



Australian democracy module

Australian democracy

This module explores various aspects of the Australian democratic system, some through a historic lens, which shaped the voting system today. The topics are covered in short videos which students can explore at their own pace with short, fun quizzes on board Democrabus at the end of each video to test their knowledge. Topics covered in this module include:

- The Constitution and Federation
- Preferential voting
- Universal male suffrage
- Women's suffrage
- Indigenous rights
- Independent electoral body
- Secret ballot
- Compulsory voting
- Voting age
- Three levels of government

Students can return to the main DemocraCity map at any time and can watch the videos in any order.



Learning outcomes

By the end of the first module, students will:

- Recognise key aspects of Australia's democracy and recall the historical context in which they emerged, including the secret ballot, compulsory voting, preferential voting and the current voting age.
- Recognise that Australia is a federation of states.
- Recall the three levels of government in Australia.
- Identify the progression of suffrage in Australia.



Suggested extension knowledge and understanding activities

- Construct a timeline that traces Australia's voting history – the evolution of voting rights, electoral systems and democratic reforms.
- Research compulsory voting – what it is, why it exists, when it was brought in, compare and contrast other countries (e.g. Belgium, UK, Brazil, New Zealand, USA, Singapore.)
- 3 levels of government – match the level of government to the responsibility. (PPT or document).

- Students draft a basic classroom Constitution with consideration for what kinds of things could be included.
- Analyse speeches or articles from First Nations advocates on voting rights.



Supplementary links with AEC resources

Links to other AEC education and information resources:

- [Democracy Rules: An electoral education resource](#) - The voice of a vote in a world of change



Key questions

1. Today everyone who is an Australian citizen over 18 years of age and enrolled can vote. Was that always the case? Who could and couldn't vote?

Answer:

- Until the reforms following the Eureka stockade, most people didn't have a say in how Australia was governed
- Women couldn't vote until 1902
- Indigenous people couldn't vote until the 1960s
- People 18-21 couldn't vote until 1973

2. Today when everyone votes, they do it without anyone else knowing how they voted. Why do you think that is?

Answer: Before the secret ballot, other people could put pressure on someone or intimidate them to vote a particular way. It's important that everyone has their say – every vote counts!

3. What are the three levels of government in Australia?

Answer: Federal, State/Territory and Local



ACTIVITY

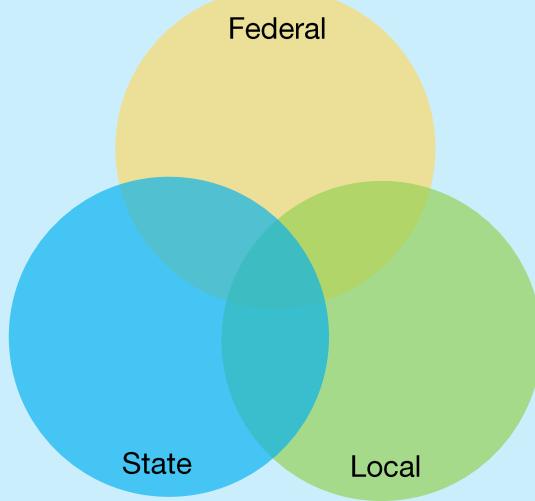
Three levels of government

This activity tests students' knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities of each level of government in Australia. After watching the 'Three levels of government' video in the 'Australian democracy' module, students need to match the items to their correct level of government. Teachers can facilitate a discussion about each item and their appropriate level of government.



Activity Guide

This activity can be completed using the cards on the following pages as a class with a three-way Venn diagram drawn on a board or in small groups or pairs on a worksheet. Answers to each item are in the table below. Alternatively, you may wish to use the [PowerPoint version of this activity for more interactivity](#).

Example diagram		Answer key	
		FEDERAL	Defence Foreign Affairs Aviation Currency
STATE		Police/ambulance Public transport Hospitals Driving licences	STATE AND LOCAL
LOCAL		Rubbish collection Parking Pets Libraries	ALL LEVELS
			Taxation



Going further: Inquiry questions

- Why are government responsibilities split between multiple levels?
- What would happen if a federal level responsibility like defence or foreign affairs were at the local level? Alternatively, what would happen if local level responsibilities like regulating pets or rubbish collection was at a federal level?
- Some responsibilities are split between multiple levels. For example, healthcare (Federal responsible for programs such as GPs, Medicare, NDIS, State for hospitals and ambulance service) and education (Federal responsible for universities and setting the curriculum, State for running primary and secondary schools). Why may that be?
- Taxation is at all three levels. Why might that be important?



Driving licenses



Libraries



Town planning



Foreign Affairs



AUSTRALIAN
DEFENCE FORCE

Defence



Aviation



Currency



Rubbish collection



Education



Hospitals



Healthcare



Public transport



Parking



Police/ambulance



Pets



Taxation



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