



13 July 2015

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email (em@aph.gov.au) & by post

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into Electoral Education

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) is the peak body representing the interests of South Australian Independent schools. Independent schools are a significant provider of school education in South Australia enrolling in excess of 17% of all South Australian school age students, from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including significant numbers of students experiencing educational disadvantage.

The study of Civics and Citizenship has been a longstanding and integral part of the curriculum in all South Australian Independent schools. Feedback from member schools indicates that students gain significant educational benefit through visiting Canberra and experiencing first hand key places such as Parliament House, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Electoral Education Centre and the Australian War Memorial. Schools note that there are also positive flow-on effects for other students in the school that arise out of this educational experience.

The distance and associated costs with travel to Canberra from South Australia, however, places a substantial cost burden on schools and school families, in particular for schools serving low socio-economic communities. Government subsidies, such as the current Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER), have therefore been critical in minimising this cost burden. I note that the PACER is provided on a sliding scale with a maximum rebate of \$260 per student for schools located in excess of 4,000 kilometres from Canberra. Hence, schools and families are still required to make a significant financial investment. Schools must also meet certain accountability measures in order to qualify for funding.

Any removal of government subsidies would likely result in fewer students, in particular students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, having access to this important educational experience. I call for the Committee to recognise the educational benefit of government support for students to undertake this important educational experience.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Grant *skalfs*
Chief Executive