



**AEC**

Australian Electoral Commission

# countme in!

Australian democracy

BE COUNTED



# Why enrol to vote?

**Voting** is about making decisions that will affect your life.

Enrolling and voting is a very effective way of having your say.

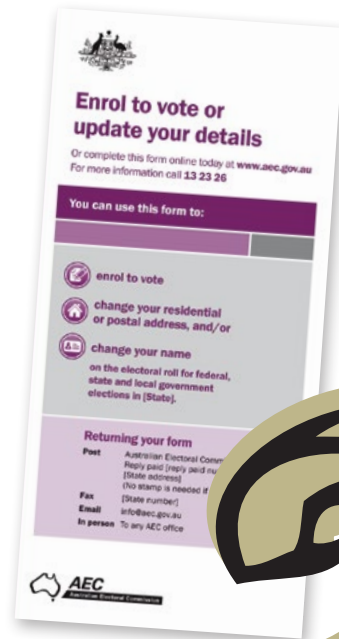
*Count me in!* explains the processes that enable you to make informed decisions in our democracy.



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# Who Can

# Vote



In Australia, citizens have the right and the responsibility to enrol and vote. Voting in elections is a powerful way for citizens to have a say in the decision-making which affects their lives. Enrolment and voting are compulsory in federal elections.

## Enrolling to vote

It is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 or older to enrol and vote.

> If you are 16, you can enrol now so you are ready to vote when you turn 18.

To enrol you must fill in an enrolment form and also provide some proof of identity – for most people this means providing drivers licence details. Remember it is necessary to complete a new enrolment form each time you change address.

Enrolment forms are available at any Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) office, from the AEC website ([www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)), at all post offices and their agencies, Centrelink Customer Service Centres, Medicare Offices, Australian Taxation Office shopfronts and some Rural Transaction Centres.

Fill it out, sign it and return it in the reply paid envelope provided by the AEC. This will enrol you for federal, state and local government elections.

## Special Interest

Australia is one of only a few countries in the world that has compulsory voting.

### Arguments supporting compulsory voting

- > all citizens in a democracy have both the right and the duty to help decide how the country is governed
- > the government is not completely representative of the people if only some of the people vote
- > candidates can concentrate on issues rather than spending time and money just persuading people to vote

### Arguments against compulsory voting

- > compulsory voting takes away freedom of choice
- > people vote regardless of their interest in or understanding of political issues



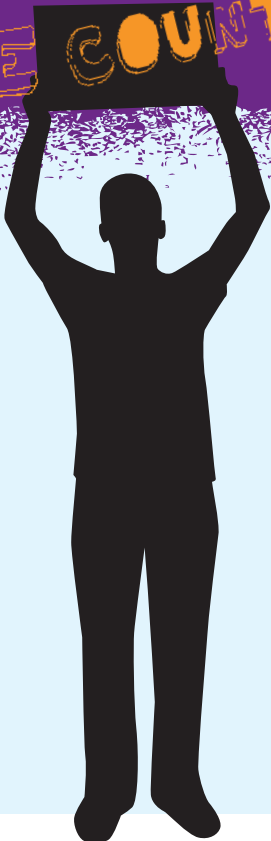
Compulsory enrolment was introduced in Australia by the federal parliament in 1911 and compulsory voting for federal elections was first introduced in 1924. Prior to compulsory voting the best turnout of voters was 78.3%. The worst turnout of voters was in 1903 when 50.3% of enrolled voters voted. The first compulsory federal election of 1925 had 91.4% of enrolled voters voting. Now around 95% is usual.

Compulsory enrolment was not required of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples until 1984. These Australians gained the right to enrol and vote in federal elections in 1962.

Elections are held on a Saturday and there are various ways in which people who cannot attend a polling place in their electorate on election day can cast a vote. This is to make sure that all eligible electors have an opportunity to vote.

# Government in Australia

BE HEARD  
BE COUNTED



Australia is a representative democracy where people elect representatives to speak and make decisions on their behalf.

In 1901 the six colonies (now states) federated to form the new nation of Australia to be governed by a federal parliament. It was set up as a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch is head of state. In Australia the executive power that is vested in Queen Elizabeth II is exercised by the Governor-General as her representative.

Representatives are elected to each of the three levels of government:

- > federal government
- > state government
- > local government

## Federal Government

The decision-making body at the federal level is the federal parliament. It consists of two houses – the House of Representatives and the Senate.

### Representation

Representatives elected to the House of Representatives are called members of the House of Representatives (MHRs). The leader of the federal government, the Prime Minister, is usually a member of the House of Representatives.

Representatives elected to the Senate are called senators.

### Responsibilities

Federal government responsibilities include foreign affairs, social security, industrial relations, trade, immigration, currency and defence.

## State Government

The decision-making body at the state level is the state parliament which meets in the parliament house of each state. State parliaments are made up of two houses with the exception of Queensland which only has one house.

