



How Australia's EMBs train their electoral officials and educate their youth

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Transliteration with Belinda Bennett, Director of the Australian Electoral Commission's National Training and Education Unit and Andrew Hawkey, Electoral Commissioner at the Tasmanian Electoral Commission

International IDEA message: *Hello listeners, this podcast is hosted by International IDEA. In the next minutes we will help you make sense of what's happening today in democracy worldwide.*

Erik Asplund: Hello and welcome to **Peer to Peer**, International IDEA's Electoral Podcast Series. Peer to peer is co-hosted by me, [Erik Asplund](#).

David Towriss: And by me, [David Towriss](#). Together we speak with practitioners from around the world to share knowledge, experience, and good practice. This part of our series focuses on training, education, and research in electoral administration. Each episode includes a guest who provides insights on how the Election Commission in their country prepares frontline workers for Election Day operations, and how it provides voters and other stakeholders with the information that they need to make the election as such.



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Erik: In this episode, the fifth in our series, we are delighted to be talking to two passionate supporters of electoral training education, Belinda Bennett, Director at the Australian Election Commission's national training and education Unit, and Andrew Hawkey, Commissioner at the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. Our conversation is timely, Belinda, you are gearing up to federal elections later this year, and Andrew, you are preparing for the Tasmanian Legislative Council elections. Belinda, Andrew, welcome to Peer to Peer.

David: Speaking with you both today offers us a wonderful opportunity to explore Australian electoral training and education at both the national and the state level. And with this goal in mind, I would like to begin our conversation by asking you to provide us with a bit of a background on electoral administration in Australia. Belinda, under Australia's federal system, how is responsibility divided between the national and state electoral management bodies?

Belinda Bennett: Thanks David, thanks Erik, and thanks for having me. So, look, it is quite a simple split for us. So, the Australian Electoral Commission, we are responsible for administering the Commonwealth Electoral Act, which essentially means we are responsible for delivering federal elections. So, national elections, our national by-elections, referendums, constitutional conventions, those sorts of national events. And we are also responsible for administering industrial elections under the Fair Work Act for Australia. Each state and territory have its own independent electoral management, and they administer state and local government elections in their state and territory. So, that is probably the easiest way to say the separation of responsibilities.

David: That is awesome, really clear, Belinda, thank you. And do the mandates of both national and state EMBs include electoral training and education?

Belinda: Certainly, nationally we do, I might let Andrew comment on the state, but nationally, it is actually part of our mandate now, funding as an organization, particularly around the education of the community, is one of our clear mandates as an organization.

David: Andrew, yes.

Andrew Hawkey: So, yes, it is, one of the functions of the Electoral Commission in Tasmania and most other state bodies is to provide communication, education, and training as a part of that process. One other area that electoral commissions nationally and state are heavily based in, as well, is for the drawing of electoral boundaries around the country. It is a broader group, but usually the Electoral Commission make up the core of those organisations, or to the boundaries.

David: And Andrew, to what extent do Australian EMB's support each other? I am particularly interested in whether you share innovations and best practice.



Andrew: We are a very tight group where we have the AEC, we have six state commissions, we have two territory commissions. But, as you can imagine, the ACT has 300,000 people, the non-territory has less, the Federals look after 26 or so million people, so, our size varies, our structures vary, and both our laws and our election timings vary. So, while there is a great connection between the different groups, there is not a lot that actually can be done, collaboratively, to a large degree. We have a national electoral roll which fundamentally was set up in the mid-1990s, and pretty much everyone is there. But every once in a while, the state will change their legislation and jump sideways a little bit or back in. But otherwise, we share a lot of innovation. So, one really good example of that is electoral role management in polling places. So again, back in the early 2000, I think it was New South Wales that bought a lot of what were called PDAs, personal digital assistants, which were a little bit like a Blackberry, and it allowed them to have the roll for the whole of New South Wales where they could check for outer division votes.

