

Civics and Citizenship Level 5

Chapter 3 — Skills: investigating and evaluating

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Making research questions from current political, legal and civic issues

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Chapter 3 — Skills: investigating and evaluating · Section 3A

Owns

VC2HC6S01

Draws on

VC2HC6S01.E01 VC2HC6S01.E02 (VCAA's examples for teachers, listed here for links — D7)

Before we start — agreeing on the big words

This section is about **asking good questions**. In Chapters 1 and 2 you found out about Australia's democracy, its parliaments, courts and laws. In this section you use that knowledge to ask questions about things happening **now**.

The Victorian Curriculum — the official plan for what schools teach — sets out what this section is about, but it does not give every word one fixed meaning. So this section tells you the meaning it uses. Every question in this section can be answered with these meanings. Other meanings exist, and they are not the same as these.

Word	How this section uses it
contemporary	happening now, or within recent memory
issue	a matter people are talking about, wondering about or disagreeing about
political issue	an issue about how places are run: parliaments, elections, and the decisions governments make (their policy)
legal issue	an issue about the law: what it says, why it exists, and who makes sure it is followed
civic issue	an issue about people in the community: how it touches their lives, and what they can do
investigate	to find out about something carefully, by checking sources and facts; the finding-out is an investigation
enforce	to make sure a law is followed, with a result for people or companies who break it; when that happens, the law is enforced

Two words to bring back from earlier sections. A **democracy** is a way of choosing leaders and making decisions in which the people have a say, usually by voting. A **parliament** is a group of people chosen by voters to make laws for a place.

1. Strong questions are open

A **closed question** can be answered with one word: yes, no, or a name. Closed questions are good for checking facts. But they are too small to investigate.

An **open question** makes you think and find out. It often starts with *why*, *how*, or *what should*. Open questions are the questions we investigate in civics.

Closed and open questions

Closed question	Open question
Can be answered with one word: yes, no, or a name. "Is voting compulsory in Australia?" Answer: Yes. (One word.) Good for checking a fact — but too small to investigate.	Makes you think and find out. Often starts with why, how, or what should. "Why does Australia make voting compulsory?" Answer: you need facts and reasons. Just right for an investigation.

Turn a closed question into an open one:
"Did the federal parliament pass the social media minimum-age law?" (closed)
"Why did the federal parliament pass the social media minimum-age law?" (open)

Two panels. The left panel shows a closed question and its one-word answer. The right panel shows an open question that needs facts and reasons. Below, a closed question about the social media law is turned into an open one.

Figure 1. Closed and open questions, and how to turn one into the other.

Useful openers for open questions: *Why did...?* · *How does...?* · *Who decides...?* · *What should happen...?* · *How do we know...?*

Before you keep a question, check it against the five ticks.

Is your question ready to investigate?

☒	It is open you cannot answer it with just yes or no.
☒	It is clear someone else can understand it.
☒	It is about your issue it links to your contemporary issue.
☒	You can investigate it you can find facts and different views.
☒	It asks why or how not just what or when.

If you can tick all five, your question is ready.

A checklist of five ticks for a strong question: it is open; it is clear; it is about your issue; you can investigate it; and it asks why or how.

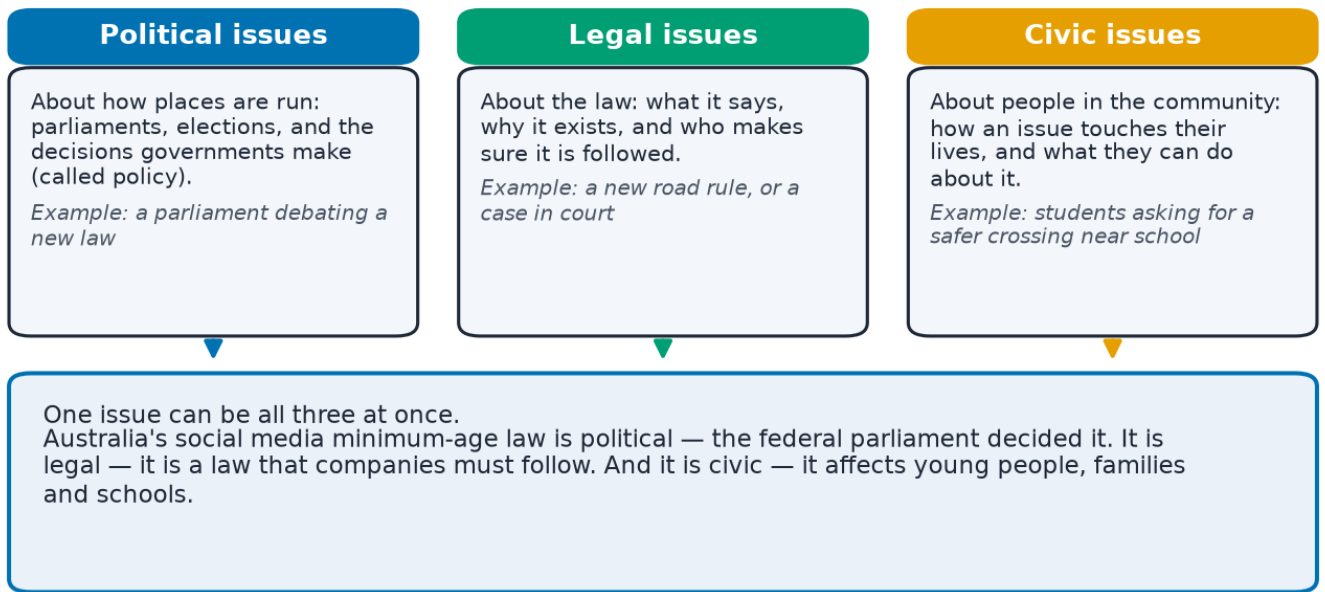
Figure 2. Five checks for a strong question.

2. Sort the issue

Questions go better when you know what kind of issue you have. This section sorts issues into **political, legal** and **civic**.

Three kinds of issues in civics

An issue is something people are talking or wondering about right now



Political, legal and civic issues often overlap — sorting them helps you aim your questions.

A three-column table sorting issues into political, legal and civic, with what each kind means and an example. Below, a note that one issue can be all three at once.

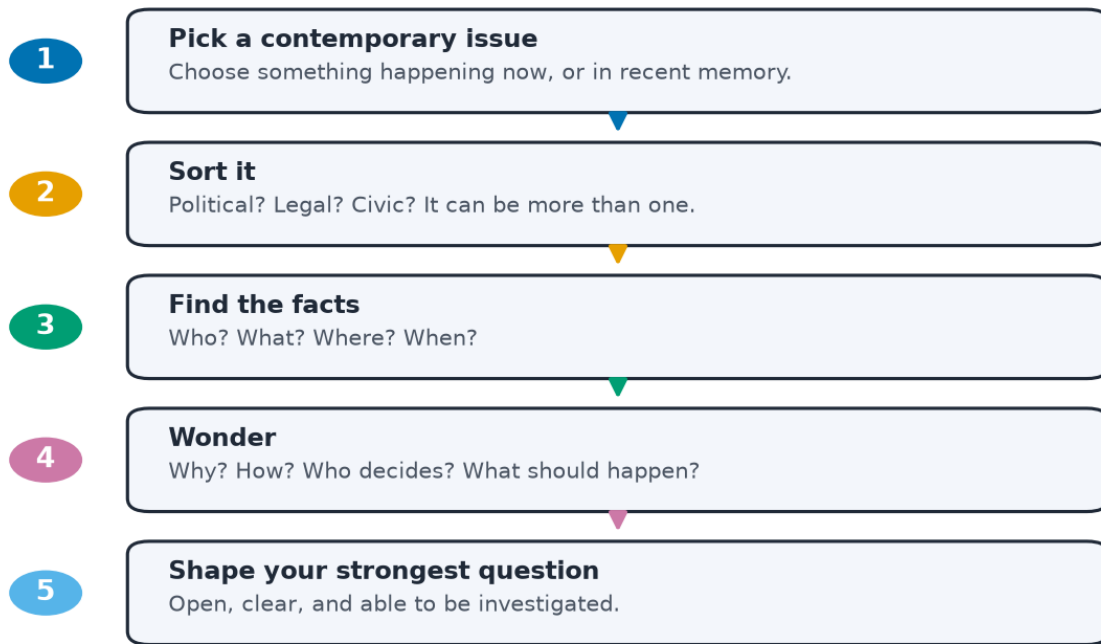
Figure 3. The three kinds of issues. One issue can be all three at once.

Sorting helps you aim your questions. A political issue leads to questions about parliaments, elections and decisions. A legal issue leads to questions about the law and who makes sure it is followed. A civic issue leads to questions about people and what they can do.

3. Five steps to develop a question

Here is the method for this section. You will use it in the worked examples, the practice questions and your own investigation.

Five steps to a strong question



A flow of five numbered steps: pick a contemporary issue; sort it; find the facts; wonder; shape your strongest question.

Figure 4. The five steps.

Notice step 3. Find the facts first. A question built on facts is a strong question.

4. Our case study — a real, recent law

From here on we work with one real contemporary issue. It is real, it is dated, and it is within your recent memory.

Source A — Australia's social media minimum-age law

A real law passed by the Parliament of Australia

Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024

Made by	The Parliament of Australia — passed on 29 November 2024.
What it says	From 10 December 2025, children under 16 cannot have accounts on certain social media platforms, such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat.
Who checks it	Australia's eSafety Commissioner.
If a company breaks it	The company can be fined up to A\$49.5 million.
Important	Children are not in trouble under this law. It tells companies what they must do.

Summary of the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Source A, a fact card about the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024: who made it and when, what it says, who checks it, what happens if a company breaks it, and that children are not in trouble under it.

Figure 5. Source A — the facts of the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024. A minimum age is the lowest age allowed.

Read Source A. This law is all three kinds of issue at once. It is **political** — the federal parliament decided it. It is **legal** — it is a law that companies must follow, and someone checks that they do. And it is **civic** — it touches the lives of young people, families and schools. The person whose job is to check that platforms (the apps and websites where people share things) follow this law is Australia's **eSafety Commissioner**.

Two views. People who all want young people to be safe online disagree about this law, and both sides have real points.

- **One view:** the law protects children. Social media can carry bullying and harmful things, and a minimum age keeps the youngest kids off these platforms until they are older.
- **Another view:** the law goes too far. Some young people use these platforms to keep in touch with family, to find help and support, and to learn; and the age checks raise questions about privacy (keeping your personal information to yourself).

When you answer questions about this debate, what matters is the strength of your reasons, not which side you pick.

Two more political issues: the elections. Elections are another good place to ask questions about democracy. Figure 6 gives the facts about the 2025 Australian federal election (already held) and the 2026 Victorian state election (coming up on 28 November 2026, in this school year). In Australia, voting is **compulsory**: the law says adults must enrol (put their name on the list of voters) and must vote. Voting is by **secret ballot**: nobody sees who you choose.

Two real elections to ask questions about

The 2025 Australian federal election	The 2026 Victorian state election
• Held on Saturday 3 May 2025. • Run by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). • Every adult Australian citizen must enrol and vote — this has been the law since 1924. • The vote is secret: no one sees who you choose. • The Labor Party, led by Anthony Albanese, won.	• Will be held on Saturday 28 November 2026. • Run by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC). • Decides who forms the next Victorian government. • Voting in Victoria is also compulsory, and the vote is secret.

Use these facts to develop your own questions — closed ones to check facts, open ones to investigate.

Sources: Australian Electoral Commission; Victorian Electoral Commission. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A two-panel fact table. Left panel: the 2025 Australian federal election, held on Saturday 3 May 2025, run by the Australian Electoral Commission, with compulsory enrolment and voting and a secret ballot, and won by the Labor Party led by Anthony Albanese. Right panel: the 2026 Victorian state election, to be held on Saturday 28 November 2026, run by the Victorian Electoral Commission, which will decide the next Victorian government.

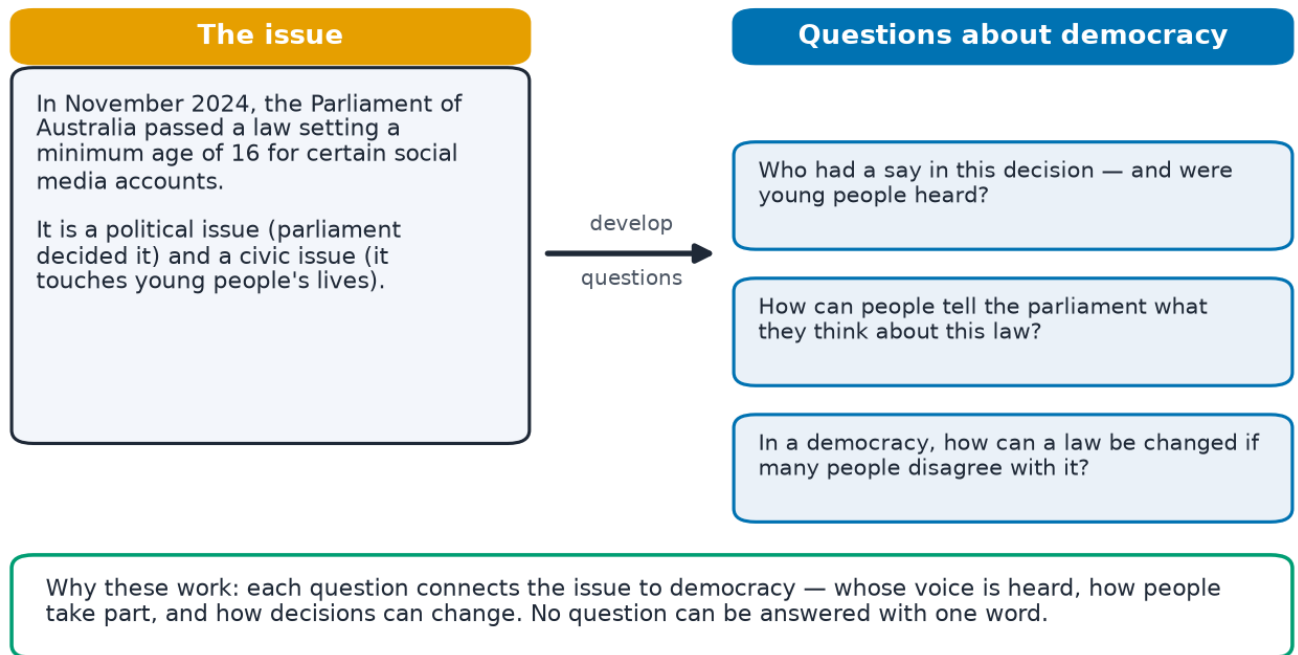
Figure 6. Two real elections to ask questions about.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — from the issue to questions about democracy

The first two steps are already done: the issue is picked, and it is sorted (political, legal and civic all at once). Steps 3 to 5 are shown in the figure: the facts come from Source A, the wondering links the issue to democracy, and each wonder is shaped into an open question.