### Representation

Representatives elected to state parliaments are generally known as ‘members’ – members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), members of the House of Assembly (MHA) or members of the Legislative Council (MLC). The leader of a state government is called the premier.

The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have a different arrangement. Each territory parliament has one house called the Legislative Assembly. The leader of each territory government is called the chief minister.

### Responsibilities

State and territory government responsibilities include justice, consumer affairs, health, education, forestry, public transport and main roads.

## Local Government

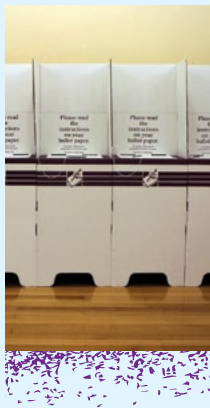
The decision-making body at the local level is usually called the city or shire council. Councils have been established by state governments to look after the particular needs of a city or local community.

### Representation


Representatives elected to the local council are called aldermen or councillors. The head of the council is the mayor or shire president.

### Responsibilities

Local government responsibilities include local roads, garbage collection, building regulations and land subdivisions, public health and recreation facilities such as swimming pools.



# Representation Australian



The Australian Constitution was written by representatives of the six colonies in the period immediately before Federation. The Constitution broadly defines the structure and powers of the federal parliament and establishes the basis of representation in its two houses – the House of Representatives and the Senate.

## The House of Representatives

Members of the House of Representatives, which is often called the 'people's house', are elected on a population basis. Australia is divided into electorates. Regardless of geographical size, all electorates in every state or territory have approximately the same number of electors. One member is elected to the House of Representatives to represent each electorate.

The number of electorates may change slightly due to redistributions of electoral boundaries. At the 2010 federal election there were 150 electorates.

## The Senate

The Senate is often called the 'states' house'. Each state, regardless of its size or population, is represented by 12 senators to ensure equality of representation for the states.

Both territories – the ACT and NT – are represented by 2 senators each.

Each state and territory forms a multi-member electorate. That is, each state and territory elects a group of people to represent it. At the 2010 election there were 76 senators – 12 from each state and 2 from each territory.



## *Special Interest*

**Nexus**—The Constitution states that there must be, as near as possible, twice as many members of the House of Representatives as senators in the Senate. This numerical relationship is called the nexus.

in the

# Parliament



### When are elections held?

A federal election must be held every three years because the Constitution limits the term of office for members of the House of Representatives to three years.

State senators are elected for a term of six years but half-Senate elections are usually held at the same time as the House of Representatives elections.

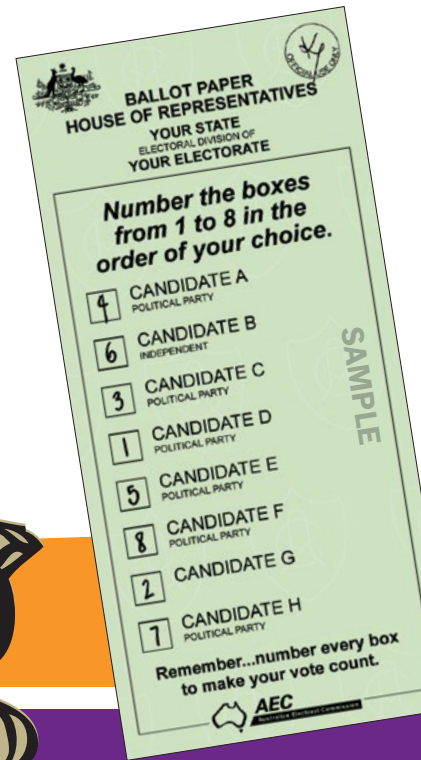
This means that half of the senators within a state stand for election every three years. Territory senators are elected only for the term of the House of Representatives.

A double dissolution results in all seats in both houses being vacated.

If a member of the House of Representatives dies, resigns or is disqualified by the High Court of Australia, a by-election is held in that electorate. If a senator dies, resigns, or is disqualified by the High Court of Australia, the vacancy is filled by a person chosen by a joint sitting of the houses of parliament of that state until the end of the term. The person chosen must be of the same political party as the previous senator.

# Preferential

# voting



In Australia we use the preferential voting system for House of Representatives and Senate elections. When filling out their ballot papers, voters number the candidates in the order of their preference.



## The House of Representatives

A single-member system of representation applies to this house. Electorates are based on population and the electors of one electorate choose one member of the House of Representatives to represent them.

Under this system the candidate who gains the majority of support of an electorate (more than 50%) is elected.

The House of Representatives ballot paper is green and lists the candidates' names.

The voter is required to put a number in each of the squares next to the candidates' names. The number 1 indicates the voter's first preference, 2 indicates their second preference and so on.

**(See page 12 for more information about counting the votes)**



## *Special Interest*

**Formal and Informal Votes**—Ballot papers correctly marked according to the rules of voting are called formal votes. Only formal votes are counted for the election result. A ballot paper is regarded as informal if it is not filled out correctly. These ballot papers are not counted towards any candidate.