So, [several inaudible words] Australia has compulsory voting, so we have to do a lot of things as electoral management bodies to give electors chance to vote. That includes voting away from your local area, early voting and postal, but in most places around the country, most electoral bodies, you can vote on polling day away from home, and depending on how broadly spread that is, depends on the body. But they started with these ones to look up people to make sure they are getting the right division. Tasmania then took that in 2010 and created the netbooks which then we used to be the actual electronic version of the roll and so that then simplified to a very large degree what happened to people who voted outside of division, they did not have to do a declaration vote with an envelope. They could just vote like they were in their own polling place, and that spread across the whole of Tasmania.

Western Australia then took that up and made partially back to base, where in Tasmania, they are all standalone machines, because we did not have connectivity around Tasmania, or security to allow that to happen. Western Australia took that next step and then the ACT took it further, and they have back to base, including live enrollment numbers going up during the day. Their results go up their management for their polling place manager, they are all things that are linked electronically on these computers, the AEC use them in their pre-poll centers to a direct back to base. So, that was an issue that started in New South Wales, adapted in Tasmania, adapted in Western Australia, adapted in the ACT, so that is a good example of how we all learn and share as much as we can from each other.

David: Thank you, Andrew.

Erik: And now let us talk electoral training. Much of our previous discussions about electoral training on this podcast series have focused on the training of frontline poll workers. But the Australian Election Commission is a global leader in the professional development training that it provides to permanent staff. And so, it is here that I would like to start this part of our conversation. Belinda, why is it important to invest in the training and development of permanent staff?

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Belinda: Yes, so, my favorite topic ever--training, and training of election in elections for sure. It is absolutely critically important; I cannot ever understate the importance of training. Our workforce, all workforce that we have, but our permanent workforce, we need to ensure they are prepared for one thing, we have an obligation to prepare our staff, we have a responsibility to set them up for success, and the more we invest in building that capability, the better the outcomes, right? So, it is the better the outcome for the individual, better the outcome for the electoral management body, and it always then leads to a better result for the community, and that is our purpose. We are here to serve the community and to deliver our democracy and our electoral system for our country and building the capability of our staff. It is critically important for us to deliver that.

The other element for me when I think about this, we cannot assume that the same staff will be in the same roles from election to election, right? So, just staff turnover moving into different areas but also just different areas within the organization, they may be in a different role within the organization as well. So, we need to make sure that our training is really fit for purpose, to set them up for role change or new people coming in. And it needs to be really flexible, but also really comprehensive for them. And it is something we have really evolved and continued to evolve in the AEC as our needs have changed over the years and they continue to change, and I think we are all acutely aware of, a lot of the change in the electoral world particularly. You know, our needs have changed. That training needs to continue to adapt and change because our workforce continues to change as well.

I think the other element for me as to why it is so important is we are in such an increased environment of scrutiny by all of our stakeholders, and stakeholders we may never once upon a time I have ever heard from. But, with the rise in the use of social media, particularly instant access to news and information, it makes it more and more important that we have a capable, knowledgeable, confident workforce to deliver those services in this really highly pressurized and scrutinized environment, and that for me, is why it will always continue. That is not going to go away, and that is going to continue to be a key feature in democracy and in elections. And that is happening globally, and we have seen that happen globally, and I think that is for me, one of the main reasons why it is so critically important.

Erik: Thanks Belinda, one of the AEC's professional development offerings is its operational leadership program. Now, could you begin by explaining to our listeners what the objective of the program is and who is aimed at?

Belinda: So, our Operational Leaders Program, its key objective is to build and enhance the critical operational and leadership capabilities in AEC staff relevant to election readiness and delivery and to promote compliance and quality assurance within the AECs operational environment. So, that is our core objective of that program, and that whole program is designed around meeting that object. We had three kinds of versions, or variations, of that program because they were targeted at three key audiences. So, our first key audience is our divisional returning officers who are responsible for delivering elections in each of our 151 electoral divisions. The second program was targeted at our operations managers and assistant directors that are based out in our states and territories, and the third program was targeted at our state managers and the directors based in our state officers around the country.



