

# Mathematics Level 7

## Chapter 4 — Skills: participating and communicating

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# Deliberating together on a community issue

Chapter 4 · Skills: participating and communicating · Section 4A · Content description VC2HC6S05 · Draws on elaborations VC2HC6S05.E01, VC2HC6S05.E02

When a decision affects a whole group, the group needs a fair way to make it. In this section you will learn a skill called **deliberation** — thinking and talking carefully before deciding. You will look at how three real communities responded to one real issue in Victoria, and then you will run a class decision of your own and reach a **consensus**, the way many real groups do.

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

- **Deliberate / deliberation** — to think and talk carefully about something before deciding, weighing the reasons for and against. (This is the sense used in the Victorian Curriculum.)
- **Consensus** — a decision that every member of a group can accept and support, even if it is not everyone's first choice.
- **Community** — a group of people who share something, such as a place, a school, a sport, a faith, a culture or an online space.
- **Issue** — a topic that people may have different views about, and that may need a decision.
- **Point of view** — one way of thinking about an issue, shaped by a person's job, experiences and needs.

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

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## Theory

### 1. What does it mean to deliberate?

To **deliberate** is to think and talk carefully about something before deciding. Good deliberation has three parts working together:

- **Thinking** — working out what the issue is and what the facts are.
- **Talking and listening** — sharing points of view and hearing others out.
- **Weighing** — comparing the reasons on each side before choosing.

Deliberation is not a shouting match, and it is not a race to be first with an answer. It is how careful groups decide. Real groups deliberate all the time: a parliament deliberates on a proposed new law before it votes on it, and a jury (a group of citizens in a court) deliberates before it gives its decision. Deliberating and talking things through to an agreed outcome are also ways of taking part in democracy — you will look at this more in Section 4B.

### 2. Communities and the issues that affect them

An **issue** affects people through the communities they belong to. One person can belong to many communities at the same time, so the same issue can matter to several different communities at once — and each one may respond in its own way.

# Kinds of communities and the issues that matter to them

One person can belong to many communities at the same time.

| Kind of community  | Example                                         | An issue that might matter to it               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| A place            | People living in the same suburb or town        | Whether the local park gets new play equipment |
| A school           | The students, teachers and families of a school | Rules for phones and devices at school         |
| A sport or hobby   | A footy club, a dance group, a chess club       | Access to grounds or halls for training        |
| A faith or culture | People who share a faith or a culture           | Places to gather and celebrate together        |
| Online             | People in a game, a group chat or a fan page    | How members treat each other online            |

Different communities can respond to the same issue in different ways, because their members have different jobs, experiences and needs.

*A table showing five kinds of communities — a place, a school, a sport or hobby, a faith or culture, and online — with an example of each and an issue that might matter to it*

Different communities can respond to the same issue in different ways because their members have different jobs, experiences and needs. A good deliberation listens to those different points of view before it decides.

### 3. The seven steps of good deliberation

Deliberation works best as a series of steps. The diagram below shows seven steps you can use for any issue, in class or in life.

# The seven steps of good deliberation



*A flow diagram of the seven steps of good deliberation: 1 understand the issue, 2 gather the facts, 3 listen to different points of view, 4 weigh the reasons, 5 look for common ground, 6 decide, 7 reflect*

Two things are worth noticing. First, the steps are a habit, not a test: you can use them for a small class decision or a big public issue. Second, deliberation does not always run in a straight line — a new point of view can send you back to step 2 to find out more, and that is a sign the group is working carefully, not a sign of failure.

## 4. Consensus: a decision everyone can support

Many real groups — councils, clubs, boards — try to decide by **consensus** first. A consensus is a decision that every member of the group can accept and support. It is not the same as everyone getting their first choice, and it is not the same as a majority vote.

## Consensus: what it is and what it is not

| Consensus IS                                              | Consensus IS NOT                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| ✓ A decision everyone in the group can accept and support | ✗ Everyone thinking the same thing      |
| ✓ Everyone gets a turn to speak and give reasons          | ✗ Everyone getting their first choice   |
| ✓ People adjust their ideas so more people can say yes    | ✗ Only a majority vote                  |
| ✓ Nobody is made to feel left out                         | ✗ One person deciding for everyone else |

A group that cannot reach consensus after a fair try can decide by vote instead.

*A two-column diagram listing what consensus is — a decision everyone can accept and support, everyone gets a turn to speak and give reasons, people adjust their ideas so more people can say yes, nobody is made to feel left out — and what consensus is not — everyone thinking the same thing, everyone getting their first choice, only a majority vote, one person deciding for everyone else*

**Think about it — two fair ways to decide.** Fair-minded people disagree about the best way for a group to decide. Some say consensus is best, because everyone is heard, nobody is left out, and the whole group stands behind the decision. Others say a majority vote is best, because it is quick, and one person who will not agree cannot hold the whole group up. Both views have real strengths. A sensible rule is the one this section uses: try for consensus first with a fair go for every voice, and if consensus is not possible after a fair try, hold a vote.