## The Senate

Preferential voting is also used for Senate elections. The electors of a state or territory form a multi-member electorate and elect a group of senators to represent them.

A proportional system of representation applies to the Senate. Under this system candidates must gain a specific proportion of the electorate's votes (a quota) to be elected. Senate ballot papers are white and are divided into two sections. Electors can vote either above the black line or below the black line.

**YOU MAY VOTE IN ONE OF TWO WAYS**

**Either:**

**Above the line**  
By placing the single figure 1 in one and only one of these squares to indicate the voting method you wish to adopt on your vote.

A	B	C	D	E	F	
POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY

**Or:**

**Below the line**  
By placing the numbers 1 to 14 in one and only one of these squares to indicate the voting method you wish to adopt on your vote.

A	B	C	D	E	F	Ungrouped
POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY

**SAMPLE**

### Above the line

In the section above the black line electors only have to put a number 1 in the box above the party or the group they want to support. Their preferences will be counted the way that party or group has registered them with the AEC.

**YOU MAY VOTE IN ONE OF TWO WAYS**

**Either:**

**Above the line**  
By placing the single figure 1 in one and only one of these squares to indicate the voting method you wish to adopt on your vote.

A	B	C	D	E	F	
POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY

**Or:**

**Below the line**  
By placing the numbers 1 to 14 in one and only one of these squares to indicate the voting method you wish to adopt on your vote.

A	B	C	D	E	F	Ungrouped
POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY
6	3	4	7	9	13	14
CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE
First name	First name	First name	First name	First name	First name	First name
Party	Party	Party	Party	Party	Party	Party
2	7	8	11	10		
CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE	CANDIDATE		
First name	First name	First name	First name	First name		
Party	Party	Party	Party	Party		

**SAMPLE**

### Below the line

In the section below the black line, electors follow the same process as for the House of Representatives – putting a number 1 beside the candidate they want as their first choice, number 2 beside the candidate they want as their second choice and so on until all the boxes are numbered. (See page 14 for more information about counting the votes)

# Stages in an

# Election



## 1 Issuing the writs

For a House of Representatives election the Governor-General issues legal instructions to the Electoral Commissioner to hold elections in each electorate. These instructions are called writs.

For a Senate election, each state governor issues a writ to the Australian Electoral Officer in the state. The Governor-General issues writs to the Australian Electoral Officers in each of the territories.

## 2 The electoral roll

Once the writs have been issued, all eligible citizens have a short period to ensure they are enrolled to vote, and that their enrolment details are correct, before the Commonwealth Electoral Roll is closed for that election event.

The AEC arranges for the updated electoral roll data to be printed for use in polling places.

## 3 Nominations

Candidates must nominate for election. To nominate, candidates must be Australian citizens and eligible to be on the electoral roll. They complete a nomination form and pay a deposit; in 2010 the deposits were \$500 for the House of Representatives and \$1 000 for the Senate.

## 4 Producing ballot papers and other polling material

The order of the candidates' names for each electorate is determined by a random draw. Then, the AEC organises the printing of the ballot papers.

Many thousands of ballot boxes and voting screens are also manufactured to equip over 7 700 polling places around Australia and overseas.

## 5 Campaigning

Once the election is announced, political parties and candidates start their election campaigns. This may include television, radio, newspaper and internet advertisements, interviews, distribution of pamphlets and shopping centre visits.

## Free and fair elections

Some rules governing federal elections are laid down in Australia's Constitution but most of the rules are contained in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

The AEC is the Commonwealth agency responsible for providing Australians with an independent electoral service and enhancing their understanding of, and participation in, the federal electoral process. The Electoral Commissioner is the full time Chief Executive Officer of the AEC.

The AEC also has a manager located in each state and the Northern Territory who are known as Australian Electoral Officers. Both the Electoral Commissioner and the Australian Electoral Officers have key roles in the federal elections process and all are appointed by the Governor-General acting on the advice of the federal government.

### 6 Voting arrangements

By law, election day is always on a Saturday. Polling places open at 8.00am and close at 6.00pm. They are usually in schools or community halls.

Three groups of people have important duties at polling places. They are polling officials, party workers, and scrutineers.

> Polling officials are employed and trained by the AEC; they follow the procedures laid down in the electoral laws.

To start the voting process a polling official asks each voter

[What is your full name?](#)  
[What is your address?](#)  
[Have you voted before in this election?](#)

The official checks the voter's enrolment on the roll, marks off the voter's name and initials the ballot papers – one green one for the House of Representatives and a white one for the Senate. These are handed to the voter who goes to

a voting screen to vote in secret, folds the ballot papers and puts them into the sealed ballot boxes.

**Note:** Polling officials may help people who have trouble completing the ballot paper themselves.

> Party workers are volunteers who support a particular party. They can only set up outside polling places and usually offer voters how-to-vote cards. The cards show voters how particular candidates would like them to fill in their ballot papers. Voters don't have to take or use these cards.

