

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Queensland Government,

Our response to the question,

“Should compulsory voting remain for Queensland State elections?”

Short answer: NO – there exists no rational or reality-based argument to justify, in a democracy, the principle or practise of compulsory voting.

Longer answer:

The process of voting to appoint individuals who will be responsible for governing a population (state or federal) is far too seriously important to be addressed with short ‘bullet points’ or ‘sound bytes’.

There exist many other important and complex considerations.

However, the discussion paper does not raise any considerations other than those presented, in ‘bullet point’ style, for and against.

Therefore this submission is deliberately restricted to examining the flaws in each of the ‘bullet point’ “*Arguments in favour of compulsory voting*”:

(1) Voting is a civic duty comparable to other duties citizens perform e.g. taxation, compulsory education, jury duty;

This statement is patently false. Voting, paying taxes, becoming educated (i.e. going to school) or serving as a juror all *appear* similar in terms of being a citizen’s duty.

Yet those activities are no more comparable than would be the act of driving one’s car to work every day as compared to the act of driving one’s car to the beach on the weekend. (The false comparison of voting to jury duty is addressed below).

While both car-driving activities might appear be identical, just as the abovementioned three activities might appear to be similar in terms of a citizen’s ‘duty,’ the actual purpose of driving that car in each case is as completely different as the three ‘duties’ mentioned above.

Similarly the purpose of the activity of a surgeon using a sharp knife (scalpel) to cut human skin is in no way comparable to the purpose of a similar action – that of a murderer also using a sharp knife. Just because actions - or ‘duties’ - *appear* to be similar and therefore comparable, does in no way mean they are.

Consider fruit: while both quite obviously are fruit, any argument attempting to equate apples to oranges is immediately no argument.

Furthermore, the assertion of “**Voting is a civic duty comparable to other duties citizens perform.**” might be more accurately truthful were the words “*properly-informed and intelligent*” included to qualify the word ‘voting.’

To illustrate the falsity of the argument as it stands, failure to include such qualifiers means that, in effect, our society discriminates against young children by not allowing them to vote.

After all, if the only qualification to vote is that a person born in Australia – a ‘citizen’ – is capable of making a mark on a piece of paper, then any Australian-born child over the age of (say) six would be eminently capable of voting. There would be no valid reason for excluding them from the process.

The ‘ridiculous’ example of a child of six voting merely serves to demonstrate how ridiculous is the failure to qualify the word ‘voting’ with the words ‘*educated and informed*’ in the assertion that, “**Voting is a civic duty comparable to other duties citizens perform...**”

To compare voting to jury duty is similarly flawed. Indeed, doing so reinforces the validity of the ‘six-year-old-child’ counter-point.

Would one allow a six-year old child to sit on a jury in an important criminal trial? Worse, would one allow the child ‘juror’ to play fiddlesticks or listen to an iPod with headphones while evidence is being presented in the court?

Of course not.

Why not? Because, when it comes time for the child to cast a vote as a juror, it will have no idea of what it is voting for or against – even if it was concentrating on proceedings..

Which would be as ridiculous as allowing, let alone compelling, an adult – similarly uninformed – to exercise the ‘duty’ of voting or being a juror

Allowing, indeed *requiring*, any adult citizen who does not have a good grasp - and in many cases no grasp at all - of the ideological issues involved to cast an electoral vote is no different in principle to, and equally as ridiculous as, requiring an ignorant, uninformed child to participate either as a voter or as a member of a jury.

Summary: the statement is self-proved ridiculous by virtue of it requiring no qualifications for voting. Therefore it is not a rational argument in favour of compulsory voting. It self-eliminates as an argument.

(2) (Voting) teaches the benefits of political participation;

This statement is so patently untrue – and ridiculous – that one has to wonder at the lack of intelligence of anyone who would repeat it, let alone the individual who first offered it as an argument.

Consider just the example of a completely uneducated citizen of very low intelligence voting. What exactly would such persons be ‘taught’ when they are fundamentally incapable of learning?

For the reason explained below, this discussion is - and can only be - about the ‘act’ of voting and not about the ‘education’ of the voter, which is an entirely different matter.

Were it that the law on compulsory voting included a provision that the voter be ‘compulsorily’ educated in the benefits, responsibilities and ideological aspects of

intelligent, informed political participation, then this particular argument might have some merit.

But the law makes no such provision. It does not even require that the voter discuss the reasons for voting, let alone the advantages, with another person; which discussion might then at least be some rudimentary form of 'teaching' what the benefits might be.

In the absence of these additional requirements, it is clear that the law only requires that the voter engage in the 'act' of casting a vote, which is to make a mark on a piece of paper.

To assert that the act of making a simple mark on a piece of paper is 'educational' is ridiculously untrue.

Summary: the statement is obviously a ridiculous untruth. Therefore it too is not a sensible argument in favour of compulsory voting. It self-eliminates as an argument.

(3) (Because of compulsory voting) parliament reflects more accurately the "will of the electorate";

Yet another untruth. For many reasons.

To demonstrate the dishonesty of this assertion, it would be fair to say that the will of the great majority of any given electorate would be that they should pay no taxes, or very minimal taxes.

Indeed that would likely be the will of about 100% of the electorate.

Australia has had compulsory voting for some eighty years. Over that time, taxes have increased to a point where Australians today are, via direct and indirect taxes, by far the most overtaxed citizens in the world.

Which is without doubt in monumental *contradiction* of the will of the electorate.