### 5. Ground rules for respectful deliberation

For deliberation to be fair, everyone's voice has to be safe to use. Groups therefore agree on **ground rules** before they begin. Ground rules protect everyone's right to a say, and they grow from democratic values such as respect, fairness, equality and freedom of speech.

# Ground rules for respectful deliberation

These rules protect everyone's right to a say. They come from democratic values: respect, fairness, equality and freedom of speech.

- 1 One person speaks at a time.
- 2 Listen to understand, not just to answer.
- 3 Give reasons for your ideas.
- 4 Disagree with ideas, not people — no put-downs.
- 5 Everyone gets a turn, including quieter members.
- 6 Keep an open mind — it is okay to change your view.

Groups that follow ground rules make better decisions — and everyone is willing to support them.

*A list of six ground rules for respectful deliberation: 1 one person speaks at a time, 2 listen to understand not just to answer, 3 give reasons for your ideas, 4 disagree with ideas not people with no put-downs, 5 everyone gets a turn including quieter members, 6 keep an open mind because it is okay to change your view*

Ground rules matter most when people disagree. Disagreeing with an idea is a normal part of deliberation; put-downs are not, because they stop people sharing their views.

## 6. Reflecting on how we decided

The last step of deliberation is **reflection** — looking back at *how* the group decided, not just *what* it decided. Reflection is what turns one decision into better decisions next time.

## Reflecting: how did we decide?

After a group decision, take a moment to think about HOW the group decided. These prompts help.

|                          |                                                |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Did everyone get a turn to speak?              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Did we listen to each other?                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Did anyone change their mind? What changed it? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | What helped us decide?                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | What was hard?                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | What would we do differently next time?        |

Reflecting helps a group deliberate better every time it tries.

*A checklist of six reflection prompts: did everyone get a turn to speak, did we listen to each other, did anyone change their mind and what changed it, what helped us decide, what was hard, what would we change next time*

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### Worked examples

#### **Example 1 — worked step by step: three communities respond to one real issue**

In Victoria, the government banned six single-use plastic items — drinking straws, drink stirrers, cutlery, plates, cotton buds, and cups and food boxes made of light foam plastic — from 1 February 2023. The diagram below shows the key facts of this real issue.

# Victoria's single-use plastics ban — key facts

Single-use plastics are items made to be used once and thrown away.

## WHAT

From 1 February 2023, six single-use plastic items are banned in Victoria: drinking straws, drink stirrers, cutlery, plates, cotton buds, and cups and food boxes made of light foam plastic.

## WHY

Single-use plastics make up a third of the litter in Victoria's streets and waterways. They stay in the environment a long time, harm wildlife, and get into food and water.

## WHO

The ban applies to every business or group that sells or hands out these items. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) enforces the ban.

## EXCEPTION

Plastic straws are still available to people who need them because of a disability or a medical need.

## Timeline of Victoria's plastic bans

1 November 2019

1 February 2023

Lightweight plastic shopping bags banned in shops

Six single-use plastic items banned

Source: Environment Protection Authority Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).

*A fact box about Victoria's single-use plastics ban: what is banned from 1 February 2023, why (a third of litter in streets and waterways, harm to wildlife), who the ban applies to (every business or group, enforced by the EPA), the straw exception for disability or medical need, and a timeline showing the bag ban of 1 November 2019 and the six-item ban of 1 February 2023*

The same issue touched different communities, and they responded in different ways. Let us deliberate about it using the seven steps.

| Step                                    | Working                                                                                                                                                                      | Comment                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Understand the issue                 | Victoria's streets and waterways had large amounts of single-use plastic litter, so the government banned six single-use plastic items from 1 February 2023.                 | State the issue in one or two sentences, using facts.  |
| 2. Gather the facts                     | The items made up about a third of the litter. The ban applies to every business or group that sells or hands out the items. Straws stay available for people who need them. | Facts from a trustworthy source keep the talk honest.  |
| 3. Listen to different points of view   | Three communities responded: the Victorian Government, businesses, and community groups with their customers.                                                                | The diagram below shows each response and its reasons. |
| 4. Weigh each response at its strongest | Government: made one rule for everyone and worked with                                                                                                                       | Put each view in its strongest form before judging it. |

| Step                                                 | Working                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Comment                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                      | businesses first. Businesses: changed their items so people could still buy food and drinks. Community groups and customers: pushed for the ban by sending thousands of responses supporting it.                                                                                                              |                                                                       |
| 5. Decide which response you agree with, and say why | A model answer: “I agree most with the community groups and customers, because they used a democratic way to make change — they shared their views with the government and gave reasons. But I also see that the government’s response made the change apply to everyone, and that businesses had to adjust.” | Any choice can be a good answer. What makes it strong is the reasons. |
| 6. Check the limits of your own view                 | The ban made some things harder for businesses at first, and the straw exception shows the rule had to think about people with different needs.                                                                                                                                                               | Naming what your view might miss makes your thinking stronger.        |

## Three communities respond to the single-use plastics issue

The same issue, three different responses.

| Community                                           | How it responded                                                                         | Why                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Victorian Government                            | Made the ban into law. It worked with businesses first, and the EPA enforces the ban.    | Litter harms wildlife and the environment, and thousands of responses supported a ban. |
| Businesses — shops, supermarkets and takeaway shops | Switched to allowed items, such as metal cutlery, and paper or wood stirrers and plates. | The ban applies to every business that sells or hands out these items.                 |
| Community groups and customers                      | Sent thousands of responses to the government supporting the ban.                        | They want less litter in streets and waterways, and less harm to wildlife.             |

### Which response do you agree with most — and why?

Source: Environment Protection Authority Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).

