

TOPICS AND INVESTIGATIONS

You and me, the decision makers

We are all decision makers. Our decisions range from those that impact only on our own lives to decisions that affect the way we participate in and contribute to society. We make many decisions individually or collaboratively but other decisions are made for us or are made indirectly through representatives.

You and me, the decision makers provides students with the opportunity to explore the purpose and meaning of voting as a democratic form of decision making.

The topic contains two investigations:

What do we mean by democracy?

Can we all make the decisions?

These investigations explore the democratic principles and values that underpin the individual's right to a free and fair vote, the concept of representation and the electoral systems that facilitate the election of parliamentary representatives.

Introductory activity

Randomly choose four students to be the class decision makers for a day or two. Draw colour-coded paper or discs out of a box to ensure random selection.

Inform the class that you will only be consulting these four students on classroom decisions over the next one to two days. They are to be the 'decision makers' who will be making the decisions for the entire class over this time. Tell the decision makers that they are not to consult the rest of the class about the decisions that they will make.

Decisions could include the choice of any games played, which students go to recess first, group structures for activities, where students sit, timing of an activity, medium of activity, sport, and so on.

If students become agitated about their lack of consultation during this time, reassure them that in a few days they will be told the reasons for deciding class activities in this way.

Provide all students with a reflective journal and ask them to record their feelings and perceptions of the situations they encounter during the day. Prompts could include:

- > Did you agree with the way the decision makers were chosen?
- > How are you feeling about the situation?
- > Are decisions being made fairly?
- > Is your opinion changing, and if so, in what way?

After one or two days (according to teacher judgement), conduct a classroom discussion directing the following questions to the decision makers and to the rest of the class. Their answers should be summarised and recorded on poster paper as a PMI (plus, minus, interesting) chart:



Fig 3: Being marked off the roll in a class election

	Decision makers	Other class members
Plus (Positive points)		
Minus (Negative points)		
Interesting		

Decision makers

- > How did you make the decisions?
What did you take into account?
- > Did you mainly consider yourself, your friends or everybody?
- > How did you feel about yourself and other class members when making these decisions?
- > Did you feel you were able to 'represent' other class members?
- > Would you feel the same if you had been making decisions with the help of everyone in the class?
- > Did you like or dislike this role? Why?

Other class members

- > Did you like the decisions being made for you?
- > Did you feel that they 'represented' you?
- > What did you think about the decision makers? How did they make you feel?
- > What did you think about the way the decision makers made their decisions?
- > Would you have felt any different if there were a different group of decision makers?

Whole class

Was this a fair way of organising the decision making in the class?

- > What did you like or dislike about it?
- > How could it have been fairer?
- > How can you have your say?

Teachers should now contrast this undemocratic system by asking the class about issues in school life that concern them. Make a list of contributions on the board, then ask the students to consider that if one person were to be chosen to speak on behalf of the class on these issues, what skills and personal qualities would this representative need. Make a list of these qualities. Finally, ask the group to nominate candidates who would be good class representatives and who could take class concerns to the principal or year level coordinator. Elect one or two representatives by a show of hands. Arrange a meeting between the representatives and the principal or year level coordinator, and have the representatives report the results to the rest of the class in a subsequent lesson.



Fig 4: Receiving a ballot paper before voting in a school election

Investigation

What do we mean by democracy?

In this investigation students explore the principles and values that underlie the right of all individuals to a free and fair vote. They will learn about the exercise of the franchise, and link the act of voting with democratic decision making. The investigation emphasises the formalities of the voting process and the different kinds of voting in Australian elections, especially full preferential voting. Students will participate in an 'election' using the procedures followed by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to ensure a free and fair vote.

RECOMMENDED LEVELS

UPPER SECONDARY

MIDDLE SECONDARY

LOWER SECONDARY

UPPER PRIMARY

THE INVESTIGATION AT A GLANCE

Background briefings for teacher reference	Australian Electoral Commission; Constitution; Democracy; Electoral division; Full preferential voting; House of Representatives; Senate
Suggested classroom teaching time	Activity 1: What is a democracy? (40 minutes) Activity 2: How do we make decisions in a democratic society? (80 minutes) Activity 3: Who has the right to vote and choose our representatives? (40 minutes) Activity 4: How do we make sure that elections reflect democratic values? (80 minutes)
Indicators of student achievement	Understand how the Australian electoral system accords with democratic principles and values Understand how voting and electoral systems facilitate representation Describe the key features of the Australian electoral system including the franchise, preferential voting and electoral processes Explain the role of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) in administering the electoral system
Related Discovering Democracy Units	Middle Primary: Joining in Upper Primary: People Power Lower Secondary: Should the people rule?



