



## Appendix C

### **Learning from initiatives overseas**

The Committee's Terms of Reference for the inquiry required that it examine:

...opportunities for introducing creative approaches to electoral education taking into account approaches used internationally and, in particular, in the United States, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of Australia's system of compulsory voting, many countries face the dual challenge of encouraging young people to enrol and also to vote. Fostering greater civic awareness is equally challenging. The following appendix outlines how this challenge has been met overseas. The appendix is divided into three sections:

- Encouraging greater civic awareness and engagement;
- Encouraging voter registration (or enrolment) and voting; and
- Civics education initiatives.

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1 Inquiry Terms of Reference.

## Encouraging greater civic awareness and engagement

### Canada

The decline in young people's civic engagement has been of major concern to Elections Canada. In response, the organisation has adopted a multi-pronged strategy, including:

- a 'young voters' web site, designed in consultation with young people that provides information on the electoral process and how young people can become more involved in their communities and the political process;
- a partnership with Cable in the Classroom to run a voter education program called 'Your Vote ... Your Voice.' The program challenged students in Grades 10-12 across Canada to create public service announcements telling their peers why democracy is important and why it is important to vote;
- a partnership with Rush the Vote, an organisation that aims to increase voter turnout and political awareness through 'edutainment' – musical events at which performers encourage voting and democratic involvement. Concerts were held in Ottawa, Toronto and Edmonton; and
- partnerships with four student associations—the Canadian Federation of Students, the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, the New Brunswick Student Alliance, and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations—to develop a poster for display on campuses across Canada. A total of 3,200 posters were sent to these associations for distribution to their 119 member associations.

Student Vote has been a very successful initiative in Canada to provide students not yet of voting age with the opportunity to experience electoral processes through parallel elections in their schools.

The program was first trialled in 2003 during the provincial elections in Ontario. Over 825 schools participated from 103 ridings in the province, representing approximately 72 per cent of all Ontario secondary schools. Editorials and the results of the parallel elections were published in regional daily newsletters.

The program has now been replicated at the 2004 and 2006 federal elections, the Alberta 2004 provincial election and the 2005 provincial election of British Columbia.

Schools and students are essentially tasked with running the elections themselves. In summary, the program is as follows:

- Registered schools receive free learning materials and program outline to use during the federal election.
- The teacher who registers the school becomes the "Team Leader" and is responsible for implementing the program with a relative class or student committee.
- During the campaign period, students learn about the democratic process, party platforms, and local candidates, through in-class lessons and take home activities.
- Events are organized to engage the entire school and to help to build critical thinking and decision-making skills among students (e.g. all-candidate debates).
- On a day determined by each school, students take over the roles of Deputy Returning Officers and Poll Clerks, and conduct a school wide vote.
- Each school counts their ballots and calls in their results into the Student Vote Returning Office, before a specified date and time.
- The results are released to the public and shared with media across Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Taylor Gunn, Chief Electoral Officer of Student Vote submitted that Student Vote's success lies in the strong partnerships built with a range of supporters including Elections Canada, thousands of teachers, and the local and national media outlets.<sup>3</sup>

## United Kingdom

The Electoral Commission and the Hansard Society in the United Kingdom have now conducted three 'audits' of political engagement. Using the following 16 indicators, the latest poll (2006) involved interviews with a representative sample of 1,209 adults aged 18 and over across the UK:

### *Knowledge and interest*

- Percentage of people who:
  - ⇒ feel they know about politics
  - ⇒ are interested in politics
  - ⇒ know their MP's name
  - ⇒ 'passed' a political knowledge quiz
  - ⇒ feel they know about the role of MPs

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2 Student Vote, Program Summary, <<http://www.studentvote.ca/federal/pages.php?id=7>>. Accessed 24 November 2006.

