



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

Addressed to: Braddock MLA

Addressed to: Damian Cantwell AM CSC – ACT Electoral Commissioner

Redirected to:

Reference: Civics and citizenship education

Hearing: 10 November 2025

In relation to: Elections ACT educational programs in schools

Question received: 14 November 2025

Answer Due: 25 November 2025

On page 17 of the Elections ACT Annual Report, it indicates that the Elections ACT education program with a focus on Hare-Clark reached around 400 college students.

Recognising that there are approximately 12,000 college students in the ACT, this suggests the program reached approximately 3.3% of ACT college students. With this in mind:

1. What is preventing this rate being closer to 50% per year, as would ensure the Commission can reach every college student once between years 11 and 12?
2. What efforts does the Commission make, if any, to reach high school students (years 7-10)?
3. Does the Commission have any information on the number of teachers attending professional development programs to support competencies in civics and citizenship, and what barriers exist to the commission engaging in such work?

Mr Cantwell: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The Commission acknowledges the importance of civics and citizenship education in preparing young people to participate in democratic processes. Elections are a fundamental component of this education, providing a practical example of democratic participation and helping students understand the principles of democracy, the importance of voting, and the role of citizens in shaping government.

1. What is preventing this rate being closer to 50% per year?

Reaching every college student during Years 11 and 12 would be ideal because these are the years when most students become eligible to vote. However, several systemic and operational barriers make engagement challenging:

- **Curriculum limitations**
Civics and citizenship education is not mandatory in Years 11 and 12. Unless students choose specific subjects, civics education is not available. Even in subject streams that could include civics content, delivery is often at the discretion of teachers. As a result, most college-age students do not receive essential knowledge about elections and voting at the time they are first likely to need it.
- **Operational constraints**
Without a curriculum pathway, the Commission cannot systematically access senior students. Recommendation 20 in the *ACT Legislative Assembly Election Report 2024* calls for curriculum reform and partnerships to address this gap. Expanding outreach to all Year 11–12 students would require significant additional resources and funding. It is important to note that, in meeting its legislated responsibility to conduct electoral education and information programs, Elections ACT operates as a supportive partner to the Australian Electoral Commission. This reflects the Commission's relatively limited practical capacity and resourcing in this function. Should legislative changes be considered to mandate comprehensive civics education for senior students, the Commission would require significant additional support and funding to deliver such programs effectively. This context underpins the related recommendation in the Commission's Election Report.
- **Timetabling and engagement challenges**
College timetables and pastoral care calendars are crowded, limiting opportunities for dedicated sessions outside of a curriculum pathway.
- **Limitations on collaboration:** In recent years, Elections ACT (EACT) has been unable to work in collaboration with the Legislative Assembly education unit as had been the practice for many years. The unit has advised that its focus is now on Legislative Assembly matters, and school visits no longer include Elections ACT participation, which previously involved mock elections and discussions on Hare-Clark to school children of all ages.

The Election Report highlights that without structured curriculum coverage in senior years, students may lack the necessary knowledge about the electoral process, the importance of voting, and how to engage effectively in democratic practices. The Commission recommends that the Legislative Assembly consider amending the curriculum to mandate civics and citizenship education for all senior secondary students and facilitate partnerships to deliver targeted education sessions, including mock elections.

2. What efforts does the Commission make to reach high school students (Years 7–10)?

The Australian Curriculum integrates civics and citizenship education into Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), with elections and democracy a focus in Years 5 and 8, and to a lesser extent Year 10. Lessons aim to build foundational understanding of democratic principles, compulsory voting, and the electoral process. The Commission complements this framework by:

- Providing online resources for teachers and students.
- Delivering mock elections and supplying tailored classroom materials upon request.
- Supporting the use of Hare-Clark in Student Representative Council (SRC) elections within schools, either through advice, materials loan or active participation.
- Delivering teacher professional development sessions to assist teachers to provide mock elections and focussed lessons within their own classrooms.

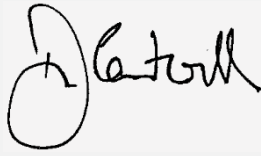
3. Does the Commission have any information on teacher professional development and barriers to engagement?

Between 2024 and 2025, the Commission delivered five teacher professional development sessions in partnership with the Legislative Assembly, attended by 39 teachers. The Commission does not hold data on teacher participation in programs offered by other organisations such as the Australian Electoral Commission, Parliament House, or the Museum of Australian Democracy.

Barriers to expanding professional development include:

- Lack of mandatory civics education in senior years, reducing teacher demand for professional development in Civics education.
- Timetabling constraints within schools.
- Resource limitations - additional funding would be required to scale offerings were the demand to increase.
- ACT Teacher Quality Institute registration (TQI) – currently EACT collaborates with the Legislative Assembly education unit for teacher professional development due to their registered and approved program. EACT does not hold TQI registration independently.
- The need to collaborate with and support federal programs with greater resources and visibility.

OFFICIAL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Cantwell', is positioned above the signature line.

Signature:

Date: 25 November 2025

By the ACT Electoral Commissioner, Mr Damian Cantwell AM CSC