

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 3 — Skills: investigating and evaluating

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Asking questions about today's issues

Curriculum code: VC2HC6S01 · VC2HC6S01.E01 · VC2HC6S01.E02 · Civics and Citizenship · Levels 5–6 · Skills strand

This section is about **writing questions**. People who study how Australia works - journalists, lawyers, councillors, researchers - all start the same way: with a question worth chasing. A strong question opens up an investigation. A weak one shuts it down. Here you will build strong ones, step by step.

Theory

Part 1 — Know your kind of issue

The content description names three kinds of issues: political, legal and civic. Before you write a question, say which kind your issue is - it tells you which words to use and where to look.

Three kinds of issues

The content description for this section names all three. One issue can fit in more than one box.

Political issue	What is it about? About how Australia is governed: elections, what parliaments decide, and government policy (a plan of action chosen by a government).	Example from Victoria The Victorian Government's mobile phone policy for every government school.
Legal issue	What is it about? About laws: what they say, why they are enforced, and what happens when someone breaks them.	Example from Victoria Victoria's single-use plastics ban, and how the Environment Protection Authority Victoria enforces it.
Civic issue	What is it about? About community life: how people in a place work together, take part, and sort out shared problems.	Example from Victoria A local council looking after parks and playgrounds, and the people who volunteer to keep them clean.

Tip: say which kind an issue is before you write questions about it - it helps you pick the right words.

Three kinds of issues: political, legal and civic, each with what it is about and an example from Victoria

One issue can sit in more than one box. Victoria's single-use plastics ban is a **legal** issue (it is a law with fines) and a **political** issue (the Victorian Government chose the policy).

Part 2 — Open beats closed

A closed question can be answered with yes, no, or one short fact. An open question needs facts, reasons and often more than one side of the story (a *perspective* - one person's way of seeing the same issue).

Closed and open questions

Closed questions check one fact. Open questions start an investigation.

Closed question

Can be answered with yes, no, or one short fact.

- Did Victoria ban some single-use plastics?
- In what month did the ban start?

Useful for checking facts - but they stop there.

Open question

Needs facts, reasons - and often more than one perspective.

- Why did the Victorian Parliament choose to ban these items?
- How has the ban changed what shops hand out?

These are the questions that drive an investigation.

Rewrite a closed question into an open one

Is the plastics ban a law?

How does the plastics ban work as a law - and who makes sure it is followed?

Do students like the phone policy?

What do students, parents and teachers each think about the phone policy, and why do they see it differently?

Closed questions are not wrong - they just do the smaller job. An investigation is built from open ones.

Closed and open questions side by side, with two examples of rewriting a closed question into an open one

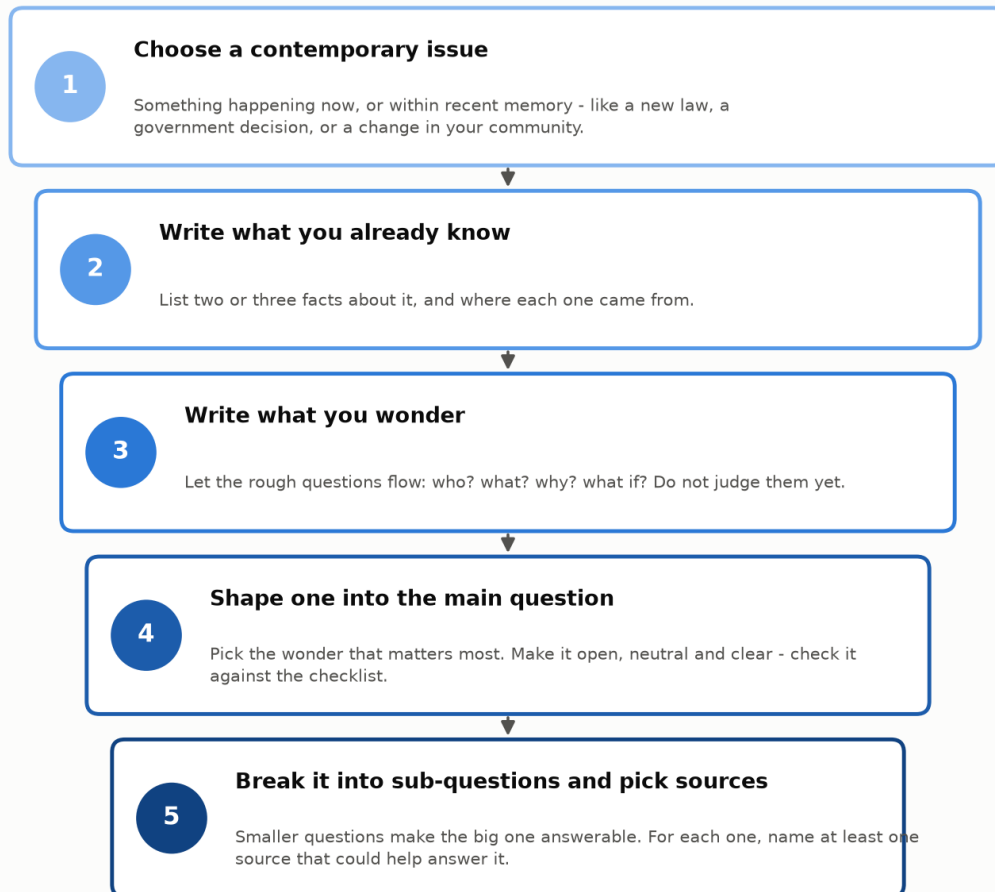
Closed questions are not wrong - they check your facts. But the question that leads your investigation should be open.

Part 3 — The question funnel

Good question writers narrow a big topic down step by step, like a funnel.

From an issue to a question set: five steps

Developing a question means shaping it on purpose - not just asking the first thing that comes to mind.



You can loop back: a sub-question may send you back to step 2 to learn more facts.

Five-step question funnel: pick an issue, list the facts, wonder, choose a main question, break it into sub-questions

A *sub-question* is a smaller question that breaks your main question into answerable parts. You investigate the parts, then put the answers together.

Part 4 — The five-point check

Before you investigate a main question, check it against all five points.

Is it a good question to investigate?

Check your main question against all five before you start.



OPEN

It cannot be answered with just yes or no. It starts with who, what, when, where, why or how - so the answer needs facts and reasons.

How has Victoria's plastics ban changed what shops hand out?



RESEARCHABLE

There is evidence you can find to help answer it: facts, numbers, laws, or what people say.

Who enforces the ban, and what can happen to a shop that breaks it?



NEUTRAL

It does not hide the answer inside the question. List what the question takes for granted, and check each part.

Not: Why are bans a bad idea? - that already says they are bad.



CLEAR

One idea at a time, and small enough to answer. Big questions get broken into sub-questions.

What are the rules for e-scooters on Victorian footpaths?



WORTH IT

The answer matters to real people, and reasonable people can see it in different ways.

Should students have a say in school rules? Whose job is it to decide?

If your question misses one of the five, fix the question - then check it again.

Checklist of the five features of a good question to investigate: open, researchable, neutral, clear, worth it

Watch out for a *loaded question* - a question that hides its answer inside itself, like “Why are bans a bad idea?” That question already assumes bans are bad. List what your question takes for granted, and check each part.

Part 5 — Which level of government decides?

For political and legal issues, ask which level of government is involved. It tells you which parliament or council your question is about, and which sources to search.

Which level of government decides?

Ask this before you investigate a political or legal issue - it tells you where to look.

Australian Government (federal)	Decides for the whole country Decided by: the Australian Parliament in Canberra Decides on: money, immigration and passports, defence, postal services, and federal elections (run by the Australian Electoral Commission)	A question at this level <i>Who runs the Australian Electoral Commission, and what is its job?</i>
Victorian state government	Decides for Victoria Decided by: the Parliament of Victoria in Melbourne Decides on: schools, roads and road rules, hospitals, police, the plastics ban	A question at this level <i>Why does the Victorian Government make rules for schools?</i>
Local councils	Decide for their local area Decided by: councillors elected by local residents Decides on: parks and playgrounds, local rubbish and recycling, local roads and footpaths	A question at this level <i>How does our council decide where to build a new playground?</i>

Some issues involve more than one level - for example, councils collect rubbish while the state makes waste laws.

Three levels of government: the Australian Government, the Victorian state government and local councils, with what each decides and a sample question at each level

Part 6 — Pick your sources

An investigation is stronger when it draws on more than one kind of source. Your questions tell you what to look for; each kind of source does a different job.

Different sources for different questions

Your questions tell you what to look for. Each kind of source is good for a different job.

Government websites

Official rules and policies - like vic.gov.au for the plastics ban or the school phone policy.

What does the rule actually say?

News reports

What is happening now, and what different people say about it.

What happened, and who noticed?

Laws and rules

The words of the law itself, from the parliament that made it.

What must people do - and what happens if they do not?

Statistics

Numbers that show change - like counts of items collected or fines given.

How much? How many? Did it change?

People - interviews and surveys

What people think and experience - a shop owner, a student, a councillor.

How does this affect real people?

Library and reference books

Background: how something works, like how a bill becomes a law.

How does this part of government work?

Pick at least two different kinds of source for your inquiry - and record where each fact came from.

Six kinds of sources: government websites, news reports, laws and rules, numbers, people you can interview or survey, and library and reference books

Worked examples

Example 1 — with help: questions about a government policy (a political issue)

The issue. In 2020, Victoria became the first Australian state to require every government school to keep phones switched off and put away in a set place all school day. The policy's aims are fewer distractions, less online bullying, and more talking and moving at lunch. Some students may keep a phone available for a health reason or for learning. (Source: vic.gov.au, 'Mobile phones in schools', checked 25 August 2026.)

The model below follows the funnel: facts → wonders → main question → sub-questions → sources.

Worked example 1: questions about a government policy

Issue: mobile phones in Victorian government schools (a political issue)

1 What is happening? (facts from sources)

The Victorian Government has a phone policy for every government school: phones brought to school must be switched off and put away in a set place during the school day. The aims are fewer distractions, less cyberbullying, and more talking and moving at lunch. Exceptions exist for some health needs and for learning. Victoria was the first state to do this.
(Source: vic.gov.au, 'Mobile phones in schools', 2026)

2 What do I wonder?

Who decided this, and how did they get the power to decide?

Do students get a say in rules that affect them?

Is it fair that there are exceptions for some students?



3 My main question (open, neutral, researchable)

What can Victoria's school phone policy teach us about how government decisions affect everyday life - and who should have a say in them?

4 Sub-questions

Which level of government makes rules for schools - and how are its members chosen?

What do students, parents and teachers each think, and why might they see it differently?

How could students have a say in school rules? Should they?

5 Sources that could help

the vic.gov.au phone policy page

an interview with our principal

a class survey of students and families

Check: every question here is open, neutral and researchable - and the loaded ones were fixed before investigating.

Worked example 1 model: from the facts of the Victorian school phone policy, through wonders, to a main question, three sub-questions and three sources

Why each step works:

- **Facts first.** Every fact came from a named source, so the questions sit on evidence, not rumour.
- **Wonders are allowed to be messy.** “Is it fair that there are exceptions?” is a fine wonder - but it is closed and a little loaded, so it does not become the main question.
- **The main question passes the five-point check.** It is open (needs reasons), researchable (the policy page, the principal and a class survey can all feed it), neutral (it does not say the policy is good or bad), clear, and worth it - real students live with this rule.
- **It connects to democracy (E01).** The sub-question “Which level of government makes rules for schools - and how are its members chosen?” leads straight to the Parliament of Victoria, and to who gets a say in decisions that affect them. That is what discussions about democracy are made of.

Example 2 — on your own: questions about why a law is enforced (a legal issue)

The issue. From 1 February 2023, businesses in Victoria may not sell or supply some single-use plastics: drinking straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers, cotton bud sticks, and foam-like plastic (polystyrene) food and drink containers. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria enforces the ban. A business that breaks it can be fined - up to

\$11,095.20 for a person or \$55,476 for a company - and serious cases can go to court. Straws stay available for people who need them for a disability or medical need. (Sources: EPA Victoria, 2023; vic.gov.au, checked 25 August 2026.)

This model is shown complete. Your job is to check it: run the main question through the five-point check, find the two fair perspectives, and spot the loaded question that was rewritten before investigating.

Worked example 2: questions about why a law is enforced

Issue: Victoria's single-use plastics ban (a legal issue)

1 The facts (from sources)

From 1 February 2023, businesses in Victoria may not sell or supply some single-use plastics: drinking straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers, cotton bud sticks, and expanded polystyrene (a light, foam-like plastic) food and drink containers. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria enforces the ban. A business that breaks it can be fined - up to 11,095.20 dollars for a person or 55,476 dollars for a company - and in serious cases the EPA can take it to court. Straws stay available for people who need them for a disability or medical need. (Sources: EPA Victoria, 2023; vic.gov.au, 2026)

2 Why do we enforce laws at all?

So the law works

A rule nobody follows changes nothing. Enforcement makes the law real.

So the rules are the same for everyone

Fairness: shops that follow the law are not undercut by shops that break it.

To protect people, animals and places

Here, the aim is less plastic harming wildlife and the environment.

3 My main question

Why is Victoria's single-use plastics ban enforced, and what would change for shops, people and the environment if it were not?

4 Two fair perspectives - and a question for each

Perspective 1

The ban protects the environment and keeps the rules the same for every shop. Enforcement is what makes it work.

Q: What evidence shows the ban is reducing plastic waste?

Perspective 2

Bans limit choice, and fines can hurt small shops. Teaching people and offering reusable options might work too.

Q: How has the ban affected small shops, and what help do they get?

5 Check before investigating

Both perspectives get the same fair test. Loaded questions like 'Why are fines unfair to shops?' were rewritten before investigating.

Sub-questions to try: Who enforces the ban, and how? What happens step by step if a shop keeps breaking it? Is the straw exception fair? Why?

Worked example 2 model: facts of the plastics ban, three reasons laws are enforced, a main question, two fair perspectives with a question each, and a check step

Your checks:

1. Does the main question pass all five points? Which point does "Why are fines unfair to shops?" fail, and why?
2. Why is this law enforced at all? Name the reasons the model gives, then add one of your own.
3. The ban treats straws in a different way for people with a disability or medical need. Write one fair question about that choice.

