

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION NO. 112

15 October 2006

Dear Sonia,

Thank you for copies of the transcript of evidence given on 21 September 2006 in the Legislative Council Committee Office in Perth, Western Australia. We were most appreciative of the comments made by Chair, Mr Peter Lindsay MP, on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, concerning the quality of the submission (for Jane Gray) and commitment to civic education (for Harry Phillips).

During the course of giving evidence we were both asked to amplify our views concerning the civic education of migrants. We have discussed this important issue and suggest consideration of the following steps:

- * A civic induction program should be offered for all immigrants during the period that is required for them to satisfy residency requirements;
- * For the convenience of the migrants the induction program, of about two full days in duration, should be offered according to a number of formats such as two full days, mornings or afternoons or evenings;
- * The timing of the program would be subject to the immigrant acquiring some proficiency in English. Versions in other languages should be produced as deemed beneficial. Our view is that a certificate of 'civic participation' would be a component of citizenship requirements. A small booklet, modeled on Harry Phillips, A Citizen's Guide to the Western Australian Parliament (2006), adapted to an Australia wide perspective with more emphasis on electoral enrolment provisions, should be provided to the prospective citizens. Booklets prepared for citizenship activities (and tests) in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America

should be consulted. Publications should probably be the responsibility of the Department of Immigration of Immigration and Multi-Cultural Affairs.

The induction course would also provide participants with suitable and interesting video or DVD materials;

* A minimum level of proficiency should be encouraged but not made mandatory, particularly as Australian citizens are not required to meet minimum standards and: *The civic participation courses could be conducted by TAFE institutions. In Western Australia the Constitutional Centre would be an appropriate agency.

In making this requested supplementary submission we would like to indicate our strong support for a recommendation included in the recently published Voices and Votes Report of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Young People Engaging in Democracy (2006). In part the Committee (p. 110) stated:

"the committee recommends that the Minister for Education conduct a longitudinal study of the effects of the implementation of the Active Democracy recommended in this report. The longitudinal study should be based on the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study undertaken in the United Kingdom by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

In essence we are recommending the conduct of a political socialisation research project for Australian youth. An endorsement of such a project by your committee would facilitate the conduct of such vital research.

If further information is required we would be most willing to comply.

Sincerely,

Jane Gray, and
Harry Phillips

Dr Harry Phillips,
Parliamentary Fellow (Education): Parliament of Western
Australia Adjunct Professor-Edith Cowan University Adjunct
Professor-Curtin University of Technology