

[REDACTED]

From: Dan Smareglia [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 2 March 2013 4:47 PM
To: Electoral Reform
Subject: Feedback regarding the proposed changes to electoral laws

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am very concerned about the proposed changes to the electoral system and in particular the introduction of optional voting.

Throughout history, millions of people have sacrificed their lives for the right to vote. It may seem that this struggle happened in the distant past, but we only have to look at what is currently happening in Syria to remind us that this hard won right is still being fought for today. In that country thousands of people have been killed fighting for the right to vote in open, free and fair democratic elections. It's a right that we take for granted in this country because thankfully we have never had to endure such a fate. Therefore before we even consider the smallest of changes to the way we vote in Queensland we need to carefully consider all implications.

The current system is not flawed and if the government wishes to change it, then it must prove otherwise.

According to the Courier Mail, voter turnout has never fallen below 90% of the total eligible voter population since the law was introduced in 1915. We should be extremely proud of this statistic because it shows evidence of a strong democracy where the majority of citizens contribute to the future of their country. Voting is a civic duty, along with paying taxes and being available for jury duty. Voting is a responsibility, as well as a right.

If we were to abolish compulsory voting in Queensland it would lead to an erosion of democracy because fewer of the eligible voters will be responsible for electing the government. Democracy flourishes when more people vote – not less.

The US experience of optional voting has shown that politicians eventually work out which parts of the population do not vote. It may be a geographical region or a socioeconomic group. But once they are identified, the government knows that they need to pay far less attention to them. Consequently these people can potentially receive less support in the form of services and government funding. Often they are the people who least can afford it.

Scrapping compulsory voting would also cause voter confusion because there would be one rule for local and national elections and another for state elections.

If you know that you are obliged to vote in a coming election then most people will take some time to listen to the issues and consider the opposing views of the various candidates and then make a decision when it's time to vote. If there is no obligation to vote then people don't care and forfeit their say on who governs the country.

Therefore I ask that the government maintain and retain. Maintain the status quo and retain compulsory voting.

Yours sincerely
Dan Smareglia