Practice questions

Practice with help

(Questions with help give you support steps; questions on your own you build yourself.)

Q1. Sort these issues into political, legal or civic. One of them fits two boxes - say which two, and why. (a) The Victorian single-use plastics ban (b) A federal election (c) Your council choosing where to build a new playground (d) Volunteers who clean up a local park each month (e) The Victorian school phone policy

Q2. These closed questions check facts. Rewrite each one as an open question that could lead an investigation. (a) Does the plastics ban apply to plates and cutlery? (b) Do students at Victorian government schools put their phones away during the day?

Q3. These questions are loaded - the answer is hidden inside. Rewrite each one so it is neutral. (a) Why is the plastics ban unfair to small shops? (b) Should the strict phone rule be scrapped?

Q4. Match each question to the level of government that decides it: Australian Government, Victorian state government, or local council. (a) Who makes the rules about passports? (b) Which parliament chose to ban these plastics? (c) Who decides where the new playground goes? (d) Who runs the elections for the national parliament?

Q5. Here is a main question: *How has Victoria's plastics ban changed what shops hand out?* Write three sub-questions that break it into answerable parts.

Q6. A student's main question is: *"Is the plastics ban a good thing?"* It fails two of the five checks. Name the two, and rewrite the question so it passes.

Practice on your own

Q7. Using the five-point check, write your own main question about the plastics ban, plus two sub-questions. For each sub-question, name one kind of source that could help.

Q8. Facts: (i) In Victoria, it is against the law for a driver to hold and use a mobile phone while the car is moving, and police can fine drivers who do. (ii) The fine applies even when nobody is hurt - breaking the rule itself is what brings the fine. Develop one main question about **why this law is enforced**, and one sub-question about what happens when people break it.

Q9. The school phone policy was a government decision that affects students' everyday lives. Write one open, neutral question about how this decision connects to democracy - for example, who had the power to decide, and who gets a say now.

Q10. Pick one issue from this list: e-scooters on Victorian footpaths; a ban on energy drink ads near schools; free lunch programs at some Victorian schools. Say which kind of issue it is (political, legal, civic - it may be more than one), and write a main question that passes the five-point check.

Source-based inquiry task

Use the planner to run your own small inquiry. Work from the two sources below, plus one source you find yourself.

Source A — vic.gov.au, 'Victoria's single-use plastic ban' (checked 25 August 2026). From 1 February 2023, Victorian businesses must not sell or supply single-use drinking straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers, cotton bud sticks, or foam-like plastic food and drink containers. The ban also covers versions of these items that are made to break down. EPA Victoria enforces the law and can fine businesses that break it.

Source B — class survey (original). A Year 6 class of 31 students surveyed their families about the school phone policy: 19 families said the rule helps their child focus at school; 7 said it makes it harder to contact their child during the day; 5 were not sure.

Your task:

1. Choose one issue (from Source A, Source B, or your own) and tick its kind on the planner.
2. Write two facts you already know, and where each came from.
3. Write a main question and check it against all five points.
4. Write three sub-questions. For each, list **two different kinds** of source.
5. List what your main question takes for granted, and check each part.

6. Say why the issue matters, and to whom.

My civics inquiry planner

My issue: _____

Kind of issue: ☐ political
☐ legal
☐ civic

Two facts I already know (and where each came from):

1. _____
2. _____

My main question (open, neutral, clear):

My sub-questions, and two different sources for each:

Sub-question	Source 1	Source 2
1.		
2.		
3.		

What does my main question take for granted? (List each part to check.)

Why does this issue matter - and to whom?

Blank fill-in inquiry planner with spaces for the issue, its kind, two known facts, a main question, three sub-questions with two sources each, assumptions, and why the issue matters

Answers

A1. (a) legal (and political - it is a law the government chose); (b) political; (c) civic (and political - the council is a level of government); (d) civic; (e) political (and legal, while it is enforced as a rule with exceptions). The two-box answers are (a) and (e); either earns full marks with a reason.

A2. (a) *Why did the Victorian Parliament choose to ban plates and cutlery?* (b) *What do students, parents and teachers each say about putting phones away, and why might they see it in different ways?* (Any open, neutral rewrite.)

A3. (a) *How has the plastics ban affected small shops?* (b) *What do people say for and against the phone rule?* A neutral question does not tell you the answer in advance.

A4. (a) Australian Government; (b) Victorian state government; (c) local council; (d) Australian Government (its elections are run by the Australian Electoral Commission).

A5. Example sub-questions: What items did shops hand out before the ban? What do they hand out now? How do shop owners feel about the change? What do the numbers show about plastic waste since 2023?

A6. It fails **open** (yes or no) and **clear/worth it** as a research question - “good” hides an opinion, so it is also not neutral as written. Rewrite: *What are the arguments for and against the plastics ban, and what evidence does each side use?*

A7–A10. Answers will vary. A passing answer has: a main question that starts with who/what/when/where/why/how, no hidden answer, one idea at a time, and named sources; Q8’s main question must be about why the law is enforced, not just what it says.

Inquiry task. Assessed against the six steps: issue + kind, two sourced facts, a main question passing the five checks, three sub-questions each with two different source kinds, what the question takes for granted listed and checked, and a “why it matters” that names who is affected.

Worked solutions

Q3 — how to un-load a question. Step 1: find the hidden answer. In (a), “unfair” tells you the ban is unfair before you start. In (b), “strict” and “scrapped” tell you the rule is bad and should go. Step 2: list what the question takes for granted - (a) takes for granted that shops are hurt; (b) takes for granted that the rule harms students. Step 3: rewrite so both sides get a fair test - *How has the plastics ban affected small shops?* and *What do people say for and against the phone rule?* Now the evidence decides, not the question.

Q6 — running the five-point check. “Is the plastics ban a good thing?” Open? No - it answers yes or no. Researchable? Only if “good” is defined - for whom: shops, the environment, shoppers? Neutral? Not quite - “a good thing” pushes for a yes or no instead of reasons. So fix two points at once: open it up and remove the verdict - *What are the arguments for and against the plastics ban, and what evidence does each side use?* Re-check: open (needs reasons), researchable (reports, the EPA page, interviews), neutral (both sides), clear, worth it. Pass.

Q8 — from facts to a why-enforced question. The facts say the law is enforced (police can fine drivers) and that the fine is for breaking the rule itself, not for causing harm. A strong main question ties the fines to their purpose: *Why is the handheld phone law enforced, and what would change on Victorian roads if it were not?* A sub-question about breaking it: *What happens, step by step, when a driver is caught holding a phone at the wheel?* Both stay inside E02: each asks why a real legal rule is enforced.

Inquiry task — a model planner entry. Issue: the plastics ban (legal + political). Facts: (1) the ban started 1 February 2023 (vic.gov.au); (2) 19 of 31 families in our survey said a similar rule helps students focus (Source B). Main question: *How has the plastics ban changed the choices shoppers in our community make?* Sub-questions with two source kinds each: (1) What must shops stop supplying? - the vic.gov.au page and the law itself; (2) What do local shop owners say? - interviews and a news report; (3) Has waste changed since 2023? - council numbers and an EPA report. Taken for granted: the question may take for granted that shoppers' choices changed - so the first sub-question tests that. Why it matters: shoppers, shop owners and the environment all live with the rule.

Sources for this section (all checked 25 August 2026):

- vic.gov.au, 'Victoria's single-use plastic ban' (page updated 8 May 2026)
- Environment Protection Authority Victoria, single-use plastics ban information (2023)
- vic.gov.au, 'Mobile phones in schools' (2026)
- Victorian Department of Education, 'Mobile phones in schools policy', made under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic) (policy last updated 12 April 2022)

Finding and organising information from sources

Chapter 3 · Skills: investigating and evaluating · Section 3B · Content description VC2HC6S02 · Draws on elaborations VC2HC6S02.E01, VC2HC6S02.E02, VC2HC6S02.E03, VC2HC6S02.E04

When people want to explain something that is happening in the world right now — a **contemporary issue** — they do not just guess. They find information, check it, put it in order, and then explain what it shows. That is what this section trains you to do. You will practise the three skills of a good investigator: **locate** (find information from different sources), **select** (choose the sources that are good and leave the weak ones out), and **organise** (put the information in order so it can be explained). The issue you will work with is a real one: crime recorded in Victoria, using real, dated numbers from the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria.

Before we start — what do these words mean here? Some big words in civics can be used in more than one way. So that everyone is answering the same question, here is the sense this book uses.

- **Source** — where information comes from: a person, a book, a website, a news report or an official report.
- **Data** — facts and numbers that have been collected, such as counts of crimes recorded by police.
- **Contemporary issue** — something people are talking about and dealing with right now, in our own community.
- **Jurisdiction** — the area a government is in charge of. In Australia there are three: your local area (local council), your state or territory, and the whole country (federal).
- **Alleged** — said to be true, but not yet proven in court. An **alleged offender** is a person who police believe has broken the law; a court has not found them guilty.
- **Offence** — an act that breaks the law, such as stealing or damaging property on purpose.
- **Volunteer** — a person who gives their time to help others, without being paid.

Other people may use these words in slightly different senses. In this section, every question can be answered using the meanings above.

Theory

1. Locate — *know your sources*

To explain a contemporary issue you need information from more than one **source**. Different kinds of sources are good for different jobs, so a good investigator knows what is out there. The table below lists six kinds of sources you can use, with a real Australian example of each.

Types of sources you can use

Different sources are good for different jobs

Type of source	Example	What it is good for
Government agencies	Crime Statistics Agency Victoria	Official numbers and facts
Parliaments and courts	Parliament of Victoria	How laws are made and work
News media	TV, newspaper and online news	Reports about recent events
Library books	Books in your school library	Background information
Community groups	A surf life-saving club	What people do together
People	An interview with a local person	First-hand stories and views

All of these examples are real Victorian sources you can find online or in a library.

A table of six types of sources students can use - government agencies (example: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria), parliaments and courts (Parliament of Victoria), news media (TV, newspaper and online news), library books, community groups (a surf life-saving club) and people (an interview with a local person) - with a note on what each type is good for

Locating means more than finding one source. If two or more different sources give you the same fact, you can feel more sure of it. That is why the table gives six kinds, not one.

2. Select — check a source before you use it

Not every source is a good one. A post online might be wrong, out of date, or only telling half the story. **Selecting** means checking each source and choosing the ones you can trust. Ask the four questions in the checklist below.

Is this a good source? Ask four questions



Who made it?

A person or group who knows about the topic, like a government agency



Can they be trusted?

They give evidence for what they say and do not leave big parts out



When was it made?

Newer is better for a current issue - check the date



Do other sources agree?

If two or more good sources say the same thing, it is more likely true

A checklist of four questions to ask before trusting a source: Who made it? (a person or group who knows about the topic, like a government agency); Can they be trusted? (they give evidence for what they say and do not leave big parts out); When was it made? (newer is better for a current issue - check the date); Do other sources agree? (if two or more good sources say the same thing, it is more likely true)

Try the checklist on a real example. The **Crime Statistics Agency Victoria (CSA)** is a government agency whose job is to count and publish the crimes recorded by Victoria Police. Who made it? An agency built for the job. When was it made? Its key figures are published with a date, so you can check they are current. Do other sources agree? News reports use the same numbers. It passes all four questions — a strong source for crime data.

3. Organise — put the information in order

Once you have located and selected your information, **organise** it so the story is easy to see. There are four common ways, and the best one depends on what you have.

Four ways to organise information

1. A table

Use when you have numbers or facts to compare

2. A chart



Use when you want to show amounts

3. A timeline



Use when you want to show the order of events

4. Sort into groups



Use when things belong in different types

Four ways to organise information, each with a small sketch and a note on when to use it: 1. A table (use when you have numbers or facts to compare), 2. A chart (use when you want to show amounts), 3. A timeline (use when you want to show the order of events), 4. Sort into groups (use when things belong in different types)

The rest of this section uses all four ways on one real contemporary issue.

4. The issue: crime recorded in Victoria

Here is our contemporary issue. How much crime is recorded in Victoria, and what is happening to it? This matters for **law enforcement** — the work police and courts do to keep the law (you will meet this again in section 2A). The best source for the numbers is the CSA, which passed our four-check test in part 2. The table below is drawn from the CSA's key figures for the year ending 31 March 2026.

Crime recorded in Victoria - key figures

Recorded by Victoria Police, counted by the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria

What is counted	Year to 31 March 2025	Year to 31 March 2026	Change
Criminal incidents recorded by Victoria Police	473,518	468,711	down 1.0%
Offences recorded by Victoria Police	626,950	625,426	down 0.2%
Victim reports from people	275,670	268,144	down 2.7%
Family incidents	106,236	102,674	down 3.4%

Each row counts a different thing - that is why the numbers are different.