Worked example 1 — from issue to questions about democracy



Worked example 1. On the left, the social media law issue. An arrow points to three developed questions about democracy: who had a say and were young people heard; how people can tell the parliament what they think; and how a law can change if many people disagree with it.

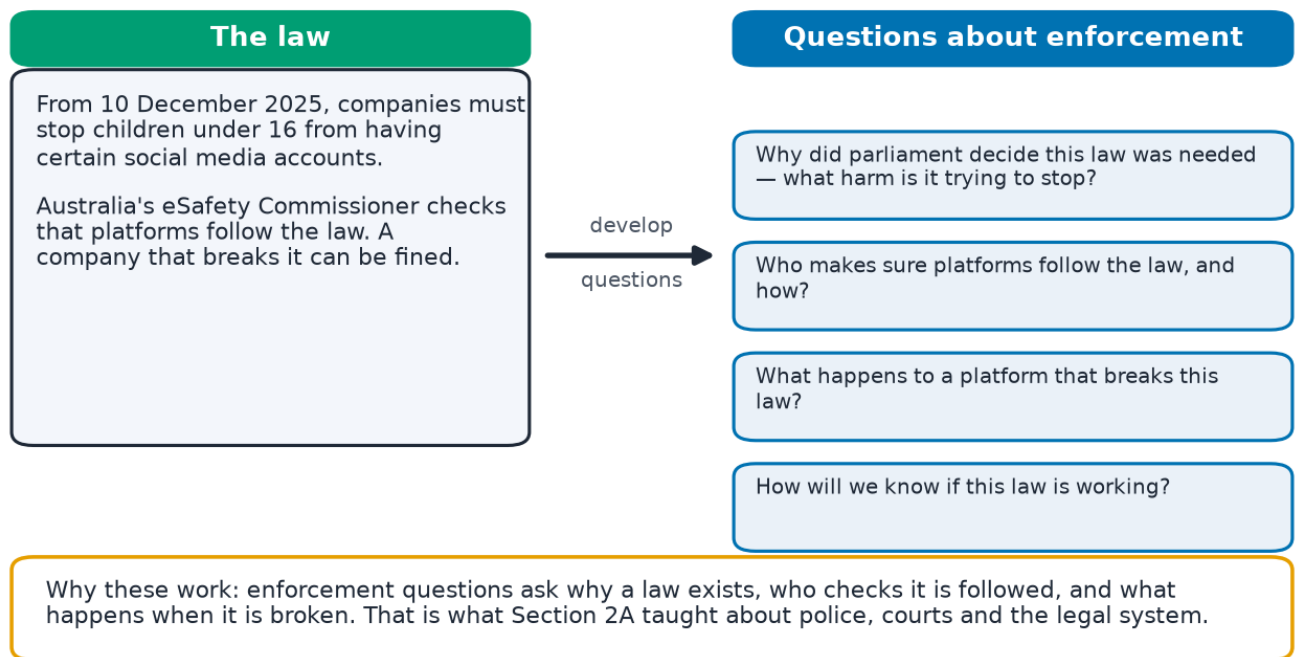
Figure 7. Worked example 1 — three questions about democracy, developed from the issue.

Why these work: each question links the recent federal decision to a discussion about democracy — whose voice is heard, how people take part, and how a decision can change. No question can be answered with one word, so each one is open.

Worked example 2 — questions about why the law is enforced

Same issue, new angle. Section 2A showed that laws are enforced to protect people, with police and courts doing part of that job. This law is enforced a different way — a commissioner checks companies, not people — but the questions keep the same shape.

Worked example 2 — why is this law enforced?



Worked example 2. On the left, the law. An arrow points to four questions about enforcement: why parliament decided the law was needed; who makes sure platforms follow it and how; what happens to a platform that breaks it; and how we will know if it is working.

Figure 8. Worked example 2 — questions about why the law is enforced.

Why these work: they ask why the law exists, who checks it is followed, what happens when it is broken, and how we will know it is working. Those are the questions to ask about any enforced law.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Look at Figure 3. Sort each issue as political, legal or civic. (a) A parliament debating a new law. (b) A court deciding what a law means. (c) People asking their council for a safer crossing near the school.

Q2. Closed or open? (a) Is voting compulsory in Australia? (b) Why does Australia make voting compulsory? (c) Who runs the 2026 Victorian state election? (d) How does a secret ballot help make an election fair?

Q3. Turn this closed question into an open one about *why* or *how*: “Did the Parliament of Australia pass the social media minimum-age law in 2024?”

Q4. Figure 6 gives facts about two real elections. Write one closed question and one open question about the 2025 federal election.

Q5. Tick-check with Figure 2. Which of these questions are ready to investigate? For any that are not, say which tick they miss. (a) When was the last federal election held? (b) Why do adult Australians have to vote in elections? (c) Is the Victorian Electoral Commission in charge of Victorian state elections?

Q6. Fill the gaps using the word bank: *contemporary · enforce · investigate · political · legal · civic*

- (a) An issue that is happening now is a _____ issue.
- (b) To _____ a law is to make sure it is followed.
- (c) To _____ an issue is to find out about it carefully, using sources.
- (d) An issue about parliaments and the decisions governments make is a _____ issue.
- (e) An issue about what a law says, and who makes sure it is followed, is a _____ issue.
- (f) An issue about people in the community, and what they can do, is a _____ issue.

On your own

Q7. The 2026 Victorian state election will be held on 28 November 2026 (Figure 6). Develop three open questions about it: one about the Victorian Parliament (political), one about voting and democracy, and one about the people of Victoria (civic).

Q8. Look again at the two views in section 4. Develop one open question that tests the strongest point of **each** side. (Remember: you are testing, not picking a winner.)

Q9. Pick a law you know, such as wearing a helmet on a bike or a seatbelt in a car. Develop three questions about why that law is enforced. Use Figure 8 as your model.

Q10. Think of one contemporary issue happening now in Australia or in Victoria. Sort it (political, legal, civic — it may be more than one) and develop two open questions about it.

Source task — run your own investigation

This task **is** the investigation. You are the investigator. Work through the five steps in Figure 4 and record them in your question log.

My question log

Fill in each line as you run your own investigation.

1. My contemporary issue:

2. Sort it (circle one or more): ☐ political ☐ legal ☐ civic

3. My source (who made it, and when):

4. Three facts I found:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. My three questions:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

A fill-in question log with spaces for the issue, the sort, the source, three facts and three questions.

Figure 9. Your question log.

1. **Pick a contemporary issue.** Ideas: the social media minimum-age law; the 2026 Victorian state election; a law or rule that affects your family or school; or a current issue you found in the news with an adult.
2. **Find one source** with an adult: a news story, or an official page such as the Australian Electoral Commission's or the Victorian Electoral Commission's website.
3. **Fill in your log:** the issue, the sort, the source (who made it, and when), and three facts.
4. **Develop three questions**, then tick-check them against Figure 2.
5. **Answer these:**

S1. Which of your three questions is your strongest, and which ticks from Figure 2 did it pass?

S2. Pick your question that asks *why* or *how*. Say what facts you would look for in your source to start answering it.

S3. Is your issue political, legal, civic — or more than one? Say why.

Answers

Q1. (a) political; (b) legal; (c) civic. **Q2.** (a) closed; (b) open; (c) closed; (d) open. **Q3.** Any open turn, e.g. “Why did the Parliament of Australia pass the social media minimum-age law?” **Q4.** Any closed and open pair about the 2025 election. **Q5.** (a) not ready — it is closed; (b) ready; (c) not ready — it is closed. **Q6.** (a) contemporary; (b) enforce; (c) investigate; (d) political; (e) legal; (f) civic. **Q7–Q10.** Any questions that pass the checks in Figure 2. **S1–S3.** Any log that is filled in with a real issue, a named source, three facts and three tick-checked questions.

Answers explained

Q1. (a) A parliament debating a new law is about how a place is run → **political**. (b) A court deciding what a law means is about the law → **legal**. (c) People asking their council for change is about the community and what it can do → **civic**.

Q2. (a) and (c) can be answered with one word (Yes; the Victorian Electoral Commission), so they are **closed**. (b) and (d) ask *why* and *how*, so they are **open**.

Q3. Sample: “Why did the Parliament of Australia pass the social media minimum-age law?” or “How did the parliament decide on 16 as the minimum age?” Both are open: they need facts and reasons.

Q4. Sample closed: “Was the 2025 federal election held on 3 May 2025?” Sample open: “Why does Australia make voting compulsory in federal elections?” The closed one checks a fact from Figure 6; the open one can be investigated.

Q5. (a) Not ready — it is closed, so it misses the “open” tick. (b) Ready — it is open, clear, about the issue, and can be investigated. (c) Not ready — it is closed.

Q6. (a) **contemporary**; (b) **enforce**; (c) **investigate**; (d) **political**; (e) **legal**; (f) **civic**. Each word matches its definition in the big-words table.

Q7. Sample: “How will the Victorian Parliament change after the 2026 election?” (political); “Why is voting compulsory in Victoria, as it is federally?” (democracy); “How can young Victorians who cannot vote yet have a say before the election?” (civic). Any three open questions, one per kind, pass.

Q8. Sample: “What facts show that a minimum age of 16 keeps young people safer online — and what facts show that it cuts some of them off from family, help and support?” A good answer asks about both sides in one breath.

Q9. Sample, helmet law: “Why did Victoria make helmet-wearing a law and not just a suggestion?” (why the law exists); “Who checks that riders follow the helmet law?” (who enforces); “What happens to a rider who breaks it?” (the result).

Q10. A good answer names a real current issue, sorts it with a reason, and gives two open questions that pass the five ticks.

S1. A good answer names the question and matches it to the ticks: open, clear, about the issue, able to be investigated, asking why or how.

S2. A good answer names facts to look for — for example, who the law applies to, when it started, who checks it, or what people say about it.

S3. A good answer sorts the issue and gives a reason for each kind it is (or is not).

Finding, choosing and sorting information from sources to explain a current issue

You are learning: VC2HC6S02. Links: .E01 .E02 .E03 .E04.

Theory

The working words. This section has a few working words. Here is how we use them.

Word	How this section uses it
contemporary issue	something happening in the world right now that people talk about and want to understand or fix
source	a place information comes from — an official website, a government page, a news report, a book
data	facts and numbers, collected and kept ready to use
statistics	numbers that have been collected and sorted so we can see the big picture, like counts of recorded crime
incident	one event the police have recorded; in this section, one crime event
offence	an act that breaks the law; one incident can include more than one offence
category	a group things are sorted into because they are the same kind, like theft or assault
evidence	information that shows something is true

One more small word: in source lines, **retrieved** means “the day we looked at the source”.

The four steps. A **researcher** is a person who looks for information carefully. To explain a contemporary issue, a researcher follows four steps.



A four-step flow chart for researching an issue: 1 locate (find sources that have information about the issue), 2 select (choose the parts that matter, from sources you can trust), 3 organise (sort and group your notes so they are ready to use), 4 explain (say what the issue is and why it matters, with evidence). An arrow loops back to the start for when something is missing.

The loop-back arrow matters: if something is missing, go back a step and look again. And the line at the bottom is the heart of this section — **an explanation without evidence is just an opinion.**

Steps 1 and 2 — locate and select: know your sources. Different kinds of sources are good for different things.

Different sources, different strengths

Where could you look for information about a contemporary issue?

Kind of source	Example	What it is good for
Official statistics websites	Crime Statistics Agency website	Counting things — like how much crime is recorded
Government pages	Victoria Police website	What the government is doing; community safety programs
News reports	TV, newspapers and news sites	What is happening now; what different people think
Books and encyclopaedias	Your school library	Background and the big picture

No source gets everything right.

Good researchers check important facts in at least two sources.

A table of four kinds of sources — official statistics websites (like the Crime Statistics Agency website), government pages (like the Victoria Police website), news reports (TV, newspapers and news sites), and books and encyclopaedias (your school library) — with what each is good for, plus the rule: no source gets everything right, so good researchers check important facts in at least two sources.

Our contemporary issue: theft in Victoria. The **Crime Statistics Agency (CSA)** is the official Victorian office that collects crime data and publishes the statistics. Its tables count **recorded criminal incidents** — crime events recorded by Victoria Police. Here are five big categories, for two years in a row.

