

Civics and Citizenship Level 10

Chapter 1 — Government and democracy

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The Australian Constitution: basis of the federal system, democratic institutions, and constitutional change by referendum

Curriculum: VC2HC10K01 — the role of the Australian Constitution in providing the basis for Australia’s federal system of government and democratic processes, including democratic institutions, and the process for constitutional change through a referendum

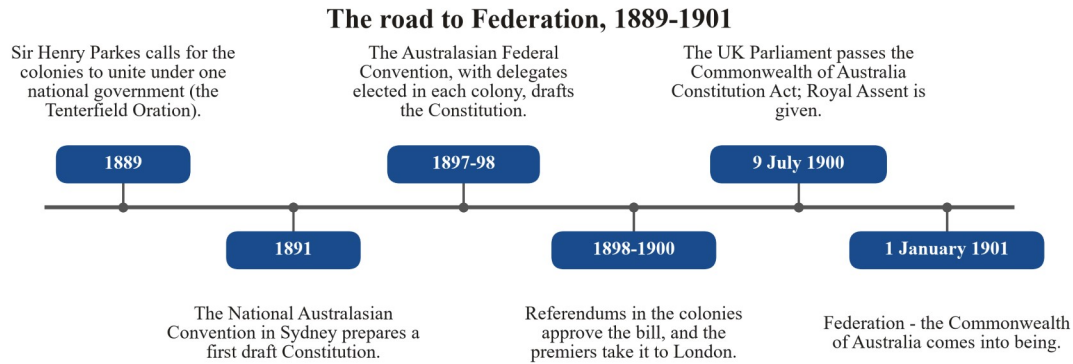
Linked elaborations: VC2HC10K01.E01 — understanding the aims of the authors of the Australian Constitution, including the need for compromise VC2HC10K01.E02 — describing the process by which referendums to change the Australian Constitution are initiated and decided, including the role of the Australian Electoral Commission, and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of having a constitution that can only be amended by referendum VC2HC10K01.E03 — investigating the extent to which the Constitution upholds and enables democratic institutions and systems, including a constitutional monarchy; a federal parliamentary system with elected legislatures; protection of states’ rights and individual rights; and representation of the interests of all Australians VC2HC10K01.E04 — assessing the effectiveness of the process of constitutional change and the degree to which it supports popular sovereignty, through examining selected referendum proposals (*D3 PARTIAL: taught through the Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) 1999 only*)

Theory

Part 1 — The aims of the authors, and the need for compromise (VC2HC10K01.E01)

In the 1890s, six British colonies — New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania — each had its own parliament, governor and laws. Some colonists wanted the colonies to unite as one nation. Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales, argued for this in his famous 1889 speech at Tenterfield, and colonial delegates prepared a first draft constitution at the National Australasian Convention in Sydney in 1891. The draft that became our Constitution was written at the Australasian Federal Convention of 1897-98, where most delegates were elected by the colonists, and was then approved at referendums held in the colonies across 1898-1900. The UK Parliament passed it as the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* (Royal Assent, 9 July 1900), and on 1 January 1901 the six colonies became six states in a new nation, the Commonwealth of Australia.

Source: Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (UK); Australian Electoral Commission, ‘Referendums’ (retrieved 26 August 2026).



Timeline diagram showing six steps on the road to Federation between 1889 and 1901

The authors had clear aims. They wanted a national government able to do what the colonies could not do well alone: organise defence, run one market with free trade between the colonies, set one immigration policy, and borrow money with the credit of a whole nation. At the same time, each colony wanted to keep its own parliament and its own control over local matters such as schools, hospitals and police. This double aim is why the Constitution created a **federal system** — a system in which law-making power is divided between a national parliament and state parliaments, with the division written into a constitution. The Commonwealth Parliament received listed (enumerated) powers in section 51, such as defence, currency, immigration and external affairs, while the states kept their **residual powers** — everything not listed, such as schools, hospitals, police and roads.

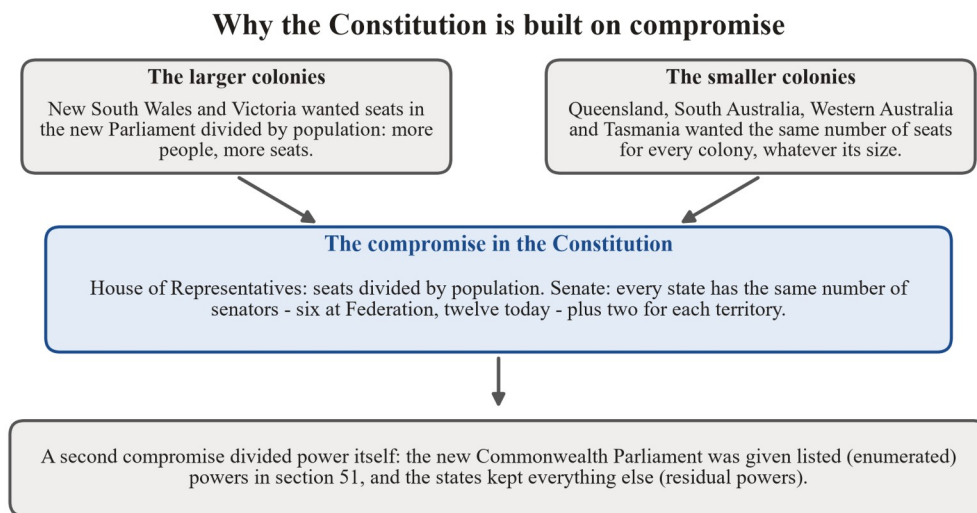


Diagram showing how the larger and smaller colonies compromised over seats in the new Parliament

The authors could only reach agreement through compromise. The larger colonies (New South Wales and Victoria) wanted seats in the new Parliament divided by population; the smaller colonies (Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) would not accept a parliament in which they could always be outvoted. The compromise was two houses: a House of Representatives divided by population, and a Senate in which every state has the same number of senators — six at Federation, twelve today, plus two for each territory. A second compromise divided power itself between the Commonwealth and the states, as described above. Section 109 manages the overlap: where a state law and a Commonwealth law conflict on a shared (concurrent) power, the Commonwealth law prevails.

The Constitution divides law-making power

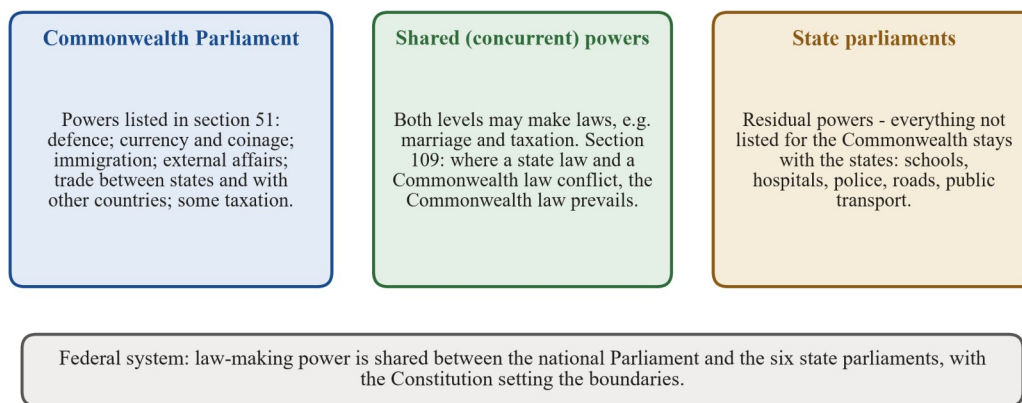


Diagram showing how law-making power is divided between the Commonwealth and the states

Part 2 — What the Constitution upholds and enables (VC2HC10K01.E03)

The Constitution is the basis of Australia's democratic institutions. E03 asks you to investigate the *extent* to which it upholds them — so this part states both what the text secures and what it leaves to other sources.

Australia's constitutional monarchy

King Charles III - King of Australia and head of state. The Crown is the formal source of executive power.



chosen on the advice of the Prime Minister

Governor-General: Sam Mostyn AC - the 28th Governor-General, sworn in on 1 July 2024. She performs most of the King's constitutional duties.

In a constitutional monarchy, the powers of the Crown are exercised under the Constitution and by convention, almost always on the advice of elected ministers. Each state also has its own Governor as the Crown's representative.

Diagram showing the King, the Governor-General and what a constitutional monarchy means

Constitutional monarchy. Australia's head of state is King Charles III, King of Australia. Because Australia is a **constitutional monarchy** — a monarchy in which the monarch's powers are limited by a constitution and by convention — the King's powers are exercised under the Constitution and, by long-standing convention, on the advice of elected ministers. In practice, most of the King's Australian duties are performed by the Governor-General, Sam Mostyn AC, the 28th Governor-General, sworn in on 1 July 2024. Each state likewise has its own Governor.

A federal parliamentary system with elected legislatures. Section 1 vests the Commonwealth's law-making power in a Parliament of three parts: the King, a Senate and a House of Representatives. A parliament with two houses is called **bicameral**. The Senate (section 7) is composed of senators directly chosen by the people of each state; the House of Representatives (section 24) is composed of members directly chosen by the people, from electorates of roughly equal enrolment — 151 members and 76 senators today. The same federal idea runs through the states: each state keeps its own elected parliament. By **convention** — an unwritten rule of political practice that is followed as if it were law — the government must hold the confidence of the lower house, which is what makes the system responsible as well as representative.

The Parliament of the Commonwealth

The Federal Parliament is bicameral - it has two chambers. The King, the Senate and the House of Representatives together make up the Parliament.

The Senate

76 senators: twelve from each state and two from each territory. It was designed as a states' house, giving the smaller states an equal voice.

The House of Representatives

151 members from electorates of roughly equal enrolment. The party or group of parties with majority support forms the government.

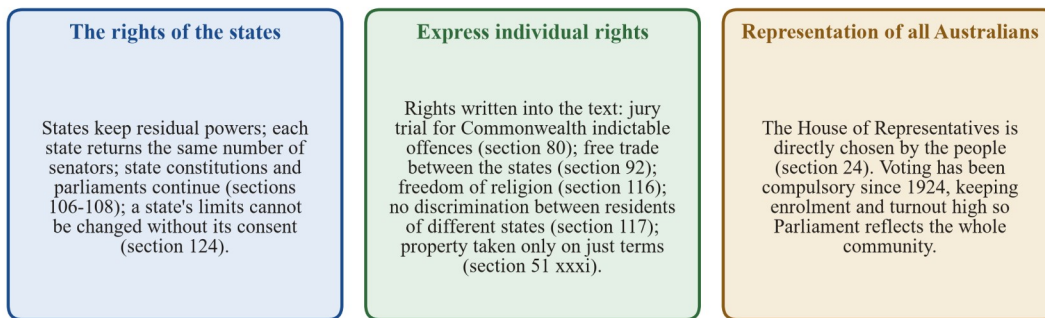
Roles of Parliament: make and change laws; approve taxes and government spending; hold the government to account; represent the Australian people.

Diagram showing the two chambers of the Federal Parliament and their roles

Protection of states' rights and individual rights. The Constitution protects the states as states: they keep their residual powers; each state returns the same number of senators; state constitutions and parliaments continue (sections 106-108); and a state's limits cannot be changed without its consent (section 124). For individuals, the Constitution contains a short list of **express rights** — rights written into the text itself: trial by jury for serious Commonwealth offences (section 80); free trade and movement between the states (section 92); freedom of religion (section 116); no discrimination between residents of different states (section 117); and property may be acquired by the Commonwealth only on just terms (section 51(xxxi)). The list is short — Australia has no national bill of rights in the Constitution, so much rights protection comes from statutes and the common law, which other sections of this book examine.

Representation of the interests of all Australians. Because the House of Representatives must be 'directly chosen by the people' (section 24), every adult citizen's vote counts towards choosing the government. Voting and enrolment have been compulsory in Commonwealth elections since 1924, which keeps enrolment and turnout high — typically above 90 per cent of enrolled electors — so Parliament is chosen by nearly the whole adult community rather than by a motivated few. The High Court has treated representative government as a constitutional requirement: in *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520 it held that the Constitution's system of representative government implies a freedom of political communication, because people cannot choose their representatives freely unless they can discuss politics freely.

What the Constitution upholds



These protections work alongside conventions and High Court interpretation, which give the text its practical meaning.

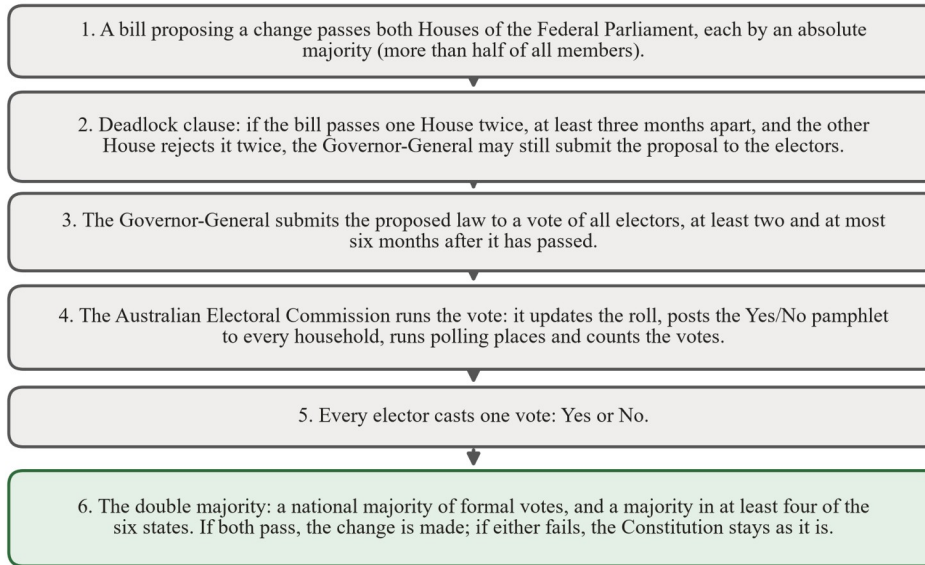
Diagram showing how the Constitution upholds states' rights, express individual rights and representation

The *extent* question, answered plainly: the Constitution provides the basis — it creates the institutions, divides the powers and writes down key protections — but it is only the basis. Much of Australia's democracy rests beside the text: on convention (the Governor-General acts on advice; the government answers to the House), on statutes (the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* sets out enrolment and compulsory voting), and on High Court interpretation (for example *Amalgamated Society of Engineers v Adelaide Steamship Co Ltd* (1920) 28 CLR 128 on the reach of Commonwealth powers, and *Lange* on representative government). A complete account of Australian democracy must therefore cite the text and these sources together.