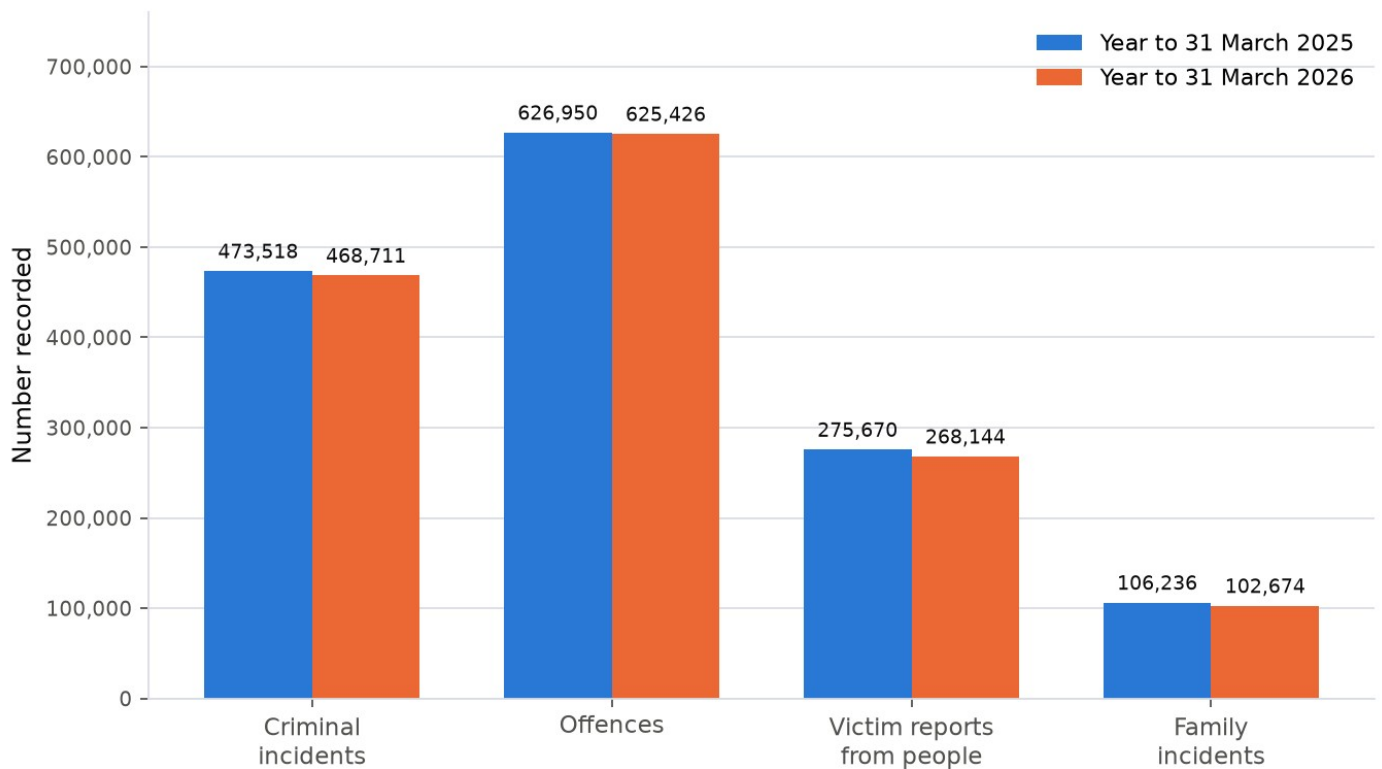
Source: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Key Figures: Year ending March 2026 (published 18 June 2026; retrieved 26 August 2026).

A data table of crime recorded in Victoria with four rows - criminal incidents recorded by Victoria Police (473,518 then 468,711, down 1.0%), offences recorded by Victoria Police (626,950 then 625,426, down 0.2%), victim reports from people (275,670 then 268,144, down 2.7%), and family incidents (106,236 then 102,674, down 3.4%) - for the years to 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026, with the source line Crime Statistics Agency Victoria

Read the table slowly. Each row counts a **different thing**. *Criminal incidents* counts events police recorded. *Offences* counts each offence, and one incident can include more than one offence. *Victim reports* counts reports from people who say they were harmed. *Family incidents* counts incidents that involve family violence. That is why the numbers differ from row to row — they are not four guesses at one number.

The same data can also be organised as a chart. A chart makes the comparison between the two years easy to see at a glance.

Crime recorded in Victoria, two years compared



Source: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Key Figures: Year ending March 2026 (published 18 June 2026; retrieved 26 August 2026).

A grouped bar chart comparing four measures of crime recorded in Victoria across the years to 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026 - criminal incidents, offences, victim reports from people, and family incidents - with a legend, direct value labels on every bar, and the source line Crime Statistics Agency Victoria

Now here is something a careful investigator notices. The same CSA release holds two facts that sound like they disagree.

Two claims - both from the same release

Claim 1	Claim 2
"Crime is down" Recorded offences fell 0.2% to 625,426	"Offending is up" Alleged offender incidents rose 8.6% to 195,343

Can they both be true?

Yes. They count different things: offences count each crime, while alleged offender incidents count people reported to police. Always check what a number counts before you use it.

Source: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Key Figures: Year ending March 2026 (published 18 June 2026; retrieved 26 August 2026).

Two claim cards drawn from the same CSA release - Claim 1 "Crime is down": recorded offences went down 0.2% to 625,426; Claim 2 "Offending is up": alleged offender incidents rose 8.6% to 195,343 - with a resolution band asking "Can they both be true? Yes", because offences count each crime while alleged offender incidents count people reported to police, plus the source line Crime Statistics Agency Victoria

Think about it Two people read the same release. One says "crime is down" and the other says "offending is up". Each is using a real number from the same source, and each can point to their row. No one is making a number up. The disagreement is not about honesty — it is about **which measure** each person chose. Before you agree with either person, ask: what does your number count? Talk with a partner about which claim you would lead with, and why.

The lesson for your own work: always check **what a number counts** before you use it, and say which measure you mean when you explain.

5. Organise by jurisdiction — who makes the laws about it?

Explaining an issue also means knowing **who can do something about it**. Laws and services in Australia are split between three levels of government, and each level has its own **jurisdiction** (you met this idea in section 1C). Sorting the areas of lawmaking into the three levels is a second way of organising information — this time into groups.

Who makes the laws and decisions?

Each level of government looks after different areas

Local council for your town or suburb	Victorian Government for the whole state	Australian Government for the whole country
Collecting rubbish	Police	Defence
Local parks and pools	Public schools	Money and banking
Local roads and footpaths	Hospitals	Who can move to Australia
Registering pets	Trains, trams and buses	Postal services

Three columns showing which level of government makes the laws and decisions about which areas: Local council (for your town or suburb) looks after collecting rubbish, local parks and pools, local roads and footpaths, and registering pets; the Victorian Government (for the whole state) looks after police, public schools, hospitals, and trains, trams and buses; the Australian Government (for the whole country) looks after defence, money and banking, who can move to Australia, and postal services

The sorting question to ask is simple: *is this about the local area, the whole state, or the whole country?* Police and courts — the heart of law enforcement — are a **state** job in Victoria, while defence and who can move to Australia are **federal**, and rubbish, parks and footpaths are **local**.

6. Explain — connect the issue to democratic values

Organised information lets you **explain** the issue, and one powerful way to explain is to connect the issue to the democratic values you met in section 1B. The cards below do that for our issue: crime in the community.

Connecting values to an issue

The issue: crime in our community. Which democratic values does it connect to?

Rule of law

Everyone must obey the law, and people who break it are dealt with by police and courts.

Fairness

People who break the law should be dealt with in a fair way, and victims should be helped.

Equality

The police and the courts must treat every person the same way.

Participation

Citizens can tell police and the government what worries them, and vote for the people who make the laws.

Four cards connecting democratic values to the issue of crime in the community: Rule of law (everyone must obey the law, and people who break it are dealt with by police and courts), Fairness (people who break the law should be dealt with in a fair way, and victims should be helped), Equality (the police and the courts must treat every person the same way), and Participation (citizens can tell police and the government what worries them, and vote for the people who make the laws)

Notice the shape of each card: **name the value, then say how it connects to the issue.** That two-part shape is what “explaining the democratic values relevant to a contemporary issue” looks like in your own writing.

7. Summarise — citizens working together on a civic goal

Sources do not only give numbers and laws. They also show **citizens working together** to reach a **civic goal** — something a community wants done (you will meet this again in section 2E). One strong Victorian example is the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES), whose volunteers help communities through storms and floods. The frame below summarises the story under four questions: who, what, how, why.

Citizens working together on a civic goal

A model summary you can copy for other civic goals

Who worked together?

More than 5,000 volunteers in the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES).

What was the civic goal?

To help Victorians through storms, floods and other emergencies.

How did they work together?

As trained teams on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In 2023-24 they responded to more than 31,000 emergency incidents and gave more than 308,000 hours of their time.

Why does it matter?

Communities get help fast when they need it. Over 93% of the people in VICSES are volunteers, so they are not paid for their time.

Source: Victoria State Emergency Service, About us page (ses.vic.gov.au, retrieved 26 August 2026).

A model summary frame of citizens working together on a civic goal, in four cards: Who worked together? (more than 5,000 volunteers in the Victoria State Emergency Service, VICSES); What was the civic goal? (to help Victorians through storms, floods and other emergencies); How did they work together? (as trained teams on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; in 2023-24 they responded to more than 31,000 emergency incidents and gave more than 308,000 hours of their time); Why does it matter? (communities get help fast when they need it; over 93% of the people in VICSES are volunteers who give their time without pay), with the source line Victoria State Emergency Service

Source: Victoria State Emergency Service, About us page (ses.vic.gov.au, retrieved 26 August 2026).

The same four-question frame — who, what, how, why — works for summarising any group of citizens working toward a civic goal. You will use it yourself in the practice questions and the source inquiry.

Worked examples

Example 1 — worked step by step

Use the CSA key figures table in part 4 of the Theory. Explain, in one or two sentences, what happened to offences recorded by Victoria Police between the year to 31 March 2025 and the year to 31 March 2026.

Step	Working	Comment
1. Locate the right row and columns	Row: “Offences recorded by Victoria Police”. Columns: year to 31 March 2025 (626,950) and year to 31 March 2026 (625,426).	Find the data before you say anything about it.
2. Compare the two numbers	$626,950 - 625,426 = 1,524$. The number went down by 1,524, which the table gives as down 0.2%.	Say what changed, and check the change column agrees.

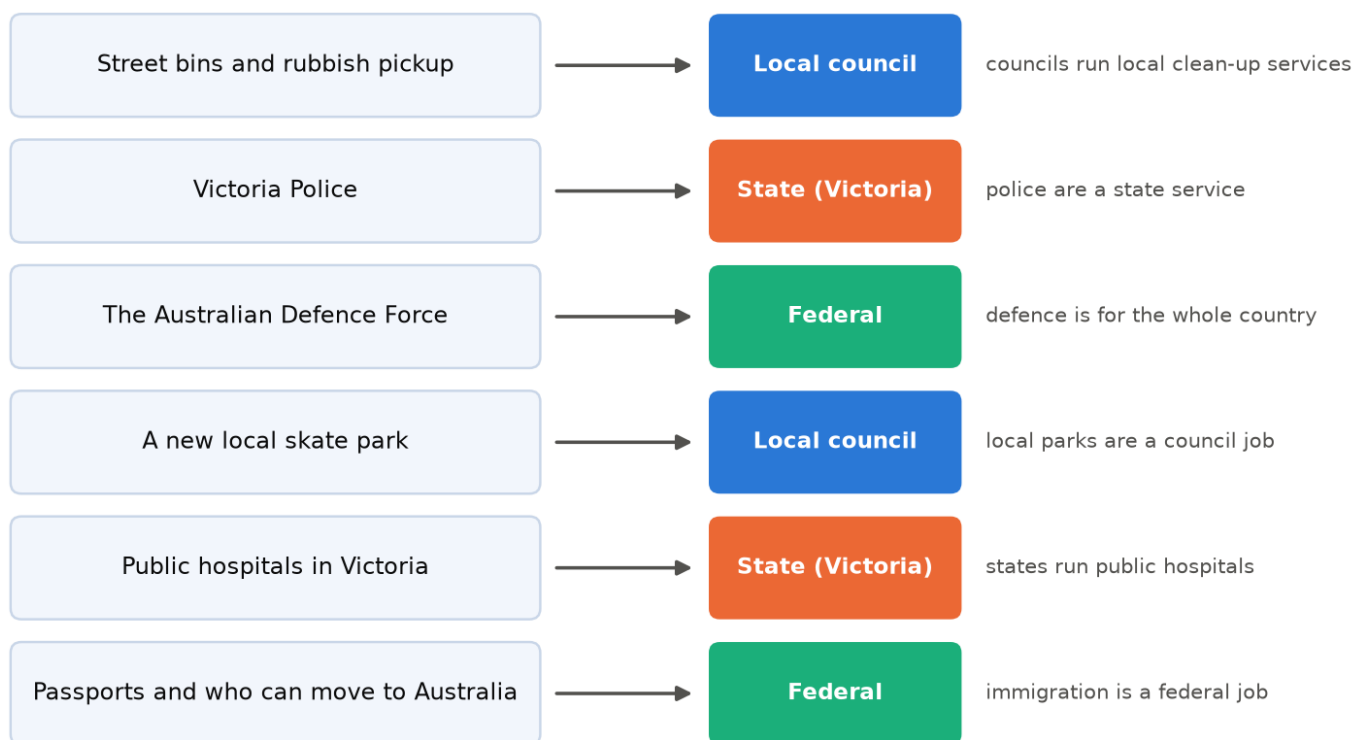
Step	Working	Comment
3. Check what the number counts	This row counts offences , not incidents, victims or alleged offenders.	Name the measure so your claim cannot be misread.
4. Write the explanation with a source	The number of offences recorded by Victoria Police went down slightly, from 626,950 to 625,426 (down 0.2%), between the two years.	Finish with a full sentence and say where the data came from.

Source: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Key Figures: Year ending March 2026 (published 18 June 2026; retrieved 26 August 2026).

Example 2 — worked step by step

Sort three areas of lawmaking by jurisdiction — local, state or federal — and give a reason for each. The diagram below shows six sorted areas; the table after it works through three of them.

Sorting the areas - a worked example



Ask: *is this about the local area, the whole state, or the whole country?*

A worked sorting diagram matching six areas of lawmaking to a level of government with a reason each: street bins and rubbish pickup to local council (councils run local clean-up services); Victoria Police to state, Victoria (police are a state service); the Australian Defence Force to federal (defence is for the whole country); a new local skate park to local council (local parks are a council job); public hospitals in Victoria to state (states run public hospitals); passports and who can move to Australia to federal (immigration is a federal job), with the sorting question “is this about the local area, the whole state, or the whole country?”

Step	Working	Comment
1. Ask the sorting question	Is this about the local area, the whole state, or the whole country?	The same question every time keeps the sorting honest.
2. Sort “a new local skate park”	Local. A park in one suburb is a	Match the area to the level whose

Step	Working	Comment
	local-area matter, and councils look after local parks.	jurisdiction it sits in.
3. Sort “public hospitals in Victoria”	State. Hospitals serve the whole state, and states run public hospitals.	State services match state jurisdiction.
4. Sort “passports and who can move to Australia”	Federal. Who may enter the country is a whole-country matter, so it is federal.	Some areas can only be run at national level.