*A table showing three communities’ responses to the single-use plastics issue — the Victorian Government made the ban into law, businesses switched to allowed items such as metal cutlery and paper or wood stirrers, and community groups with customers sent thousands of responses supporting the ban — with the reasons for each response*

*Source: Environment Protection Authority Victoria, single-use plastics information for businesses (archived 31 August 2024; retrieved 26 August 2026); Environment Protection Amendment (Banning Single-Use Plastic Items) Regulations 2022 (Vic), Statutory Rule No. 85/2022.*

### Example 2 — worked step by step: a class consensus, modelled on a real Victorian rule

From the start of the 2020 school year, every Victorian government school has had a mobile phone policy: phones brought to school are switched off and stored safely for the whole school day. The policy set the rule for all schools — but *how* a class stores its phones is a question each class can decide for itself. The diagram below shows the key facts of the real policy.

# Mobile phones in Victorian government schools — key facts

|                         |                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>WHEN</b>             | From the start of the 2020 school year, every Victorian government school has had a mobile phone policy.                                 |
| <b>THE RULE</b>         | Phones brought to school must be switched off and stored safely for the whole school day.                                                |
| <b>WHY</b>              | Phones can disturb lessons and be misused, including for cyberbullying. Without them, students talk and move around more at break times. |
| <b>EXCEPTIONS</b>       | A student may use a phone to manage a health condition, or for a learning task when a teacher or the principal says yes.                 |
| <b>KEEPING IN TOUCH</b> | Parents who need to reach their child during the day contact the school office.                                                          |

The policy set the rule for all schools. Each class still has to decide HOW phones are stored — a question made for a class consensus.

Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training, information for parents (archived 20 October 2020; retrieved 26 August 2026).

*A fact box about mobile phones in Victorian government schools: from the start of the 2020 school year every school has had a policy, phones are switched off and stored safely all day, the reasons (less disruption and misuse including cyberbullying, more talking and activity at break times), the exceptions (health conditions and teacher-approved learning), and that parents contact the school office to reach their child*

Now imagine your class is going to decide how phones are stored during class time. Here is one way the deliberation could run, step by step.

| Step                               | Working                                                                                                                                                                      | Comment                                                         |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. State the issue in one sentence | “How do we store our phones safely during class, so nobody is distracted and no phone goes missing?”                                                                         | A shared question keeps everyone on the same issue.             |
| 2. Agree on ground rules           | One speaker at a time; listen to understand; give reasons; no put-downs; everyone gets a turn.                                                                               | Ground rules first, ideas second.                               |
| 3. Share ideas with reasons        | Idea A: each student keeps their phone in their own bag. Idea B: phones go in a labelled pocket chart at the front. Idea C: phones go in a locked box on the teacher’s desk. | Every idea comes with a reason, so there is something to weigh. |
| 4. Look for common ground          | Everyone wants phones to be safe, no phone use during lessons, and quick collection at the end of the day.                                                                   | Common ground is the seed of a consensus.                       |
| 5. Adjust the ideas into one plan  | A numbered pocket chart at the front; each student checks their phone is off before it goes in; the chart sits in a locked cupboard; a                                       | Ideas A, B and C each gave something to the plan.               |

| Step                                        | Working                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Comment                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                             | two-minute collection routine at the end of the day.                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                       |
| 6. Test for consensus                       | Ask: “Can everyone live with this plan and support it?” Students who wanted the locked box agree the locked cupboard keeps phones safe. Students who wanted their own bag agree the chart stops distraction. Every member says yes. | Consensus reached — not everyone’s first choice, but a plan everyone can support.     |
| 7. Reflect on how the consensus was reached | “We reached consensus by listening to every idea, finding what we all wanted, and adjusting the ideas into one plan. Next time we would give quieter students even more time to speak.”                                             | Reflection uses the prompts from Theory 6, and it makes the next deliberation better. |

*Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training, mobile phone policy information for parents (archived 20 October 2020; retrieved 26 August 2026). The class scenario is a model written for this workbook; the policy it is modelled on is real.*

## Practice questions

### Guided questions

**Q1.** Match each word to its meaning.

| Word           | Meaning                                                                |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) deliberate | (i) a group of people who share something, such as a place or a school |
| (b) consensus  | (ii) to think and talk carefully before deciding                       |
| (c) community  | (iii) a topic people may have different views about                    |
| (d) issue      | (iv) a decision everyone in a group can accept and support             |

**Q2.** The seven steps of deliberation below are out of order. Rewrite them in the correct order.

Weigh the reasons · Understand the issue · Reflect · Listen to different points of view · Decide · Gather the facts · Look for common ground

**Q3.** Consensus or not? Say whether each group has reached a consensus, and give one reason for your answer.

- - (a) A club votes 17 to 13 on a new training night. The 13 are unhappy and say they will not come on that night.
- - (b) After everyone shares ideas, two ideas are joined into one plan, and every member says they can support it.
- - (c) A team captain chooses the team uniform alone and tells everyone what to buy.
- - (d) Everyone agrees except one student, and the group tells that student to just accept it.

