The voice of a vote in a world of change

During the 20th century vast changes occurred in attitudes towards human rights – the right to equality for all citizens and the right of nations to determine their own futures.

At the turn of the 20th century Australia regarded itself as a ‘white’ society and ignored the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the development of its Constitution. At the same time in the international arena, many African, Pacific and Asian nations were ruled by European nations which denied citizens’ rights in their colonial possessions.

Over the course of the 20th century most of these European colonies gained their independence. An example close to Australia was the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. After centuries of colonial rule the Portuguese government finally left East Timor in 1975.

The voice of a vote in a world of change explores the importance of the democratic vote.

The topic contains two investigations:

How did Indigenous Australians achieve civic rights?

How did East Timor take the first steps to democracy?

Introductory activity

Explain to students that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up after World War II when there was international horror at the gross abuses of human rights under Nazism as well as concern for the future of former European colonies seeking independence and self-determination. Australia was one of the founding members of the United Nations, and one of the original signatories to the Declaration.


Provide students with a copy of the Declaration either in print or online. Have all students read the preamble to the Declaration then meet in groups to discuss and report on the following questions:

> What are human rights and what is ‘universal’ about them?

> What is the purpose of the Declaration, as outlined in the preamble?

> The preamble introduces the words ‘dignity’, ‘justice’ and ‘equality’. What do these three words signify in your own lives?

> What are our responsibilities towards our rights? Is this the same as our responsibilities towards the rights of others?

> How can we make sure our rights are respected?

Divide the listed rights in the Declaration among groups in the class. (There are 30 rights so each group could look at four or five of these.) Students should prepare a brief presentation for the rest of the class that includes:

> an explanation of the meaning of these rights

> examples of how these rights are upheld (or otherwise) in Australia (for example through universal suffrage or anti-discrimination laws)

> examples of how these rights are upheld or otherwise in relation to global or international issues that they know about. (This might include global issues such as refugees, as well as issues in particular countries.)

Student groups could use the results of the class discussion to develop a working definition of human rights with an explanation of key examples of these rights.
Investigation
How did Indigenous Australians achieve civic rights?

The 1967 referendum is often considered as a symbolic acceptance of Indigenous Australians as equal citizens with non-Indigenous Australians. The referendum of 1967 gave the Commonwealth Government power to make laws for Indigenous Australians, and abolished a constitutional provision that said that they were not to be counted in the census.

However, advances in gaining the right and responsibility to vote for Indigenous Australians were made well before, and after, this historic date. In 1962 the Commonwealth Electoral Act was amended to provide that Indigenous Australians could enrol to vote in federal elections if they wished. Then, in 1984 compulsory enrolment and voting for Indigenous Australians came into effect.

In this investigation students engage in research about Indigenous Australians’ civic rights. They also explore the importance of referendums in giving Australians a voice in creating political change.

THE INVESTIGATION AT A GLANCE

| Background briefings for teacher reference | Australian Electoral Commission; Constitution; Democracy; Indigenous Australians’ Rights; Referendum; Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| Suggested classroom teaching time | Activity 1: A question of equal citizenship (80 minutes) |
| | Activity 2: How referendums work (80 minutes) |
| | Activity 3: An historic vote (80 minutes) |
| Indicators of student achievement | Understand the role of constitutional change in a democracy |
| | Understand the importance of equality in a democracy |
| | Describe the evolution of political rights for Indigenous Australians |
| | Explain the way the Australian Constitution can be changed by a referendum |

ACTIVITY 1
A question of equal citizenship

FOCUS QUESTIONS
What civil and political rights did Indigenous Australians have before 1967?
What key events served to change opinions about civil and political rights for Indigenous Australians?
Why did Indigenous Australians seek to change the Australian Constitution?

RESOURCES
• BLM 1 Commonwealth Laws against Aborigines
• The following are available from the AEC website:
  Australian Electoral History:
  - Indigenous Australians and the Vote
  - Electoral Milestones: Timeline for Indigenous Australians
  - History of the Indigenous Vote
• Australia’s Democracy: A Short History, by John Hirst, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne, 2002
• Animation History of Voting
• Interactive The History of Voting Game

Gathering information
Provide students with a copy of BLM 1. Explain that this was produced by the Aboriginal–Australian Fellowship to encourage people to sign a petition to present to the Federal Government requesting it to conduct a referendum. This was one of 94 petitions presented to the Federal Government in the 10 years prior to the 1967 referendum.

Identifying and analysing
Discuss the following questions with students:
> What action does the writer of the petition want the readers to take?
> What problems does the writer have with sections 51 and 127 of the Australian Constitution?
> Why might there be reference to the United Nations in this document?
> What is meant in this document by the term ‘equal citizenship’?

Ask students to record their impressions of the document, as well as any questions they might have. These will be consulted at the conclusion of this activity.

