

Civics and Citizenship Level 5

Chapter 2 — Laws and citizenship

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How laws are enforced, and why: police, courts and the legal system

Curriculum — VC2HC6K04: VC2HC6K04.E01 VC2HC6K04.E02 VC2HC6K04.E03

Theory

Rules and laws — a quick look back. You have met this idea before: a *rule* is made for one group, like your class or your team, while a *law* is a rule made for the whole community. Figure 1 checks you still know the difference.

Rules and laws — what is the difference?

You meet rules every day at school and at sport. Laws are the rules of the whole community.

	Rules	Laws
What is it?	A guide made for one group, like a class, a school or a team.	A rule made for the whole community, backed by the whole community.
Who makes it?	People in charge of the group — a teacher, a principal, a coach.	In Australia, most laws are made by parliaments — the people we elect to make them.
Who checks it is kept?	The people in the group — a teacher, a referee, a captain.	The police and other official bodies.
What can happen if it is broken?	A group result — a warning, time out, or being dropped from the team.	A legal result — a fine or another penalty set by a court.

Example of a rule: no running in the school hallways. **Example of a law:** drivers must stop at a red light.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Laws are enforced because they keep everyone safe, protect what belongs to people, and keep life fair.

A table comparing rules and laws: who makes them, who checks they are kept, and what can happen if they are broken, with one example of each

Why are laws enforced at all? A law only does its job if someone makes sure it is kept. Figure 2 shows the three big reasons communities enforce their laws.

Why are laws enforced?

A law that nobody enforces cannot do its job. Laws are enforced for three big reasons.



The police, the courts and other legal bodies do this work so that everyone in the community can live together safely and fairly.
Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · VC2HC6K04

Three cards giving the reasons laws are enforced: to keep people safe, to protect what belongs to people, and to keep life fair and in order

In Victoria, two groups do most of this work: **the police** (Victoria Police) and **the courts**. We look at each of these, and then at the civil side of the law.

Part 1 — The police. Victoria Police is the police force of the state of Victoria. Policing in Victoria goes back to 1838, and the force was joined into one in 1853. Today it has more than 15,000 police officers. Figure 3 shows the main jobs police do to enforce the criminal law.

The jobs of Victoria Police

Victoria Police enforces criminal law in Victoria. Policing in Victoria goes back to 1838.

Prevent crime

Police patrol streets and towns, and work with the community to stop crime before it happens.

Help people in need

In an emergency, people call 000. Police answer, come to help and keep people safe.

Investigate crime

When a crime is reported, police find out what happened. They gather evidence: they talk to witnesses and look at cameras and records.

Charge people

If police have enough evidence, they charge a person they think broke the law. The person then goes before a court.

Give evidence in court

Police tell the court what they found, so the judge or magistrate can make a fair decision.

Keep roads safe

Police check that drivers follow road laws — speed limits, seatbelts, and no drink-driving.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Source: Victoria Police, police.vic.gov.au (viewed 26 August 2026).

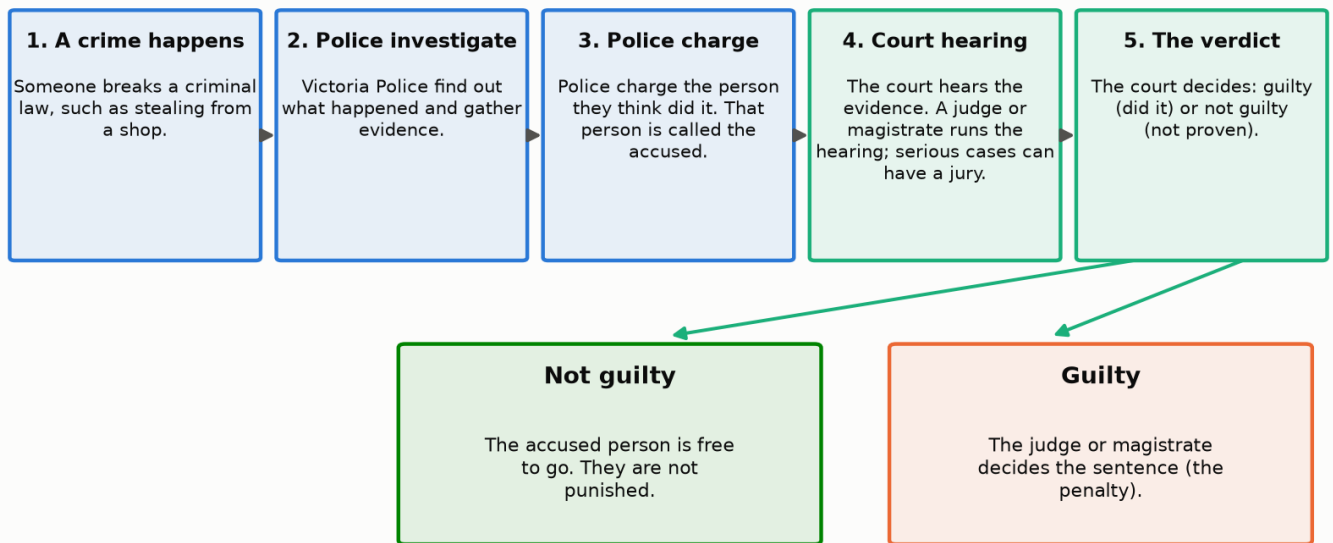
Six cards showing the jobs of Victoria Police: prevent crime, help people in need, investigate crime, charge people, give evidence in court, and keep roads safe

Some words to know. When police **investigate**, they find out what happened and gather **evidence** — the facts, objects and recordings that help prove what happened. When police **charge** someone, they say, “We believe you broke this law,” and the person must come to court. The person charged is called **the accused**. Police must follow strict rules when they do all of this, and other bodies check that police themselves keep the law: in Victoria, a body called **IBAC** looks into complaints about police.

Part 2 — The courts: from charge to sentence. Once police charge someone, the case goes to a court. Figure 4 shows the path of a criminal case.

From crime to sentence: how criminal law is enforced

A criminal case moves through steps. The police do the front half; the courts do the back half.



In Victoria, young people aged 10 to 17 who are charged with a crime go to the Children's Court of Victoria.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Court facts viewed 26 August 2026.

A flow chart of a criminal case in five steps — a crime happens, police investigate, police charge, court hearing, the verdict — branching to not guilty (free to go) or guilty (the judge or magistrate decides the sentence)

Victoria has four main courts for criminal cases. Figure 5 shows them, from the court that hears the most cases (the Magistrates' Court of Victoria) to the highest court (the Supreme Court of Victoria).

Criminal courts in Victoria

Different courts hear different cases. Less serious cases start lower; the most serious go higher.

Court	What it hears	Today's court dates from
Magistrates' Court of Victoria	Most criminal cases in Victoria are heard here: less serious offences, and early hearings to check if there is enough evidence for a trial.	1989 (Magistrates' Court Act 1989)
Children's Court of Victoria	Criminal cases where the accused person is a young person aged 10 to 17.	1989 (first children's court began in 1906)
County Court of Victoria	Serious criminal cases, such as armed robbery and serious fraud — but not the most serious cases like murder or manslaughter.	1852
Supreme Court of Victoria	The most serious criminal cases, such as murder and manslaughter. Victoria's highest court also hears appeals.	1852

A person who thinks the court got it wrong can ask a higher court to check the decision. This is called an appeal.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Court facts viewed 26 August 2026.

A table of the four criminal courts of Victoria — the Magistrates' Court, the Children's Court, the County Court and the Supreme Court — with the kind of case each court hears and the year today's court dates from

Part 3 — Sentences and their aims. If the court finds the accused guilty, the judge or **magistrate** (the name for a judge in the Magistrates' Court and the Children's Court) chooses a sentence. Figure 6 shows the four main options in Victoria.

Sentencing options: what a Victorian court can choose

When a court finds a person guilty, the judge or magistrate chooses a sentence from the options below (Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic)).

Sentence	What happens
Imprisonment	The person goes to prison for a time the court sets. Courts use this for the most serious offences, or to protect the community.
Community correction order	The person stays in the community but must follow rules set by the court — like doing unpaid work for the community, going to programs, and reporting to a community corrections officer.
Fine	The person pays money to the court. How much depends on how serious the offence was.
Adjourned undertaking	The person makes a promise to the court to be of good behaviour and to stay out of trouble for a set time. If they keep the promise, that can be the end of it.

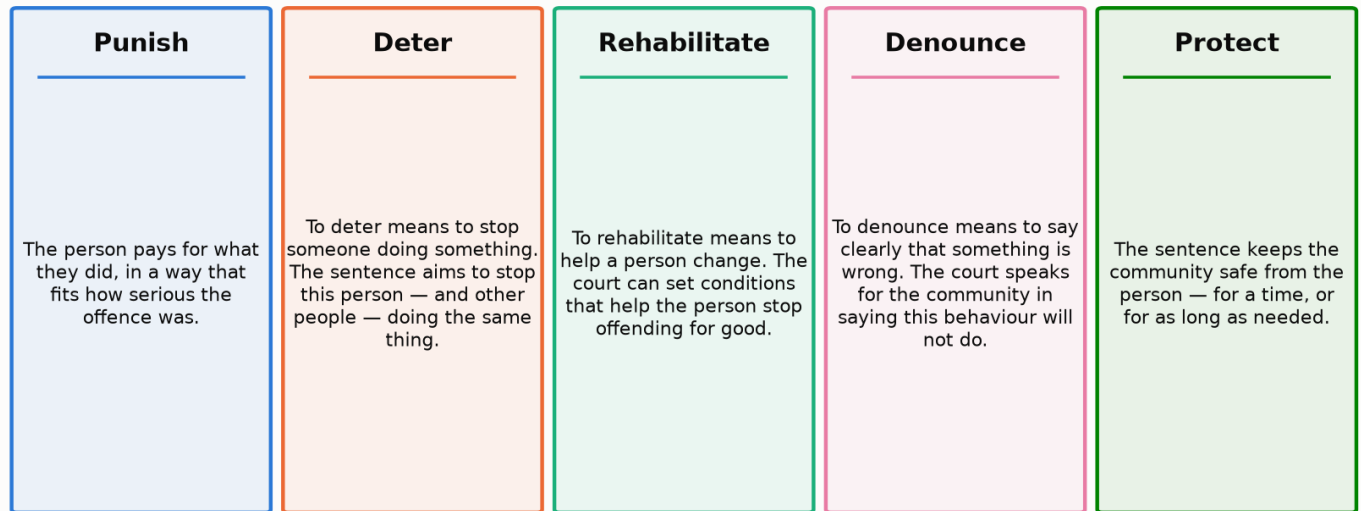
Courts can also choose other orders, such as a drug and alcohol treatment order. Young offenders are sentenced by the Children's Court, which has its own options.
Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Source: Sentencing Advisory Council Victoria, sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au (viewed 26 August 2026).

A table of the four main sentencing options a Victorian court can choose — imprisonment, community correction order, fine and adjourned undertaking — with what happens for each option

A sentence is not chosen at random. A Victorian law, the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), lists in section 5 the **only** aims a court may have when it sentences someone. Figure 7 gives each aim in short words. (The law itself, retold in short words, appears as **Source A** in the source task at the end of this section.)

The five aims of sentencing in Victoria

Section 5 of the Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic) lists the only aims a court may use when it sentences a person.



A court can aim at more than one of these at once — for example, punishing a person and protecting the community at the same time.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Source: Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic), section 5; Sentencing Advisory Council Victoria (viewed 26 August 2026).

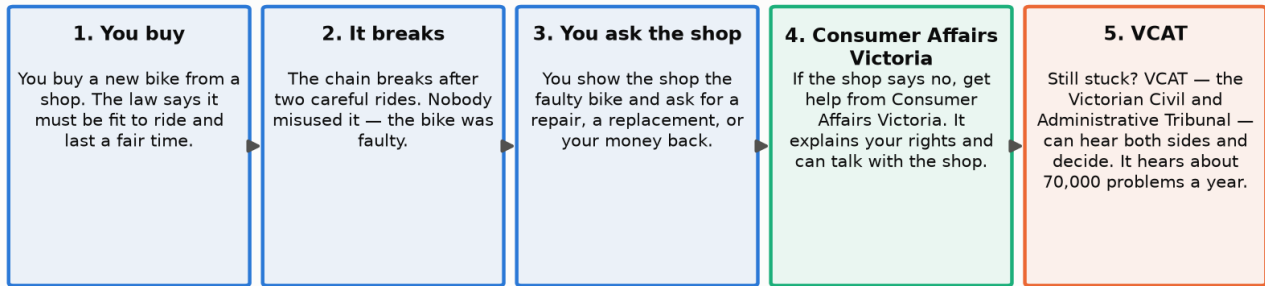
Five cards giving the aims of sentencing in Victoria — punish, deter, rehabilitate, denounce and protect — with each aim explained in short words

Part 4 — Civil law, and the bodies that watch over it. Criminal law is about crimes — wrongs against the whole community. **Civil law** is about problems between people, shops and businesses. Nobody is charged and nobody goes to prison; the problem is sorted out, often with money back, a repair or a replacement.

One civil law you may have used without knowing it is the **Australian Consumer Law**. It says the things you buy must work and be as described. Figure 9 follows one civil problem — a faulty new bike — along the path this law provides.

Sorting out a civil law problem — a faulty new bike

Civil law sorts problems between people and shops, not crimes. Here is one path a problem can take, under the Australian Consumer Law.



The law behind this path: the Australian Consumer Law gives every buyer rights about the things they buy. A shop cannot take those away — not even with a sign that says “no refunds”.

Notice: no police, no prison. Civil law problems are sorted out between the people involved, with help from official bodies when needed.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Sources: consumer.vic.gov.au and accc.gov.au; VCAT facts from vcat.vic.gov.au (viewed 26 August 2026).

A flow chart of a civil law problem about a faulty new bike in five steps: you buy it, it breaks, you ask the shop for a repair, a replacement or your money back, then Consumer Affairs Victoria can help, and finally VCAT can hear both sides and decide

Different civil laws watch over different parts of life, and each one has a body that makes sure it is followed. Figure 10 shows four of them.

Civil laws in Victoria — and the groups that make sure they are followed

These laws are about everyday life: shopping, work, the environment and fair treatment.

The civil law	What it looks after	The group that makes sure it is followed
Australian Consumer Law (a national law that applies in Victoria)	Fair trading. Things you buy must work and be as described.	Consumer Affairs Victoria — helps buyers and keeps shops and businesses fair
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)	Safe workplaces, so workers go home unhurt.	WorkSafe Victoria — its inspectors visit workplaces and can take rule-breakers to court
Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic)	Clean air, water and land for everyone.	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)	Fair treatment for everyone — no treating people badly because of who they are.	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

If a civil problem cannot be sorted out, the people involved can take it to VCAT (the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal), which hears both sides and decides.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Sources: consumer.vic.gov.au; worksafe.vic.gov.au; epa.vic.gov.au; humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au (viewed 26 August 2026).

A table of four civil laws in Victoria — the Australian Consumer Law, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, the Environment Protection Act 2017 and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 — with what each law looks after and the body that makes sure it is followed

So the legal system works as a team: the police enforce the criminal law, the courts hear cases and choose sentences, and special bodies make sure civil laws are followed. That is why laws are enforced in Victoria — and who does the enforcing.

Worked examples

Example 1 — Following a criminal case from the street to the sentence (guided)

In a Melbourne suburb, a person is seen putting a phone in their bag and walking out of a shop without paying. Shop staff call 000.

Working	Comment
1. Stealing is a crime in Victoria (it breaks the <i>Crimes Act 1958</i> (Vic)).	A crime is a wrong against the whole community, so the police act — not just the shop.
2. Victoria Police investigate: they talk to the staff, view the shop camera and gather evidence.	This is the “investigate crime” job from Figure 3.
3. Police charge the person. The person is now the accused.	A charge says, “We believe you broke this law.”
4. The case is heard in the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria, where most criminal cases are heard. A magistrate runs the hearing.	Figure 5: less serious cases are heard here. This court has existed under its current name since the <i>Magistrates’ Court Act 1989</i> (Vic).
5. The magistrate finds the accused guilty. The verdict is “guilty”.	The verdict answers one question: did it, or not proven?
6. The magistrate chooses a fine, aiming to punish and to deter.	Figures 6 and 7: a fine is one option, and punish and deter are two of the aims named in the <i>Sentencing Act 1991</i> (Vic), section 5.

Example 2 — A civil law problem and its fixes (guided)

You buy a new bike. On your second careful ride, the chain breaks. The shop points to a sign: “No refunds.”

Working	Comment
1. This is a civil problem, not a crime. Nobody broke the criminal law; the problem is between you and the shop.	Civil law sorts out problems between people and businesses. No police, no prison.
2. The Australian Consumer Law is on your side. It says goods must be of “acceptable quality” — the law’s own way of saying they must work and last a fair time.	A faulty bike that broke after two careful rides was never of acceptable quality.
3. You may ask the shop for a repair, a replacement, or your money back.	These three fixes are your rights under the Australian Consumer Law (ACCC, viewed 26 August 2026).
4. If the shop says no, Consumer Affairs Victoria can explain your rights and talk with the shop.	Figure 9, step 4. The “no refunds” sign does not take your rights away.
5. Still stuck? VCAT — the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal — can hear both sides and decide. VCAT has done this work since 1 July 1998.	A tribunal is like a court, but simpler and quicker.

Practice questions

Guided

Q1. Look at Figure 1. Sort each item as a *rule* or a *law*, and name the row of the figure that helped you decide: (a) “No running in the school hallways.” (b) “Drivers must stop at a red light.”

Q2. Figure 3 shows six jobs of police. Name the job that matches each story: (a) After a break-in, police talk to the people next door and look at doorbell camera recordings. (b) Police walk through the shopping strip on Friday nights so trouble does not start.

Q3. Use Figure 4 to put these events in order. The first one is done for you: (1) a crime happens; then, in order: the verdict; police investigate; police charge; court hearing.

Q4. Using Figure 5, choose the court for each case: (a) a 14-year-old charged with theft; (b) a person charged with murder; (c) a first hearing to check there is enough evidence in a less serious case.

Q5. Figure 6 shows four sentencing options. (a) Name the option where the person does unpaid work for the community. (b) Name the option where the person promises the court to be of good behaviour. (c) Using Figure 7, give one aim that imprisonment can serve.

Q6. Using Figure 10, name the body that makes sure each law is followed: (a) the law about safe workplaces; (b) the law about things you buy; (c) the law about fair treatment for everyone.

Independent

Q7. In your own words, give two reasons why laws are enforced. Check yourself against Figure 2.

Q8. A person is found guilty of stealing in the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria. The magistrate gives them an adjourned undertaking instead of a fine. (a) Explain what an adjourned undertaking is. (b) Which aim of sentencing from Figure 7 is the magistrate mainly using?