**Q4.** Copy the table and fill in the two blank rows with communities *you* belong to, and one issue that might matter to each.

| Community I belong to | An issue that might matter to it |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| My class              |                                  |

**Q5.** Copy the table and fill it in from the diagram in Example 1.

| Community                      | How it responded to the plastics issue |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| The Victorian Government       |                                        |
| Businesses                     |                                        |
| Community groups and customers |                                        |

**Q6.** Choose two ground rules from Theory 5. For each, explain in one sentence how it helps a group make a better decision.

### ***Independent questions***

**Q7.** Explain why deliberation is a good way for groups to make decisions in a democracy. Give at least two reasons.

**Q8.** A consensus and a majority vote are both fair ways for a group to decide. Give one strength of each.

**Q9.** Of the three communities' responses to the single-use plastics issue in Example 1, which do you agree with most? Give two reasons for your choice, and one fair point from a response you did *not* choose.

**Q10.** A student says: "Consensus means everyone in the group thinks the same thing." Do you agree? Use the diagram from Theory 4 to justify your answer.

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## **Source inquiry**

### **Source 1 — A short brief on Victoria's single-use plastics ban**

- From 1 February 2023, six single-use plastic items are banned in Victoria: drinking straws, drink stirrers, cutlery, plates, cotton buds, and cups and food boxes made of light foam plastic.
- Single-use plastics made up about a third of the litter in Victoria's streets and waterways. They harm wildlife and get into food and water.
- The ban applies to every business or group that sells or hands out these items. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) makes sure the ban is followed.
- Before the ban began, the government asked for views. Businesses, community groups and customers sent thousands of responses, and most supported the ban.

- Plastic straws are still available to people who need them because of a disability or a medical need.

*(Facts drawn from Environment Protection Authority Victoria; brief written for this workbook; retrieved 26 August 2026.)*

**SQ1.** From Source 1, name three of the banned single-use plastic items.

**SQ2.** From Source 1, give two reasons Victoria banned these items.

**SQ3.** Source 1 says thousands of responses were sent before the ban began. Explain what this tells you about how one community responded to the issue.

**SQ4.** With your class, choose one issue that affects your class or school this term. Deliberate using the seven steps, try to reach a consensus, and then write two sentences reflecting on *how* your class reached (or did not reach) its decision.

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## Answers

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

**Q2.** Understand the issue → Gather the facts → Listen to different points of view → Weigh the reasons → Look for common ground → Decide → Reflect.

**Q3.** (a) Not a consensus — it was a majority vote, and the smaller side does not support the decision. (b) A consensus — every member can accept and support the plan. (c) Not a consensus — one person decided for everyone else. (d) Not a consensus — one member was not listened to and was left out.

**Q4.** Answers will vary. Check: each row names a real community the student belongs to, and the issue is one that could matter to that community.

**Q5.** Government: made the ban into law, worked with businesses first, and the EPA makes sure it is followed. Businesses: switched to allowed items such as metal cutlery and paper or wood stirrers and plates. Community groups and customers: sent thousands of responses supporting the ban.

**Q6.** Answers will vary. Example: “One person speaks at a time, so every idea can actually be heard. Give reasons, so the group has something to weigh, not just opinions.”

**Q7.** Answers will vary. Strong answers note at least two of: more voices and points of view are heard before deciding; people give reasons, so decisions are based on reasons, not on who is loudest; people are more willing to support a decision they had a say in; it treats members as equals.

**Q8.** Consensus: everyone is heard and the whole group stands behind the decision, so nobody is left out. Majority vote: it is quick, and one person who will not agree cannot hold the group up.

**Q9.** Answers will vary. A strong answer gives two reasons for the chosen response and names one fair point from another response (for example, that the government’s response made the change apply to everyone, or that businesses still kept food and drinks available).

**Q10.** Disagree. The diagram shows consensus is *not* everyone thinking the same thing; it is a decision everyone can accept and support. Members can keep different first choices and still support the group’s plan.

**SQ1.** Any three of: drinking straws, drink stirrers, cutlery, plates, cotton buds, cups and food boxes made of light foam plastic.

**SQ2.** Any two of: the items made up about a third of the litter in streets and waterways; they harm wildlife; they get into food and water.

**SQ3.** It shows a community (community groups and customers, and businesses) responded by sharing its views with the government before the decision was made — taking part in the decision instead of just answering after it was made, and that most who wrote supported the ban.