Practice questions

Guided questions

Q1. Name two different types of source from the table in part 1 that you could use to find out about crime in Victoria, and say what each one is good for.

Q2. A post online says “crime in Victoria is out of control”, with no name, no date and no numbers. Use two of the four check questions from part 2 to say why this source is weak.

Q3. Match each job to the best way of organising (table, chart, timeline, or sort into groups).

Job	Best way to organise
(a) Show the order of events in a flood rescue	...
(b) Compare four crime numbers across two years	...
(c) Put lawmaking areas under local, state and federal	...
(d) Show and compare the amounts of four measures	...

Q4. Look at the change column of the CSA table in part 4. (a) Which measure went down the most, in per cent? (b) Which went down the least? (c) Does the table say family incidents went up or down?

Q5. Sort each area into local, state (Victoria) or federal jurisdiction, and give one reason each: (a) collecting the rubbish; (b) Victoria Police; (c) the Australian Defence Force.

Q6. Choose one value from the cards in part 6 and explain, in two sentences, how it connects to the issue of crime in the community. Use the shape: name the value, then connect it to the issue.

Independent questions

Answer each question in one or two full sentences.

Q7. Using the CSA table in part 4, work out the change in victim reports from people between the two years, and write one sentence that reports it with the source named.

Q8. “Crime is down” and “offending is up” both come from the same CSA release. Explain how both claims can be true at the same time.

Q9. Surf life-saving clubs are community groups whose members patrol beaches and rescue swimmers. Summarise their work as a civic goal using the four-question frame from part 7: who, what, how, why.

Q10. A classmate says one news article is enough to explain a contemporary issue. Use the ideas of this section to say why that is not enough, and name one thing you would do to strengthen their explanation.

Source inquiry

Run your own short investigation into a contemporary issue you care about — for example, crime and community safety in your area, or how your community copes with storms and floods. Use the planner below, and do all six steps. Your sources must be real: the CSA and VICSES websites, your local council website, your school library, trusted news, or an interview with a person who knows.

Your investigation planner

Six steps from a question to an explanation

1	My issue and my question What current issue will I look into? Write one clear question. _____
2	My sources Where will I look? List at least three different sources. _____
3	My source check For each source, ask the four check questions. _____
4	How I will organise it Pick the best way to sort the information: table, chart, timeline or groups. _____
5	My explanation What does my information show? Answer your question. _____
6	Double-check Do my sources agree? Have I said where each fact came from? _____

A six-step investigation planner: 1 My issue and my question (what current issue will I look into? write one clear question); 2 My sources (where will I look? list at least three different sources); 3 My source check (for each source, ask the four check questions); 4 How I will organise it (pick the best way to sort the information: table, chart, timeline or groups); 5 My explanation (what does my information show? answer your question); 6 Double-check (do my sources agree? have I said where each fact came from?)

Hand in one half-page explanation that:

- states your question;
- lists at least **three different sources**, each with its check answers and where you got it;
- shows your information organised in one of the four ways from part 3;

- ends with two or three sentences that answer your question, and name one democratic value or civic goal your issue connects to.

SQ1. Which of your three sources was the strongest, and which check question made the difference?

SQ2. Did your sources agree with each other? If two did not, what did you do about it?

SQ3. Which way of organising did you choose, and why was it the right one for your information?

Answers

Q1. Any two with a matching job, for example: government agencies (Crime Statistics Agency Victoria) — official numbers and facts; news media — reports about recent events; people — first-hand stories and views.

Q2. Any two checks, for example: *Who made it?* — no name is given, so we cannot tell if the writer knows the topic. *When was it made?* — no date, so we cannot tell if it is current. *Can they be trusted?* — no evidence or numbers are given.

Q3. (a) timeline. (b) table (or chart). (c) sort into groups. (d) chart (or table).

Q4. (a) Family incidents, down 3.4%. (b) Offences, down 0.2%. (c) Down (from 106,236 to 102,674).

Q5. (a) Local — councils run rubbish collection in the local area. (b) State — police are a state service for the whole of Victoria. (c) Federal — defence is for the whole country.

Q6. Sample answer: **Equality** connects to the issue because the police and the courts must treat every person the same way, whoever they are. That is what makes law enforcement something the whole community can trust.

Q7. $275,670 - 268,144 = 7,526$. Sample sentence: Victim reports from people went down by 7,526 (down 2.7%) from the year to 31 March 2025 to the year to 31 March 2026 (Crime Statistics Agency Victoria).

Q8. They count different things. “Crime is down” uses offences, which count each crime, and that number went down 0.2%. “Offending is up” uses alleged offender incidents, which count people reported to police, and that number rose 8.6%. Two different measures can move in different directions in the same year.

Q9. Sample answer: **Who** — volunteer members of surf life-saving clubs. **What** — the civic goal of keeping people at the beach safe. **How** — by training together and patrolling beaches to rescue swimmers in trouble. **Why** — because communities are safer when people give their time to look after each other.

Q10. Sample answer: One article is one source, and a single source can be wrong, out of date or one-sided. To strengthen it, check the facts against at least one more good source — for example the CSA’s own published figures — and say where each fact came from.

SQ1. Sample answer: The CSA website was strongest; the “who made it?” check made the difference, because counting crime is the agency’s actual job.

SQ2. Sample answer: Where two sources disagreed, I checked what each one was counting and the dates; the newer official numbers were the ones I used, and I said so.

SQ3. Sample answer: I used a table, because I had numbers from two years to compare, and a table keeps each measure in its own row.

Inside democratic institutions: their values and features

Chapter 3 · Skills: investigating and evaluating · Section 3C · Content description VC2HC6S03 · Draws on elaborations VC2HC6S03.E01, VC2HC6S03.E02

In Chapters 1 and 2 you learned what Australia's democracy is made of: its values, its institutions, its three levels of government, how laws are made and enforced, and what citizenship means. This section is about **using** that knowledge. The skill is *explaining* — showing **how** a real institution or system shows a key value or feature of democracy. You will practise the skill on two case studies:

- the way the **Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities** protects human rights when Victoria's laws are made;
- how the process of **elections** shows three principles at work: participation, representation, and free and fair elections.

Before we start — what do these words mean here? Some of the words in this section can be used in more than one way, and the Victorian Curriculum does not give them one fixed meaning. So that everyone is answering the same question, this section uses the meanings below. Other people may use these words in slightly different senses, and every question in this section can be answered using the meanings here.

- **Free and fair election** — an election in which everyone who is allowed to vote can enrol and vote; each person has one vote and every vote counts the same; voting is secret; candidates are free to put themselves forward and to campaign; and the votes are counted honestly by officials who are not part of the government.
 - **Demonstrate** — to show something clearly, so it can be seen.
 - **Uphold** — to protect something and make sure it is respected.
 - **Representation** — elected members speaking and making decisions for the people who elected them.
 - **Participation** — taking part. In a democracy, the main way people participate is by voting, but there are many other ways too.
 - **Independent** — not controlled by the government of the day or by any political party.
-

Theory

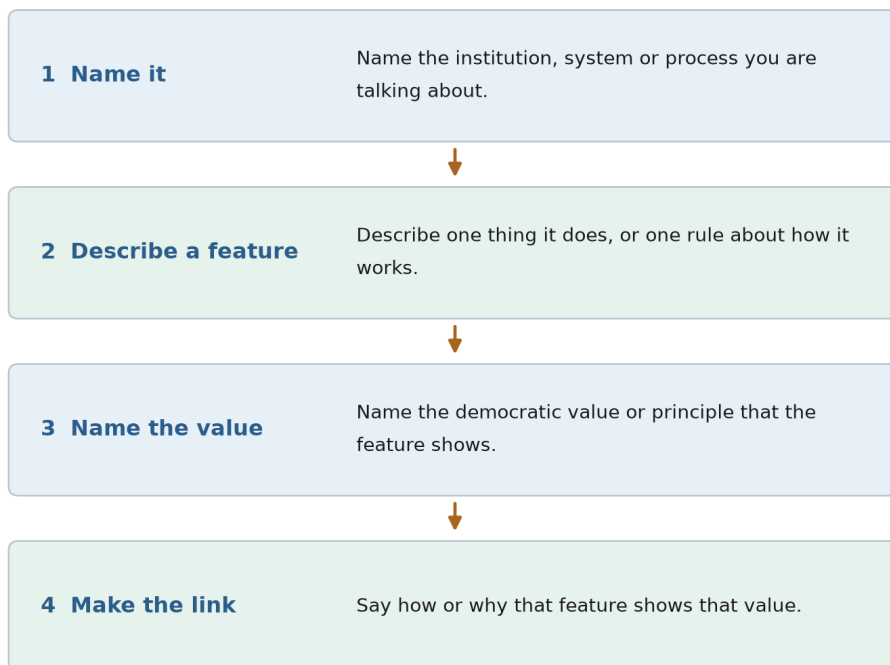
1. The skill: explaining values and features

To explain how an institution or system shows a democratic value, make four moves, in order:

1. **Name** the institution, system or process.
2. **Describe** one of its features — something it does, or a rule about how it works.
3. **Name** the value or principle that the feature demonstrates.
4. **Link** them — say *how* or *why* that feature shows that value.

How to explain a value or feature

Four moves, in order



Example: The VEC runs the count (moves 1 and 2). This shows a free and fair election (move 3), because the government does not count its own votes (move 4).

A four-step ladder showing how to explain a democratic value or feature: name the institution, describe one of its features, name the value it shows, then link the two by saying how or why

You will use these four moves in both case studies below, and in the worked examples.

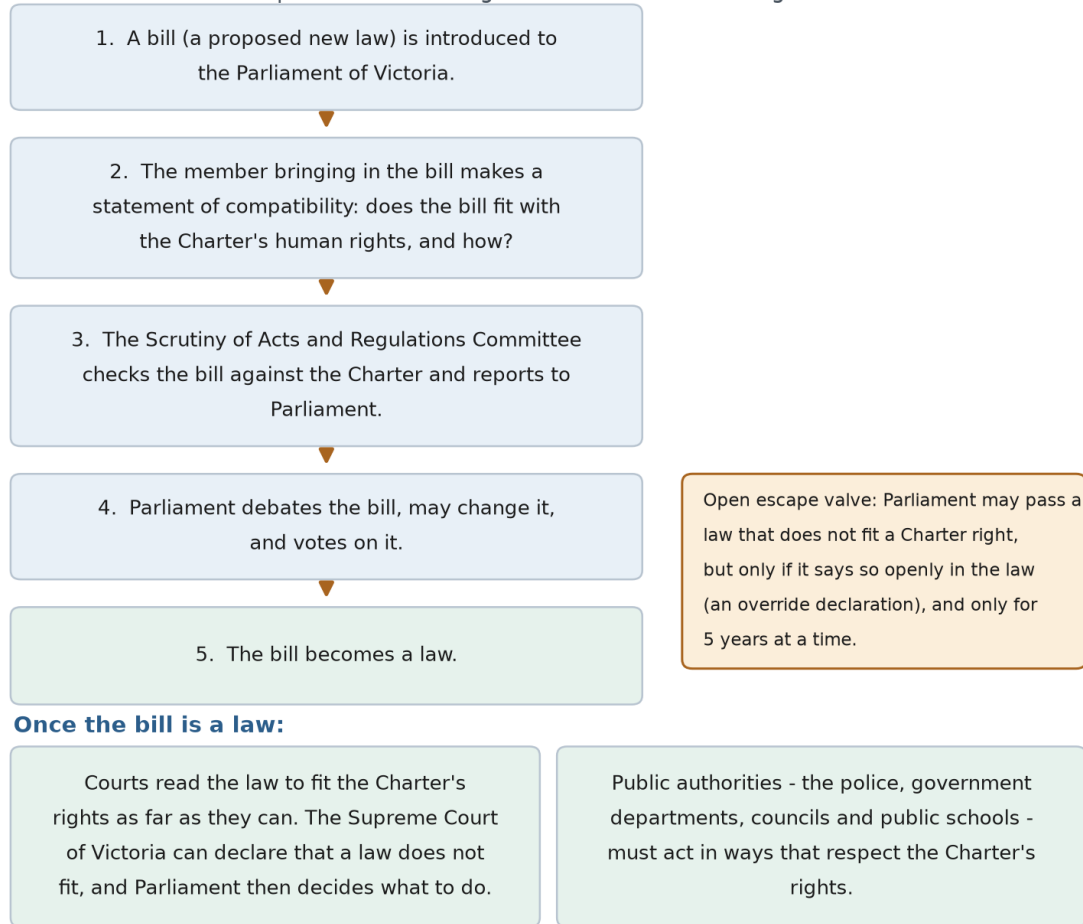
2. Case study A — how the Charter upholds human rights in lawmaking

In Section 1B you met the **Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities** — a Victorian law, made in 2006, that protects 20 human rights. In Section 2B you looked at some of the rights it protects. This section asks a new question: **how does the Charter uphold human rights when new laws are made?**

Since 1 January 2008, every new law made by the Victorian Parliament has had to pass through a set of Charter checks. A **bill** (a proposed new law) goes through these checks.

How the Charter checks a new Victorian law

The path of a bill through the Charter's lawmaking checks



Every new Victorian law has passed through these checks since 1 January 2008 (Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)).

