



Participating in democracy takes practice

The importance of participating in democracy from a young age will be a major theme of a public hearing by federal parliament's Electoral Matters Committee in Melbourne on Monday (21 August).

The next day the Committee will take its enquiry to two schools to take first hand evidence from both students and teachers.

A number of witnesses will advocate for a 'whole of school' approach to civics and citizenship education, including stronger school governance. The Victorian Department of Education and Training, the Australian Education Union, Dr Lucas Walsh and Ms Yvonne Goudie are supportive of this approach. Among other things, they argue that participating in student representative council elections teaches students about electoral processes broadly, in a "learn-by-doing" approach.

Committee Chairman Peter Lindsay (Herbert, Qld) said, "the Committee has already heard evidence that sometimes, the conduct of student council elections causes students to lose interest in voting in the future. Students believe their school elections are not run fairly. This attitude is a contributing factor to the low enrolment rate of young Australians."

The inquiry has received over 100 submissions from a broad range of individuals and organisations, including teachers and schools, federal, state and territory parliaments and electoral commissions, academics and governments. Copies of these submissions are available on the Committee's website.

The Committee is a Joint Committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and comprises members of the Government, Opposition and the Australian Democrats.

Public hearing in K-Room, Victorian Parliament House, Monday 21 August 2006

- 9:00am **Victorian Electoral Commission (Sub 36)**
- 9:45am **Victorian Department of Education and Training (Sub 88)**
- 10:15am **Australian Education Union (Sub 48)**
- 11:00am **National Union of Students (Sub 45)**
- 11:30am **Dr Lucas Walsh, Deakin University (Sub 47)**
- 1:30pm **Australian Children's Television Foundation (Sub 82)**
- 2:00pm **Ms Yvonne Goudie (Sub 27)**

School visits, Tuesday 22 August 2006

Monbulk Primary School – 1 Main Road, Monbulk

- 9:30-10:00am **Meeting with Year 5/6 students**
- 10:00-11:00am **Open discussion with students**

Melbourne High School – Forrest Hill, South Yarra

- 1:00-1:30pm **Meeting with teachers**
- 1:30-2:30pm **Open discussion with Year 11 and 11 students**

For media comment: Please contact the Committee Chair, Mr Peter Lindsay MP on (02) 6277 4964 (Canberra) or (07) 4725 2066 (Townsville), or by mobile on 0419 656 234.

Further information: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 4453, by mobile on 0411 440 490, email jscem@aph.gov.au or visit the Committee's webpage at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/>