

A Bill for an Act relating to Accessible Civics Education Bill 2020.

To be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

Accessible Civics Education Bill 2020

A Bill for an Act to establish a mandatory civics education program for Victorian secondary school students. Each year around 50 000 Victorian high school students finish their secondary education¹. Regrettably, this student population is often bereft of a basic understanding of Victoria's civic structures.

The Bill was written to enact a program which will be added onto the current secondary school curriculum. The program will function to outline for students' key areas of civics education such as voting, jury duty and taxes; better enabling all Victorian students to make informed decisions as adults.

¹ "Size of the Victorian School Education System 1. Numbers of Schools, Students and Teachers Government Catholic Independent All Schools Number of Schools by School Type Number (FTE) of Teaching Staff (Including Principals) in Government Schools on Pay by School Type, as at End of Quarter," 2019. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/departments/brochurejuly.pdf>.

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) to establish the existence and operation of a mandatory accessible civics education program that will—
 - (i) provide Victorian students with the knowledge, skills and values needed to confidently participate as active and informed citizens in the democratic process;
 - (ii) inform and educate students on the process of voting in an unbiased and objective manner;
- (b) to provide students with an understanding of their citizenship responsibilities of voting in state, federal, and local council elections;
- (c) help students gain an understanding of the processes involved in policy making, and the ways that policy affects and informs their lives;
- (d) improve student's awareness and understanding of tax systems;
- (e) improve student's knowledge and understanding of their citizenship responsibilities in relation to jury duty.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill, we define the following to mean—

- (a) **student(s)** means patrons or attendees of the program;
- (b) **other first-time voters** refers to individuals who have not yet been exposed to the Australian voting ballot;
- (c) **local governments** means the tier of government overseeing municipalities and shires; in accordance with the definition provided in part 1 of the **Local Government Act 2020**;
- (d) **existing external programs** means extracurricular programs or modules operated by private enterprises, Council divisions, etc..., that seek to educate students on civic education and were in operation prior to the commencement of this Act;
- (e) **the Department** means the Department of Education and Training.

PART II—Establishment

Clause 4 Development of an Accessible Civics Education Program

- 4.1 A renewed and accessible civics education program is to be developed and implemented by local governments across Victoria.
- 4.2 The provision and implementation of the program shall be mandatory.

- 4.3 The implementation of the program shall be overseen by the Minister for Education and the Department of Education and Training.

Clause 5 Program resourcing

- 5.1 The Department of Education and Training shall provide the local government with resources upon request, ensuring that resources are elevated equitably across the state. Suitable resources include but are not limited to—
- (a) funding;
 - (b) facilities;
 - (c) publicly employed humanities teachers.
- 5.2 Local governments shall have the capacity to collaborate with the following parties in the delivery of their program—
- (a) youth branches of their local governments;
 - (b) local Library staff;
 - (c) neighborhood ouses;
 - (d) other facilities under the operation of local governments.
- 5.3 Local governments may adopt and amend *existing external civics education programs* to ensure compliance with this Act.

Clause 6 Program delivery

- 6.1 The program is to be delivered in addition to the existing secondary school curriculum and made available to other first-time voters across the state.

Clause 7 Program Content Standards

- 7.1 The program shall include key information regarding state and federal democratic processes. Including but not limited to—
- (a) the compulsory voting system and civic responsibility to vote in federal, state, and local elections once eligible;
 - (b) election procedure, including the conditions to which an election may be called, the conditions to which a double dissolution may be called;
 - (c) access to and familiarity with voter enrollment forms;
 - (d) how to cast ballots and the role of the secret ballot.
- 7.2 The program shall include key information regarding the judicial system. Including the responsibility to serve jury duty or as a witness in court.
- 7.3 The program shall include key information regarding taxation, including but not limited to—
- (a) the requirement to pay taxes once employed;
 - (b) a basic understanding of the Australian Taxation Office.