

To the teacher

Teachers play a critical part in shaping young people's understanding of their role as citizens and future electors. In fact, the work of the teaching profession helps to guide the democratic development of our nation.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has played a significant role in the advocacy and support of civics and citizenship education with a particular focus on building electoral literacy and encouraging future participation in Australian electoral processes. In recent years, the Australian Curriculum has been developed and has specified the teaching and learning of civics and citizenship education as a core part of the curriculum in all Australian states and territories. For this reason, the AEC has worked with Education Services Australia to update *Democracy rules: An electoral education resource*.

This revised edition of *Democracy rules* maintains the strengths of the previous edition while incorporating:

- updates to electoral information, reflecting changes to electoral law and the latest information on voting and elections
- specific links between the topics and the Australian Curriculum (see table)
- modification of teaching and learning activities to strengthen links to the curriculum
- increased use of digital options within teaching and learning activities
- revision of current animations and interactives

- development of new animations to support teaching and learning: 'Making your vote count', 'Redistributions', 'Preferential voting', 'Changing the constitution' and 'Your rights and responsibilities' (see table)
- the creation of a separate 'Background briefings' section
- a new topic – 'Young people and the vote' – designed for middle- and upper-secondary-school students.

The proposition that electoral and voting systems safeguard our democratic principles and values underpins this resource. Electoral and voting systems are a vital link between citizen participation and democratic representation, and provide the mechanism for free and fair elections and political change. Sound electoral systems empower representatives to make decisions on behalf of others and confer legitimacy on governments. Electoral systems also have the power to transform conflict and competition into cooperative activity, and prevent rivalries that place a destructive strain on communities.

In Australia, the Commonwealth Parliament contains two representative institutions at the federal level: the House of Representatives and the Senate. They rely on different electoral and voting systems, which in turn affect the nature of their representation.

The Australian Constitution provides for the composition of both houses of parliament. The Constitution also provides the legal framework within which the parliament can determine the electoral and voting systems used to elect both houses of parliament, and the procedures and processes used to conduct referendums. The *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth) (the Electoral Act) and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* (Cth) (the Referendum Act) outline the rules for federal elections and referendums, providing for electoral and voting systems that reflect the principles of democratic representation – including universal adult franchise and free and fair elections – and mechanisms for constitutional change. The Constitution and the Electoral and Referendum Acts thus reflect and give meaning to liberal democratic practice.

Democracy rules aims to explain these facts and themes in an engaging manner and to make a worthy contribution to what might be described as the 'democratic life experience' of your students.

The role of the Australian Electoral Commission

The AEC is an independent organisation established by an amendment to the Electoral Act in 1984.

Six processes uniquely identify the AEC:

- managing the Commonwealth electoral roll
- preparing for, conducting and reviewing elections
- educating and informing the community about participating in the electoral process
- providing advice and assistance on electoral matters in Australia and overseas
- ensuring that political parties and others comply with financial disclosure requirements
- supporting electoral redistributions.

Through its enforcement of the provisions of the Electoral Act, the AEC ensures that electoral systems for the Commonwealth Parliament are administered fairly and that elections are free from interference and intimidation. The AEC also enforces voter eligibility requirements, and provides electors with access to the ballot. These are some of the key elements of free and fair elections that sustain Australia's democratic system of government.

Should you have any feedback on the content of this electoral education resource, please email your comments to education@aec.gov.au.



Figure 1: Image of polling place signage

How to use this resource

The teacher guide contains nine investigations grouped under five topics. Teachers may connect many of the activities to the Discovering Democracy units already used in Australian classrooms. These units have been revised and will be published on the [Civics and Citizenship Education Hub](http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/): www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/ launching in 2021.

Purposes

This guide has three main purposes:

- to equip teachers with background knowledge so they can confidently lead students in an exploration of Australian electoral and voting systems
- to provide students with appealing, engaging and accessible material that furthers their understanding of the key concepts and functions of Australian electoral and voting systems
- to support the teaching and learning of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship.

Inquiry approach

The activities in this book use a three-stage inquiry approach to learning: 'Gathering information', 'Identifying and analysing' and 'Presenting findings'. This approach is consistent with the Civics and Citizenship skills strand outlined in the Australian Curriculum. Students are encouraged to develop understandings of key concepts through exploration and investigation. Where appropriate, a linking stage – 'Making connections' – is also included.

