

Submission to the Electoral Reform Green Paper – Strengthening Australia’s Democracy

This is my submission to the Electoral Reform Green Paper - Strengthening Australia's Democracy. I am a 64 year old woman who is concerned at the duplicity and complexity of our laws throughout Australia and the lack of innovative teaching of politics. In particular I wish to highlight the confusion in education and health/disability which makes life so difficult for many.

1. Education.

I was born and commenced my schooling in New South Wales nearly 60 years ago. Our family including six children moved to Victoria when I was 10 years old. I well remember the disruption this caused to our schooling, my parents endeavouring to find out which year of schooling we fitted in with. Now my four grandchildren are experiencing the same problems. Their father is in the armed forces and their eldest daughter at the age of 10 years has this year commenced her third system (NT, NSW - two moves, now Victoria). Surely we can have:

National

- starting age for formal education
- terminology for year (eg Prep, Kinder, Grade 1)
- curriculum - yes we need to teach State/regional/local issues too
- teaching methods for basics - reading etc
- terminology for qualifications, Year 12 - Victorian Certification Education,
- registration for qualifications, nursing, teaching etc

2. Disability.

Support for people with disabilities is always stretched, and there have been many questions about the targeting of new and additional funding both in Commonwealth and State services.

Unmet need – those needs which are either not addressed or met, or addressed at a level below what is required – continues to be a key issue in providing support for people with disabilities.

For example, funding packages may be available to support someone to remain in their home for longer, but is the funding and associated service provision truly addressing the needs, or is it simply a partial response that leaves people increasingly disadvantaged? Similarly, assistance with managing unmet needs and the complex social and community service system provided by case management has been identified as a crucial component in addressing unmet need, but is it available to all who need it?

We must have a better understanding of the unmet needs of people with disabilities and the areas of life where they exist. We need to ensure that public funding is better targeted to address unmet needs, and that new government funding addresses the gap between what is and what is needed.

3. Other issues.

As well as education, health/disability, innovative teaching of politics there are many other laws that just make life hard for our vibrant transient population. They include road laws, car registration, insurance, etc.

I was fortunate enough to attend the Citizens Parliament held in Canberra in February this year where we discussed issues to strengthen our democracy over a period of four days. I was amazed at the number of people present from all around Australia who felt that the harmonising of laws, more innovative teaching of politics and electoral system were among the most important issues facing Australia today.

Mavis Gallienne
25 November 2009