Recorded criminal incidents in Victoria — five large categories

An incident is one crime event recorded by Victoria Police

Category	Year ending 31 March 2025	Year ending 31 March 2026	Change
Theft	201,547	192,880	down 8,667
Assault	47,601	47,385	down 216
Property damage	41,194	39,986	down 1,208
Burglary (break and enter)	45,913	38,803	down 7,110
Deception	19,613	21,462	up 1,849
These five together	355,868	340,516	
All recorded criminal incidents	473,518	468,711	

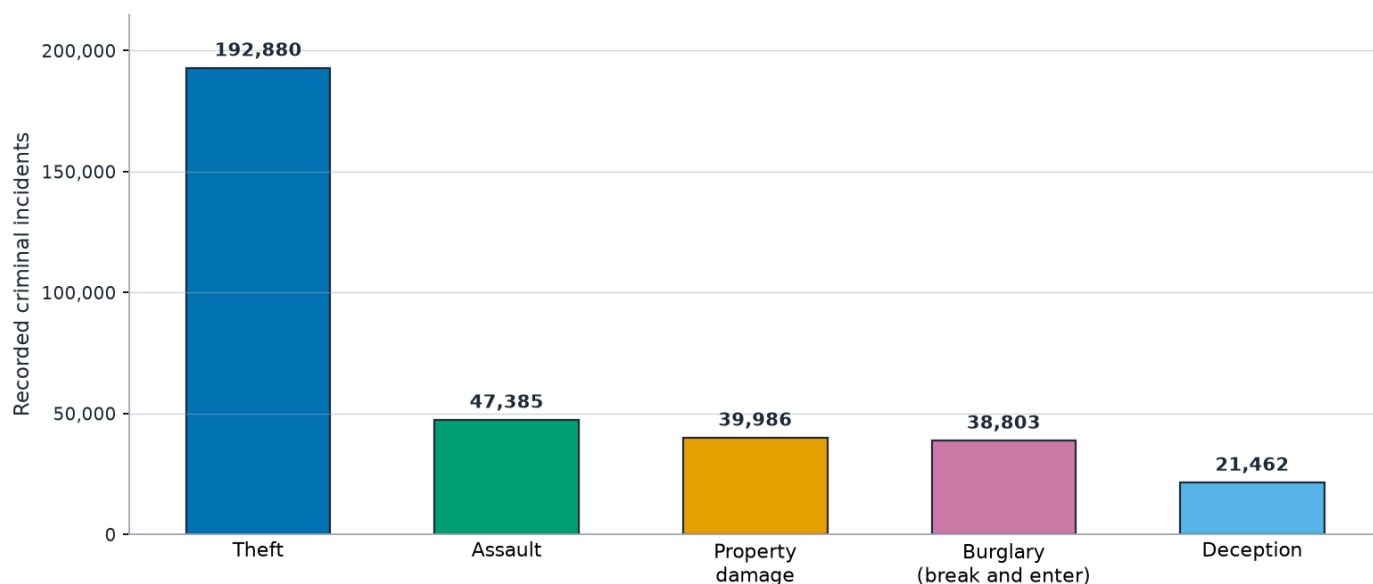
Source: Crime Statistics Agency (2026), Recorded Criminal Incidents data tables, statistical release for the year ending 31 March 2026, published June 2026, retrieved 26 August 2026. One incident can include more than one offence.

A table of recorded criminal incidents in Victoria for the years ending 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026: theft 201,547 then 192,880; assault 47,601 then 47,385; property damage 41,194 then 39,986; burglary (break and enter) 45,913 then 38,803; deception 19,613 then 21,462. The five together went down from 355,868 to 340,516, and all recorded criminal incidents went down from 473,518 to 468,711. Source line: Crime Statistics Agency (2026), retrieved 26 August 2026.

How to read it: pick a row, read across. The change column tells you if the number went up or down.

Step 3 — organise: the same data as a column graph. Organising means choosing a shape that shows the big picture. A column graph lets your eye compare the five categories all at once.

Recorded criminal incidents in Victoria, year ending 31 March 2026



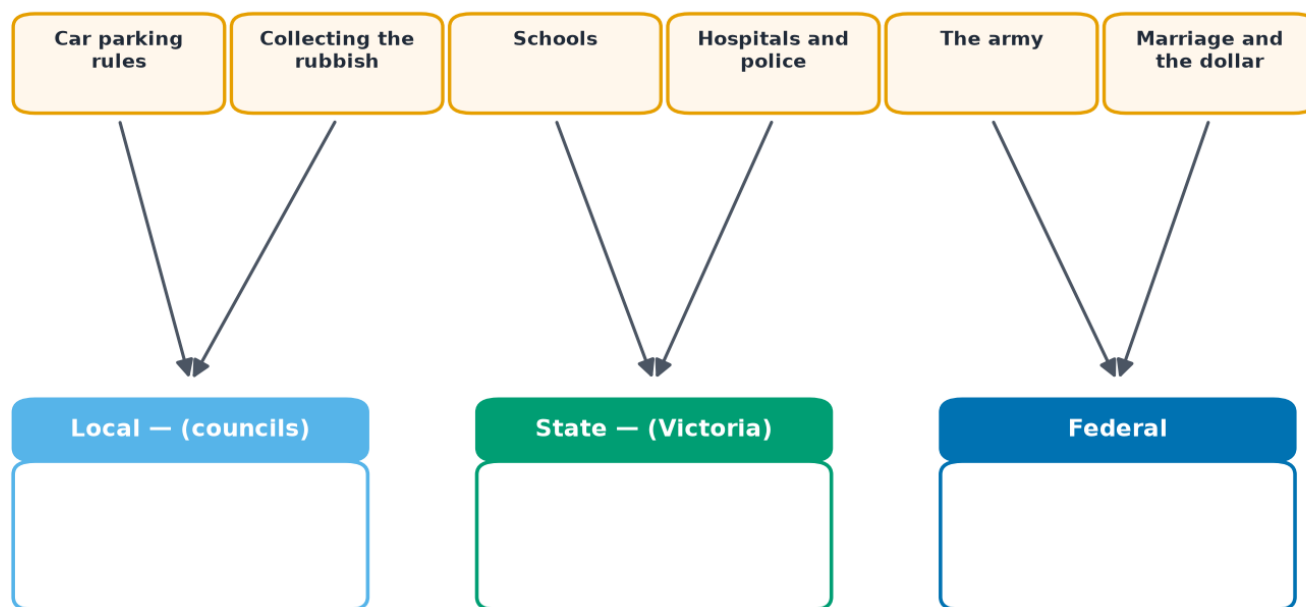
Source: Crime Statistics Agency (2026), Recorded Criminal Incidents data tables, year ending 31 March 2026. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A column graph of recorded criminal incidents in Victoria for the year ending 31 March 2026: theft 192,880; assault 47,385; property damage 39,986; burglary (break and enter) 38,803; deception 21,462. Source line: Crime Statistics Agency (2026), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Who can act? Sort the law-making areas. A full explanation also says *who can act* on the issue. In Section 1C you sorted law-making areas into the three levels of government. Here is the same skill, used on our issue.

Which level makes the laws? Sorting areas of law-making

Each card is an area of law-making. Where does it belong?



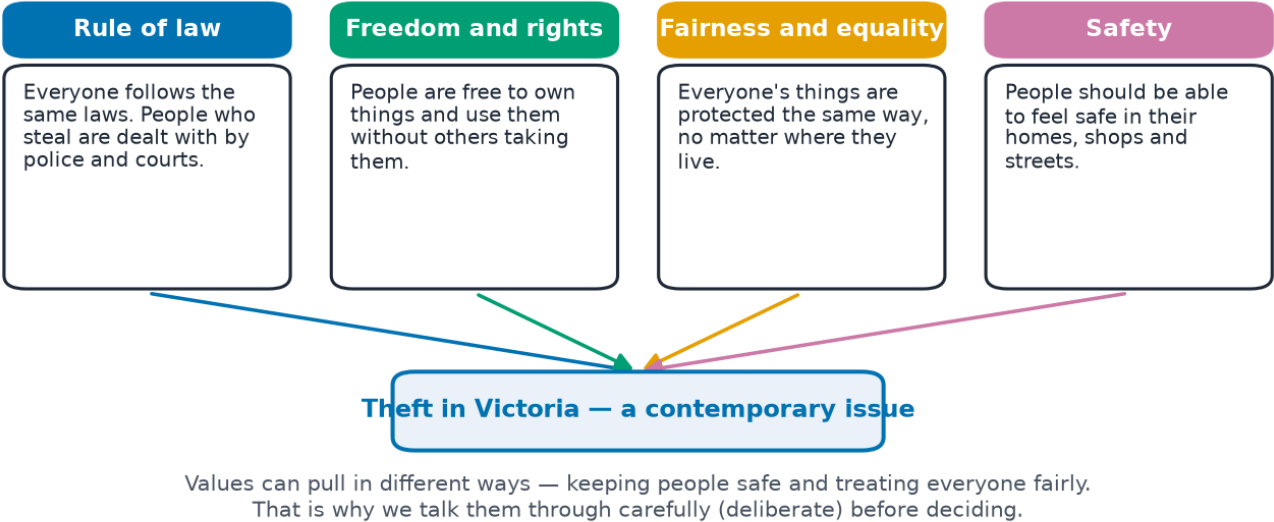
Remember from Section 1C: local for your area, state for Victoria, federal for the whole country.

A sorting diagram with six law-making cards — car parking rules and collecting the rubbish into local (councils); schools and hospitals and police into state (Victoria); the army, and marriage and the dollar, into federal.

Police are a **state** job, so most law-making about theft in Victoria happens in the Parliament of Victoria. Councils help with local safety, and the federal level looks after whole-of-country areas.

The values in the issue. In Section 1B you met the democratic values that hold up Australia’s democracy. Values are ideas about what is right and important — and they belong in a full explanation too.

Democratic values linked to the theft issue
Values are ideas about what is right and important



A diagram linking four democratic values — rule of law, freedom and rights, fairness and equality, and safety — by arrows to the contemporary issue of theft in Victoria, with a note that values can pull in different ways, so we talk them through carefully before deciding.

Citizens working together. A full explanation also includes what people are *doing* about the issue. One real example in Victoria is **EyeWatch**.

Citizens working together on the issue: EyeWatch

A Victoria Police program that joins locals with their local police

What is EyeWatch?

EyeWatch is a set of social media pages run by Victoria Police. There is one for each of 54 regions across Victoria. Each page joins the local police with the people who live there.

The civic goal

Safer streets. Police share news and safety tips. Locals share what they have seen. Together they work to stop crime before it starts and to solve crimes.



Working together on a shared goal like this is active citizenship (Section 2E).

Source: Victoria Police, EyeWatch page (police.vic.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

A diagram of the EyeWatch program: what EyeWatch is (social media pages run by Victoria Police, one for each of 54 regions, joining local police with the people who live there), the civic goal (safer streets), and a four-step flow — police share news and safety tips; locals follow their local page; locals share what they have seen; safer streets for everyone. Source line: Victoria Police, EyeWatch page, retrieved 26 August 2026.

Step 4 — explain: a research organiser. Now see the whole method on one page: the issue, the question, the sources, the organised notes, and the explanation.

A filled-in research organiser (model)

Use one like this to keep your notes sorted

Issue:	Theft is the biggest crime category in Victoria.
My question:	How much theft is there in Victoria, and what are people doing about
My sources:	1. Crime Statistics Agency data tables — official numbers. 2. Victoria Police EyeWatch page — a community safety program.
Key notes (organised):	- 468,711 criminal incidents were recorded in Victoria in the 12 months to 31 March 2026. - Theft was the biggest category: 192,880 incidents. - EyeWatch: locals and police work together in 54 regions to stop crime and solve crimes.
My explanation:	In the year ending 31 March 2026, Victoria recorded 468,711 criminal incidents. Theft was the biggest category, with 192,880 incidents. Citizens are doing something about it: through EyeWatch, locals and police in 54 regions work together to stop crime and keep streets safe.

Check: every number in my explanation comes from one of my sources.

A filled-in research organiser model: issue (theft is the biggest crime category in Victoria), my question, my sources (CSA data tables and the Victoria Police EyeWatch page), key notes as three bullet points with numbers, and my explanation in three sentences, plus a check strip: every number in my explanation comes from one of my sources.

Check the habit at the bottom of the organiser: **every number in your explanation must come from one of your sources.**

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — with help

Use the CSA table (the third figure). Find the burglary row, then organise one note from it.

Method: locate the row → select the two numbers → organise them into one note with the change.

Step	What we do	What we get
1 Locate	Find the “Burglary (break and enter)” row.	The right row of the table.
2 Select	Read across: 45,913 (year ending 31 March 2025) and 38,803 (year ending 31 March 2026).	Two numbers to compare.
3 Organise	Work out the change: $45,913 - 38,803 = 7,110$, and label it “down”.	One tidy note.
4 Explain-ready note	“Burglary (break and enter) was down 7,110 incidents, from 45,913 to 38,803.”	A note we can use in an explanation.

Worked example 2 — with help

Using the EyeWatch figure, write a summary of how citizens work together on the issue. Fill the starters, then join them into one summary.

Starter	Filled in
Who:	Locals and police in 54 regions across Victoria.
What:	They use EyeWatch pages: police share news and safety tips, and locals share what they have seen.
Goal:	Safer streets — stopping crime before it starts and solving crimes.
Summary:	Through EyeWatch, locals and police work together to make streets safer.

Practice questions

With help

Q1. Which step is each person doing? (a) Mara finds the CSA website. (b) Mara copies the theft numbers into her organiser. (c) Mara puts her notes into groups: “how big is the issue” and “what is being done”.

Q2. Fill the gaps using the word bank: *locate · select · organise · explain*. (a) To _____ means to choose the parts that matter, from sources you can trust. (b) To _____ means to say what the issue is and why it matters, with evidence.

Q3. Look at the CSA table. Which category had the most recorded incidents in the year ending 31 March 2026, and how many were there?