Q9. Sort each case as *criminal* or *civil*, and say who sorts it out — the police and courts, or the people involved with help from a body: (a) someone rides off with a bike that is locked up outside a shop; (b) the bike you bought last month breaks because it was faulty.

Q10. A shop has a sign that says “No refunds.” (a) Explain why the sign is against the law. (b) Name the body that can help a buyer, and the tribunal that can decide the case if the shop still says no.

Source task — reading Source A

Source A retells, in short words, part of a real Victorian law: the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), section 5(1). Read it, then answer the questions.

SOURCE A — What the law says about why courts sentence people

Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic), section 5(1) — in short words

- (a) to punish the person who offended, in a way that is fair in all the circumstances; or
- (b) to deter them, or other people, from doing the same or a similar offence; or
- (c) to set conditions that the court thinks will help the person be rehabilitated (change and stop offending); or
- (d) to denounce the kind of behaviour — to say clearly, for the whole community, that it is wrong; or
- (e) to protect the community from the person; or
- (f) a mix of two or more of these aims.

This law also says these are the ONLY aims a Victorian court may sentence someone for.

Retold in short words for this book from the Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic), s 5(1). The real law can be read free at legislation.vic.gov.au.

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Section 2A · Source A for the inquiry task.

Source A: section 5(1) of the Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic) retold in short words, listing the only aims a Victorian court may sentence someone for — to punish, to deter, to rehabilitate, to denounce, to protect the community, or a mix of these aims

S1. From Source A, name the aim that matches each short meaning: (a) “stop this person — and others — doing it again”; (b) “say clearly, for the whole community, that this behaviour is wrong”; (c) “keep the community safe from the person”.

S2. Source A says these are the ONLY aims a Victorian court may sentence someone for. In one sentence, what does that stop a court from doing?

S3. Which two aims together best explain why a court might choose imprisonment for a very serious crime?

Answers

Q1. (a) Rule — the row “Who makes it?” (a principal, not a parliament). (b) Law — the row “What can happen if it is broken?” (a fine set by a court). **Q2.** (a) Investigate crime. (b) Prevent crime. **Q3.** A crime happens → police investigate → police charge → court hearing → the verdict. **Q4.** (a) The Children’s Court of Victoria. (b) The Supreme Court of Victoria. (c) The Magistrates’ Court of Victoria. **Q5.** (a) A community correction order. (b) An adjourned undertaking. (c) Any one of: to punish; to deter; to protect the community (imprisonment can serve each of these). **Q6.** (a) WorkSafe Victoria. (b) Consumer Affairs Victoria. (c) The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. **Q7.** Any two of: to keep people safe; to protect what belongs to people; to keep life fair and in order. **Q8.** (a) The person promises the court to be of good behaviour and stay out of trouble for a set time; if they keep the promise, that can be the end of it. (b) Rehabilitation (helping the person change and stop offending). **Q9.** (a) Criminal — sorted out by the police and courts. (b) Civil — sorted out by the people involved, with help from a body such as Consumer Affairs Victoria or VCAT. **Q10.** (a) The Australian Consumer Law gives every buyer rights to a repair, a replacement or a refund for faulty goods, and a shop cannot take those rights away. (b) Consumer Affairs Victoria; VCAT (the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal). **S1.** (a) To deter. (b) To denounce. (c) To protect the community. **S2.** It stops a court sentencing someone for any other reason — the court cannot sentence someone for a reason that is not on the list. **S3.** To punish and to protect the community (deter or denounce also accepted with a reason).

Full solutions

Q7. Step 1 — Ask what a law is for: laws stop people hurting others and taking what is not theirs. Step 2 — Reason 1: laws are enforced to keep people safe (for example, police check drink-driving laws). Step 3 — Reason 2: laws are enforced to keep life fair and in order, so problems are sorted out by courts, not by fights. Check: both reasons appear in Figure 2.

Q8. Step 1 — Find the option in Figure 6: an adjourned undertaking is a promise to the court to be of good behaviour and stay out of trouble for a set time. Step 2 — The person stays out of prison and gets a chance to change, so the aim is mainly **rehabilitation**. Step 3 — Check against Source A: rehabilitation is aim (c) in the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), section 5 — so the magistrate is using an aim the law allows.

Q9. Step 1 — Test each case: is it a wrong against the whole community (criminal), or a problem between people (civil)? Step 2 — (a) Taking a locked-up bike is stealing, a crime: the police investigate and the courts hear the case. Step 3 — (b) A faulty bike is a problem between a buyer and a shop: civil law, sorted out by the people involved with help from Consumer Affairs Victoria or VCAT. Step 4 — Check the “no police, no prison” note under Figure 9 for the civil side.

Q10. Step 1 — Name the law: the Australian Consumer Law says things you buy must work and be as described, and gives buyers rights to a repair, a replacement or a refund when goods are faulty. Step 2 — A “No refunds” sign tries to take those rights away, so the sign is against the law. Step 3 — The body that makes sure this law is followed and can help a buyer is Consumer Affairs Victoria (Figure 10). Step 4 — If the shop still says no, the tribunal that can hear both sides and decide is VCAT, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Figure 9, step 5).

S2. Step 1 — Read the bold line in Source A: the list in section 5 is the only list of aims a court may use. Step 2 — So a court cannot sentence someone for a reason outside the list — it cannot, for example, sentence someone out of anger or for revenge. Step 3 — This is a protection for everyone: even when sentencing, the court must act for a reason the parliament has put in the law.

Citizens' rights and responsibilities under Australian law

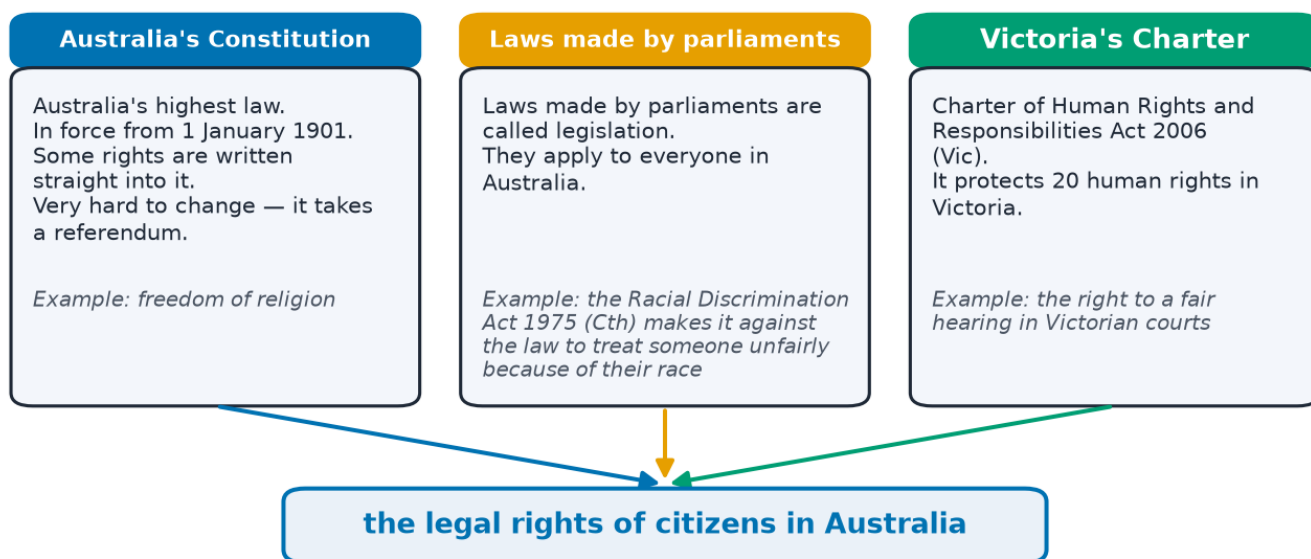
Covers: VC2HC6K05 (Knowledge and Understanding · Laws and citizens). Draws on .E01 .E02 .E03. The .E01 – .E03 codes link this section to its questions; they are not a teaching order.

Theory

A **right** is something you are free to do or have. A **responsibility** is a job you should do. In this section both words are **legal**: a **legal right** is a protection written into law that courts and government must follow, and a legal responsibility is a job the law puts on citizens. Australians gain their rights in three main places.

Where do Australians' legal rights come from?

Three main places put rights into law



The Constitution is the hardest to change. Parliaments can make new rights laws.
The Victorian Charter protects human rights inside Victoria.

Three panels — Australia's Constitution, laws made by parliaments, and Victoria's Charter — with arrows joining them to the legal rights of citizens in Australia

Source 1 — Australia's Constitution. The **Constitution** is Australia's highest law. It set up the Parliament of Australia and the High Court of Australia, and it has been in force from 1 January 1901. A few rights are written straight into it, and it is very hard to change.

Rights written into the Australian Constitution

These rights are listed in the Constitution itself, with the section number where each one sits.

Trial by jury	People charged with a serious Commonwealth offence have the right to a trial by jury.	Section 80
"Just terms" payment	If the Commonwealth takes someone's property for a public purpose, it must pay a fair amount.	Section 51(xxxi)
Freedom of religion	The Commonwealth may not make laws that stop people practising their religion.	Section 116
No religious tests	No religious test can be required for a job in the Commonwealth government.	Section 116
Rights of state residents	A person living in one state must not be treated unfairly when they are in another state.	Section 117

Implied rights

The High Court of Australia has also found rights that are implied (not written out in words). In *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997), the Court said the Constitution protects a freedom to talk about political matters and government.

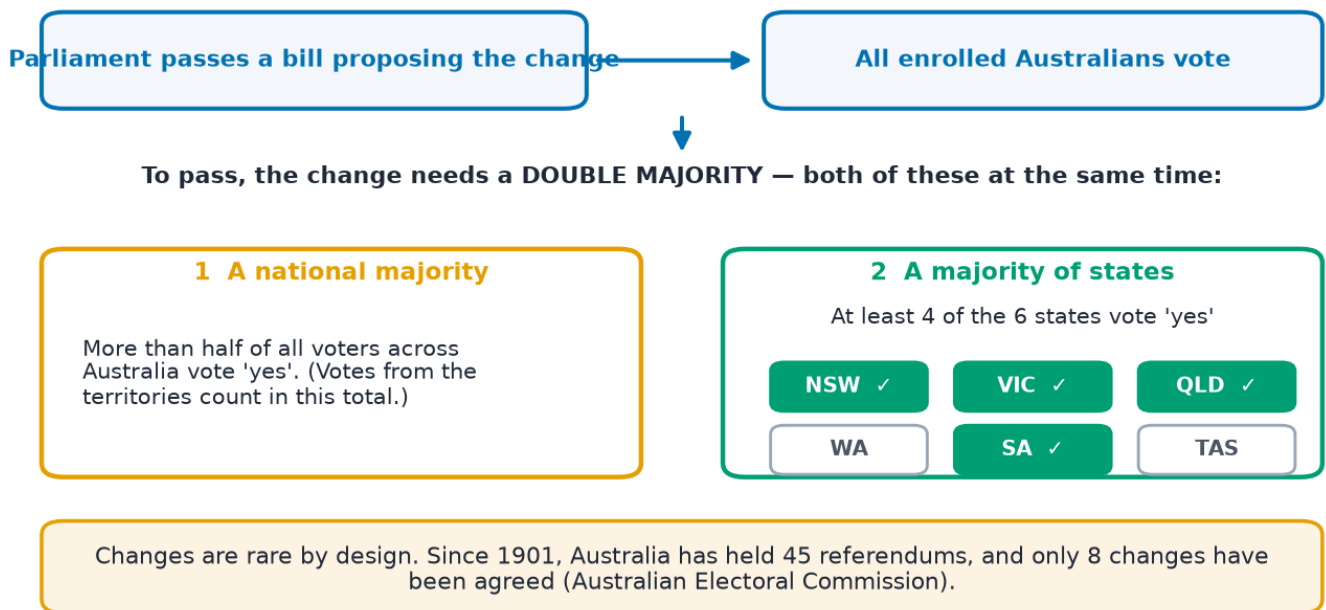
Table of rights written into the Constitution — trial by jury, just terms payment, freedom of religion, no religious tests, rights of state residents — plus the freedom of political communication the High Court of Australia found in Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997)

One more right is **implied** — not written down, but found by the High Court of Australia reading the Constitution as a whole. In *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997), the High Court held that the Constitution carries an implied freedom of political communication: Australians are free to talk and write about political matters and government. That freedom is a big part of how citizens keep the government accountable.

Changing the Constitution takes a referendum. A **referendum** is a national vote in which every enrolled Australian says yes or no to a proposed change to the Constitution. To pass, a change needs a **double majority**: a national majority of voters, and a majority of states — at least 4 of the 6 states — saying yes, both at the same time. First the Parliament of Australia passes a **bill** (a proposed law) suggesting the change; then every enrolled Australian votes. That is why changes are rare: since 1901, Australia has held 45 referendums and only 8 changes have been agreed (Australian Electoral Commission).

Changing the Constitution takes a referendum

A referendum is a vote of all enrolled Australians on a proposed change to the Constitution



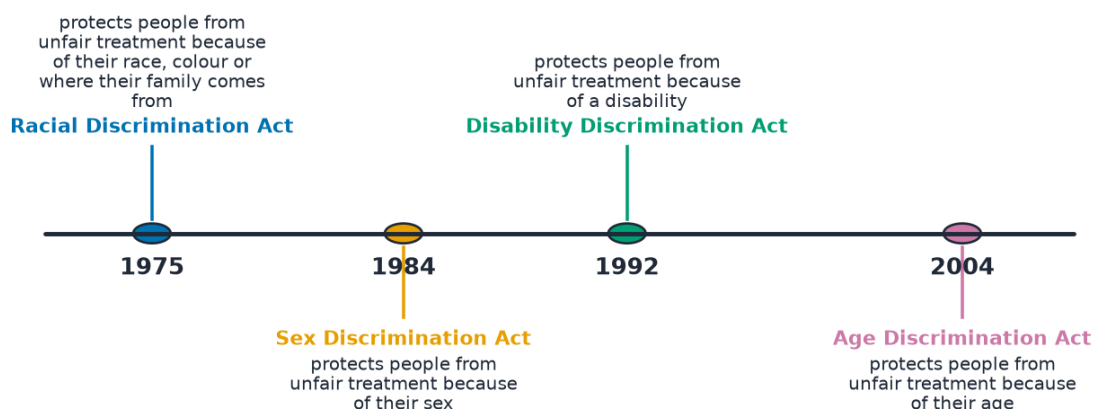
The state boxes show an example only — a change passes when both majority tests are met at once.

Flow chart — Parliament passes a bill proposing the change, all enrolled Australians vote, and the change needs a double majority: a national majority and at least 4 of the 6 states saying yes

Source 2 — legislation. **Legislation** means laws made by parliaments. Federal and state parliaments have passed many laws that give rights, and some of the most important are about **discrimination** — treating someone unfairly because of who they are, such as their race, sex, disability or age. These laws make that unfair treatment against the law.

Commonwealth laws that protect people from discrimination

Each one makes it against the law to treat someone unfairly for a different reason



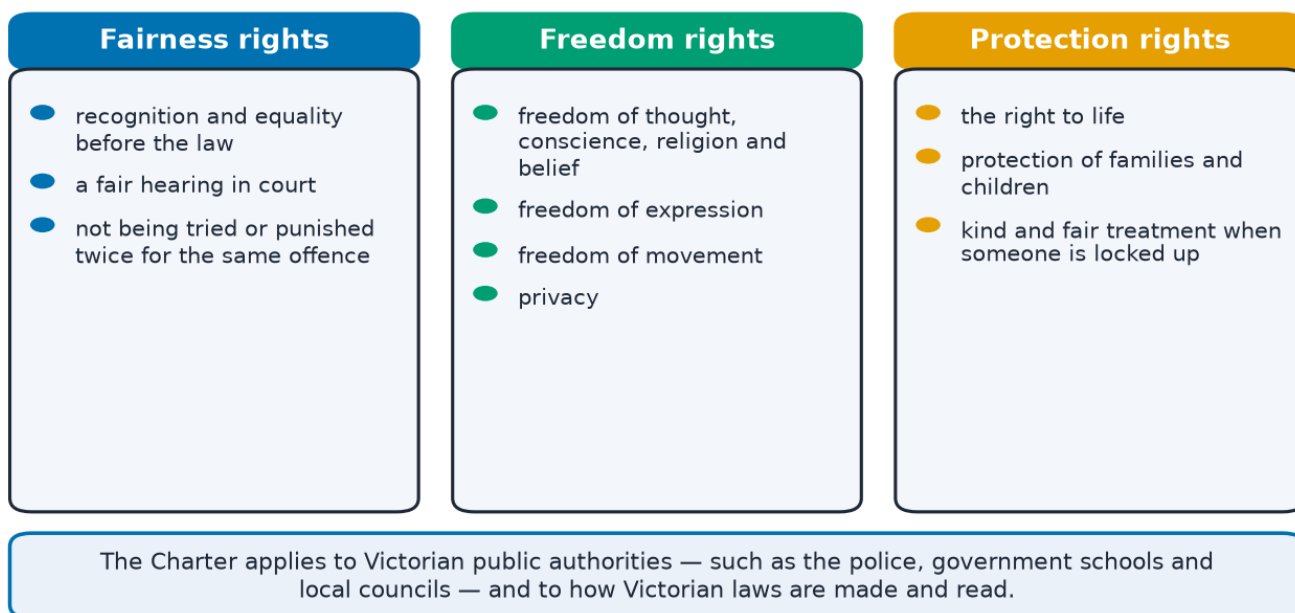
These are Commonwealth Acts (Cth) — legislation that applies in every state and territory. The years shown are the years each Act was passed.

Timeline of four federal laws against discrimination — Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination Act 1984, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Age Discrimination Act 2004 — with Victoria's Equal Opportunity Act 2010 below

Source 3 — the Victorian Charter. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic) — the **Charter** — is a Victorian law that protects 20 human rights in Victoria. The rights fall into three groups.

Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) protects 20 human rights — here are some, in three groups

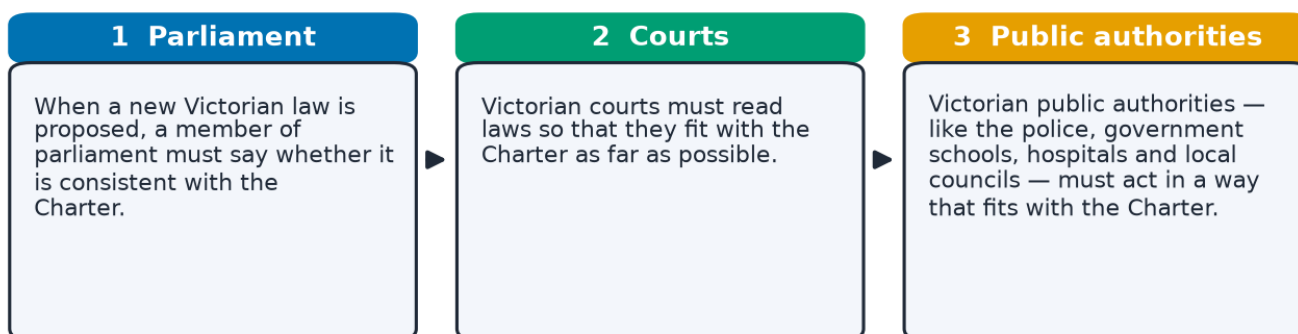


List of the 20 rights: Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

The three groups of Charter rights — fairness, freedom and protection — with example rights in each group

How the Charter works. The Charter does three jobs. When a new bill goes to the Parliament of Victoria, a statement must go with it saying whether the bill fits with Charter rights. Victorian courts must read Victorian laws, as far as possible, in a way that fits with Charter rights. And Victorian **public authorities** — government bodies doing public work, like government departments, police and public schools — must act in ways that fit with Charter rights.

How the Victorian Charter keeps rights safe

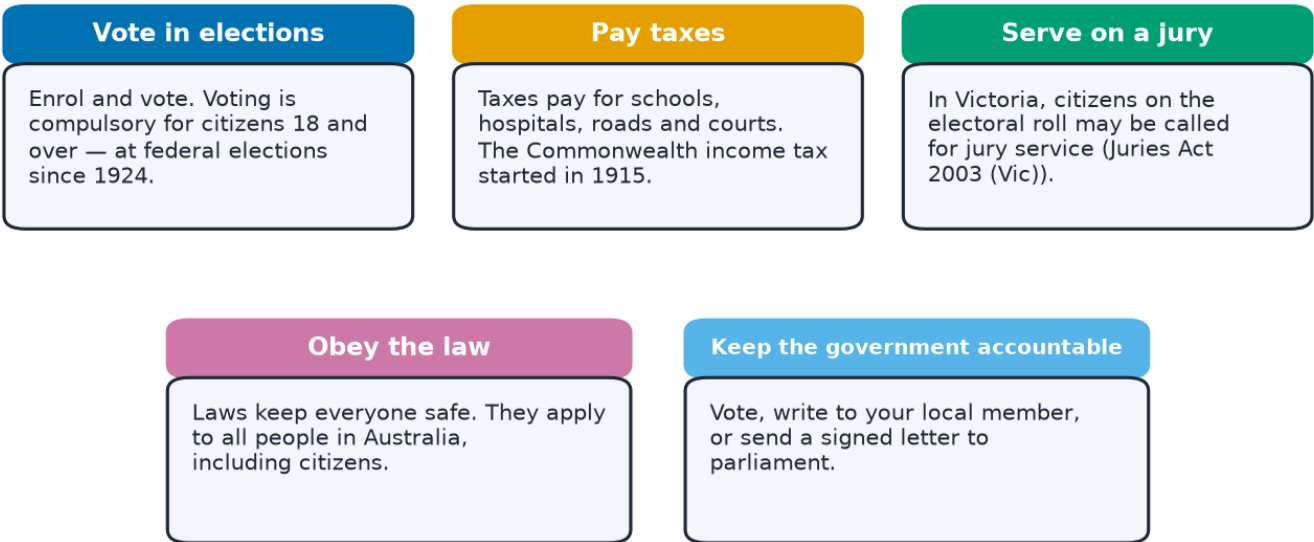


So the Charter works in three places at once: where laws are made, where laws are read, and where the government serves people.

Three steps — the Parliament of Victoria checks each new bill against the Charter, courts read laws to fit the Charter, and public authorities act to fit the Charter

The responsibilities of citizens. Rights come with responsibilities. Five big ones are voting, paying taxes, serving on a jury, obeying the law, and keeping the government accountable. Voting is **compulsory** — required by law — for citizens 18 and over, and to vote you must first **enrol**: put your name on the **electoral roll**, the official list of people enrolled to vote.

The responsibilities of Australian citizens

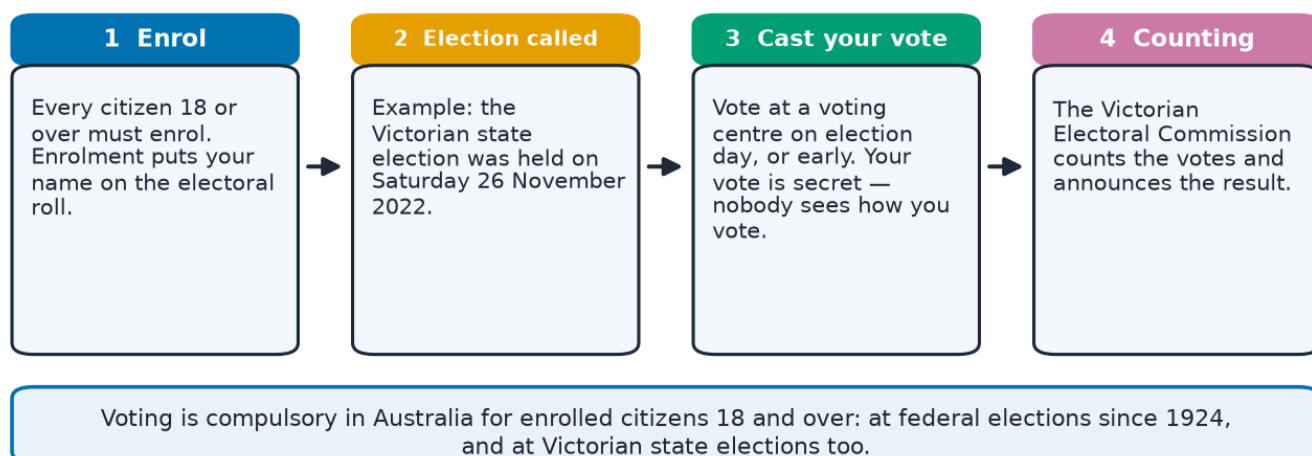


Rights and responsibilities come as a pair: citizens enjoy rights in the law, and they carry these responsibilities in return.

Five tiles — vote in elections, pay taxes, serve on a jury, obey the law, keep the government accountable — each with a short law fact

How voting works. Because voting is compulsory, every enrolled citizen 18 and over votes. That has been the rule at federal elections since 1924, and it applies at Victorian state elections too. On election day your vote is secret — nobody sees how you vote — and an independent body, the Victorian Electoral Commission (or the Australian Electoral Commission at federal elections), counts the votes and announces the result.

The responsibility to vote — how it works in Victoria



Four steps of voting in Victoria — enrol, election called, cast your vote, counting — using the Victorian state election held on Saturday 26 November 2022

Paying taxes and jury service. **Taxes** are money people pay to the government. The federal government has collected income tax since 1915, and taxes pay for schools, hospitals, roads and courts. **Jury service** is the job of sitting on a **jury** — the group of everyday people who decide the facts in a court case. In Victoria, jurors are picked from the electoral roll under the *Juries Act 2003* (Vic). **Keeping the government accountable** means asking questions, writing to your local member of parliament, and speaking freely about political matters — the Lange freedom at work.

Worked examples

Example 1 — guided

Three people are in three different situations. Sort each situation to the law that protects it: the Constitution, federal legislation, or the Victorian Charter.

- Omar wants to build a church in Melbourne. A law says he cannot, because of his religion.
- Lena is refused service in a shop because of her race.
- Priya goes to a Victorian court, and the court must give her a fair hearing.

Step	Working	Comment
1	Ask: where does each right live? (a) is about religion.	Freedom of religion is written straight into the Constitution (s116).
2	(b) is about race, in every part of Australia.	The <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i> (Cth) is federal legislation.
3	(c) is a Victorian court matter.	The right to a fair hearing is a Charter right in Victoria.

So: (a) the Constitution · (b) federal legislation · (c) the Victorian Charter.

Example 2 — independent

Explain the responsibility to vote, and show how it worked at the Victorian state election held on Saturday 26 November 2022.

Solution. Voting is a responsibility because the law makes it compulsory for enrolled citizens 18 and over — at federal elections since 1924, and at Victorian state elections too. At the Victorian state election of Saturday 26 November 2022, enrolled Victorians cast a secret vote, and the Victorian Electoral Commission counted the votes and announced the result. The responsibility works in four steps: enrol (your name goes on the electoral roll), the election is called, you cast your secret vote, and the votes are counted. Because every enrolled adult votes, parliament represents the whole community — and choosing the government (or choosing not to re-elect it) is the strongest way citizens keep it accountable.

Practice questions

Guided

Q1. Match each right to where it lives — the Constitution, federal legislation, or the Victorian Charter. (Hints are given.)

- a) Freedom of religion (written into the highest law, in force from 1901)
- b) The right not to be treated unfairly because of your age (a federal law of 2004)
- c) The right to a fair hearing in Victoria (a Victorian law of 2006)

Q2. Fill each gap using the word bank: **1901 · referendum · double majority · 4 · High Court of Australia**

- a) The Constitution has been in force from 1 January ____.
- b) Changing the Constitution takes a ____, a national vote of enrolled Australians.
- c) To pass, a change needs a ____: a national majority and at least ____ of the 6 states.
- d) In *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997), the ____ found an implied freedom of political communication.

Q3. Put the four federal laws against discrimination in order of year, oldest first. Start by finding the Racial Discrimination Act.

Age Discrimination Act · Racial Discrimination Act · Disability Discrimination Act · Sex Discrimination Act

Q4. Put each Charter right into its group — fairness, freedom, or protection.

- a) The right to a fair hearing
- b) Freedom of religion
- c) The right to meet with others peacefully
- d) Protection of families and children

Q5. Finish each sentence to explain why it is a responsibility.

- a) Paying taxes is a responsibility because ...
- b) Serving on a jury is a responsibility because ...

Q6. A proposed change to the Constitution is voted on. Nationally, 6 in 10 voters say yes. The states say yes in NSW, VIC, QLD and SA, and no in WA and TAS. Does the change pass? Check both parts of the double majority.

Independent

Q7. Name the three places where Australians gain their rights in law, and give one right from each place.

Q8. In *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997), the High Court of Australia found an implied freedom of political communication. Explain what that freedom means for citizens, and how it helps them keep the government accountable.

Q9. Choose two responsibilities of citizens. For each one, explain how it helps Australia's democracy work.

Q10. Explain two of the three ways the Victorian Charter shapes what the Parliament of Victoria, the courts and public authorities do.

Source questions

Read the source — a citizen's letter to a local member of parliament.

Model text — a citizen's letter to a local member of parliament

Keeping the government accountable can start with one letter

Dear local member,

My name is Alex, and I am in Year 5 at a primary school in your electorate.

I am writing about the road crossing outside our school gate. Many children cross there each morning, and the cars do not always slow down. Could you please ask the council to look at adding a pedestrian crossing with a flashing light?

As a citizen, I know it is my job to keep the government accountable. Writing to you is one way to do that, even before I am old enough to vote.

Thank you for reading my letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Alex (age 10)

A model letter from a Year 5 student to a local member of parliament, asking the council to look at the road crossing outside the school gate

- Which responsibility of citizens is Alex carrying out?
 - What is the problem Alex writes about?
 - Alex cannot vote yet. Find the sentence that shows Alex knows this, and say what Alex does instead.
 - Is writing a letter like this a good way for people under 18 to keep the government accountable? Give one reason for your answer.
-

Answers

Q1. (a) the Constitution · (b) federal legislation (*Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)) · (c) the Victorian Charter

Q2. (a) 1901 · (b) referendum · (c) double majority, 4 · (d) High Court of Australia

Q3. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* · *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* · *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* · *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (all Cth)

Q4. (a) fairness · (b) freedom · (c) freedom · (d) protection

Q5. Sample: (a) ... taxes pay for schools, hospitals, roads and courts, so everyone who uses them shares their cost. (b) ... everyday people on juries keep court cases fair.

Q6. Yes. National yes: 6 in 10 is more than half. States: 4 of the 6 say yes. Both parts of the double majority are met, so the change passes.

Q7.–Q10. and source (a)–(d): see the full solutions below.

Full solutions

Q1. (a) Freedom of religion is one of the few rights written into the **Constitution** (s116), in force from 1 January 1901. (b) The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth) is an act of the federal parliament, so this right lives in **federal legislation**. (c) The right to a fair hearing is one of the 20 rights in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic) — the **Victorian Charter**.

Q2. (a) 1901 — the Constitution has been in force from 1 January 1901. (b) referendum — only a national vote of enrolled Australians can change it. (c) double majority, 4 — a national majority of voters and at least 4 of the 6 states must say yes at the same time. (d) High Court of Australia — the court that reads and applies the Constitution.

Q3. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* → *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* → *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* → *Age Discrimination Act 2004*. All four are federal legislation; Victoria's own Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) sits beside them.

Q4. (a) The right to a fair hearing is a **fairness** right. (b) Freedom of religion is a **freedom** right. (c) The right to meet with others peacefully is a **freedom** right. (d) Protection of families and children is a **protection** right.

Q5. (a) Paying taxes is a responsibility because taxes pay for the things the whole community uses — schools, hospitals, roads and courts — so everyone who uses them shares their cost. (b) Serving on a jury is a responsibility because juries of everyday people, picked from the electoral roll, keep court cases fair: the facts are decided by the community, not only by the government.

Q6. Part 1, national majority: 6 in 10 voters say yes, which is more than half — met. Part 2, majority of states: NSW, VIC, QLD and SA say yes, which is 4 of the 6 states — met. Both parts at the same time means the double majority is met, so **the change passes**. (If only one part were met, the change would fail.)

Q7. The three places are: the **Constitution** (for example, freedom of religion, s116); **legislation** made by parliaments (for example, the right not to be treated unfairly because of your race, in the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)); and the **Victorian Charter** (for example, the right to a fair hearing in Victoria).

Q8. The implied freedom means Australians are free to talk and write about political matters and government — to criticise laws, policies and politicians without the government silencing them. It helps citizens keep the government accountable because keeping the government accountable starts with free speech: people can point out what the government has done wrong, ask it questions in the public view, and argue for change. At election time, that free discussion is what lets voters judge the government before they vote.

Q9. Sample pair. Voting: because voting is compulsory for enrolled citizens 18 and over, parliament is chosen by (and answers to) the whole community, not just the people who feel like voting — that is what makes it representative. Paying taxes: taxes fund schools, hospitals, roads and courts, so the government can actually do the jobs voters expect of it; and because the government must spend public money, citizens have the right to ask how it was spent. (Jury

service, obeying the law, and keeping the government accountable are equally acceptable with a clear how-it-helps line.)

Q10. Sample pair. Parliament: every new bill that goes to the Parliament of Victoria must come with a statement saying whether the bill fits with Charter rights, so rights are checked before a law is even made. Public authorities: bodies doing public work in Victoria — government departments, police, public schools — must act in ways that fit with Charter rights, so the rights are respected day to day, not just on paper. (The third way: Victorian courts must read Victorian laws, as far as possible, to fit with Charter rights.)

Source (a). Alex is **keeping the government accountable** — writing to a local member of parliament to ask for action and to question how a public space (the road outside the school) is managed.

Source (b). The problem is the road crossing outside the school gate: many children cross there each morning, and the cars do not always slow down. Alex asks the member to have the council look at adding a crossing with a flashing light.

Source (c). The sentence is “...even before I am old enough to vote.” Instead of voting, Alex writes to the local member — a way of taking part and keeping the government accountable that is open to people under 18.

Source (d). Reasons may vary; a sound reason: yes — the letter names a real problem, says who is affected, and asks a specific question of a person whose job is to represent the community, so it is a direct, peaceful way to be heard before you can vote. (A sound reason on the other side, for example that one letter may need many voices behind it to move the council, is also acceptable if it is explained.)

Sources

All real-world facts in this section are named, dated and checkable (retrieved 26 August 2026 unless an act of parliament is itself the source):

- **Constitution** — *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900*, ss 51(xxxi), 80, 116, 117, 128; in force from 1 January 1901.
- **Lange** — *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 211 (High Court of Australia).
- **Referendums** — 45 referendums held since 1901, 8 changes agreed: Australian Electoral Commission.
- **Compulsory voting** — federal elections since 1924: *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth), as changed in 1924; Australian Electoral Commission.
- **Victorian state election** — held on Saturday 26 November 2022: Victorian Electoral Commission.
- **Income tax** — federal income tax from 1915: *Income Tax Assessment Act 1915* (Cth); Australian Taxation Office.
- **Juries** — jurors picked from the electoral roll: *Juries Act 2003* (Vic).
- **Charter** — *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic); the list of the 20 rights as published by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.
- **Discrimination laws** — *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (all Cth); *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic).

How bills become laws: federal, state and territory parliaments

For teachers and families — what this section teaches.

Curriculum: VC2HC6K06, drawing on .E01 .E02 .E03.

Notes: seat numbers are as at August 2026 — federal after the 3 May 2025 election and later party changes, Victorian after the 26 November 2022 state election. The role-play and the model speech use a clearly labelled classroom *practice bill*, not a real law. All real-world facts are real, named and dated; see Sources at the end.

Big idea

In Australia, laws are made by a **parliament** — the group of people we elect to make and change laws. There is one parliament for the whole country (the federal parliament) and one for each state. A new law starts life as a **bill** — a plan for a new law. The bill must pass **both houses** of a parliament, stage by stage, and then get **royal assent** (the signing that makes it law). Only then is it an **Act** — a law everyone must follow.

Most of the time, the government does **not** hold enough seats in the upper house to pass a bill on its own. So it has to talk to members from other parties and win their support. That number-crunching is part of how laws really get made.

