

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

Inquiry into Civics and Electoral Education

*Chair: Peter Lindsay MP  
Deputy Chair: Michael Danby MP***Public hearings: Perth-21 September & Adelaide-22 September  
Indigenous and young people need more information  
before enrolling to vote**

The under-enrolment of Indigenous Australians on the electoral roll will continue to be investigated by Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee at its hearing in Perth on Thursday (21 September).

Committee Chairman Peter Lindsay (Herbert, Qld) said, "while there are no precise figures, the Committee has received evidence that as many as 15-20 per cent of Aboriginal citizens in remote communities may not be enrolled to vote. This could be attributed to language barriers, where English is not the first language, cultural barriers and the isolation of the communities."

In Perth, the Committee will hear from the WA Electoral Commission, Shelley Archer - a member of the Western Australian Legislative Council and others involved in remote area polling in Indigenous communities to try and identify strategies to improve Indigenous participation. Recommendations include the use of Aboriginal translators and qualified electoral educators rather than temporary staff in remote polling exercises, and more frequent visits to remote indigenous communities by electoral commissions.

The other under-enrolled target group of the inquiry will be heard in a school forum in the House of Assembly Chamber of the South Australian Parliament on Friday. Students from Aberfoyle Park High School, Banksia Park International High School, Henley High School, Karoonda Area School, Mitchum Girls High School, Reynella East High School, Seaton High School, Seymour College, Torrens Valley Christian School and University Senior College will participate in a discussion with the Committee about their intention to enrol to vote, their "preparedness" to vote, and the idea that some young people have been described as "cynical and apathetic".

"Students are saying to the Committee that a lack of interest in the Australian political system is essentially linked to a lack of knowledge about civics and electoral processes, including how to vote," Mr Lindsay said. "Where students are taking legal studies courses, or civics and citizenship classes, they are much more likely to be engaged, and interested in enrolling to vote. A significant challenge remains in engaging those students who do not elect to take these kinds of subjects, particularly in senior secondary years."

The inquiry by a Joint Committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate has received over 100 submissions from a broad range of individuals and organisations.

**Public hearing in Legislative Committee Room 4, 1110 Hay Street, Perth**

- 9:00am Western Australian Electoral Commission (Sub 12)
- 9:45am Mr Brian Moore (Sub 6)
- 10:30am The Hon. Shelley Archer MLC (WA) (Sub 24)
- 11:15am Ms Jane Gray (Sub 68)
- 11:45am Dr Harry Phillips (Sub 22)
- 1:15pm Office of Multicultural Interests, WA (Sub 92)
- 1:45pm Mrs Melissa Rasmussen (Sub 106)

**Public hearing in the Old Chamber, South Australian Parliament, Adelaide**

- 10:15am Association of Independent Schools South Australia (Sub 96)
- 11:15am SA Department of Education and Children's Services
- 11:45am Local Government Association of South Australia (Sub 17)

**School forum, House of Assembly chamber, South Australian Parliament**

- 1:00-2:00pm **Open discussion with students and teachers**

**For media comment:** Please contact the Committee Chair, Mr Peter Lindsay MP on (02) 6277 4964 (Canberra) or (07) 4725 2066 (Townsville), or by mobile on 0419 656 234.

**Further information:** contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 4453, by mobile on 0411 440 490, email [jscem@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscem@aph.gov.au) or visit the Committee's webpage at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/>