Q4. True or false, then correct the false one: deception went down between the two years in the CSA table.

Q5. Sort these three areas of law-making to a level (use the sorting figure and Section 1C): (a) police; (b) collecting the rubbish; (c) the army.

Q6. Name **two** of the four democratic values linked to the theft issue in the values figure.

On your own

Q7. Use the CSA table. In the year ending 31 March 2026, how many more theft incidents were there than burglary (break and enter) incidents? Show your working.

Q8. A friend says, “Crime in Victoria went up last year.” Use the bottom line of the CSA table (all recorded criminal incidents) to say if your friend is right, and give the two numbers.

Q9. Pick one value from the values figure. In two sentences, explain why it is linked to the theft issue.

Q10. In two or three sentences of your own, write a summary of how EyeWatch brings citizens together for a civic goal.

Source task

Read the source in the picture, then answer in your own words.

Source 1 — the media release, retold in plain words

Crime Statistics Agency, June 2026

Source 1

In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, the number of criminal incidents recorded in Victoria went down. It was down 1.0% - that is, 4,807 fewer - to 468,711 incidents.

From the same data tables: theft was the biggest category, with 192,880 incidents in the year ending 31 March 2026.

Retold in plain words from the Crime Statistics Agency media release, June 2026; numbers checked against the Recorded Criminal Incidents data tables, year ending 31 March 2026. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A source card retold in plain words from the Crime Statistics Agency media release of June 2026: in the 12 months to 31 March 2026, recorded criminal incidents in Victoria went down 1.0% — 4,807 fewer — to 468,711; and from the same data tables, theft was the biggest category, with 192,880 incidents.

S1. (Locate) From the source, how many criminal incidents were recorded in Victoria in the 12 months to 31 March 2026?

S2. (Select) Did the number go up or down from the year before, and by how many?

S3. (Organise) Sort these four notes under two headings — “How big is the issue?” and “What is being done?”. (a) 468,711 incidents were recorded. (b) Police share news and safety tips on EyeWatch pages. (c) Theft was the biggest category, with 192,880 incidents. (d) Locals share what they have seen on their local page.

S4. (Explain) In two or three sentences, explain the issue of theft in Victoria. Use at least two numbers from the source.

Answers

Q1. (a) locate; (b) a bit of select and organise — copying the chosen numbers is selecting, and putting them into the organiser is organising; (c) organise. **Q2.** (a) select; (b) explain. **Q3.** Theft, with 192,880 incidents. **Q4.** False — deception went **up**, by 1,849 (from 19,613 to 21,462). **Q5.** (a) state; (b) local; (c) federal. **Q6.** Any two of: rule of law; freedom and rights; fairness and equality; safety. **Q7.** $192,880 - 38,803 = 154,077$ more theft incidents. **Q8.** The friend is wrong: all recorded criminal incidents went **down**, from 473,518 to 468,711 (down 4,807). **Q9.** Any value with a true link, e.g. safety — people should feel safe in their homes, shops and streets, and theft takes that feeling away. **Q10.** Any true 2–3 sentence summary of the EyeWatch figure, e.g. Through EyeWatch, locals and police in 54 regions work together; police share news and safety tips and locals share what they have seen, to make streets safer. **S1.** 468,711. **S2.** Down, by 4,807 (1.0%). **S3.** How big is the issue: (a) and (c). What is being done: (b) and (d). **S4.** Any 2–3 sentences that use at least two numbers from the source, e.g. In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, Victoria recorded 468,711 criminal incidents. Theft was the biggest category, with 192,880 incidents, so theft is a large part of the crime issue in Victoria.

Answers explained

- Q1.** (a) Finding a source is **locate**. (b) Choosing the theft numbers is **select**, and writing them into the organiser is **organise** — the two steps often happen together. (c) Putting notes into groups is **organise**.
- Q2.** (a) **select** — choose the parts that matter, from sources you can trust. (b) **explain** — say what the issue is and why it matters, with evidence.
- Q3.** Read down the column for the year ending 31 March 2026: **theft** is the biggest number, **192,880** incidents.
- Q4. False.** Deception went **up** by 1,849 — from 19,613 to 21,462. It is the only one of the five categories that went up.
- Q5.** (a) police → **state** (Victoria); (b) collecting the rubbish → **local** (councils); (c) the army → **federal**.
- Q6.** Two of: **rule of law** (people who steal are dealt with by police and courts); **freedom and rights** (people are free to own things); **fairness and equality** (everyone's things are protected the same way); **safety** (people should feel safe).
- Q7.** Line up the two numbers for the year ending 31 March 2026 and subtract: $192,880 - 38,803 = 154,077$.
- Q8.** The bottom line of the table says all recorded criminal incidents went from 473,518 to 468,711 — that is **down** 4,807, so the friend is wrong. (One category, deception, did go up — which is why we check the total, not just one row.)
- Q9.** A good answer names one value and links it, e.g. **safety**: people should be able to feel safe in their homes, shops and streets; theft takes that feeling away, so safety is linked to the issue.
- Q10.** A good summary has the who, the what and the goal: locals and police in 54 regions use EyeWatch pages; police share news and safety tips and locals share what they have seen; together they work towards safer streets.
- S1.** The source says **468,711** criminal incidents were recorded in the 12 months to 31 March 2026.
- S2.** The number went **down**, by **4,807** (that is the 1.0% the source mentions).
- S3.** “How big is the issue?” gets the number notes: (a) 468,711 incidents and (c) theft's 192,880. “What is being done?” gets the EyeWatch notes: (b) police share news and safety tips, and (d) locals share what they have seen.
- S4.** A good explanation uses the numbers as evidence, e.g. In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, Victoria recorded 468,711 criminal incidents, and theft was the biggest category with 192,880. That is why theft is treated as a large part of the crime issue, and why programs like EyeWatch work to stop it.

Explaining democratic institutions: their values and features

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Chapter 3 — Skills: investigating and evaluating · Section 3C

You are learning: VC2HC6S03. Links: .E01 .E02.

Before we start — this section is about a skill

In Chapters 1 and 2 you learned **what** Australia’s democratic institutions and systems are, and **how** they work. This section teaches you a skill: how to **explain** the connection between them. The skill has two big words in it.

- A **feature** is a part of something, or a way it works. The secret ballot is a feature of Australian elections.
- A **value** is an idea about what is right and important. You met the key values of Australia’s democracy in Section 1A, such as freedom of speech and religious belief, and freedom to vote and to stand for election.

Two more words to agree on:

- **Participation** means taking part — for example, voting in an election or speaking up about an issue.
- **Representation** means having your voice carried by someone chosen to speak and decide for you. When people vote for members of parliament, those members represent them.

One last idea is used by people in slightly different ways, so this section says exactly how it is used here.

Free and fair elections. The Victorian Curriculum — the official plan for what schools teach — uses this phrase but does not give it one fixed meaning. In this section it is used in the sense the curriculum itself points to: elections that are **open** (people can enrol and vote), **free** (people can choose without being forced or frightened) and **fair** (every vote is counted the same way). This is the same standard the Australian Electoral Commission and the Victorian Electoral Commission work to when they run elections. Other definitions exist, and they are not the same as this one. Every question in this section can be answered using this meaning.

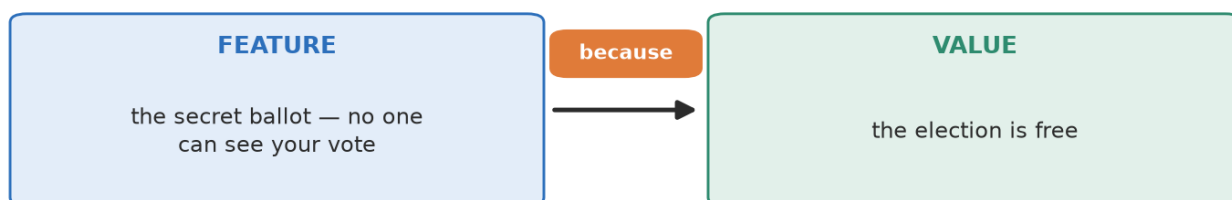
You will also use words defined earlier in this book: **democracy** (Section 1B), **institution** (Section 1B), **bill** (Section 1B) and **Charter** — Victoria’s Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Sections 1B and 2B).

1. The explanation move

Look at any democratic institution or system, and you can ask: *which of its features show which of its values?* That is the explanation move. It always has three parts:

1. **Name a feature** — a real part of the institution or system, or a real way it works.
2. **Name a value** — the democratic value the feature shows.
3. **Link them with “because”** — say how the feature shows the value.

The explanation move



The move always has three parts:

1. Name a feature — a real part, or a real way it works.
2. Name a value — the democratic value it shows.
3. Link them with “because” — say how the feature shows the value.

A labelled diagram of the explanation move. A box for a feature points to a box for a value, with the word because linking them. A short example is shown underneath.

Figure 1. The explanation move: feature → value, because ...

Here is a small example you already know from Section 1A — a class captain election.

Part	Example
Feature	Every student gets exactly one vote.
Value	Equality.
Because	No student gets extra votes, so everyone counts the same way.

In this section you will make the same move with Australia’s real institutions: its elections (Part 2) and its Charter of Human Rights (Part 3).

The values you can use in your explanations

Value	What it means
Freedom to vote and to stand for election	People can choose their leaders, and can put themselves forward to be chosen
Freedom of speech and expression	People can share their ideas and ask hard questions
Freedom of religious belief	People can choose their own beliefs
Rule of law	The law applies to everyone — including the government
Equality	Everyone counts the same way before the law
Participation	People take part — for example, by voting or speaking up about an issue
Representation	Someone chosen by the people carries their voice and decides for them

A table of key democratic values with a short meaning for each, for use as a reference while writing explanations.

Figure 2. The values you can use in your explanations.

2. Part 1 — How elections show free and fair voting, participation and representation

Australia's elections have features that were chosen on purpose. Each one shows a value.

Five features of Australian elections — and the value each one shows

Feature	What it means	Value it shows
Enrolment	People get on the voting list first — one person, one vote	Equality
The secret ballot	No one can see how you vote	Freedom
Compulsory voting	Once you are enrolled, you must vote	Participation
Preferential voting	Voters number the candidates in the order they choose them	Fairness — every vote still counts
Independent electoral commissions (the AEC and the VEC)	A neutral body — not the government of the day — runs the election	Fairness — a neutral umpire

AEC = Australian Electoral Commission (federal) · VEC = Victorian Electoral Commission (Victoria)

A table of five features of Australian elections matched to the value each one shows: enrolment, the secret ballot, compulsory voting, preferential voting, and independent electoral commissions.

Figure 3. Five features of Australian elections, and the value each one shows.

- **Enrolment.** People put their name on the voting list before they can vote. This keeps the election open and honest: one person, one vote.
- **The secret ballot.** No one can see how you vote, and you do not have to tell anyone. This keeps voting free: nobody can force you or frighten you over your choice.
- **Compulsory voting.** Once you are enrolled, you must vote in elections. This keeps participation high, so the result speaks for almost everyone, not just some people.
- **Preferential voting.** Voters number the candidates in the order they choose them. This means the winner is the person most people can accept, and every vote still counts even if your first choice does not win.
- **Independent electoral commissions.** The **Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)** runs federal elections, and the **Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC)** runs Victorian state elections. They are not part of the government of the day, so elections are run by a neutral umpire, not by the people trying to win.

Real elections you can check. The last Victorian state election was held on Saturday 26 November 2022, and about 4.4 million people were enrolled to vote in it. The next one is already fixed: Saturday 28 November 2026. Victoria's elections happen on a fixed date every four years. Australia's last federal election was on Saturday 3 May 2025, and more than 17 million people were enrolled to vote in it.

Two real elections you can check

Victorian state election	Australian federal election
Run by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC)	Run by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)
Last one: Saturday 26 November 2022 — about 4.4 million people enrolled	Last one: Saturday 3 May 2025 — more than 17 million people enrolled
Next one: Saturday 28 November 2026	All 150 seats of the House of Representatives were filled
Fixed date: every four years, on the last Saturday of November	

Sources: Victorian Electoral Commission; Australian Electoral Commission. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Two election cards. The Victorian card shows the 2022 state election, the next election on 28 November 2026, and the fixed four-year term. The federal card shows the 2025 election run by the Australian Electoral Commission.

Figure 4. Two real elections you can check. Sources: Victorian Electoral Commission; Australian Electoral Commission. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked example 1 — with help

Question: Explain how the secret ballot shows that Australian elections are free and fair.

Method: use the three-part explanation move — feature, value, because.