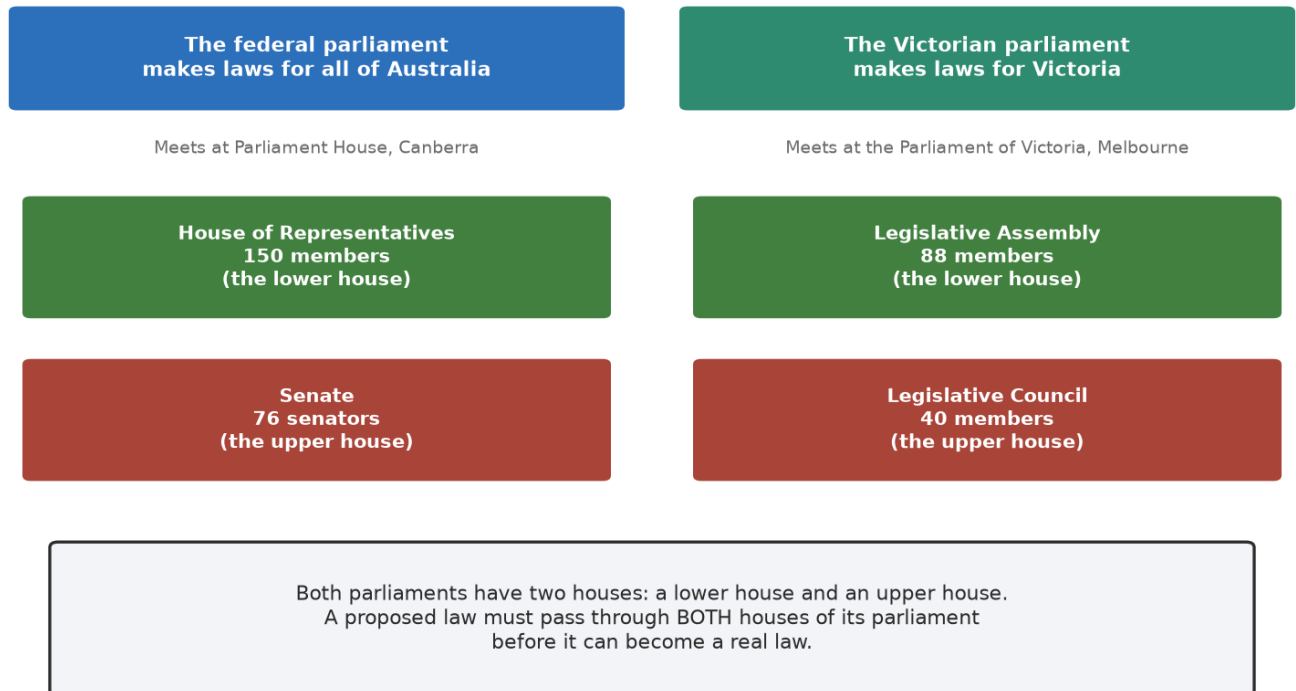
Key words

Word	What it means
parliament	the group of people we elect to make and change laws
legislation	law-making, and the laws that are made
bill	a plan for a new law, before it has passed
Act	a bill that has passed parliament and become a law
lower house	the house that usually starts a bill. Federally: House of Representatives (150 members). In Victoria: Legislative Assembly (88 members)
upper house	the house that checks the bill again. Federally: Senate (76 senators). In Victoria: Legislative Council (40 members)
member	a person elected to the lower house
senator	a person elected to the Senate
minister	a member of the government put in charge of an area, who brings bills to parliament
government	the party (or group of parties) with the most seats in the lower house. It runs the country or state
opposition	the next biggest group in parliament. It questions the government
crossbench	members who are not in the government or the opposition
first reading	stage 1: the bill is brought in and its title is read out
second reading	stage 2: a minister gives a speech explaining the bill, members debate it (talk it through and question it), then vote
committee stage	stage 3: members check the bill part by part and can make changes
third reading	stage 4: the house votes on the bill one last time
amendment	a change made to a bill while it is being checked
royal assent	the signing, in the King's name, that turns a passed bill into an Act. Federally the Governor-General signs; in Victoria the Governor signs
house of review	a name for the upper house, because it checks and can change bills from the lower house
balance of power	when a few members who are not in the government can decide which way a vote goes
majority	more than half of the seats or votes

1. Two houses in two parliaments

Two parliaments that make laws for us

The federal parliament and the Victorian parliament



Two panels comparing the Australian Parliament in Canberra, with the House of Representatives (150 members, lower house) and the Senate (76 senators, upper house), against the Parliament of Victoria in Melbourne, with the Legislative Assembly (88 members) and the Legislative Council (40 members), noting that both houses must agree before a bill becomes a law

The **Australian Parliament** meets in Canberra and makes laws for the whole country. It has two houses:

- the **House of Representatives** — 150 members, the lower house. Its meeting room is green.
- the **Senate** — 76 senators, the upper house. Its meeting room is red.

The **Parliament of Victoria** meets in Melbourne and makes laws for Victoria. It also has two houses:

- the **Legislative Assembly** — 88 members, the lower house.
- the **Legislative Council** — 40 members, the upper house.

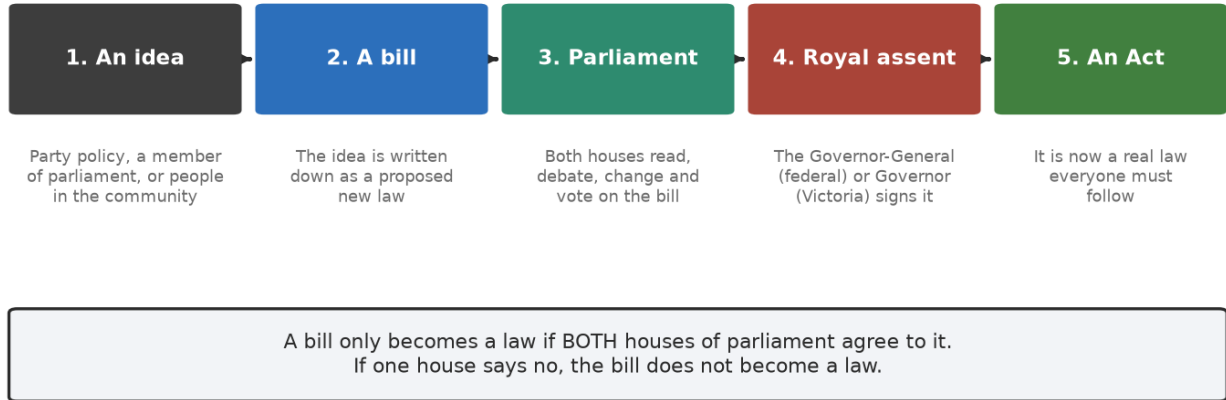
The other Australian states have two-house parliaments just like these. The territories — the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory — have parliaments with only one house, so their bills go through the stages once, in that one house.

The big rule for two-house parliaments: **both houses must agree to a bill, word for word, before it can become law.**

2. From an idea to an Act

How an idea becomes a law

The big picture journey every law takes



A chain of five boxes showing the journey of a law: an idea, then a bill (a plan for a new law), then parliament (both houses pass it), then royal assent (the bill is signed), then an Act (a law everyone must follow)

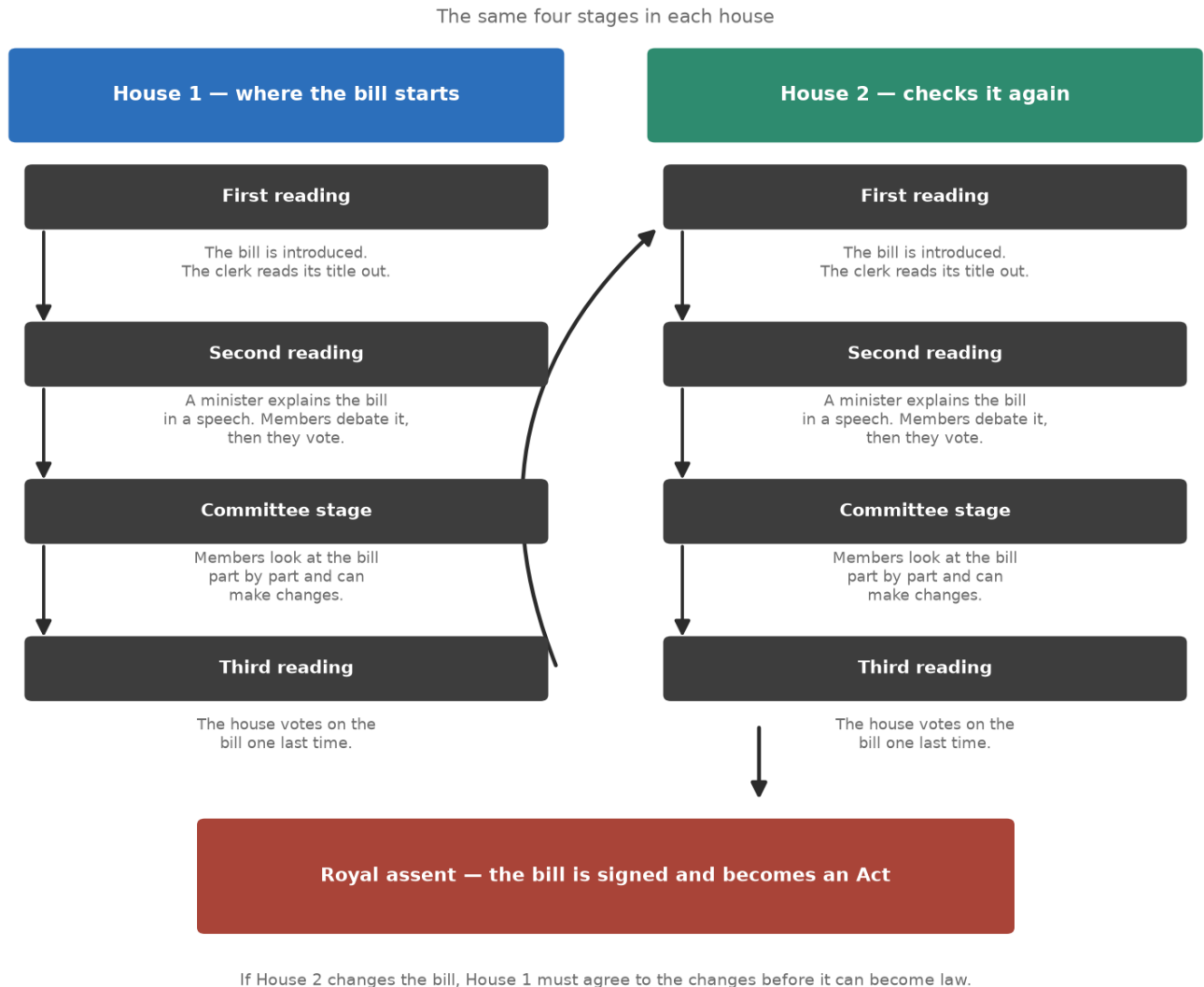
Legislation means law-making, and the laws that are made. Every law goes on the same journey:

1. **Idea** — someone sees a problem or wants a change.
2. **Bill** — the idea is written up as a plan for a new law, called a bill.
3. **Parliament** — the bill is checked and voted on in both houses.
4. **Royal assent** — the bill is signed in the King's name.
5. **Act** — the bill is now an Act of Parliament: a real law.

A bill is only a *plan*. An Act is a *law*. That difference — bill versus Act — is the heart of this section.

3. The steps a bill takes in each house

The steps a bill takes through parliament



Two panels, one for each house, each showing the same four stages in order: first reading (the bill is introduced and its title read out), second reading (a minister explains the bill in a speech, members debate it, then vote), committee stage (members check the bill part by part and can change it), and third reading (the house votes one last time); an arrow carries the bill from House 1 to House 2, and after House 2 the bill goes to royal assent and becomes an Act

Each house takes a bill through the **same four stages**:

- **First reading** — the bill is brought in, and the **clerk** (the person who keeps parliament's papers) reads out its title. There is no vote yet.
- **Second reading** — the **minister** in charge gives a speech explaining why the bill is needed — the *second-reading speech*. Members then **debate** the bill: they talk it through, question it, and argue for or against it. Then the house votes.
- **Committee stage** — members check the bill part by part and can make changes, called **amendments**.
- **Third reading** — the house votes on the bill one last time.

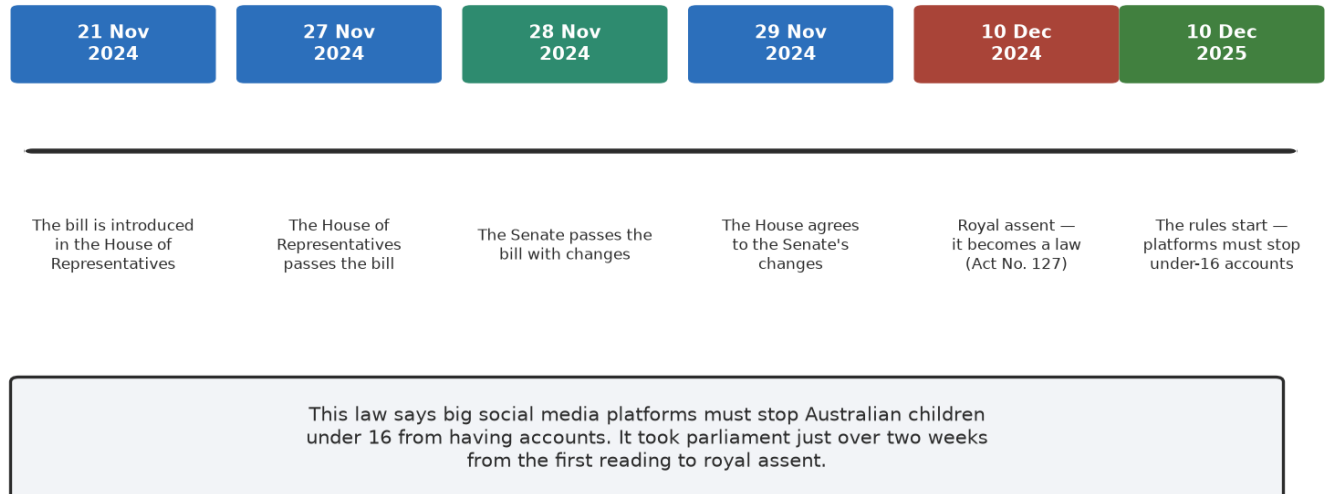
Then the bill crosses to the other house and starts again at first reading. If the second house adds amendments, the first house must agree to them. When both houses agree on exactly the same words, the bill is ready for **royal assent**.

Royal assent is given in the King's name: by the **Governor-General** for federal laws, and by the **Governor of Victoria** for Victorian laws. Once it is signed, the bill is an **Act**.

4. A real law, step by step

A real law: the social media minimum age law

Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024



A timeline of six dated milestones for the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024: introduced in the House of Representatives on 21 November 2024; House passes it on 27 November 2024; Senate passes it with amendments on 28 November 2024; House agrees to the amendments on 29 November 2024; royal assent on 10 December 2024 (Act No. 127 of 2024); and the main rules start on 10 December 2025

The **Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024** is a real federal law. It says big social media platforms must stop Australians under 16 from having accounts. This is its journey:

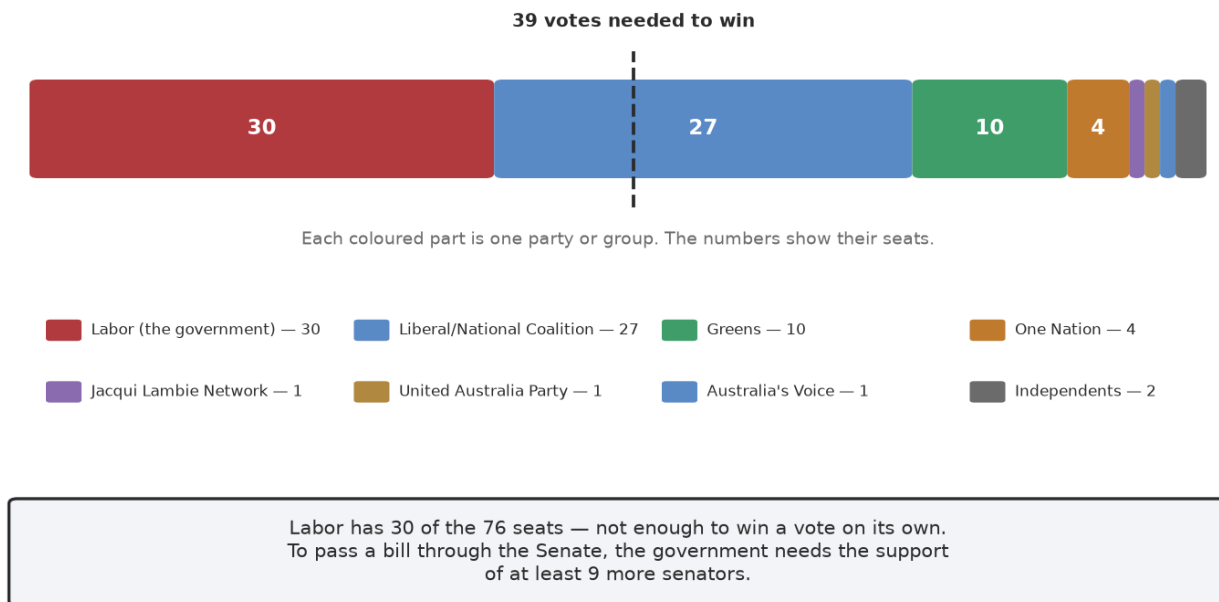
- **21 November 2024** — the bill is brought into the House of Representatives (first reading).
- **27 November 2024** — the House passes the bill.
- **28 November 2024** — the Senate passes the bill **with amendments** — the Senate changes some of its words.
- **29 November 2024** — the House agrees to the Senate's changes. Now both houses match, word for word.
- **10 December 2024** — the Governor-General gives royal assent. The bill becomes an Act (Act No. 127 of 2024).
- **10 December 2025** — the Act's main rules start: under-16 accounts are blocked.

Now look at 28–29 November. The Senate did not just say “yes”. It changed the bill, and the House then had to agree to those changes. That is the upper house doing its job as the **house of review** — the house that checks and can change bills from the lower house.

5. The Senate: who must the government convince?

Who holds the seats in the Senate?

The 76 Senate seats after the federal election on 3 May 2025 (numbers checked 26 August 2026)



A bar of 76 coloured blocks showing who holds the Senate seats after the 2025 federal election: Labor (the government) 30, Coalition 27, Greens 10, One Nation 4, and smaller groups and independents making up the rest, with a dashed line at 39 marking the votes needed to win and a note that the government needs at least 9 more senators

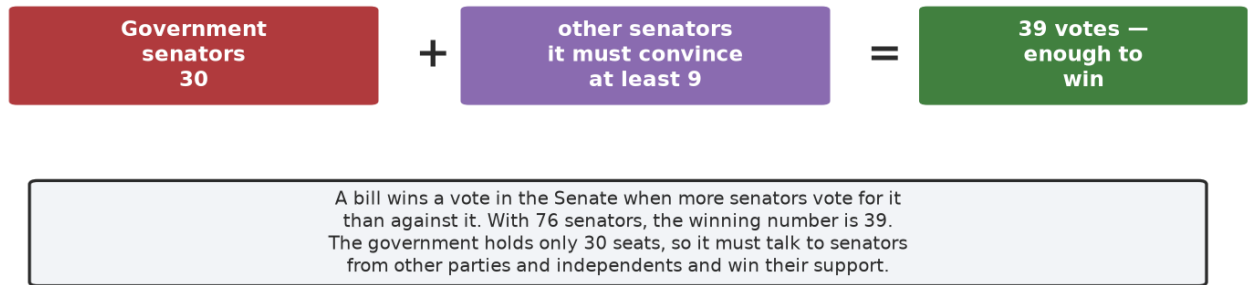
At the federal election on **3 May 2025**, the Labor Party won 94 of the 150 seats in the House of Representatives. The party with the most seats in the lower house forms the **government**, and the next biggest group becomes the **opposition**. So in the lower house, the government can usually pass its bills on its own.