Part 3 — How the Constitution changes: section 128 (VC2HC10K01.E02)

The Constitution is **entrenched** — that is, it cannot be changed by an ordinary act of Parliament, but only by the special process in section 128, which ends in a **referendum**: a vote in which electors decide Yes or No to a proposed law. Importantly, only the Federal Parliament can start the process; there is no way for citizens to force a referendum by petition. The steps are set out below.

How the Constitution can be changed: section 128



Flow chart showing the six steps of the section 128 process for changing the Constitution

The deciding test is the **double majority**: the proposed law must win a majority of formal votes across Australia, and a majority of Yes votes in at least four of the six states. Territory votes count towards the national total but not towards the states' test. If a proposal would reduce a state's representation in Parliament or alter its limits, a majority of that state's electors must also approve it.

Section 128 requires a double majority

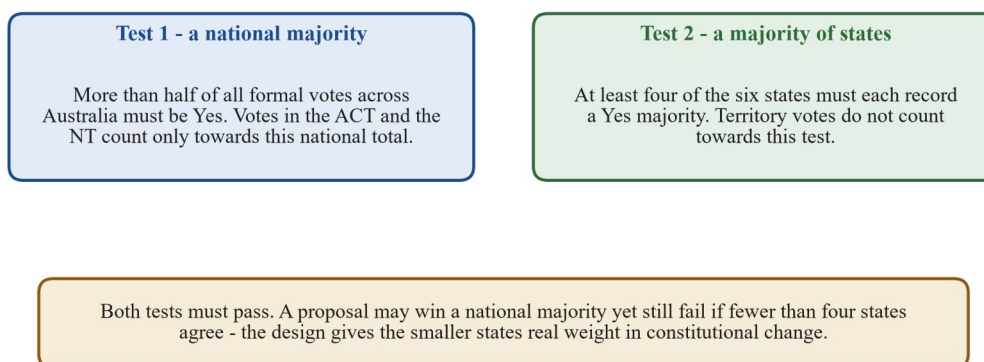


Diagram showing the two tests of the double majority

The **Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)**, the independent statutory authority that runs Commonwealth elections, also runs referendums. Its jobs include maintaining the electoral roll,

posting to every household a pamphlet containing the proposed law together with the Yes and No cases (as required by the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984*), running polling places in Australia and overseas, counting the votes and declaring the results for each state, territory and the nation.

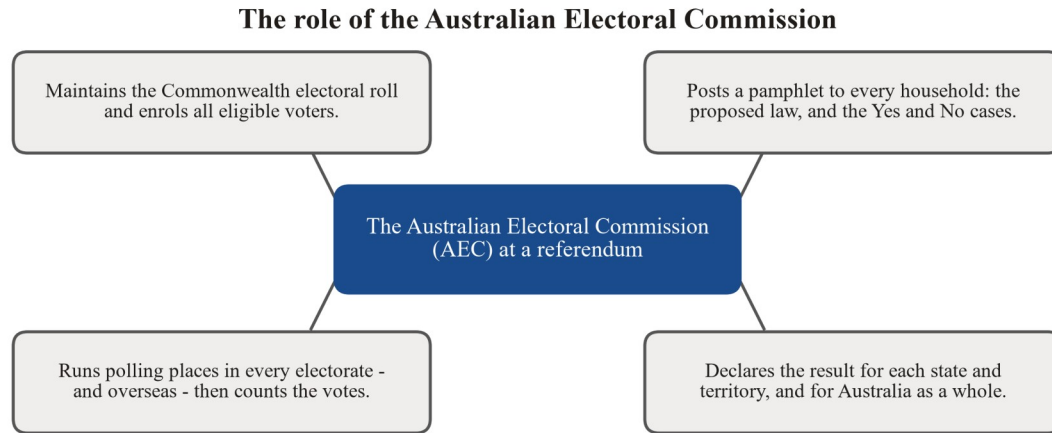


Diagram showing four roles of the Australian Electoral Commission at a referendum

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a constitution that can only be amended by referendum? The strongest arguments on each side are set out below; note that both sides agree about how section 128 works and differ about how to weigh its effects.

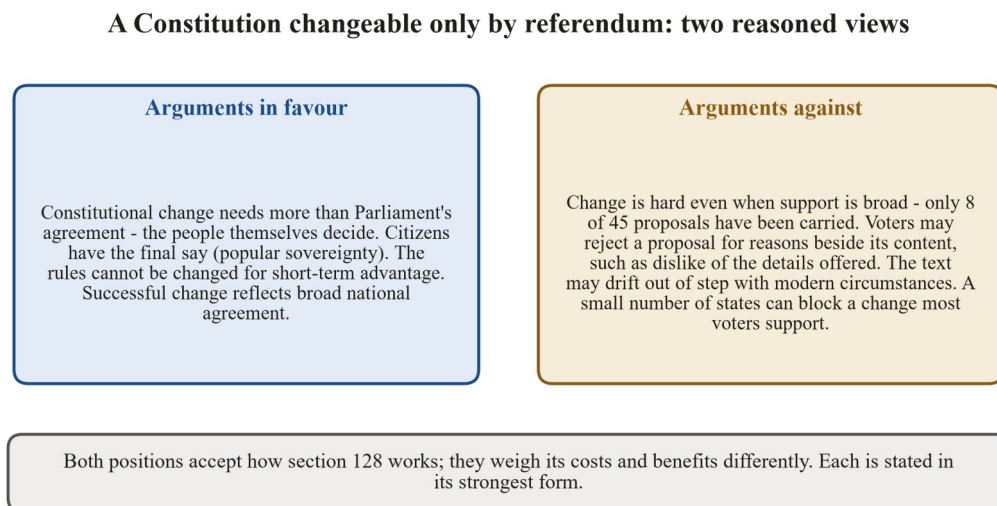


Diagram presenting two reasoned views about changing the Constitution only by referendum

In favour: change requires more than parliamentary agreement, so the rules of politics cannot be altered by the politicians alone for short-term advantage; citizens hold the final say, which is a practical expression of popular sovereignty; and successful change reflects a broad national

consensus, giving the Constitution stability and legitimacy. Against: change is hard even when support is broad, so the text may drift out of step with modern circumstances; voters may reject a proposal for reasons beside its content, such as dislike of the details offered or distrust of the government proposing it; and a small number of states, or a narrow national margin, can block a change that most voters support. Whether you judge the design well or badly depends on which of those effects you weigh most heavily — which is exactly the assessment E04 asks you to make.

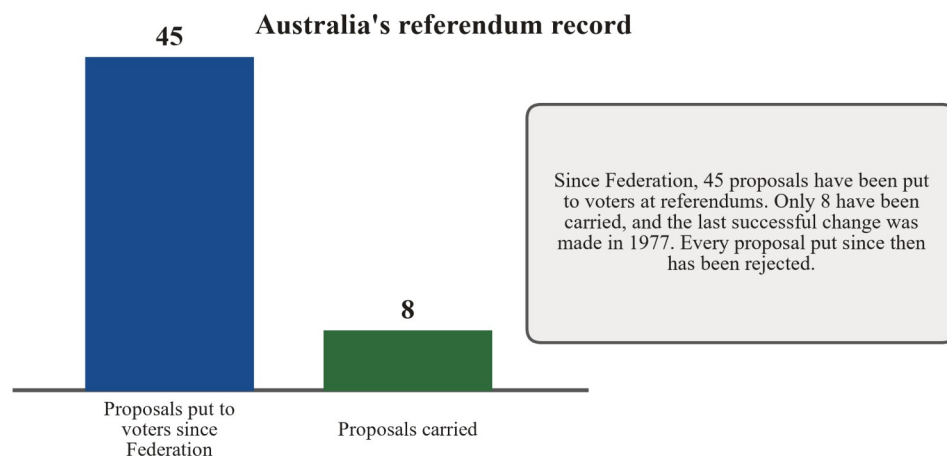
Part 4 — Effectiveness and popular sovereignty (VC2HC10K01.E04)

Two terms in E04 need careful definition before they can be used.

Popular sovereignty is a contested term, and writers use it in more than one sense. In this section the term is used in the sense the High Court has given it in its cases on representative government (for example *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520): the idea that the people are the ultimate source of political authority, and that government must answer to them at the ballot box. Other writers use the term more widely, to mean that the people may act directly at any time, outside Parliament and the courts. That wider sense is noted here but not used, because section 128 gives the people a final say, not a free-standing power to act.

Effectiveness is a frame-dependent word: an answer to ‘how effective is the process?’ depends on the criteria you state. Three workable criteria are: (1) how often proposed changes succeed; (2) how well the process protects the Constitution from change by a temporary majority (stability); and (3) the degree to which the process gives the people the final say (popular sovereignty). A fair assessment names its criteria before it judges.

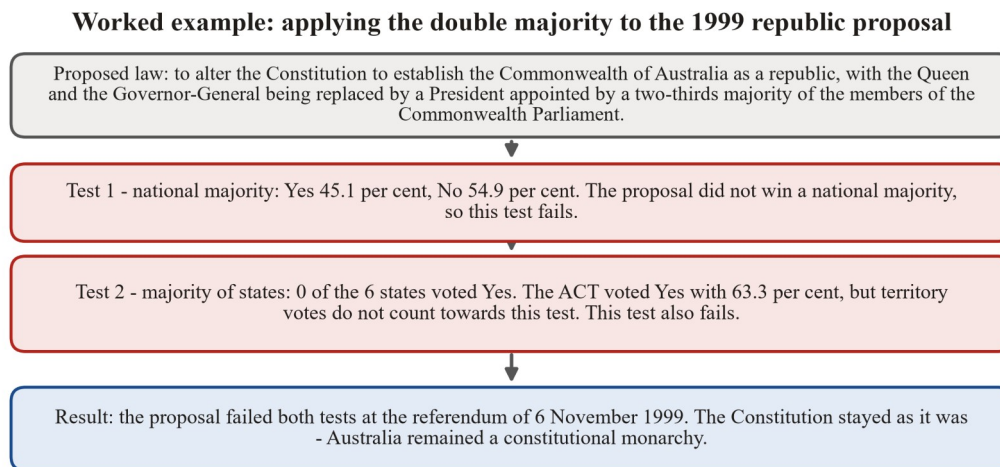
The record supplies the facts. Since Federation, 45 proposals have been put to Australian voters at referendums; only 8 have been carried, and the last successful changes were made in 1977. Every proposal put since then has been rejected.



Bar chart comparing proposals put to voters since Federation with proposals carried

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 'Referendums' (retrieved 26 August 2026).

The **Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) 1999** shows the process at work on a major proposal. Put to voters on 6 November 1999, it asked whether Australia should become a republic with the Queen and the Governor-General replaced by a President appointed by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Commonwealth Parliament. It failed both tests of the double majority: nationally, Yes won 45.1 per cent against No's 54.9 per cent; and no state recorded a Yes majority (0 of 6), with Victoria closest at 49.8 per cent Yes. The ACT voted Yes at 63.3 per cent, but territory votes count only towards the national test. The Constitution therefore stayed as it was, and Australia remained a constitutional monarchy.



Source: Australian Electoral Commission, official results of the 1999 referendum.

Worked example applying the double majority tests to the 1999 republic proposal

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, official results of the 1999 referendum (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Assessing the process against the three criteria: on criterion 1, the process rarely succeeds — 8 of 45 proposals carried, and none since 1977 — so it is a hard process to use. On criterion 2, that hardness is the design: change requires broad national and federal agreement, which protects the rules of politics from a temporary majority and gives the Constitution long-term stability. On criterion 3, the people always hold the final say over any change, which strongly supports popular sovereignty in the sense used here — with one real limit: because only Parliament can start a change, the people's sovereignty under section 128 is a power to refuse or approve, not a power to propose. A well-reasoned assessment holds these findings together: the same feature (the double majority) is the process's strength under one criterion and its weakness under another, which is why informed people weigh it differently.

Worked examples

Example 1 — Applying the double majority to the 1999 republic referendum (scaffolded)

Task: Using the official results, decide whether the 1999 republic proposal satisfied each test of the double majority.

Step 1 — State Test 1 (national majority). Nationally, Yes won 45.1 per cent and No won 54.9 per cent. A majority is more than 50 per cent, so 45.1 per cent fails Test 1.

Step 2 — State Test 2 (majority of states). The state results were: New South Wales No (Yes 46.4%), Victoria No (Yes 49.8%), Queensland No (Yes 32.9%), Western Australia No (Yes 34.2%), South Australia No (Yes 30.6%), Tasmania No (Yes 40.4%). That is 0 of 6 states voting Yes, so Test 2 fails. (The ACT voted Yes at 63.3 per cent, but territory votes do not count towards the states' test.)