We also had a variety of other staff, from our national areas as well, also participate in the program. We rolled out those three programs last year (trying to remember, we are now in 2022). Prior to the 2019 federal election, we actually had a program that we called the Election Readiness Program, which was a two-week residential program that people came and attended, after undertaking a few months of E-learning and planning processes. We had many intentions of rolling that program out again because it was very successful for us going into the 2019 federal election. But as many of our colleagues around the world have had to do, we had to adapt. So, the Operational Leaders Program was born from that original program but was delivered predominantly virtually.

Erik: Thanks Belinda. Is this formal training program complemented by other types of training?

Belinda: Yes, very much. So, one of the things when we designed that particular program on the back of the pandemic environment, we had to adopt a lot of methodologies we actually had not adopted before. So, we had used virtual learning, particularly E-learning, quite extensively, for many years. But we have not done an enormous amount of learning in a virtual environment, live-facilitated sessions in a virtual environment. So, we started to adopt a range of those methodologies. We have also implemented things like the use of 3D games technology, so we have started to roll some of those games out to the organization as well, around adopting some of those other traditional things like micro learning, short videos, short audios from subject matter experts, our business areas. So, a range of different methodologies that we adopted that made up this program. In terms of that complementary with other formal training, one of the things that we always look to do when we design a new learning program is ensuring that it complements the other learning, so the learning is not so jarring for people, right? That we can see the connections and the fit in the design and the look and feel is familiar for people.

We also have a learning and professional development strategy that all of our learning gets aligned to. So, it sets out our goals and it helps us to ensure that our design is all aligned towards that goal. So, we provide that complementary. One of the key features of our learning infrastructure that allows for that complementary component is the use of our the 70:20:10 model. Where 70 per cent of learning is on the job, 20 per cent of learning takes place through relationships, for example, like mentoring, and 10 per cent is formal learning, which is often what people look at training and going “oh, this is not training because it is not formal learning”. But in actual fact, learning is quite much broader than that 10 per cent. So, we designed that entire program to cater for sure the 10 per cent, but also really emphasize for people where they are also learning around that 70 per cent and 20 per cent as well.

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So, that, along with our learning management system, has also allowed us to connect all that learning up and allow for the ongoing use of that content. So, it kind of is not just a point in time, rolled it out, tick the box, job done--That program and all its content is still available so new people coming in can access it, and people who have already been through it can continue to access it, refresh if they want to go back over particular content, you know, use it in whatever way is best for them coming in at this point in our cycle. We also have formal learning, but what we try to do is actually make that only 10 per cent of the learning, and we try to actually focus people on you are doing. You are actually applying a lot of your learning, and learning all the time, and continuing to build that skill and capability.

The other design we applied to the modules within the Operational Leaders Program is the three elements of learn, practice, and apply. So, 'learn' was all about, "well, what information do we need to give you to know how to do that?". 'Practice': here is some opportunity for you to practice that learning, and 'apply': here are some things for you to apply that learning and show us that you have learned. So, how we structured each of those modules has also given us some assurance that people have been able to not only, I guess, learn and be able to practice that, but also give us that demonstration of being able to apply the learning as well.

Erik: Thank you, Belinda. Super interesting, especially this concept around 70:20:10. It would be interesting to know if that is used in other countries as well? Maybe Andrew could kind of say something about training. Also, does the 70:20:10 also apply to Tasmania? Is this something that you have worked with for this?

Andrew: Not strictly a "70:20:10". We do look at the same structures in the same process of learning, practice and apply. One of the key things we talk about in electoral is that it is a trade, so you cannot just read a book and go "I can run election now", you have to know it, you have to feel it and do it, you have to be in the environment to learn at best. So, we do similar structures to that and, yes, so there are similarities, but I can go into them a bit later.

