

In reply please quote: 2004/02086

Your reference: 203-03

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2004 forwarding a copy of petition number 203-03 which seeks a lowering of the voting age to 16 or 17 years.

Under section 64 of the *Electoral Act 1992* (Qld), the criteria for enrolment to vote set out in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth) are adopted as the criteria for enrolment to vote in Queensland. The Commonwealth Act provides for a minimum voting age of 18 years.

Because the Queensland criteria for enrolment are similar to the Commonwealth criteria, Queensland is able to participate in a joint electoral roll arrangement with the Commonwealth. Under the joint electoral roll arrangement, a single electoral roll is maintained and updated by the Australian Electoral Commission and is used for Federal, State and Territory and local government elections.

Any move by the Queensland Government to lower the voting age to 16 or 17 years would require the State to keep a separate roll, at least in relation to persons under the age of 18. This would have significant cost implications. It would be costly to accumulate the data and to implement systems to ensure that the database was kept secure and up to date. Copies of both electoral rolls would also need to be provided in hard copy to polling booths on election days. A further difficulty is that the existence of two electoral rolls and different eligibility requirements for voting in elections for the various levels of government may cause confusion in the electorate.

The Queensland Government has a youth participation strategy which includes the adoption of the Queensland Youth Charter. The Youth Charter contains a commitment by the Government to engage with young people to ensure that their views are taken into account when policies, programs and services are developed.

Although the Government encourages young people to participate in political processes, given the current joint electoral roll arrangement between the State and the Commonwealth, it is not practical to lower the voting age in Queensland.

Thank you for referring this petition to me.

Yours sincerely

Rod Welford MP

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