The Senate is a different story. It has 76 seats, and a bill wins a Senate vote when more senators vote for it than against it — with 76 senators, that means **39 votes**.

- The government holds **30** of the 76 seats.
- The winning number is **39**.
- So the government must convince **at least 9 more senators** — senators from the opposition, senators from minor parties, or crossbench senators.

How many more senators must the government convince?

Working out the numbers after the 2025 federal election



This is called holding the balance of power — the extra senators can choose which way a bill goes.

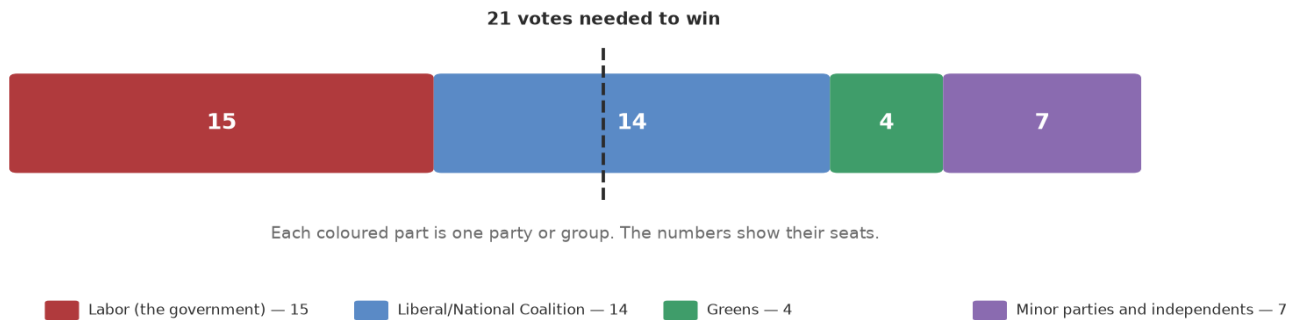
Three boxes forming a number sentence — 30 government senators plus at least 9 other senators equals 39 votes, enough to win — explaining that with 76 senators the winning number is 39 and the government must win support from other parties and independents; a caption names this holding the balance of power

Those extra senators are said to **hold the balance of power**: because the government cannot reach 39 on its own, their votes can decide which way a bill goes. That is why a government must listen to the upper house, and why the Senate can genuinely review, change or even block a bill.

6. The same story in Victoria

Who holds the seats in the Victorian Legislative Council?

The 40 seats after the Victorian state election on 26 November 2022



The Victorian government holds only 15 of the 40 seats.
To pass a bill through the Legislative Council, it needs 21 votes —
so it must win the support of at least 6 members from other parties.
Because of this, the Legislative Council is called the house of review:
it can question and change bills the lower house has passed.

A bar of 40 coloured blocks showing who holds the Victorian Legislative Council seats after the 26 November 2022 state election: Labor (the government) 15, Liberal/National Coalition 14, Greens 4, and minor parties and independents 7, with a dashed line at 21 marking the votes needed to win and a note that the government must win the support of at least 6 more members

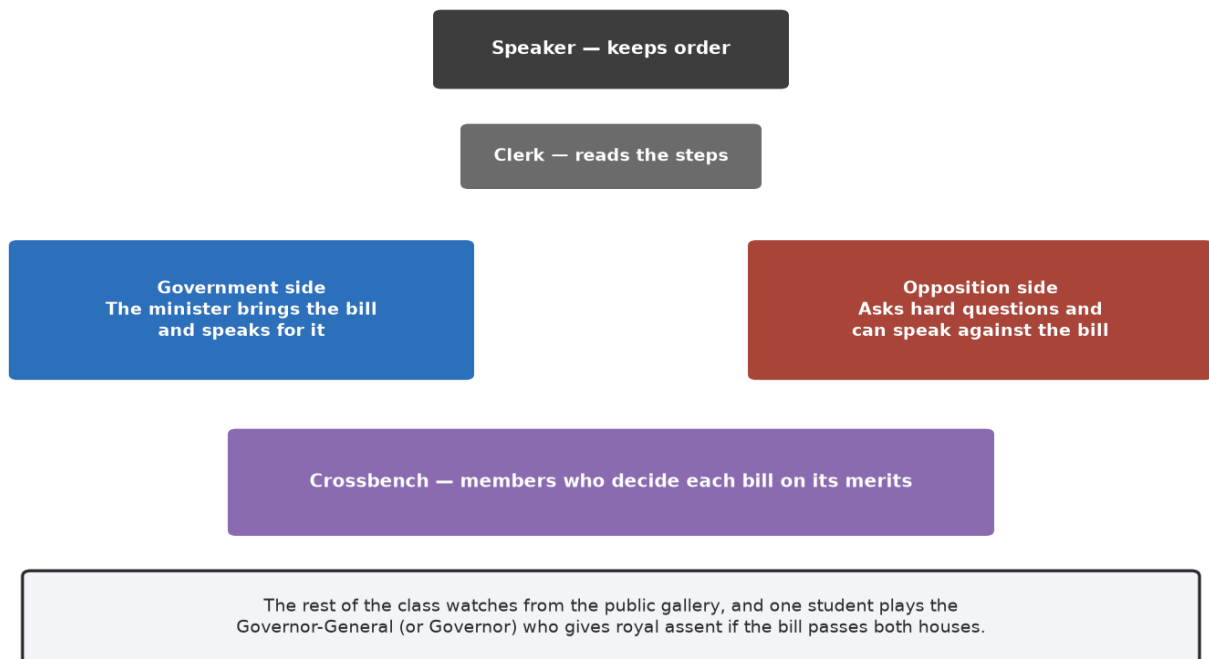
At the Victorian state election on **26 November 2022**, Labor won enough lower-house seats to form the government. But in the upper house, the Legislative Council, the government holds only **15 of the 40 seats**. A bill needs **21 votes** to win, so the government must convince **at least 6 more members**.

Victorian laws take the same road as federal laws: the same four stages in each house, both houses agreeing word for word, then royal assent — given by the Governor of Victoria in the King's name.

7. Role-play: pass a bill in your classroom

Turn your classroom into a parliament

Roles for the bill role-play (a practice parliament, not the real one)



Use the same four stages as real parliament: first reading, second reading, committee stage, third reading.

A plan of a classroom set up as a parliament chamber: the Speaker at the top keeping order, the Clerk below reading out the steps, a government side that brings the bill and speaks for it, an opposition side that asks hard questions, a crossbench in the middle that decides each bill on its merits, the rest of the class in a public gallery, and one student playing the Governor-General or Governor who gives royal assent if the bill passes

Time to run a parliament for real (well, classroom real). This activity is **VC2HC6K06.E01** — role-playing a bill's journey through parliament.

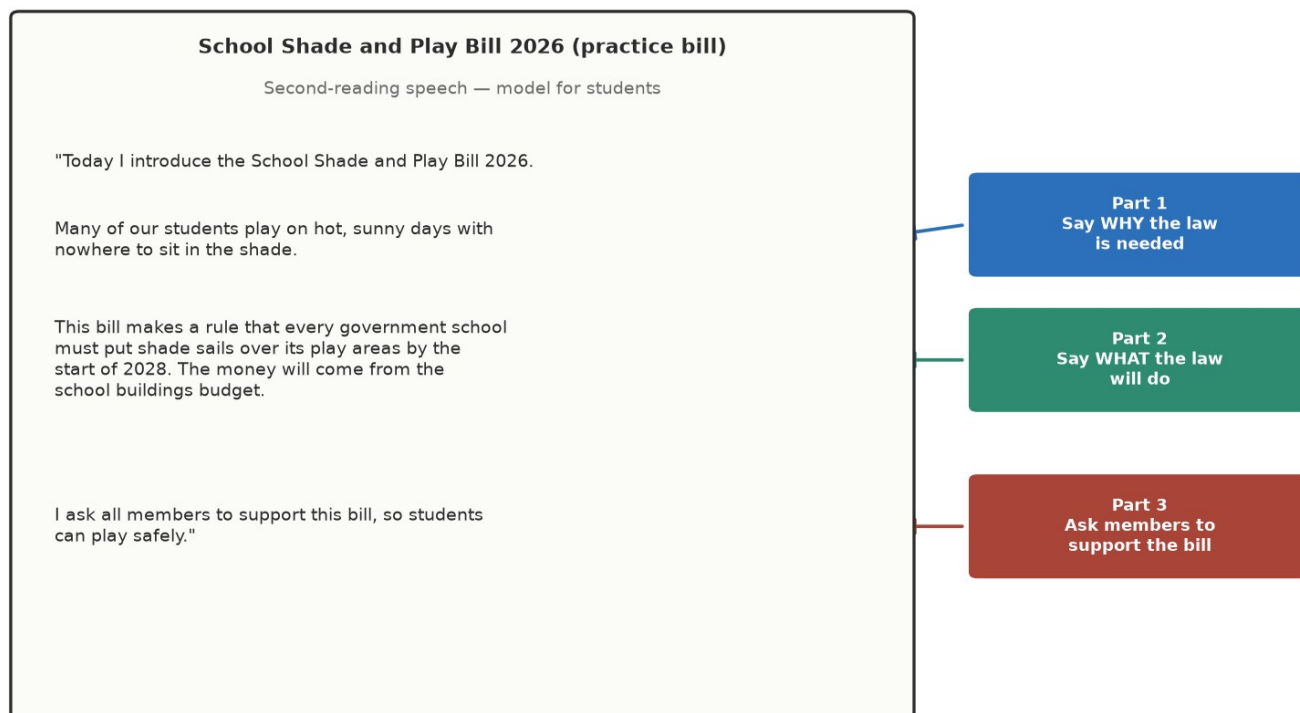
1. **Pick a practice bill.** Choose one as a class — for example, the *School Shade and Play Bill 2026* from the next section. Label it clearly as a practice bill: it is not a real law.
2. **Set up the room** as the picture shows. Decide: are you the Commonwealth Parliament (Governor-General gives royal assent) or the Victorian Parliament (Governor gives royal assent)?
3. **First reading** — the clerk reads out the bill's title.
4. **Second reading** — the minister gives a short speech for the bill (you will write one in section 8). The opposition asks hard questions. The class debates it.
5. **Committee stage** — go through the bill part by part. Anyone may propose an amendment; vote on each one.
6. **Third reading** — final vote. Count the votes out loud.
7. **Royal assent** — if the bill passed, the student playing the Governor-General (or Governor) signs it. The practice bill becomes a practice Act.

Afterwards, note down what your crossbench did. Did the government need them? That is the balance of power, live in your room.

8. Write a second-reading speech

A model second-reading speech

For a classroom practice bill — this is not a real law



In a real parliament, the minister who brings a bill gives this speech at the second reading, and other members then debate it before they vote.

A model second-reading speech document for the classroom practice bill "School Shade and Play Bill 2026", with three labelled parts: Part 1 says why the law is needed, Part 2 says what the law will do, and Part 3 asks members to support the bill; a note says that in a real parliament the minister who brings a bill gives this speech at the second reading

In a real parliament, the minister who brings a bill explains it at the second reading. That speech has **three parts**:

1. **Why** — say why the law is needed. What is the problem?
2. **What** — say what the bill will do, and how it will work.
3. **Ask** — ask members to support the bill.

The picture shows a model speech for a practice bill. Now it is your turn, following **VC2HC6K06.E02**: write the second-reading speech for **your own bill**. It may be a real bill you have heard about, or a practice bill for your school — if it is a practice bill, label it as one. Use the three parts, in that order.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — trace a real law through parliament.

Task: fill in the journey of the social media minimum age law, stage by stage.

Step	Where	When	What happened
First reading	House of Representatives	21 Nov 2024	The bill is brought in; its

Step	Where	When	What happened
			title is read out
Second + third reading	House of Representatives	by 27 Nov 2024	The House debates the bill, then passes it
Second + third reading	Senate	28 Nov 2024	The Senate passes the bill with amendments
Agreement to amendments	House of Representatives	29 Nov 2024	The House agrees, so both houses match
Royal assent	Governor-General	10 Dec 2024	The bill becomes an Act (Act No. 127 of 2024)
Rules start	—	10 Dec 2025	Under-16 accounts are blocked

The teaching point: the Senate used its power as house of review (28 Nov), and the law could not move on until the House agreed to the changes (29 Nov).

Worked example 2 — work out who the government must convince (Victoria).

Task: in the Victorian Legislative Council, how many more members must the government convince?

1. Seats in the house: **40**. More than half of 40 is 20, so the winning number is **21**.
2. Seats the government holds: **15**.
3. Extra votes needed: $21 - 15 = 6$.
4. Who can supply them? The non-government members number $40 - 15 = 25$ (Coalition 14, Greens 4, minor parties and independents 7). The government must win at least 6 of those 25.

The teaching point: because 6 is smaller than 25, the government has choices about who to convince — but it *must* convince someone. No deal, no law.

Your turn — activities

With step-by-step help

Q1. Copy and complete this table.

Parliament	Lower house (seats)	Upper house (seats)
Australian (federal)	House of Representatives (? (76))	
Victorian	? (88)	? (40)

Q2. These five steps of a law's journey are out of order. Rewrite them in the right order.

- a) royal assent — the bill is signed
- b) an idea for a new law
- c) the bill passes both houses
- d) the idea is written up as a bill
- e) the bill becomes an Act

Q3. Match each stage (1–4) to its job (a–d).

1. First reading · 2. Second reading · 3. Committee stage · 4. Third reading
- a) members check the bill part by part and can make amendments
- b) the house votes on the bill one last time
- c) the bill is brought in and its title is read out
- d) a minister explains the bill in a speech, members debate it, then vote

Q4. Use the timeline in section 4. (a) Which house passed the social media bill first? (b) What did the Senate do on 28 November 2024? (c) The House agreed to the Senate's changes on 29 November 2024. How many days after the Senate made the changes was that?

Q5. Use the Senate diagram in section 5. Fill in the blanks: the Senate has ____ seats. The winning number is _____. The government holds _____, so it must convince at least _____ more senators.

Q6. Use the Victorian diagram in section 6 to do the same for the Legislative Council: _____ seats, winning number _____, government holds _____, must convince at least _____ more members.

On your own

Q7. The upper house is called the *house of review*. Using the seat numbers in sections 5 and 6, explain in two or three sentences why the government cannot simply pass any bill it likes.

Q8. (*E01 — role-play.*) With your class, run your practice bill through a parliament using the set-up in section 7. Choose whether you are the Commonwealth or the Victorian Parliament. Afterwards, write two or three sentences: what happened at the committee stage, and how the final vote went.

Q9. (*E02 — speech-writing.*) Write the second-reading speech for your own bill, with the three parts from section 8 (why / what / ask). If you invent the bill, label it as a practice bill.

Q10. Imagine the government held **40** of the 76 Senate seats instead of 30. How many more senators would it need to convince to reach 39? What would that mean for the balance of power?

Reading the fact file

Q11. Read the fact file below, then answer the questions.

Source: a fact file about a real federal law

A fact file written for this book, using facts checked on 26 August 2026

FACT FILE — the social media minimum age law

1. The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 is a federal law made by the Australian Parliament.
2. The law says big social media platforms must stop Australian children under 16 from having accounts.
3. The bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on 21 November 2024. The House passed it on 27 November 2024.
4. The Senate passed the bill on 28 November 2024 with changes. The House agreed to those changes on 29 November 2024.
5. The Governor-General gave royal assent on 10 December 2024, and the law's main rules started on 10 December 2025.

A fact file card titled “FACT FILE — the social media minimum age law”, written for this book with facts checked on 26 August 2026, listing five facts: the law’s official name; that it blocks under-16 accounts on big platforms; that the bill entered the House of Representatives on 21 November 2024 and passed on 27 November 2024; that the Senate passed it with changes on 28 November 2024 and the House agreed on 29 November 2024; and that royal assent was given on 10 December 2024 with the main rules starting on 10 December 2025

- a) What is the official name of this law, and what Act number is it?
- b) The fact file says the Senate passed the bill “with changes”. Which house had to agree to those changes, and on what date?
- c) Royal assent was given on 10 December 2024, but the main rules did not start until 10 December 2025. Suggest one sensible reason why a law might not start straight away.
- d) Write one question of your own that you would like to ask the minister who brought this bill into parliament.

Answers

Q1. Federal: House of Representatives (150); Senate (76). Victorian: Legislative Assembly (88); Legislative Council (40).

Q2. $b \rightarrow d \rightarrow c \rightarrow a \rightarrow e$. (Idea; written up as a bill; passes both houses; royal assent; becomes an Act.)

Q3. 1–c; 2–d; 3–a; 4–b.

Q4. (a) The House of Representatives. (b) It passed the bill *with amendments* — it changed some of the bill’s words. (c) One day later.

Q5. 76; 39; 30; 9.

Q6. 40; 21; 15; 6.

Q7. Sample: In the Senate the government holds 30 of 76 seats, short of the 39 needed to win, so at least 9 other senators must agree — and they can ask for changes first. The same is true in Victoria (15 of 40, needing 21). Because the government must win extra votes, the upper house really can check, change or block a bill. That checking job is why it is called the house of review.

Q8. Check that your write-up names the stages you ran, says what amendments (if any) were made at committee stage, and gives the final vote numbers.

Q9. Check that your speech has the three parts in order: why the law is needed, what it will do, and an ask for support — and that an invented bill is labelled as a practice bill.

Q10. Zero — 40 is already more than 39, so the government would not need to convince anyone. It would hold a majority in the Senate itself, and no crossbench would hold the balance of power.

Q11. (a) Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024; Act No. 127 of 2024. (b) The House of Representatives, on 29 November 2024. (c) Sample: to give platforms, families and the eSafety Commissioner time to get ready. (d) Any question that could really be asked of the minister — for example, “How will the law check someone’s age without reading their messages?”

Solutions shown step by step

Q4(c), shown. Senate changes made: 28 Nov 2024. House agrees: 29 Nov 2024. $29 - 28 = 1$ day.

Q5, shown. Seats 76 $\rightarrow$ more than half is 38, so the winning number is $38 + 1 = 39$. Government 30 $\rightarrow 39 - 30 = 9$ more senators.

Q6, shown. Seats 40 $\rightarrow$ more than half is 20, so the winning number is **21**. Government 15 $\rightarrow 21 - 15 = 6$ more members.