Fig 5: The Australian Electoral Commission works with other countries to improve their electoral processes

ACTIVITY 1

What is democracy?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What do you know and understand about democracy?
What are democratic values?

RESOURCES

- **BLM 1** Concept cards (photocopied and cut out)
Connecting Concepts: Thinking Activities for Students,
by Clinton Golding, ACER Press, 2002
- National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools,
DEST, 2005



Fig 6: *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*

Gathering information

Review the ideas about fairness that students arrived at in the introductory activity then ask them what they think the term 'democratic' means. For example: 'We say that Australia is a democratic society; what does this mean?' Briefly discuss and write class responses on poster paper or the board.

Identifying and analysing

Have students sit in a circle on the floor. In the middle of the circle place signs labelled 'democratic', 'undemocratic' and 'not sure'. Cut out and distribute to each student the

concept cards (**BLM 1**), which list a range of democratic and undemocratic values, behaviours and systems. Ensure there is enough room for students to place their concept cards around each of the signs.

Students individually classify their concept cards as 'democratic', 'undemocratic' or 'not sure' and place cards around the appropriate sign.

When all cards have been positioned, ask students whether they agree or disagree with the placements. Ask them to clarify and justify their reasons for placement. At this stage, some cards may be changed to different positions because cards next to the 'not sure' position might be explained by others. Cards are moved with the agreement of the person who placed that card and by class consensus. Any cards that students disagree about can be classified in the 'not sure' category and be revisited later.

Teachers should keep a checklist of the card placements so the concepts can be revisited in 'Going further' at the end of this investigation.

Presenting findings

Ask students to use the cards grouped around the 'democratic' sign to develop their own short definition of democracy. After writing their definitions on sticky notes, students place them on a class poster where they can be displayed under the heading: 'Our definitions of democracy'.

FROM THE MARGIN

VOTING FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

The Australian people as a whole do not vote for the Prime Minister. Voters in their division elect all representatives to parliament. John Howard, the Prime Minister from 1996 to 2007, was elected by the voters of the electorate of Bennelong, NSW. The position of Prime Minister is determined by the party or parties that win the majority of seats in parliament.

ACTIVITY 2

How do we make decisions in a democratic society?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What is representative democracy?
- How does choosing representatives reflect democratic principles?
- How are we represented in the Australian Federal Parliament?

RESOURCES

- **BLM 2** Representation – Federal Parliament
- *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, DEST, 2005
- Electoral Division Profiles and Maps:
www.aec.gov.au/Education/Democracy_Rules/web_links.htm
- www.peo.gov.au (Students>Parliament NOW)
- www.aph.gov.au (House of Representatives>Members)
- www.aph.gov.au (Senate>Senators)

FROM THE MARGIN

JOINING THE PARTY

Political parties are organised groups of like-minded people with broadly similar views. They aim to influence or control government by having members elected to parliament. Parties are a key feature of Australia's representative democracy as the majority party or coalition of parties in the House of Representatives forms the government.

Gathering information

Tell students that the word 'democracy' comes from two Greek words: *demos* meaning 'the people' and *kratos* meaning 'power'. Effectively, the word 'democracy' means 'people power' – the right of the people of a nation to make decisions about how they are governed.

Discuss the practicality of a country the size of Australia, with over 14m voters, all taking part in democratic decision making. Is it possible? (Canvass factors such as size of population, remoteness, time to make a decision and vote counting.) Could it be an effective way of making decisions and would it be fair?

Using the analogy of school, discuss the ways students take part in decision making in different situations.

For example:

- > between friends – discussion and mutual agreement
- > in the classroom – discussion, hands-up voting, decisions made by the teacher
- > within the school – Junior School Council through representatives, elections.

Identifying and analysing

Use a PMI (plus, minus, interesting) chart on the board or a sheet of poster paper to analyse these three examples and comment on the effectiveness of different decision-making processes.

For example, agreement between friends is direct involvement, gives ownership to the decision and is quickly decided. Classroom decisions can be made quickly in small groups of people who know each other. Hands-up voting is fast and allows majority decisions within a larger group, but can be intimidating and subject to peer pressure. Decisions made by the teacher alone are fast but imposed without agreement, and free students of responsibility. Junior School Council involves lengthier processes and representatives, rather than direct participation, but allows a larger group to be involved in decision making.

