

## **Submission to The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

### **Inquiry into the delivery of electoral education.**

**Professor Murray Print**  
**University of Sydney**

I was research director of the Youth Electoral Study (YES) as found on the Australian Electoral Commission website. The results of that study have been published in journal articles as well as the AEC website in addition to numerous conference presentations nationally and internationally. That research covered several years but was focused on 2004-7.

I am currently completing an Australian Research Council grant on youth civic engagement and the role of schools in Australia. This research also addressed political and electoral engagement of young Australians in the final years of schooling.

In relation to the terms of reference of the inquiry I have several items to contribute. However, due to my current overseas work I am only able to make the following summarized points:

1. Electoral education services directly available to schools, students and teachers are best categorized as minimal and haphazard. The AEC, with principal responsibility, is hampered by lack of resources for direct electoral education in schools.
2. The AEC online education services are very good and meet many teachers' needs. Teachers can access the site easily and the resources are valuable. But if some form of direct educational experience is required for students in order to reinforce experiential learning then the AEC is limited.
3. The best evidence of the effectiveness of direct electoral education is where students attend AEC / state electoral education centres.
4. The Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship is a curriculum document and has yet to be implemented. Expect 2016 in most states. It is currently being revised in response to the Curriculum Review of the Australian Curriculum conducted in 2104. It is not possible to comment on 'results' of the Australian Curriculum at this stage other than to state that it is nearing completion and is likely to be implemented in 2016.
5. In the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship teaching methodology is frequently implied but not stated directly as that is the domain of schools and teachers in states and territories.
6. The Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship currently ceases at Year 10. Some wish to continue this area to Years 11 and 12 but this is not assured. Yet

- this is the very age that would be most appropriate for a program in electoral education.
7. There are some schools and some teachers that address electoral education in addition to attending electoral education centres but these are the exception rather than the rule
  8. Current and recent research indicates that Australian students are still not enrolling in large numbers from 17 years and most exhibit minimal understanding of Australia's preferential voting system.
  9. Given the compulsory nature of our voting system [young people do understand voting is compulsory and that 18 is the voting age, though some may ignore both] there is a need for more explicit electoral education in the upper years of school

Email note -

This is a brief submission as I'm currently overseas. However, I am available to expand on items from August, 15 when I return