

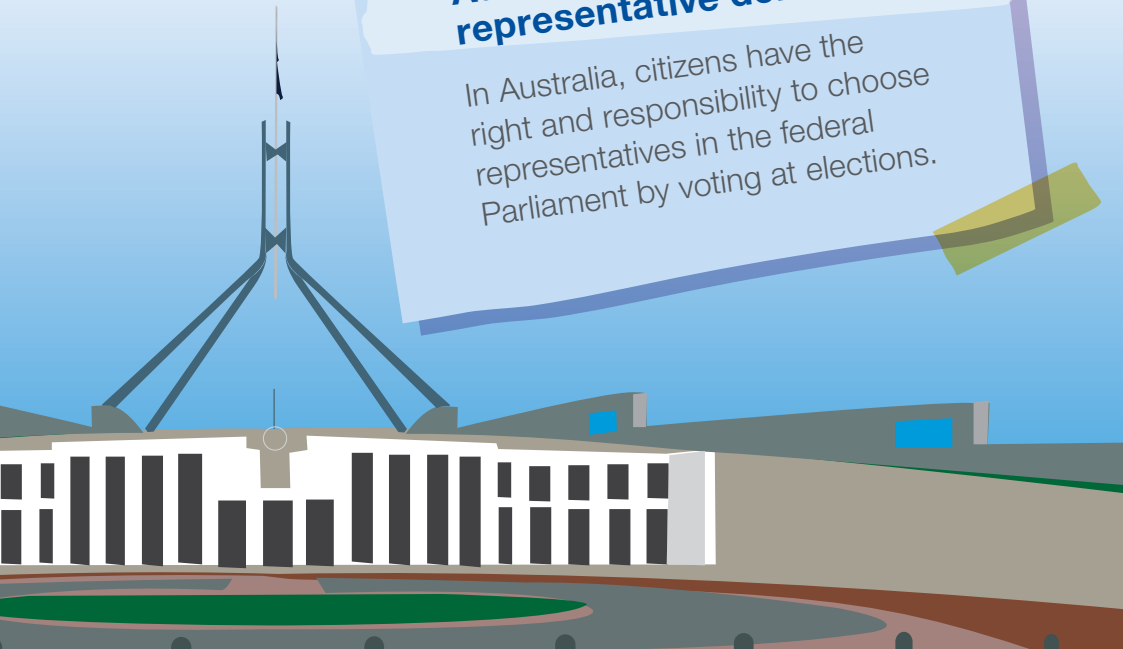


Australian Federal Elections

Classroom activities for students,
based on Bloom's Taxonomy

**Australia is a
representative democracy.**

In Australia, citizens have the
right and responsibility to choose
representatives in the federal
Parliament by voting at elections.





Knowing

- Find out the number of enrolled voters in your state or territory and compare this to other states or territories.
- Use the information on the last pages of this booklet to make an illustrated timeline of Australia's voting history.
- Debate different systems of voting (full preferential, partial preferential, first past the post).
- Debate compulsory versus voluntary voting.
- Describe how you would feel if the law prevented you from voting, as it did to many women and Indigenous people.
- Debate raising/lowering the voting age.



Understanding

- Make a cartoon strip to show how to vote formally.
- Discuss how people can participate in democracy other than by voting.
- Role-play an election including nominations and a double random ballot paper draw to select the order of candidates.
- Predict what might happen if we no longer had elections.
- Make a flow chart to show how the preferences flowed in a real election at your school.



Applying

- Design a fact sheet on the electoral process.
- Explain how you would feel if you lived in a country where people were unable to vote.
- Develop a Snakes and Ladders type board game based on electoral processes e.g. gain pre-selection/ have a successful campaign launch etc.
- Choose music appropriate for an advertising campaign to encourage people to vote.
- Conduct your own elections at school.
- Examine why sometimes the person with the most first preference votes is not elected in a federal election.



Analysing

- Create a flow chart showing what happens when you go to a polling place.
- Develop a mind map of the electoral system.
- Design a poster to encourage people to enrol/vote.
- Explain how the election of a Senator is different to that of a member of the House of Representatives.
- Develop an advertisement to encourage people to check their enrolment is up to date.
- Write a letter to the school Principal to demonstrate all you have learned about the electoral system.



Creating

- Predict what might happen if voting was not compulsory.
- Invent a machine to count votes and identify formal votes.
- Prepare a three minute speech on a former member for your electorate.
- Write a rap to explain parliamentary representation.
- Create a Y-chart to show what a good representative looks, sounds and feels like.
- Write a poem about enrolling to vote.