> Scrutineers represent the candidates. They may be present at the polling place to observe election procedures but they are not allowed to influence any voter. This means they cannot leave any party material such as how-to-vote cards in the polling places. The most important task of the scrutineers is to watch the count and make sure that only formal votes

are counted and they are counted properly. However scrutineers must not touch the ballot papers.

**Note:** Electors unable to get to a polling place on election day are able to cast a vote before that day at an early voting centre or by post. Some electors, who have continuing difficulty getting to a polling place because of disability, isolation or religious practice, register as General Postal Voters. This entitles them to automatically be sent their ballot papers through the post.

### 7 The count

When voting finishes at 6.00pm the counting begins. On election night the votes cast at polling places on that day are counted at the polling place.

The count and distribution of preferences may go on for some time after election day, until the results are finalised.

(See pages 12–15 for more details)



# Getting a **Result** in the House of Representatives

A single-member system of representation applies to this house. Under this system the candidate who gains majority support of an electorate is elected.

## Counting House of Representatives votes

The first count takes place at polling places. All the formal ballot papers are sorted into separate bundles according to first preference votes for each candidate.

After polling day, all the '1' votes for the electorate are counted for each candidate. If a candidate gets more than 50% of the formal first preference votes then they are immediately elected.

If no candidate has an absolute majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is excluded. These votes are then transferred to the other candidates according to the second preferences shown by voters on these ballot papers.

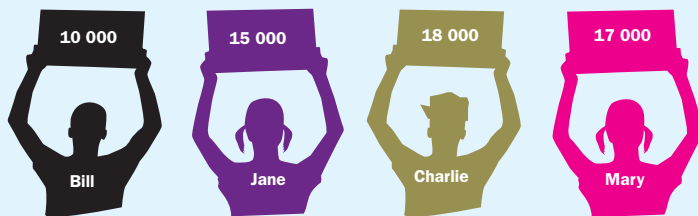
If still no candidate has an absolute majority, again the remaining candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and these votes are transferred. This process will continue until one candidate has more than half the total formal votes cast and is declared elected.



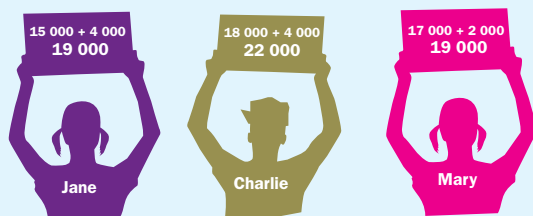
## AN EXAMPLE

Four candidates, Bill, Jane, Charlie and Mary stand for election in the electorate of Utopia. After the election, the ballot papers are counted and there are 60 000 formal votes. Therefore the absolute majority needed to win the seat is 30 001 (more than 50%).

### At first count



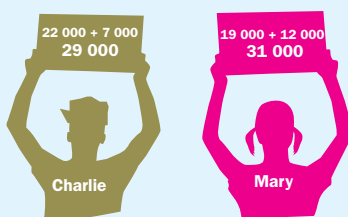
Nobody has gained an absolute majority so the person with the lowest number of votes (Bill with 10 000 votes) is excluded, and the votes are distributed according to the 2nd preferences marked on Bill's ballot papers.



Jane gained 4 000 second preferences making her total 19 000  
Charlie gained 4 000 second preferences making his total 22 000  
Mary gained 2 000 second preferences making her total 19 000

Still nobody has gained the absolute majority (more than 50%) so again the candidate with the lowest number of votes is excluded.

In this example there are now two candidates with equal least votes (Mary and Jane each with 19 000), so in this situation the candidate who had the lowest number of votes in the first count is excluded (Jane) and those votes are distributed.



Charlie gained 7 000 votes making his total 29 000

Mary gained 12 000 votes making her total 31 000

Now that Mary has 31 000 votes, she has more than the absolute majority and becomes the elected representative for the electorate of Utopia.

**An interesting fact:** Mary was not the candidate who had the 'most' votes in the first count.

## Special Interest

**First-past-the-post**—Before 1918 the simple majority or 'first-past-the-post' system was used to elect representatives to the House of Representatives and the Senate. In this system the candidate who receives the greatest number of votes is elected.

This system is still used in many countries today including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and India.

In the Australian federal system today, a candidate must get more than 50% of the formal vote to be elected.

# Getting a **Result** in the Senate

A proportional system of representation applies to the Senate. Under this system candidates must win a specific proportion of the electorate's votes to be elected. This is known as a quota.

## Counting Senate votes

Senate candidates must win a quota or proportion of votes to be elected.

This quota is worked out by dividing the total number of formal ballot papers by one more than the number of vacancies to be filled (ignore any remainder) and then adding 1 to the result.

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{\text{no. of formal votes}}{\text{no. of vacancies} + 1} + 1$$

In this example three senators are to be elected.

The total number of formal votes for the 'state' is 2400.