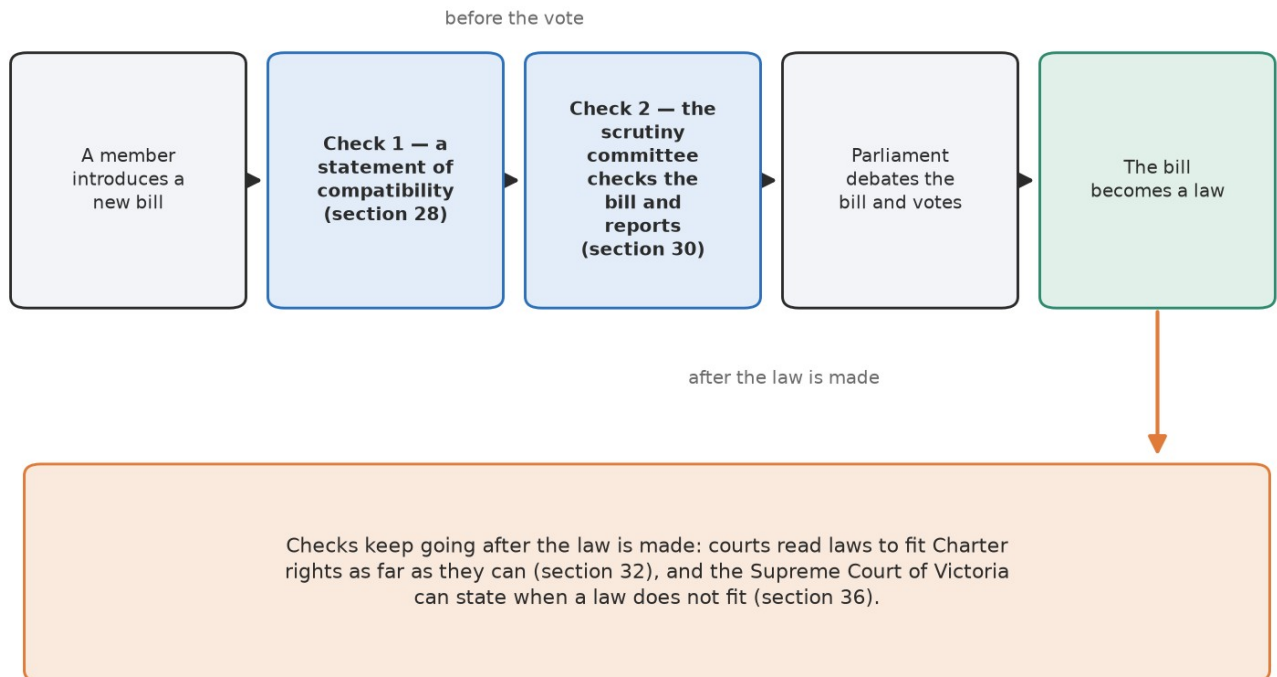
Part	Answer
Feature	The secret ballot: no one can see how a person votes.
Value	The election is free (and fair).
Because	Because nobody can see your vote, nobody can force you, pay you or frighten you into voting a certain way. You can choose for yourself in secret. That is what makes the vote free.

Finish with a full sentence: *The secret ballot shows that Australian elections are free, because people can vote in secret and no one can pressure them over their choice.*

3. Part 2 — How the Charter upholds human rights when Victoria makes laws

In Section 1B you met Victoria's **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities**, the law passed by the Parliament of Victoria in 2006 that protects 20 human rights. The Charter does not just sit on a shelf. It works **while laws are being made**. Here is how.

How the Charter checks new Victorian laws



A flow diagram showing how the Victorian Charter checks new laws. A bill is introduced with a statement of compatibility, a scrutiny committee checks it, parliament debates and votes, and courts can later check how the law fits with Charter rights.

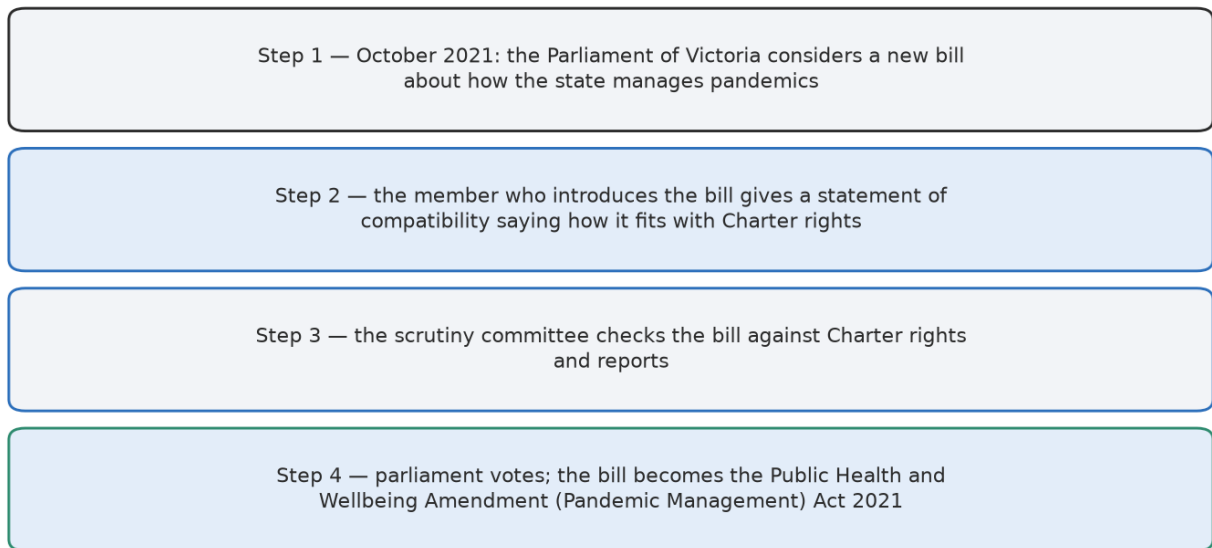
Figure 5. Three checks on new Victorian laws, in order. Source: *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*, sections 28, 30, 32 and 36. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

1. **A statement of compatibility.** When a member introduces a new bill into the Parliament of Victoria, they must also give a written statement saying whether the bill fits with Charter rights, and how. (This is in section 28 of the Charter.)
2. **A careful check by a committee.** A group of members called the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee looks at every new bill and reports on whether it fits with Charter rights. (This is in section 30 of the Charter.)
3. **Courts check the law too.** When courts work out what a Victorian law means, they read it in a way that fits with Charter rights as far as the law allows (section 32). The Supreme Court of Victoria can even state that a law cannot be read in a way that fits with Charter rights (section 36). The law still stays a law — but parliament must then look at it again.

A *pandemic* is when a sickness spreads across many places at the same time. In October 2021, in the middle of one, the Parliament of Victoria made a real law about how the state manages pandemics: the *Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Act 2021*. Like every bill since 2008, it arrived with a statement of compatibility, and the scrutiny committee looked at how it fitted with Charter rights before parliament voted on it.

A real law checked by the Charter

Victoria's pandemic management law, October 2021



The same checks happen for every bill introduced since 2008.

A worked case study in four steps showing how the Charter checks applied to the 2021 Victorian pandemic management law.

Figure 6. A real law checked by the Charter. Source: Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Act 2021 (Vic); Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked example 2 — with help

Question: Explain how the Charter of Human Rights protects human rights when the Parliament of Victoria makes a new law.

Method: name one check, name the value it upholds, then link them with “because”.

Part	Answer
Feature	A statement of compatibility must be given when a new bill is introduced (section 28 of the Charter).
Value	Human rights are upheld before a law is made, not only after.
Because	Because the member must say, in writing, how the bill fits with Charter rights, rights are checked at the start. Parliament and the public can see the answer and question it before anyone votes.

Finish with a full sentence: *The Charter upholds human rights in lawmaking because every new bill must come with a written statement about how it fits with Charter rights, and a committee checks the bill too — so rights are thought about before a law is passed, not only after.*

Two views — should everyone have to vote?

Compulsory voting is a feature of Australian elections, and most Australians accept it — but people who both care about democracy disagree about it, and both sides have real points.

- **One view:** compulsory voting makes elections more free and fair. When almost everyone votes, the result speaks for the whole community, not just the people who feel strongly. Politicians must think about everyone, and nobody can be quietly left out.
- **Another view:** voting is a freedom, and a freedom you are forced to use is not really free. People should be able to choose whether to vote, and forcing them may produce votes from people who do not care, which weakens the result.

When you answer questions about this debate, what matters is the strength of your reasons, not which side you pick.

Practice tasks

With help

S1. Fill the gaps using the word bank: *because · feature · value*

- (a) A _____ is a part of something, or a way it works.
- (b) A _____ is an idea about what is right and important.
- (c) The word _____ links the feature to the value and tells how one shows the other.

S2. Match each election feature (1–5) to the value it shows best (A–E).

Feature	Value it shows
1. Secret ballot	A. Participation — almost everyone takes part
2. Compulsory voting	B. Fairness — a neutral umpire runs the election
3. Enrolment (one person, one vote)	C. Freedom — no one can see or pressure your choice
4. Independent electoral commissions	D. Equality — every person counts once
5. Preferential voting	E. Fairness — every vote still counts, even if your first choice does not win

S3. Complete this explanation using Figure 3. Start with the feature, then the value, then “because”.

“Compulsory voting shows that Australian elections have high participation, because ...”

S4. Here is an incomplete explanation. Add the missing value, then write the “because” sentence.

“The VEC and the AEC are not part of the government of the day. This shows the value of _____, because ...”

S5. Put the three Charter checks in the order they happen. The years and steps are in Figure 5.

- (a) Courts read laws in a way that fits with Charter rights.
- (b) A member introduces a bill with a statement of compatibility.
- (c) The scrutiny committee checks the bill and reports.

S6. True or false? If false, correct the statement.

- (a) The Charter only protects rights after a law has been made.
- (b) A statement of compatibility says how a new bill fits with Charter rights.
- (c) The next Victorian state election is fixed for Saturday 28 November 2026.
- (d) The Australian Electoral Commission runs Victorian state elections.

On your own

U1. Explain how compulsory voting shows that Australian elections value participation. Use the three-part move: feature, value, because.

U2. Choose one feature of Australian elections from Figure 3 that is **not** the secret ballot. Write a full-sentence explanation of how it shows that elections are free and fair.

U3. Explain how the Charter of Human Rights protects human rights when the Parliament of Victoria makes a new law. Name **two** checks and say why each one helps.

U4. Some people say everyone should have to vote. Others say voting should be a free choice. Give one strong reason for **each** view, then say which reason you found stronger and why. (You are showing you understand both sides, not just picking one.)

Source task

SOURCE 1

The Charter's statement of compatibility rule, in plain words

When a member introduces a new bill into the Parliament of Victoria, the member must also give a written statement.

The statement must say:

- whether the bill fits with the human rights in the Charter — and if it does, how;
- if any part of the bill does not fit, that the member must say which part, and how much it does not fit.

From: section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic). Retold in plain words.

A source card showing the statement of compatibility rule in plain words, based on section 28 of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Source 1. Retold in plain words from section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Your task. You are writing a short explanation for the school newsletter: “How does the Charter of Human Rights help keep rights safe when Victoria makes new laws?”

Plan and write your explanation using the frame below. Use Source 1, this section, and (with your teacher) the Parliament of Victoria’s education pages if you want one more source.

Plan your explanation

1. Find a feature

what does Source 1 say must happen?

2. Name the value

what right or value does that feature uphold?

3. Link them

write the "because" that joins them

4. Add a real example

a law, a date or an institution from this section

5. Check it

does your explanation name a feature, name a value, and link them with "because"?

If a step is missing, go back and fix it.

A five-step planning frame for your explanation: find a feature, name the value, link them with because, add a real example, and check the explanation against the checklist.

Figure 7. Your planning frame.

- (a) Find one feature from Source 1 and write it down.
 - (b) Name the value that feature upholds.
 - (c) Link them with "because".
 - (d) Add one real example from this section (a law, a date or an institution).
 - (e) Read your explanation aloud. Does it name a feature, name a value, and link them with "because"? If not, fix it.
-

Answers

S1. (a) feature; (b) value; (c) because. **S2.** $1 \rightarrow C$; $2 \rightarrow A$; $3 \rightarrow D$; $4 \rightarrow B$; $5 \rightarrow E$. **S3.** Sample: ... because almost everyone who is enrolled must vote, so nearly the whole community takes part. **S4.** Sample: fairness; because a neutral body that is not trying to win runs the election, so no government can fix the count to help itself win. **S5.** (b), then (c), then (a). **S6.** (a) False — the Charter checks rights before a law is made (statements of compatibility and the scrutiny committee) as well as after (courts). (b) True. (c) True. (d) False — the Victorian Electoral Commission runs Victorian state elections; the AEC runs federal elections.

U1. Sample answer: Compulsory voting means everyone who is enrolled must vote, so almost the whole community takes part in elections. That shows participation, because the result comes from nearly everyone, not just some people.

U2. Sample answer (preferential voting): Preferential voting lets voters number the candidates in their own order, so every vote still counts even if a voter's first choice does not win. This shows that elections are fair, because no vote is thrown away. (Accept any accurate feature–value–because explanation using enrolment, compulsory voting, preferential voting or the independent commissions.)

U3. Sample answer: First, when a bill is introduced, the member must give a statement of compatibility saying how it fits with Charter rights, so rights are checked before the vote. Second, the scrutiny committee checks every bill and reports, so parliament hears a second view before it decides. Both checks help because rights are thought about early, while the law is still being written. (Courts reading laws to fit Charter rights is also accepted.)

U4. Sample answer: One strong reason for compulsory voting is that the result then speaks for the whole community, so nobody is quietly left out. One strong reason against is that voting is a freedom, and being forced to vote is not really free. (Award one accurate, reasoned point per view, plus the student's own choice of the stronger reason with a real “because”.)

Source task. A complete answer names a feature from Source 1 (the written statement), names a value (rights upheld before laws are made), links them with “because”, and adds one real example (for example, the 2021 pandemic management law, section 28 of the Charter, or the Parliament of Victoria).

Answers explained

S1. The explanation move is: a **feature** shows a **value**, **because** ...

S2. The secret ballot keeps choices free (C). Compulsory voting lifts participation (A). Enrolment keeps every person to one vote, which is equality (D). Independent commissions are a neutral umpire, which is fairness (B). Preferential voting keeps every vote counting, also fairness (E).

S3. The “because” part must say *how* the feature shows the value: compulsory voting means nearly all enrolled people vote, so participation is high.

S4. The value is **fairness** (or freedom — accept either with a matching reason). The “because” must point to the neutral umpire idea: the body running the election is not one of the teams trying to win it.

S5. The checks happen in this order: the bill arrives with its statement (b), the scrutiny committee checks it (c), and courts can later read the law in a way that fits Charter rights (a).

