



# DEMOCRACY

## Representation module



**AEC**

Australian Electoral Commission

# Representation



This unit explores the two houses of Parliament and examines representation in each chamber, how representatives organise themselves into political parties or independents and how government is formed. The two units in this module are completed with a revision quiz.

Students are taken to Parliament House where specific topics include:

- the role of the House of Representatives and the Senate,
- how representatives are elected to each chamber,
- what an electoral division is,
- how states and territories are allocated seats in the Senate,
- the seating plan of each chamber and how government is formed.



## Learning outcomes

By the end of the activities, students will:

- Recognise Australia as a representative democracy and describe what that means.
- Recall the two houses of Parliament and how representatives are elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Understand how representation works in the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Understand the difference between government, opposition and the crossbench and their role within the Parliament.



## Suggested extension knowledge and understanding activities

- Use this [Representation quiz](#) to test your students' knowledge. Topics include the Parliament, the House of Representatives, Senate, house composition and forming government. Download the [quiz answers](#).



## Suggested extension application activities:

**UNIT OF WORK:** How are we represented?

The unit includes these suggested learning activities:

- Recall representation in the House of Representatives. Students research their electorate and current member.
- Research 'redistributions' on the AEC website. Students investigate their purpose in representation and why they are important.



## Supplementary links with AEC resources

### Links to other AEC education and information resources:

- Democracy Rules – Topic 1 - [‘You and me, the decision-makers’](#)
  - Investigation A: What do we mean by democracy?
  - Investigation B: Can we all make the decisions?
- Democracy Rules – Topic 2 - [‘Representing everyone’](#)
  - Investigation A: How do you have your say? (activity 1 and 2).
- Democracy Rules – Topic 3 – [‘What’s your vote worth? - Investigation A’](#)
- Democracy Rules – Topic 3 – [‘What’s your vote worth?’- Investigation B’](#)



## Key questions

1. What are the two houses of parliament and what colour are they?  
**Answer:** The House of Representatives is green, and the Senate is red.
2. Does each electorate have the roughly the same number of voters or different?  
**Answer:** Same. Even though some electorates cover a really big area and others a really small area, they all have roughly the same number of people in them.  
*Give an example from your state or use the following – “In the Northern Territory, Darwin (Solomon) is one electorate, but all of the rest of the Northern Territory (Lingiari)- a really large area - is one electorate. They are very different in size but they have a similar number of people.*
3. Does each representative in the House of Representatives represent roughly the same number of people?  
**Answer:** Yes, each member represents an electorate, which has roughly the same number of people.
4. Does each Senator represent the same number of people? Or does representation work differently in the Senate?  
**Answer:** Senators don't represent the same number of people. They represent states or territories. There are 12 Senators for each state, and the territories have 2 Senators each.

*If students ask, ‘why do the territories only have two Senators?’: When the states agreed to federate, they agreed to have the same number of senators. The territories were created after the Constitution was written, so only have two each.*



# Representation - How are we represented?

**DEMOCRACY MODULE**

Representation

**KEY CONCEPT**

Representation in parliament

**RELATED CONCEPTS**

- **Participation** – your vote will help shape Australia.
- **Voting** – eligible citizens determining who should represent them.
- **Representative democracy** – where elected officials advocate and make decisions on our behalf.

**Overarching questions**

How are citizens represented in Australia's Parliament? How do elected officials represent the Australian people?

Inquiry questions:

**Factual** – How are representatives elected to Australia's Parliament?

**Conceptual** – How do the planning and structure of electorates make voting more equitable?

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the activities, students will:

- Explain parliamentary structures, the functions of each house and how members and senators represent their constituencies.
- Explain the difference between government, opposition and the crossbench and their role within the parliament.
- Investigate representation in the House of Representatives and the role of redistributions.