Divide students into pairs or small groups to research the following historical circumstances and events:
> Indigenous Australians’ voting rights pre-1901
> The Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902
> State and territory control of Indigenous Australians 1901–1967
> The Day of Mourning 1938
> Indigenous Australians’ service in World War II and voting rights 1946
> The right to vote 1962
> The Freedom Rides 1965
> The Wave Hill strike 1966
> Compulsory enrolment and voting 1984.
The resources listed above can be supplemented by online and library resources. Ask students to consider the following questions in their research:

> What was the nature of the inequalities suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
> How are these compatible with students’ understandings of human rights and citizenship rights?
> How would these inequalities be affected by the changes to the Constitution proposed in the 1967 referendum?

**Presenting findings**

Have students share their research findings with the class and discuss the rights that Indigenous Australians sought in the period up until the 1967 referendum and the ways that Indigenous Australians’ rights differed from those of other Australians.

Ask students to refer again to BLM 1.

Using the information gathered through their research, as well as their impressions of the petition, ask students to write an explanation that would help an uninformed Australian to decide whether or not to sign this petition.

**ACTIVITY 2**

**How referendums work**

**FOCUS QUESTIONS**

How does the Australian Constitution provide for altering the words of the Constitution?
What role does the Commonwealth Parliament play in altering the Australian Constitution?
What role does the Australian Electoral Commission perform?
Who votes in referendums?

**RESOURCES**

- BLM 2 The Australian Constitution – alteration process
- Referendums
- Interactive Quiz 1 – Referendums – Do you get it?

**FROM THE MARGIN**

**DIRECT DEMOCRACY**

In ancient Athens the power to make laws was given to citizens (native-born free-men, which excluded women, slaves and migrants) who directly decided on the laws governing their city state.

**FROM THE MARGIN**

**VOTING DAYS**

A House of Representatives election must be held every three years. By law, elections for the Commonwealth Parliament are held on a Saturday, while in the United States and the United Kingdom elections are held on weekdays and voting is not compulsory.

**Gathering information**

Discuss with students why the Australian Constitution (written before 1900) might need to be altered. What changes have occurred in Australian society that would not have been foreseen by those who wrote the Constitution?

Ask students in groups to use the resources listed above to research one or more of the following about the referendum process and its significance.
The areas of research are:

> the Australian Constitution provisions in section 128 (which include the role of the Parliament and the requirement of a double majority for change to occur)
> the role of the AEC in conducting referendums
> voter requirements
> the significance of referendums in changing the Australian Constitution
> the success of the referendum process in changing the Constitution.

Have students report back on their findings to their main groups.

**Identifying and analysing**

After students have presented their research to their groups, ask the groups to suggest and record:

> the reasons why Constitutional change appears difficult
> the nature of the referendum questions that have been passed
> the sorts of changes to the Constitution and powers of government that have resulted from successful referendums
> the ways in which the 1967 referendum was different from other referendums held since federation.

**Presenting findings**

Instruct the student groups to prepare an artefact entitled *The Referendum Process: A Voter’s Guide* in a format of their choice. Remind the groups to include qualifications for voting in referendums.

Alternative or additional presentations could consider the following topics:

> Changing the Australian Constitution: Some examples of success stories
> Changing the Australian Constitution: What issues have been most important?

**ACTIVITY 3**

**An historic vote**

**FOCUS QUESTIONS**

How was the ‘Yes’ case put to voters?
Why did the results of the referendum differ across States?
What was the significance of the referendum to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders?

**RESOURCES**

- **BLM 3** The case in favour
- **Referendums**
- **Australian Biography:** [www.australianbiography.gov.au](http://www.australianbiography.gov.au) (Biographies of activists for Indigenous Australians’ rights including Charles Perkins, Neville Bonner, Faith Bandler)
- **Human Rights Commission:** [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)
- **Animation History of Voting**
- **Interactive The History of Voting Game**

![Fig 31: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights activist, Faith Bandler](image)
**Gathering information**

**Why vote ‘Yes’?**
Provide students with a copy of BLM 3.
Divide students into groups to analyse the impact of each of these sources on Australian voters. The following questions will direct their discussion:

> How might people have responded to sources 1, 2 and 3?
> What messages are contained in the song and the poster? How might they have appealed to voters?

Ask students to consider the arguments used in the official ‘Yes’ case. How might these have appealed to voters?

Unlike in other referendums, there was no official ‘No’ case. How might this have influenced voters?

**What were the results?**
Groups should use the AEC website to look at the results of the 1967 referendum. Ask students to graph the results by state and territory.

Ask them to identify electorates or states and territories where there were high ‘Yes’ votes and high ‘No’ votes, and to offer explanations for these differences.

**What was the significance to the campaign’s leaders?**
Next have student groups analyse the significance of the referendum to those who led the campaign. Use online resources to view interviews with Chicka Dixon, Charles Perkins and Faith Bandler, as well as other print sources.

**Identifying and analysing**
Have student groups examine their findings.

In relation to BLM 3 ask students to consider the arguments used in the official ‘Yes’ case? How do these compare with their research in Activity 1, and their ‘advice to uninformed Australians’?