A flow chart showing the Charter checks a bill passes through in Victoria: the member introducing the bill makes a statement of compatibility, the scrutiny committee checks the bill and reports, Parliament debates and votes, and courts and public authorities must follow the Charter once the bill becomes law

The checks, one at a time:

- **A statement of compatibility.** The member who brings the bill to Parliament must make a **statement of compatibility** — a statement saying whether the bill fits with the Charter's human rights, and how. If any part of the bill does not fit, the member must say so openly and say why.
- **Scrutiny by a committee.** A **committee** (a small group of members chosen to look carefully at something) gives every bill a close, careful check against the Charter and reports to Parliament about any problems it finds. In Victoria this job is done by the **Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**. *Scrutiny* means close, careful checking.
- **Parliament debates and votes.** Members can use the statements and the committee's report when they debate the bill, and they can change the bill before they vote on it.
- **Courts keep checking.** Once a bill becomes law, courts must **interpret** it (work out its meaning) in a way that fits with the Charter's rights as far as they can. If a law cannot be read that way, the Supreme Court of Victoria can make a **declaration of inconsistent interpretation** — a formal statement that the law does not fit with a Charter right. That statement sends the problem back to Parliament to decide what to do.
- **An open escape valve.** Parliament *can* pass a law that operates even though it does not fit with a Charter right, but only if it says so openly in the law itself (this is called an **override declaration**), and that step only lasts five years at a time.

- **Public authorities must act in line with the Charter.** Government departments, the police, public schools and local councils must act in ways that respect the Charter's rights.

The table below puts these checks together by who does them.

Who does what under the Charter

The Charter's checks, sorted by who carries them out

Who	What they must do under the Charter
The member who introduces a bill	Make a statement of compatibility saying whether the bill fits with the Charter's human rights, and how.
The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee	Give every bill a close check against the Charter and report any problems to Parliament.
Parliament	Debate the bill, change it if needed, and vote on it, knowing what the statement and the committee have said about rights.
The courts	Read laws in a way that fits the Charter's rights as far as they can. The Supreme Court of Victoria can declare that a law does not fit.
Public authorities (police, councils, public schools)	Act in ways that respect the Charter's rights.

These checks have applied to every new Victorian law since 1 January 2008.

A table showing who does what under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities: the member introducing a bill, the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, Parliament, the courts, and public authorities

One last point about where the Charter works. The Charter is about **Victoria only**: it applies to the Victorian Parliament, the Victorian government and Victoria's public authorities. It does not apply to the federal government or the other states, and it is about the power of government, not about private disagreements between two people.

3. Case study B — how elections show participation, representation, and free and fair elections at work

In Section 1A you met the machinery of Australian elections: the secret ballot, compulsory voting, preferential voting and the independent electoral commissions. This section asks: **how does the process of an election demonstrate three principles — participation, representation, and free and fair elections?**

Elections in Victoria are run by the **Victorian Electoral Commission** (the VEC). It runs Victorian state elections and local council elections. Federal elections are run by the **Australian Electoral Commission** (the AEC). Both commissions are **independent** — they are not part of the government of the day, so the government cannot run its own elections.

Representation works through **electorates**: an electorate is an area whose voters elect one member to speak for them in Parliament.

The table below matches the three principles to features of Australian elections that demonstrate them.

How elections demonstrate three key principles

Each principle is shown by real features of Australian elections

Principle	Features that demonstrate it	Why it matters
Free and fair elections	An independent electoral commission runs the election; voting is secret; every vote counts the same; candidates are free to campaign; scrutineers can watch the count.	No one can force, buy or rig votes, so the result can be trusted.
Participation	Enrolling and voting are required by law for citizens who are 18 or over; people can also campaign, volunteer or be scrutineers.	Almost the whole community takes part, so the result reflects everyone, not just some.
Representation	Each electorate elects its own member; members speak and decide for their voters; members must face the voters again at the next election.	The people's voice is carried into Parliament, and members must keep earning their voters' trust.

These features work together: a fair election invites people to take part, and taking part chooses the representatives.

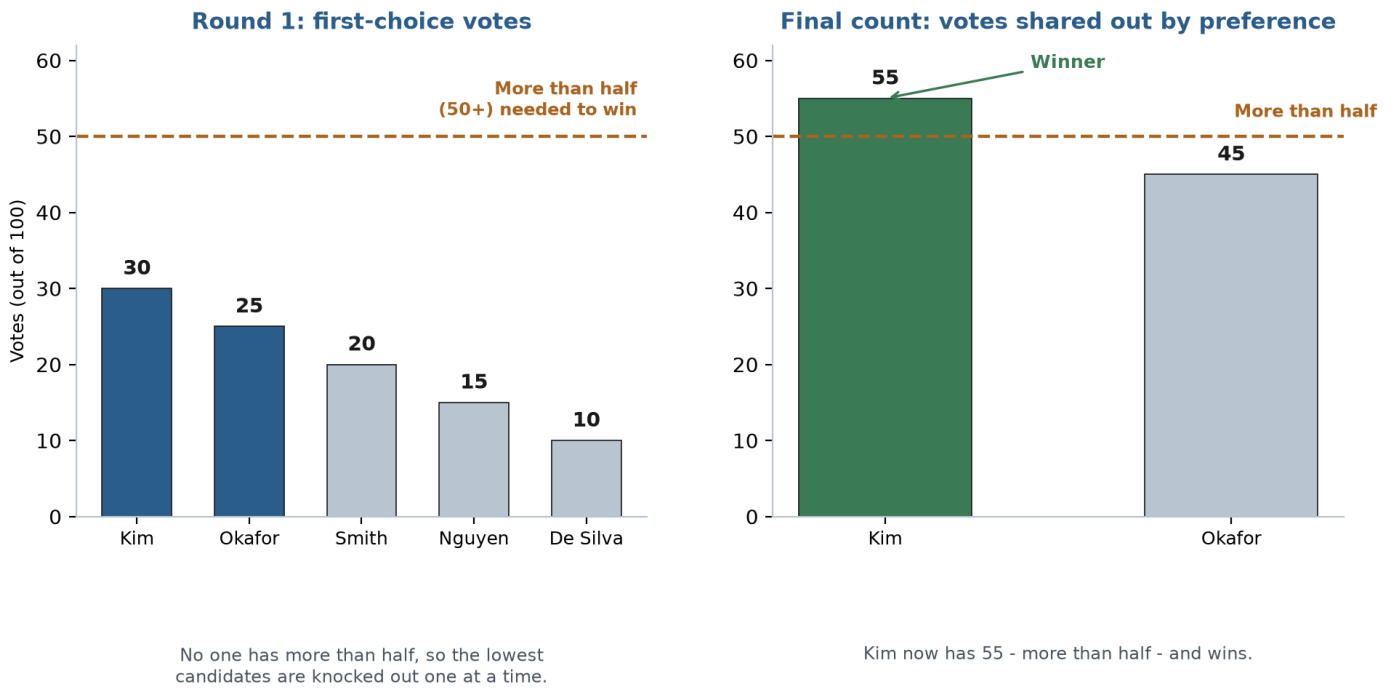
A table matching the three principles of elections — participation, representation, and free and fair elections — to the features of Australian elections that demonstrate each one, with a note on why each feature matters

Three features are worth a closer look.

The secret ballot. Your vote is private: no one can see how you vote, and you do not have to tell anyone. Victoria was one of the first places in the world to use the secret ballot, in 1856. Because voting is secret, no one can pressure you, bribe you or punish you for your vote. That keeps elections free and fair — and because people can vote without fear, more of them participate.

Preferential voting. On an Australian ballot paper you do not just tick a name. You number the candidates in the order you prefer them: 1 for your favourite, 2 for your next choice, and so on. In lower-house elections, a candidate needs a **majority** (more than half of the votes) to win. If no one has a majority of first-choice votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is knocked out, and their votes move to each voter's next choice. This repeats until one candidate has more than half. The model count below shows how it works.

A model preferential count (numbers made up for practice)



A model chart of a preferential vote count with made-up numbers: five candidates' first-choice votes, then the smallest candidates knocked out in turn and their votes shared out, and the winning candidate finishing with more than half of the votes

Because of preferential voting, the winning candidate is the one most voters can live with, not just the one with the biggest first round of support. That strengthens representation.

Here is what a ballot paper looks like when you fill it in. (This one is a practice paper for the classroom — the candidates and parties are made up.)

How to fill in a ballot paper

Model practice paper - not a real ballot paper

Victorian Legislative Assembly election - Sample district		
Number every box from 1 to 5, in the order you prefer: 1 for the candidate you want most.		
Your number	Candidate	Party
4	KIM, Dana	Sunrise Party
1	OKAFOR, Ben	Independent
5	SMITH, Chloe	River Party
2	NGUYEN, Sam	Main Street Party
3	DE SILVA, Maya	Independent

This voter chose Ben Okafor first (1), Sam Nguyen second (2), Maya De Silva third (3), Dana Kim fourth (4) and Chloe Smith fifth (5). The district, candidates and parties are made up for practice.

A model ballot paper for classroom practice with five made-up candidates, showing how a voter numbers the boxes from 1 to 5 in order of preference

Compulsory enrolment and voting. *Compulsory* means required by law. In Australia, every citizen who is 18 or over must **enrol** (put their name on the list of voters) and must vote. Compulsory enrolment began federally in 1912, compulsory voting at federal elections began in 1924, and voting at Victorian state elections has been compulsory since 1926. If an enrolled person does not vote, they can be fined. Because nearly everyone votes, the result reflects almost the whole community, not just the people who felt like voting. That is participation in action.

4. When do elections happen?

Victorian state elections are held every four years, on the last Saturday in November. The date is fixed by law — the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) — so the government of the day cannot pick a date that suits itself. The last Victorian state election was held on Saturday 26 November 2022. The next one will be on Saturday 28 November 2026 — you may be able to follow it while you are in this year of school.

The stages of a Victorian state election

What happens, in order, on the way to election day and after it



Fixed terms: Victorian state elections happen every 4 years, on the last Saturday in November (Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)). The last one was Saturday 26 November 2022; the next is Saturday 28 November 2026.

A timeline showing the stages of a Victorian state election: enrolment, nominating as a candidate, campaigning, voting day on Saturday 28 November 2026, counting with scrutineers watching, and the result declared

People can take part at every stage, not just on voting day: enrolling, nominating as a candidate, campaigning, handing out how-to-vote cards, volunteering at a voting centre, or being a **scrutineer** — a person a candidate sends to watch the counting and make sure it is done the right way.

The final table compares the two electoral commissions you need to know.

Two independent commissions run our elections

The Australian Electoral Commission and the Victorian Electoral Commission

Question	AEC	VEC
Full name	Australian Electoral Commission	Victorian Electoral Commission
Which elections it runs	Federal elections for the Australian Parliament, and national referendums	Victorian state elections for the Parliament of Victoria, and local council elections
Who it serves	All enrolled voters across Australia	Enrolled voters across Victoria
Is it independent of the government?	Yes. It is not part of any party or ministry, so the people running the election are not the people trying to win it	Yes. It is not part of any party or council, so the people running the election are not the people trying to win it

Independent electoral commissions are one way elections are kept free and fair: the referee is not one of the players.

A table comparing the Australian Electoral Commission and the Victorian Electoral Commission: which elections each one runs, and the fact that both are independent of the government

Worked examples

Example 1 — explaining a Charter check in action

In 2021, Victoria was managing the coronavirus pandemic using emergency powers. Those powers were due to end, so the Victorian Parliament made a new law: the **Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Act 2021**, passed in December 2021. It set out new rules for managing a pandemic. A law like this one touches Charter rights, such as freedom of movement. Explain how the Charter's checks applied to this bill, and how they upheld human rights in lawmaking. Use the four moves from part 1 of the Theory.

Step	Working	Comment
1. Name the institution or process	The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and its lawmaking checks.	Name the system.
2. Describe its features	When the pandemic-management bill was introduced, the member bringing it in had to make a statement of compatibility about the bill and human rights. The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee checked the bill and reported to Parliament. Members debated the bill carefully before voting to pass it	Describe what happened.

Step	Working	Comment
	in December 2021.	
3. Name the value	These features uphold human rights — they make Parliament face up to how a new law affects rights before it votes.	Name what is shown.
4. Link them	Because the member had to state how the bill fit with rights, and the committee had to check it openly, Parliament could not pass powerful pandemic rules without examining their effect on rights first. That is how the Charter upholds human rights in lawmaking.	Say how and why.

Source: Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Act 2021 (Vic), passed by the Parliament of Victoria in December 2021; Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), which requires a statement of compatibility and committee scrutiny of bills.

Example 2 — explaining what an election demonstrates

The Victorian state election was held on Saturday 26 November 2022. More than 4.3 million Victorians were enrolled to vote (4,394,465), and 3,868,615 people did vote. Explain how this election demonstrated three principles: participation, representation, and free and fair elections.

Step	Working	Comment
1. Free and fair	The election was run by the Victorian Electoral Commission, which is independent of the government. Voting was by secret ballot, and every vote counted the same.	Feature + principle.
2. Participation	Enrolling and voting are compulsory in Victoria, and about 88 out of every 100 enrolled voters voted — more than 3.8 million people. People also participated by campaigning and volunteering.	Feature + principle + number.
3. Representation	Voters in each of the 88 electorates chose one member for the Legislative Assembly, and voters in eight regions chose the 40 members of the Legislative Council. Those members now speak and decide for their voters, and must face the voters again at the next election.	Feature + principle.
4. Finish with a clear point	The 2022 Victorian state election demonstrates all three principles: an independent commission and secret voting kept it free and fair, compulsory voting brought in almost the whole community, and elected members now represent their electorates.	Link it together.

Practice questions

Guided questions

Q1. Match each word to its meaning. Use the “Before we start” box.

Word	Meaning
(a) uphold	(i) elected members deciding for the people who elected them
(b) demonstrate	(ii) not controlled by the government of the day
(c) representation	(iii) to protect something and make sure it is respected
(d) independent	(iv) to show something clearly

Q2. Complete the table about the Charter’s checks.

Who	What they must do under the Charter
The member who introduces a bill	Make a ...
The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee	Check every bill against ... and report to Parliament
Courts	Interpret laws in a way that ... with Charter rights, as far as they can
Public authorities (police, public schools, councils)	Act in ways that ... the Charter’s rights

Q3. Number these stages of a bill’s Charter checks in the correct order, from 1 to 5.

Stage	Order
Parliament debates the bill and votes on it.	...
The member introducing the bill makes a statement of compatibility.	...
Courts interpret the new law in line with the Charter.	...
The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee checks the bill and reports.	...
The bill becomes law.	...

Q4. Here are four features of the 2022 Victorian state election. For each one, say which principle it demonstrates: *free and fair elections*, *participation* or *representation*.