S6. The Charter works **before** a law is made (statement of compatibility, scrutiny committee) **and** after it (courts), so (a) is false. (b) and (c) are true. (d) is false — the VEC runs Victorian state elections; the AEC runs federal elections.

U1. A full answer has all three parts: the feature (enrolled people must vote), the value (participation), and the link (because almost everyone takes part, the result speaks for the whole community).

U2. Check for: a real feature from Figure 3, a real value (free, fair, participation or representation), and a “because” that truly links them. The example given uses preferential voting and fairness.

U3. Check for two named checks (statement of compatibility; scrutiny committee; or the courts’ role) and a reason for each one. The strongest reasons say the checks happen **early** — while the law is being made — and that parliament and the public can see and question them.

U4. Both views are real ones held by people who support democracy. Marks go to the reasoning: one strong point per side, then the student’s own choice with a real “because”. No side is the “right” side.

Source task. The explanation should read like one or two full sentences with the three parts joined: feature → value → because, with one real example attached. Source 1 comes from section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

Connecting current issues with democratic institutions and systems

Civics and Citizenship 5 · Chapter 3 — Skills: investigating and evaluating · Section 3D

You are learning: VC2HC6S04. Links: .E01 .E02.

Before we start — this section is about a skill

In Chapters 1 and 2 you learned **what** Australia’s democratic institutions and systems are, and **how** they work. This section teaches you a skill: how to **explain** the connections between a big issue in the news and those institutions and systems.

Contemporary issue. The Victorian Curriculum — the official plan for what schools teach — uses this phrase but does not give it one fixed meaning. In this section it is used in this sense: a real problem or topic that many people are talking about now, or have been talking about recently — recent enough that you may have seen it in the news, and real enough that you can check it. Other meanings exist, and they are not the same as this one. Every question in this section can be answered using this meaning.

Four more words to agree on:

- A **connection** is how two things are joined, or how one affects the other. In this section, a connection joins an issue to the work of an institution or system.
- An **institution** is a group set up to do an important public job. You met this word in Section 1B: parliaments and courts are institutions.
- A **response** is what someone does about an issue. A government’s response is what it does — it makes a law, makes rules, or checks that a law is followed. The **focus** of a response is the part of the issue it is aimed at.
- A **process** is the set of steps a system goes through to do its job. The **legal system** is the courts, the police, and the rules for dealing with people who break the law — you met its processes in Section 2A.

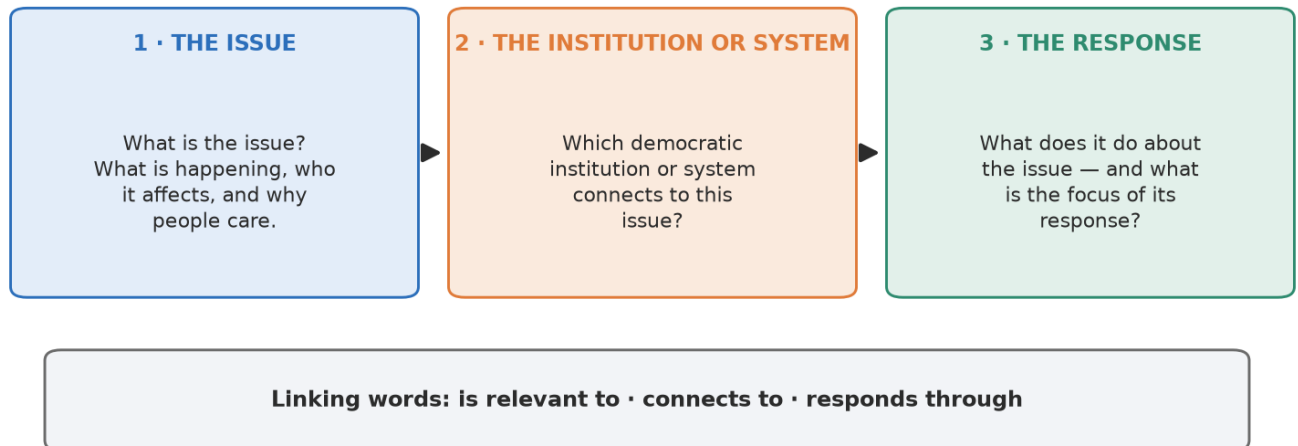
You will also use words defined earlier in this book: **bill** and **Act** (Sections 1B, 1C and 2C), **federal** (Section 1C), and **imprisonment** (Section 2A).

1. The connection method — three questions

Look at any contemporary issue, and you can explain its connection to democratic institutions and systems by answering three questions, in order.

1. **What is the issue?** Say what is happening, who it affects, and why people care.
2. **Which institution or system connects to it?** Name the real institution or system whose job touches the issue.
3. **What does it do about it?** Describe the response — what the institution or system does, and what the focus of that response is.

The three-question method



Example: imprisonment → Victoria's legal system → courts decide sentences; Corrections Victoria runs the prisons

A three-box method diagram. Box 1 (the issue) asks what is happening, who it affects and why people care. Box 2 (the institution or system) asks which democratic institution or system connects to the issue. Box 3 (the response) asks what it does about the issue and what the focus of its response is.

Figure 1. The three-question method.

When you write your answer, use linking words that show the connection: *is relevant to ... • connects to ... • responds through ...*

Here is a tiny example, so you can see the whole move before the real case studies.

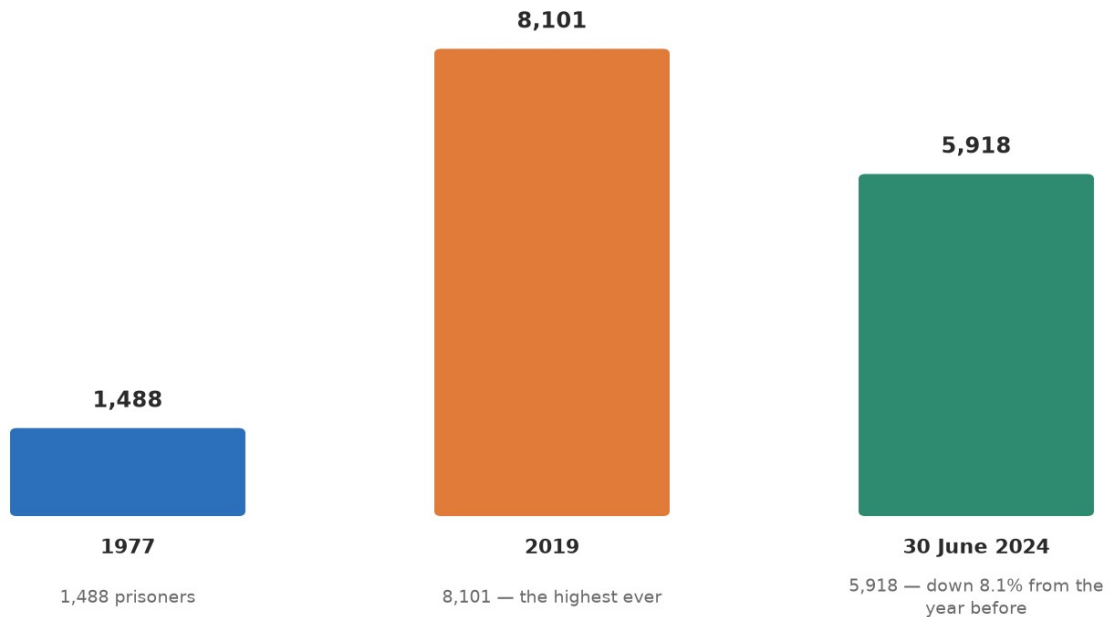
Part	Example
Issue	Children under 16 having accounts on social media platforms.
Institution	The federal parliament.
Response and focus	A new law; its focus is on the platforms, not on the children.

You will now make the same move with two real case studies, each one built from real, dated, checkable facts.

2. Case study 1 — imprisonment and Victoria's legal system

The issue. *Imprisonment* means being kept in a prison as a punishment. It is the most severe sentence a court in Victoria can give. How many people are in prison — and who is put there — is a contemporary issue: it is real, it changes, and people watch it and argue about it. Here are three real numbers for Victoria.

Victoria's prison population — three points in time



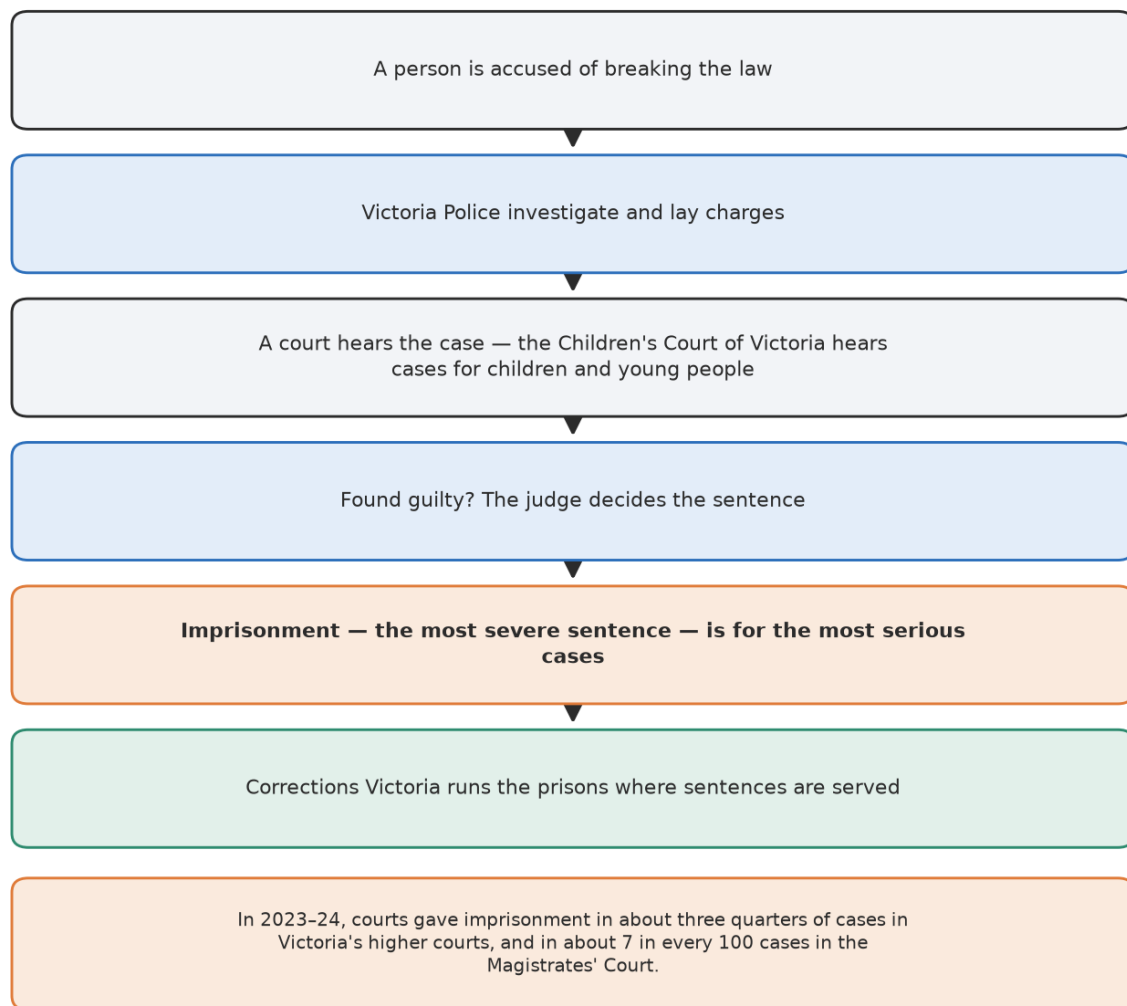
Source: Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria, using ABS Prisoners in Australia 2024. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A bar chart of Victoria's prison population at three points in time: 1,488 prisoners in 1977; 8,101 in 2019, the highest ever; and 5,918 at 30 June 2024, down 8.1% from the year before.

Figure 2. Victoria's prison population at three points in time. Sources: Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria, using ABS Prisoners in Australia 2024. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

The institution and system that connects to it. Imprisonment is the work of Victoria's legal system — the system you met in Section 2A. The chain below shows its processes, step by step.

How an imprisonment case moves through Victoria's legal system



Source: Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A chain diagram of six steps: a person is accused of breaking the law; Victoria Police investigate and lay charges; a court hears the case, with the Children's Court of Victoria for children and young people; if found guilty, the judge decides the sentence; imprisonment is for the most serious cases; Corrections Victoria runs the prisons.

Figure 3. How an imprisonment case moves through Victoria's legal system. Sources: Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria; Children's Court of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

In 2023–24, courts in Victoria gave imprisonment in about three quarters of cases in the higher courts, and in about 7 in every 100 cases in the Magistrates' Court. So imprisonment is not the usual ending of a case — it is saved for the most serious cases.

How judges decide. When a judge in Victoria decides a sentence, the law gives five purposes to think about. Three of them have formal names, so here they are in plain words the first time they are used:

- **Just punishment** — to punish the person in a way that fits the crime.
- **Deterrence** — to make the person, and other people, less likely to break the law.
- **Rehabilitation** — to help the person change, so they can live without crime.
- **Denunciation** — to say clearly that what the person did is wrong.
- **Community protection** — to keep the community safe.

The five purposes of sentencing in Victoria

Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic), section 5(1)

Purpose	In plain words
Just punishment	To punish the person in a way that fits the crime
Deterrence	To make the person — and other people — less likely to break the law
Rehabilitation	To help the person change, so they can live without crime
Denunciation	To say clearly that what the person did is wrong
Community protection	To keep the community safe

For children and young people, the law says rehabilitation is the main purpose courts must think about.