**SQ4.** Answers will vary. Check: the class named one real issue, followed the steps, tested for consensus (“can everyone live with this and support it?”), and the two reflection sentences describe *how* the class decided (for example, listening, adjusting ideas, finding common ground), not just what was decided.

## Why taking part in democracy matters

Chapter 4 · Skills: participating and communicating · Section 4B · Content description VC2HC6S06 · Draws on elaborations VC2HC6S06.E01, VC2HC6S06.E02, VC2HC6S06.E03

In Australia, citizens who are 18 or over must enrol and vote — but voting is only one way to take part. People also sign petitions, volunteer in community groups, write to their local member, and talk decisions through together. This section asks **why** taking part matters. You will run a classroom election, see how active citizens reach a civic goal, and work out how deliberation and negotiation are also forms of participation.

**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.

- **Democratic processes** — the ways a democracy makes decisions and chooses people to lead, such as elections, petitions to parliament, and talking decisions through together. (This is the sense used in the Victorian Curriculum.)
- **Participate / participation** — taking part: having a say in decisions and in choosing people to lead.
- **Active citizenship** — when members of a community take part and work together to make their community better or to reach a shared goal.
- **Civic goal** — a goal that is for the good of the community, not just for one person.
- **Deliberation** — talking carefully together before a decision: listening to every idea and every reason.
- **Negotiated outcome** — an agreement reached when people who want different things talk, and each side gives a little, until everyone can live with the result.
- **Compulsory** — required by law. In Australia, enrolling to vote and voting are compulsory for citizens who are 18 or over.
- **Secret ballot** — voting in a way that no one can see or check your choice.
- **Answerable** — having to explain your decisions to others, and facing the result if they are not happy with them.

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

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## Theory

### 1. Many ways to take part

Voting on election day is the most famous way to participate, but it is not the only way. The six cards below are all **democratic processes**: each one is a way of having a say, or of choosing people to lead, or of working with others on a shared goal. You do not have to be 18 to do most of them.

# Ways people can participate in democratic processes

Voting is only one of them.



**Every one of these ways is a form of participation.**

*Original figure for this workbook.*

*A grid of six cards showing ways people can participate in democratic processes: vote in elections, stand as a candidate, sign or start a petition, join in community groups, deliberate together, and contact elected members, each with a short note*

Every one of these counts as participation for the same reason: it is a way of putting your voice into a shared decision.

## **2. Five reasons why participation matters**

Why do people take part at all? This section uses five reasons. They are a checklist you can use in every question and every answer.

# Why do people participate? Five reasons

Each reason is explained in this section.

| Reason                                      | What it means                                                                                                            | An example                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Your voice counts</b>                 | Taking part is how you let others know what you think and what you need.                                                 | Voting for the candidate you think will do the best job.                            |
| <b>2. Decisions reflect the people</b>      | When many people take part, decisions are more likely to match what the community wants.                                 | A class vote where every student votes gives a result the whole class can accept.   |
| <b>3. Leaders are kept answerable</b>       | If people take part, leaders know they must explain their decisions and do a good job, or they will not be chosen again. | At an election, voters can choose a different representative if they are not happy. |
| <b>4. Shared values are upheld</b>          | Participating keeps democratic values strong, such as fairness, equality and free and fair elections.                    | Everyone voting in secret means no one can be forced or watched.                    |
| <b>5. Working together gets things done</b> | Some goals are too big for one person. Joining with others makes change possible.                                        | Volunteers working together to keep their local beach safe.                         |

Original figure for this workbook.

*A three-column table of five reasons to participate. Reason 1, your voice counts: taking part lets others know what you think and need, for example voting for the candidate you think will do the best job. Reason 2, decisions reflect the people: when many take part, decisions match what the community wants, for example a class vote where every student votes. Reason 3, leaders are kept answerable: if people take part, leaders must explain their decisions or they will not be chosen again, for example voters choosing a different representative. Reason 4, shared values are upheld: participating keeps fairness, equality and free and fair elections strong, for example everyone voting in secret. Reason 5, working together gets things done: some goals are too big for one person, for example volunteers keeping their local beach safe*

