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Session 2: Decision-making and Democracy

You will need

1. A voting method of your choice. Some ways are listed below.
 - Put a bead in a jar to indicate a preferred choice
 - Hands up
 - Each person write their choice on a piece of paper and put it in a box.
 - Fill out a ballot paper
 - You can generate ballot papers for a group election on any topic using the Get Voting web site <http://apps.aec.gov.au/GetVoting/ballotpaper>.
2. You will need to use a method that will be suitable for your particular group and prepare any equipment you will need.
3. Whiteboard or butchers paper and pens.

Activity

Demonstrate the concept of democracy by voting as a group to make decisions.

You can vote as a group on many topics. Here are some ideas you could use:

- Favourite fruit
- Favourite colour
- A group outing we will go on
- A meal choice for a special event
- The movie we will watch together.
- What posters we will display in our meeting area

During the process emphasise to the group that:

- Every person's vote counts. The group, not the leader will make the decision.
- In Australia we vote in elections to decide who will represent us and make decisions on our behalf.

Group discussion

1. How did it feel to be a part of making a decision as a group?

Key Idea: Remind the group that at an election they will make a decision about who will represent them in parliament.

2. What decisions have you made recently?

Key Idea: Decision making is a daily occurrence and all choices are important. Voting is a process where you have your say in Australia's democracy.

3. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to make a good decision? Write the group's answers up on a whiteboard or butchers paper.

Key Idea: This can be displayed on a wall where it can be referred to later on. The following points could be made:

- Don't just go for the first thing you think of
- Take time to consider all the options
- Think about the issue from other people's points of view
- Reflect on what you think is really important

Extension activity

Compare a public voting method (such as a show of hands or going around the group and asking each person to state their choice) with a private method (such as using a ballot paper or going to the side of the room to tell the facilitator their choice). When the public method was used, did other group members suggest how a person should vote or comment on their choice? Discuss the secret ballot and how it ensures that a person is able to vote in elections without pressure from others in making their decision, or anyone else knowing what their choice was.

Notes for facilitator

Decision making is a life skill. Through decision making, we see the consequences of our choices. (Choices, AEC publication)

The idea of one vote, one value can be difficult to address in an environment where the group leader has all the decision-making power. This activity gives each member of the group an equal say in making a decision for the group.

It will be important to choose a voting topic that it will be possible to follow through and implement for the group. We have provided some ideas for voting on things that do not require action, however it is recommended that the topic used demonstrate an outcome from the voting process so that an understanding that voting affects change can be obtained.

If this activity is completed with just one participant it is important to discuss that democracy is a way of making choices by a group of people. With an individual you can emphasize that every person's vote counts and that it is the group of voters not the leader that will make the decision. As part of this it might help to think about decisions that have been made democratically in the past by the person and a group of people, such as a family decision of where to go on a holiday or what to eat for dinner. This gives some real life context to the process of decision making.

More information about conducting an election that follows good process and give the voters confidence in the outcome of the election is available on the AEC's Get Voting Website <http://education.aec.gov.au/getvoting/>