**Suggested extension learning experiences and activities:**

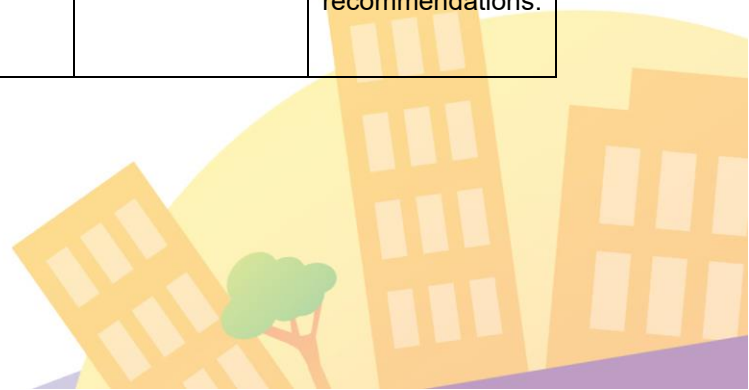
- Recall representation in the House of Representatives. Look up your electorate. How many enrolled voters live in that area? Who is the current representative? Use resources such as [find my electorate](#) and the AEC's [enrolment statistics](#).
- Research 'redistributions' on the AEC website. Investigate their purpose in representation and why they are important. More information can be found on the AEC's [Federal redistributions](#) website and on [Redistributions – Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Section continues next page...

- Explore members or senators in your electorate. [Home - Parliamentary Handbook](#). [Home – Parliament of Australia](#) What are their roles and responsibilities? They've been elected to represent your electorate – research what they do.
- The Australian people vote for candidates to represent them in parliament. They don't, however, vote for the Prime Minister. Research how the Prime Minister is appointed and discuss.

## How are we represented? - Suggested assessment rubric

Criteria	Level 1-2	Level 3-4	Level 5-6	Level 7-8
<b>Criterion A: Knowing and understanding</b>  Recall of structures and facts about representation, electorates and redistributions.	Demonstrates limited understanding of parliamentary representation or voting concepts.	Demonstrates basic understanding with partial accuracy and some relevant facts.	Demonstrates sound understanding with mostly accurate facts and clear explanations.	Demonstrates thorough understanding with insightful connections between electoral data, representation, and democratic structures.
<b>Criterion B: Investigating</b>  Research into representatives, redistributions and voter data.	Uses limited research and relies on general or unclear sources.	Uses basic research methods; sources are somewhat relevant.	Uses effective research strategies; synthesises relevant information clearly.	Uses thorough, critical research to draw meaningful conclusions from data and sources.
<b>Criterion C: Communicating</b>  Presentation of ideas, comparisons, and fairness discussions.	Communicates ideas in a limited or unclear manner; lacks structure.	Communicates adequately with some structure and clarity.	Communicates effectively with clear structure, appropriate comparisons and terminology.	Communicates persuasively with clarity, depth, and insight; compares scenarios with strong logic and cohesion.
<b>Criterion D: Thinking critically</b>  Evaluation of redistribution fairness and representation equity.	Attempts basic evaluation; ideas may be undeveloped or unsupported.	Evaluates with some insight; draws basic comparisons between electoral and classroom situations.	Evaluates thoughtfully; reflects on fairness and links ideas to real-world representation.	Evaluates critically and creatively; integrates fairness principles with real-world electoral implications and presents informed recommendations.





## WORKSHEET

# Representation quiz

**Question 1:** Australia is a representative democracy. This means:

- A. The people elect representatives to Parliament to make decisions on behalf of all Australians.
- B. The Prime Minister makes all the decisions based on the number of seats they have.
- C. Decisions on the democratic process are made by the representative high council.
- D. All of the above.

**Question 2:** True or false: the House of Representatives and the Senate are the two houses that make up Parliament.

- A. True
- B. False

**Question 3:** Currently, how many senators represent each state and territory in the Senate?

- A. 6 Senators from each state and 2 from each territory.
- B. 12 senators from each state and 2 from each territory.
- C. 10 from New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. 8 from every other state and territory.
- D. It depends on the formula in the Constitution.

**Question 4:** What determines the number of senators each state can have?

- A. Parliament but the Constitution dictates states must have an equal number of senators each.
- B. The Constitution.
- C. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet.
- D. The people – it depends on how many people vote on election day.

**Question 5:** Government is formed in which house?

- A. The House of Representatives.
- B. The Senate.



### Question 6:

**Who sits on the crossbench?**

- A. The government.
- B. The media.
- C. The opposition.
- D. Minor parties and independents.

### Question 7:

**True or false: Each electorate in the House of Representatives within a given state/territory has roughly the same number of enrolled voters.**

- A. True
- B. False

### Question 8:

**What does the Speaker of the House of Representatives do?**

- A. They tell the government how to run Parliament.
- B. They help the government negotiate with the opposition and the crossbench.
- C. They are the official source of information from the Parliament to the people.
- D. They oversee the House of Representatives and ensure that members are obeying the rules of the House.