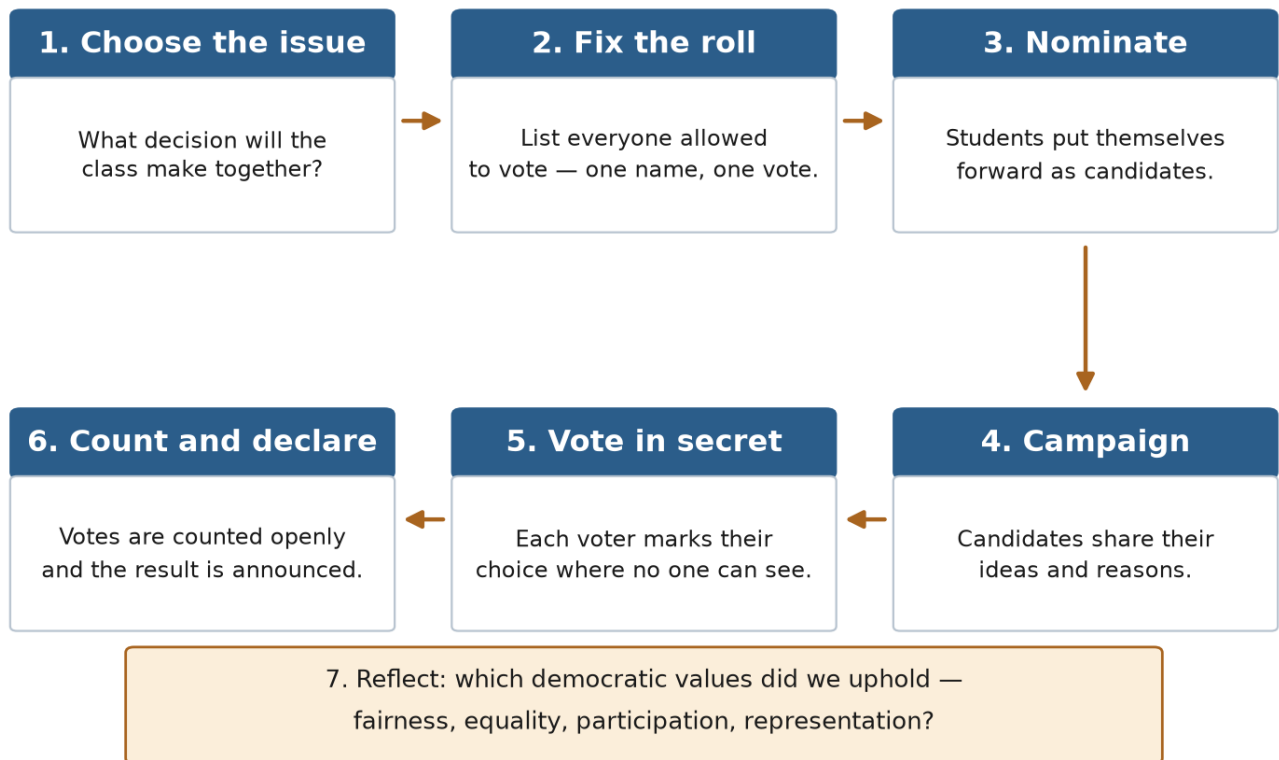
Keep these five reasons nearby. The rest of the section shows each one in action.

## 3. Reason in action: electing a representative

The Victorian Curriculum suggests acting out an election, or choosing a representative for the class (see also Section 1A). A class election uses the same shape as a real one run by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) or by the Victorian Electoral Commission.

# Running a classroom election, step by step

A role-play of a real election (Section 4B, Example 1).



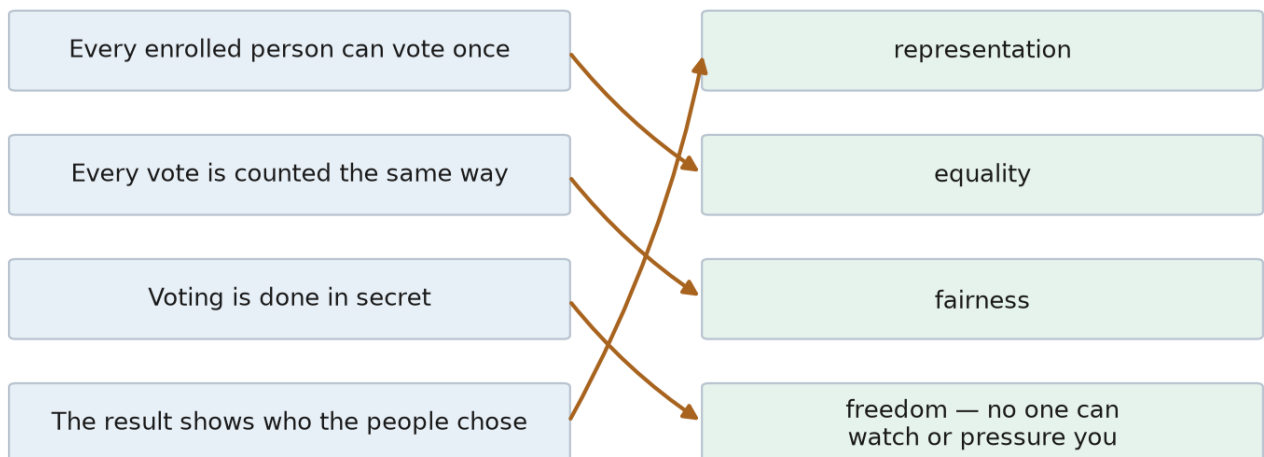
Original figure for this workbook.

*A step-by-step flow chart for running a classroom election: 1 choose the issue, 2 fix the roll so every voter has one name and one vote, 3 nominate as candidates, 4 campaign by sharing ideas and reasons, 5 vote in secret, 6 count openly and declare the result, and 7 reflect on which democratic values were upheld*

When a class runs these steps, it is not just a game. Each feature of a fair election **upholds** a democratic value — the diagram below shows which one.

