

Neal Sellars

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Dear Sir,

**Re: Electoral reform – Non-compulsory voting**

It is with great concern that I learn of the proposal to introduce non-compulsory voting in Queensland State Elections.

I have lived and worked overseas for several years and seen the impact of non-compulsory voting on the democratic process. The impact is that the less well-educated members of the community and the marginalised are less likely to vote and vulnerable to political manoeuvring/manipulation. In extreme cases obstacles are put in the way of them voting (such as requiring them to have forms of identification that cost money and even the spreading of misinformation about their eligibility to vote). This obviously disadvantages people in these groups and makes the system less democratic.

The fundamental concept of a democracy is that everyone has a say – in other words, everyone votes. We should be looking for ways to increase the number of people voting and improve their political literacy, rather than introducing a system by which fewer people will vote. A system of non-compulsory voting will favour the more affluent and better educated segments of society and disadvantage those from socially or economically marginalised groups – exactly those groups that a progressive society should seek to protect.

Our Federal Elections have had compulsory voting since 1924 and I believe that this has served Australia well. Compare the system in the United States of America where large sections of the community do not vote and, therefore, are not represented. The turnout for Presidential elections in the USA is generally less than 60 percent of the voting age population. Most would agree that compulsory voting ensures more equitable representation. Without representation, how do you propose that those who do not vote express their concerns and put forward their interests?

Yours sincerely

Neal Sellars