Q10, shown. Winning number 39. Government 40. $40 \geq 39$, so extra senators needed = **0**. With a majority of its own, the government would not need the crossbench, so nobody outside the government would hold the balance of power.

Worked example 2, shown. Winning number: half of 40 is 20, plus 1 = 21. Needed: $21 - 15 = 6$. Pool available: $40 - 15 = 25$ non-government members ($14 + 4 + 7 = 25$ ✓). So the government must convince at least 6 of those 25.

Ideas that stick

- A **bill** is a plan for a law; an **Act** is a law that has passed.
- A bill becomes an Act only after **both houses** pass it through the four stages (first reading, second reading, committee stage, third reading) and it gets **royal assent**.
- The **upper house** is the *house of review*: it checks and can change bills.
- When the government lacks a **majority** in the upper house, it must convince extra members — they **hold the balance of power**.

Sources (for teachers)

- VCAA, *Victorian Curriculum 2.0 — Civics and Citizenship, Levels 5–6* (export dated 29 July 2026, re-read 21 August 2026): codes VC2HC6K06 and .E01–.E03.
- Wikipedia, “2025 Australian federal election” — accessed 26 August 2026: House of Representatives 150 seats, Labor 94, election date 3 May 2025.
- Wikipedia, “Senate (Australia)” and related composition tables — accessed 26 August 2026 (two independent pages cross-checked): 76 seats; from 22 July 2025 Labor 29, Coalition 27, Greens 10, One Nation 4, remaining minor parties and independents; Senator Tammy Tyrrell joined Labor on 14 May 2026, taking Labor to 30. Majority of 76 is 39.
- Wikipedia, “Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024” — accessed 26 August 2026: Act No. 127 of 2024; introduced 21 Nov 2024; House passed 27 Nov 2024; Senate passed with amendments 28 Nov 2024; House agreed 29 Nov 2024; royal assent 10 Dec 2024; main rules started 10 Dec 2025.
- Wikipedia, “Victorian Legislative Council” and “2022 Victorian state election” — accessed 26 August 2026: 40 seats; Labor 15, Coalition 14, Greens 4, minor parties and independents 7; election held 26 November 2022; majority of 40 is 21. Fixed four-year terms; the Governor of Victoria gives royal assent in the King’s name.
- The fact-file figure is an original source card written for this book from the facts above (checked 26 August 2026); it is not a government document.

Contested terms (see CONTESTED_TERMS.md). VC2 uses *legislation*, *parliament*, *house of review* and *balance of power* without defining them. This section’s working definitions: **legislation** = law-making and the laws made; **parliament** = the elected body that makes and changes laws; **house of review** = the upper house’s checking-and-changing role; **balance of power** = the position of non-government members whose votes can decide which way a bill goes. *Government*, *opposition* and *crossbench* are used in their Australian parliament sense and are defined in Key words.

What ‘citizenship’ means: five kinds, from local to global

Owens VC2HC6K07 · draws on .E01, .E02, .E03, .E04 · Year 5

Theory

1. One word, more than one meaning. The word *citizenship* is used in more than one way. In one sense it is a legal status: the law says you are a member of a country. In Australia, that law is the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*. In another sense, citizenship is about belonging and taking part: the ways you help in the life of a group. You already belong to many groups — your family, your class, your school, your local area. Citizenship is that same idea, grown bigger.

Some words have one meaning that is fixed by a law or a rule. Other words are used in different ways by different people, and no rule fixes them. ‘Global citizenship’ and ‘digital citizenship’ are words like that: the Victorian Curriculum uses them but does not define them. In this section we use them like this:

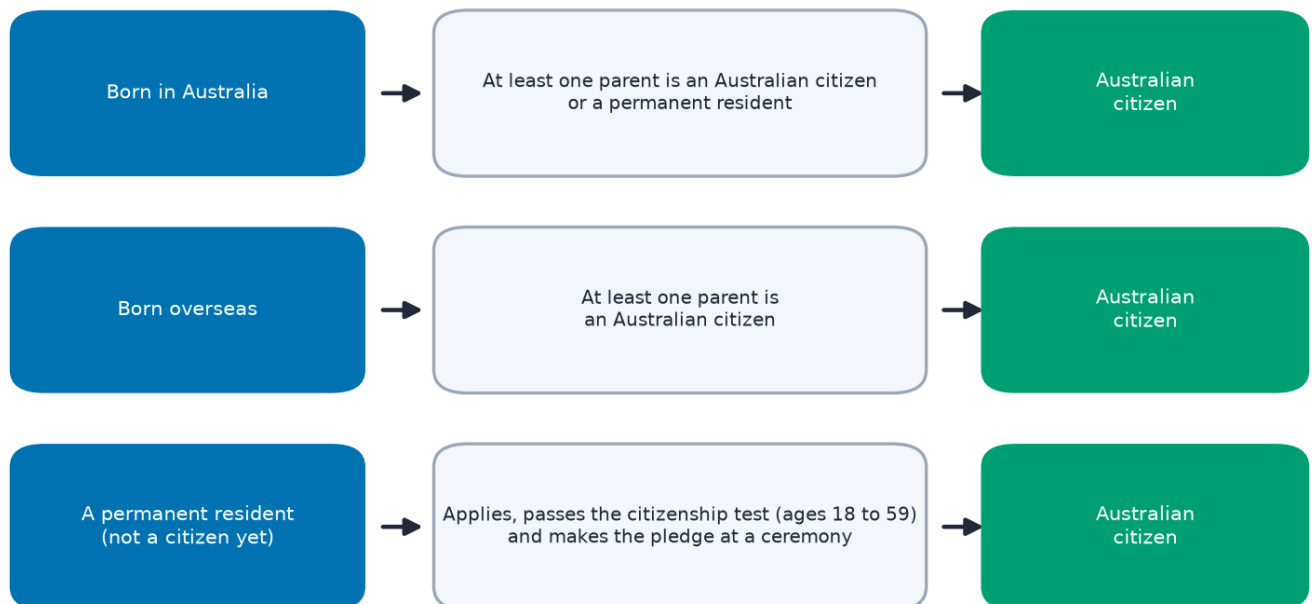
- A **global citizen** is a person who thinks about how their choices affect people all around the world, and then acts on that thinking.
- A **digital citizen** is a person who uses the internet and other technology in a safe, respectful and responsible way.

Keep these two senses in mind as you read: *legal membership* and *taking part*.

2. Who can become an Australian citizen? There are three main ways to become an Australian citizen.

Three ways to become an Australian citizen

Each path leads to the same citizenship



Since 2002, Australians can in many cases also hold another country's citizenship at the same time (dual citizenship).

Three pathways to Australian citizenship: by birth in Australia, by descent when born overseas to an Australian citizen parent, and by application as a permanent resident

- **By birth.** A baby born in Australia is an Australian citizen at birth if at least one parent is an Australian citizen or a permanent resident. A permanent resident is a person who is not a citizen but has permission to live in Australia for good.
- **By descent.** A person born overseas can become an Australian citizen if at least one parent is an Australian citizen.
- **By application.** A permanent resident can apply to become a citizen. People who apply and are 18 to 59 years old must pass the Australian citizenship test. The test asks about Australia, its laws and what citizens must do. At a citizenship ceremony, new citizens make the pledge of commitment, a formal promise to Australia and its people, and receive a citizenship certificate.

Since 2002, Australia's law has also allowed dual citizenship in many cases: a person can be a citizen of Australia and of another country at the same time.

3. Rights, responsibilities and the values Australians share. Australian citizenship brings rights and responsibilities together.

Australian citizenship: rights, responsibilities and the values Australians share

Rights	Responsibilities	Shared values
Vote in Australian elections	Obey the law	Freedom
Apply for an Australian passport	Enrol and vote (citizens who are 18 or older)	Respect
Get help from Australian officials overseas	Serve on a jury if called	Fairness
Leave Australia and come back	Defend Australia if needed	Equality

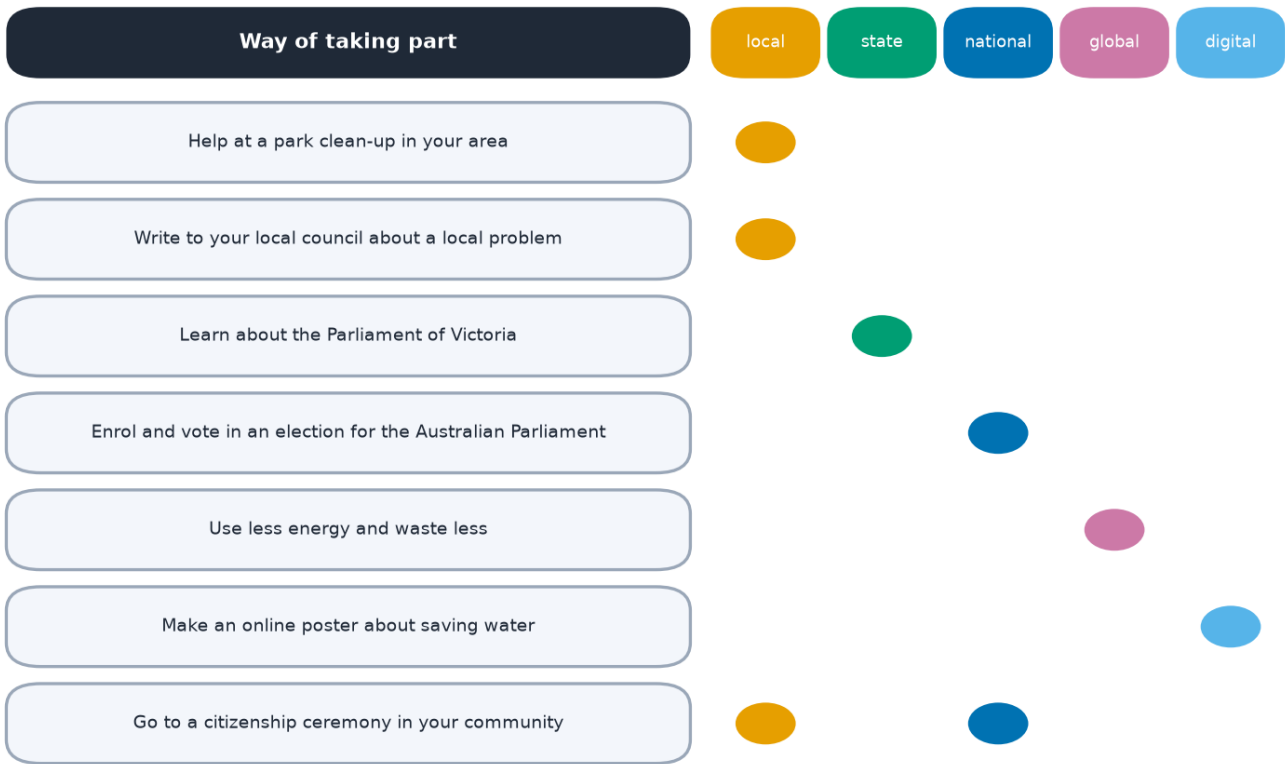
Voting is special: it is a right, and for citizens who are 18 or older it is also a duty the law expects them to do.

Table of rights, responsibilities and the values Australians share

- **Rights** are things citizens are allowed to do, or to have, and that the law looks after. Only citizens may vote in Australian elections or hold an Australian passport.
- **Responsibilities** are things citizens are expected to do. In Australia, the law says citizens who are 18 or older must enrol and vote. To *enrol* means to put your name on the official list of voters. Citizens must also obey the law, serve on a jury if they are called, and defend Australia if they are needed. A *jury* is a group of citizens who listen to a case in court and help decide it.
- **Shared values.** Many Australians share values such as freedom, respect, fairness and equality. People who apply for citizenship learn about these values for the citizenship test.

4. **Ways citizens take part.** Citizens do not just hold rights — they use them. Here are some ways Australians take part, at different scales.

Ways of taking part — and the kinds of citizenship they show



One action can show more than one kind of citizenship at a time.

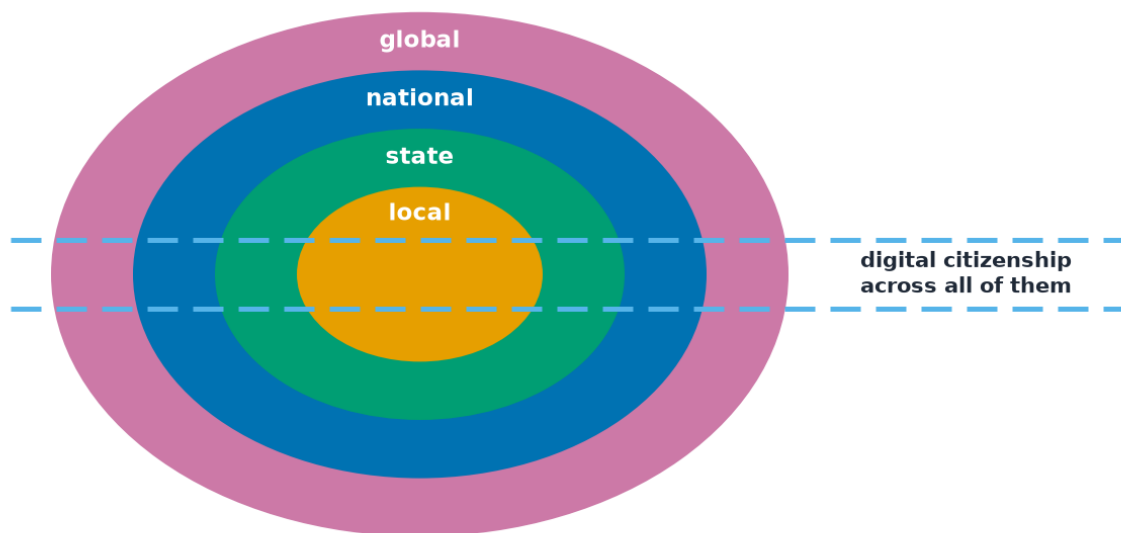
Chart matching ways of taking part to the kinds of citizenship they show

You can take part long before you turn 18: helping at school, joining a clean-up, writing a polite letter about something you want to change. A **petition** is a written ask that many people sign to show they want a change — classes and communities use them too. When you turn 18, you enrol and vote. The Australian Electoral Commission runs federal elections, and the Victorian Electoral Commission runs Victorian state elections. An electoral commission is a body that runs elections so they are open, free and fair.

5. Five kinds of citizenship. The same person can be all five kinds of citizen at once.

The five kinds of citizenship

One person can stand in all of these circles at once



Only national citizenship is a legal status. The other kinds describe belonging and ways of acting.

Diagram of the five kinds of citizenship as nested circles, with digital citizenship shown across all of them

Five kinds of citizenship, side by side

Kind	What it means	Legal status?	One way to take part
local	Belonging to your local area	No	Join a clean-up; write to the council
state	Belonging to Victoria	No	Learn about the Parliament of Victoria
national	Being a legal member of Australia	Yes — the only legal one	Enrol and vote when you are 18
global	Acting for the good of the world	No	Use less energy; waste less
digital	Acting online in a safe, respectful way	No	Check before you share; be kind online

Australia has one legal citizenship — the national one.

Table comparing the five kinds of citizenship: what each one means, whether it is a legal status, and an example of taking part

Australia has only **one** legal citizenship — the national one. There is no separate legal citizenship of Victoria or of your local area. ‘Local citizen’ and ‘state citizen’ describe belonging and taking part: you are part of your local area, and you are part of Victoria. ‘Global citizen’ and ‘digital citizen’ describe ways of acting: nobody hands you a global or digital certificate — you are a global or digital citizen when you act like one.

Notice what this means for who is in, and who is out. Legal citizenship has a clear line: you either are an Australian citizen or you are not. Global and digital citizenship have no such line — anyone who chooses to act can take part. Section 8 looks at this again.

6. National and global responsibilities. Your responsibilities grow as your circles grow. As a national citizen, your responsibilities are set by Australian law. As a global citizen, your responsibilities come from the fact that you share one world with everyone else.

National and global responsibilities, side by side

Your responsibilities grow as your circles grow

The question	National citizen	Global citizen
Where do its responsibilities come from?	Australian law	We share one world with everyone else
Two examples	Enrol and vote; obey the law	Use less energy; waste less
Who do they help?	People in the whole of Australia	People and places around the world

Global problems do not stop at borders — so global citizens act at home too.

Table comparing the responsibilities of a national citizen and a global citizen

Global problems do not stop at borders. Waste in the ocean, smoke in the air and a warming climate affect people in every country, so global citizens act at home too: they use less energy, waste less and look after the places they live. Countries also work together. The United Nations began in 1945, and Australia was one of the first members. In 1948 the United Nations agreed to a statement of the rights all people should have, and in 1989 it agreed to a set of rights just for children. Australia agreed to the children's rights set in 1990. Learning about these agreements, and about the world they protect, is part of being a global citizen.

7. Digital citizenship in action. For most Year 5 students, the internet is already part of everyday life. That makes you a digital citizen right now — not when you turn 18.

Five habits of a good digital citizen

You are a digital citizen right now — not when you turn 18



Check before you share

Ask a friend before you post their photo



Be kind and respectful

Send welcome messages; no unkind words



Keep passwords private

Share them only with trusted adults



Keep personal information safe

No home address or school in public posts



Speak up

Tell a trusted adult when something worries you

The eSafety Commissioner helps keep Australians safe online.

