

QPLC Election 2013 Alert!

+ POLLING DAY
7 September 2013,
8am-6pm

If you have questions about
voting in Australia go to
www.aec.gov.au

Not enrolled?

You have until 8pm,
12 August.

It's easy on line;
www.aec.gov.au

'...Seek to understand
the causes of injustice,
social unrest and fear.
Are you working to
bring about a just and
compassionate society
which allows everyone to
develop their capacities
and fosters the desire to
serve?'

Advices and Queries 36

Dates:

5 Aug 5:30pm House of Representatives
dissolved, government
goes into caretaker mode

12 Aug 8pm Enrol to vote closes. Only
takes minutes on line.
www.aec.gov.au

15 Aug 12 noon Close of candidate
nominations

5 Sept 6pm Close of postal vote
applications

13 Nov Latest date for return of
writs

+

GET INVOLVED
Political parties and
local polling areas
need support. Look
for recruitment
notices in your
community.

QPLC – Election Alert!

Following on our established Action Alerts and Watching Briefs, the Australian Yearly Meeting Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee (QPLC) provides this Election Alert! to share information. We encourage Australian Friends to be active in the national elections set for 7 September 2013, and to stay involved after the election.

Good citizenship is much more than just voting, and Friends' commitment to peace and social justice will be needed now more than ever.

We acknowledge the American Friends Service Committee for inspiration and some material.



‘Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.’

Quaker Faith and Practice
1.02.34 (British Yearly Meeting)

Quaker forums – local issues and their impact on your neighbourhood.

Elections are a good reason for Friends to host events to talk about the election issues. It gives Friends an opportunity to build a sense of community as well as to actively reach out to the wider local community.

Identify a local topic and bring together a panel to discuss or debate the topic. Invite a range of

interest groups. Take into consideration the variety of people who may be impacted, but don't always have a voice – for example, lower income

workers, advocates for the homeless, youth, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

If practical, develop an action plan which focuses on an election topic and then bring people back together after the election.



How to ask a politician a question:

Know where your candidate stands on the topic so you can frame your question correctly. Don't ask general questions (they have general

answers). Instead of 'what's your position on education reform and health care.' Ask 'What would you do to balance spending priorities, and give us real security, like job creation and education reform?'. (AFSC)

Under 25? Your vote counts

2011 research estimated that approximately 300 000 young Australians between 18-25 have not enrolled to vote.

Just turned 18?

You aren't automatically enrolled to vote, but it is easy to do at www.aec.gov.au

Remember,
it's still true that in many parts of the world people die for the right to vote, don't waste yours – vote!



CHECK THIS OUT



Generally, 18-25 year olds do not enroll to vote. Electoral Commissioner Ed Killesteyn stated that there are approximately half a million 18-24 year old voters missing from the electoral roll.

In Western Australia the figure is approximately one in three young people. Given that in 2008, the margin of votes in a number of WA districts was less than 100, the missing youth vote could have a real influence in election outcomes.

Austria has lowered its voting age to 16, and Scotland may follow depending on the outcomes of the Scottish independence referendum.

Lowering Australia's voting age to 16 or 17 continues to be debated.

An ANU study release in April 2013, indicates that lowering the voting age to 16 and 17 years would not make young people more politically engaged. The study 'The Politics of Lowering the Voting Age In Australia' by Professor Ian McAllister indicated that young people have no more political knowledge today than twenty years ago.

Ellie Mae O'Hagan, 27, is a staffer at a trade union in the UK; 'For lots of people our age, the only relationship we have with, say, the National Health Service is to criticize it.' 'It never occurs to us that there was a time when we didn't have it. It and the welfare state are such automatic parts of our lives that it doesn't even occur to us that we have to defend it' (*Guardian*, 11 March 2013)

ABC News is launching an interactive online application to help voters engage on important policy issues during the 2013 federal campaign.

It allows voters to explore and compare their views on a number of policy areas with the platforms of political parties.

Vote Compass was first launched in partnership with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the 2011 national election.

It also ran during the 2012 US presidential election in association with the Wall Street Journal.

The Australian Vote Compass is co-sponsored by the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney.

Sign up to the ABC's Australia Votes 2013 email list and ABC will notify you of significant election coverage, including launch of Vote Compass.

Australian Quakers and Politics

Jo Valentine and Peter Jones delivered the 1990 Backhouse Lecture on *Quakers and Politics: Pragmatism or Principle*. Jo writes of her election in 1984 as the Independent Senator for Nuclear Disarmament from Western Australia and her continued activism. Peter gives an account of the involvement of Quakers who have been active in politics in Britain and the USA since the seventeenth century.

Australian Friends who were elected to state or federal parliaments may be few, but they are diverse in their political views. The lecture introduces readers to three members of the Allen family who had seats in the Legislative Assembly in New South Wales in the nineteenth century and who had diametrically opposed views.

Laurie Wilkinson (ALP, Western Australia) was the first Friend to enter Federal politics. He was a Senator from 1966 to 1974, during the Vietnam war. He served as both a member of the Opposition and a member of the Government.

Between 1980 and 1985 Friend Jean Hearn (Labor) represented Tasmania in the federal government, and was a member of the new Parliamentary Disarmament Group which formed in 1984 and encouraged membership from all political parties.

Another Tasmanian Friend, Robert Mather, represented the Liberal Party in the Lower House of the State Parliament from 1964 to 1982. During his time as minister in the education portfolio, he guided a policy to formalize interdenominational religious education in schools. However, before it could come into affect, there was a change of government and the policy was not implemented. In Opposition, the Liberal Party voted against abolition of the death penalty and Bob Mather voted against his colleagues.

Hector Kinloch served in the first ACT Legislative Assembly from 1989 until he retired in 1992. He was an academic at both the University of Adelaide and the Australian National University (the latter from 1968 until 1988 (from 1981 he was Dean of Students). Hector was a vigorous critic and campaigner against plans for a casino in Canberra.

While Friends continue to be involved in both politics and public policy, throwing their hat (or bonnet, as the case may be) into the parliamentary ring is rare.



OF HISTORICAL NOTE:

In 1681, William Penn acquired a tract of land in the American colonies and established a Quaker colony, Pennsylvania. By 1756, Quakers had acquired political majority status in most of the American colonies. However, as France and England battled for control of the eastern colonies in what is now Canada and the United States, Quakers in government chose to abdicate political power rather than govern over war-making.

IT'S NOT OVER AFTER THE ELECTION

Getting the letter right

Friends have a long tradition of writing to political leaders.

Generally, keep the letter short and simple, include any specific actions you want the policy maker to take.

Paragraph 1: share who you are and why you're writing. Include your professional or life experience credentials –

for example, 'As a small business owner'...'as a parent with children in the public school system'.

Paragraph 2: Bringing it home – stick to one topic and highlight a few main points, but most importantly include how the issue affects your family or community. Your

personal story is more moving than you think. Provide specific rather than general information about how the topic impacts your life and others you know.

Paragraph 3: In closing, state what it is that you want done (such as call for an inquiry, support/oppose a bill). Thank the Member/Senator for taking the time to read your letter and ask for a response.

The website you need to know:
www.aph.gov.au



Your letters
are the
seeds for
public
discourse
and ideas.

Possible topics: what policies will your party develop to:

1. Reduce economic output to a level that fits the capacity of the earth to support life?
2. Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy?
3. Direct a greater percentage of Australia's military to a peacekeeping role?
4. Promote diplomatic initiatives to reduce violent conflict in the Asia-Pacific regions?
5. Reduce poverty in Australia?