### Question 9:

**True or false: A political party is an organisation made up of like-minded people with similar ideas and aims.**

- A. True
- B. False

### Question 10:

**To form government, how many seats does a party or group of parties need in the House of Representatives?**

- A. An absolute majority (More than 50% of the seats).
- B. A super majority (More than 65% of the seats).
- C. Any number – it depends on who has the biggest number of representatives.
- D. It doesn't matter – the government can negotiate with the Senate.





**Question 11:**

How many years are House of Representatives members elected for?

- A. Until they retire.
- B. 6 years.
- C. 4 years.
- D. 3 years.

**Question 12:**

How many years are senators elected for?

- A. 3 years.
- B. 6 years for state senators and 3 years for territory senators.
- C. 4 years for state senators and 3 years for territory senators.
- D. Until they retire.

**Question 13:**

During a double dissolution election, who is up for election?

- A. All senators only.
- B. All members of the House of Representatives and half the number of senators.
- C. Just the members of the House of Representatives.
- D. All members of the House and all senators.

**Question 14:**

True or false: A political party requires a majority in the Senate to form government.

- A. True
- B. False

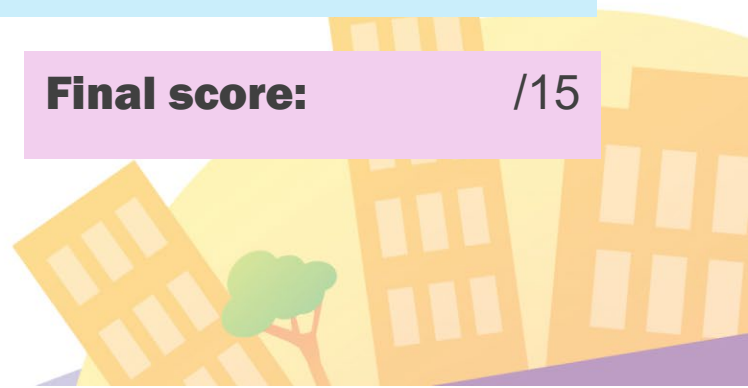
**Question 15:**

What is the role of the President of the Senate?

- A. To determine how many senators each state gets.
- B. To oversee the Senate.
- C. To decide who is eligible to be a senator.
- D. To veto the decisions of the government if they think it's unconstitutional.

**Final score:**

**/15**







## ACTIVITY

# Representation quiz answers

Question	Answer
1. Australia is a representative democracy. This means:	<b>A:</b> The people elect representatives to Parliament to make decisions on behalf of all Australians.
2. True or false: the House of Representatives and the Senate are the two houses that make up Parliament.	<b>A:</b> True.
3. Currently, how many senators represent each state and territory in the Senate?	<b>B:</b> 12 senators from each state and 2 from each territory.
4. What dictates the number of senators each state can have?	<b>A:</b> Parliament but the Constitution dictates states must have an equal number of senators each.
5. Government is formed in which house?	<b>A:</b> The House of Representatives.
6. Who sits on the crossbench?	<b>D:</b> Minor parties and independents.
7. True or false: Each electorate in the House of Representatives within a given state/territory has roughly the same number of enrolled voters.	<b>A:</b> True.
8. What does the Speaker of the House of Representatives do?	<b>D:</b> They oversee the House of Representatives and ensure that members are obeying the rules of the House.
9. True or false: A political party is an organisation made up of like-minded people with similar ideas and aims.	<b>A:</b> True.





Question	Answer
10. To form government, how many seats does a party or group of parties need in the House of Representatives?	<b>A:</b> An absolute majority (More than 50% of the seats).
11. How many years are House of Representatives members elected for?	<b>D:</b> 3 years.
12. How many years are senators elected for?	<b>B:</b> 6 years for state senators and 3 years for territory senators.
13. During a double dissolution election, who is up for election?	<b>D:</b> All members of the House and all senators.
14. True or false: A political party requires a majority in the Senate to form government.	<b>B:</b> False.
15. What is the role of the President of the Senate?	<b>B:</b> To oversee the Senate.



