

Intellectual disability and voting



This article is from Down Syndrome Australia's Voice magazine, December 2018.

Dr Ellen Skladzien wrote the original article. She is CEO of Down Syndrome Australia.



The article is about people with intellectual disability having the right to vote.

It has information about what you can do to be able to vote.

It also says what Down Syndrome Australia is doing to help people to be able to vote.



We have written this article in an easy to read way.



You can get help to read it.



The **UNCRPD** says that people with disability have the right to vote.

UNCRPD stands for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



This is an agreement that tells countries what they have to do to make sure people with disabilities have the same rights as everybody else.

Australia follows the UNCRPD.

In Australia people with intellectual disability have the right to vote, just like everyone else.



You can put your name on the **electoral roll** when you turn 18. This is a list of everyone who can vote.



The **Australian Electoral Commission** looks after this list.

They are the department in charge of voting.

Once you are on the electoral roll, you have to vote at **elections**. This is when people choose who will be the next government.



Lots of people with intellectual disability want to vote. Some need some support to be able to vote.



But some people with intellectual disability aren't allowed to vote.

This happens because someone has said the person doesn't understand about being on the electoral roll and voting.

They write to the Australian Electoral Commission to say the person shouldn't be on the electoral roll.

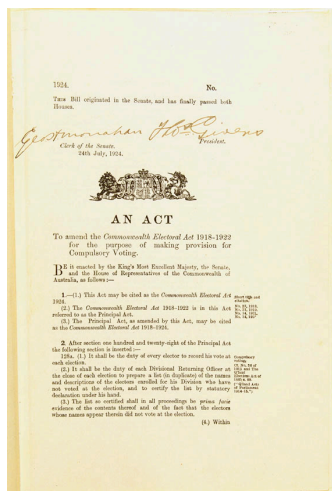
They have to also get a doctor to sign a form to say the person isn't able to understand voting.



The law about this has very old-fashioned language about people with intellectual disability.

It also doesn't say how to find out if a person understands voting.

If you have been stopped from being on the electoral roll, you can get this changed.



You would need to get a doctor to sign a form saying you are able to understand how to vote.

Many people with intellectual disability can understand voting if they get the right information and support.





Down Syndrome Australia says the law isn't fair and it should be changed.

The **Australian Law Reform**

Commission is a department that tells the government how to make laws better.

They say the law about people with intellectual disability voting needs to be changed.

They say that everyone should be able to be on the electoral roll.

They should then be able to decide if they can vote or not.

If they don't vote, they should not be in trouble.

Down Syndrome Australia agrees this would be much better.

We will keep telling the government to change the law so people can have their right to vote.

Down Syndrome Australia says people should get the support and information they need to choose who to vote for.

We have asked the main political parties to make their information easier to read.





If you want to vote, but you have been taken off the electoral roll, You need to:

- Fill in a new enrolment form, and
- Get a new medical certificate from your doctor to say you understand voting.



It's a good idea to check now to see if you are on the electoral roll.

Once you are on the roll, think about what supports you might need to be able to vote.



This might include:

- Information you need to make your choices,
- Transport to the polling place,
- Help to write on the voting papers.



The **Australian Electoral Commission** has some Easy Read information about voting.

You can find it here:

https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/easy-english/