Source: Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

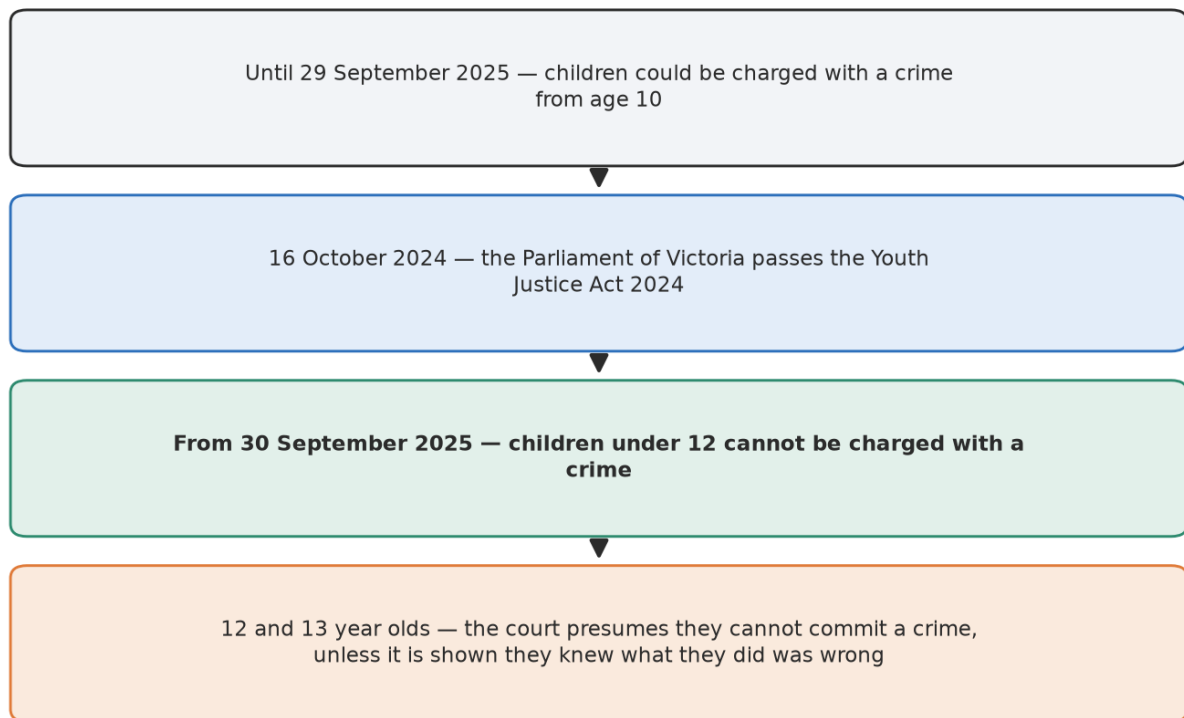
A table of the five purposes of sentencing in Victoria with a plain-words meaning for each: just punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, denunciation and community protection. The rehabilitation row is highlighted, because for children and young people it is the main purpose.

Figure 4. The five purposes of sentencing in Victoria. Source: Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic), section 5(1), via the Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

For children and young people, the law says **rehabilitation** is the main purpose courts must think about. That leads to the next part of the issue — children.

Children and the age of criminal responsibility. The Children’s Court of Victoria hears cases about criminal offending by children and young people. And a big, recent change belongs here: the age at which a child can be charged with a crime.

A recent change: the age of criminal responsibility in Victoria



Source: Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic); Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A timeline of the age of criminal responsibility in Victoria: until 29 September 2025 children could be charged from age 10; on 16 October 2024 the Parliament of Victoria passed the Youth Justice Act 2024; from 30 September 2025 children under 12 cannot be charged with a crime; and for 12 and 13 year olds the court presumes they cannot commit a crime unless it is shown they knew what they did was wrong.

Figure 5. A recent change: the age of criminal responsibility in Victoria. Sources: Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic); Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Under the same law, a court can also send a person under 21 to a youth detention centre — a place for young people, not an adult prison. Detention means being kept in a secure place by order of a court.

How many young people are in detention? Here are the real numbers for 2023–24.

Young people in detention, 2023–24

Place	Young people in detention	Rate per 10,000 young people
Victoria	278	4.2 — the lowest rate in Australia
Australia	4,353	16.3

Victoria's number fell 23.6% — from 364 the year before.

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare youth justice data, via the Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A table of young people in detention in 2023–24: Victoria had 278, at a rate of 4.2 per 10,000 young people, the lowest rate in Australia; Australia as a whole had 4,353, at a rate of 16.3 per 10,000.

Figure 6. Young people in detention, 2023–24. Sources: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare youth justice data, via the Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

The connection, all together.

Question	Answer for this case study
1. What is the issue?	Imprisonment — the most severe sentence in Victoria. The numbers change and people argue about them: 5,918 adults were in prison at 30 June 2024, and 278 young people were in detention in 2023–24.
2. Which institution or system connects to it?	Victoria’s legal system: Victoria Police, the courts (including the Children’s Court of Victoria), and Corrections Victoria.
3. What does it do about it?	Its processes decide everything about the issue: police lay charges, courts decide guilt, judges use the five purposes of sentencing to decide the sentence, and Corrections Victoria carries it out. The age rules decide who can enter the chain at all.

Two views — was raising the age the right move?

People who both care about children and about community safety disagree about raising the age from 10 to 12, and both sides have real points.

- **One view:** children under 12 are not ready for the court system; they do better with help from family, school and support services, and most grow out of crime as they get older.
- **Another view:** some children do real harm to others, and victims and the community matter too; courts can order help and rules that keep people safe, and the old age let courts step in early.

When you answer questions about this change, what matters is the strength of your reasons, not which side you pick.

Worked example 1 — with help

Question: Describe how imprisonment, as a contemporary issue, is connected to the way Victoria’s legal system works.

Method: use the three questions, then join them with linking words.

Working	Comment
1. The issue. Imprisonment is the most severe sentence in Victoria, and its numbers are a real, dated issue: 5,918 adults at 30 June 2024, 278 young people in detention in 2023–24.	The issue must be real and checkable — the numbers come from the Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria.
2. The system. Victoria’s legal system: Victoria Police, the courts, and Corrections Victoria.	Name the real institutions, not “the government” in general.
3. The processes. Each step of the chain touches imprisonment: police start the case, courts decide guilt, judges apply the five purposes of sentencing, and Corrections Victoria runs the prisons. The age rules decide who can be charged.	This is the “connected to” part — the issue sits inside the system’s everyday steps.
Finish with a full sentence: <i>Imprisonment is connected to the way the legal system works because every step of the chain — police, courts, sentencing and Corrections Victoria — is about deciding who goes to prison and for how long.</i>	

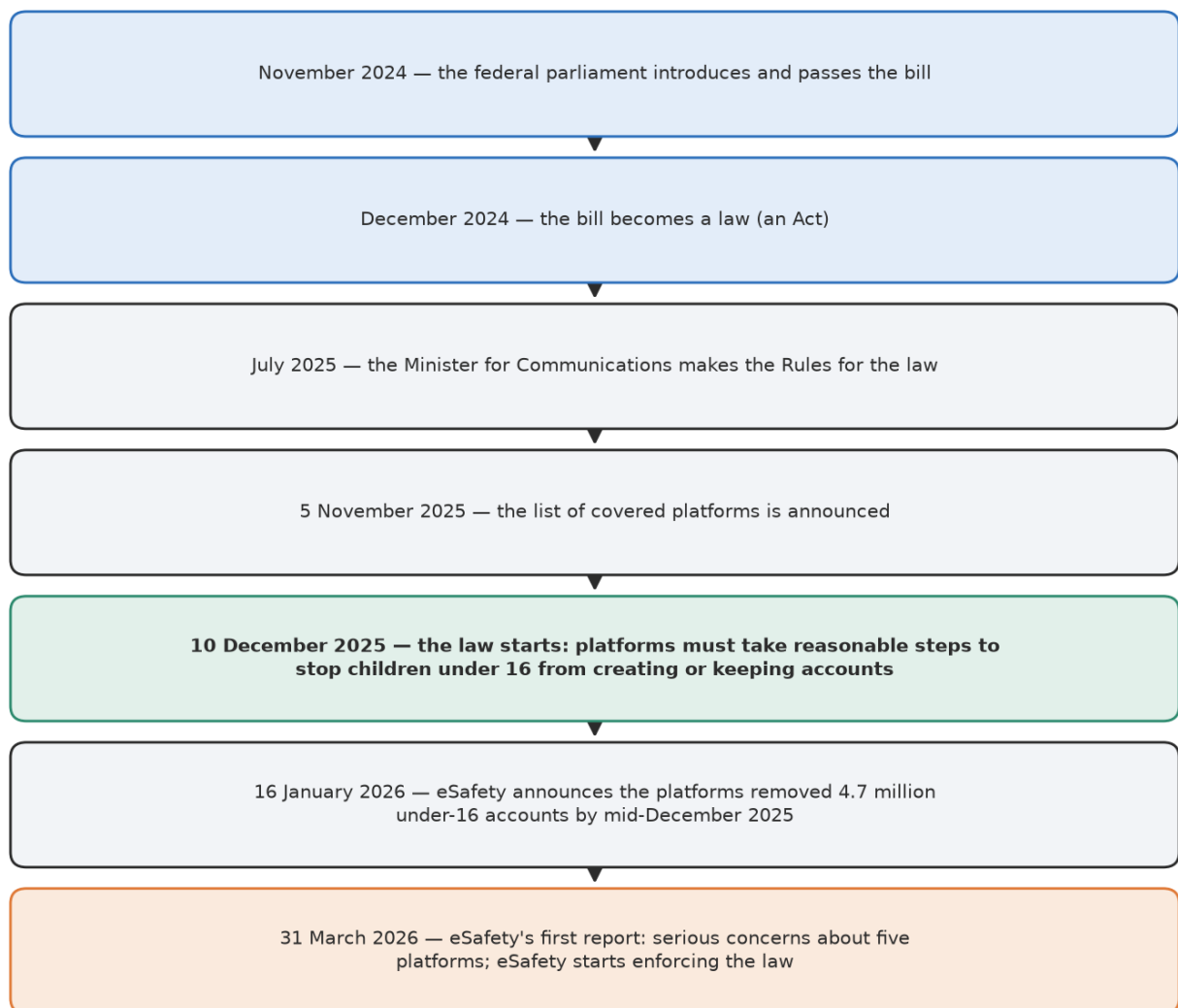
3. Case study 2 — Australia’s social media minimum age

The issue. Many families, teachers and health workers worry about children on social media: poor sleep, bullying, pressure to look a certain way, and designs that are hard to stop using. This is a contemporary issue — real, current, and argued about in the news.

The institution that connects to it. Social media crosses the whole country, so the response came from the **federal** level: the federal parliament in Canberra, which makes laws for all of Australia (Section 1C).

The response and its focus. The federal parliament passed the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* — the bill was introduced and passed in November 2024, and it became a law in December 2024. From **10 December 2025**, age-restricted social media platforms must take reasonable steps to stop Australians under 16 from creating or keeping an account. The focus of the law is on the **platforms**, not on children: no child under 16 and no parent is fined; a platform that breaks the law can be ordered by a court to pay a fine of up to about \$54.6 million. eSafety, the independent office that keeps Australians safe online, calls the law “not a ban, it’s a delay”.

How Australia's social media age law came together



Source: eSafety Commissioner (esafety.gov.au). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A timeline of seven steps: November 2024 the federal parliament introduces and passes the bill; December 2024 the bill becomes a law; July 2025 the Minister for Communications makes the Rules; 5 November 2025 the list of covered platforms is announced; 10 December 2025 the law starts; 16 January 2026 eSafety announces 4.7 million under-16 accounts removed by mid-December 2025; 31 March 2026 eSafety's first report names serious concerns about five platforms.

Figure 7. How Australia's social media age law came together. Sources: eSafety Commissioner (esafety.gov.au). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Who does what. Five real bodies each have a job under this law — this is a democratic system at work, with each part doing its own job.

Who does what under the social media age law

Who	Their job under the law
The federal parliament	Made the law (2024)
The Minister for Communications	Made the Rules and announced the list of covered platforms (2025)
The eSafety Commissioner	Checks that platforms follow the law; can take a platform to court
The courts	Can order a platform that breaks the law to pay a fine — up to about \$54.6 million
The platforms	Must take reasonable steps to stop children under 16 from creating or keeping accounts

Children and parents face no fines for under-16 accounts. eSafety says the law is "not a ban, it's a delay".