Checklist of the five habits of a good digital citizen

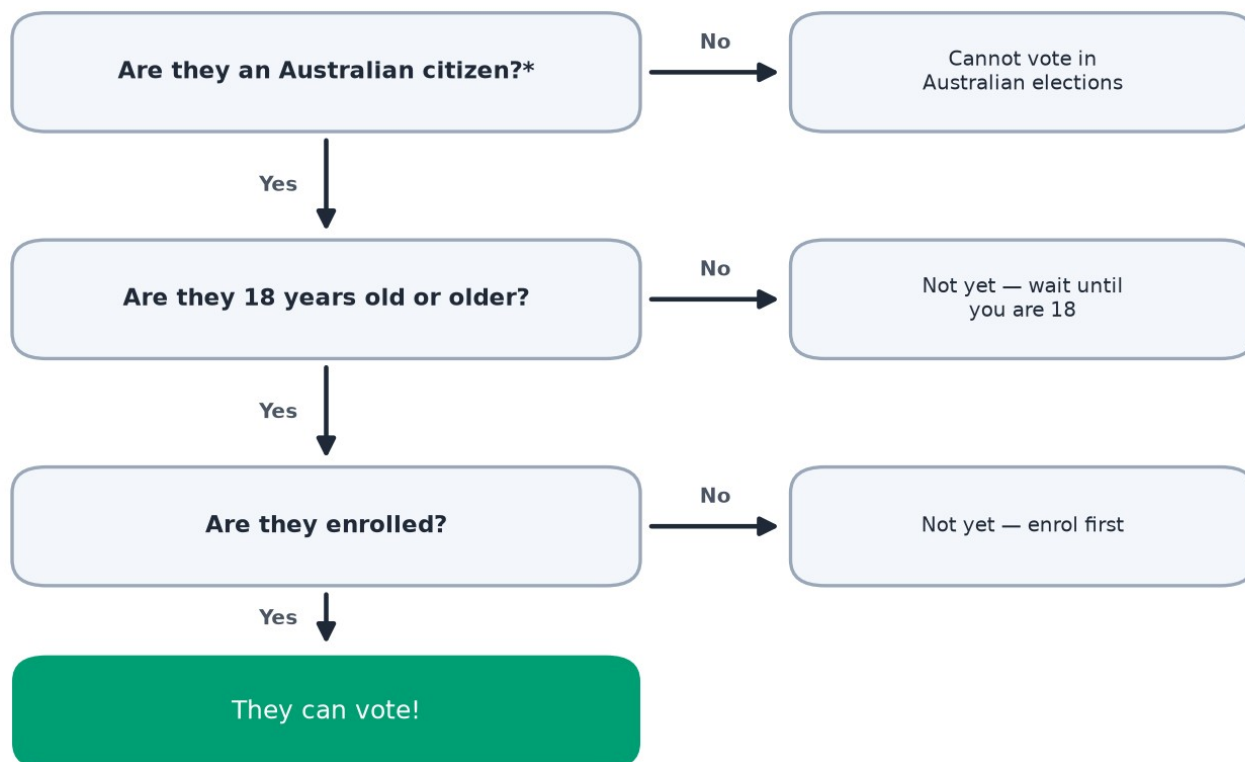
Australia has an office that helps keep people safe online: the **eSafety Commissioner**. It was set up by Australian law (the *Online Safety Act 2021*). It helps people who are bullied or treated badly online, and it teaches people how to stay safe. Being a good digital citizen means looking after yourself and others — and asking a trusted adult for help when something is wrong.

8. Who is in, and who is out? Every kind of citizenship has a line around it. For national citizenship, the line is fixed by law. In Australia, a person can vote in an election if they:

- are an Australian citizen, and
- are 18 years old or older, and

- are enrolled.

Who can vote in Australian elections?



*Some people from Britain who enrolled before 26 January 1984 can still vote — the old rule was kept for them.

Flowchart showing who can vote in Australian elections

The lines can change. When Australia's voting rules were first written, many people were left out. Over time, the circle of voters grew wider. Two facts show how the rules work today:

- People who are serving a prison sentence of three years or more cannot enrol to vote. When their sentence ends, they can enrol again.
- Some people from Britain who enrolled before 26 January 1984 can still vote today, even though they are not Australian citizens. The old rule was kept for them, but new voters must be citizens.

What about people who live here but are not citizens? Permanent residents pay taxes, use local services and obey Australian laws, but they cannot vote. Some people say that is fair, because voting belongs to citizenship, and people can choose to apply for citizenship. Other people say that is not fair, because people who must follow the decisions should get a say in them. Task Q9 asks you to think through both sides.

Worked examples

Example 1 — with help

Use the three rules from Section 2 to decide whether each person is an Australian citizen.

Person	Citizen?	Reason
Sofia was born in Melbourne. Her mother is an Australian citizen.	Yes — a citizen from birth.	Rule: born in Australia with at least one parent who is an Australian

Person	Citizen?	Reason
Liam was born in New Zealand. His father is an Australian citizen.	Yes — he can become a citizen by descent.	citizen or a permanent resident. Rule: born overseas with at least one parent who is an Australian citizen.
Priya was born in Perth. Her parents are permanent residents.	Yes — a citizen from birth.	The birth rule counts permanent residents as well as citizens.
Chen was born in Sydney while his parents were on a short visit.	No — not a citizen from birth.	At least one parent must be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident for the birth rule to apply.

Example 2 — with help

Sort each action into the kind of citizenship it shows, and give a reason.

Action	Kind	Reason
Enrolling to vote in an election for the Australian Parliament	National	It is about the whole country; the Australian Electoral Commission runs that election.
Switching off lights you are not using and recycling your waste	Global	It helps the environment, and the environment is shared by people all around the world.
Posting a kind thank-you message to volunteers online	Digital	It is taking part online in a safe and respectful way.

Practice questions

Practice with help

Q1. Name the pathway to citizenship for each person: *by birth*, *by descent* or *by application*. (a) Anna was born in Geelong. Her father is an Australian citizen. (b) Ben was born in Japan. His mother is an Australian citizen. (c) Cara is a permanent resident who has lived in Australia for ten years. She wants to become a citizen. (d) Dan was born in Brisbane. His mother is a permanent resident.

Q2. Sort each item into *right* or *responsibility* of an Australian citizen. obey the law · apply for an Australian passport · enrol and vote · serve on a jury if called · get help from Australian officials overseas · leave Australia and come back

Q3. Match each action to the kind of citizenship it shows: *local*, *state*, *national*, *global* or *digital*. (a) writing to your local council to ask for a safe crossing near the school (b) learning about the Parliament of Victoria at Parliament House in Melbourne (c) voting in an election for the Australian Parliament (d) joining a clean-up day with people in many countries (e) making an online poster with your class about saving water

Q4. Copy and complete the table. The national row is done for you.

Kind of citizenship	Is it a legal status in Australia?	One way to take part
local		
state		
national	Yes	enrol and vote when you are 18
global		
digital		

Q5. True or false? Correct each false statement. (a) Australia has three separate legal citizenships: local, state and national. (b) You must be an Australian citizen to vote in a federal election. (c) Digital citizenship is a legal status that the government hands out. (d) Since 2002, a person can in many cases be a citizen of Australia and another country at the same time. (e) Only adults can become Australian citizens.

Q6. Here are six things students do online. Pick the three that show good digital citizenship. For each one, say which habit from the digital checklist it follows. sharing your password with a friend · asking a friend before you post their photo · sending a welcome message to a new player in your game · posting an unkind joke about someone in your class · telling a trusted adult when something online worries you · writing your home address in a public post

Practice on your own

Q7. Write two ways you could take part as a local citizen now, and two ways you could take part as a national citizen when you are older. For each way, explain how it helps.

Q8. In your own words, write one responsibility of a national citizen and one responsibility of a global citizen. Then explain one way the two responsibilities are the same.

Q9. Deliberation means thinking an issue through carefully, weighing the reasons on each side before you decide. “Permanent residents who live in an area should be able to vote in council elections.” Write the strongest case you can for this idea, and the strongest case against it — at least two strong reasons on each side. Then give your own view and your reason. Marks are given for good reasoning — defined words, clear reasons, examples — not for which side you choose.

Q10. To steelman an idea is to build the strongest case for it you can, even if you disagree. “Global citizenship is not a real kind of citizenship.” First write the strongest case for this statement. Then write the strongest case against it. Which case do you find stronger, and why? Marks are given for the quality of your reasoning, not for the side you finish on.

Source-based task

Q11. Read Source 2D-A, then answer the questions below.

Source 2D-A — A citizenship ceremony (written for this book; facts checked against the Australian Government’s citizenship pages, 26 August 2026)

Citizenship ceremonies happen all through the year, in communities all around Australia. Many ceremonies are run by local councils. Family and friends come to watch. The Australian flag is on display, and a leader from the community welcomes the new citizens. Then comes the big moment: each new citizen makes the pledge of commitment, a formal promise to Australia and its people. After the pledge, each person receives a citizenship certificate. Many ceremonies end with the national anthem. The ceremony shows the whole community that a new citizen now belongs.

- (a) List three things that happen at a citizenship ceremony, according to the source.
 - (b) What is the pledge of commitment? Use the source and Section 2.
 - (c) Why do you think the ceremony happens in front of family, friends and the community, rather than in a quiet office? Give two reasons.
 - (d) The source says ceremonies happen “in communities all around Australia”. What does this tell you about the kinds of citizenship in this section? Think about local and national citizenship together.
-

Answers

Q1. (a) by birth; (b) by descent; (c) by application; (d) by birth.

Q2. Rights: apply for an Australian passport; get help from Australian officials overseas; leave Australia and come back. Responsibilities: obey the law; enrol and vote; serve on a jury if called.

Q3. (a) local; (b) state; (c) national; (d) global; (e) digital.

Q4. local: No — help in your local area; state: No — take part in Victorian life; global: No — act for the good of the world; digital: No — act online in a safe, respectful way. (Any clear example of taking part is accepted.)

Q5. (a) False — Australia has one legal citizenship, the national one; local and state citizenship describe belonging, not legal status. (b) True. (c) False — digital citizenship is a way of acting online, not a legal status. (d) True. (e) False — children can be citizens too; many citizens were born citizens as babies.

Q6. Asking a friend before you post their photo (check before you share); sending a welcome message to a new player (be kind and respectful); telling a trusted adult when something worries you (speak up). Sharing passwords, posting unkind jokes and writing your home address in public are not safe choices.

Q7. Sample points — local: join a park clean-up; write politely to the council about a local problem. National: enrol and vote when 18; write to a member of parliament about an issue. Any clear ways with matching reasons are accepted.

Q8. Sample: national — enrol and vote; global — waste less and use less energy to look after the shared environment. They are the same in this way: both are things you do, not things you are given; both help other people.

Q9. For: permanent residents live, work and pay taxes in the area; council decisions affect them, so they should get a say. Against: voting is part of citizenship, and citizenship comes with a formal promise; people who want to vote can choose to apply for citizenship. Either view can earn full marks if the reasons are clear and honest.

Q10. For: citizenship is a legal status in a country, with rights like voting; there is no world government that gives out global rights, so ‘global citizen’ is an idea, not a real status. Against: our choices cross borders — waste, energy, what we buy — so we have real duties to people in other countries; a kind of citizenship can be about how we act, not only about papers. Either side can earn full marks with strong reasoning.

Q11. (a) Any three of: families and friends watch; the flag is on display; a community leader welcomes the new citizens; new citizens make the pledge of commitment; new citizens receive a certificate; many ceremonies end with the national anthem. (b) A formal promise to Australia and its people, made at the ceremony. (c) Sample: it lets family and friends share a proud moment; it lets the community welcome the new citizen and show they belong. (d) A ceremony is national — the pledge is to Australia — but it happens in a local place, run by the local community. That shows national and local citizenship happening at the same moment.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. The birth rule needs a baby born in Australia with at least one parent who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident: Anna (a) and Dan (d) fit. The descent rule needs a baby born overseas with at least one parent who is an Australian citizen: Ben (b) fits. Cara (c) is a permanent resident, so her path is by application: she applies, passes the citizenship test and makes the pledge at a ceremony.

Q2. A right is something the law lets citizens do or have; a responsibility is something citizens are expected to do. Voting is both — it is a right and, in Australia, a duty the law expects of citizens who are 18 or older. Sorting them: rights are the passport, help overseas, and leaving and returning; responsibilities are obeying the law, enrolling and voting, and jury service.

Q3. Local actions happen in your own area, so writing to the council about a crossing is local. Learning about the Parliament of Victoria is about the state. Voting for the Australian Parliament is about the whole country, so it is national. A clean-up with people in many countries reaches around the world, so it is global. Making an online poster is taking part on the internet, so it is digital.

Q4. Only national citizenship is a legal status in Australia — it is the one the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* defines. Local and state citizenship mean belonging to your area and to Victoria, and global and digital citizenship are ways of acting. Strong examples: local — help at a community clean-up; state — learn about Victorian elections; global — use less energy and waste less; digital — check before you share and be kind online.

Q5. (a) The key idea is that Australia has one legal citizenship. Local and state ‘citizenship’ are real ideas in this section, but they describe belonging and taking part, not a legal status. (b) True — the voting rules list citizenship first. (c) No office hands out digital citizenship; it grows from how you act online. (d) True — the law changed in 2002 so that, in many cases, Australians may also hold another country’s citizenship. (e) Citizenship has no age floor: babies born to the right parents are citizens from birth, and children can become citizens by application with their family.

Q6. Good digital citizenship: asking before posting a friend’s photo follows ‘check before you share’; the welcome message follows ‘be kind and respectful’; telling a trusted adult follows ‘speak up’. The other three break the checklist: passwords stay private, unkind posts hurt others, and your home address is personal information you keep safe.

Q7. A full answer names two local ways and two national ways, and ties each one to a clear help. Model: local — join a clean-up, because it keeps the local area pleasant for everyone; write politely to the council about a broken swing, because councils look after local places. National — enrol and vote when 18, because voting is how citizens choose who makes decisions for the country; write to a member of parliament about road safety, because members need to hear what citizens think.

Q8. A full answer gives one responsibility of each kind and a real likeness. Model: a national citizen enrolls and votes, because Australia’s laws ask citizens who are 18 or older to take part. A global citizen wastes less and uses less energy, because choices at home can hurt or help people and places in other countries. Likeness: both are duties you act on, not gifts you receive — and both make life better for people beyond yourself.

Q9. Model deliberation. Case for: permanent residents live in the area, pay taxes and use council services; council rules affect their daily lives, and people affected by decisions should have a voice in them. Case against: voting is one of the special parts of citizenship, and citizenship includes a formal promise to Australia; there is already a path — permanent residents can apply for citizenship and then vote. Own view (either side): marks go to clear reasons and honest thinking, not to the side chosen.

Q10. Model steelman. For the statement: citizenship is a legal status in one country; it gives rights like voting and duties like obeying that country’s laws; there is no world government to give global rights or make global laws, so ‘global citizen’ is a fine idea but not citizenship in the legal sense. Against the statement: the problems that matter most — waste, a warming climate, trade — cross borders; what we do at home reaches people far away, so we do have duties beyond our country; if citizenship can also mean ‘taking part’, then acting for the world is a real kind of citizenship. Weigh both sides and say which you find stronger, with your reason.

Q11. (a) Read the source once, then list three named happenings, such as the pledge, the certificate and the welcome. (b) Join the source (“a formal promise”) with Section 2: the pledge of commitment is the promise new citizens make to Australia and its people, at the ceremony. (c) Two strong reasons: sharing a proud moment with the people who matter to the new citizen; letting the community welcome the new citizen and show they now belong. (d) The deepest point: one event holds two kinds of citizenship at once. The pledge is national — it is made to Australia. The event is local — it happens in a community, often run by the local council. National and local citizenship are not separate lives; they are two circles the same person stands in.

Source lines

- *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* (Cth), Federal Register of Legislation, legislation.gov.au (accessed 26 August 2026) — citizenship by birth, by descent and by application; the pledge of commitment; dual citizenship (law changed in 2002).
- Department of Home Affairs, Australian Government, homeaffairs.gov.au (accessed 26 August 2026) — pathways to citizenship; the citizenship test for people who apply and are 18 to 59 years old; rights and responsibilities of citizens; citizenship ceremonies.

- Australian Electoral Commission, aec.gov.au (accessed 26 August 2026) — the law says citizens who are 18 or older must enrol and vote; people who are 16 or 17 may enrol early.
- Victorian Electoral Commission, vec.vic.gov.au — runs Victorian state elections and many Victorian council elections.
- *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth), Federal Register of Legislation — voters must be citizens (with a saved right for some people from Britain enrolled before 26 January 1984); people serving prison sentences of three years or more cannot enrol.
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner, esafety.gov.au; *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) — Australia’s office for online safety.
- United Nations (accessed 26 August 2026, at the United Nations website) — founded in 1945; the statement of human rights agreed on 10 December 1948; the set of children’s rights agreed in 1989, which Australia agreed to in 1990.

Shared beliefs and values: citizens working together for a civic goal

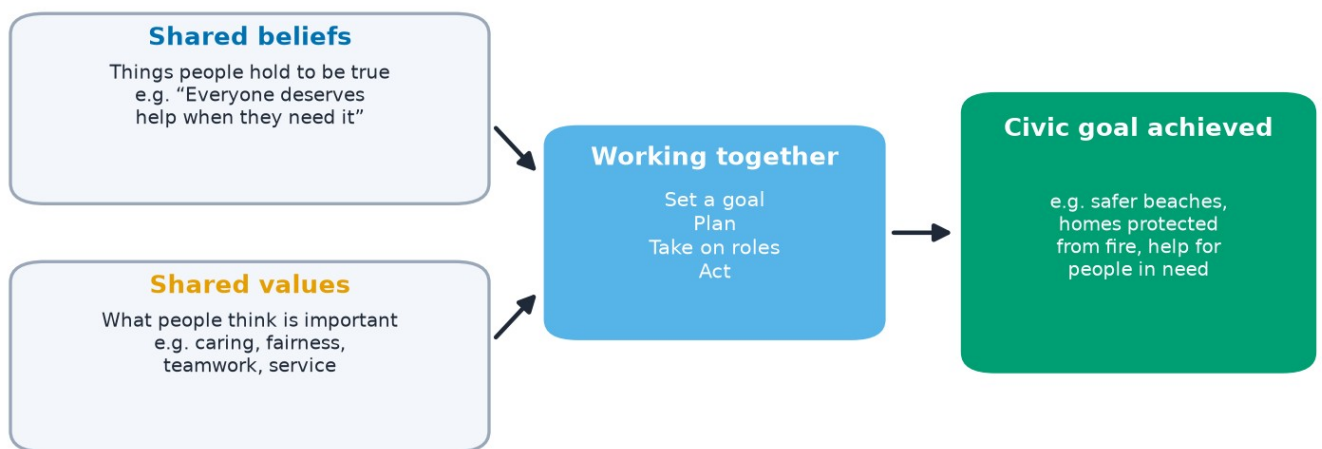
You are learning: VC2HC6K08. Links: .E01 .E02 .E03.

Theory

Citizens working together. A **citizen** is a member of a community. Most people belong to many communities at once — their class, their street, their town, their state (Victoria), their country (Australia), and the whole world. When citizens care about the same things, they often join a group and work together to reach a **civic goal**. The Victorian Curriculum — a *curriculum* is the official plan of what students should learn — uses the words *civic goal* but does not say exactly what they mean. In this section, a *civic goal* is a goal that helps people in a community, not just one person.

Working together for a civic goal

Shared beliefs and values bring citizens together



A civic goal is a goal that helps people in a community.

A flow map: shared beliefs and shared values lead into working together (set a goal, plan, take on roles, act), which leads to a civic goal achieved, with examples such as safer beaches and homes protected from fire.

