



Department of Education & Training

Office of Learning and Teaching

MEM15851

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	88
Date Received	26/6/06
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

Mr Peter Lindsay, MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Lindsay

Thank you for your recent correspondence addressed to the Premier, the Hon. Steve Bracks, MP, who referred your letter to the Minister for Education and Training concerning Victorian initiatives in electoral education. I have been asked to reply on her behalf.

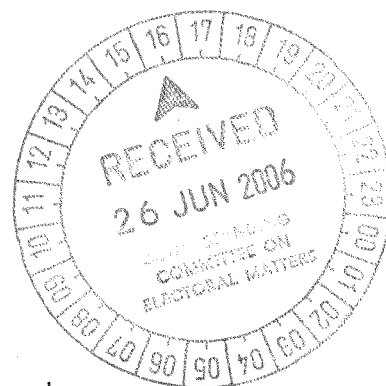
Please find attached a summary of the Department of Education and Training's Civics and Citizenship program and an overview of electoral education for Victorian schools provided by the Australian Electoral Commission, The Parliament of Victoria and the Victorian Electoral Commission.

Yours sincerely

Tony Cook

Tony Cook
General Manager
Student Learning Division

15/6/2006



Inquiry into Civics and Electoral Education

Civics and electoral education in Victorian schools

Civics and Citizenship education is located in the Physical, Social and Personal Learning Strand of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

The Standards describe what is essential for all students to achieve from prep to year 10.

Civics and Citizenship has two dimensions;

- Civic knowledge and understanding
- Community engagement

Specific learning foci on democratic principles, governance and Australia's voting system are made explicit through levels 4–6 (Years 5–10).

In level 4, as a standard, students are expected to describe the three levels of government and other key features of democratic principles and values. By level 6 (Years 9-10) students are asked to describe the election processes in Australia and how to vote.

Schools are required to assess student progress against these expected standards. The Department does not have specific electoral education resources. The key Commonwealth resource available for this purpose is the *Discovering Democracy* kit for primary and secondary schools which was published in 1998.

The Australian Electoral Commission's (AEC) Electoral Education Centre, located in Melbourne, provides formal electoral education in a purpose built centre. It is estimated that between 15,000 – 16,000 students visit the Centre annually for the 90 minute session. 60% of students are from secondary schools. Each visiting school receives an election education pack. AEC District Returning Officers are also located in each of 37 federal electorates and have as part of their duties an education mandate which may include school visits.

The Education Office of the Parliament of Victoria offers guided tours of Parliament House to schools. These tours are designed to meet essential learning standards. The Office provides worksheets, develops and publishes teaching materials and offers consultation for individual teachers in developing civics curriculum. The Office also provides specific support for VCE teachers of Legal Studies, Politics, Australian History, History and English. In 2005, a total of 23,819 students visited Parliament House.

The AEC Electoral Education Centre and the Education Office of Parliament also support the Schools Constitutional Convention Program (Years 11-12).

The Department of Education and Training provides approximately \$8000 per annum to run the Convention Program in Victoria. Electoral education is a component of the Convention.

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has an information resource centre and provides general voting and electoral information. This includes the resource for schools *Your Opinion Counts*. The Commission provides limited electoral education services to schools but has recently concentrated on The Secondary Schools Democratic Engagement Grants Program. Through this Program, the Commission provided funding for seven secondary schools to develop new electoral education programs. The following schools have received grants as part of this program:

Metropolitan:

- Braybrook College
- St. Monica's College Epping

Regional:

- Kalianna Special School Bendigo
- North Geelong Secondary College
- Robinvale Secondary College
- Wangaratta High School
- Wodonga High School

It is planned that all secondary schools in Victoria will be able to access the curriculum developed in these schools.

Summary

It is difficult to judge the current status of young people's knowledge of, and responsibilities under, the Australian electoral system. Schools are expected to include the Australian electoral system as part of Civics and citizenship education. The content and adequacy of such experiences are managed by schools. Schools are supported by three main sources of electoral education; the AEC, the VEC and the Education Office of Parliament Victoria. Apart from the most recent resources from the AEC and VEC there aren't any resources dedicated to electoral education.