Feature	Principle
(a) Voting was by secret ballot.	...
(b) Every enrolled person had to vote.	...
(c) Each of the 88 electorates elected its own member.	...
(d) The count was run by the Victorian Electoral Commission, not the government.	...

Q5. Name the two electoral commissions in this section, and say which elections each one runs.

Q6. In two sentences, explain why preferential voting helps representation. Use the idea of a majority.

Independent questions

Answer each question in two or three full sentences.

- Q7.** Choose one Charter check from part 2 of the Theory (for example, the statement of compatibility, or committee scrutiny). Explain how that check upholds human rights in lawmaking. Use the four moves.
- Q8.** The Victorian Electoral Commission is independent of the government. Explain why that independence helps make elections free and fair.
- Q9.** Explain how the secret ballot demonstrates free and fair elections, and how it also helps participation. (One feature can demonstrate more than one principle — say how it shows each one.)
- Q10.** A classmate says: “Victorian elections are free and fair because everyone gets one vote.” Explain why this is a good start but not a complete answer. Name two more features of Australian elections that help make them free and fair, and say why each one matters.

Source inquiry

In this Skills section, the inquiry is the task. Read the source below, then use it — together with what you have learned in this section — to explain how an election demonstrates democratic principles.

Source 1 — How the 2022 Victorian state election ran

The Victorian state election was held on Saturday 26 November 2022. It was run by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), which is independent of the government. More than 4.3 million Victorians were enrolled to vote — 4,394,465 people. Enrolling and voting are compulsory in Victoria, and 3,868,615 people voted: about 88 out of every 100 enrolled voters. Voters chose 88 members for the Legislative Assembly — one for each electorate — and 40 members for the Legislative Council, who represent eight regions. Voting was by secret ballot, and voters numbered the candidates in order of preference. The next Victorian state election will be held on Saturday 28 November 2026.

(Written for this workbook, using figures published by the Victorian Electoral Commission; retrieved 26 August 2026.)

SQ1. From the source, find one feature of the election for each principle, and complete the table.

Principle	A feature from the source
Free and fair elections	...
Participation	...
Representation	...

SQ2. Using your table from SQ1, pick the feature you listed for *representation*. Explain, in two sentences, how it demonstrates representation.

SQ3. The source says about 88 out of every 100 enrolled voters voted. Explain how compulsory voting helps produce a result like this, and why that matters for participation.

SQ4. Not everyone agrees about compulsory voting. Here are the two sides, each given as strongly as its supporters would put it:

Side A — keep compulsory voting. When everyone must vote, the result reflects the whole community, not just the people who feel strongly. Politicians have to appeal to everyone, and no group can win just by getting its own supporters to the polling place. Voting is a duty of citizenship, like obeying the law.

Side B — make voting voluntary. A free society includes the freedom *not* to vote. Forcing people to vote can push up the number of careless or don’t-care votes, and participation is worth more when people choose it for themselves. Other free democracies get good turnout without forcing anyone.

- Give one strong reason for each side, in your own words.
- Say which side you find stronger, and give one reason why. You will be marked on how well you reason, not on which side you choose.

SQ5. The source says it was written for this workbook. If you wanted to check its numbers (such as how many people were enrolled), name one place you could look, and say why that place could be trusted.

Answers

Q1. (a)–(iii), (b)–(iv), (c)–(i), (d)–(ii).

Q2. The member — make a **statement of compatibility**. The committee — check every bill against **the Charter’s human rights**. Courts — interpret laws in a way that **fits** with Charter rights, as far as they can. Public authorities — act in ways that **respect** the Charter’s rights.

Q3. From 1 to 5: the member’s statement of compatibility (1); the committee checks the bill and reports (2); Parliament debates and votes (3); the bill becomes law (4); courts interpret the new law in line with the Charter (5).

Q4. (a) Free and fair elections. (b) Participation. (c) Representation. (d) Free and fair elections.

Q5. The **Australian Electoral Commission** runs federal elections. The **Victorian Electoral Commission** runs Victorian state elections and local council elections.

Q6. Sample answer: Under preferential voting, a candidate needs a majority — more than half of the votes — to win. So the winner is the candidate most voters can live with, which means the member truly speaks for the whole electorate.

Q7. Sample answer: The statement of compatibility upholds human rights in lawmaking. It is a statement the member must make saying whether the bill fits with the Charter’s rights and how. This demonstrates care for rights because Parliament must face the effect of a new law on rights openly, before it votes, instead of finding out afterwards.

Q8. Sample answer: If the government ran its own elections, it could be tempted to count votes to help itself win, or to make voting hard for people who support other parties. An independent commission has no reason to help one side, so the count is honest and the election stays free and fair.

Q9. Sample answer: The secret ballot shows free and fair elections because no one can see your vote, so no one can pressure, bribe or punish you for it. It also helps participation, because people who might be afraid of how others would judge their vote can still vote in private.

Q10. Sample answer: One vote each is part of it, but not all of it. Two more features: (1) the secret ballot — voting is private, so voters are free from pressure; (2) independent counting by the Victorian Electoral Commission — the government does not count its own votes, so the result can be trusted.

SQ1. Accept any matching feature from the source. For example: free and fair — run by the independent VEC / secret ballot. Participation — enrolment and voting are compulsory / 88 out of every 100 enrolled people voted. Representation — one member elected for each electorate / members represent eight regions.

SQ2. Sample answer: Each electorate chose one member for the Legislative Assembly, and those members speak and decide in Parliament for their voters. That demonstrates representation because the voters’ voices are carried into Parliament by the member they chose.

SQ3. Sample answer: Because voting is compulsory, almost every enrolled person votes, so 88 out of 100 turned up. This matters because the result then reflects nearly the whole community, not just the people who felt strongly enough to vote by themselves.

SQ4. (a) Sample reasons — Side A: the result reflects the whole community. Side B: a free society includes the freedom not to vote. (b) Marked on the quality of the reason, not on the side chosen. A good answer links the reason to a value from this section, such as fairness, freedom or participation.

SQ5. Sample answer: You could check the Victorian Electoral Commission’s website, because it is the independent body that ran the election and publishes the official election figures.

Connecting current issues to democratic institutions

Chapter 3 · Skills: investigating and evaluating · Section 3D · Content description VC2HC6S04

This section owns one content description: **VC2HC6S04**. It draws on both curriculum examples for this content description: .E01 and .E02.

A **contemporary issue** is a real problem or debate happening now, or within your recent memory. This section uses two real Australian case studies: **youth crime in Victoria** and **the growth of vaping**. The skill is not just to *describe* an issue and an institution side by side. The skill is to **explain the connection** — how the issue touches the institution, and how the institution responds. Every task here practices that one move, using the institutions and processes you meet in Chapters 1 and 2 (the three levels of government in Section 1C, the legal system in Section 2A, and the lawmaking process in Section 2C).

Before we start — what do these words mean here?

- **contemporary issue** — a real problem or debate happening now, or within your recent memory, that the community and government are dealing with.
- **institution / system** — an official part of how Australia is governed and run: parliaments, governments, police and courts.
- **legal system** — the police who enforce the law, the courts that hear cases, and the sentences courts can give (Section 2A).
- **workings of the legal system** — the steps a case moves through: the charge, the court hearing, the finding, and the sentence.
- **government response** — what a government does about an issue: a new law, a program, or a service.
- **focus (of a response)** — the main thing the response is trying to achieve.
- **magistrate** — the person who runs a case and decides the sentence in the Children’s Court of Victoria and in the Magistrates’ Court, like a judge in a higher court.
- **sentence / sentencing** — what a court orders after a finding of guilt.
- **detention** — a sentence that orders a young person to live in a locked youth justice centre.
- **rehabilitation** — helping a person who has offended to change their life and stop offending.
- **deterrence** — using punishment to discourage the person (and others) from offending again.
- **diversion** — programs that steer young people away from the court system and deal with the causes of their offending.
- **evaluate** — to weigh up the reasons and evidence on each side before making a judgement.

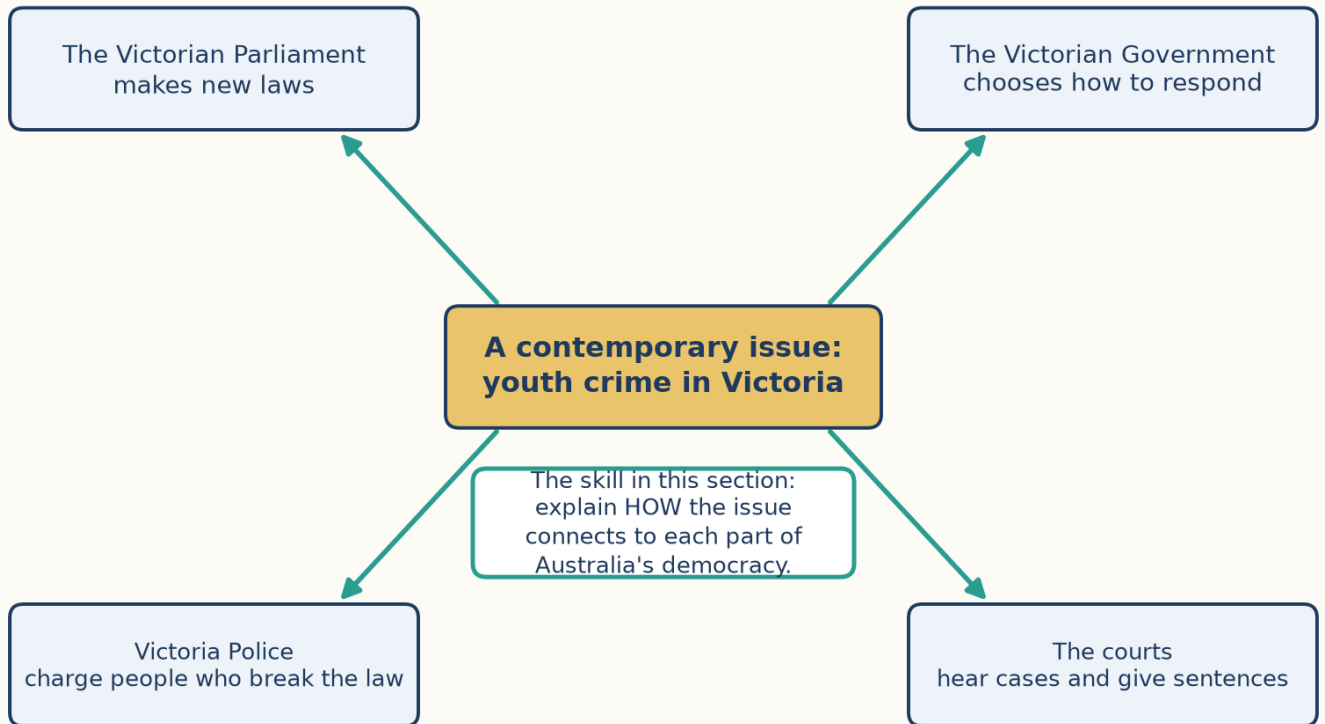
Some of these are subject terms — the precise words civics uses — and some sit inside proper nouns, the real names of institutions and laws (for example the Children’s Court of Victoria and the Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic)). Subject terms are defined here and at first use.

Theory

Part 1 — The skill: connect, do not just describe

The content description asks you to *explain connections*. A connection answer always has four parts: name the **issue**, name the **institution or system**, explain **how the two touch**, and finish with a **clear point**. Figure 1 shows the two case studies of this section sitting in the middle of a web of institutions.

Connecting a contemporary issue to institutions and systems



Original figure for this workbook. The institutions are the same ones studied in Sections 1C, 2A and 2C.

A concept map with youth crime in Victoria at the centre, connected by arrows to the Victorian Parliament, the Victorian Government, Victoria Police and the courts

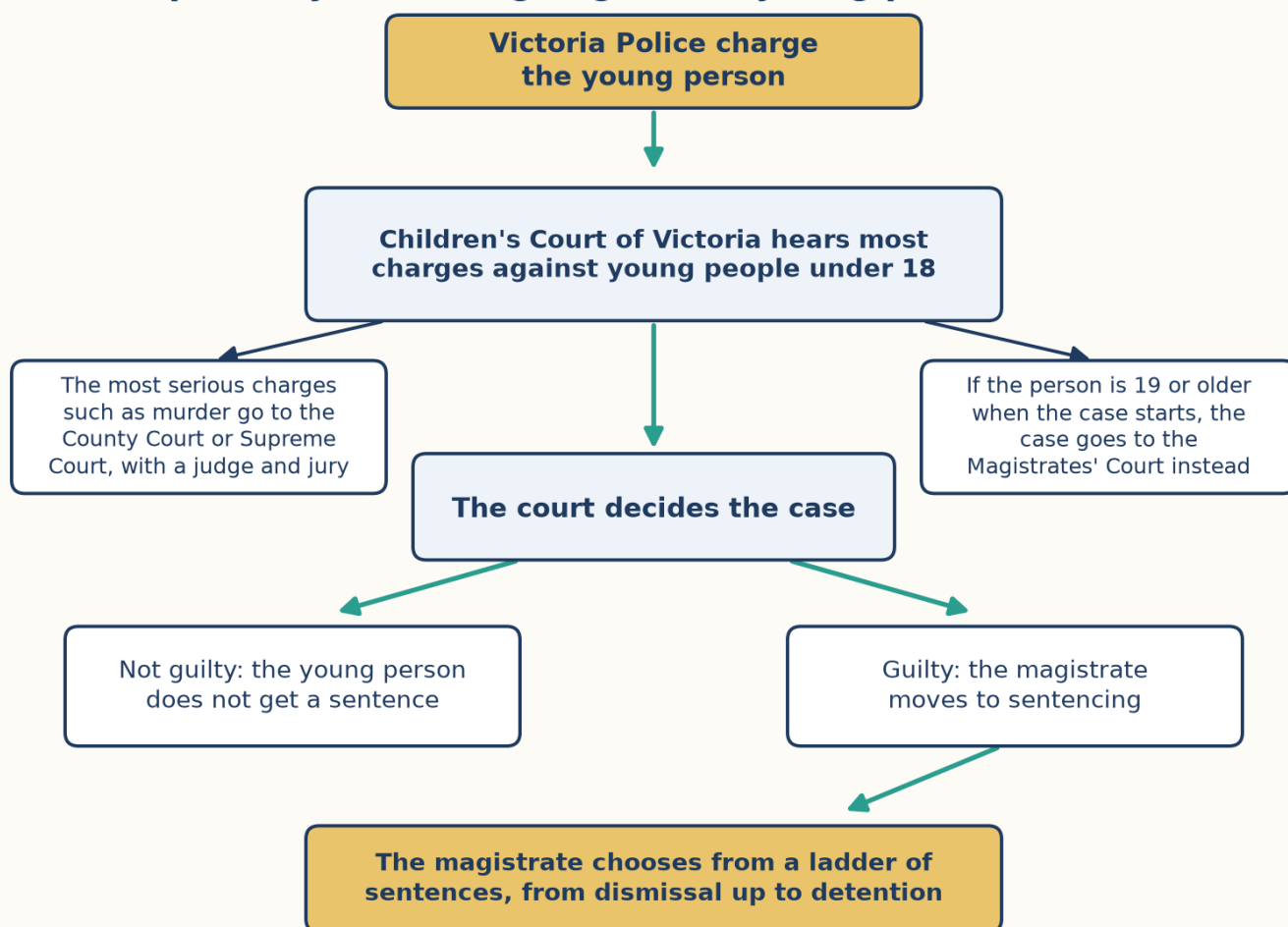
Figure 1 — A contemporary issue sits in the middle of a web of institutions and systems. The skill is to explain each connection.