Erik: Fantastic, well, I just had one more question really, for now. I know that the Australian Election Commission's training and professional development work is not only restricted to Australian election officials, could you briefly tell us about the work you do outside of Australia?

Belinda: Yes, absolutely, Erik. So, this work is undertaken and directed by one of my colleagues, Rachel Ellen, and our Community and International Engagement unit within the AEC. So, we provide quite a lot of technical support, strategic and electoral assistance program support, other electoral management bodies, particularly in the region. But certainly, that, you know, also further afield. We have a range of programs that we support, and most of the assistance that we provide internationally centers around technical assistance, those specific operational election specific assistance, strategic planning, and advice. We will support, review, and update policies and procedure manuals, we do a lot of knowledge exchange programs with our counterparts, conduct a range of different workshops, and do things of like design, print, and supply a lot of election material to some of our colleagues across the region. We also, as you are very close to, Erik, deliver a lot of support for the BRIDGE program, particularly again in the Pacific-- And for those who do not know, the BRIDGE program is our Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections program. So, we not only deliver workshops, BRIDGE-workshops, but also look to build the capacity and pool of BRIDGE facilitators in the region as well.

So, we currently have work with electoral management bodies in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Boga Ville, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka. And we also support the PIANZEA network, which is the Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand Electoral Administrators network, which has been going for 25 years, this year, I believe, which is fantastic and going really strong. And it is a really fantastic knowledge and sharing network with all of its members and really highly valued by all of our stakeholders. And certainly, has had a bit of a pivot itself, as has everyone in this pandemic environment, and last year they piloted



the program The Women Intellectual Management Virtual Mentoring program, which went really well and will be continued to be rolled out. And it was really successful to do that in our virtual way as well. So, it is quite a broad remit that we have that we support internationally.

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David: Belinda, thank you, and now I would like to move our conversation towards the training of the temporary election workforce. Andrew, as Election Commissioner at the TEC, you are responsible for overseeing the delivery of elections to the Upper House of Tasmania's parliament, the Legislative council in August of 2020. Now, this was during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, where more elections were being postponed than were being held. And you delivered them without the benefit of the best practices that have subsequently emerged around the world. How did you go about training your temporary poll workers for these elections, and what were some of the biggest challenges that you faced in delivering that training?

Andrew: So, we were both the postponement and an election. Our election was due to go in May, but our director of Public Health banned anyone accessing any public buildings for the March, April, May period. So, we essentially said that we could not run them, and essentially did not run them. But then once things were lifted, we ran them in August. So, similar to the AEC, we have multi-mediums of delivery of our services, and we do not have permanent returning officers, so our permanent hub is just the office of around 15 people. So, there is generally around five or so points a difference between where the Commission professional staff are and where sometimes the things are delivered on the frontline. So, you are always looking at key areas of risk, you are always looking at uncertainty because you have a range of pragmatists or people involved in an election with conflicting needs and conflicting wants. And so, that puts a lot of risk and changes as most electoral people would experience themselves.

So, in Tasmania what we have tried to do is, there are so many things that can happen in a polling place, but most things that happen are the same things over and over again. So, we took a process of having what we call cascaded manuals, so the lowest level person in the polling place is the polling officer, and they had a manual themselves of around 10 pages and a little bit of online learning. And then a deck officer, or a polling major above that, had their manuals and the ones belonged. So, we tried to keep the reading as simple and direct. Our polling managers also came to an online process where we divided into four different areas, one which is to look at the values and I think that is really important in electoral administration that at times there is not a line on the paper that tells you what to do. So being led by the values which work for us, respect for all, integrity, and transparency. They are the three we push in our Commission.