Making connections

Explain to students that Australia is a representative democracy, meaning that we choose representatives to make decisions on our behalf, similar to a Junior School Council.

Confirm student understanding of what we mean by the terms 'representative' and 'representation'. Clarify any misconceptions (refer to *Can we all make the decisions?* Activity 1: *Who makes the decisions?*).

Briefly explain that Australia has three levels of government with different responsibilities and law-making powers.

Provide students with **BLM 2** and photos and seating plans of the Parliament of Australia.

Explain to students that the citizens of Australia have chosen representatives in both houses of parliament to make the laws that govern all Australians.

Ask students to fill out the two blank maps of Australia in **BLM 2** with the number of members in the House of Representatives and the number of senators for each state and territory.

Divide students into two broad groups: one to obtain information about the House of Representatives and one to obtain information about the Senate. Allocate an electorate (House of Representatives) or state or territory (Senate) to individual students or groups of students to investigate. They should use the AEC website and the Australian Parliament website with its details of the Parliament of Australia to complete the listed questions.

FROM THE MARGIN

GERRYMANDER

A gerrymander is the deliberate drawing of electoral boundaries to maximise the number of seats that one party might win while minimising the number of seats that might be won by another. The term comes from America, where in 1812 Governor Eldridge Gerry, of Massachusetts, rigged the boundaries of electoral districts to give maximum advantage to the Republican Party. On a map, one of these electorates looked like a salamander (a type of amphibian) – thus the term gerrymander.



Fig 7: Parliament House, Canberra

House of Representatives

- > What is the name of the electorate you are investigating?
- > What is the size (square kilometres) of the electorate?
- > What is the total enrolment for the electorate?
- > How many members of the House of Representatives come from the state or territory in which the electorate is located?
- > What is the history of the electorate's name?
- > Who is the representative?

Have students compare the electorates they are investigating using the above questions.

The Senate

- > Which state or territory are you investigating?
- > What is the total enrolment for the state or territory?
- > How many senators represent the state or territory?
- > Who are they?

Have students compare the states or territories they are investigating using the above questions.

Bring students together to discuss what they have learnt about parliamentary representation from these maps, pictures and electoral research, including reasons for the different numbers of representatives.

Confirm student understanding of the House of Representatives being based on single-member, population-based electorates, and the Senate electorates as multi-member with senators chosen to represent their state or territory.

Presenting findings

Students may work as individuals or in pairs to present their research on electoral representation as a poster or booklet. They could title the posters or booklets *Electorates and Representatives* and display them in the classroom or school library.

ACTIVITY 3

Who has the right to vote and choose our representatives?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What is the meaning of the word 'franchise'?
How has the franchise changed over time?

RESOURCES

- **BLM 3** Franchise cards
- **BLM 4** Franchise timeline
- Magazines, poster paper, textas, scissors and glue
- **CD-ROM** Animation History of Voting
- **CD-ROM** Interactive The History of Voting Game
- **CD-ROM** Interactive History Challenge – Test your knowledge



Fig 8: Australian citizenship certificate

Gathering information

Cut out and distribute the cards on **BLM 3** to students. Copy extra cards to ensure that each class member has a card. Read **BLM 4** to students and ask individuals to stand in line as their 'person' is read out. (Suggested teaching points have been provided on the BLM in italics.) Explain to students that people remaining seated would not have been able to vote for representatives at that time in history and would not have had a voice in decisions that affected their daily lives. In practice, they were disenfranchised.

Continue until all 'persons' are standing.

Identifying and analysing

Remind students of the introductory activity and discuss how they felt about not being able to vote because of colour, race, gender or financial status. Was this fair? Was this democratic? Why do they think the right to vote has changed over time?

Ask students to draw a picture of their 'person' and paste it onto their own history of the franchise in Australia timeline.

Provide students with the opportunity to explore the **CD-ROM Animation** History of Voting during this stage of the activity.

Bring students together and discuss the following:

- > Who do you think is eligible to vote in Australia today?
- > Is this a reasonable and democratic franchise?
- > Who is disenfranchised?
- > Should the franchise be extended? If so, why and to whom?