3 Mr Taylor Gunn (Student Vote Canada), *Transcript of Evidence*, 4 December 2006, pp. 38-41.

*Action and participation*

- Percentage of people who:
  - ⇒ are 'absolutely certain' to vote at an immediate general election
  - ⇒ have discussed politics
  - ⇒ have contacted their MP or councillor
  - ⇒ are classified as electoral activists
  - ⇒ are classified as non-electoral activists
  - ⇒ paid money to or joined a political party

*Efficacy and satisfaction*

- Percentage of people who:
  - ⇒ believe that 'getting involved works'
  - ⇒ think that the present system of governing works well
  - ⇒ trust politicians generally
  - ⇒ are satisfied with Parliament
  - ⇒ are satisfied with their own MP

Findings from this latest audit suggest that:

...part of the solution to political disengagement must be to begin to manage expectations of politics, how it is done and what it can deliver. If 'politics' is to be recast, it could usefully blend the best components of representative democracy with more direct, participatory mechanisms, provided that the direct forms of participation do not undermine or supplant established representative institutions. It is clear that more work still needs to be done in this area, and in the areas of political education, if we are to encourage not only increased political engagement, but also informed engagement.<sup>4</sup>

The aspiration to re-build the relevance of politics was at the heart of the UK Electoral Commission's recent public awareness campaign – 'If you don't do politics, there's not much you do.' The campaign combined:

- high-profile advertising with public relations;
- leaflet distribution via a variety of outlets;
- a national outreach tour specifically targeting young people; and
- a call centre and a new consumer-facing website ([www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)).

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4 UK Electoral Commission and the Hansard Society, 2006, *An audit of political engagement 3*, Executive Summary.

The campaign aimed to make politics personal by showing the multitude of areas of everyone's lives that 'politics' affects, as well as challenging the view that 'I don't do politics' and creating the right climate for politicians to 'get out the vote.'

The UK Electoral Commission, in partnership with MTV, have also run a 'Votes are Power' competition, challenging 14 to 24-year-olds to devise a creative idea that will engage young people to 'turn opinion into action'. Major prizes, including Apple Macs, are on offer and entrants can use any medium they choose to get their message across.<sup>5</sup>

## Germany

Germany's political history has, in some respects, made democratic engagement an important element of civics education. In 1952, the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/BPB) was established to promote democratic awareness and civic participation. Its main activities include the organisation of seminars, events, study excursions, exhibitions and competitions, and the distribution of a range of publications.

The BPB specifically caters to young people by producing multi-media kits and by providing training activities in sports clubs.

## Encouraging voter registration (or enrolment) and voting

### United States of America

Founded in 1990 by members of the United States recording industry, Rock the Vote is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation which aims to motivate young people to participate democratically by registering to vote, voting and speaking out. Rock the Vote has implemented a variety of strategies to encourage young people to register, including:

- lobbying the United States Congress in 1991 to pass the Motor Voter Bill to enable driver's licence offices and other public assistance agencies to offer voter registration as part of their services;
- registering young people at concerts and on college campuses;
- developing and airing public service announcements promoting youth participation on MTV. Rock the Vote and MTV's Choose or Lose

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5 See Australian College of Educators, *Submission no. 10*, p. 3.

projects combine news segments and specials mixed with contemporary music, quick cuts, and flashy graphics with the political reporting.<sup>6</sup>

Rock the Vote works primarily because of its website; it is a communication format that reaches out to young people on an ongoing basis. The website [www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com) includes features such as a regularly updated web log covering the big issues affecting young people each day, a comprehensive reading list, archives of Rock the Vote media, advertisements and campaigns, special features such as a calculation clock of student debt, 'how to' guides for getting involved in rock the vote and other community organisations and Rock the Vote merchandise.