> What sorts of appeals were made to the Australian voters and how might Australians respond to them today?
> What would have been the impact on voters of the absence of an official ‘No’ case?

In relation to the referendum results discuss with students:

> What was the pattern of results across Australia?
> Which electorates had high levels of ‘Yes’ votes? What are the characteristics of these electorates?
> Which electorates had high levels of ‘No’ votes? What might account for this?

In relation to the views of the leaders of the campaign, discuss with students:

> What were the key issues for them in the 1967 referendum?
> How was the 1967 referendum significant?
> What other issues do they identify as being important for Indigenous Australians to achieve equality in Australia?

**Presenting findings**
Have students write an informative feature article for a general audience which analyses the significance of the 1967 referendum. Their article should include:

> an appropriate heading
> background information on Indigenous Australians’ civil and political rights until the 1960s
> information on the referendum process
> analysis of the results
> Indigenous Australians’ perspectives including some key quotes
> appropriate charts, diagrams, illustrations and photographs
> a personal reflection on the issues
> a bibliography of sources used.
Citizenship rights and the electoral process

Ask students to research one or more significant issues concerning Indigenous Australians’ civil and political rights since 1967. These could include:

- Land Rights issues (Mabo and Wik and contemporary cases)
- Stolen Generations
- Aboriginal deaths in custody
- Reconciliation

Have students focus on:

- the ways that elected parliaments have responded to these issues
- the extent to which these issues have been resolved.


Successful referendums

Ask students to research another of the referendums using the material available on the AEC website, as well as online and library materials (the most contentious recent referendum is the Republic referendum).

The following questions could frame their research:

- What changes were being sought to the Constitution?
- What were the key arguments in the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ cases?
- What do you think of these arguments?
- What were the views of the media at the time (if appropriate)?
- What were the patterns of voting contained in the results – Australia-wide, by state and territory, and in individual electorates?

MOBILE POLLING

Geographic remoteness is no barrier to helping electors cast their vote in a federal election. In the 2013 federal election, the AEC used road, air and sea transport to visit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their outstations, pastoral properties, small towns, tourist resorts and mine sites. A number of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were recruited to identify, interpret for and assist with the special needs of electors.

Fig 32: Australian citizens have an obligation to vote – wherever they may be
Investigation
How did East Timor take the first steps to democracy?

East Timor is one of Australia’s nearest neighbours but its experience of democracy could not be more different. After centuries of Portuguese colonial rule and 25 years of Indonesian occupation the East Timorese people were finally granted the opportunity to decide their own future through a democratic vote in a ‘popular consultation’. In subsequent elections in 2001 and 2002 they voted for a representative assembly and president.

In this investigation students will focus on the significance of the vote in achieving momentous change – the status of an independent sovereign nation in East Timor, the first democratic nation of the 21st century. They will research the background to East Timorese independence and consider the roles undertaken by Australians through the United Nations. In particular, they will consider the role of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) in assisting East Timor’s progress towards democratic government.

THE INVESTIGATION AT A GLANCE

| Background briefings for teacher reference | Australian Electoral Commission; Democracy; International assistance – East Timor; Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| Suggested classroom teaching time | Activity 1: A promise of democracy (80 minutes)  
Activity 2: International response (120 minutes)  
Activity 3: Introducing democracy: The role of the AEC (80 minutes) |
| Indicators of student achievement | Describe the situation in East Timor under Portuguese and Indonesian rule  
Explain the reasons for Australian and United Nations involvement in East Timor after 1975  
Examine East Timor’s progress towards democratic government and the AEC’s role in that process |
| Related articles in Discovering Democracy Australian Reader Upper Secondary Collection | People Make Politics: Fighting for a Cause  
Shifting Boundaries |
**ACTIVITY 1**

**A promise of democracy**

**FOCUS QUESTIONS**
- What was East Timor like under Portuguese and Indonesian rule?
- What roles did the East Timorese resistance play in drawing world attention to the plight of East Timorese?
- How have Australians been involved in East Timor?

**RESOURCES**
- **BLM 4** East Timor under Portuguese and Indonesian rule
- BBC News: [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news) (Asia)
- US Department of State: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) (Countries and Regions>East Asia and the Pacific>Countries and other areas>Timor-Leste)
- Nobel Prize: [www.nobelprize.org](http://www.nobelprize.org)
- Australian War Memorial: [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au) (Collections>Collections search>Type in key words such as ‘Sparrow Force’ or ‘Balibo Five’)

**Gathering information**

Read through **BLM 4** with students. Explain that they will work in groups to further research one of the aspects of East Timorese history under the headings: Portuguese rule, Indonesian occupation, East Timorese resistance, Australian contact with East Timor.

Divide the class into small groups to research one of the key events, the results of which they will bring back to the class for explanation and discussion. Each group must provide one or more images from their research for this discussion. The resource list is a basic list of websites that can be used. Encourage students to use search engines and library resources to find further material.

Emphasise that students maintain a bibliography of resources while they are completing this research.