Presenting findings

Using magazines and hand-drawn illustrations, create a class collage or poster headed *The Faces of our Voters* to show who can vote in Australia today. Use multiple pictures of people who look over 18, and create labels for them, such as university student, apprentice, wait staff, rock band member, teacher, parent, sky diver, grandparent, and so on. The poster should also include an image of an Australian birth certificate, passport or Australian citizenship certificate to remind the class that citizenship is a necessary qualification for voting. Display the finished poster or collage in the classroom or school library.

FROM THE MARGIN

ON A ROLL

It is compulsory for Australian citizens who have attained the age of 18 years to enrol and to vote (*Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, section 101). The AEC maintains the electoral rolls for federal elections. Eligible voters only need to enrol once, but need to ensure that their details such as name and address remain up to date.

ACTIVITY 4

How do we make sure that elections reflect democratic values?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What are the features of our voting system that ensure a free and fair vote?

What are the rights and responsibilities of voters?

What is meant by preferential voting and compulsory voting?

What role does the AEC have in ensuring free and fair elections?

RESOURCES

- **BLM 5** Participating in free and fair elections
- **BLM 6** The wild residents of Blackwattle Swamp
- **BLM 7** What makes an election free and fair?
- *Running an election in your school*
- Poster paper, scissors and glue
- CD-ROM Animation Election Day
- CD-ROM Animation Counting Your Vote
- CD-ROM Interactive Voting Challenge – What do you know?



Gathering information

Provide students with **BLM 5** and briefly discuss the rights and responsibilities of the voter.

Run an election in your classroom following the procedures outlined in the *Running an election in your school* section of this teacher guide. Mock election scenarios have been provided in the guide to facilitate this activity.

Outline the chosen scenario and explain to students that they will be taking part in an election using the voting formalities and practices that are used in a federal election to elect members to the House of Representatives. The CD-ROM Animations and Interactives will also assist in explaining these features and concepts.

Explain full preferential voting to students and how to cast a formal vote; choose polling officials and scrutineers and explain their roles. These are outlined in *Running an election in your school*. Use the class list as the electoral roll and provide ballot papers, a sealed ballot box and a place for voters to vote in secret.

Conduct the election and count according to the guidelines.

FROM THE MARGIN

COMPULSORY VOTING

What do Singapore, Cyprus, the Philippines, Uruguay and Egypt have in common? Like Australia, they have compulsory voting. Other countries with compulsory voting include Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Panama, Switzerland (some cantons only) and Venezuela.

Identifying and analysing

Reflecting on the experience and drawing on understandings and information from previous activities, ask students to critically evaluate the election, discussing:

- > Was it a fair and free election? Why, or why not?
- > What processes and features were used?
- > Did the election follow AEC procedures?
- > What were the benefits and/or problems of this model of voting and election?

Making connections

Provide students with a copy of **BLM 6** and ask them to read it individually. Alternatively, the reading could be conducted as a whole-of-class activity.

Draw the class together and discuss the election described in the article. Ask students to compare that election with the running of their classroom election based on AEC procedures.

Questions could include:

- > Were there any similarities?
- > How did they differ?
- > Which election reflected the democratic principles of a free and fair election?

Presenting findings

Group students in pairs or small groups and distribute **BLM 7**, a large sheet of poster paper, scissors and glue.

Using information from **BLM 5** and **BLM 6** and the classroom experience of participating in an election, ask students to complete a table classifying illustrations from **BLM 7** under the following heading:

WHAT MAKES AN ELECTION FREE AND FAIR?	
Fair	Unfair

As a class draw on the information from the table and summarise the democratic voting/electoral system in Australia in a statement beginning: 'The electoral rights of Australian citizens are protected by As Australian citizens we have the responsibility to'



Fig 9: Respecting the secret ballot in a school election

FROM THE MARGIN

ARE YOU QUALIFIED?

Australian citizens 16 years or older are eligible to enrol, but only those who have attained 18 years of age are able to vote. British subjects who were on the electoral roll prior to 26 January 1984 are also eligible to enrol and to vote. (*Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, sections 93 and 100)

Going further

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What are the key features of our democratic society?
- What processes facilitate democratic representation?

Ask students individually to reflect and draw on their understandings from the previous activities in the investigation to complete a Y-chart (looks like, feels like, sounds like) on the features of Australian democracy.

Drawing on individual Y-charts combine responses onto a class 'Democracy' Y-chart and display.