In some US states, schools have become active vehicles for the promotion of voter registration:

- in New York City, public high school graduates get registration forms with their diplomas;
- Hawaii allows citizens to pre-register at 16, making it easier to achieve 100 percent student registration; and
- in Vermont, Secretary of State Deborah Markowitz designated a "high school voter registration week."<sup>7</sup>

In the recent mid-term Congressional elections, a \$1.3 million lottery was used to entice voters in Arizona to vote. A series of television advertisements were also produced and publicly aired, with a number of Hollywood actresses encouraging young women in particular to vote for their first time.<sup>8</sup>

## Canada

Elections Canada also made a concerted effort to increase young people's voter registration levels in the lead up to the 2004 federal election:

- in February 2004, the Chief Electoral Officer sent a personalised card to approximately 1.1 million Canadians who turned 18 since the 2000 election, telling them of their right to vote, and sent a personalised card once the 2004 election was called to the 250,000 who still had not registered to tell them how they could register;

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6 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1999, *Youth Voter Participation: Involving Today's Young in Tomorrow's Democracy*, Stockholm, pp. 45-6.

7 Anderson, J.B. and R. Martinez III, 2006, 'Voter's Ed', *The New York Times*.

8 Gold Coast Bulletin, 'Enticing Americans to vote', 30 October 2006, p. 39.

- before the election, returning officers were able to appoint 'community relations officers' to target areas that had large numbers of students for special registration drives';
- during the election, a widespread advertising campaign targeted young people and the electoral commission sponsored a 'road trip' contest, offering three prizes of a road trip for two anywhere in Canada; and
- after the election Elections Canada continued to work in partnership with the Historica Foundation to develop a new YouthLinks education module on citizenship and voting, titled 'Voices.' YouthLinks is a free, bilingual, online education program that links high schools across Canada.

## New Zealand

In the lead up to the 2005 General Election, the New Zealand Electoral Enrolment Centre introduced a text messaging service whereby eligible enrollees could request an enrolment form via text message.

In the first two weeks of the campaign, the Centre received close to 18,000 text messages requesting enrolment forms. The initiative saw double the number of people wanting enrolment forms in the first fortnight of the Enrolment Update Campaign than in the 2002 election. The Manager of the Enrolment Centre remarked that 'The new technology seems to be making it easier for people to get an enrolment form' and noted the enthusiastic response from young people in particular.<sup>9</sup>

## United Kingdom

The recently published *Power: An Independent Inquiry into Britain's Democracy* (<http://www.powerinquiry.org/>) has advocated extending the franchise to 16-year-old citizens.

## Civics education initiatives

### United States of America

#### The Centre for Civic Education

The Centre for Civic Education promotes understanding of the federal Constitution by constructing curricula for the teaching of civics education, and

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<sup>9</sup> Elections NZ, 2005, 'Txs set enrolment request record'. Available online: [http://www.elections.org.nz/news/eec\\_media\\_txt\\_170505.html](http://www.elections.org.nz/news/eec_media_txt_170505.html). Accessed 29 January 2006.

through its publication of student texts explaining the functioning of the Constitution.<sup>10</sup>

The Centre runs the US Department of Education's "We the People" civics education program, among others. Mrs Melissa Rasmussen provided the Committee with extensive information on this program, having received a grant to attend the Summer Institute professional development program in July 2005. Mrs Rasmussen found:

- the program teaches the explicit learning of the American Constitution;
- substantial learning materials have been developed to assist both the teacher and the student in the conduct of the program. These materials are readily available and can be obtained in class sets free of charge to the school;
- a national drive exists to implement the program with funding provided by the US Department of Education and private donors. The donations from private individuals and public companies underlines the importance that American citizens place on civic education;
- national outcomes are in place that reflect the desired level of student achievement across the nation. This has ensured that all schools and educators are encouraged to strive to achieve the same outcomes;
- the national outcomes are explicit, written in clear and plain English and are directly relational to the lessons provided in the "We the People" teacher guide and student reader;
- teacher professional development is available during summer vacation that provides funding for travel, accommodation and meals. This PD involves a combination of actual teaching of the constitution to equip teachers with theoretical knowledge and the teaching of program implementation. The Institutes are generally 2 weeks in duration and equip educators not only with the tools required to implement the program but most importantly the inherit desire to foster civic appreciation amongst their students;
- significant evaluative materials designed to test student development in relation to National Standards are available. These evaluative tools include Multiple Choice questions, short answer tests and application activities; and
- there are national competitive programs that allow students of each state the opportunity to compete against one another. Thus students are able to apply and demonstrate the skills learnt.<sup>11</sup>

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10 The Center's site at <<http://www.civiced.org/>> outlines a curriculum for teaching civics at high schools.