Therefore, the

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{2\,400}{3 + 1} + 1 = 601$$

All the ballot papers are now examined to see how many first preference votes each candidate received.

John	240
Mary	550
Kim	730
Ann	140
Tom	590
Sally	150
<b>Total votes</b>	<b>2 400</b>

Kim is the only candidate to receive the quota of 601 immediately and so is elected. The 129 votes she received in excess of the quota are called surplus votes. These are transferred to the remaining candidates by distributing all of Kim's votes at less than their full value, called the transfer value.

The transfer value is worked out by dividing the number of surplus votes by the total number of ballot papers received by the elected candidate.

$$\frac{\text{no. of surplus votes}}{\text{total no. of Kim's 1st preference votes}} = \frac{129}{730}$$

$$\text{Transfer value} = .17671232$$





That's a very accurate number but with a large number of votes it can make a difference. To make it easy for this example, the number is rounded off to .177.

The list below shows the number of second preferences received by each candidate on Kim's 730 ballot papers.

John	100
Mary	400
Ann	20
Tom	150
Sally	60

These ballot papers are then multiplied by their transfer value (decimal remainders are disregarded) and then added to the first preference totals.

			Transfer Value	+	1st Pref Votes	=	New Total
John	100 x .177	=	17	+	240	=	257
Mary	400 x .177	=	70	+	550	=	620
Ann	20 x .177	=	3	+	140	=	143
Tom	150 x .177	=	26	+	590	=	616
Sally	60 x .177	=	10	+	150	=	160

Now Mary and Tom also have the quota so the three vacancies have been filled.

If all the vacancies have not been filled after the surplus votes have been transferred, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is excluded. The excluded candidate's ballot papers are distributed according to preferences, to the remaining candidates. The distribution of preferences from excluded candidates continues until the required number of senators is elected.

It is not surprising that it can take some weeks before we learn who are the elected senators for each state and territory in Australia.

# Parliament and the Government

When the counting is finished the elected candidates' names are announced. The Electoral Commissioner endorses the back of the original writs with the names of the successful candidates and returns them to the Governor-General. This is the final stage in the election. The election results decide the composition of the new parliament.

## Forming a Government

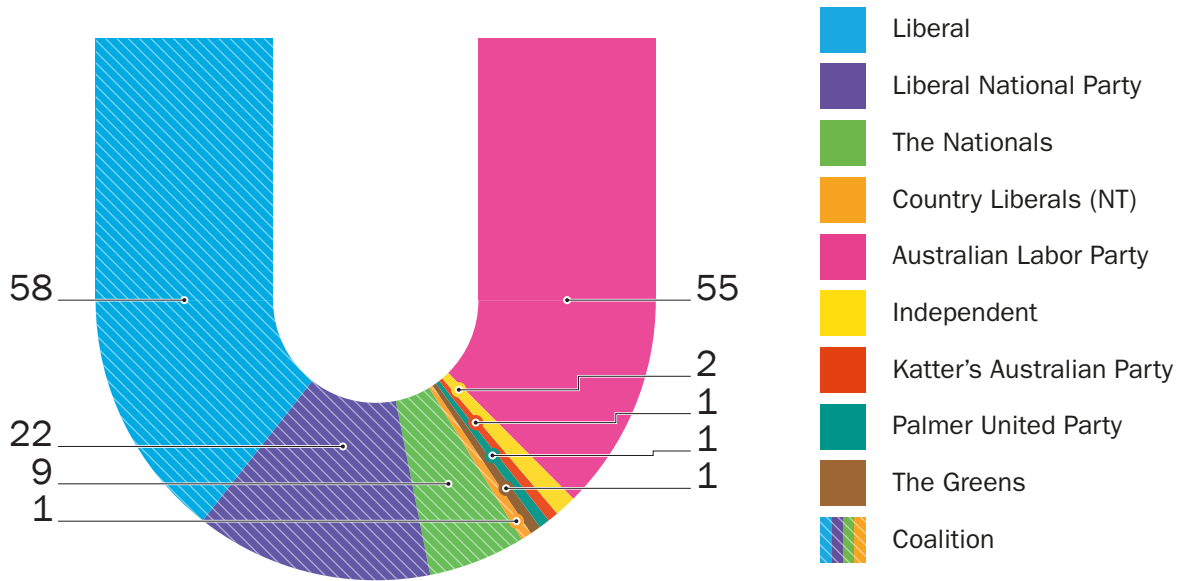
By convention, the Governor-General invites the party, or coalition of parties, with a majority in the House of Representatives to form a government. The leader of the majority party becomes the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is usually a member of the House of Representatives, and other ministers can be selected from either house of parliament. The party, or coalition of parties, with the next highest number of members in the House of Representatives forms the Opposition. Its leader is called the Leader of the Opposition.

The 'U's opposite show the numbers of elected members and senators in parliament and arranges them in their party or group.

Remember, the party or coalition of parties with a majority of members in the House of Representatives forms government.