Step 3 — Conclude. Both tests failed, so the proposal was rejected and the Constitution was unchanged. Note the logic: even a proposal that wins the national test can still fail Test 2 — the double majority requires both.

Example 2 — Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of referendum-only change (scaffolded)

Task: 'Section 128 makes the Constitution too hard to change.' Show how to reason about this claim without taking sides.

Step 1 — Name the criterion. State what 'too hard' would mean. Using criterion 1 (how often change succeeds), the record is 8 carried of 45 proposals, with nothing carried since 1977 — a success rate of under one in five.

Step 2 — Steelman the claim. The strongest version is not 'change is rare' but 'change is rare even when widely supported': voters may reject a proposal for reasons beside its content (dislike of details, distrust of the proposer), and a minority of states can block a change most Australians support, as in 1999 when every state voted No while a large national debate showed strong support for considering change.

Step 3 — Steelman the opposite claim. The strongest answer is that the difficulty is the point: the Constitution sets the rules of politics, so changing it should require more than a temporary parliamentary majority; the double majority forces broad national and federal consensus, and a stable rulebook is itself a public good.

Step 4 — Weigh and conclude, marking the frame. A model conclusion: 'Measured by how often change succeeds, the process is very hard to use; measured by stability and protection from temporary majorities, that same hardness is the design working as intended. Whether s 128 is "too hard" therefore depends on which effect the writer weighs most.' The reasoning is marked, not the conclusion — which is what E02's discussion requires.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Look at the compromise diagram. Name the two compromises the authors of the Constitution made, one about seats in Parliament and one about power. (*Hint: which house was each colony group given?*)

Q2. Match each institution with the constitutional fact that secures it: (a) constitutional monarchy; (b) a bicameral Federal Parliament; (c) equal representation of the states in one house;

(d) continuation of state parliaments. (*Hint: your answers are in Part 2 — for example, ‘the King is head of state, with powers exercised under the Constitution and on advice’.*)

Q3. The steps of section 128 below are out of order. Rewrite them in the correct order. (a) The AEC runs the vote and counts it. (b) A bill proposing the change passes both houses by an absolute majority. (c) The result is checked against the double majority. (d) The Governor-General submits the proposal to the electors, 2-6 months later. (e) Every elector votes Yes or No. (*Hint: use the process flow chart.*)

Q4. Give two jobs the AEC performs at a referendum, and name the Act that requires the Yes and No cases to be posted to every household. (*Hint: AEC role diagram.*)

Q5. Match each scenario to the express right that most directly applies (sections 80, 92, 116, 117): (a) A Queensland resident is charged in a Victorian court simply for being a Queensland resident. (b) A Commonwealth law abolishes jury trials for serious Commonwealth offences. (c) A Commonwealth law establishes a national religion. (d) A state charges a fee on goods crossing its border from another state.

Q6. A proposal wins 51.2 per cent of the national formal vote. In the states, Yes wins in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, and loses in South Australia and Tasmania; the ACT and the NT both vote Yes. Apply both tests of the double majority and state the result. (*Hint: do territory votes count towards Test 2?*)

Unscaffolded

Q7. Explain why the authors of the Constitution had to compromise, using one specific example from the conventions.

Q8. The Constitution can only be amended by referendum. Discuss one advantage and one disadvantage of this design, giving a reason for each.

Q9. ‘The Constitution upholds representative government.’ Discuss the extent to which this is true, referring to at least two of: section 24; compulsory voting since 1924; the implied freedom of political communication (*Lange*); and convention.

Q10. Evaluate the effectiveness of the process of constitutional change, using the referendum record and the 1999 republic proposal. State the criterion or criteria you are using before you judge.

Source-based inquiry

Source A — Section 128 of the Australian Constitution, in simplified language (see diagram).

Source A - Section 128 of the Australian Constitution (in simplified language)

Section 128 - Mode of altering the Constitution

A proposed law to alter this Constitution must be passed by an absolute majority of each House of the Parliament, and between two and six months after it has passed it must be submitted to the electors.

If one House passes the proposed law twice, with at least three months between, and the other House rejects it, the Governor-General may nevertheless submit the proposed law to the electors.

When a proposed law is submitted, every elector votes once. If it is approved by a majority of the electors in a majority of the States, and also by a majority of all the electors in Australia, it shall be presented to the King for the King's assent.

If the proposed law would reduce the number of senators or members of the House of Representatives for a State, or alter the limits of a State, it shall not become law unless a majority of the electors voting in that State also approve it.

Source: Constitution of Australia, section 128, as altered by the Constitution Alteration (Referendums) 1977. Simplified for study.

Source A: section 128 of the Constitution set out in simplified language

- I1.** According to Source A, who may begin a change to the Constitution, and what majority is required in each House?
- I2.** Source A requires the proposed law to be submitted to the electors not less than two nor more than six months after it has passed. Suggest one reason the authors set a time limit rather than leaving the timing open.
- I3.** Source A requires a majority of electors in a majority of the States as well as a national majority. Explain one purpose of this second requirement.
- I4.** A student claims: 'Source A shows that the people, not the Parliament, have the final say over the Constitution.' Assess this claim using evidence from the source.

Answers

Q1. (1) The representation compromise: a House of Representatives divided by population (satisfying the larger colonies) and a Senate with equal state representation (satisfying the smaller colonies). (2) The division-of-power compromise: the Commonwealth received listed powers in section 51 while the states kept residual powers.

Q2. (a) The King is head of state, with the Crown's powers exercised under the Constitution and by convention on advice, largely through the Governor-General. (b) Section 1 vests legislative power in a Parliament of the King, a Senate and a House of Representatives. (c) Section 7: each original state has the same number of senators. (d) Sections 106-108 continue the state constitutions and parliaments.

Q3. b, d, a, e, c — the bill passes both houses (b); the Governor-General submits it to the electors 2-6 months later (d); the AEC runs the vote (a); electors vote Yes or No (e); the result is checked against the double majority (c). (The deadlock clause, not shown, allows step d even if one house twice rejects the bill.)

Q4. Any two of: maintaining the electoral roll and enrolment; posting the pamphlet with the proposed law and the Yes and No cases; running polling places in Australia and overseas; counting and declaring the results. The pamphlet is required by the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984*.

Q5. (a) Section 117 (no discrimination based on state residence). (b) Section 80 (jury trial for serious Commonwealth offences). (c) Section 116 (freedom of religion). (d) Section 92 (free trade and movement between the states).

Q6. Test 1 passes (51.2% > 50%). Test 2 passes: 4 of the 6 states voted Yes. The ACT and NT Yes votes count only towards Test 1. Result: the proposal is carried.

Q7. Model points: the colonies agreed a union was useful (defence, one market, immigration) but the smaller colonies feared being permanently outvoted, and each colony wanted to keep control of local matters; so agreement required compromise — for example, the larger colonies accepted an equal-state Senate in exchange for a population-based House, and the colonies accepted a Commonwealth with listed powers while keeping their residual powers.

Q8. Model points: advantage — change requires broad popular consent, so the rules of politics are protected from a temporary parliamentary majority and citizens hold the final say (popular sovereignty); disadvantage — change is difficult even with broad support (8 of 45 carried; none since 1977), because voters may reject a proposal for reasons beside its content and a minority of states can block it, so the text may fall out of step with modern circumstances.

Q9. Model points: to a large extent — section 24 requires the House to be directly chosen by the people; compulsory enrolment and voting since 1924 keep turnout above 90 per cent of enrolled electors; *Lange* holds that representative government implies a freedom of political communication. To a limited extent — much of responsible government (for example, that the Governor-General acts on advice and the government answers to the House) rests on convention rather than the text, and the detail of the franchise and enrolment rests on statute, so representation is secured by the text together with convention, statute and interpretation.

Q10. Model points: state the criterion first. Criterion 1 (success rate): 8 of 45 carried and none since 1977, and the 1999 republic failed both tests despite a large national campaign — the process is hard to use. Criterion 2 (stability): the same hardness forces broad national and federal consensus and protects the rulebook from temporary majorities — the design working as intended. Criterion 3 (popular sovereignty): the people always hold the final say, though they cannot initiate a change, so the process supports popular sovereignty as a power of approval and refusal. A strong answer holds more than one criterion at once and notes that the double majority is both the strength and the weakness of the process.

I1. The Parliament: a proposed law must be passed by an absolute majority of each House (or, under the deadlock clause, passed twice by one House while the other rejects it). Citizens cannot begin the process.

I2. Model reasons: a minimum of two months allows time for the Yes and No cases to reach electors and for informed debate; a maximum of six months prevents a government from delaying or shelving a vote it has promised, and keeps the debate about the proposal rather than about changed circumstances.

I3. Model reasons: it protects the federal character of the union — the smaller states cannot be overridden by a national majority concentrated in the two or three largest states; it forces proposed changes to have broad support across the federation, not just in the most populous cities and states.

I4. The claim is partly correct. Correct: no change can take effect without a majority of electors nationally and in a majority of states, so the people hold the final say. Limited: Source A also shows that only a proposed law passed by Parliament (or the deadlock clause) reaches the electors, so the people may refuse or approve but cannot propose — the final say is real, but the agenda is Parliament's.

The processes through which government policy is shaped, developed and implemented

Content description VC2HC10K02 — the processes through which government policy is shaped, developed and implemented, including the role of political parties, interest groups, the media and legislative processes.

This section draws on elaborations VC2HC10K02.E01 (charting the development of a policy from initial idea to enacted legislation), VC2HC10K02.E02 (investigating political parties', interest groups' and media organisations' public viewpoint on one contemporary issue) and VC2HC10K02.E03 (evaluating whether policy can effectively resolve a contemporary issue).

Theory

What is public policy? A **policy** is a plan of action a government chooses and puts into effect to deal with a problem. **Public policy** is the set of those choices, made by government, about how a community is run and who is helped or affected. The Victorian Curriculum uses the term but does not define it, so this section treats *public policy* as **the choices a government makes, and the laws, spending and programs it uses to act on them**. A policy becomes real when it is written into law (an Act), funded in the budget, and carried out by departments and agencies.

Who shapes policy? Policy is not made by government alone. Four shapers matter most.

Four shapers of government policy

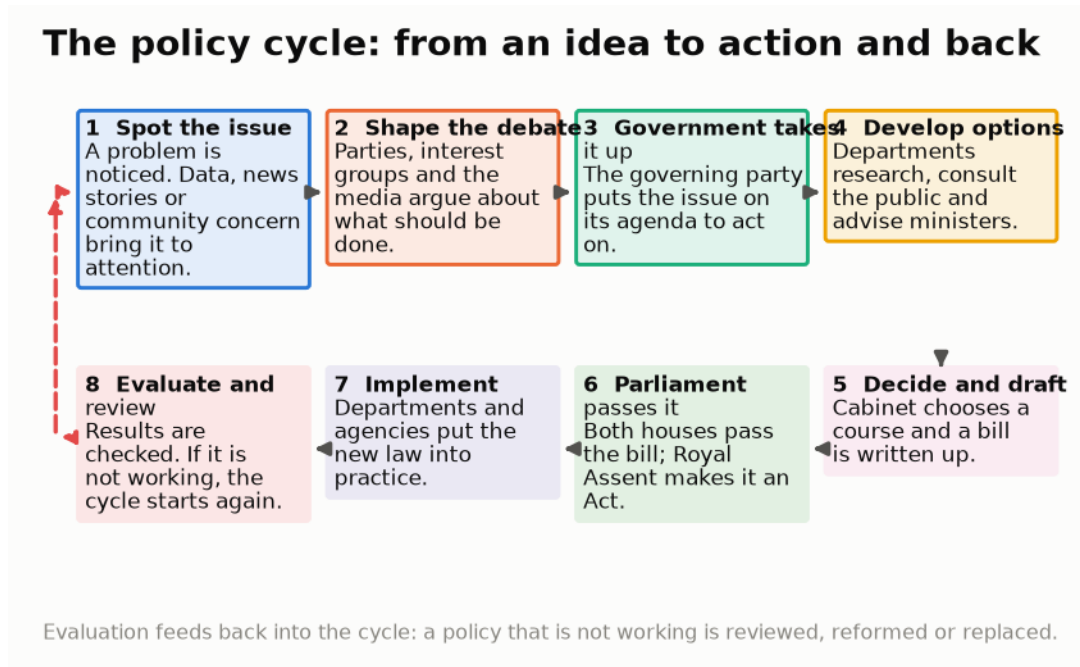
Shaper	Who they are	How they shape policy
Political parties	Organised groups that aim to win government and put their ideas into action.	Develop policy platforms; the governing party decides what to pursue; opposition parties criticise and offer alternatives.
Interest groups	Organisations pressing for a particular cause or a group's interests; they do not seek to govern.	Lobby, run campaigns, give evidence to inquiries, and mobilise members and the public.
The media	News outlets: television, radio, newspapers and online news.	Report issues, set what the public talks about, question the government, and publish viewpoints.
Legislative processes	The steps Parliament follows to make law.	Give bills scrutiny: readings, debate, committee review and votes in both houses.

An interest group is a subject term. In this section it means an organised group that tries to influence policy without seeking to be the government.

Four shapers of government policy: political parties, interest groups, the media, and legislative processes, with who they are and how each shapes policy.

A **political party** is an organised group that aims to win government and put its ideas into action. An **interest group** is an organised group that tries to influence policy without seeking to be the government (for example a health body or a business group). The **media** are the news outlets that report issues and publish viewpoints. The **legislative processes** are the steps Parliament follows to turn a proposal into law. Together these shapers decide what is talked about, what the government treats as important, and what finally becomes law.