# How participating in an election upholds democratic values

Match the feature of a fair election with the value it upholds.



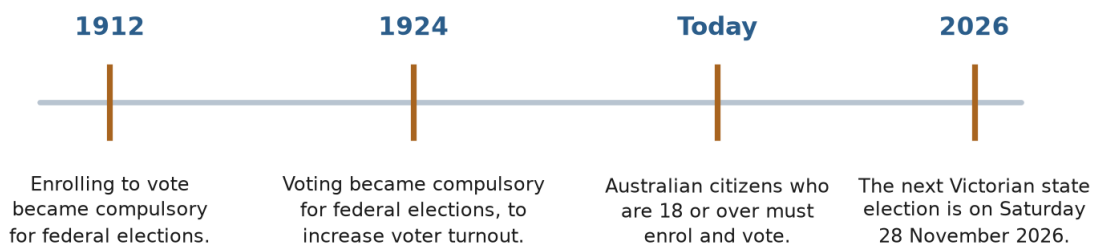
Original figure for this workbook.

*A matching diagram linking four features of a fair election to four democratic values: every enrolled person can vote once matches equality, every vote is counted the same way matches fairness, voting is done in secret matches freedom because no one can watch or pressure you, and the result shows who the people chose matches representation*

Australia also made participation part of the law. The timeline below shows when enrolling and voting became **compulsory** for federal elections, and what that means today.

## Voting in Australia: enrolment and voting are compulsory

Key facts from the Australian Electoral Commission.



If an enrolled voter does not vote without a good reason, they can be fined a small amount.

Sources: Australian Electoral Commission, 'Compulsory voting' backgrounder; Victorian Electoral Commission, 'State elections' (retrieved 26 August 2026).

*A timeline of compulsory voting in Australia: in 1912 enrolling to vote became compulsory for federal elections, in 1924 voting became compulsory to increase how many people vote, today Australian citizens who are 18 or over must enrol and vote, and the next Victorian state election is on Saturday 28 November 2026, with a note that an enrolled voter who does not vote without a good reason can be fined a small amount*

**A word to know:** an enrolled voter who does not vote can be fined a small amount **unless** they have a good reason, such as being too sick to vote on the day. The law is about giving everyone a say, not about punishing people for no reason.

**Think about it** Australia makes voting compulsory. Some people say this is right: it keeps the number of voters high, so parliaments represent the whole community — not just the people who felt like voting — and politicians must listen to everyone, not only a few. Other people say it is wrong: a choice, they argue, only means something if you are free not to make it, and people who are made to vote may vote without thinking. Both sides want elections to be fair and representative; they disagree about whether making people vote helps or hurts that goal. With a partner, give the strongest reasons you can for **each** side, then say which side you agree with and why.

*Teacher note: mark the quality of the reasoning, not which side the student takes.*

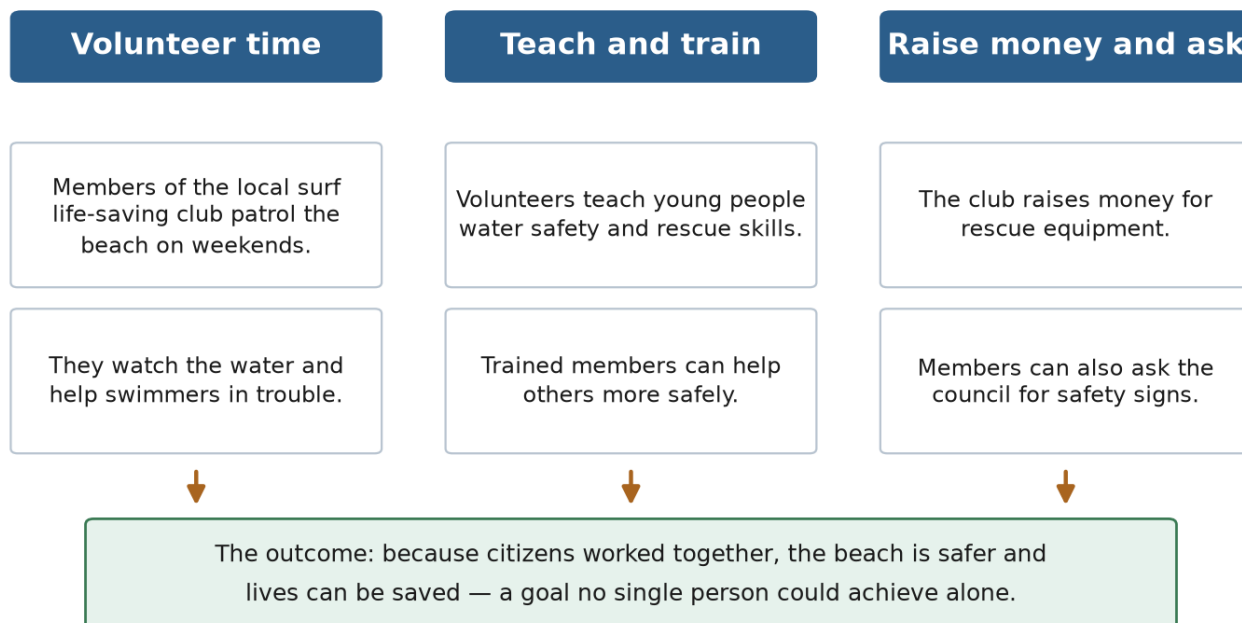
#### 4. Reason in action: active citizenship reaches a civic goal

Participation is not only about elections. **Active citizenship** is when members of a community take part and work together for a shared **civic goal** (see also Section 2E). The case study below shows how it achieves one.