Notice the verbs in the content description. *Explaining* a connection means more than listing: it means saying **how** and **why** the issue and the institution meet. “Youth crime is an issue and Victoria has courts” is a list. “When a young person is charged, the Children’s Court of Victoria hears the case, so youth crime is connected to the court process” is a connection.

Part 2 — Case study 1: youth crime and how the legal system works (E01)

Youth crime is a contemporary issue in Victoria: it has been much debated in the Victorian Parliament and in the community across 2023 to 2026. .E01 asks you to describe how an issue like this connects to the **workings of the legal system**. In Victoria, those steps are: police charge the person, a court hears the case, the court makes a finding, and — if the finding is guilty — a magistrate chooses a sentence. Figure 2 maps the pathway for a young person.

The pathway of a charge against a young person in Victoria



Facts from the Children's Court of Victoria website (retrieved 26 August 2026).
See Section 2A for the court system in more detail.

Flow diagram of the pathway of a charge against a young person in Victoria, from Victoria Police to the Children's Court of Victoria, with branches for the most serious charges and for people 19 or older, then to a finding and a sentence

Figure 2 — The pathway of a charge against a young person in Victoria. Facts from the Children's Court of Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026). The court system itself is studied in Section 2A.

Two features of the legal system make the connection with youth crime especially clear.

First, the system has a **court built for young people**. Most charges against a young person are heard in the Children's Court of Victoria, and the most serious charges (such as murder) go to the County Court or the Supreme Court with a judge and jury. Second, the system has a **ladder of sentences** built for young people, shown in Figure 3.

Sentences for young people in Victoria: least to most serious

Sentence	What it means
10. Detention in a youth justice centre	The most serious option: locked detention.
9. Detention in a youth residential centre	Lives in a locked centre, not the community.
8. Youth control order	Strict rules and close supervision.
7. Youth attendance order	Must attend set programs at set times.
6. Youth supervision order	Closer supervision by Youth Justice.
5. Probation	Supervised in the community and must follow rules.
4. Fine	The young person pays money.
3. Good behaviour bond	A promise to be of good behaviour for a set time.
2. Undertaking	The young person promises to stay out of trouble.
1. Dismissal of the charge	The magistrate dismisses the charge.

more serious

Options listed by the Children's Court of Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).
The first three options are usually given without conviction — the court does not record a finding of guilt.

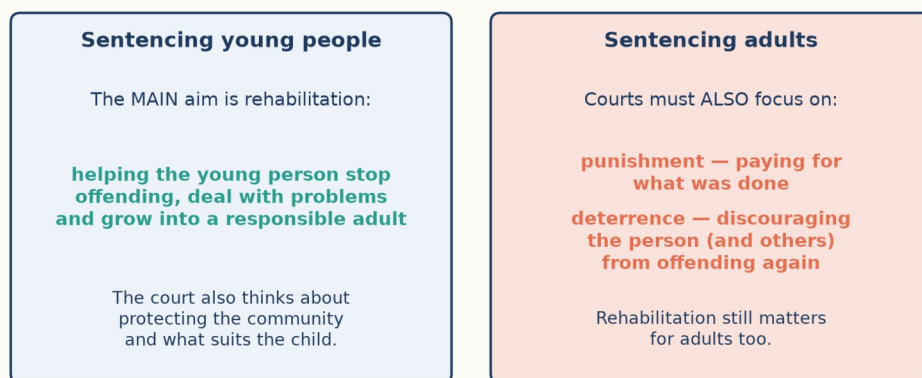
Table listing the sentences for young people in Victoria from least serious (dismissal of the charge) to most serious (detention in a youth justice centre), with an arrow marking increasing seriousness

Figure 3 — The sentencing ladder for young people in Victoria, least to most serious. Options listed by the Children's Court of Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).

The ladder's names are precise subject terms: **dismissal** means the charge is dropped; an **undertaking** is a promise to stay out of trouble; a **bond** is a promise to be of good behaviour for a set time; **probation** is supervision in the community with rules to follow; and **detention** sits at the top.

The ladder matters because of **what sentencing aims to do**. For young people, Victorian law puts **rehabilitation** first; for adults, courts focus on punishment and **deterrence** as well (Figure 4). And the ladder starts at a strict age rule (Figure 5): in Victoria a child under 12 cannot be charged with a crime at all.

What sentencing aims to do: young people and adults compared



Based on the Children's Court of Victoria 'Sentencing' page: under Victorian law, the main aim when sentencing young offenders is rehabilitation (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Two-panel comparison: sentencing young people aims mainly at rehabilitation, while sentencing adults also focuses on punishment and deterrence

Figure 4 — What sentencing aims to do: young people and adults compared. Based on the Children's Court of Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Victoria's rules about age and criminal responsibility



Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic) s 10 and Sentencing Council Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Three age bands: under 12 cannot be charged; 12 to 13 can be charged but the law starts from the idea they cannot commit an offence unless proved otherwise; 14 to 17 can be charged and are heard in the Children's Court; a callout states the minimum age was raised from 10 to 12

Figure 5 — Victoria's rules about age and criminal responsibility. Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic) s 10 and Sentencing Council Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).

So the connection sentence for this case study writes itself: **youth crime is connected to the workings of the legal system because those steps — the charge, the Children's Court hearing, the finding and the ladder of sentences**

— are how Victoria deals with young people who break the law, and the aim of rehabilitation shapes every step.

Think about it

People disagree, in good faith, about how Victoria should respond to youth crime. Figure 6 shows each side in its strongest form. Give both columns a fair read: the point of this section is to *evaluate* the reasoning, not to pick a team. No matter which side you find stronger, your mark comes from how well you use reasons and evidence — never from which side you choose.

What should Victoria do about youth crime? Two strong arguments

Argument 1: tougher punishment	Argument 2: early help and rehabilitation
• Serious offending should have serious consequences. • Tough sentences protect the community from harm. • Strong consequences can deter others from offending. • Victims deserve to see the wrongdoing punished.	• Most young people grow out of crime, especially with help. • Rehabilitation stops repeat offending better than detention. • Detention can lead young people into more crime. • Early help deals with the causes and costs less.
Both sides want safer communities. Marks are given for how well you use reasons and evidence — not for which side you choose.	

Each argument is stated in its strongest form. Evaluating both sides is part of this section's skill.

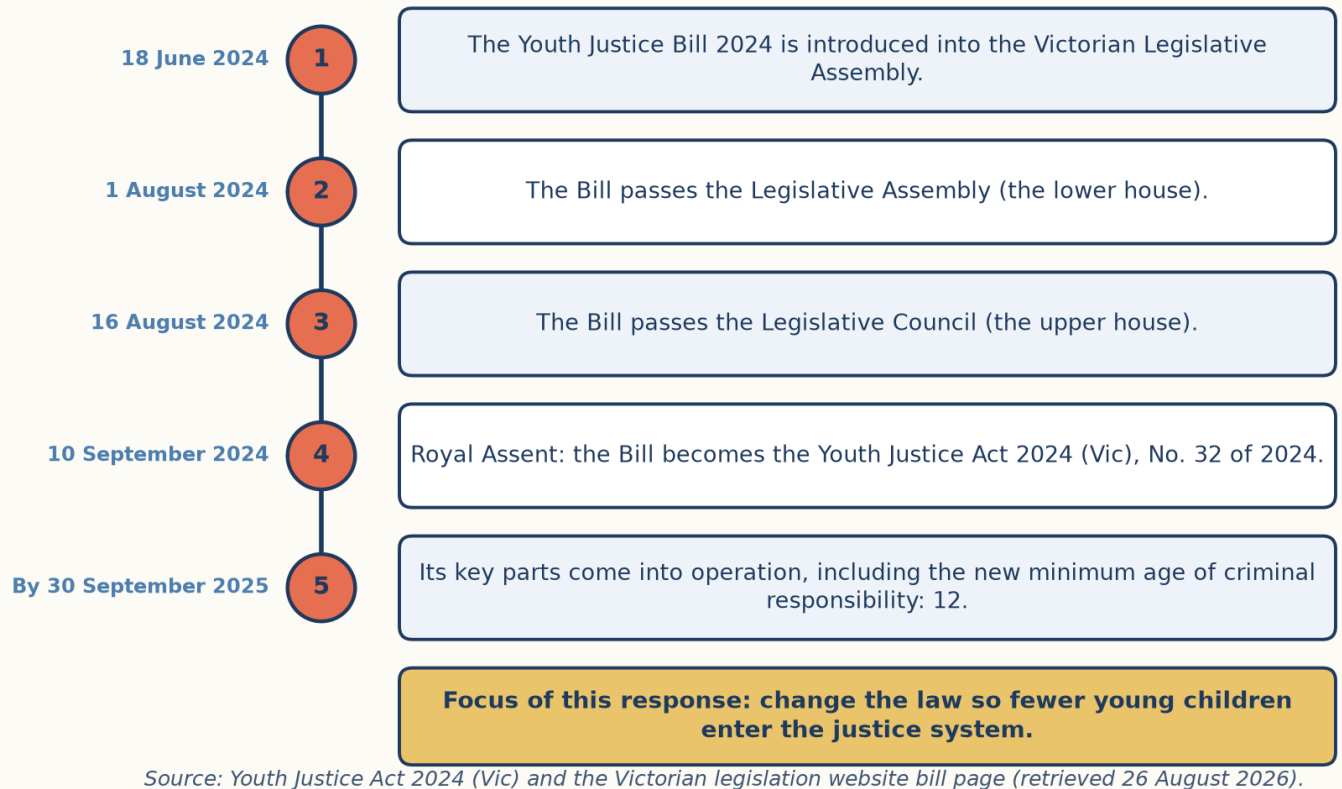
Two-column table stating the strongest form of each argument about youth crime: tougher punishment on one side, early help and rehabilitation on the other, with a note that marks are given for reasoning, not conclusion

Figure 6 — Two strong arguments about youth crime. Evaluating both sides is part of this section’s skill.

Part 3 — Case study 1 continued: the Victorian Government’s response (E02)

. E02 asks you to explain the **focus** of a government’s response to a contemporary issue. The Victorian Government’s response to youth justice concerns was a new law: the **Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic)**, which raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 and changed the youth justice system (Figure 7).

A government response: the Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic)



Timeline of the Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic): bill introduced 18 June 2024, passed the Legislative Assembly 1 August 2024, passed the Legislative Council 16 August 2024, Royal Assent 10 September 2024, key parts in operation by 30 September 2025, with a callout stating the focus of the response

Figure 7 — A government response: the Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic). Source: the Act and the Victorian legislation website (retrieved 26 August 2026).

The Act is one part of a wider response. Figure 8 shows the three parts together, each with its focus.

The Victorian Government's response to youth crime	
Part of the response	What it is, and its focus
A new law	The Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic) raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 and changed the youth justice system. Focus: change the rules so fewer young children enter the justice system.
Diversion and early help	Programs that steer young people away from the justice system and deal with the reasons they offend. Most stay in the community. Focus: stop offending early, before it becomes a pattern.
Supervision by Youth Justice	Youth Justice supervises young people who are 12 to 18 and ordered by the courts, in the community or in custody. Focus: keep the community safe while helping young people change.

Source: Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety, 'Youth Justice', and the Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic) (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Table of the three parts of the Victorian Government’s response to youth crime: a new law (the Youth Justice Act 2024), diversion and early help, and supervision by Youth Justice, each with its focus

Figure 8 — The Victorian Government’s response to youth crime. Source: Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety, ‘Youth Justice’, and the Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic) (retrieved 26 August 2026).

The response did not stop in 2024. Figure 9 records a bill moving through the Victorian Parliament in 2026 — the **Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026**, a response to the issue of adults drawing children into crime. (To **amend** a law is to change it.) Follow its dates: this is the lawmaking process of Section 2C happening in real time, and the statement presented to parliament with the bill connects to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Sections 1B and 2B).

Lawmaking in action: the progress of a 2026 Victorian bill

Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026

A government response to the issue of adults recruiting children into crime.

Date	What happened
17 June 2026	Introduced into the Legislative Assembly (first reading passed).
18 June 2026	Statement about the bill and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities presented to parliament; second reading speech made.
13 August 2026	Second and third readings passed in the Legislative Assembly.
13 August 2026	Moved to the Legislative Council; first reading passed.
August 2026	Being debated and amended in the Legislative Council; as at 26 August 2026 it is still moving through Parliament.

Table created for this workbook from the Victorian legislation website and the Parliament of Victoria bills page (retrieved 26 August 2026).