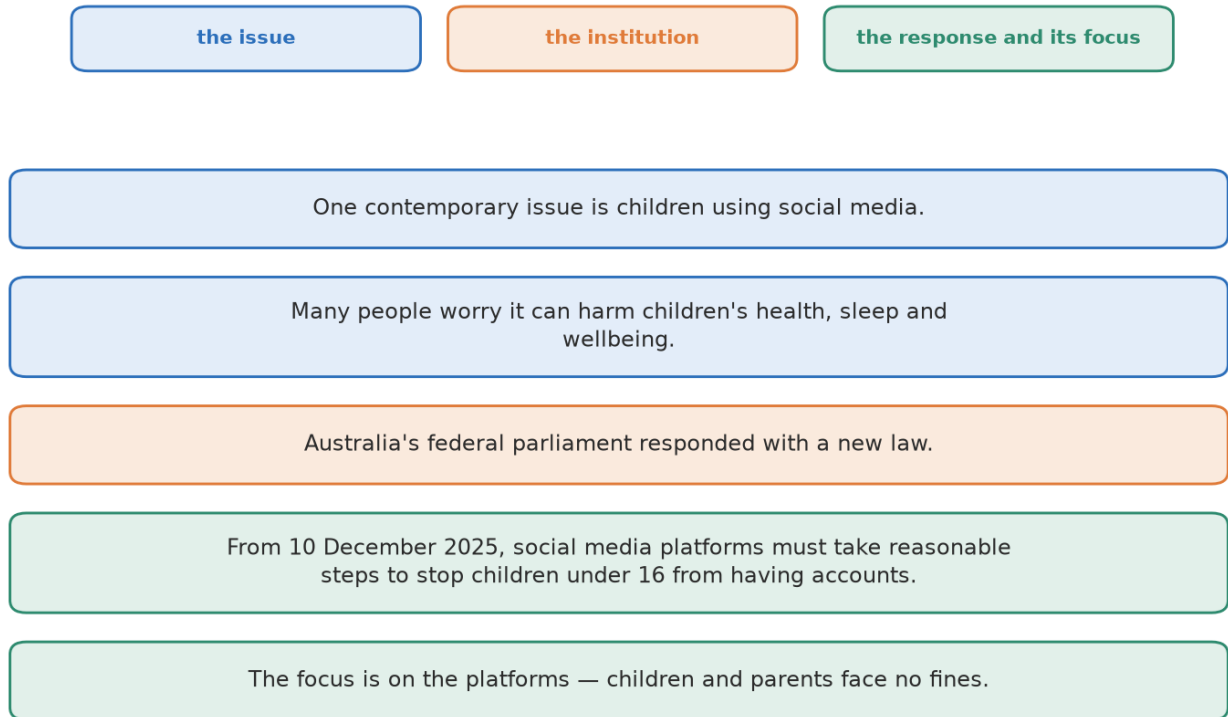
Source: eSafety Commissioner (esafety.gov.au). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A table of who does what under the social media age law: the federal parliament made the law; the Minister for Communications made the Rules and announced the platforms; the eSafety Commissioner checks that platforms follow the law; courts can fine a platform up to about \$54.6 million; platforms must take reasonable steps to stop children under 16 from creating or keeping accounts.

Figure 8. Who does what under the social media age law. Sources: eSafety Commissioner (esafety.gov.au). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A model explanation. Here is the three-question method written up as one short paragraph. Notice the colour code: blue for the issue, orange for the institution, green for the response and its focus.

A model explanation — colour-coded



A model paragraph, colour-coded by part: in blue, the issue is children using social media and the worry about health, sleep and wellbeing; in orange, Australia's federal parliament responded with a new law; in green, from 10 December 2025 platforms must take reasonable steps to stop children under 16 from having accounts, and the focus is on the platforms.

Figure 9. A model explanation, colour-coded.

The connection, all together.

Question	Answer for this case study
1. What is the issue?	Worry about children on social media — sleep, bullying, pressure, and designs that are hard to stop using.
2. Which institution connects to it?	Federal democratic institutions: the federal parliament, the Minister for Communications, the eSafety Commissioner, and the courts.
3. What is the response and its focus?	A national law, started 10 December 2025, with its focus on the platforms: they must take reasonable steps, and they — not children or parents — face the fines.

Two views — should there be a minimum age for social media?

People who both want children to be safe online disagree about this law, and both sides have real points.

- **One view:** the delay protects children's health and wellbeing while their brains are still growing; it helps families, because the whole country sets the rule at once; and it is a delay, not a ban — young people can return when they are older.

- **Another view:** some young people lose contact with friends and with support groups they rely on; some under-16s will find work-arounds and be less safe there; and the real problem is platform design, so fixing design and teaching good habits could work better.

When you answer questions about this law, what matters is the strength of your reasons, not which side you pick.

Worked example 2 — with help

Question: Explain the focus of the federal government’s response to the social media issue.

Method: name the issue, name the response, then say where the focus sits and why.

Working	Comment
1. The issue. Worry about children under 16 on social media.	Question 1 of the method.
2. The response. A federal law: platforms must take reasonable steps to stop under-16s from creating or keeping accounts, from 10 December 2025.	Question 3, first half — what was done.
3. The focus. The focus is on the platforms, not on children or parents: no child or parent is fined, and a platform that breaks the law can be fined up to about \$54.6 million.	Question 3, second half — where the response is aimed.
4. Why that focus. The law puts the hard work on the companies that run the platforms, and eSafety calls it “not a ban, it’s a delay”.	The focus explains what the government chose to aim at — and what it chose not to aim at.

Finish with a full sentence: *The focus of the federal government’s response is on the platforms, because the law makes platforms take reasonable steps and face the fines, while children and parents face no fines.*

Practice tasks

With help

S1. Fill the gaps using the word bank: *connection · contemporary issue · focus · institution · response*

- A _____ is a real problem or topic many people are talking about now or recently.
- An _____ is a group set up to do an important public job.
- A _____ is what someone does about an issue.
- The _____ of a response is the part of the issue it is aimed at.
- A _____ is how two things are joined, or how one affects the other.

S2. Match each institution (1–5) to its job under the law or legal system (A–E).

Institution	Job
1. Victoria Police	A. Runs the prisons where sentences are served
2. The courts (Victoria)	B. Made the social media age law (2024)
3. Corrections Victoria	C. Investigate and lay charges
4. The federal parliament	D. Checks that platforms follow the social media age law
5. The eSafety Commissioner	E. Decide guilt and choose the sentence

S3. Put these events from the social media age law in order, first to last. The dates are in Figure 7.

- eSafety publishes its first report, with serious concerns about five platforms.
- The federal parliament passes the bill.

- (c) The law starts: platforms must take reasonable steps about under-16 accounts.
- (d) The Minister for Communications makes the Rules for the law.

S4. Sort each fact into the correct column of the three-question method: *Issue · Institution · Response*.

- (a) 5,918 adults were in Victoria's prisons at 30 June 2024.
- (b) The Children's Court of Victoria hears cases about criminal offending by children.
- (c) From 10 December 2025, platforms must take reasonable steps to stop under-16s from keeping accounts.
- (d) Many families worry about poor sleep and bullying linked to social media.
- (e) A court can fine a platform that breaks the law up to about \$54.6 million.
- (f) Judges in Victoria must think about five purposes when they sentence, including rehabilitation.

S5. Complete this explanation using the word bank: *connects to · is relevant to · responds through*.

- (a) Imprisonment _____ the way the legal system works, because every step of the chain decides who goes to prison.
- (b) The social media issue _____ the federal parliament, which made the 2024 law.
- (c) The federal government _____ a law whose focus is on the platforms.

S6. True or false? If false, correct the statement.

- (a) Under the social media age law, a child under 16 who keeps an account can be fined.
- (b) From 30 September 2025, a child under 12 cannot be charged with a crime in Victoria.
- (c) Imprisonment is the usual ending of most Magistrates' Court cases in Victoria.
- (d) The eSafety Commissioner can take a platform that breaks the law to court.

On your own

U1. Use the three questions to describe how imprisonment is connected to the way Victoria's legal system works. Answer each question in one or two sentences, using real facts and dates from this section.

U2. Explain the focus of the federal government's response to the social media issue. Say what the response is, where its focus sits, and one reason the government aimed it there.

U3. Choose **one** case study from this section. Write a short paragraph (4–5 sentences) that explains the connection between the issue and the democratic institutions and systems, using at least two linking words from Figure 1 and at least two real dates or numbers.

U4. Some people say there should be a national minimum age for social media accounts. Others disagree. Give one strong reason for **each** view, then say which reason you found stronger and why. (You are showing you understand both sides, not just picking one.)

SOURCE 1

The eSafety Commissioner's first report on the social media age law — in plain words

The eSafety Commissioner has written her first report on how platforms are following the new social media age law.

The report says eSafety has serious concerns about five platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube.

Some children under 16 still have accounts on these platforms.

eSafety is now enforcing the law. If platforms do not follow it, courts can order them to pay very large fines.

From: eSafety Commissioner, first report on the social media minimum age restrictions, 31 March 2026 (esafety.gov.au). Retold in plain words.
Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A source card with the eSafety Commissioner's first report on the social media age law retold in plain words: eSafety has serious concerns about five platforms, some children under 16 still have accounts on them, and eSafety is now enforcing the law.

Source 1. Retold in plain words from the eSafety Commissioner's first report on the social media minimum age rules (esafety.gov.au), published 31 March 2026. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Your task. You are writing a short explanation for your class: “How does the social media issue connect to Australia’s democratic institutions?” The investigation itself is the task: apply the three-question method to Source 1.

Plan with the frame below, then write your explanation. If you want one more source, use (with your teacher) the eSafety news pages.

Plan your explanation

1. Find the issue — what does Source 1 say people are worried about?
2. Name the institution — which democratic institution or system is responding?
3. Describe the response — what did it do, and what is the focus?
4. Connect them — write two or three sentences linking the issue, the institution and the response
5. Check it — did you name all three parts and show how they connect?

If a part is missing, go back and fix it.

A five-step planning frame: find the issue; name the institution; describe the response and its focus; connect them in two or three sentences; check that all three parts are named and connected.

Figure 10. Your planning frame.

- (a) Find the issue — what does Source 1 say people are worried about?
 - (b) Name the institution — which democratic institution or system is responding?
 - (c) Describe the response — what did it do, and what is the focus?
 - (d) Connect them — write two or three sentences linking the issue, the institution and the response, using linking words from Figure 1.
 - (e) Check it — does your explanation name all three parts and show how they connect? If a part is missing, go back and fix it.
-

Answers

S1. (a) contemporary issue; (b) institution; (c) response; (d) focus; (e) connection. **S2.** 1 → C; 2 → E; 3 → A; 4 → B; 5 → D. **S3.** (b), (d), (c), (a). **S4.** Issue: (a), (d). Institution: (b), (f). Response: (c), (e). **S5.** (a) is relevant to; (b) connects to; (c) responds through. **S6.** (a) False — no child under 16 and no parent is fined; the platforms face the fines. (b) True. (c) False — imprisonment was given in about 7 in every 100 Magistrates' Court cases in 2023–24; it is saved for the most serious cases. (d) True.

U1. Sample answer: The issue is imprisonment, the most severe sentence in Victoria, with 5,918 adults in prison at 30 June 2024 and 278 young people in detention in 2023–24. The system is Victoria's legal system. Imprisonment is relevant to its processes because police lay charges, courts decide guilt, judges apply the five purposes of sentencing, and Corrections Victoria carries the sentence out.

U2. Sample answer: The response is the social media age law, started 10 December 2025. Its focus is on the platforms: they must take reasonable steps to stop under-16s from having accounts, and they face the fines, while children and parents face no fines. One reason for this focus is that the companies running the platforms are best placed to do the hard work.

U3. Accept any paragraph that names the issue, names the institution or system, describes the response, uses two linking words, and includes two real dates or numbers.

U4. Sample answer: One reason for a minimum age is that the delay protects children's health and wellbeing while they are still growing, and it helps families by setting one rule for the whole country. One reason against is that some young people lose contact with friends and support, and some will find work-arounds and be less safe there. (Give one clear, correct point for each view, plus the student's own choice of the stronger reason with a real "because".)

Source task. A complete answer names the issue (children under 16 still holding accounts, and the worries behind the law), names the institution (the federal system: parliament made the law, eSafety checks it, courts can fine), describes the response and its focus (the law puts the work and the fines on the platforms), and connects them in two or three sentences with linking words.

Answers explained

S1. These are the five words the method is built from, exactly as defined in “Before we start”.

S2. Victoria Police investigate and lay charges (C). Victorian courts decide guilt and choose the sentence (E). Corrections Victoria runs the prisons (A). The federal parliament made the 2024 social media law (B). The eSafety Commissioner checks that platforms follow it (D).

S3. The order is: parliament passes the bill (b, November 2024); the Minister for Communications makes the Rules (d, July 2025); the law starts (c, 10 December 2025); eSafety publishes its first report (a, 31 March 2026).

S4. Facts about what is happening and why people care are the **issue** — (a) and (d). Facts about the bodies whose job touches the issue are the **institution** — (b) and (f). Facts about what is done about the issue are the **response** — (c) and (e).

S5. (a) *is relevant to* — the issue sits inside the system’s processes. (b) *connects to* — the issue and the institution join. (c) *responds through* — the institution acts.

S6. (a) False: the focus of the law is on the platforms; children and parents face no fines. (b) True: from 30 September 2025, children under 12 cannot be charged. (c) False: imprisonment is not usual in the Magistrates’ Court — about 7 in every 100 cases in 2023–24. (d) True: the eSafety Commissioner can take a platform to court.

U1. Check for all three questions answered with real facts: the issue (imprisonment, with a real number or date), the system (Victoria’s legal system, naming at least two of Victoria Police, the courts, the Children’s Court of Victoria, Corrections Victoria), and the processes (how each step touches imprisonment).

U2. Check for three parts: the response (a law making platforms take reasonable steps, started 10 December 2025), the focus (on the platforms, not on children or parents), and one reason for that focus (for example, platforms are best placed to do the work, or eSafety’s “not a ban, it’s a delay”).

U3. Check for: the issue named; the institution or system named; the response described; two linking words from Figure 1; and two real dates or numbers (for example, 10 December 2025, 30 September 2025, 5,918, 278, 4.7 million, \$54.6 million).

U4. Both views are real ones held by people who care about children’s safety. Marks go to the reasoning: one strong point per side, then the student’s own choice with a real “because”. No side is the “right” side.

Source task. The explanation should read as two or three full sentences with the three parts joined by linking words: the issue (under-16 accounts and the worries behind the law) → the institution (the federal system: parliament, the eSafety Commissioner, the courts) → the response and its focus (the law puts the work and the fines on the platforms). Source 1 comes from the eSafety Commissioner’s first report, 31 March 2026.