**Identifying and analysing**

After students have had an opportunity to conduct some research, bring them together to report their findings to the class, show images they have found and build a timeline of events. This could be done as a PowerPoint™ presentation, constructed on the board or drawn on a large sheet of poster paper.
Conduct a class discussion on the following:

> What was the nature of Portuguese colonial rule?
> What impact did Australian experiences with the East Timorese in World War II have on Australian attitudes to East Timor?
> Why did Indonesia invade East Timor in 1975?
> How significant was the Balibo Five incident in Indonesian–Australian relationships?
> Why do you think Australia was the only country to recognise the Indonesian occupation?
> What roles did key East Timorese leaders play in drawing attention to the plight of the East Timorese?

**Presenting findings**

Have student groups use their research findings to produce three or four slides or screens that will become part of the timeline. Each group should use key images, and brief explanations of events.

Have a class presentation where each group speaks to and explains their slides.

**ACTIVITY 2**

**International response**

**FOCUS QUESTIONS**

What was the purpose of the United Nations missions in East Timor?
How were Australians involved in the United Nations operations in East Timor?
What were the results of the East Timorese elections?
How did the people of East Timor respond?

**RESOURCES**

- **BLM 5 The United Nations in East Timor**
- Australian War Memorial: [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au) (Collections>Collections search>Type in key words such as ‘INTERFET’)
- East and Southeast Asia: An Annotated Directory of Internet Resources:
  - Inside Indonesia: [www.insideindonesia.org](http://www.insideindonesia.org) (Past Editions>Edition 61, Jan–March 2000 (East Timor special))
  - East Timor: Birth of a Nation: [www.abc.net.au/etimor/default.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/etimor/default.htm)
  - Answered by Fire: Online at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
Gathering information
Read through BLM 5 with students. Discuss with students:
> Why might East Timor need a high level of international support?
> What particular needs might the people of East Timor have?
> Why might Australia be involved in these United Nations missions?
Divide the class into groups to represent the United Nations missions outlined: UNAMET, INTERFET, UNTAET, UNMISET and UNMIT.
Within their groups students will be responsible for:
> outlining the aims of this mission
> analysing Australian contributions to each of these missions
> explaining the results of these missions, including election results where appropriate.
Select one or two key primary or secondary sources that explain the mission from the point of view of the East Timorese or Australian participants. These could be in the form of photographs (such as INTERFET photographs from the Australian War Memorial website), newspaper articles from the Internet or reports from East Timorese leaders.

Explain to students that they can find a range of materials, including lists of countries involved in these missions, photographs and media reports from the United Nations website. Have students contribute to a media display of newspaper articles about current issues and events.

Use audiovisual material to provide further information to students. The following are recommended:
Answered by Fire is a two-part mini-series based on the 1999 East Timor conflicts that led to East Timor’s independence. Available on DVD or online at: www.youtube.com
East Timor: Birth of a Nation – This can be viewed online at www.abc.net.au/etimor/

Identifying and analysing
Allow students two or three lessons to research. Have each group report on their findings after that time. Use student reports to discuss effective ways of presenting information.
Discuss the focus questions at the beginning of this activity as well as:
> How important was democracy to the East Timorese?
> What difficulties are they encountering on the path to democracy?
> What kinds of support do countries with no experience of democracy need?
> What light can the experience of democracy in East Timor throw on Australian democracy?

Presenting findings
Have students present their findings in the form of a press conference to the class. (This could be preceded by a short videotape of a press conference as an example.)
Set up the classroom to represent a press conference: each group takes turns in presenting reports and the rest of the class members are the reporters. A volunteer should mediate the session and allocate questions from the reporters to the panel members.
Each of the groups could decide on a particular angle for their press conference such as the announcement of election results or the deployment of Australian troops. Other group members could present other aspects based on their research findings – including visual resources on a PowerPoint™ presentation.
The reporters should use the research questions to ask questions of the panel and take notes on their answers.
Have students use the material gained in this session to write a newspaper article about one of the issues discussed in the press conference.

Fig 34: Australian soldiers as part of INTERFET, about to undertake a patrol of an area between Suai and Matai, East Timor
ACTIVITY 3
Introducing democracy: The role of the AEC

FOCUS QUESTIONS
What was the AEC’s role in East Timor?
What are the challenges involved in establishing democratic institutions in a country that has had no experience of democracy?
What government and electoral systems did the East Timorese adopt?

RESOURCES
• BLM 6 Introducing democracy: The role of the AEC in East Timor
• www.dfat.gov.au (Countries and regions>Timor-Leste)
• Government of Timor-Leste: timor-leste.gov
• AEC International Electoral Services
• Electoral Procedures

Gathering information
Provide students with a copy of BLM 6.
Divide the class into groups and ask them to research the following:
> What processes do people need to understand to conduct elections?
> What skills and resources would people need to conduct democratic elections from scratch?
> What information would be needed by East Timorese citizens to participate in democratic elections?
> What institutions and procedures would need to be put into place to implement the requirements as outlined in the East Timorese Constitution?