Then we also had, talking about what a polling place manager does, and it is basically three things they manage. They manage people that manage the premises, the building, and location and they manage the processes, the three Ps. And so, we try and distill and simplify to a structure that they can remember where they are going, and what they have to focus on it each time that is complemented by returns and other things that relate to their day and tasks during the day, and they all fit together specifically for the 2020 elections. Yes, there were a broad range of things that were thrown directly upon us, and we established quite a few elements in that short time frame we had the separation. We had the hand cleaner

or different things there, we had screens and masks for our staff, we had separation of our voting screens where people could come in, we had consistent cleaners, we had a welcomer reminding people of the processes and encouraging people to use hand sanitizer when they came into the building. We required scrutiny, one of the big debates last year was what role could scrutineers have? How can they properly scrutinize an election when you have Covid safe? So, we required them all to have masks whenever they were in the room, but we allowed them to be in the room which was suitable.

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And as I say all this, all these things were done in consultation with public health to make sure that they met the criteria. We have also run a state election since that time as well, and many of the same things have run that was in March of 2021. So, they are the main things. There is a lot of communication, one of the bigger issues we had as well in Australia, or around the world, was the fact that we have the uncertainty and the risk and whether people felt comfortable going to a polling place. So, there was a broad range of communication things that happened within the training of our staff, but also our communications to the electors. We also provided a double page sheet for all candidates and parties as to what their requirements, needs, and expectations were as they engaged in the process.

Our Upper house elections has a lot of door knocking, "Hello, I am your candidates, your local area, what is your issues?". Some people do that for six months leading up to an election, and so we had to clearly set boundaries there to say these are the things you need to do when you are visiting people door to door, which again has an impact on those things. So that all those things were put in place for those elections? which is probably covering most of it there at the moment. Again, as I was saying earlier, elections are compulsory in Australia, so there is an expectation that participation in elections is 85 per cent plus, because that is our tradition, and our cultural expectation of what democracy is.

So, with this anxiety around the polling place, also the uncertainty. When you have a seven-week process to undertake, and we were in the thrust of an election. We did not know what an "Omicron" could happen at week three, so you could set a whole lot of preparation from the first part of the process, but you had to have your pivot points of contingency, and so we expanded our early voting centers to make that more accessible. But we also sent out to everyone on our roll, it was only a smaller Upper House, it was only a few divisions, thankfully not a full national election or anything like that. I actually sent everyone a postal vote application so that anyone who felt unsure could at least participate by voting via post, and we went from about a 10 per cent postal vote to a 47 per cent postal vote.

David: Wow, OK, so there were some significant adaptations that you had to make, and a lot of uncertainty that you were all having to deal with there and I can imagine that this makes the work of all electoral officials considerably more stressful. Did you observe higher levels of stress amongst your poll workers during the August 2020 elections [inaudible] connected to that? What support was the AEC able to give to these workers?

Andrew: So, two things here. One is that Tasmania was fairly removed from the horrors of the Covid pandemic that many parts of the world had. So, and our anxiety was there, but it was not as relevant as other parts of the world, we found some staff just did not want to come to work. And in Australia, a lot of your people that work are generally 50+, so, a group that was more vulnerable to the pandemic. So, we



had to do a lot of work with what staff we could get and where we could get them. By providing a lot of this extra training, by providing them with all the PPE and other elements there, and keeping good communication with our casuals, we managed it quite well. The fact that we increased our staff numbers, the fact that we only used polling places that were larger than the space needed. So, there was one person per four meters squared. We have one [several inaudible words] as basis for people filling a space, and we made sure one per eight, so that we had a greater flow. Even things like our [several inaudible words] I talked about further, meant that we did not have queuing in the same way.

I know with Queensland, who also had an election, they actually brought [several inaudible words] in to help manage queues, because they are highly regarded in Australia, and they were seen as a comforting element because it was not just our staff, it was also the electors coming. But having good clear messaging, having all the measures in place, having larger spaces than needed. Also, in the end, such a large early vote meant that the numbers in polling places were less. The other area of concern of course was post-polling period. So, when you are doing your counting and you are processing postal votes, we had to re-establish some of those. And in Tasmania, the tradition is that all our pre polls and all our postals are counted on election night. So, we had to change that because we could not process our normal amounts. Plus, we had more coming in, so a lot of clear early communication to say, “we will only do this much” helped the candidates, help the media, help the staff, and screenings to know where we were going. We tried to create as much certainty and calm simple structure. Well, the storm was having around us and that went down well.

