

FURTHER RESOURCES

Glossary

absolute majority	In an Australian House of Representatives election, a candidate must receive more than 50% of the formal votes to be elected. This is called an absolute majority.
Australian Electoral Commission	The independent statutory authority established in 1984 to maintain and update the Commonwealth electoral roll and conduct federal elections and referendums.
ballot	A method of voting, normally in a written form.
bicameral	A parliament with two houses.
by-election	An election to fill a vacancy which has occurred between general elections.
candidate	A person who stands for election to parliament. In Australia candidates can be nominated by political parties or stand as independents.
citizen	A member of a national community who shares the same entitlements and legal status as others of that community.
coalition	A collection of individuals or parties who have come together to achieve a specific purpose. Political parties may form coalitions to advance their position in parliament.
compulsory enrolment	A legal obligation to enrol to vote at elections.
compulsory voting	A legal obligation to vote at elections.
constitution	The set of basic laws by which a country or state is governed. The Australian Constitution can only be amended through a constitutional referendum.
democracy	Government on behalf of the people by their elected representatives.
double random draw	The method of deciding the order of candidates on the ballot paper. Candidates' names are randomly selected and matched to randomly drawn numbers to determine their position on the ballot paper.
election	The choosing of representatives by the voters.
electoral division	Geographical areas containing approximately equal numbers of voters as defined for electoral purposes.
electoral roll	A list of the names and addresses of all the people who are entitled to vote in an election.
electorate	See 'electoral division'.
Federation	The unification of Australian Colonies which formed the Australian nation on 1 January 1901.
first past the post	An election in which the candidate with the most votes is elected after one round of counting. A simple majority is all that is required, as there is no requirement for an absolute majority.
formal vote	A ballot paper which has been correctly completed and accepted as valid.
franchise	The right to vote.
full preferential voting	A system of voting in which the elector is required to demonstrate a preference for each candidate on the ballot paper.

government	In Australia, the political party or coalition of parties which has won a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives forms the government.
House of Representatives	The House of Representatives (or lower house) is one of two houses of the Australian Parliament. Members of the House of Representatives (sometimes referred to as the 'people's house') are chosen directly by the people of the Commonwealth and in each state and territory the number of members elected is proportional to the number of people in that state or territory, except that at least five members must be chosen in each original state. The House of Representatives currently has 150 members.
human rights	A universally recognised, basic set of entitlements which are owed to all human beings by virtue of their humanity.
hung parliament	A term used to describe a parliament in which no political party or coalition of parties has a majority in the House of Representatives. The term is becoming more applicable to modern parliaments, as minor parties and independent candidates are increasingly holding the balance of power in minority governments.
independents	Candidates for election to parliament, or members of parliament, who do not belong to a political party.
informal vote	A ballot paper which has been incorrectly completed or not filled in at all. Informal votes are not counted towards any candidate but are set aside.
multi-member electorate	An electorate which has more than one representative. A proportional representation system usually applies.
one vote, one value	An ideal which holds that electoral systems should strive to ensure the equal worth of individual votes.
parliamentary democracy	A system of government where the people exercise their political power by electing representatives to parliament to make laws. Australia is a parliamentary democracy.
party	A group of people with similar ideas or aims, some of whose members nominate as candidates at elections in the hope that they will be elected to parliament. A political party can register with the Australian Electoral Commission for federal elections. This is to fulfil legislative requirements under the funding and disclosure provisions of the <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i> and to enable party names to appear on the ballot paper.
petition	A formal grievance which is presented on behalf of its signatories by a Member of Parliament to the responsible minister.
preferential voting	A system of voting in which the voter completes the ballot paper by putting the number 1 in the box beside their first choice candidate, the number 2 beside their second choice, and so on. Partial and optional preferential voting do not require the numbering of all boxes (see full preferential voting).
proportional representation	A system of voting designed to elect representatives in proportion to the amount of support each has in the electorate.

quota	The term 'quota' is used in reference to the following: 1 Senate – the proportion of votes required by a candidate to be elected. 2 Redistribution (entitlement) – the calculation used to determine the number of parliamentary representatives to which a state or territory is entitled (i.e. the number of divisions). 3 Redistribution (enrolment) – the current and projected average divisional enrolment for the state or territory.
redistribution	The redrawing of electoral boundaries for a division to ensure that there are, as near as possible, equal numbers of electors in each division for a state or territory.
referendum	A proposal to alter the Constitution put to the vote. The Australian Constitution can only be altered with the approval of a national majority of electors in states and territories and a majority of electors in a majority of states.
representative	A person who is formally empowered to act on behalf of others.
scrutineer	A candidate's nominee who witnesses the counting of the votes after polling has closed.
scrutiny	The process following the close of polling. Acceptability of votes is determined and the votes are sorted and counted to determine the outcome of the election.
seat	Another term for electoral division; used because the candidate elected then has a seat in parliament.
seat status	Prior to an election, some electorates are categorised as 'safe' or 'marginal' for certain candidates or parties, which aids predictions of election outcomes. During the counting of votes, however, a division's status may be informally declared or 'in doubt' to expedite the outcome of a general election.
secret ballot	A vote made in secret – first introduced in Victoria in 1856.
Senate	One of the two houses of Federal Parliament. It is often called the 'States' house' or House of Review, as these are two of the Senate's major functions. There are 76 senators: 12 from each of the six states and two each from the ACT and NT.
single-member electorate	An electorate for which there can only be one representative.
suffrage	The right to vote (see franchise).
vote	The formal act of an elector in an election to choose the candidate the elector most wants to be the representative for that division. Australia has a secret vote, and enforces compulsory voting.