Ready references

This guide contains 'Background briefings', a 'Glossary' and a 'Franchise timeline' (BLM 4 in 'You and me, the decision-makers') for ready reference. The latter provides a simple introduction to the historical evolution of Australian electoral and voting systems.

AEC website links

Many investigations in this guide direct you to the [AEC website](#).

Investigations and activities

Introductory activities at the beginning of the first four topics allow teachers to elicit students' prior learning and to develop their understandings of the relevant concepts before tackling more complex investigations. Each investigation is designed around a concept, issue or event, and invites exploration through a series of activities that represent different stages in the inquiry approach.

At a glance

Each investigation begins with a table – 'The investigation at a glance'. This contains important information for teachers, and will assist their navigation of the resource. The table includes:

- links to relevant background briefings
- suggested classroom teaching time for each activity
- indicators of student achievement, which align to the cognitive levels of the Achievement standards in the Australian Curriculum.

Recommended levels and curriculum alignments

Each topic has been aligned to appropriate year levels and content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum.

- Topic 1: upper primary
- Topic 2: upper primary, lower secondary
- Topic 3: lower secondary, middle secondary
- Topic 4: middle secondary
- Topic 5: middle secondary, upper secondary

As Topic 5 addresses youth enrolment and voting processes, it is appropriate for upper secondary as these students near voting age. Curriculums in each state and territory vary considerably in regard to this topic and teachers are advised to consult their relevant senior secondary curriculum in regard to alignments.

Given the diversity of learning abilities and needs in classrooms, teachers are invited to use their professional judgement in conducting the investigations and activities in this resource to suit their classroom curriculum planning.

Blackline masters

Blackline masters (BLMs) accompany every investigation and may be freely copied for student use or used with the whole class on interactive boards. Many activities make use of BLMs and teachers are advised to prepare them in advance.

Connections to multimedia resources

The teacher guide uses a system of icons to link the text to recommended animations and interactives. Teachers may choose to pause at particular stages to allow students to explore a particular item or may use them as standalone activities.

BLM 7
What makes an election free and fair?

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BLM 1
Ballot paper template

Sample Australian Electoral Commission National Election Education Centre

Mark the boxes from 1 to 4 in the order of your choice.

Change Apple Pear Banana

Sample Australian Electoral Commission National Election Education Centre

Mark the boxes from 1 to 4 in the order of your choice.

Change Apple Pear Banana

Sample Australian Electoral Commission National Election Education Centre

Mark the boxes from 1 to 4 in the order of your choice.

Change Apple Pear Banana

© Australian Electoral Commission 2012

BLM 3
How do Indigenous Australians vote in a referendum?

The case in favour

Source 1

Vote 'Yes'

Vote 'Yes' for Aborigines. They want to be Australians too.

Vote 'Yes' to give them rights and freedoms like me and you.

Stop 'No' for Aborigines, as parties say they don't know what they want.

Vote 'Yes' and show the world the true Australian spirit!

Words of a song used by the Aboriginal Rights 'Vote Yes' Committee to help, educate, and inspire Aboriginal people, 19 May 1967.

Source: The ABC. *Aboriginal Referendum, Australian Bureau of Statistics*. Year 2008 (August 2009).

Source 2

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BLM 1
How do you bring your vote?

Referendums – double majority

To change the Australian Constitution, each proposed alteration must be approved by a double majority of voters in a referendum.

A referendum is passed when:

- A national majority (more than half) of voters from all states and territories vote **YES**.
- A majority (more than half) of voters in at least four of the six States vote **YES**.

The votes of people living in the ACT, the NT and any of Australia's external territories count towards the national majority only.

A referendum is NOT passed when:

- A national majority (more than half) of voters from all states and territories vote **NO**.
- A majority (more than half) of voters in at least three states vote **NO**.