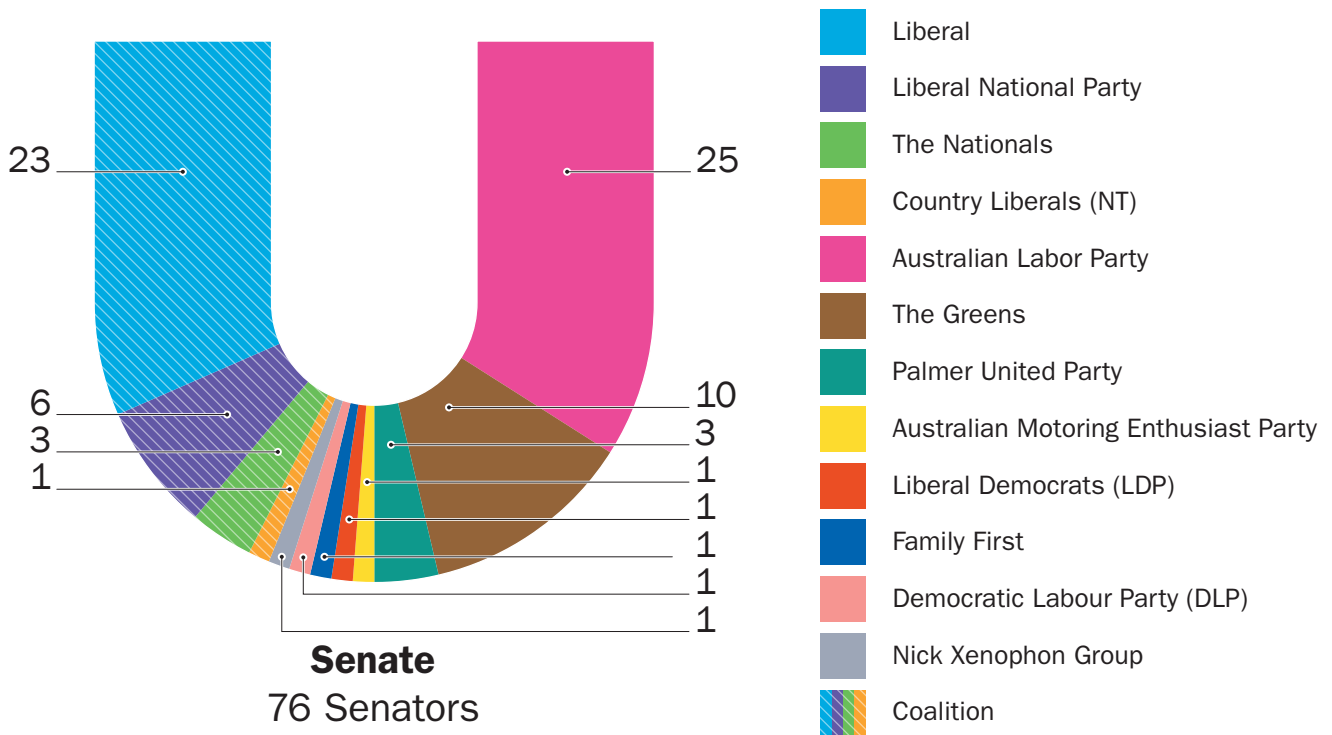
# 44TH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT



## House of Representatives

150 Members

Elected 7 September 2013



## Senate

76 Senators

Effective 1 July 2014

# Constitutional Referendums

Australian citizens vote in referendums to approve or reject proposed amendments to the Australian Constitution. The Constitution can only be amended by this process.

For a referendum to produce constitutional change there must be a 'double majority', that is:

- > a national majority of voters from all states and territories and
- > a majority of voters in a majority of states\* (i.e. at least four of the six states) must vote in favour of the proposed change

\* The votes of people living in any of Australia's internal or external territories only count towards the national majority.

Before a referendum can be held, a Bill must be passed by both houses of parliament or passed twice in either the House of Representatives or the Senate.

A referendum must be held no sooner than two months and no later than six months after the Bill is passed.

In the four weeks after the Bill is passed, the 'yes' case is prepared by members and senators who voted for the proposed changes. The 'no' case is prepared by those members and senators who voted against the proposed changes. The Australian Electoral Commission then organises the printing and distribution of information booklets to every elector.

The Governor-General issues a writ for a referendum which must be held on a Saturday. Sometimes they are held in conjunction with ordinary elections but sometimes they are held separately.

There are usually several proposed changes on a referendum ballot paper.

Voters show they agree with a proposed change by writing 'yes' in the appropriate square. If they do not agree with the proposed change they write 'no' in the appropriate square.

Since Federation there have been 44 proposals for constitutional change put to Australian electors but only 8 have been approved.

