

**Submission
No 21**

**PROPOSALS TO INCREASE VOTER ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND
CONFIDENCE**

Organisation: The Australia Institute

Date Received: 16 August 2024

16 August 2024

Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

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Dear Committee,

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence.

The Australia Institute's Democracy & Accountability Program was founded in 2021 to improve the quality of Australian governance and heighten public trust in politics and democracy.

The Democracy & Accountability Program has a significant body of work on voter engagement and participation in Australia and on the weaknesses in NSW's political finance system that could undermine public confidence in democracy in the state.

I have attached two papers that might help the committee.

Browne and Adhikari (2024) Submission: Inquiry into civics education, engagement, and participation (relating to terms of reference 1a and 1g):

Our submission to the federal Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters describes the Australia Institute's existing work on civics education, engagement and participation.

The submission also makes the point that *electoral* participation in Australia is relatively strong, and it is *civic* participation that has been neglected or actively undermined by governments and parliaments.

Browne (2024) Submission: Review of the 2023 NSW election (relating to terms of reference 1e, 1f and 1g, and Recommendation 2 of Operation Aero):

Our submission to the NSW Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters describes and critiques the NSW political finance system, particularly the way donation caps, spending caps and public funding can favour major parties and incumbents at the expense of new entrants and a level playing field.

Among its recommendations is one for political parties to publish annual reports, an expansion of the "acceptable standards of party governance" recommended in Operation Aero.

The Institute would welcome the opportunity to discuss research findings in further detail at any committee hearing, should there be one.

Regards,

Bill Browne
Director – Democracy and Accountability
The Australia Institute

Attachments

Submission 120, [Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into civics education, engagement, and participation in Australia](#), Parliament of Australia.

Submission 33, [Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the administration of the 2023 NSW state election and other matters](#), Parliament of NSW.