Evaluating

- Construct arguments for and against full preferential voting.
- Compare democracies to other forms of government e.g. dictatorships, kingdoms, theocracies.
- Use the media/internet/newspapers to investigate how elections are held in other countries. Assess the effectiveness/fairness of these systems.
- Should changes be made to Senate representation for the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory? Why/why not?
- Prepare arguments for/against permanent residents being able to vote.
- Should voters show identification at polling places? Discuss, and list the reasons why you do/do not think this is a good idea.

Check out our website!

www.education.aec.gov.au



Other useful resources to find on the AEC website www.aec.gov.au

Type **'How to vote'** in the search box on the AEC website to practise filling out a ballot paper.



Type **'video'** for a range of videos such as an explanation of how we count the votes for the House of Representatives or the Senate and the ways in which we make voting accessible for all Australians.



AUSTRALIAN VOTING HISTORY IN BRIEF

Australia is a federal, representative, parliamentary democracy. How did our system of government take shape?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived in Australia for tens of thousands of years. Laws, customs and rules came from tradition, not parliaments.

When the British arrived in 1788 they brought their own traditions and culture. Captain Arthur Phillip was appointed by the British government as the first Governor of the prison colony.

Subsequently free settlers came to the colonies and felt entitled to have a say in who governed them. In 1842, a small group of male residents were enfranchised to elect a proportion of the Colony's Legislative Council

Eureka Stockade



During the 1850s, people from around the world flocked to the Australian goldfields. They had to purchase licences in order to earn money from prospecting for gold. In 1854, a miners' protest about the licence fee and their political rights resulted in a rebellion in which both soldiers and miners died. Following the rebellion, a number of the miners' demands were met, including their right to vote.

Male suffrage



In 1856, South Australia extended the vote to male residents aged 21 years and over. Two years later, Victoria followed their lead, with the remaining colonies following suit.

The Secret Ballot

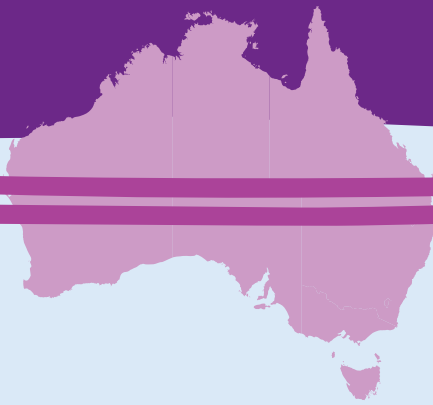


Until the 1850s, people voted publicly, and were vulnerable to intimidation and coercion. To rectify this situation, an independent electoral body was established during the 1850s. It ensured elections were run fairly, and the secret ballot, sometimes referred to as the 'Australian ballot', was implemented.

Women's suffrage



During the 1880s, the women's suffrage movement gained momentum. This movement was based on the belief that democracy, in its truest form, could not be achieved until women had the same electoral rights as men. In 1894 South Australia was one of the first places in the world to grant women the right to vote in elections and stand for Parliament. The remaining colonies gradually came to the same view. Australia helped pioneer the recognition of women's suffrage internationally.



Federation



In 1898, South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania passed a referendum to federate under an Australian Constitution. In 1899, Queensland supported the federation, and the following year, Western Australia followed suit.

On 1 January 1901, the nation of Australia was born, with a federal parliament to govern it.

Compulsory voting



In 1924, to improve the low rates of voter turnout, amendments to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 were made. Compulsory voting was introduced and this resulted in a dramatic increase in voter turnout at the following election.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders



For many years Indigenous Australians were excluded from enrolment and voting unless they already had the franchise in their states. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples campaigned for many years to achieve full voting rights in state and federal elections.

These rights were granted in 1962, and were made compulsory in 1984.

Voting age



During the 1960s and 1970s, several Western parliamentary democracies began to support lowering of the eligibility age to enrol and vote. Young people paying taxes, driving cars, and serving their country during times of conflict, believed they were entitled to have a say in the composition of their government.

In 1973, the Australian Parliament amended the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 and lowered the minimum voting age to 18 years.

Today



Australia is a federal, representative, parliamentary democracy where citizens have the power to elect their representatives in parliament. Enrolling and voting is a right and a responsibility of each Australian citizen.

The effectiveness of our democracy depends on the active participation of all Australian citizens.



**WANT TO
KNOW
MORE?**

AEC FOR SCHOOLS

The AEC produces a range of products and resources to support teaching and learning about Australian civics and citizenship.

RUNNING A SCHOOL ELECTION?

Go to our website and order Get Voting for everything you need to run a free and fair election for your class or school.

Visit the Parliamentary Education Office for resources about the Australian Parliament.

Visit the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House to investigate the history of Australia's democracy.

EDUCATION.AEC.GOV.AU