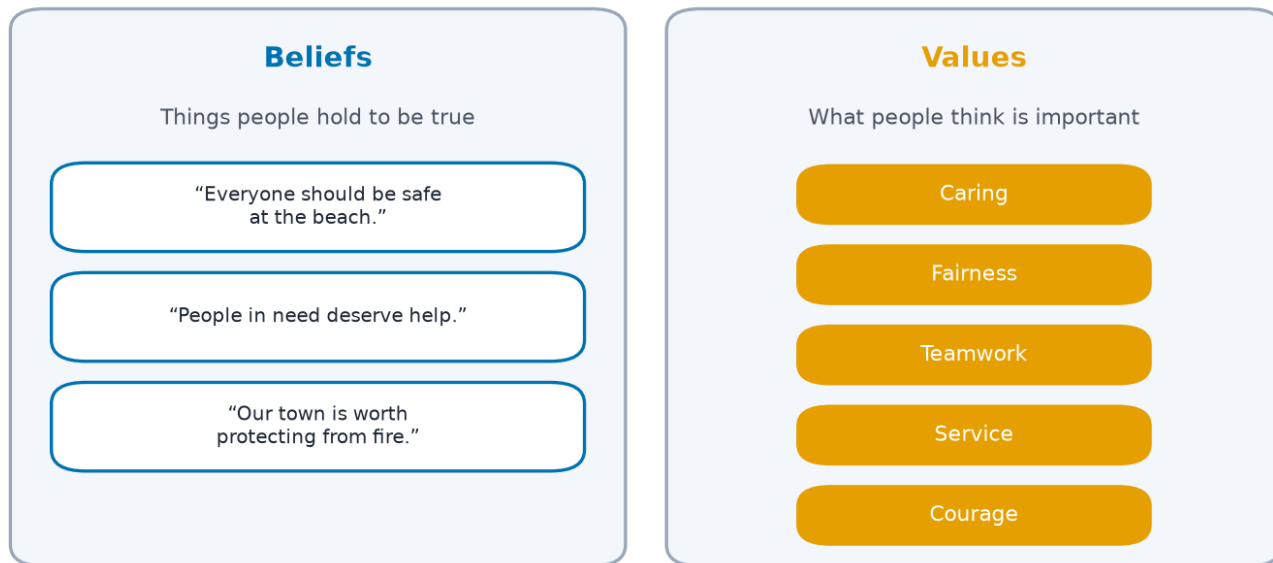
Beliefs and values. What brings a group together? Two things:

- A **belief** is something a person holds to be true. Example: “Everyone should be safe at the beach.”

- A **value** is something a person thinks is important. Examples: caring, fairness, teamwork, service, courage.

Beliefs and values

Two things that bring people together



People who share beliefs and values often join a group and work together on a civic goal.

Two panels: beliefs (things people hold to be true) with example sentences, and values (what people think is important) listed as caring, fairness, teamwork, service and courage.

People do not have to be the same in every way to work together. They only need to share the beliefs and values that the group is about.

Volunteers. Most community groups run on **volunteers**. A *volunteer* is a person who gives their time to help, without being paid. People volunteer because they want to help others, because they care about the cause, to meet people, and to learn new skills.

Five kinds of groups. Citizens who share the same beliefs and values work together in many kinds of groups:

Five kinds of groups where citizens work together

Each group has its own civic goal

Kind of group	Real examples	Its civic goal
Youth groups	Scouts and Girl Guides in Victoria	Young people learning skills and helping their community
Emergency services groups	Victoria State Emergency Service (VicSES)	Helping people in floods and storms
Surf life-saving clubs	Surf life-saving clubs across Victoria's coast	Keeping swimmers safe at beaches
Rural fire services	Country Fire Authority (CFA), Victoria	Protecting lives and homes from fire
Religious groups and other charities	St Vincent de Paul Society ("Vinnies") The Salvation Army ("Salvos")	Helping people in need with food, clothes and a place to stay

Members of these groups are usually volunteers: people who give their time without being paid.

A table of five kinds of groups — youth groups, emergency services groups, surf life-saving clubs, rural fire services, and religious groups and other charities — each with real examples and its civic goal.

Working together: the Country Fire Authority. The CFA is Victoria's volunteer fire service. Its members share the belief that communities should be safe from fire, and values like service and courage. They train together at local **brigades** (a *brigade* is a local CFA team), raise money for trucks and gear, and go to fires and rescues when called. Their civic goal is protecting lives and homes from fire. The CFA says it is made up of "tens of thousands of Victorians", with 1,211 brigades in 21 districts and 5 regions (Source: cfa.vic.gov.au, 26 August 2026).

Working together: the Country Fire Authority (CFA)

Victoria's volunteer fire service



The CFA says it is made up of “tens of thousands of Victorians”, with 1,211 brigades in 21 districts and 5 regions (Source: cfa.vic.gov.au, retrieved 26 August 2026).

A four-step flow for the CFA: shared beliefs and values, train together, raise money and equipment, respond when called, leading to the civic goal of protecting lives and homes from fire.

Working together: a surf life-saving club. At the beach, one person cannot watch everyone — so club members share the work. Trained members **patrol** (a *patrol* is the team on duty watching the beach) on weekends and public holidays, a first aid team helps anyone hurt, and young members called **Nippers** learn water safety and help out. Every role points to the one civic goal: everyone safe at the beach. In the 2024-25 season, Surf Life Saving Australia reported 207,962 members and 314 clubs around the country (Source: Wikipedia, “Surf lifesaving”, 26 August 2026).

One club, many roles: a surf life-saving club

Everyone in the club works toward the same civic goal



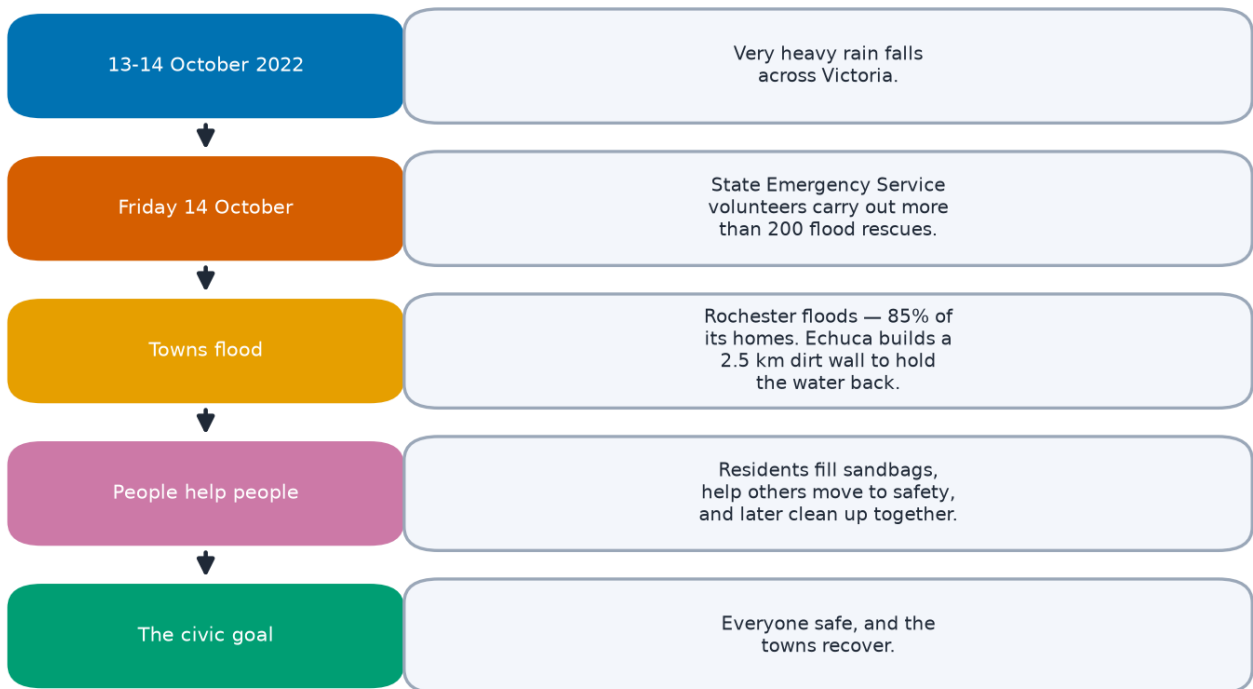
Surf Life Saving Australia reported 207,962 members and 314 clubs in the 2024-25 season (Source: Wikipedia, “Surf lifesaving”, retrieved 26 August 2026).

A surf life-saving club shown as four roles — patrol members, Nippers, first aid team and beach watch — with arrows joining into the civic goal: everyone safe at the beach.

Working together in an emergency. In October 2022, very heavy rain caused floods across Victoria. Towns such as Rochester and Echuca flooded, and many people had to move to safety. Victoria’s State Emergency Service (VicSES) volunteers carried out more than 200 flood rescues on 14 October, residents filled sandbags and helped each other, and after the water went down, people cleaned up together. The shared civic goal: everyone safe, and the towns recover (Source: Wikipedia, “2022 south eastern Australia floods”, 26 August 2026).

Working together in an emergency: the October 2022 floods

A real event in Victoria



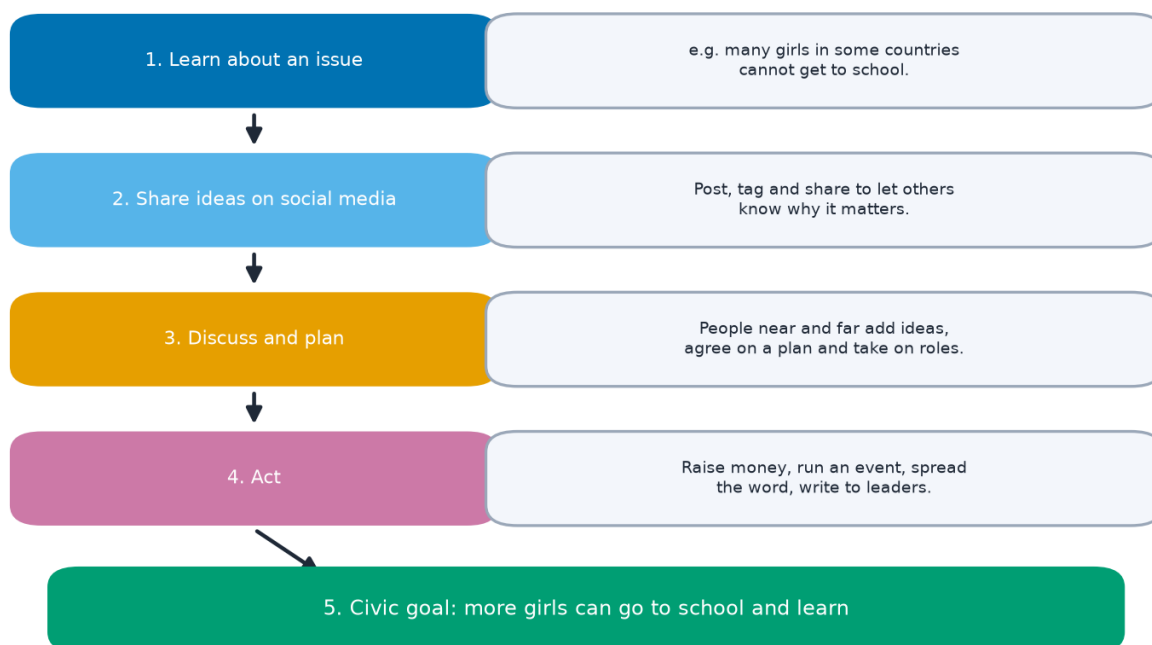
Source: Wikipedia, “2022 south eastern Australia floods”, retrieved 26 August 2026.

A five-step timeline of the October 2022 Victorian floods: heavy rain, SES volunteer rescues, towns flooding, people helping people, and the civic goal of everyone safe and the towns recovering.

Working together online. Citizens can also use **social media** to work together — in their own area, in their region and around the world. *Social media* is apps and websites where people post, share and discuss ideas — for example, campaigns to help women and girls in other countries go to school. A group can learn about a problem, share it online, plan with people near and far, and then act: raise money, run an event, or write to leaders. One real group doing this work is UNICEF, a United Nations group that helps children all around the world and works so that all children, girls and boys, can go to school. In 2018 UNICEF gave 12 million children an education (Source: Wikipedia, “UNICEF”, 26 August 2026).

Working together online: social media for a civic goal

People can share ideas near and far



UNICEF is a United Nations group that helps children all around the world; in 2018 it gave 12 million children an education (Source: Wikipedia, "UNICEF", retrieved 26 August 2026).

A five-step flow for working together online: learn about an issue, share ideas on social media, discuss and plan, act, and the civic goal — for example, more girls able to go to school and learn.

Two views. Some people say a group works best when all of its members share the same beliefs, because they can agree quickly and pull the same way. Other people say a group makes better choices when it also listens to people who see things in a different way, because it hears more ideas before it acts. Both views agree on one thing: a group needs a clear shared goal, and members need to listen to each other.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — step by step

Look at the CFA. Find its shared beliefs, its shared values, one way its members work together, and its civic goal.

Method: for each box on the diagram, ask "What do the members hold to be true? What do they think is important? What do they do together? What goal helps the community?"

Box	Answer for the CFA
Shared beliefs	Communities should be safe from fire.
Shared values	Service and courage.
Working together	Members train at local brigades, raise money for gear, and go to fires and rescues when called.
Civic goal	Protecting lives and homes from fire — a goal that helps the whole community, not one person.

Worked example 2 — step by step

The October 2022 floods. Who worked together, and what was the civic goal? Use the timeline.

Step	Who worked together	What they did
1	VicSES volunteers	Carried out more than 200 flood rescues on 14 October 2022.
2	Residents	Filled sandbags and helped others move to safety.
3	Residents, after the floods	Cleaned up together so the towns could recover.
Civic goal	Everyone safe, and the towns recover.	

The shared belief was that every person in the towns mattered; the shared values were caring and teamwork. That is what pulled strangers together into one effort.

Practice questions

With steps

- Q1.** In this section, what is a *civic goal*?
- Q2.** Name **two** of the five kinds of volunteer and community groups in the table.
- Q3.** True or false, then correct the false one: A volunteer is paid for their time.
- Q4.** Circle the words that are *values*: fairness, Tuesday, courage, kindness, weather.
- Q5.** Name **two** roles in a surf life-saving club from the diagram.
- Q6.** What is the name of the United Nations group that works so that all children can go to school?

On your own

- Q7.** Pick one kind of group from the table (youth groups, emergency services groups, surf life-saving clubs, rural fire services, or charities). For your group, give one shared belief or value and its civic goal.
- Q8.** In the October 2022 floods, name two ways ordinary citizens (not emergency services) helped, and say what civic goal they were working toward.
- Q9.** Explain how social media can help citizens who live in different places work together on one civic goal. Use the five-step flow.
- Q10.** Some people say a group is strongest when all its members share the same beliefs. Others say a group makes better choices when it listens to people who see things in a different way. Give one good reason for **each** view.

Source questions

Read the fact card in the picture, then answer in your own words.

Fact card: Surf Life Saving Australia

VOLUNTEERS AT WORK

Surf life saving started in Australia in 1907.

There are 314 surf life-saving clubs around the coast,
and they patrol more than 600 beaches.

In the 2024-25 season there were 207,962 members.

Members are volunteers: they are not paid.

Trained members patrol on weekends and public holidays.

Young members, called Nippers, learn water safety
and help out at their club.

Surf Life Saving Australia says its life savers rescue
30 people every day.

Facts: Surf Life Saving Australia figures as reported in Wikipedia, "Surf lifesaving" (membership, clubs, 1907), and sls.com.au ("30 people every day"); retrieved 26 August 2026. Original model text written for this book.

A fact card titled "Volunteers at work" about Surf Life Saving Australia: started in 1907, 314 clubs patrolling more than 600 beaches, 207,962 members in the 2024-25 season who are not paid, trained members patrol on weekends and public holidays, Nippers learn water safety, and life savers rescue 30 people every day.

S1. In your own words, what does the card say a volunteer is?

S2. How many members did Surf Life Saving Australia have in the 2024-25 season, and how many clubs?

S3. The card says life savers rescue 30 people every day. Give one reason why that job needs many people working together, not just one.

Answers

Q1. A goal that helps people in a community, not just one person. **Q2.** Any two of: youth groups; emergency services groups; surf life-saving clubs; rural fire services; religious groups and other charities. **Q3.** False — a volunteer is **not** paid. **Q4.** fairness, courage, kindness. **Q5.** Any two of: patrol members; Nippers; first aid team; beach watch. **Q6.** UNICEF. **Q7.** Any correct pair, e.g. surf life-saving club — belief “everyone should be safe at the beach” — civic goal: everyone safe at the beach. **Q8.** Filled sandbags; helped others move to safety (or cleaned up together); civic goal: everyone safe and the towns recover. **Q9.** People learn about a problem, share it online, discuss and plan with people near and far, then act together on one goal. **Q10.** Same beliefs: members agree quickly and pull the same way. Different views: the group hears more ideas before it acts, so it makes better choices. **S1.** A person who gives their time to help without being paid. **S2.** 207,962 members and 314 clubs. **S3.** Any sound reason, e.g. one person cannot watch a whole beach or be in all places at once; a team can take turns and cover more ground.

Worked solutions

Q1. A **civic goal** is a goal that helps people in a community, not just one person — that is the meaning this section gives those words.

Q2. Two of: **youth groups** (Scouts, Girl Guides); **emergency services groups** (VicSES); **surf life-saving clubs**; **rural fire services** (the CFA); **religious groups and other charities** (e.g. Vinnies, Salvos).

Q3. False. A volunteer gives their time to help **without being paid**.

Q4. The values are **fairness, courage and kindness**. (Tuesday and weather are not things people think are important in this sense.)

Q5. Two of: **patrol members** (trained life savers on duty); **Nippers** (young members); **first aid team**; **beach watch** (flags and radio).

Q6. **UNICEF**, a United Nations group that helps children all around the world.

Q7. A full answer names the group plus one shared belief or value plus the civic goal. Example: a **rural fire service** — members value **service** and believe **communities should be safe from fire** — civic goal: **protecting lives and homes from fire**.

Q8. Ordinary citizens **filled sandbags** and **helped others move to safety**, then **cleaned up together**. Their civic goal was **everyone safe, and the towns recover**.

Q9. Using the flow: citizens **learn about an issue, share ideas on social media, discuss and plan** with people near and far, and then **act** (raise money, run an event, write to leaders) — so people who live in different places can still pull together on the one civic goal.

Q10. One good reason for each view. **Same beliefs:** members agree quickly and pull the same way, so the group can act fast (like a fire brigade at a fire). **Different views:** the group hears more ideas before it acts, so it is less likely to miss a problem and makes better choices. A good answer gives a reason for each side and does not have to pick a winner.

S1. A volunteer is a person who gives their time to help **without being paid**.

S2. The card says **207,962 members** in **314 clubs** in the 2024-25 season.

S3. One person cannot watch a whole beach, be on duty every day, or rescue many people at once. A **team** can take turns, cover more ground, and bring different skills — so the civic goal (people safe in the water) is reached.