the strongest possible terms, enraged, with the actions of the Australian Government. I know I am not alone.

It's happened all over the world, Scotland, Austria, the Isle of Man, Guernsey, and Brazil are examples of reductions in voting ages, specifically to 16. These are all examples of fantastic democracies, and while a lower voting age doesn't necessarily make this so, it is a connection between all of them.

One may argue that the model used by say, Brazil, regarding optional voting for 16- and 17-year-olds conflicts with compulsory voting, the fact is, it doesn't. Brazil has had compulsory voting since 1932, for citizens aged 18 years and above, and optional voting for the illiterate and those over 70. This is a practical example of how we must not fear that the lowering of the voting age would conflict with our current electoral systems, in this case, compulsory voting.

I advocate for optional voting for 16- and 17-year-olds, not out of an urge to engage with the democratic process (although this is true), but out of a want to see us a liberal democracy progress.

Let's take the next step to better enfranchising our people, by lowering the voting age, and giving younger people a voice in future elections.