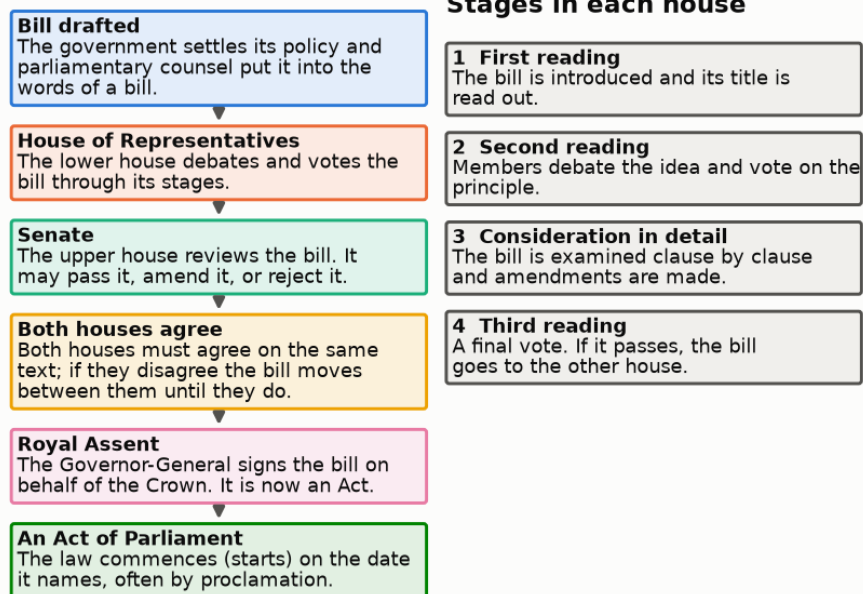
From idea to law: the policy cycle. A policy usually travels through a repeating loop of eight steps, from first noticing a problem to checking whether the response works.



The policy cycle as a loop of eight steps: spot the issue, shape the debate, government takes it up, develop options, decide and draft, parliament passes it, implement, then evaluate and review, with evaluation feeding back to the start.

How a bill becomes an Act. The legislative process is where a policy becomes law. A proposal is drafted as a **bill**, then must pass both houses of Parliament in the same form before receiving Royal Assent and becoming an **Act**.

How a bill becomes an Act in the Australian Parliament



Prepared by ClassBasics from the Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Note: most bills start in the House of Representatives. The Senate has equal power except that it cannot amend money bills.

Flowchart of how a bill becomes an Act in the Australian Parliament, from drafting, through the House of Representatives and Senate, to both houses agreeing, Royal Assent and commencement, with the four stages in each house listed.

Case study: vaping. To see these processes at work, this section follows one real, recent issue: **vaping** (the use of e-cigarettes, also called vapes). Australia introduced a series of laws on vaping between 2021 and 2024. The timeline below shows the key dated steps.

Australia's vaping reforms, 2021 to 2024



Prepared by ClassBasics from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (health.gov.au) and the Federal Register of Legislation, retrieved 26 August 2026.

Timeline of Australia's vaping reforms from October 2021 to October 2024, including the prescription model, the import ban on disposable vapes, the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024 receiving Royal Assent, and the pharmacy-only supply model.

The vaping case also shows **federalism** at work: the Commonwealth and the states each handle a different part of the same problem.

Who does what: Commonwealth and state roles in vaping policy

Australian Government

The Commonwealth controls therapeutic goods; sets product rules; bans the import, manufacture and supply of non-compliant vapes; and runs the prescription and pharmacy model through the Therapeutic Goods Act and the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

State and territory governments (including Victoria)

Enforce rules on retail sale and possession; set the places people may not vape, such as schools, hospitals and public transport; police and inspectors apply the penalties.

Two levels of government share responsibility for one issue. This division of labour is an example of federalism.

Two boxes showing the division of labour in vaping policy: the Australian Commonwealth Government controls therapeutic goods, product rules and the prescription and pharmacy model, while state and territory governments including Victoria enforce retail sale and possession rules and where people may not vape.

Viewpoints on the issue. Political parties, interest groups and media organisations each put a public view on vaping policy. The table below reports the range of those viewpoints. This book reports them and takes no side; weighing them is your task.

Public viewpoints on vaping policy

Actor	Their public viewpoint
Australian Labor Party (government)	Drove the 2024 reforms; framed vaping as a threat to children's health and said the goal was to stop vapes reaching kids.
Liberal-National Coalition (opposition)	Backed a tough crackdown; pressed for strong enforcement and penalties, and warned about a black market.
Australian Greens	Supported strong public-health action and urged the government to go further on flavours and advertising.
Public-health interest groups (for example the Australian Medical Association and Cancer Council Australia)	Backed strong restrictions; said youth vaping was a serious health risk and that flavours and bright packaging drew young people in.
Some retailers and harm-reduction voices	Warned that bans could hurt honest shops and push sales underground, and noted that vapes help some adult smokers quit.
Media organisations	Reported rising youth vaping and gave the crackdown wide coverage; some commentators backed the ban while others asked whether bans can be enforced.

These are the kinds of viewpoints in Australian public debate. This book reports them and takes no side; judging them is your task in this section.

Table of public viewpoints on vaping policy from the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal-National Coalition, the Australian Greens, public-health interest groups, some retailers and harm-reduction voices, and media organisations.

Can policy effectively resolve an issue? Whether a policy “works” is a **contested** question: people weigh different things. The Victorian Curriculum uses the phrase *effectively resolve* but does not define it, so this section judges a policy against this checklist, and asks you to state which questions you think matter most.

Does a policy effectively resolve an issue? A checklist

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Does it address the cause?
Is it aimed at what actually drives the problem, not just its symptoms? | 2 Can it be enforced?
Are there the powers, people and money to make it happen in practice? |
| 3 Do benefits outweigh costs?
Weigh the good effects against the costs and any unwanted effects. | 4 Is it fair and lawful?
Does it treat people fairly and stay within the law and people's rights? |
| 5 Does the community support it?
Will most people follow it, or will they resist or ignore it? | 6 What does the evidence show?
Is there data showing whether the problem got better or worse? |

Effectively resolve is a contested term: people weigh these questions differently. State which questions you think matter most before you judge a policy.

Checklist of six questions for evaluating whether a policy effectively resolves an issue: does it address the cause, can it be enforced, do benefits outweigh costs, is it fair and lawful, does the community support it, and what does the evidence show.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded (E01)

Chart the development of Australia's vaping policy from initial idea to enacted legislation, using the policy cycle.

Working	Comment
Spot the issue. Health data and news reports showed a sharp rise in young people vaping.	The idea starts with evidence and public concern, not with a law.
Shape the debate. Health groups (e.g. the Australian Medical Association) pressed for action; parties and the media argued about what to do.	Interest groups and the media put the issue on the public agenda.
Government takes it up. The Australian Government made vaping a priority and announced a reform package.	The governing party decides to act.
Develop options. The Department of Health and Aged Care researched options, consulted the public, and advised ministers.	The public service gives expert advice.
Decide and draft. Cabinet agreed on a course; the changes were written into a bill.	A policy choice becomes a draft law.
Parliament passes it. The <i>Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024</i> passed both houses and received Royal Assent on 28 June 2024.	The legislative process turns the bill into an Act.
Implement. From 1 July and 1 October 2024 the bans and the pharmacy-only model took effect; states enforce retail and possession	Departments and agencies put the law into practice.

rules.

Example 2 — unscaffolded (E03)

Evaluate whether the vaping policy can effectively resolve youth vaping. Apply two checklist questions and state your frame.

Model response. I will weigh two questions from the checklist most heavily: *can it be enforced?* and *does it address the cause?* (This is my frame, and a different frame could reach a different conclusion.) On the cause, the policy acts on part of it: banning disposable and flavoured vapes removes the products that drew young people in, but it does not remove the demand for them, and an illegal market remains. On enforcement, the Commonwealth has real powers at the border and over pharmacies, but illegal sales are hard to police, and the Commonwealth and the states must work together on retail and possession rules. On balance, the policy can reduce youth vaping but is unlikely to fully resolve it on its own; its effect depends on how well the bans are enforced and on whether demand falls. I could have reached a different judgement by weighing other checklist questions, such as community support — which is why the frame must be stated.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define, in your own words, (a) public policy and (b) an interest group.

Q2. List the eight steps of the policy cycle in order, starting with “spot the issue”.

Q3. Name the two houses of the Australian Parliament and the four stages a bill passes through in each house.

Q4. Match each description to a shaper (political party, interest group, the media): (a) reports issues and publishes viewpoints; (b) aims to win government; (c) presses for a cause without seeking to govern.

Q5. For vaping policy, give (a) one role of the Commonwealth Government and (b) one role of a state government such as Victoria.

Q6. State the date the *Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024* received Royal Assent, and what Royal Assent means.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Explain how one interest group helped shape the vaping debate in Australia. (2 marks)

Q8. Explain the difference between the role of the government and the role of the opposition in shaping policy, using the vaping issue as an example. (3 marks)

Q9. Explain why a bill must pass both houses and receive Royal Assent before it becomes law. (2 marks)

Q10. Evaluate whether the vaping policy can effectively resolve youth vaping. Apply two questions from the checklist and state your frame. (4 marks)

Source-based inquiry

Use **Source 1** (below) to answer the questions.

Source 1 - Two views on the vaping ban

View A - supports the ban

As a parent, I have seen vapes marketed to kids with bright colours and sweet flavours. This is a health threat to young people. Clear rules and strong action are the only way to stop it.

View B - questions the ban

As a small shop owner, I worry a ban punishes honest businesses and pushes sales underground, where there are no checks at all. Some adult smokers also tell me vapes helped them quit.

This source was written for this book to represent viewpoints in Australian public debate about the vaping reforms (2021-2024). It is a teaching source, not a real quotation.

Source 1, two teaching views on the vaping ban: View A from a parent supporting the ban to protect young people, and View B from a small shop owner questioning whether a ban pushes sales underground.

S1. (a) State the viewpoint in View A and one reason given for it. (2 marks) (b) State the main concern raised in View B. (1 mark) (c) Identify one assumption behind each view. (2 marks) (d) Name the checklist question each view speaks to most directly. (2 marks) (e) Give your own judgement on the vaping ban, stating which checklist questions you weigh most. (3 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) The choices a government makes, and the laws, spending and programs it uses to act on them. (b) An organised group that tries to influence policy without seeking to be the government. **Q2.** Spot the issue; shape the debate; government takes it up; develop options; decide and draft; parliament passes it; implement; evaluate and review. **Q3.** House of Representatives and Senate. Stages: first reading, second reading, consideration in detail, third reading. **Q4.** (a) the media; (b) political party; (c) interest group. **Q5.** (a) e.g. controls therapeutic goods and runs the prescription/pharmacy model. (b) e.g. enforces retail sale and possession rules and where people may not vape. **Q6.** 28 June 2024. Royal Assent is the Governor-General signing the bill on behalf of the Crown, after which it is an Act (law). **Q7.** See solutions. **Q8.** See solutions. **Q9.** See solutions. **Q10.** See solutions. **S1.** See solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. The Australian Medical Association (an interest group) published reports and spoke publicly about the health risks of youth vaping, which kept the issue in the news and added pressure on the government to act. This is an interest group shaping policy by informing the public and lobbying decision-makers. (2 marks: names a group + explains the mechanism.)

Q8. The government (the party or parties in power) decides which policies to pursue and introduces bills; on vaping, the Labor government drove the 2024 reforms. The opposition criticises the government and offers alternatives; on vaping, the Coalition backed a crackdown but pressed for stronger enforcement. Both shape policy, but only the government can introduce and pass the government's bills. (3 marks: government role + opposition role + vaping example.)

Q9. A bill must pass both houses in the same form so that the two houses check and improve it; this is part of the legislative process. Royal Assent (the Governor-General signing on behalf of the Crown) is the final step that turns the passed bill into an Act, a binding law. (2 marks: both houses + Royal Assent.)

Q10. *Model answer.* Frame: I weigh “can it be enforced?” and “does it address the cause?” most. The policy addresses part of the cause by removing the flavoured and disposable products that drew young people in, but demand and a black market remain. It can be enforced at the border and in pharmacies, but illegal sales are hard to police. So the policy can reduce youth vaping but is unlikely to fully resolve it alone. A different frame (for example weighing community support) could reach a different conclusion, which is why the frame must be stated. (4 marks: frame + two criteria applied + balanced conclusion.)

S1. (a) View A supports the ban; reason: vapes were marketed to kids with bright colours and sweet flavours, a health threat to young people. (b) View B worries a ban punishes honest businesses and pushes sales underground with no checks. (c) View A assumes strong rules change behaviour and protect kids; View B assumes a black market will grow and that some adults benefit from vapes. (d) View A speaks to “does it address the cause?” (protecting young people); View B speaks to “can it be enforced?” (underground sales). (e) Any reasoned judgement that states a frame.

The key features and values of Australia’s system of government, compared with at least one other system in the Asia-Pacific region

Content description VC2HC10K03 — the key features and values of Australia’s system of government compared with at least one other democratic or non-democratic system of government in the Asia-Pacific region.

This section draws on elaborations VC2HC10K03.E01 (examining key differences between Australia’s system of government and one other system of government, such as a multi-party democracy versus a one-party state) and VC2HC10K03.E03 (discussing different expressions of democracy across the Asia-Pacific region). VC2HC10K03.E02 is excluded under CONTENT_POLICY Rule 1 and recorded in §2A of TOC.md; the id is retained as a linkage key only and is not taught here.