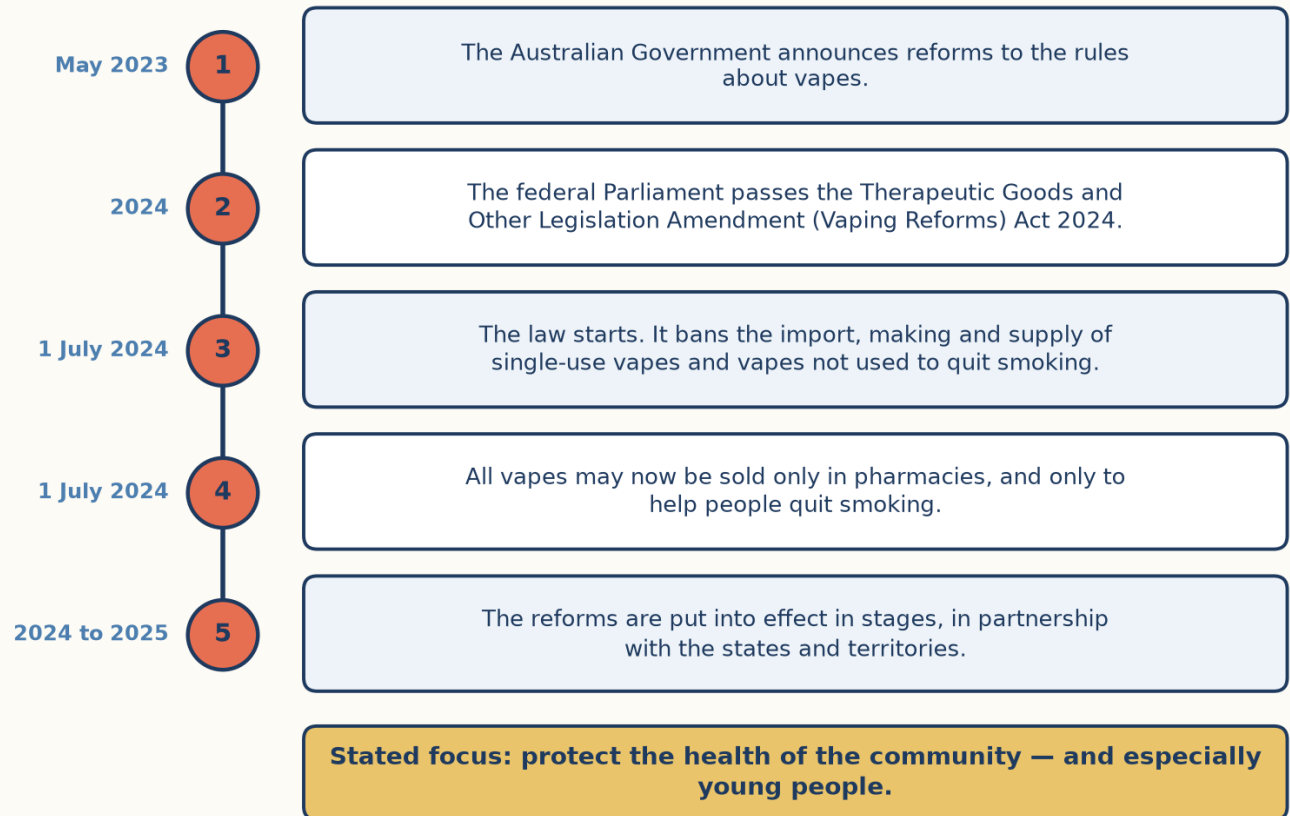
Table recording the progress of the Crimes Amendment (Recruitment of Children for Criminal Activity) Bill 2026 through the Victorian Parliament, from introduction on 17 June 2026 to debate in the Legislative Council in August 2026

Figure 9 — Lawmaking in action: a 2026 Victorian bill, as at 26 August 2026. Table created for this workbook from the Victorian legislation website and the Parliament of Victoria bills page (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Part 4 — Case study 2: the Australian Government's response to vaping (E02)

Not every contemporary issue is answered at the state level. The growth of vaping — especially among young people — was answered by the **Australian Government**, because the rules about what may be brought into Australia and sold are federal rules (Section 1C). The main part of the response is the **Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024**, which started on 1 July 2024 (Figure 10).

The Australian Government's response: new vaping laws



Source: Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Australian Government Department of Health (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Timeline of the Australian Government's vaping reforms: reforms announced May 2023, the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024 passed in 2024 and started on 1 July 2024, vapes sold only in pharmacies, reforms put into effect in stages with the states and territories, with a callout stating the stated focus

Figure 10 — The Australian Government's response: new vaping laws. Source: Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Australian Government Department of Health (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Figure 11 sorts which level of government does which part of our two case studies — the division of powers you met in Section 1C, applied to real, dated issues.

Which level of government does what?

Part of the case study	Level of government	Why
Criminal laws, courts and youth justice (the youth crime case study)	The Victorian Government (state level)	The Victorian Parliament makes Victoria's criminal laws and sets up its courts.
Imports of goods, and product laws (part of the vaping case study)	The Australian Government (federal level)	The federal Parliament makes laws about the goods brought into Australia and sold across the country.
Selling vapes in shops, working with the federal reforms (the vaping case study)	The state and territory governments	The federal reforms are put into effect 'in partnership with states and territories'.

Australia's Constitution divides lawmaking power between the federal and state levels — see Section 1C.

Table sorting which level of government handles each part of the two case studies: Victoria handles criminal laws, courts and youth justice; the Australian Government handles product rules and the goods brought into Australia; states and territories work with the federal reforms on selling vapes in shops

Figure 11 — Which level of government does what? The division of powers (Section 1C) applied to the two case studies.

And Figure 12 gives you the five-part shape of a focus explanation, filled in for the vaping case.

How to explain the focus of a government response: a model	
Part of the explanation	Model answer (the vaping case)
1. Name the issue	Use of vapes has grown quickly, especially among young people.
2. Name who responded	The Australian Government (the federal level of government).
3. Name the response	A new law: the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024, which started on 1 July 2024.
4. Say what it does	It bans single-use vapes and vapes not used to quit smoking. Vapes may be sold only in pharmacies.
5. Say the focus	The focus is protecting the health of the community, and especially young people.

Use these five parts for any contemporary issue. Facts from the TGA and the Department of Health (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Table of the five parts of a good focus explanation — name the issue, name who responded, name the response, say what it does, say the focus — filled in for the vaping case

Figure 12 — How to explain the focus of a government response: a model. Facts from the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Department of Health (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Part 5 — Putting the connection into a paragraph

Figure 13 is a model paragraph for curriculum example .E01, with its four moves labelled. Use the same shape for any issue and any institution.

A model paragraph: connecting an issue to the legal system

Part 1

Name the issue

A contemporary issue in Victoria is youth crime.

Part 2

Name the institution or process

When police charge a young person, the case is usually heard in the Children's Court of Victoria.

Part 3

Explain the connection

The court's main aim when sentencing young people is rehabilitation, and its most serious sentences involve detention in a youth justice centre.

Part 4

Finish with a clear point

So the issue of youth crime is connected to the workings of the legal system: the police, the courts and sentencing.

Facts from the Children's Court of Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026). Use this shape for your own answers.

A labelled four-part model paragraph: name the issue, name the institution or process, explain the connection, finish with a clear point, filled in for youth crime and the legal system

Figure 13 — A model paragraph: connecting an issue to the legal system. Use this shape for your own answers.

Worked examples

Example 1 (E01) — Describe how youth crime, a contemporary issue, connects to the workings of the legal system in Victoria.

Step	Working	Comment
1	Name the issue: youth crime in Victoria — a real, dated issue, debated in the Victorian Parliament across 2023 to 2026.	A connection starts from a real issue, not an invented one.
2	Name the processes: Victoria Police charge the young person; the Children's Court of Victoria hears most cases; the magistrate makes a finding; if guilty, the magistrate chooses from the ladder of sentences (Figures 2 and 3).	Name real institutions — the legal system is not a blur, it is specific courts and steps (Section 2A).
3	Explain the connection: those processes are how Victoria deals with young people who break the law, and the aim of rehabilitation shapes the ladder — from dismissal at the bottom to detention at the top	This is the “how” sentence. Without it, the answer is a list.

Step	Working	Comment
4	(Figure 4). Finish with a clear point: so youth crime is connected to the workings of the legal system — the charge, the hearing, the finding and the sentence.	Close the loop back to the content description's words.

Source: Children's Court of Victoria, 'Criminal cases' and 'Sentencing' pages (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Example 2 (E02) — Explain the focus of the Australian Government's response to the contemporary issue of vaping.

Step	Working	Comment
1	Name the issue: use of vapes grew quickly, especially among young people.	Keep the issue to one sentence.
2	Name who responded: the Australian Government — the federal level, because imports and product rules are federal rules (Figure 11).	Naming the level shows the division of powers at work (Section 1C).
3	Name the response and what it does: the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024, started 1 July 2024; it bans single-use vapes and vapes not used to quit smoking, and vapes may be sold only in pharmacies (Figure 10).	Real law, real date — checkable.
4	Say the focus: protecting the health of the community, and especially young people.	The focus is the why , not just the how.

Source: Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Australian Government Department of Health (retrieved 26 August 2026).

Practice questions

Guided

- (E01) Look at Figure 2. In your own words, list the four steps a case against a young person moves through, from the charge to the sentence.
- (E01) Look at Figure 3. (a) Name the most serious sentence on the ladder. (b) Name the least serious. (c) Which two sentences involve living in a locked centre?
- (E01) Using Figures 4 and 5, complete this sentence twice, once for young people and once for adults: "When sentencing _____, the court mainly aims at _____."
- (E02) Look at Figure 7. (a) Put these events in order: Royal Assent; bill introduced; Bill passes the Legislative Council; key parts in operation. (b) State the focus of this response in one sentence.
- (E02) Look at Figure 12. Rewrite parts 3 and 4 (what the vaping law does) in your own words, without looking at the figure's exact wording.
- (E01, E02, evaluate) Look at Figure 6. Choose the argument you find stronger. Write two reasons for your choice, and one fair point from the other side. You are marked on your reasoning, not your conclusion.

Independent

7. (E01) Without using Figure 13's labels, write your own paragraph of four sentences explaining how youth crime is connected to the workings of the legal system in Victoria. Use the real names of at least two institutions.
8. (E02) Explain the focus of the Victorian Government's response to youth crime. Name the Act, the year it received Royal Assent, and one other part of the response besides the Act.
9. (E02) Using Figure 11, explain why the vaping issue was answered by the Australian Government, while the youth crime issue was answered by the Victorian Government. Use the idea of the division of powers.
10. (E01, E02) Figure 9 shows a bill still moving through the Victorian Parliament as at 26 August 2026. Explain how this bill connects the two halves of this section's skill: the contemporary issue, the workings of the legal system, and a government response.

Source inquiry

In Skills sections, the investigation itself is the task. Both sources below were written for this workbook from the real pages named in each source line.

Source A — *Written for this workbook from the Children's Court of Victoria, 'Criminal cases' and 'Sentencing' (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

The Children's Court of Victoria is a specialist court. Its criminal division hears charges against young people who were 10 to 17 years old at the time of the offence they are charged with. When sentencing a young person, the main aim is rehabilitation. The magistrate thinks about the young person's family, reports about the young person, the need to protect the community, and any victim impact statements.

Source B — *Written for this workbook from the Australian Government Department of Health and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

New laws introduced in 2024 protect the health of the community, and especially young people. From 1 July 2024, vapes may be sold only in pharmacies, to help people quit smoking. The reforms are put into effect in stages, in partnership with the states and territories.

Inquiry tasks

- **A.** From Source A, locate: (i) the court that hears most charges against young people; (ii) the main aim of sentencing a young person.
- **B.** From Source A, explain one connection between the contemporary issue of youth crime and a process of the legal system.
- **C.** From Source B, explain the focus of the Australian Government's response to vaping in one sentence of your own.
- **D.** Source A says the magistrate thinks about the community and about the young person. Evaluate: does this balance support the argument for rehabilitation in Figure 6, the argument for tougher punishment, or both? Give one reason.

Answers

1. The charge (Victoria Police); the hearing (usually the Children’s Court of Victoria); the finding (guilty or not guilty); the sentence (from the ladder, if guilty).
2.
 - (a) Detention in a youth justice centre. (b) Dismissal of the charge. (c) Detention in a youth residential centre and detention in a youth justice centre.
3. Young people: rehabilitation. Adults: punishment and deterrence (rehabilitation still matters).
4.
 - (a) Bill introduced (18 June 2024); Bill passes the Legislative Council (16 August 2024); Royal Assent (10 September 2024); key parts in operation (by 30 September 2025). (b) To change the law so fewer young children enter the justice system.
5. Accept any fair rewriting: the law bans single-use vapes and vapes not meant to help people quit; vapes can only be sold in pharmacies.
6. Accept any choice with two reasons for it and one fair point from the other side. Mark the reasoning, not the conclusion.
7. Check for the four moves: names the issue; uses the real names of institutions (for example Victoria Police, the Children’s Court of Victoria); explains how the processes deal with the issue; closes with a clear point.
8. The Youth Justice Act 2024 (Vic); Royal Assent 10 September 2024; focus: fewer young children entering the justice system; another part: diversion and early help, or supervision by Youth Justice.
9. Imports and product rules are federal rules, so the Australian Government acted; criminal law and courts are Victorian rules, so the Victorian Government acted. The division of powers (Section 1C) decides which level responds.
10. Accept answers that connect: the issue (adults drawing children into crime) → the legal system (criminal law, police and courts) → the response (a bill amending the criminal law, moving through the Victorian Parliament as at 26 August 2026).
 - **A.** (i) The Children’s Court of Victoria. (ii) Rehabilitation.
 - **B.** Accept any connection that uses a process from Source A, for example: the Children’s Court hearing charges against young people is the legal system dealing with youth crime.
 - **C.** Accept any one-sentence focus: protecting the health of the community, and especially young people.
 - **D.** Accept reasoned answers; the strongest note that the balance supports both sides — protecting the community answers the tougher-punishment side, while rehabilitation answers the early-help side.