Identifying and analysing
Discuss with students the notion of ‘sustainable government’:
> What does this mean and what role did the AEC play in supporting it?
> In what ways are elections a ‘complex logistical exercise’?
> What knowledge and skills and resources should an Electoral Administrators Course contain?
> What sort of education program is needed to inform the public about their rights and responsibilities as outlined in the East Timorese Constitution?

Presenting findings
Have students complete one of the following scenarios:
Imagine you were developing a public education campaign to inform the East Timorese about democratic electoral processes and their rights and responsibilities in elections. Establish a series of brief key messages that would become the focus of your education campaign. Produce a poster or the text of a radio or television advertisement that will explain the key messages.

Using the extract from the East Timorese Constitution, write a report to the East Timorese minister responsible for elections. Include recommendations about:
> the role of an electoral administration body
> the knowledge and skills needed by people to be employed by this body
> the public education that needs to be implemented.
Getting young Australians to enrol to vote

Students should now be familiar with the importance of the vote as an instrument of change. Discuss with them the political symbolism attached to voting, such as full membership of a community, equality, autonomy, freedom and responsive government. They should also know about different types of campaigns that encourage people to vote, and become informed voters.

Although it is compulsory for eligible citizens to enrol to vote in Australia, there is concern about low enrolment rates among young Australians. The Australian Electoral Commission estimated that for the 2004 election approximately 25% of eligible 18-year-old Australians were not enrolled to vote. Furthermore, although many young people may enrol when they are eligible, they are often highly mobile and fail to keep their enrolment current when they change their address.

At 30 September 2010, the AEC estimated that approximately 33% of eligible 18 year olds were not enrolled, an increase of 8%.

In response, the Australian Electoral Commission has created initiatives to encourage young people to enrol.

The Campaign – Enrolment Week

Provide students with BLM 7 and BLM 8. Draw students’ attention to BLM 7 pointing out that the AEC has targeted specific youth events, but has not stated what form its message will take.

Have students work in groups of five to organise a campaign encouraging enrolment among young Australians. This should include all youth, as well as young people not in the education system. Ensure that each group member has individual responsibility for one of the sets of data from BLM 8. Their understanding of the data should be recorded on a ‘plus, minus and interesting’ chart and be communicated to the rest of the group.

Each group must produce a ‘campaign centrepiece’ encouraging young people to enrol to vote. This can take the form of a video, web page, billboard or television, radio or print advertisement. Teachers may choose to stop at the storyboard stage, or they may have student groups produce their artefacts. Each group’s campaign should clearly demonstrate that they used information from BLMs 7 and 8.

Groups should develop their main message or messages using findings from the data (BLM 7) and the information from the AEC. They should also decide on the format of the campaign, and be aware that their target audience (young people) is diverse, and that their campaign and message should reflect this diversity (rural/metropolitan, gender, cultural background and socioeconomic status).

Allow students to present their findings at a storyboard or draft stage for class feedback, before going into full production. Depending on the formats chosen by the student groups, the cooperation of specialist teachers may be advisable. This activity may be integrated with Media, Technology or Communications learning areas. The AEC is most interested in student ideas and invites students to send in their findings and campaign suggestions.

Further research can be encouraged. Students may choose to examine the whole of the Youth Electoral Study at: www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/youth_study/index.htm or make comparisons with young people’s enrolment in comparable democracies, such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.
Commonwealth Laws against Aborigines

Petitioning for constitutional change

The Commonwealth Constitution says the Federal Parliament can make laws for "the people of any race OTHER THAN THE ABORIGINAL RACE in any State" (Section 51, Clause xxvii) and "in reckoning the numbers of people . . . ABORIGINAL NATIVES SHALL NOT BE COUNTED". (Section 127).

EVERY STATE HAS DIFFERENT LAWS FOR ABORIGINES

- Federal Parliament has to justify these laws to public opinion at home and abroad, and to the United Nations.
- Since N.S.W. this year ended discrimination in our State Laws, Aborigines have equal rights here but not if they travel interstate.
- CENSUS (Section 127) implies that Aborigines are not worth counting, and this is an insult to the original Australians.

Please Sign the National Petition for Equal Citizenship for Aborigines

Authorised by the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, G.P.O. Box 2672, Sydney

Witmer Press, 12 Little Regent Street, Sydney
**The Australian Constitution – alteration process**

A bill *(proposed law)* is introduced into either house of the Federal Parliament

A bill is *passed* by an absolute majority in the originating house

The bill is *considered* in the other house

The bill is *passed* by an absolute majority in the other house*

* The Constitution provides for the process to go forward if the bill is rejected by the other house

**Referendum process begins**

Members of parliament who support the proposed change prepare the ‘Yes’ case

Members of parliament who oppose the proposed change prepare the ‘No’ case

The Australian Electoral Commission *prints and distributes* an information leaflet to voters outlining the proposed alterations and the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ cases

**Voters vote in a referendum**

‘Yes’ or ‘No’

‘Double majority’

The bill becomes law and the Constitution *is* altered

No ‘Double majority’

The Constitution *is not* altered
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
Vote ‘Yes’ for Aborigines, all parties say they think you should
Vote ‘Yes’ and show the world the true Australian brotherhood.


