

**Submission
No 1**

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

Name: Mr Fulin Yan

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Mr Fulin Yan

Make it 16 Volunteer

The Hon Peter Primrose MLC

Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Mr Chair

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal to lower the voting age to 16 and 17 years old in NSW. This submission will address the significant benefits of such a change in our electoral system, emphasizing how it will enhance the health and wellbeing of young Australians, embody the principle of “No Taxation without Representation,” and bring profound positive impacts to our democracy, both at the ballot box and in our classrooms. Additionally, I welcome the opportunity to speak at a Hearing to further elaborate on these points.

The inclusion of 16 and 17-year-olds in the voting process is anticipated to have profound positive effects on their health and wellbeing. Adolescence is a critical period for developing a sense of identity, autonomy, and social responsibility. Providing young people with the right to vote acknowledges their evolving maturity and societal role, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose.

Engaging in the democratic process can significantly enhance mental health by promoting feelings of empowerment and agency. When young people feel their voices are heard and that they can influence decisions impacting their lives, it leads to increased self-esteem and reduces feelings of helplessness and disenfranchisement. Such involvement in civic activities is essential for the psychological development of adolescents, contributing to a healthier transition into adulthood.

Moreover, lowering the voting age will likely spur comprehensive civic education in schools. Educational institutions will be encouraged to offer robust programs on political systems, electoral processes, and the significance of civic participation. This early exposure to civic duties prepares young Australians to be informed, active citizens, thus laying the groundwork for lifelong engagement in democratic processes.

Inclusion in the electoral process also enhances social cohesion. It sends a strong message that all members of society, irrespective of age, are valued and have a stake in the nation’s future. This inclusivity can reduce intergenerational divides, fostering a more united and cohesive community.

Lowering the voting age promises to have far-reaching and positive impacts on our democracy, not only at the ballot box but also within our educational systems. Evidence from countries that have lowered the voting age indicates that younger voters tend to have higher turnout rates. Establishing the habit of voting early can lead to sustained participation throughout their lives, thus bolstering the democratic process.

Young voters bring fresh perspectives and priorities to the political discourse. Issues such as climate change, education, mental health, and employment opportunities are particularly pertinent to young people. By including their voices, policies will better reflect the needs and concerns of the entire population, ensuring a more representative democracy.

Furthermore, integrating voting rights into the school curriculum will enhance the practical understanding of democracy. Students will gain firsthand experience with voting processes and political systems in a context

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where they can immediately apply their knowledge. This hands-on approach will create more politically literate and engaged citizens, thereby strengthening the foundation of our democratic society.

Young Australians possess unique perspectives that can enrich our democratic processes. Their participation is crucial for a more representative and dynamic democracy. Young people are often at the forefront of social and technological innovation, and their involvement in elections can drive new ideas and approaches to governance, addressing contemporary challenges with fresh energy and creativity.

Moreover, engaging young voters increases the accountability and transparency of elected officials. Politicians will need to consider the views and interests of younger constituents, leading to more inclusive and forward-thinking policies. This engagement promotes intergenerational justice by ensuring that young people, who will live the longest with the consequences of today's decisions, have a say in shaping their future. It balances the demographic representation in our democracy, making it fairer and more equitable.

Extending the right to vote to 16 and 17-year-olds is a progressive step that will significantly benefit NSW democracy. It will enhance the health and wellbeing of young Australians, uphold the principle of "No Taxation without Representation," and bring momentous positive impacts to our society. By embracing the energy, innovation, and unique perspectives of young people, we can create a more inclusive, representative, and dynamic democracy.

This proposal aligns with the terms of reference set by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, specifically in reducing barriers to participation for younger voters who have historically been excluded from the electoral process. It is a crucial step towards maintaining confidence in the integrity of our electoral processes and strengthening the security and integrity of our electoral system.

I welcome the opportunity to speak at a Hearing to further discuss the benefits of lowering the voting age and to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation, and confidence. Thank you for considering this submission, and I look forward to engaging in further discussions on this important issue.

Yours Faithfully,



Mr Fulin Yan

Make it 16 Volunteer

Attachment

Make it 16 campaign policy brief, [Lower the Voting Age](#)