

This means that students in my area miss out on the inspiration and understanding that is gained from a visit to Canberra and this impacts upon their general interest in our system of government – this affects all of us who want our citizens of the future to be engaged, well informed and participating community members.

In addition, I have a large community of newly arrived migrants and refugees in my electorate of Gellibrand and it is particularly important for their children to have the opportunity to experience first hand the concepts of parliament, democracy and civic life, however these are exactly the families in my electorate who miss out.

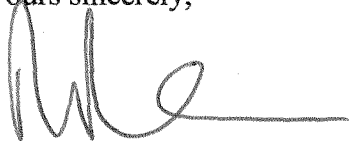
The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) provides a wonderful service and I have seen the way children's eyes light up when they role play mock parliaments etc. Obviously, though, this service primarily benefits those who are able to come to Canberra. Surely we want kids from the Western suburbs of Melbourne or refugees children from the Sudan or Iraq to also feel the excitement and see the potential of living in a robust democracy?

I urge the inquiry to consider options that would look to providing some subsidy assistance on a means test basis and also to consider other ways of making the great services of the PEO more accessible – both so it can service more of the schools who do make it to Canberra and perhaps, for example, via increased funding for the PEO to provide outreach services.

Any options that may give less well off children the opportunity to experience the benefits of a trip to Canberra would be welcome.

I would be happy to present more information to the Committee if it is of assistance and am sure that, if the inquiry is taking evidence around the country, my local schools would be delighted to discuss their views with you further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nicola Roxon', written over a horizontal line.

Nicola Roxon MP
Federal Member for Gellibrand