SOURCE 2

Campaigning for constitutional change in the 1967 referendum
The case in favour

**SOURCE 3**

**CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (ABORIGINALS) 1967**

*Argument in favour of the proposed law*

The case for **YES**

The proposed alteration of this section will do two things. **First, it will remove words from our Constitution that many people think are discriminatory against the Aboriginal people.**

**Second, it will make it possible for the Commonwealth Parliament to make special laws for the people of the Aboriginal race, wherever they may live, if the Parliament considers it necessary.**

This cannot be done at present because, as the Constitution stands, the Commonwealth Parliament has no power, except in the Territories, to make laws with respect to people of the Aboriginal race as such.

...The Commonwealth’s object will be to cooperate with the States to **ensure that together we act in the best interests of the Aboriginal people of Australia.**

The second proposed alteration is the **repeal** of section 127 of the Constitution.

That section reads:

‘In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.’

Why was this provision included in the Constitution in 1900? Well, there were serious practical difficulties in counting the Aboriginals in those days. They were dispersed, and nomadic. Communications in inland Australia were poor, and frequently non-existent. Today the situation is very different and counting is practicable.

**Our personal sense of justice, our commonsense, and our international reputation in a world in which racial issues are being highlighted every day, require that we get rid of this outmoded provision.**

Its modern absurdity is made clear when we point out that for some years now Aboriginals have been entitled to enrol for, and vote at, federal elections. Yet section 127 prevents them from being reckoned as ‘people’ for the purpose of calculating our population, even for electoral purposes!

The simple truth is that section 127 is completely out of harmony with our national attitudes and modern thinking. It has no place in our Constitution in this age.

All political parties represented in the Commonwealth Parliament support these proposals...

**We urge you to vote **YES** to both our proposals as to Aboriginals** by writing the word **YES in the square on the ballot paper.**
East Timor under Portuguese and Indonesian rule

1. PORTUGUESE RULE

The Portuguese presence in Timor began in the 16th century. It became a colony in 1702 with the arrival of the first governor from Lisbon. In the 18th century, the Netherlands gained a foothold in the western half of the island, and was formally granted West Timor in 1859 through the Treaty of Lisbon. After World War II, the Dutch granted independence to its former colonies and West Timor became part of Indonesia.

In 1974, after a coup which overthrew its fascist dictatorship, Portugal granted East Timor the right to self-determination. Elections were held in March 1975. While the Apodeti Party in East Timor supported integration with Indonesia, it was the Fretlin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) which won the election. As the Portuguese withdrew, Indonesia made no secret of its plan to invade East Timor. Xavier de Amaral, the first president and president of Fretlin, declared independence on 28 November 1975, hoping that Indonesia would not invade a sovereign state.

2. INDONESIAN OCCUPATION

Nine days later, on 7 December 1975, Indonesia launched a combined military, naval and airborne invasion of East Timor. President Suharto of Indonesia subsequently claimed East Timor as Indonesia’s 27th province in 1976.

Over the next 24 years East Timor was under military occupation. A report presented to the United Nations in 2006 estimated that from a population of 750,000, about 183,000 East Timorese were killed or died as a result of deliberate starvation between 1975 and 1999. In 1991, the massacre of 200 unarmed civilians at the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili and the killings and repression that followed focused international attention on East Timor.

In 1998 President Suharto was forced to resign. His successor, Dr BJ Habibie, in the midst of an economic crisis and in need of international support, proposed limited autonomy for East Timor within Indonesia. This resulted in a set of agreements between Indonesia and Portugal, signed in New York on 5 May 1999, entrusting the Secretary-General of the United Nations with organising and conducting a ‘popular consultation’ in order to determine whether the East Timorese people accepted or rejected a special autonomy for East Timor within the Republic of Indonesia.
East Timor under Portuguese and Indonesian rule

3. EAST TIMORESE RESISTANCE

Fretlin and the resistance army Falintil (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) opposed Indonesian occupation and engaged in an ongoing guerrilla war.

Xanana Gusmão, the Fretlin leader, was arrested in 1992 and sentenced to life imprisonment in Indonesia.

The East Timorese Catholic Church, under Bishop Carlos Filipe Belo, after 1983 spoke out against human rights abuses.

Jose Ramos-Horta left East Timor shortly before the Indonesian invasion to bring the country’s plight to the rest of the world. He was involved in the passing of a dozen United Nations resolutions on East Timor.

In 1996, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Belo.

4. AUSTRALIAN CONTACT WITH EAST TIMOR

Australian troops known as ‘Sparrow Force’ fought the Japanese in East Timor during World War II, 1942–1945. Sparrow Force was supported by the Timorese population – around 70,000 of whom were killed.