Theory

Setting the frame. Three words in this section must be framed before they can do any work: *democracy*, *values* and *Asia-Pacific*. The Victorian Curriculum uses all three without defining them, so this section states the working definitions it reasons with.

Democracy. In this section, *democracy* is used in the sense applied by Freedom House in *Freedom in the World* (2025), which rates every country’s political rights and civil liberties each year: **a system of government in which (1) leaders are chosen in regular elections that most adults can vote in and that more than one side really contests; (2) more than one party or group can stand, and an election can change the government; (3) basic freedoms — speech, association and a press free of government control — are protected, so people can form and state political views; and (4) the law binds the rulers as well as the ruled.** Other definitions exist and are not the same as this one. Every check in this section runs on this definition.

Values. A *value* here is a principle a system is designed to uphold: the “why”. The machinery of parliaments, elections and courts is the “how”. Two countries can share a value and carry it with different machinery, so the fair way to compare systems is to ask which values each carries and by which features.

Asia-Pacific. This section takes the region to mean the countries of Asia and the Pacific around Australia, and works with this set: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, China and Myanmar. New Zealand carries the main comparison (E01). The rest show how differently democracies can be built, and what non-democratic systems look like (E03).

Australia’s system, feature by feature. Eight features define the Australian system.

Key features of Australia's system of government

Feature	What it is	Where it comes from
Constitutional monarchy	The head of state is a monarch (King Charles III) represented in Australia by the Governor-General; neither makes policy decisions.	The Constitution (in force from 1 January 1901) and long-followed convention.
Federal system	Power is shared between one national parliament and six state parliaments; Victoria has its own parliament and constitution.	The Constitution lists federal powers; the states keep the rest.
Bicameral parliament	Two houses: the House of Representatives (151 members) and the Senate (76 senators).	Sections 7 and 24 of the Constitution.
Regular, independently run elections	House elections at least every three years, run by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), which is independent of the government.	Constitution section 28; the Commonwealth Electoral Act.
Preferential and compulsory voting	Voters number candidates in order of choice; enrolled citizens must vote. Turnout was 89.8 per cent at the 2022 election.	Commonwealth Electoral Act 1924.
Responsible government	Ministers must sit in parliament, and the government stays in office only while the House of Representatives supports it.	Constitution section 64, applied by convention.
Multi-party competition	Labor, the Liberal-National Coalition, the Greens and others compete; crossbench members can hold the balance of power.	Freedom of association; party registration rules.
Change by referendum only	The Constitution changes only if a majority of voters nationwide and a majority of states approve (a double majority).	Section 128 of the Constitution.

Record of referendums: 45 proposals put to voters since Federation; 8 carried; none since 1977 (Australian Electoral Commission, retrieved 26 August 2026).

Table of eight key features of Australia's system of government: constitutional monarchy, federal system, bicameral parliament of 151 and 76, regular independently run elections, preferential and compulsory voting, responsible government, multi-party competition, and constitutional change by referendum only.

Each feature exists to carry a value. The next table pairs the values the system is designed to uphold with the machinery that carries them.

Values Australia's system is designed to uphold, and the features that carry them

Value	What it means	A feature that upholds it
Rule of law	The law applies to everyone equally, including ministers and the government; courts decide disputes independently.	Independent courts; written limits on power in the Constitution (examined in Chapter 2).
Political equality	One person, one vote, and each vote carries the same weight.	Electorates with roughly equal numbers of enrolled voters; compulsory enrolment.
Representation	Parliament reflects the choices of voters across the country and the states.	The House of Representatives elected by population; the Senate with equal state representation.
Accountability	The government must explain its decisions and can be removed peacefully.	Responsible government and Question Time; Senate scrutiny; regular elections.
Freedom of political speech and association	Citizens may criticise the government, form parties and campaign without being silenced.	The implied freedom of political communication (<i>Lange v ABC</i> , 1997; Section 2B); party registration.
Fairness of elections	The rules are run and enforced by an independent body, not by the government of the day.	The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) draws boundaries, runs polling and counts votes.

A value is the principle a system is designed to uphold; a feature is the machinery that carries it. Different systems can share a value yet carry it with different machinery.

Table pairing six values Australia's system is designed to uphold — rule of law, political equality, representation, accountability, freedom of political speech and association, fairness of elections — with the feature that carries each value.

Comparing Australia with one other system (E01): New Zealand. New Zealand is a natural comparison. It sits in the region, shares Australia's Westminster history and the same head of

state, and Freedom House rates it Free, as it rates Australia. Yet for almost every feature it makes a different choice.

Australia and New Zealand, feature by feature

Feature	Australia	New Zealand	Why the difference matters
State structure	A federation: one national parliament plus six state parliaments.	A unitary state: one national parliament; local councils hold only the powers parliament gives them.	New Zealand has no second layer of law-making below the national level.
Parliament	Bicameral: House of Representatives (151) and Senate (76).	Unicameral: House of Representatives only, usually 120 seats.	New Zealand has no upper house of review; bills pass one chamber.
Head of state	King Charles III, represented by the Governor-General (Sam Mostyn since July 2025).	King Charles III as King of New Zealand, represented by the Governor-General (Dame Cindy Kiro).	Both are constitutional monarchies: the head of state acts on advice and does not govern.
Head of government	Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (Labor), after the election of 3 May 2025.	Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, heading a National-ACT-NZ First coalition since 27 November 2023.	In both systems the prime minister leads because they hold a majority in the lower house.
Voting system	Preferential voting: number all candidates 1, 2, 3... in single-member electorates.	MMP since 1996: each voter gets a party vote and an electorate vote.	MMP matches a party's seats to its party vote share; preferential voting gives each electorate one local member.
Voting duty	Compulsory for enrolled citizens since 1924; turnout 89.8 per cent in 2022.	Voluntary; turnout 78.2 per cent in 2023.	Compulsory voting lifts turnout; in New Zealand parties must persuade voters to attend.
Constitution	One written document (in force 1901). Changes only by referendum: 8 of 45 proposals carried, none since 1977.	No single document: the Constitution Act 1986 plus other statutes and conventions. Most parts change by an ordinary Act of Parliament.	In Australia the people approve every change to the basic rules; in New Zealand parliament itself can change most of them.
Rights protection	A few express rights in the Constitution plus implied freedoms (Section 2B).	The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, an ordinary statute parliament can amend.	Both protect rights, but through different tools and with different limits.

Sources: Australian Constitution ss 7, 24, 128; Australian Electoral Commission; New Zealand Constitution Act 1986; New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2023 official results (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Feature-by-feature comparison table of Australia and New Zealand: state structure, parliament, head of state, head of government, voting system, voting duty, constitution and rights protection, with a note on why each difference matters.

Two of those differences repay a closer look: how the vote is counted, and how the basic rules are changed.

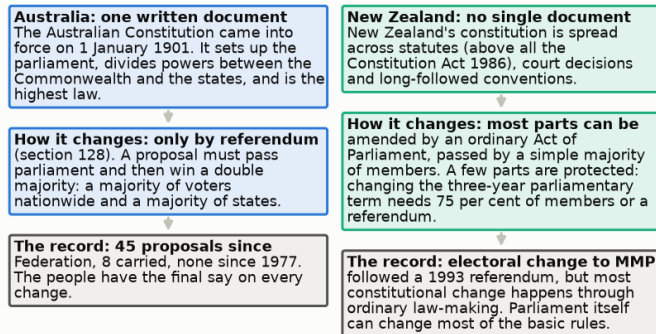
Counting the vote: preferential voting (Australia) and MMP (New Zealand)

Australia: preferential voting (in House of Representatives elections voters number all candidates in order of preference: 1, 2, 3 and so on.)	New Zealand: MMP (mixed member proportional) Each voter gets two votes: a party vote and an electorate vote.
To win a seat, a candidate needs more than half the formal votes.	The electorate vote chooses the local member for the voter's district: the candidate with the most votes wins the seat.
If no candidate has half, the candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and those votes move to each voter's next preference. This repeats until one candidate has more than half.	The party vote decides each party's overall share of the 120 seats. Extra members are taken from the party's list to top up its total.
Result: each electorate gets one local member with majority support.	Result: a party's seat share roughly matches its party vote share, so one party rarely wins a majority alone and coalitions are common.

Both systems hold free elections; they carry the same value with different machinery. Preferential voting gives every electorate a member with majority support. MMP makes the whole parliament match the party vote. Sources: Commonwealth Electoral Act (Australia); Electoral Act 1993 (New Zealand).

Two columns showing how the vote is counted: Australia's preferential voting, where voters number all candidates and the winner needs more than half the votes, and New Zealand's MMP, where each voter has a party vote and an electorate vote so seats match the party vote share.

Two ways to hold the basic rules: written and unwritten constitutions

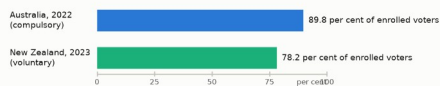


Sources: Australian Constitution s 128; Australian Electoral Commission; New Zealand Constitution Act 1986 ss 15-17; Electoral Act 1993 (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Two columns contrasting Australia's single written constitution, changeable only by referendum with a double majority (8 of 45 proposals carried, none since 1977), with New Zealand's unwritten constitution, where most parts change by an ordinary Act of Parliament.

One result of the different voting duties shows up in turnout. Because Australians must vote, nearly nine in ten enrolled voters did so at the 2022 federal election; in New Zealand, where voting is a choice, about four in five enrolled voters did so in 2023. Neither number is a score. It shows the trade each country makes: Australia trades compulsion for near-universal attendance; New Zealand trades attendance for choice.

Voter turnout at the most recent federal elections



In Australia, enrolled citizens must attend and vote (Commonwealth Electoral Act 1924); in New Zealand voting is a choice. Turnout figures are shares of enrolled voters. Sources: Australian Electoral Commission, 2022 federal election; New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2023 official results (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Bar chart of voter turnout among enrolled voters: Australia 89.8 per cent at the 2022 federal election under compulsory voting, New Zealand 78.2 per cent at the 2023 election where voting is voluntary.

Different expressions of democracy across the Asia-Pacific region (E03). The same values can be carried by very different machinery. Four of the region's democracies express democracy in four different ways.

Four expressions of democracy in the Asia-Pacific region

Country	Head of state	Parliament	Government	Elections
New Zealand	King Charles III, represented by the Governor-General.	One house: the House of Representatives, usually 120 seats.	Prime Minister leads a party or coalition that holds the house; Christopher Luxon since November 2023.	MMP; elections at least every three years; voting is voluntary.
Japan	Emperor Naruhito, a ceremonial monarch.	Two houses: House of Representatives (465) and House of Councillors (248).	Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi (Liberal Democratic Party) since October 2025; the first woman to hold the role.	Regular elections; voting from age 18; voting is voluntary.
India	A president, with a largely ceremonial role.	Two houses: Lok Sabha (543 elected members) and Rajya Sabha.	Prime Minister Narendra Modi (BJP-led alliance) won a third term at the June 2024 election.	About 970 million enrolled voters in 2024; the largest election ever held.
Indonesia	The president is both head of state and head of government.	The DPR (People's Representative Council) has 580 members.	President Prabowo Subianto, directly elected in February 2024; took office on 20 October 2024.	Multi-party elections; voters choose the president directly (since 2004).

All four are multi-party democracies, yet each expresses democracy differently: monarchy or republic, one house or two, prime minister or president. Same values, different machinery.

Table of four expressions of democracy in the Asia-Pacific region — New Zealand, Japan, India and Indonesia — listing each country's head of state, parliament, government and elections, showing monarchy or republic, one house or two, prime minister or president.

Not every system in the region is a democracy, and the curriculum's content description names democratic *and* non-democratic systems as the comparison set. Freedom House's 2025 ratings place the region on a scale from free to not free.

How free are the region's systems? Freedom House 2025 scores



Freedom House rates political rights and civil liberties each year. 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free' are Freedom House's own categories, and the scores are its expert judgements, not measurements. Source: Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Bar chart of Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025 scores for eight Asia-Pacific countries: New Zealand 99, Japan 96 and Australia 95 rated Free; India 63 and Indonesia 56 rated Partly Free; Vietnam 20, China 9 and Myanmar 7 rated Not Free.

Where a one-party state sits. The curriculum's own example of a non-democratic system is the one-party state. The difference from a multi-party democracy is not whether ballots exist, but what an election can change.

Where does power sit? A multi-party democracy and a one-party state

Question	Multi-party democracy (Australia)	One-party state (China)
Parties	Several parties compete for government. Voters can choose between them, and power can change hands at an election.	The Communist Party of China (CPC) holds the leading role; that leadership is written into the constitution itself (Article 1, amended 2018). Smaller parties exist but work under CPC leadership.
Elections	Regular elections decide who governs. A government that loses a majority leaves office.	Elections fill representative bodies at several levels, but they do not offer a choice between competing parties for national power.
Scrutiny of power	Opposition parties, an independent Senate, courts and a free media can question the government.	The party directs the state, and media operate under party rules; there is no elected opposition to replace the leadership.
Changing the government	Leadership changes happen inside the party, not at the ballot box.	Leadership changes happen inside the party, not at the ballot box.

Under the section's working definition, democracy requires elections that can change the government. A system where the government cannot be voted out sits outside that definition. That is a point about definitions, not an insult. Source: Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Article 1 (2018 amendment).

Table contrasting a multi-party democracy (Australia) with a one-party state (China) on parties, elections, scrutiny of power and change of government, sourced to the Chinese constitution's Article 1 as amended in 2018.

The fair way to weigh that model is to put each side in its strongest form before judging either. This book reports both positions and takes no side; weighing them is your task.