Which has relentlessly happened under the mantle of compulsory voting.

Therefore, via even just this one example – and there would be countless more, not to even mention selling off public assets and the Carbon Tax (oops!) - it can instantly be seen that compulsory voting has most certainly not resulted in parliament "more accurately" reflecting the will of the people.

There is another dimension to this matter of "the will of the people."

A voter(s) who is ignorant of all the facts, the mission, the principles and the ideology of the candidates (and their political parties) seeking election, will very likely not be aware that the ideology of the person (or political party) for whom he is voting might very well not be a reflection of his, her or their 'will.'

Therefore, what determines an accurate reflection of the 'will of the electorate' is the extent to which the electorate is *properly educated and informed* about the ideology (etc.) of the different candidates and their parties.

Many 'street surveys' – for example one conducted in Cairns in mid-February, 2013 – abundantly and regularly confirm a widespread lack of knowledge or understanding

regarding political issues. This validates an assertion that a significant percentage of voters do not nearly know what they are voting for. Therefore, unless voters are properly educated in the respective ideologies, they cannot know whether their 'will' is being accurately reflected via the ballot box..

Once again we see that voter education – lack thereof – makes a nonsense of this particular assertion in favour of compulsory voting.

Summary: not only can the statement quite easily be proved provable to be untrue, compulsory voting itself has, in actual practice, proved that it no more accurately reflects the will of the people than non-compulsory voting.

(4) (Because of compulsory voting) governments must consider the total electorate in policy formulation and management;

Once again actual history and experience, in particular most recently, has proved that this statement is not just a false reflection of reality, it is wishful thinking (Something – perhaps the only thing - in which socialists excel.)

That most recent Australian governments have completely ignored the total electorate in their policy formulation and management is so obvious as to need no further comment.

The examples given above suggest that this particular argument is as equally spurious as the one of which it is essentially a re-worded repeat, namely that “...*parliament reflects more accurately the “will of the electorate.”*”

There is no question that the Australian citizens are being increasingly, and ever more rapidly, impoverished as a consequence of governments not considering the “total electorate” in their policy formulation and management.

An additional example would be Australian governments giving far greater consideration to dictates of the United Nations (overseas aid, immigration, etc.) than to what the Australian people need.

Many billions of dollars are being thrown at overseas countries – some of whom embrace ideologies that seek the destruction of Australia – when vast numbers of Australians are living on bare subsistence and, more recently, have suffered complete financial wipeout due to fires, floods and even the combination of tightening economic circumstances together with relentlessly-increasing taxes and other financial imposts – such a rocketing power bills - by the government or government-owned entities.

This impoverishing of Australians is happening while the citizens have compulsory voting imposed upon them, thus again proving that the wish-statement that politicians ‘must’ consider the total electorate is just dream-world fantasy.

The statement would be far more accurate were it asserting that, *because of our democratic system*, governments must consider the total electorate. But democracy and compulsory voting are two very different matters. Therefore the argument, while applicable to democracy, does not apply to compulsory voting.

Summary: essentially a repetition of a previous argument and, also similarly, yet another easily-proved untruth.

(5) (Because of compulsory voting) candidates can concentrate their campaigning energies on issues rather than encouraging voters to attend the poll.

There are many reasons why this argument is irrelevant, even spurious.

Advances in technology since compulsory voting was first introduced render this, at best, an outdated argument. Modern mass-marketing and communication via television, radio, magazines and now the internet have resulted in a communications from candidates being able to reach vast numbers of voters to an extent unimaginable when compulsory voting was first introduced.

In those days candidates had to travel – perhaps even at times by train, horse or wagon – and hold public meetings in a local hall. Today's television and internet, for example, enables, in just a few minutes, a candidate to communicate to vast numbers of specific people in specific communities; something that would typically have taken at least many days to do in those earlier times.

Furthermore, the emphasis today is on the political party itself concentrating on – and 'marketing' - the issues. The role of candidates has largely been reduced to (a) being a parrot of the party line and (b) mostly working at getting voters to superficially 'like' them – think "false promises," "kissing babies," shiny new white "hard hats" and "safety glasses."

Summary: at best a non-argument, outdated by advances in technology over the past 80 years. At worse, a disingenuous dishonesty.

(6) (Because of compulsory voting) the voter isn't actually compelled to vote for anyone because voting is by secret ballot.

This argument fails on the basis of one minus one equals zero.

This is a 'zero' (none) argument because, in Australia, non-compulsory voting would also be secret. Therefore the argument applies equally to both viewpoints.

Therefore both viewpoints agree on this point.

Therefore it is not an argument.

Summary: a non-argument negated by presenting the same argument as a counterpoint.

Overall conclusion:

The above is a rationally-inarguable elimination of every point made in favour of compulsory voting.

As a result, one more argument *against* compulsory voting can be added to those already listed in the discussion-paper.

- there exists no rational or fact-based argument in favour of compulsory voting.

A banner for 'OzUnited' featuring a background image of a landscape. The text 'OzUnited' is at the top. Below it is a navigation bar with buttons for 'HOME', 'SUBSCRIBE', 'MULTIMEDIA', and 'DOCUMENTS & PAST E-MAILS'. A quote by Thomas Jefferson is included: "I suppose, indeed, that a man whose principles have any decided character and who has energy enough to give them effect must always expect to encounter political hostility from those of adverse principles." --Thomas Jefferson, 1808. At the bottom of the banner is a small URL: www.ozunited.info

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