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David: Thank you.

Erik: I would like now to return to an important theme of our podcast series, namely voter and civic education. And I would like to focus in particular on the AECs work with Australian schools. Belinda, could you tell us why this work is so important for the Australian Election Commission?

Belinda: Yes, thanks, Erik. As I mentioned earlier, one of our key mandates as an organization is providing targeted education programs. So, we are also funded to do that. However, more importantly, for us, we really want to encourage the voters of tomorrow to learn more about how our electoral system works and how their vote impacts their community, and how to go about doing that, so that is more important. Sure, that is it is a requirement of our mandate, but actually, we really want because, for any country, I think the more engagement you get from your voters, whether they are the voters of tomorrow, today, you know, the better, right? Because, as you know, as Andrew said, we have a compulsory voting system here in Australia, so that often automatically garners engagement. But engagement can be, just because you participate, does not mean you engage, and what we want is that engagement so that education of our younger community is really, really important for us. We want them to understand our role as an organization in delivering those services. Though it is not just about how to mark your ballot paper, how that translates to representation and the impact on your community. We also wanted to understand our role in that as an organization.



So, that is another really important part of our education as well. So, we put particularly our target at our National Electoral Education Center in Canberra the year five to six groups in Australian schools, which are usually in the year 10- to 12-year-old age group. But we also cater for older school groups as well and really focus, when we get those guys, who are on the cusp, or just about, or just become eligible to vote, we actually really target our programs to them to be all about what is in it for them right now. And so, what does it mean for them right now and around, you know, how do you actually get onto the electoral roll in order for them to be able to vote and what that means. It is so important to us to make sure that education continues and is a really fundamental part of what we do. So, we have the National Electoral Education Center, which focuses on those who can visit, but we are also acutely aware that not every single school in Australia-- , we get schools from everywhere, but not all of them can come into Canberra and visit the center.

So, we also have an extensive suite of education materials available through our website, particularly for the teachers to use in the classroom. So, we ensure our reach is really beyond what the Education Center can provide which is awesome, by the way, but it allows for those schools who just cannot travel to Canberra for a range of reasons to access those sorts of resources and it is, you know, members of the public. You can go on there now onto our website and access those materials as well. And we are in the process of expanding our education offering over the coming years, and that will include an electoral exhibition at the Museum of Australian Democracy, which will be opened later this year, which is really exciting thing and further developing some of the resources for schools and community groups. So, expanding that to be more targeted to different community groups and a virtual education offering that you really just can provide greater access to the broader community. So, it is really important to the AEC about making sure that that education offering is there, and we continue to expand and broaden its reach.

Erik: Thanks Belinda. Yes, I assume with Covid, it has been quite difficult, even for the National Electoral Education Center, always to remain open. And having those online services has been quite a, you know, huge benefit and also you know allowed the center to, you know keep that kind of access that you want to that kind of material available. So, but I was wondering, Andrew, I mean, Canberra is quite far away from you, I was looking at the map, it must be around 800 kilometers away at least, but you visited the Center, I understand. What do you think of it?

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Andrew: Oh, it is a fantastic center. It has been going along for a while and it is wonderful in how it provides information in a good, clear way. It moves the class on to different stages and another class comes in behind. They turn a huge number of students through that process, and it is fabulous. Unfortunately, not many Tasmanians can come, being so far away in that sense.

Erik: Yes, of course, and hence you know why these online resources are so valuable. Well, I understand there is an educational resource called Democracy rules. Could you say something more about that resource maybe? About its methodology.