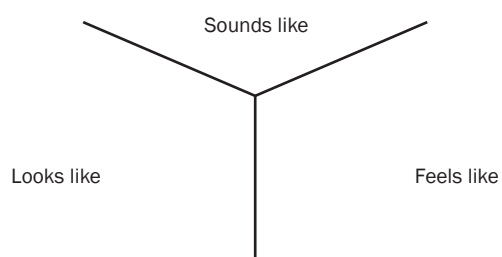
Revisit the original democratic values concepts chart from Activity 1 and discuss with students whether there are any additions or changes they wish to make, and any further clarifications.

Ask students to rewrite their definition of democracy and to compare it with their original definitions. Discuss the changes they made, and inquire if their definitions are more comprehensive. What have they added or changed?

Write a combined class statement beginning: 'We say that Australia is a democratic country because it has the following values, systems and features

Examples could include: the people of the country make the decisions on how it is governed; it has free and fair elections; the ballot is secret; we choose our representatives.

Fig 10: Australian Democracy Y-chart



FROM THE MARGIN

FAIR SHARE

Each original state (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) is entitled to a minimum of five members in the House of Representatives, regardless of its population.



Fig 11: Voters being checked against the electoral roll

Investigation

Can we all make the decisions?

In this investigation students consider the concept of representation and the role of voting and electoral systems in facilitating representation. Students consider how electoral representation translates into parliamentary representation and accountability. The need for informed choices about candidates and criteria for selecting candidates is examined.

RECOMMENDED LEVELS

UPPER SECONDARY

MIDDLE SECONDARY

LOWER SECONDARY

UPPER PRIMARY

THE INVESTIGATION AT A GLANCE

Background briefings for teacher reference	Democracy; Parliament; Representation
Suggested classroom teaching time	Activity 1: Who makes the decisions? (40 minutes) Activity 2: What should we consider when choosing a representative? (80 minutes) Activity 3: Who represents you? (40 minutes)
Indicators of student achievement	Understand the importance of making informed decisions Evaluate the qualities and characteristics of good representatives Analyse the role of representatives at school and in the general community
Related Discovering Democracy Units	Middle Primary: Joining in Upper Primary: People Power Lower Secondary: Men and Women in Political Life



Fig 12: House of Representatives

ACTIVITY 1

Who makes the decisions?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

How do we make decisions?

Who makes decisions on our behalf?

RESOURCES

- **BLM 8** Who makes the decisions?
Government websites, such as the following examples:
- **Local:** www.darebin.vic.gov.au; www.randwick.nsw.gov.au; www.cottesloe.wa.gov.au
- **State/Territory:** www.qld.gov.au; www.vic.gov.au; www.nsw.gov.au
- **Federal:** www.australia.gov.au (Directories>Portfolios, Departments and Agencies)
- Locally collected pamphlets

Gathering information

Provide students with **BLM 8** and a range of pamphlets and website addresses to assist them to investigate decision-making responsibility at different levels of government.

Ask students to read through the examples of decision making and check for understanding. Explain, or give examples to clarify. Students individually complete **BLM 8** drawing on their own experience. They also research personal, community, local, State and federal areas of decision-making responsibility while completing their investigation.

Identifying and analysing

Following completion of **BLM 8** discuss responses with the class. Suitable prompts to elicit understanding of direct, indirect and consultative representation could include:

- > What decisions do you make personally, without consultation, or in direct consultation? (Note: Some answers will differ according to family dynamics.)
- > Are many decisions made through representation? If so, what are they?
- > How do others know what we want?
- > How important is it for us to have good representatives who are making all these decisions on our behalf?

Presenting findings

Organise students into pairs or small groups and instruct them to design a decision-making concept map based on their understanding of direct, indirect, personal, group, consultative and representative decision making. Ask students to include examples of each.

Draw the class together and allow each group to present their maps, justifying their links and placements.

FROM THE MARGIN

BALLOT PAPERS

For the 2010 federal election approximately 300 tonnes of paper was used to print approximately 44 million ballot papers. Strict security during the printing, handling and storage of ballot papers ensures the integrity of the electoral process.

ACTIVITY 2

What should we consider when choosing a representative?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What are the qualities and characteristics of a good representative?
Why is it important to make informed decisions about candidates when electing representatives?

RESOURCES

- **BLM 9** Qualities in a good representative
- Poster paper

FROM THE MARGIN

PUMPING FLESH

Not a new gym program but a colourful term that describes the way of campaigning some candidates use to gain votes – they shake the hands and slap the back of every citizen they meet. Some even hold and kiss lots of babies during campaigning!