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Links to the Australian Curriculum

Level: Upper primary

| Topic | Investigations | Content | Australian curriculum content descriptions |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. You and me, the decision-makers | What do we mean by democracy? | <p>Meanings and values of democracy</p> <p>Decision-making in a democracy</p> <p>Representation in the House of Representatives and Senate</p> <p>The right to vote</p> <p>Free and fair elections</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 5</p> <p>The key values that underpin Australia's democracy (ACHASSK115)</p> <p>The key features of the electoral process in Australia (ACHASSK116)</p> <p>Inquiry and skills</p> <p>Year 5</p> <p>Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present (ACHASSI099)</p> |
| | Can we all make the decisions? | <p>Decision-making responsibility of levels of government</p> <p>Decision-making through representation</p> <p>The qualities and characteristics of a good representative</p> <p>People who represent us</p> | <p>Work in groups to generate responses to issues and challenges (ACHASSI102)</p> <p>Present ideas, findings, viewpoints and conclusions in a range of texts and modes that incorporate source materials, digital and non-digital representations and discipline-specific terms and conventions (ACHASSI105)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 6</p> <p>The roles and responsibilities of Australia's three levels of government (ACHASSK144)</p> <p>The responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia's democracy (ACHASSK145)</p> <p>Inquiry and skills</p> <p>Year 6</p> <p>Interpret data and information displayed in a range of formats to identify, describe and compare distributions, patterns and trends, and to infer relationships (ACHASSI128)</p> <p>Use criteria to make decisions and judgements and consider advantages and disadvantages of preferring one decision over others (ACHASSI131)</p> |

Level: Upper primary and lower secondary

| Topic | Investigations | Content | Australian curriculum content descriptions |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Representing everyone! | How do you have your say? | <p>Membership of the House of Representatives and the Senate</p> <p>Having a say through House of Representatives and Senate elections</p> <p>Having a say through constitutional referendums</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 6</p> <p>The key institutions of Australia's democratic system of government and how it is based on the Westminster system (ACHASSK143)</p> <p>Inquiry and skills</p> <p>Year 6</p> <p>Interpret data and information displayed in a range of formats to identify, describe and compare distributions, patterns and trends, and to infer relationships (ACHASSI128)</p> |
| | How are we represented? | <p>The significance of the Australian Constitution</p> <p>How our history has affected the Australian Constitution</p> <p>How the Australian Constitution provides a framework for our society</p> <p>Provisions of the Constitution – Federal Parliament and the states</p> <p>Constitutional change over time and the role of the AEC</p> | <p>Use criteria to make decisions and judgements and consider advantages and disadvantages of preferring one decision over others (ACHASSI131)</p> <p>Present ideas, findings, viewpoints and conclusions in a range of texts and modes that incorporate source materials, digital and non-digital representations and discipline-specific terms and conventions (ACHASSI133)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 7</p> <p>The key features of government under the Australian Constitution with a focus on: the separation of powers, the roles of the Executive, the Houses of Parliament, and the division of powers (ACHCK048)</p> <p>The process for constitutional change through a referendum (ACHCK049)</p> <p>Inquiry and skills</p> <p>Year 7</p> <p>Interpret and analyse data and information displayed in a range of formats to identify and propose explanations for distributions, patterns, trends and relationships (ACHASSI158)</p> <p>Develop and use criteria to make informed decisions and judgements (ACHASSI161)</p> <p>Present ideas, findings, viewpoints, explanations and conclusions in a range of texts and modes that incorporate source materials, citations, graphic representations and discipline-specific terms, conventions and concepts (ACHASSI163)</p> |

Links to the Australian Curriculum (Continued)

Level: Lower secondary and middle secondary

| Topic | Investigations | Content | Australian curriculum content descriptions |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. What's your vote worth? | How and why do Australians vote? | <p>Who can vote in Australia?</p> <p>Compulsory enrolment and voting</p> <p>Political parties and elections</p> <p>Mock election</p> <p>Voting systems and democratic values</p> <p>Voting systems used in states</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 8</p> <p>How citizens can participate in Australia's democracy, including use of the electoral system, contact with their elected representatives, use of lobby groups, and direct action (ACHCK062)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Skills</p> <p>Year 8</p> <p>Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources (ACHCS069)</p> <p>Critically analyse information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS070)</p> <p>Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS073)</p> |
| | How do electorates change over time? | <p>Redistributions and 'one vote, one value'</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 9</p> <p>The role of political parties and independent representatives in Australia's system of government, including the formation of governments (ACHCK075)</p> <p>How citizens' political choices are shaped, including the influence of the media (ACHCK076)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Skills</p> <p>Year 9</p> <p>Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources and reference as appropriate (ACHCS083)</p> <p>Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS084)</p> <p>Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS088)</p> |