Belinda: Yes, so our Democracy rules. I might just further Andrew's point there around the Education Center, so it is actually currently undergoing a complete refurbishment, so in a non-Covid year pre-Covid we were pulling through about 95,000 visitors a year. In our peak periods, we are booked out two to three years in advance, so it was extremely popular. [several inaudible words] at the current site, so that was the last time it underwent major refurbishments, so we are really excited it will be reopening sometime early this year. And really, lots of great tech that, particularly kids of today will maybe resonate more with than some of the old tech that we had in there, that many of them probably did not have a clue what it meant or looked like, had never seen some of that tech before in their lives. So, making it a little bit more contemporary for the current environment, but just giving it a revamp, so, Andrew, look forward to having you through the center once it reopens so you can compare your experiences.

So, just on Democracy rules, it is basically our flagship education resource that we have provided. In Australia, a national curriculum, what we call the Australian curriculum, has been developed and the democracy rules. Our resources are now very much linked in with the Australian curriculum so teachers can use it. Because one of the things that we do not want to do is waste teachers' and students' time. The Australian curriculum is a very full program for students and for teachers to navigate. But we wanted to make sure it was worthwhile, so all of our education, resources, and particularly Democracy rules links in with the Australian curriculum to make sure that it is really worthwhile for teachers to access and use in the classroom. So, it is really, it is specific to the humanities and social sciences part of our Australian curriculum, and particularly around civics and citizenship education. So, it is a core part of that curriculum.

It has three main purposes, our Democracy rules. The first one is to equip teachers with background knowledge so they can confidently lead students in that exploration of our Australian electoral and voting systems. So, it really gives them that great foundational knowledge. It also provides students with them engaging accessible material that furthers their understanding of those key concepts relating to our electoral and voting system and support the teaching and learning of that civics and citizenship component of our Australian curriculum. So, it is really important that we make sure it is worthwhile, but actually will also resonate with the students and teachers. So, we have just recently, just last year actually re-launched the latest version, so it underwent quite a significant revamp. And that is including a lot of updates to electoral information where we have had some changes to reflect changes to electoral law. Looking at making sure that we make it really explicit to teachers that link to the Australian curriculum, so, once again, they can see the value for them and for their students. And also, really increasing the use of digital options within it, and also increasing the use of animations, particularly for younger students as well, where you know it is a bit more engaging for them rather than just the chalk and talk. They have a bit of animation, really easy to understand concept.

And we also created a new topic called Young People in the Vote, which is really designed for secondary school students. And it is all about wanting students to critically analyze the learning, so it applies a three-stage inquiry approach, which is quite consistent with the civics and citizenship component of our Australian curriculum. Which is gathering information, identifying, and analyzing that information and then presenting findings so all of the structure of our Democracy rules, it applies that particular methodology so that students have the ability to find the information themselves. We provide them great resources, but also, we give them the support to analyze that and then present those findings. So, it is a really fantastic resource that we get quite a lot of uptake from across schools.

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Erik: Thanks, Belinda. Andrew, I understand that TEC has also created an educational resource for schools. Could you tell us what they are and how they were developed?

Andrew: Sure. So, Tasmania established a what we call our online educational gateway, similar in style to the AEC, bred from about 2012. So again, in Australia, we have our Commonwealth which has its different layers of tiers of government, but each state and territory does its own thing in a different way, whether it is legislation or electoral processes. So, Tasmania has quite a few things that are a little bit different, so one is the Hare-Clark electoral system, which is used by [inaudible] and not many other places, which originated out of Ireland, and Thomas, he was one of the originals of that. But we also have things which we call Robson rotation, where the names of candidates are rotated on the ballot paper so that no individual candidate gets an advantage of being at the top of the ballot paper. So, equality of the electoral process in Tasmania is quite a different level to most other places in that sense. It has a different culture and a different expectation of that. So, our online gateway is also developed in line with the curriculum, it covers all ages from basically fives through to 12 depending on what the curriculum needs.