SUBJECT	DATE OF REFERENDUMS	STATES IN WHICH A MAJORITY OF ELECTORS VOTED IN FAVOUR	PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS IN FAVOUR
Senate Elections	12.12.1906	All	82.65
Finance	13.4.1910	Qld, WA, Tas	49.04
State Debts	13.4.1910	All but NSW	54.95
Legislative Powers	26.4.1911	WA	39.42
Monopolies	26.4.1911	WA	39.89
Trade and Commerce	31.5.1913	Qld, SA, WA	49.38
Corporations	31.5.1913	Qld, SA, WA	49.33
Industrial Matters	31.5.1913	Qld, SA, WA	49.33
Railway Disputes	31.5.1913	Qld, SA, WA	49.13
Trusts	31.5.1913	Qld, SA, WA	49.78
Nationalisation of Monopolies	31.5.1913	Qld, SA, WA	49.33
Legislative Powers	13.12.1919	Vic, Qld, WA	49.65
Nationalisation of Monopolies	13.12.1919	Vic, Qld, WA	48.64
Industry and Commerce	4.9.1926	NSW, Qld	43.50
Essential Services	4.9.1926	NSW, Qld	42.80
State Debts	17.11.1928	All	74.30
Aviation	6.3.1937	Vic, Qld	53.56
Marketing	6.3.1937	None	36.26
Post-war Reconstruction and Democratic Rights	19.8.1944	SA, WA	45.99
Social Services	28.9.1946	All	54.39
Organised Marketing of Primary Products	28.9.1946	NSW, Vic, WA	50.57
Industrial Employment	28.9.1946	NSW, Vic, WA	50.30
Rent and Prices	29.5.1948	None	40.66
Power to deal with Communists and Communism	22.9.1951	Qld, WA, Tas	49.44
Parliament	27.5.1967	NSW	40.25
Aborigines	27.5.1967	All	90.77
Prices	8.12.1973	None	43.81
Incomes	8.12.1973	None	34.42
Simultaneous Elections	18.5.1974	NSW	48.30
Mode of Altering the Constitution	18.5.1974	NSW	47.99
Democratic Elections	18.5.1974	NSW	47.20
Local Government Bodies	18.5.1974	NSW	46.85
Simultaneous Elections	21.5.1977	NSW, Vic, SA	62.20
Senate Casual Vacancies	21.5.1977	All	73.32
Territory Voting in Referendums	21.5.1977	All	77.72
Retirement of Judges	21.5.1977	All	80.10
Terms of Senators	1.12.1984	NSW, Vic	50.64
Interchange of Powers	1.12.1984	None	47.06
Parliamentary Terms	3.9.1988	None	32.91
Fair Elections	3.9.1988	None	37.59
Local Government	3.9.1988	None	33.61
Rights and Freedoms	3.9.1988	None	30.79
Republic	6.11.1999	None	45.13
Preamble	6.11.1999	None	39.34

## Special Interest

### Australian citizens also vote in plebiscites and polls.

Governments can hold a plebiscite or a poll to find out citizens' views on a particular issue. Governments do not have to act on the result of a plebiscite or poll. Federal, state and territory governments have held plebiscites and polls on various issues:

- > In the only federal plebiscites held since Federation a majority of voters said 'no' to military conscription in 1916 and 1917. On both occasions the federal government decided not to introduce conscription.
- > ACT voters voted 'no' to self-government for the ACT in a plebiscite held in 1978. Despite the 'no' majority result, the federal parliament legislated for ACT self-government in 1988.
- > Citizens of Western Australia and Queensland have, at various times, voted in plebiscites on the issue of daylight saving. On each occasion a majority of voters rejected its introduction.
- > A poll for a national song was held in 1977. Voting was preferential but not compulsory. After distribution of preferences, the most favoured song was 'Advance Australia Fair' which became the national song.

# Redistribution

The rearrangement of electorate boundaries is called a redistribution. A fair electoral system ensures that each citizen's vote has equal value and that electors have as near as possible, equal representation. So changes in the distribution of Australia's population may make it necessary to change the boundaries of electorates.

## When does a redistribution occur?

There are three reasons why a redistribution in a state or territory may take place.

- > it has been 7 years since the previous redistribution in that state or territory

In 2010, a redistribution is being undertaken in Victoria because it has been seven years since their last redistribution.

- > there is a change in the number of members to which the state or territory is entitled

The Electoral Commissioner is required to check each state's entitlements in the 13th month after the first meeting of a new House of Representatives. If this results in a change to the number of members to which a state or territory is entitled, a redistribution is directed by the Electoral Commission.

Redistributions took place in Queensland and New South Wales in 2009, following a determination that their populations entitled QLD to an additional electorate and NSW to one less.

- > more than one third of the electorates within a state vary from the average electorate enrolment for that state by more than 10% for three consecutive months. (In the ACT and NT only one electorate need vary from the average enrolment by more than 10% to prompt a redistribution)

Interestingly, no redistribution has been required under this rule to date.

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{\text{number of people enrolled in the state or territory}}{\text{number of members of the House of Representatives to which the state or territory is entitled}}$$



## How are new boundaries decided?

The Electoral Commissioner calculates the average number of electors for each electorate. This is called a quota. It is worked out according to the formula above. A Redistribution Committee is appointed in each state or territory where a redistribution is to occur. Individuals and groups in the community are encouraged to make suggestions to this committee.