Level: Middle secondary

| Topic | Investigations | Content | Australian curriculum content descriptions |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. The voice of a vote in a world of change | How did Indigenous Australians achieve civic rights? | <p>United Nations Declaration of Human Rights</p> <p>Context for the 1967 Referendum – civic rights for Indigenous Australians</p> <p>The Referendum campaign and arguments for and against</p> <p>The referendum process and results</p> <p>Indigenous rights since 1967</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>How Australia’s international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHCK093)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Skills</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS097)</p> <p>Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS101)</p> <p>Historical Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations (ACDSEH104)</p> <p>The significance of the following for the civil rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Reconciliation; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology (ACDSEH106)</p> <p>Historical Skills</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>Identify and locate relevant sources, using ICT and other methods (ACHHS186)</p> <p>Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past (ACHHS190)</p> <p>Develop texts, particularly descriptions and discussions that use evidence from a range of sources that are referenced (ACHHS192)</p> |
| | How did Timor-Leste take the first steps to democracy? | <p>Timor-Leste under Portuguese and Indonesian rule</p> <p>Timor-Leste resistance</p> <p>United Nations Missions and Australian involvement</p> <p>The role of the AEC in introducing democratic elections</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>The Australian Government’s role and responsibilities at a global level, for example provision of foreign aid, peacekeeping, participation in international organisations and the United Nations (ACHCK091)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Skills</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources and reference as appropriate (ACHCS096)</p> <p>Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS098)</p> <p>Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS101)</p> |

Links to the Australian Curriculum (Continued)

Level: Middle secondary and upper secondary

| Topic | Investigations | Content | Australian curriculum content descriptions |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5. Young people and the vote | How engaged are young people in voting and elections? | <p>Young people, issues and political parties</p> <p>Young people, influence and interest groups</p> <p>Lowering the voting age to 16</p> <p>Elections, engagement and fake news</p> <p>Promoting enrolment and voting amongst young people</p> | <p>Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>The challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society (ACHCK094)</p> <p>Civics and Citizenship Skills</p> <p>Year 10</p> <p>Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS097)</p> <p>Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS098)</p> <p>Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS101)</p> |

| The animations | Topic one | Topic two | Topic three | Topic four | Topic five |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|
| History of voting March through the history of the franchise and the voting systems for the Federal Parliament, beginning with the evolution of the franchise in colonial Australia and concluding with compulsory enrolment and voting for Indigenous Australians in 1984. | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Making your vote count Experience this concise demonstration and explanation of the different voting systems used to elect representatives. | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Election day Can't remember the order of things? Let the professor take you through a step-by-step description of the election process from the calling of an election and enrolment, to the count and return of writs. | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Redistributions How does our electoral system ensure that electorates are equal and each citizen's vote is worth the same – the democratic principle of 'one vote, one value'? This animation takes you through the process of redistributions that helps to ensure our representative democracy is fair. | | | ✓ | | |
| Preferential voting What is the difference between first-past-the-post and preferential voting? This animation takes you through the process and lets you consider the impact and fairness of each method of voting. | ✓ | | | | |
| Changing the Constitution How do we change the Australian Constitution? This animation explains the constitutional requirements for change – a process called referendum, which lets all citizens have a say in whether we change our foundation document. | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Your rights and responsibilities Who can vote in Australia and what is the role of the AEC? This animation provides an overview of the AEC's role in organising free and fair elections and the roles and responsibilities of the voter. | | | | | ✓ |
| The interactives | Topic one | Topic two | Topic three | Topic four | Topic five |
| The history of voting game Help the new museum attendant reorder the pictures by researching their place in the history of voting in Australia. | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Quiz 1 – Referendums – Do you get it? Test your knowledge of the referendum process and the history of referendums in Australia in this interactive, multiple-choice game show. | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Quiz 2 – The Constitution – Are you a whiz? Test your knowledge of the Australian system of government in this interactive, multiple-choice game show. | | ✓ | | | |
| History challenge – Test your knowledge Take a speed test of your knowledge of the history of the franchise in Australia with this quick, interactive, multiple-choice quiz. | ✓ | | | | |
| Voting challenge – What do you know? Use your knowledge of voting to compete against the clock in this quick, interactive, multiple-choice quiz. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Democracy rules – The quests 1 and 2 Compete against the clock or a friend, and collect as many gems as you can by answering as many questions as you can about Australia's democracy. | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Voting tool Running an election in your school or classroom? Learn about preferential voting from the animation in this interactive and then use the preferential counting tool to count the votes in your election. | ✓ | | | | |