And again, like the AEC, you have to build an engagement and understanding of democracy and elections and the electoral process for a better engagement and understanding in being a part of that process later on. In old language, we will sow so we will later reap. So, getting that knowledge and getting that experience, we are trying to broad range away. So, the online educational gateway does that and talks about broader principles and just elections because democracy is more than actions.

And we also have more postal ballots, which, not just have the electoral process of a postal vote for our local government elections, but also has different roles to play, you are a candidate, you are a party, you are an Electoral Commission person, you are managing a role so you can work out how you create a role for an election, you can be the media people, you can be doing posters and slogans. So, it tries to create a full carnival of an election. We have a digital ballot paper generator that creates jobs and rotation for the kids in their classes for them for their names or whatever they are choosing to make their stand for. And we have had almost 60 per cent of Tasmanian schools now use that facility to again broaden and reach the practical experience of elections. So again, in the same way that there is a trade to learn, they are a sense, they are a ritual, they are tradition, they are a process election that we all integrate with and engage in, and that is where a part of that mandate for the result of election comes from. So, this tries to repeat that process in the classroom experience.

David: Andrew, Belinda, thank you very much. This has been a whirlwind journey through training and education at federal and state level. But before I round things off, I would like to continue our new tradition of ending with a more personal question. So, if I may, I will direct it first to Belinda and then Andrew, if you could answer it next. What piece of advice do you wish you had received when you first embarked on your elections career?

Belinda: This is a tricky one, but I think for me, and I may not have believed it if someone had said this. So, I will just caveat it with that, but it is that it could be and would be a career, so, it never occurred to me. Before joining the AEC, when I just go into a polling booth and get my piece of ballot paper and get



my name marked off and filling my ballot papers, put a member, never occurred to me what it took to get that piece of paper and that pencil and that ballot box into that into that polling booth. And then I started to work for the AEC. And I do not think I ever would have expected there to be a career in elections. It would never have occurred to me. But I think for me, that deep appreciation and privilege that I am a part of that for my country and my community, again, I do not think I would have, I think even if someone had said that to me, I do not think I would have really understood what they meant. A lot of people have said over the years “Oh, you need to have done an election to really, you know, to be able to do them”. That to me, is not it. You can come in, and with the right support and already apply the skills you have; you can work on election. Any job is easier if you have done it before, of course. But anyone can come in with the right support and the right skills and be able to work on an election. So, it encouraged people who think this might be the thing for them to go out there because there is a career in this area.

00:48:07

David: That is a wonderful uplifting note. Andrew?

Andrew: In support of Belinda, we look at people that have a toolkit, a toolkit of skills, that come in and we can teach you the profession, but you need those toolkits of skills. I started my electoral journey way back in 1993 and some people listening might not know that year, so I would be saying it is going to be a long--, watch out for the gray hairs and the extra kilos. But working elections is a service and a vocation. As an electoral practitioner, you are a steward of the important electoral processes that underpin democracy and all its public institutions. Most of those around you have their own political interests and agenda, your role is to be true to the people, in my case of Tasmania, in ensuring that the rules are set, that are set by Parliament are followed in a most accurate, impartial, and transparent way, and that is the charge that we have as electoral practitioners and stewards of our democracy.

Erik: Belinda, Andrew, thank you very much for joining us on Peer to Peer. It has been a really valuable conversation, so thank you so much.

David: So, that is it for today. For those who are interested in learning more about the work of the AEC National Training and Education unit, or about the National Electoral Education Center, case studies on both can be found in the background reading section of this episode. You can also find there a fantastic case study written by Ferran Martinez i Coma examining the administration of Queensland state and local elections in March 2020.

David: For any suggestions or recommendations, feel free to email us at elections@idea.int. My name is David Towriss.

Erik: My name is Erik Asplund and thanks for listening.

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This transcript has been lightly edited to enhance readability and clarity without changing the sense of the points made by the discussants.