Two positions on one-party government, each in its strongest form

Position 1: as its supporters state it One-party rule lets a government plan for decades, not just one election cycle. Decisions can be made and carried out quickly, without the delays of party competition. Supporters point to rapid growth in national wealth and living standards as evidence that the system delivers.	Testing the positions 1. Define the term. What would 'delivers' mean: wealth, freedom, both? 2. Check the evidence. Growth can also happen in multi-party democracies (India, Indonesia), so is one-party rule the cause? 3. Ask what each position costs. Speed without checks; or checks without speed?
Position 2: as its critics state it Without competing parties and free elections, citizens have no peaceful way to remove a government that fails them or harms them. Power stays concentrated; mistakes are hard to correct because criticism is discouraged, and basic freedoms give way to the party's priorities.	The section's frame This section defines democracy by elections that can change the government. On that definition, one-party rule is not a form of democracy. You may still weigh the positions above; your judgement should say which value you weighed most.

Steelmanning: each position is stated the way its own supporters would recognise it, before either is judged. Growth figures and system classifications: World Bank; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2025 (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Four boxes giving two positions on one-party government, each stated in its strongest form — supporters point to long-term planning and fast decisions; critics point to no peaceful way to remove a failing government — plus a box testing the positions and a box stating the section's working definition.

Myanmar, for the record. A third kind of non-democratic system also sits in the region: military rule. The armed forces of Myanmar took power on 1 February 2021, setting aside the government elected in November 2020; Freedom House rates the country Not Free (7 out of 100) in 2025. It is one more expression of the region's range, and one more reason the key comparison question of this section is *what an election can change*.

How to compare fairly. The discipline of this section is three rules. First, define the term before using it: here, democracy means elections that can change the government. Second, separate values from machinery: countries can share a value and differ in machinery, or share machinery and differ in values. Third, state your frame: any judgement of "better" or "worse" must say which value it weighs most.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded (E01)

Compare how Australia and New Zealand carry the value of political equality, using two features from the comparison table.

Working	Comment
Feature 1 — voting duty. In Australia, enrolled citizens must vote; turnout was 89.8 per cent in 2022.	Compulsory voting carries political equality by making every voice attend, not only the most motivated.
Feature 2 — counting. In New Zealand the party vote decides each party's share of the 120 seats; in Australia each electorate returns one member by preferences.	MMP carries a different equality: a party's share of seats matches its share of votes.
Judgement. Both systems aim at political equality; Australia weighs equal attendance, New Zealand weighs matching seats to votes.	Same value, different machinery. On the section's definition both remain democracies: in each, an election can change the government.

Example 2 — unscaffolded (E03)

A classmate claims: “India is not a democracy — its system looks nothing like Australia’s.” Evaluate the claim using the section’s working definition of democracy.

Model response. A claim about a category is tested against the definition, and the definition has four checks: regular elections most adults can vote in; more than one party able to win power; protected political freedoms; and the law binding the rulers. India passes the electoral checks. Its 2024 general election enrolled about 970 million voters — the largest election ever held — contested by many parties, and Indian governments have changed between parties at elections since 1950. On the electoral definition, India is a democracy. The classmate’s error is comparing machinery, not values: India is a republic with a ceremonial president where Australia is a monarchy, and its upper house is not an equal-states house like the Senate. Those are different expressions of democracy, which is exactly what E03 studies. One honest warning: Freedom House rates India Partly Free (63 out of 100) in 2025, citing pressure on its press; that is a warning about how fully the freedoms check is met, not a reason to drop India from the category. A claim can be wrong about a category and still point to a real worry — telling those apart is the skill.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. State the four checks in this section’s working definition of democracy.

Q2. List any four of the eight features of Australia’s system of government shown in the key features table.

Q3. Name New Zealand’s parliament and its voting system, and state how many seats the parliament usually has.

Q4. Match each value to a feature that carries it, using the values table: (a) rule of law; (b) political equality; (c) accountability; (d) fairness of elections.

Q5. (a) State the referendum record shown in the key features table. (b) Which section of the Constitution requires a referendum to change it?

Q6. Using the Freedom House bar chart, name one country rated Free, one rated Partly Free and one rated Not Free.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Identify one key difference between the parliaments of Australia and New Zealand, and state the value each design is meant to serve. (3 marks)

Q8. Explain, using the section's definition, why a one-party state sits outside the category of democracy even though it holds elections. (3 marks)

Q9. "Compulsory voting in Australia and voluntary voting in New Zealand each carry the value of political equality." Give the strongest argument on each side of that statement, then state which you weigh more and why. (4 marks)

Q10. Japan and Australia are both rated Free by Freedom House (2025), yet their systems differ in at least two features. Name two differences and explain why both countries remain democracies on the working definition. (3 marks)

Source-based inquiry

Use **Source 1** (below) to answer the questions.

Source inquiry: two constitutions on where power sits

Source A — Australian Constitution (1900), simplified "The Senate shall be composed of senators for each State, directly chosen by the people of the State..." (section 7) "The House of Representatives shall be composed of members directly chosen by the people of the Commonwealth." (section 24)	Source B — Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Article 1 (2018 amendment), translated "The People's Republic of China is a socialist state. The socialist system is the fundamental system of the People's Republic of China. Leadership of the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics."
What to notice Both houses are 'directly chosen by the people'. The words locate political power with voters, and elections are the mechanism that moves power.	What to notice The text locates leadership of the state in one party and calls that leadership the 'defining feature' of the system. No election is described that could change this.

Both texts are the countries' own constitutional words, quoted and simplified for study. Sources: Australian Constitution ss 7, 24; Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Article 1 (2018 amendment), official translation (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Source 1, two constitutional texts side by side: Source A, sections 7 and 24 of the Australian Constitution (1900) stating that both houses are directly chosen by the people; Source B, Article 1 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China as amended in 2018, stating that leadership of the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of the system; each with a short 'what to notice' note.

S1. (a) According to Source A, who chooses the members of each house of the Australian Parliament? (1 mark) (b) According to Source B, what is "the defining feature" of China's system? (1 mark) (c) Using both sources, state one key difference in where each text places power. (2 marks) (d) Which source describes an arrangement in which an election could change the government? Explain. (2 marks) (e) Judged against the section's working definition, does either source, read alone, describe a democracy? State your frame. (3 marks)

Answers

Q1. (1) Regular elections most adults can vote in, really contested; (2) more than one party can stand, and an election can change the government; (3) basic freedoms of speech, association and a free press are protected; (4) the law binds the rulers as well as the ruled. **Q2.** Any four of: constitutional monarchy; federal system; bicameral parliament (House of Representatives 151, Senate 76); regular elections run by an independent body; preferential and compulsory voting; responsible government; multi-party competition; change by referendum only. **Q3.** The House of Representatives, usually 120 seats (a single house, no upper house). MMP (mixed member proportional), since 1996. **Q4.** (a) rule of law → independent courts and written limits on power; (b) political equality → electorates with roughly equal enrolled voters and compulsory enrolment; (c) accountability → responsible government, Question Time, Senate scrutiny and regular elections; (d) fairness of elections → the AEC, an independent body, runs and counts the vote. **Q5.** (a) 45 proposals put to voters since Federation; 8 carried; none since 1977. (b) Section 128. **Q6.** Free: any of New Zealand, Japan, Australia. Partly Free: India or Indonesia. Not Free: Vietnam, China or Myanmar. **Q7.** *See solutions.* **Q8.** *See solutions.* **Q9.** *See solutions.* **Q10.** *See solutions.* **S1.** *See solutions.*

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. Australia's parliament has two houses — the House of Representatives (151) and the Senate (76); the Senate gives each state equal representation and reviews bills, carrying the values of representation and scrutiny. New Zealand's parliament has one house (usually 120 seats); lawmaking is faster and responsibility is clearer, so voters know exactly whom to hold to account — carrying accountability. Both houses are directly elected and both systems let an election change the government, so each design can serve democratic values in its own way. (3 marks: difference + one value per design.)

Q8. On the section's definition, democracy requires that an election be able to change the government, with more than one party competing for power. A one-party state holds elections, but they fill representative bodies without offering a choice of who holds national power; in China the party's leading role is written into the constitution itself (Article 1, amended 2018), so no ballot can move power between parties. Checks 1–2 of the definition are therefore not met. It is the changeability of government, not the mere presence of voting, that does the defining. (3 marks: definition + what one-party elections can and cannot change + conclusion.)

Q9. Strongest case for Australia's side: political equality means every voice counts, and without compulsion the people who vote would skew older and wealthier; the 89.8 per cent turnout of 2022 shows the whole adult community deciding. Strongest case for New Zealand's side: equality also includes free choice, and making attendance a legal duty turns a civic act into a chore; the 78.2 per cent turnout of 2023 still shows most enrolled voters choosing to attend, and parties must earn that attendance. Both are honest readings of the same value, and the frame decides which weighs more — which is why the frame must be stated. (4 marks: strongest argument each side + stated frame.)

Q10. Two differences: (1) Japan is a unitary state while Australia is a federation, so Japan has no second layer of state parliaments; (2) Japan's head of state is a ceremonial emperor and its voting is voluntary with a mixed system, while Australia has a king represented by a Governor-General, compulsory preferential voting, and an upper house of equal state representation. Both remain democracies because both pass the four checks: regular multi-party elections that can change the government (Japan's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party lost power at the 2009 election), protected freedoms, and the law binding the rulers — which is why Freedom House rates both Free (96 and 95 out of 100 in 2025). (3 marks: two differences + both pass the checks.)

S1. (a) The people: senators are “directly chosen by the people of the State” (section 7) and members are “directly chosen by the people of the Commonwealth” (section 24). (b) The leadership of the Communist Party of China. (c) Source A places power with voters and moves it by election; Source B places leadership of the state in one party as a constitutional feature, beyond any election. (d) Source A: its houses are chosen by the people, so an election can change who governs. Source B describes no election able to change the leadership. (e) Any reasoned judgement that applies the four checks and states its frame; for example, Source A meets the definition's electoral checks on its face, while Source B, read alone, fails check 2, so on this section's definition it does not describe a democracy — with the frame (which checks weigh most) stated.

The Australian Government's roles and responsibilities at a regional and global level

Curriculum: VC2HC10K04 — *Students learn about: the Australian Government's roles and responsibilities at a regional and global level, including diplomatic relations in the Asia-Pacific region*

Linked elaborations: VC2HC10K04.E01 explaining the ways in which Australia contributes to and participates in the Asia-Pacific region, including membership of international organisations and participation in agreements with other countries (e.g. exchange programs, peacekeeping, election monitoring, development aid, health programs, disaster management) and internationally, including participation in the United Nations Security Council · VC2HC10K04.E02 investigating Australia's responsibilities and commitment to various international treaties, conventions and agendas, such as the UN Sustainable Development Agenda and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change · VC2HC10K04.E03 analysing and evaluating the reasons for and effectiveness of Australia's participation in the region and globally around a global issue, such as human rights, war and conflict, challenges to democracy or climate · VC2HC10K04.E04 evaluating the impacts of these issues on Australia's identity; [...]; Australian government policies; and citizens' choices to act in the global interest (taught partial per the series content policy — see the front-of-book notice; the item left out is not taught)

Theory

Part 1 — Two circles: the region and the world

Most of this book is about what governments do inside Australia. This section is about the work the **Australian Government** does beyond our borders, at two levels. The **regional** level is the Asia-Pacific — the Pacific island countries to our north and east, and the countries of Asia to our north. The **global** level is the whole world, worked through bodies such as the United Nations (UN). The curriculum's own words add a third thread: **diplomatic relations** — the day-to-day work of talking with, representing and reaching agreements with other countries, carried on by Australia's ambassador abroad and by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (**DFAT**) at home.

Contested term — 'middle power'. Australia is often called a **middle power**. In this section the term carries one meaning: a country with real weight — a large economy, aid and defence capacity, and a vote in world bodies — but not big enough to set the world's rules on its own. Middle powers matter because they can bring countries together and organise cooperation on issues the great powers may neglect. The label is contested: reasonable people disagree about how much weight Australia really has, and some would rather the term not be used at all. This section does not settle that debate; the definition above is the one we work with.

The two circles overlap: much of what Australia does at the global level starts as work with its own neighbours first.

Part 2 — Where Australia sits: memberships

The clearest way to see the regional and global roles is to look at the bodies Australia belongs to, and when it joined them.

Australia's seats at the regional and global table

Organisation or agreement	What it is	Australia's involvement
United Nations (UN)	The main global body for peace, security and cooperation, founded in 1945 after the Second World War. 193 member countries today.	Founding member — Australia signed the UN Charter on 26 June 1945 and pushed for it to open with the words 'We the peoples'.
Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)	The leaders' group for the Pacific island countries, formed in 1971 (first called the South Pacific Forum).	Founding member. Australia is the Forum's largest member by population and economy.
ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)	A regional group of 10 Southeast Asian countries, formed in 1967 to promote peace and cooperation.	Australia became ASEAN's first 'dialogue partner' in 1974 — the first outside country invited into regular meetings.
APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)	A forum of 21 Pacific-rim economies, formed in 1989 to encourage open trade and economic cooperation.	Founding member. Australia hosted the APEC leaders' meeting in 2007.
ANZUS Treaty (1951)	A security agreement between Australia, New Zealand and the United States: an attack on one is treated as a matter for all.	Signed 1 September 1951; still the base of Australia's defence cooperation with both countries.