11 Mrs Melissa Rasmussen, *Submission no. 106*, p. 9.



The National Constitution Centre, which consists of a museum and library opposite Independence Hall in Philadelphia, functions both as a monument to the Constitution and as the headquarters of an organisation which engages in broad public education programmes.<sup>12</sup>

### Kids Voting USA

Kids Voting USA is an interactive civics curriculum taught during election campaigns. Studies of this program have found that students influence their parents to pay more attention to politics, and parents encourage students to participate more actively in civics activities at school. This process begins with Kids Voting's emphasis on peer-group conversation, through which students appear to acquire an interest in partisan debates. In these debates, students learn to appreciate the importance of strengthening their knowledge so as to back up their opinions. Students then initiate conversations with parents, and in doing so, gain confidence as young citizens who have the ability to influence others. Parents respond by paying more attention to news and by acquiring opinions they can use in subsequent conversations with their children.<sup>13</sup>

### Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)

CIRCLE promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects it supports have practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a 'clearinghouse' for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts and is now also funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy.

### American Democracy Project

The American Democracy Project (ADP) is a multi-campus initiative that seeks to create an intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement for undergraduates. The goal of the project is to produce graduates who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful actions as citizens in a democracy.

The goals of the project are to:

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12 The Center's website is at <<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/>>.

13 McDevitt, Michael, Sprio Kiouis, Xu Wu, Mary Losch and Travis Ripley, 2003, 'The civic bonding of school and family: How Kids Voting students enliven the domestic sphere', CIRCLE Working Paper 07, Centre for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, United States, p. 1.

- increase the number of undergraduate students who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful civic actions by asking participating institutions to review and restructure academic programs and processes, extracurricular programs and activities, and the institutional culture; and
- focus the attention of policy makers and opinion leaders on the civic value of the college experience.

## New Zealand

Australian College of Educators submitted that 'In New Zealand, the establishment of "Wallace" awards for good practice in civics education has engendered enthusiasm and provided a means to lift its profile.'<sup>14</sup>

## Canada

The Department of the Senate referred to initiatives in of the Canadian Parliament where substantial investment in education programs, both on-site and in the Provinces, is made. One of its flagship programs is the *Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy*, where each year, for one week, seventy teachers are competitively selected for an intensive professional development program in Ottawa, fully funded by the Canadian Parliament. The cost for the five day program in 2005 was \$CAD213 867.79.<sup>15</sup>

Elections Canada also undertook several projects in partnership with non-governmental organisations interested in civic education.

## Germany

Civics education in Germany has sought to build a strong democratic culture and support for the new democratic institutions created following the Second World War. Civics education essentially became not only a prominent educational subject but also a cornerstone of the new democracy.

Since that time, civics education has progressed along a distinct trajectory, from re-education programs implemented by the Allies and civics education based on the promotion of harmony in society, to the institutionalisation of civics as a subject of study in all universities. In 1976, the Beutelsbacher agreement saw tolerance as a key element of civics programs and the ideas that:

- students should not be the objects of teachers' judgement;

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14 Australian College of Educators, *Submission no. 10*, p. 3.

15 Department of the Senate, *Submission no. 28*, p. 11.

- controversial issues in society have to be presented as controversial in the classroom;
- students should be enabled to recognize their own interest.<sup>16</sup>

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16 The Centre for Applied Policy Research, Civic Education in Germany. Available online: <<http://www.tolerance-net.org/news/podium/podium084.html>>. Accessed 6 February 2007.