In 1975, five reporters working for Channel 9 and Channel 7 in Australia were killed during Indonesian military incursions into the town of Balibo in East Timor. They came to be known as the Balibo Five.

Australia recognised the Indonesian claim to East Timor in 1978, the only country in the world to do so.

Many East Timorese sought asylum in Australia during the period of Indonesian rule.
The United Nations in East Timor

The United Nations (UN) set up UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor) to organise and conduct the ‘popular consultation’ in 1999. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) provided significant support to this operation, both in the planning and implementation. Timorese residents in Australia also voted. The result of the ‘popular consultation’ was overwhelming rejection of the proposed status of autonomy in favour of beginning a process of transition towards independence. Although voting was not compulsory, there was a very high voter turnout and 78.5% voted in favour of independence.

During and after the vote a period of great unrest occurred, including widespread murder, violence, arson and looting by pro-integration militias, at times with the support of elements of the Indonesian security forces. United Nations personnel were evacuated during the violence that followed the vote.

In view of the urgent situation, the United Nations authorised an international peacekeeping force, led by Australia. INTERFET (International Force East Timor) comprised 11,000 troops, 5,000 of them from Australia. The force, commanded by Major-General Peter Cosgrove arrived in Dili on 20 September 1999 and oversaw the withdrawal of Indonesian troops, disarming of pro-Indonesian militia and the return of refugees from West Timor.

In October the United Nations authorised the UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor). This became the virtual administration of East Timor and guided East Timor to independent nationhood. The AEC, in collaboration with the UN, undertook a major program of capacity building to enhance the ability of the East Timorese to organise their own elections after independence.

The UN recognised at an early stage that an independent electoral management body was required in East Timor in order to conduct elections. At the same time UNTAET also announced the establishment of an Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which would have exclusive electoral authority. The IEC aimed to ensure that the 2001 and 2002 elections were conducted fairly and democratically. The Australian Electoral Commission worked as part of the IEC.

In 2002 a further mission was set up by the United Nations. Called UNMISET (United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor), it was established to provide assistance to core administrative structures critical to the viability and political stability of East Timor, to provide interim law enforcement and public security and to assist in developing the East Timor Police Service, and to contribute to the maintenance of the new country’s external and internal security. Australia contributed civilian and military police to this mission.

As a result of continued civil unrest, in 2006, the United Nations established UNMIT (United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste). This mission is ongoing at the time of writing.
Introducing democracy – the role of the AEC in East Timor

‘An election is actually the most complex logistical operation which a country ever faces in peacetime because you are taking the entire adult population in the country and putting them through the process (of voting) in a single day.’

Michael Maley, AEC and also UN-appointed Commissioner of the Independent Electoral Commission, East Timor, established by UNTAET.

In East Timor, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) provided massive support for the United Nations (UN) organisation of the 1999 ‘popular consultation’, including facilitating the vote for East Timorese resident in Australia and organising participation in elections in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Darwin. In 2001 and 2002, they supported the elections held for the new national assembly and the presidential election.

A significant challenge for East Timor, a country with no experience of democracy, was addressed by the AEC – that of providing local people with the knowledge, skills and resources in the area of electoral administration. This would allow East Timorese to organise and conduct free and fair elections so that democracy could be sustained in the absence of international assistance.

As part of its role in the Independent Electoral Commission, the AEC developed and delivered electoral education including the East Timor Electoral Administrators Course in the weeks leading up to the 30 August 2001 Constituent Assembly elections. The course provided a comprehensive introduction to every aspect of the electoral process that the East Timorese would be involved in and was instrumental in ensuring the success of those elections.

In 2002 the East Timorese adopted a Constitution for the new government mandating the importance of democratic elections.
Introducing democracy –
the role of the AEC in East Timor

Extract from East Timor Constitution

Section 65
(Elections)

1 Elected organs of sovereignty and of local government shall be chosen by free, direct, secret, personal and regular universal suffrage.

2 Registration of voters shall be compulsory and officially initiated, single and universal, to be updated for each election.

3 Electoral campaigns shall be governed in accordance with the following principles:
   a Freedom to canvass;
   b Equality of opportunity and treatment for all candidacies;
   c Impartiality towards candidacies on the part of public bodies;
   d Transparency and supervision of electoral expenses.

4 Conversion of the votes into mandates shall observe the principle of proportional representation.

5 The electoral process shall be regulated by law.

6 Supervision of voters’ registration and electoral acts shall be incumbent upon an independent organ, the competences, composition, organisation and functioning of which shall be established by law.

(Source: East Timor Constitution, decreed 22 March 2002)
AEC’s Youth Enrolment Message

Background information
The Electoral Act provides for the conduct of federal elections. This means the Act provides the legal basis for the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to conduct elections and this includes the creation and maintenance of the electoral roll. There are at present over 14 million electors on the Commonwealth electoral roll.

As the Electoral Act states, enrolling and voting are compulsory for every Australian citizen over 18 years of age. The AEC must ensure that every elector knows about and adheres to this law.