Prepared by ClassBasics from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (dfat.gov.au) and the United Nations (un.org), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Table of five organisations and treaties Australia belongs to — the United Nations (founding member, Charter signed 26 June 1945), the Pacific Islands Forum (founding member, 1971), ASEAN (Australia became the first dialogue partner in 1974), APEC (founding member in 1989, hosted the 2007 leaders' meeting) and the ANZUS Treaty (signed 1 September 1951) — with a note on what each one does and Australia's part in it

Read the table by circle. Four entries are regional: the Pacific Islands Forum, the ASEAN dialogue partnership, APEC and the ANZUS Treaty. One is global: the UN, where Australia was a **founding member** in 1945 and helped write the Charter. Membership is not a badge on a wall; each entry is a working role with duties attached — hosting meetings, contributing money and people, and keeping the agreements made there.

Source: DFAT, 'International organisations' and 'Pacific' pages; United Nations, un.org (retrieved 26 August 2026).

The heaviest global role sits inside the UN: the **Security Council**, the body that can respond to threats to peace with binding decisions, sanctions or approved use of force.

The United Nations Security Council — how it is made up

The Council has 15 members. Five are permanent; ten are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.

5 permanent members

China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Each holds a veto — one 'no' can block a Council decision.

10 elected members

Chosen by a two-thirds vote of the UN General Assembly for two-year terms, with five seats elected each year.

What the Council does

It is responsible for international peace and security. It can authorise peacekeeping missions, impose sanctions, and its decisions are binding on UN members under the Charter.

Australia's five terms as an elected member

1946

First
Council year

1956-57

Second term

1973-74

Third term

1986-87

Fourth term

2013-14

Latest term

Prepared by ClassBasics from the United Nations (un.org/securitycouncil) and DFAT (dfat.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Diagram of the United Nations Security Council: five permanent members holding the veto and ten elected members chosen by a two-thirds vote for two-year terms, a box listing what the Council does, and a timeline of Australia's five elected terms — 1946, 1956-57, 1973-74, 1986-87 and 2013-14

Australia has been elected to the Council five times, most recently for **2013-14**. Elected members do not hold the **veto** — that belongs to the five permanent members — but they sit in the room where the world's hardest security decisions are made, and they can shape what the Council puts its name to. Whether seeking a seat is worth the cost is debated in Australia; the book records the debate and takes no side.

Source: United Nations Security Council (un.org/securitycouncil); DFAT (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Part 3 — What Australia does there: the ways of participating

The curriculum lists the main ways Australia contributes and participates. The grid below puts a dated, real example under each one.

Eight ways Australia contributes and participates

Exchange programs The New Colombo Plan (since 2014) has supported more than 90,000 Australian university students to study or work in the Indo-Pacific.	Peacekeeping Australia has joined more than 80 United Nations and other peacekeeping operations since 1947 — one of the first countries to send observers.
Election monitoring Australian officials, including AEC staff, have observed elections in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Nauru and Timor-Leste.	Development aid Australia's aid budget is about \$4.6 billion a year (2025-26 federal budget), run by DFAT. Papua New Guinea is the largest single partner country.
Health programs Australia funds regional health work, from childhood vaccination campaigns to hospital partnerships in Papua New Guinea.	Disaster management After the Hunga Tonga eruption (2022) and the PNG landslide (2024), Australia sent defence aircraft, ships, supplies and funding.
United Nations Security Council Australia has served five terms as an elected member — 1946, 1956-57, 1973-74, 1986-87 and 2013-14.	Treaties and agendas Australia is bound by agreements from the UN climate convention (1992) to the Paris Agreement (2016) and the 2030 Agenda.

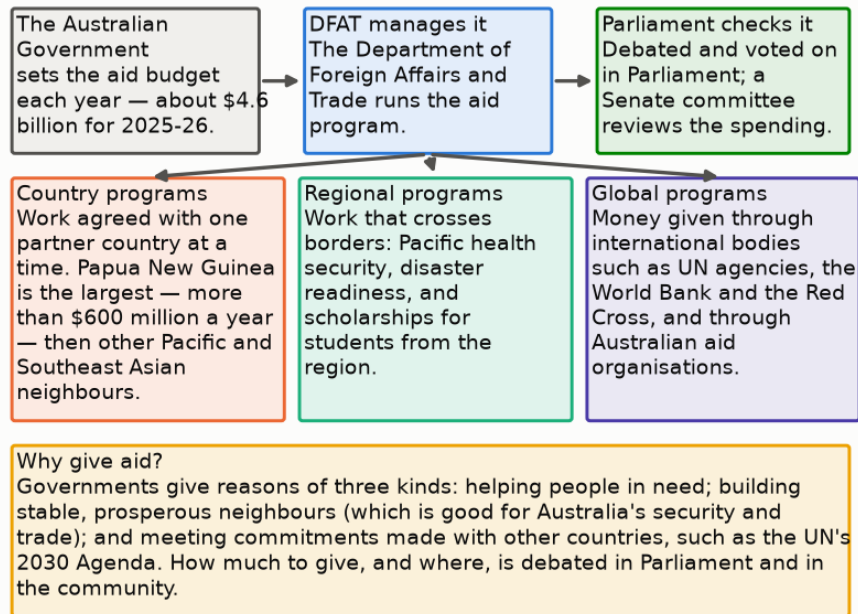
Prepared by ClassBasics from DFAT (dfat.gov.au), the Department of Defence (defence.gov.au) and the Australian Electoral Commission (aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Grid of eight cards showing the ways Australia participates in the region and the world: exchange programs such as the New Colombo Plan, peacekeeping since 1947, election monitoring, development aid, health programs, disaster management such as Tonga 2022, elected service on the United Nations Security Council, and work on treaties and global agendas

Two of those ways deserve a closer look, because they show how the roles connect to machinery at home.

Development aid — money and expertise given to help other countries — flows through a chain the diagram below maps: the Government sets the budget, DFAT manages it, and Parliament checks it.

Australia's development aid — how it flows



Prepared by ClassBasics from DFAT's aid budget statements (dfat.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026. Figures are rounded.

Flow chart of Australia's development aid: the Australian Government sets the budget (about \$4.6 billion for 2025-26), DFAT manages it and Parliament checks it; the money flows to country programs (Papua New Guinea the largest), regional programs and global programs through UN agencies, the World Bank and the Red Cross; a box gives the three kinds of reasons governments give for aid

The size and direction of the aid budget are debated in Parliament and at elections: governments of the day have set it higher or lower, and reasonable people disagree about how much Australia should give. That debate is part of democracy; this section teaches the machinery and the range of reasons, and takes no side on the number.

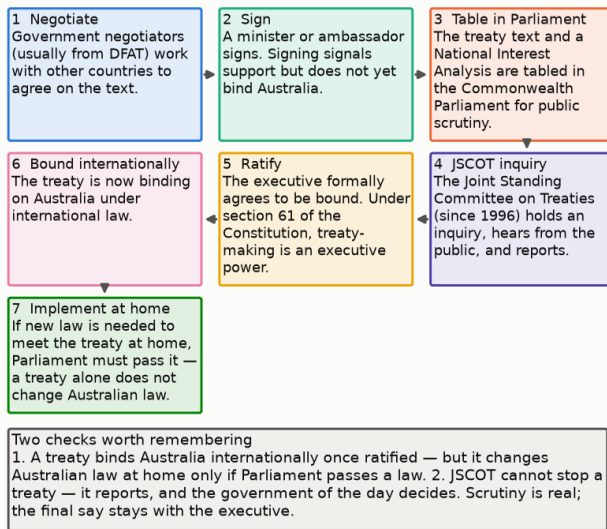
Source: DFAT, aid budget statements (dfat.gov.au); New Colombo Plan (dfat.gov.au); Australian Electoral Commission, international work; Department of Defence, peacekeeping history (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Part 4 — Treaties, conventions and agendas: how a promise becomes binding

Much of the regional and global role runs through written agreements. A **treaty** is a written agreement between countries that, once a country formally consents to be bound (**ratification**), binds it under international law. A **convention** is a treaty that sets common rules on one big subject, such as the climate or the law of the sea. An **agenda** is different: an agreed program of goals that countries commit to pursuing but that is not itself binding law, such as the UN's 2030 Agenda.

The path by which Australia binds itself to a treaty has seven steps, and two checks that protect responsible government.

How Australia binds itself to a treaty — seven steps



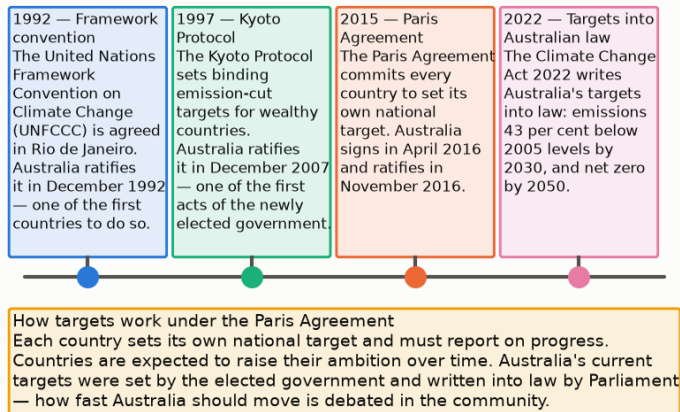
Prepared by ClassBasics from the Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (aph.gov.au), and the Australian Constitution s 61, retrieved 26 August 2026.

Flow chart of the seven steps by which Australia binds itself to a treaty: negotiate, sign, table in Parliament with a National Interest Analysis, JSCOT inquiry, ratify under section 61, bound internationally, and implement at home only if Parliament passes a law; a box notes that JSCOT cannot stop a treaty and that a treaty alone does not change Australian law

Two points from that path are worth fixing in your mind. First, **ratification** is an **executive** act: under **section 61** of the Constitution, treaty-making sits with the government of the day, not with Parliament — which is why the tabling and **JSCOT** steps (the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, since 1996) exist as scrutiny, not as a vote. Second, Australia is a country where a treaty alone does not change Australian law: if new law is needed at home, Parliament must pass it.

The climate story shows the whole path in action, from 1992 to an Australian Act of Parliament.

Australia and the global climate agreements, 1992-2022



Prepared by ClassBasics from the United Nations climate convention secretariat (unfccc.int) and the Climate Change Act 2022, retrieved 26 August 2026.

Timeline of Australia's climate commitments: the UNFCCC ratified in December 1992, the Kyoto Protocol ratified in December 2007, the Paris Agreement signed in April and ratified in November 2016, and the Climate Change Act 2022 writing the targets — 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050 — into Australian law

The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is the parent treaty; the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are agreements built under it. Notice the last step of the path: the Paris target became part of Australian law only when Parliament passed the *Climate Change Act 2022*. The promise to the world was made by the executive; the law at home was made by Parliament.

The agenda side of this content is the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**: 17 goals — ending poverty, protecting the planet, building peace and prosperity — agreed in 2015 to be pursued by 2030.

The UN 2030 Agenda — 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Adopted by UN members in September 2015, including Australia. The goals set shared targets to be reached by 2030.

1 No poverty	2 Zero hunger	3 Good health and well-being	4 Quality education	5 Gender equality	6 Clean water and sanitation
7 Affordable and clean energy	8 Decent work and economic growth	9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure	10 Reduced inequalities	11 Sustainable cities and communities	12 Responsible consumption and production
13 Climate action	14 Life below water	15 Life on land	16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	17 Partnerships for the goals	

Australia and the agenda

Australia was one of two countries appointed to help steer the final negotiations on the goals in 2015. It reports to the UN on progress and folds the goals into aid planning — for example, health, water and disaster readiness programs in the Pacific.

Prepared by ClassBasics from the United Nations, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (un.org), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Grid of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, from no poverty and zero hunger to climate action and peace, justice and strong institutions, with a note that Australia helped guide the final negotiations in 2015 and reports on progress to the UN

The Goals are not a treaty: no country is taken to court for missing them. They work as a shared agenda — countries, including Australia, report on progress to the UN, and the Goals shape where aid and programs go.

Source: Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (aph.gov.au); Australian Constitution s 61; UNFCCC (unfccc.int); Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth); United Nations, sdgs.un.org (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Part 5 — Reasons and effectiveness: why participate, and does it work?

Governments give reasons of three kinds for participating in the region and the world: **values** (helping people in need), **interests** (stable, prosperous neighbours are good for Australia's own security and trade), and **commitments** (keeping promises made with other countries). In any real decision the three overlap, and critics and supporters usually disagree about which one is really driving it.

That is why this section gives you a tool for the second half of the curriculum's question — **effectiveness**.

Contested term — 'effectiveness'. Calling something "effective" sounds simple, but it hides a values question: effective *at what*, and judged *by which measure*? In this section, effectiveness means the degree to which participation achieves its stated goals, judged against five criteria. The frame below is the operational definition this section works with; other definitions exist and are reasonable.

Judging effectiveness — the five questions used in this section

Criterion	The question to ask	Example for a disaster response
Goals	Did the action achieve what it set out to do?	Did help reach the people it was aimed at?
Reach	How many people, or how many places, were helped?	How many households got water, shelter or medical care?
Speed	Did it arrive in time to matter?	Did help arrive before conditions got worse?
Cost	Was it worth the money and resources used?	Could the same result have been achieved for less?
Lasting effect	Do the results hold once the teams leave?	Are homes rebuilt and services running again a year later?