Gathering information

Linking to the previous discussion of decision makers as representatives, and the need for ‘good representation’, discuss with students what they think are the qualities and characteristics of a ‘good’ representative. If students have difficulty, try to initiate discussion by asking whether they would choose someone with qualities such as aggression, impressive sporting achievements, assertiveness, effective communication, knowledge, kindness, fairness, intelligence or good looks. Students

then conduct a survey of other students, teachers, family and friends using **BLM 9**. This could be a homework assignment where students report their findings in the following lesson.

Identifying and analysing

Using results from the survey, list all the qualities and rank the qualities according to the number of responses. Students could graph the results as part of a related mathematics activity.

Discuss what most people think are the three or four most important qualities of a good representative. Do students personally agree with these responses? Record responses on a sheet of poster paper for display.

Further analysis could include classifying the responses according to groups interviewed, for example qualities parents thought were important and qualities different age groups thought were important.

Making connections

Explain to students that representation relies on people in the community being willing to take on the responsibility to represent others. Our representative democracy could not function without people willing to stand as candidates. In Australia any person who is over 18 years of age and who is an Australian citizen (with some exceptions such as people serving prison terms and people of unsound mind) is eligible to stand as a candidate in federal, state or local elections.

Discuss with students why they think people are willing to stand as candidates, considering motives and benefits. Drawing an analogy with the Junior School Council could be a useful starting point.



Fig 13: Receiving information about the candidates outside a polling place

Questions could include:

- > Why do you think people are willing to be candidates?
- > Do all candidates seek election for the 'right' reasons?
- > What other reasons could there be?
- > What are the benefits of being able to choose from a range of candidates?
- > How does choice of candidates improve our representation?
- > How important is it that we make an informed decision when choosing candidates?

Summarise discussion points on poster paper, linking the qualities of a good representative to making informed decisions when electing candidates.

Presenting findings

Ask students to use the information they have gathered from the survey and through discussion to design their ideal representative. They could work in pairs or in small groups to present their ideas in a choice of mediums: cardboard cut-out, role-play, outline of a person, model, poster, comic, cartoon, illustration, jigsaw or PowerPoint™ presentation. The final product should clearly display the qualities of a good representative.



Fig 14: A polling official assisting a voter at a polling place

FROM THE MARGIN

AN INFORMED DECISION?

In 1974, the voters of a town in Western Australia re-elected a mayor whose death had caused the election in the first place. The town clerk explained that the bad mistake was caused by confusion while preparing the ballot papers. The sister-in-law of the deceased mayor said, 'I know that George was very popular with the townsfolk, but I was surprised to hear his election victory announced on the radio, driving back from the crematorium'. (NSW Electoral Commission website)

ACTIVITY 3

Who represents you?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

How are you represented?

Why is it important for electors be informed about their representatives?

Why is representative accountability important?

RESOURCES

- Locally collected photos and newspaper articles profiling a selection of local, state and federal government representatives (if an election is taking place, include any articles about the candidates)
- Photos and articles involving community representatives, for example from environmental groups, sporting clubs, volunteer organisations
- Poster paper, scissors, textas and glue

Gathering information

Provide students with a range of newspapers and ask them to read and select articles that refer to issues, profile representatives, describe candidates, or present viewpoints.

Instruct students to look for a range of articles that reflect different types of representation, for example local clubs, lobby groups, and local council and government.

Ask students to bring further examples to build up profiles of a range of representatives. Encourage students to also include representatives from Junior School Council, School Council, clubs and sports organisations.

Identifying and analysing

Distribute one to two photos and newspaper articles to pairs or small groups of students and ask them to analyse the articles, to find the name of the representative, whom they represent, the issues discussed, and viewpoints expressed by the representative. Paste articles on poster paper and record accompanying summaries as representative profiles.

Presenting findings

Draw the class together and allow students to present their representative profiles to the class. Discuss with students the importance of being informed about how our representatives represent us, reinforcing the concept of representative accountability.

Combine posters to make a book entitled *Our Representatives at Work*.

Going further

Provide students with the opportunity to compose a series of questions they can use in an interview with a local representative. If an interview is not possible, students can use the questions to frame a letter which can then be sent to a representative.

Ask students to choose one of their representatives (community, local, state, federal) and write a series of questions about

being a representative. They could ask what the person likes about the job, the main difficulties faced, views about representation, how they deal with community issues, what qualities and characteristics they think make a good representative, why they chose to be a candidate seeking election, and so on.

OR

Arrange for a representative to visit the school so students can conduct an interview based on questions that have been collaboratively constructed by the class.