As federal elections in Australia are not held on set dates, the roll must be constantly updated in case an election is called. That means electors have two responsibilities: one, to enrol (it’s the law) and two, they also have to keep their enrolment details current.

What is the AEC doing about enrolment for young people?

‘O’ Week
The AEC attends university campus ‘O’ Week activities across Australia to encourage university students to enrol to vote.

This initiative provides students with an opportunity to enrol to vote, change their address or just ask any questions about enrolling and voting.

Youth vote matters
The AEC promotes its online enrolment service via a Facebook application ‘Youth Votes Matter’ that was launched in the lead up to the 2013 federal election.

The enrol to vote app encourages Australians, and in particular young Australians, to enrol online or update their enrolment details online and then share this with their friends and family on Facebook.

With over 12 million Australians active on Facebook, the AEC worked with Facebook and a digital agency to develop an innovative concept to connect with and engage young Australians to encourage participation in the election. Enrolling to vote can be done entirely online via a desktop, tablet or smartphone device.
Don’t leave it to the last minute

The AEC called on the community to help find almost 1.4 million eligible missing voters in the run up to the 2013 election. The AEC is directly working with workplaces, tertiary institutions and sporting organisations throughout Australia to ask everyone to remind colleagues, team mates, and family and friends to enrol to vote and help maintain a healthy Australian democracy.

An e-kit was available for download with resources and information that could be used to encourage people to enrol online.

The AEC also went directly to sports fans at stadiums in every Australian capital city over two weekends as part of a nationwide enrolment campaign.

Enrolment messages were shown on the big screens in the stadiums to encourage supporters to check they are enrolled while waiting for the kick-off or during the half-time break.

AEC teams were also at events such as the AFL, NRL, Super Rugby and the V8 Supercars encouraging fans to check their enrolment online.

Rock Enrol at Splendour in the Grass

Among the thousands of young Australians at Byron Bay for ‘Splendour in the Grass’ was the AEC reminding revellers to take just a few minutes to enrol online, and not leave it until it’s too late. The AEC partnered with triple J’s ‘Rock Enrol’ campaign in preparation for the 2013 election.

Rock Enrol branding was shown on stage screens in between sets by bands, and even promoted in the toilet stalls reminding people to enrol to vote.
Extracts from 2004 Youth Electoral Study

Registering on the Commonwealth electoral roll

Key Points:
> Of the under 17 students, four out of 10 males and half of the females intended to enrol at age 17.
> Of the 17 and over students, less than three out of 10 males and a third of the females had actually enrolled.
> The intention to enrol for the under-17s was higher than actual enrolment for those who were 17 or older.
> Females were higher than the male students in both intention to enrol and actual enrolment.

Awareness of enrolling at 17 is low.

Intention to vote

The students were asked two specific questions about voting. The first was: ‘Do you intend to vote in federal elections after you reach 18?’ The results for all students indicate that the vast majority, 87%, either ‘Definitely’ or ‘Probably’ would vote, though there were differences for males and females, with positive responses of 82.7% and 90.2% respectively.

Key Points:
> A little more than four out of five students say they will vote when they become 18 years old.
> Females are more likely to say they will vote than boys.
> Only one out of two students would vote at 18 if voting were non-compulsory.
> Females are more likely to say they would vote, even if non-compulsory.
> The percentage who say they would vote even when compulsory is directly related to the strength of their intention to vote at age 18.
> Young people know that voting is compulsory at 18.
Extracts from 2004 Youth Electoral Study

Preparedness to vote

Key Points:

> About one in two students feel they lack the knowledge to understand the issues, the political parties, to make a decision about voting, and in general to vote.
> Young people do not perceive themselves generally as well prepared to participate in voting.
> Generally, young people don’t understand the voting system.
> Female students feel less prepared to vote, in terms of knowledge, than males.

Source of information about voting in elections

If students generally do not feel well prepared to participate in voting, where do they obtain their information about voting in elections?

Key Points:

> Parents are regarded by the students as the most important source of information about voting, followed by TV and newspapers.
> Yet television and newspapers are regarded with skepticism.
> Church and other religious groups are the least important source of information about voting.
> School teachers are a moderate source of information about voting for students.
> The Internet has little impact as an information source on voting for students.

Attitudes towards voting

Key Points:

> Most (four out of five) students think that voting is important.
> Almost two out of three students think that the act of voting is boring, and slightly more than one-half think it is a hassle.
> Slightly less than one-half of students think that voting is a waste of a Saturday.
> The link between a citizen’s right and duty to vote is not powerful.

Youth Electoral Study

Authors: Associate Professors Murray Print, University of Sydney, Dr Larry Saha, Australian National University, and Dr Kathy Edwards, University of Sydney. Source: Youth Electoral Study – Report 1: Enrolment and Voting, December 2004. The full report is available at Youth Electoral Study: www.aec.gov.au/AboutAEC/Publications/youth-study/index.htm