How to use the frame

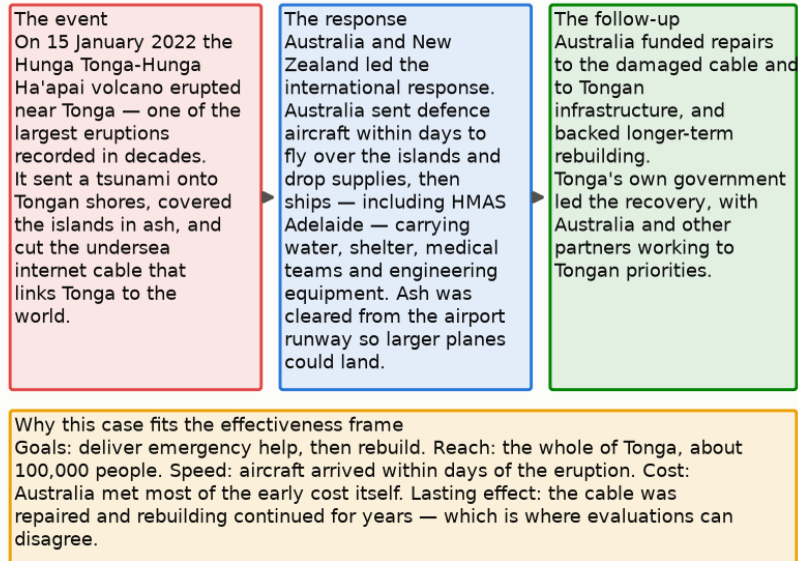
Reasonable people can weigh these five questions differently — one person may put speed first, another may put lasting effect first. That is why an evaluation must name the criteria it uses and give evidence for each one. Marking in this section rewards the quality of your reasoning, not the conclusion you reach.

Frame prepared by ClassBasics for this section.

Table of five criteria for judging effectiveness — goals, reach, speed, cost and lasting effect — each with a question and a disaster-help example, plus a box explaining how to use the frame and noting that marking in this section rewards the quality of reasoning, not the conclusion reached

The frame earns its keep on a real case.

Case study — the Hunga Tonga eruption and Australia's response



Prepared by ClassBasics from the Department of Defence (defence.gov.au) and DFAT (dfat.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Three-column case study of the Hunga Tonga eruption of 15 January 2022: the event (tsunami, ash, cut undersea cable), the response (Australia and New Zealand led the international effort; HMAS Adelaide; runway cleared) and the follow-up (cable repaired, Tongan-led recovery), with a box mapping the case onto the five effectiveness criteria

Two people using the same frame can reach different verdicts on the same facts — for example, weighing speed against lasting effect, or counting cost against reach. That is not a flaw in the frame; it is the point. Evaluating effectiveness is a reasoned judgement, and in this section your mark rewards the quality of your reasoning, not the conclusion you reach.

Source: Department of Defence (defence.gov.au); DFAT (dfat.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Part 6 — Where global issues land in Australia

The curriculum closes this content with a question about impact: what do global issues — climate change, war and conflict, human rights, challenges to democracy — do *to Australia*? The map below traces three places they land.

Where global issues land — three impacts on Australia

Global issues — climate change, war and conflict, human rights, challenges to democracy

1 Australia's identity
How Australians see themselves and their place in the world.
Examples: a self-image as a helpful Pacific neighbour; migration, trade and exchange ties with Asia-Pacific neighbours; pride in being a UN founding member.

2 Australian government policies
What governments choose to do. Examples: the size and direction of the aid budget; emission targets written into law; defence cooperation such as the ANZUS Treaty; disaster-readiness planning.

3 Citizens' choices to act in the global interest
What people choose to do as individuals and groups. Examples: voting with global issues in mind; buying products that meet fair-labour or environmental standards; joining campaigns, appeals or aid organisations.

'Acting in the global interest'

In this section, acting in the global interest means acting in ways that take account of people beyond Australia's borders, not only Australia's own short-term gain. It is a contested term: reasonable people disagree about what it requires in any given case. The definition above is the one this section works with.

Prepared by ClassBasics for this section, from the material above.

Map of three impacts of global issues on Australia — Australia's identity, Australian government policies, and citizens' choices to act in the global interest — with examples under each, and an operational-definition box for 'acting in the global interest'

Follow one issue through all three branches to see the map work: climate change shapes how Australians see themselves (a Pacific neighbour that helps), shapes policy (emission targets written into law), and shapes citizen choices (people who vote, buy or campaign with the global interest in mind). The term **global interest** is contested — the box in the figure gives the definition this section uses. The government's side of that work is what Parts 1-5 of this section taught; the citizen's side is yours, and the tasks below ask you to put both to work.

Worked examples

Example 1 — Tracing the Paris Agreement through the seven steps (scaffolded)

The **Paris Agreement** (2016) is the clearest recent example of the treaty path. We walk the seven steps from the diagram in Part 4.

Step 1 — Negotiate. The text was agreed at the UN climate conference in Paris in December 2015, with Australian officials in the negotiating room.

Step 2 — Sign. Australia signed on **22 April 2016**, the first day the Agreement opened for signature. Signing signalled support; it did not yet bind Australia.

Step 3 — Table in Parliament. The treaty text and a National Interest Analysis were tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament for public scrutiny.

Step 4 — JSCOT inquiry. The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties examined the National Interest Analysis and reported.

Step 5 — Ratify. Australia ratified the Agreement on **9 November 2016**. This was an executive act under section 61 of the Constitution — a decision of the government of the day, not a vote of Parliament.

Step 6 — Bound internationally. From ratification, the Agreement binds Australia under international law, and Australia reports its progress with other parties.

Step 7 — Implement at home. The treaty alone did not change Australian law. The target became part of Australian law later, when Parliament passed the *Climate Change Act 2022*: 43% below 2005 emission levels by 2030, and net zero by 2050.

What the example teaches. The executive makes the promise to the world (steps 1-6); Parliament controls the law at home (step 7). Both halves are needed for Australia to keep an international promise that requires change at home — and the scrutiny steps (3 and 4) are where the public and Parliament get their say before ratification.

Source: UNFCCC (unfccc.int); DFAT, Paris Agreement National Interest Analysis; Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth) (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Example 2 — Evaluating the Tonga response with the five-criterion frame (scaffolded)

We apply the effectiveness frame from Part 5 to Australia's response to the Hunga Tonga eruption of 15 January 2022, using the case study diagram.

Goals. The stated goals were emergency help first, then rebuilding. Verdict: met — water, shelter and medical teams arrived, and rebuilding followed.

Reach. The response aimed at the whole of Tonga (about 100,000 people), including outer islands reached by ship and aircraft. Verdict: strong, though outer islands waited longer.

Speed. Defence aircraft flew over within days; HMAS Adelaide followed. Verdict: fast by any fair measure.

Cost. Australia met most of the early cost itself. Verdict: here evaluations split — supporters call it money well spent on a neighbour; critics ask whether the same money would have done more at home or in longer-term programs.

Lasting effect. The cable was repaired and recovery continued under Tongan leadership. Verdict: the most contested criterion — a disaster response relieves a crisis but does not, by itself, make an island nation less exposed to the next one.

Weigh and conclude. On goals, reach and speed the response rates as effective; on cost and lasting effect, reasonable evaluators disagree. A defensible overall verdict is therefore: *effective*

as emergency action, contested as long-term strategy — and either half of that sentence, properly argued with the frame, earns full marks.

Source: Department of Defence (defence.gov.au); DFAT (dfat.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Sort the five entries of the membership table (Part 2) into the two circles: which four are regional (Asia-Pacific) and which one is global? Hint: ask where the body's members come from.

Q2. Match each scenario to the way of participating it best shows, using the grid in Part 3: (a) an Australian university student spends a funded semester in Indonesia; (b) Australian Electoral Commission staff help run an election in Solomon Islands; (c) Australian defence personnel serve in a UN-approved operation.

Q3. Using the Security Council diagram: (a) how many members are elected, and for how long? (b) what share of the General Assembly's vote must an elected member win? (c) how many terms has Australia served, and when was the most recent?

Q4. Using the treaty path diagram: (a) which step first puts the treaty in front of Parliament? (b) which body holds the inquiry at step 4? (c) can that body stop the treaty? Explain in one sentence.

Q5. Using the climate timeline: (a) name the parent treaty Australia ratified in December 1992; (b) the Climate Change Act 2022 sets a target of 43% below which year's emission level, by when? (c) which step of the treaty path made the Paris target part of Australian law?

Q6. Using the 2030 Agenda grid: (a) how many goals does the Agenda carry, and to what year? (b) is the Agenda a binding treaty? (c) name one way the Agenda shapes what Australia does, according to this section.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Governments give three kinds of reasons for development aid (Part 3, aid diagram). Explain each in your own words, then argue which one you think should weigh most, giving one reason for your choice.

Q8. Someone writes: "Australia only joins international bodies and signs treaties to serve itself." First restate that view in its strongest form. Then respond to it, using at least two dated examples from this section.

Q9. Using the effectiveness frame and the climate timeline, evaluate the effectiveness of Australia's participation on climate. Use at least three criteria, and include one point that cuts against your own overall verdict.

Q10. Choose one global issue named in the Part 6 map. Trace its impact on (a) Australia's identity, (b) one Australian government policy, and (c) one choice a citizen could make to act in the global interest.

Source-based inquiry

Source A — UN Charter preamble, 1945 (shortened).

Source A — UN Charter preamble, 1945 (shortened)

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold grief to mankind, and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Charter of the United Nations, preamble, signed 26 June 1945 (shortened). Australia is a founding member of the United Nations.

Reading tip — the preamble is a statement of aims, not a law. When you evaluate it, ask: who speaks, what is promised, and what machinery (if any) makes the promises binding?

Text: United Nations (un.org). Card prepared by ClassBasics.

Source card quoting the shortened preamble of the UN Charter of 1945, beginning 'We the peoples', with a reading tip asking who speaks, what is promised, and what machinery, if any, makes the promises binding

Source: Charter of the United Nations, preamble, signed 26 June 1945 (shortened); Australia is a founding member of the United Nations (retrieved 26 August 2026).

I1. The preamble speaks as "We the peoples". In your own words, state two things the peoples are determined to do, and one thing the preamble is *not*: is it a law, or a statement of aims?

I2. The preamble promises equal rights for "nations large and small". Using the Security Council diagram, explain one way the Council matches that promise and one way it does not.

I3. A statement of aims is only as strong as the machinery behind it. Using one mechanism from this section (the Security Council, the treaty path, or the aid program), argue that the Charter's promises have real machinery behind them; then steelman the opposite view. Give your own reasoned verdict.

Answers

Q1. Regional: the Pacific Islands Forum, the ASEAN dialogue partnership, APEC and the ANZUS Treaty. Global: the United Nations. The hint works because the UN's members come from the whole world, while the other four draw their members from the Asia-Pacific.

Q2. (a) exchange programs (the New Colombo Plan); (b) election monitoring; (c) peacekeeping.

Q3. (a) Ten elected members, for two-year terms. (b) A two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. (c) Five terms; the most recent was 2013-14.

Q4. (a) Step 3 — tabling, with the National Interest Analysis. (b) JSCOT, the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. (c) No — JSCOT reports and the government of the day decides; scrutiny is real but the final say stays with the executive.

Q5. (a) The UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). (b) 43% below 2005 levels, by 2030. (c) Step 7 — implementation at home, through the Climate Change Act 2022 passed by Parliament.

Q6. (a) Seventeen goals, to be pursued by 2030. (b) No — it is a shared agenda, not binding law. (c) It shapes where Australia's aid and programs go, and Australia reports progress to the UN.

Q7. Model points: values — helping people in need; interests — stable, prosperous neighbours benefit Australia's own security and trade; commitments — keeping promises made with other countries. The choice of which should weigh most is open; a good answer states one, gives a reason (for example, interests, because aid that builds stable neighbours helps Australia too; or values, because need should not depend on what Australia gains), and acknowledges the others.

Q8. Model points: steelman — every example in the section also serves Australian interests (aid builds stable trading neighbours; ANZUS buys security; Council seats raise Australia's standing), so a critic can say the language of values only dresses up self-interest. Response — dated examples cut both ways: in the Tonga response Australia met most of the early cost itself for a neighbour with nothing to offer in return; peacekeeping since 1947 has repeatedly sent Australians into risk far from Australian shores; and binding treaty commitments (Paris) limit Australia's own freedom of action, which a purely self-interested actor would not accept. A reasoned view may land on either side.

Q9. Model points: goals — Australia helped negotiate and then ratify the Paris Agreement, and wrote targets into domestic law (Climate Change Act 2022); strong; speed — ratification in 2007 (Kyoto) came late by international standards, a fair point for critics; lasting effect — targets in law outlast any one government, but global effect depends on other countries acting too; reach — climate participation reaches beyond the region through the UNFCCC. A good answer uses three criteria, weighs both sides, and includes one point against its own verdict (for example, that one country's targets do not, by themselves, change the climate).

Q10. Model points (climate example): identity — a self-image as a helpful Pacific neighbour that treats climate action as important; policy — emission targets written into law, aid for Pacific disaster readiness; citizen choice — voting with climate in mind, buying to a stated standard, joining a campaign. Any issue from the map is acceptable if all three branches are traced with real examples.

I1. Two of: save later generations from war; reaffirm faith in human rights and the dignity of the person; establish conditions where justice and treaty obligations are kept; promote social progress. The preamble is a statement of aims, not a law — the card's reading tip says so.

I2. Matches: every Council member, large or small, has one vote, and small states can be elected to the Council (as Australia was, five times). Does not match: the five permanent members hold a veto that no small nation has, so the largest powers keep a right the smallest do not.

I3. Model points: for — the Security Council can make binding decisions, sanctions and approved use of force (real machinery the preamble's authors built); the treaty path turns promises into binding international law and, through Parliament, into domestic law; the aid program puts money and people behind the Charter's aim of social progress. Steelman against — the Council's veto can freeze it when a permanent member objects, and a preamble cannot be enforced in any court, so the promises lean on goodwill more than on law. Reasoned verdict: either conclusion is acceptable if it uses at least one mechanism and answers the steelman.