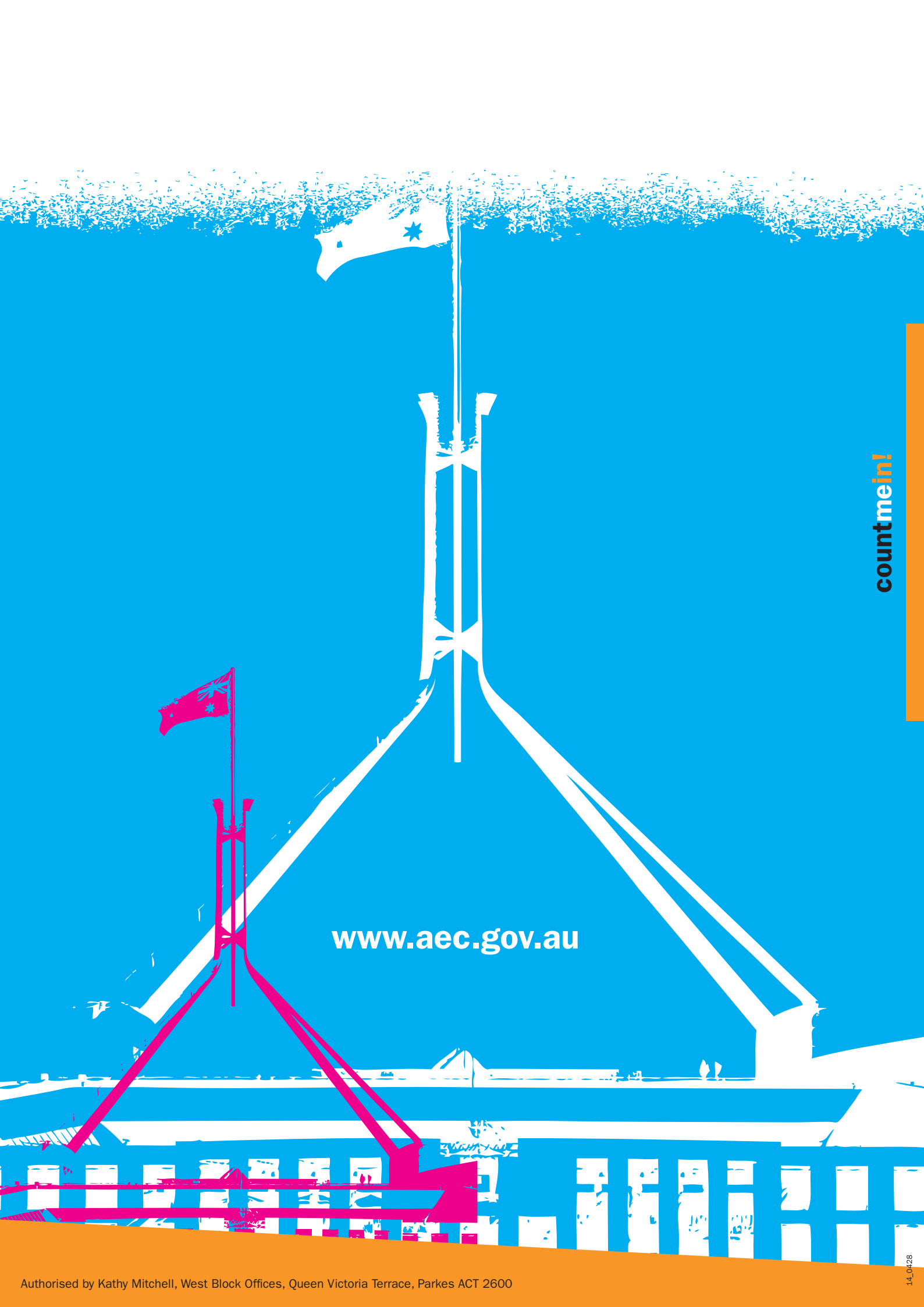
The Redistribution Committee has a map drawn showing proposed new electorate boundaries. Factors such as communities of interest, geographical features, means of communication and travel, as well as current boundaries are taken into account. During the redistribution, maps are put on display for public comment.

These comments must be considered by an augmented Electoral Commission. This consists of members of the Redistribution Committee plus the Chairperson of the Australian Electoral Commission and the non-judicial Commissioner.

After a redistribution takes place, the enrolments in an electorate must not vary by more than 10% from the average number of electors. The aim is for enrolments to be approximately equal in all electorates but also within 3.5% of the average enrolment, three and a half years after a redistribution.

Therefore, enrolments are generally set below the average in electorates experiencing marked population growth rates, and above the average in electorates where declining rates are predicted.

When the boundaries are finally decided, new maps are prepared. The decision of the augmented Electoral Commission is final although it can be challenged in the courts if there is an error of law.



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