### Active citizenship in action: a case study

Worked Example 2 — how active citizenship reaches a civic goal.

**Civic goal: keep the local beach safe for everyone**



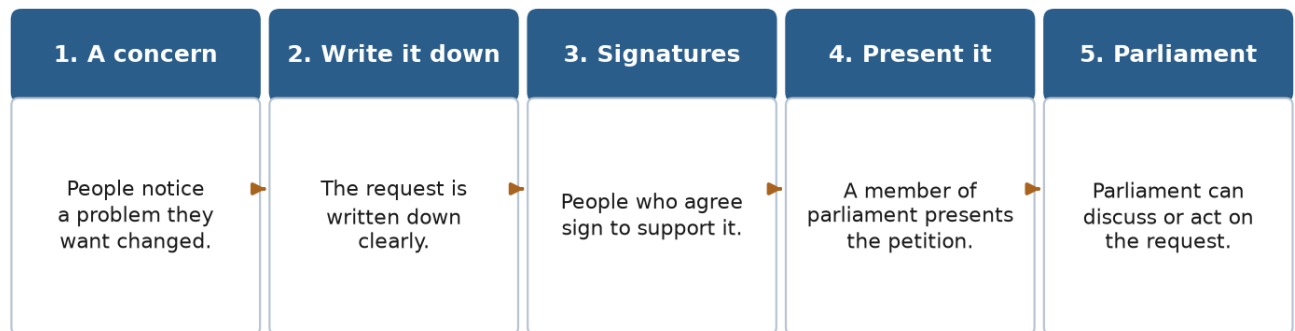
*Surf life-saving clubs and rural fire services are named in the Victorian Curriculum (VC2HC6K08.E01).*

*A case study of active citizenship with the civic goal of keeping the local beach safe for everyone, in three columns: volunteer time, where surf life-saving club members keep watch over the beach and help swimmers in trouble; teach and train, where volunteers teach young people water safety and rescue skills; and raise money and ask, where the club raises money for rescue equipment and can ask the council for safety signs, all leading to the outcome that the beach is safer and lives can be saved*

A petition is another way active citizens add their voices together, and it can travel all the way to parliament.

## A petition: one way active citizenship can reach parliament

People in Victoria can start or sign petitions to the Parliament of Victoria.



Why participate this way? A petition lets many people add their voice to one request, so parliament can see how strongly the community feels about an issue.

*Original figure for this workbook; the petition process is a real process of the Parliament of Victoria.*

*A five-step flow chart showing how a petition reaches the Parliament of Victoria: 1 a concern, where people notice a problem they want changed; 2 write it down clearly; 3 signatures, where people who agree sign to support it; 4 present it, where a member of parliament presents the petition; and 5 parliament, where parliament can discuss or act on the request, with a note that a petition lets many people add their voice to one request*

One signature can be ignored. Thousands of signatures, or a beach full of trained volunteers, cannot. That is reason 5 at work: **working together gets things done**.

### 5. Reasons in action: deliberation and negotiating an outcome

Not every shared decision ends in a vote. The Victorian Curriculum names two more forms of participation: **deliberation** and **negotiating an outcome** (see also Section 4A). Both happen at school, and both happen in Victoria's real democratic processes.

## Two more forms of democratic participation

You do not have to be old enough to vote to take part.

### Deliberation

#### What it is:

Talking carefully together before a decision: listen to every idea and every reason, then work towards a decision the group can make.

#### At school:

The class discusses two ideas for the school fete and picks the one with the best reasons.

#### In Victoria:

Councils must have a written plan for asking the community before big decisions (Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)).

### Negotiating an outcome

#### What it is:

When people want different things, they talk and compromise until they reach an agreement everyone can live with.

#### At school:

Two year levels both want the hall on Friday. They talk and agree to share the times.

#### In Victoria:

Committees of the Parliament of Victoria ask the public to send in ideas in writing before they report on an issue.

**Both forms work because people give reasons and listen — that is how shared decisions get made.**  
*Original figure for this workbook.*

*A two-panel diagram comparing deliberation and negotiating an outcome as forms of participation. Each panel says what it is, gives a school example such as a class discussing two ideas for the school fete or two year levels agreeing to share the hall, and gives a Victorian example: councils must have a written plan for asking the community before big decisions under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic), and committees of the Parliament of Victoria ask the public to send in ideas in writing before they report on an issue*

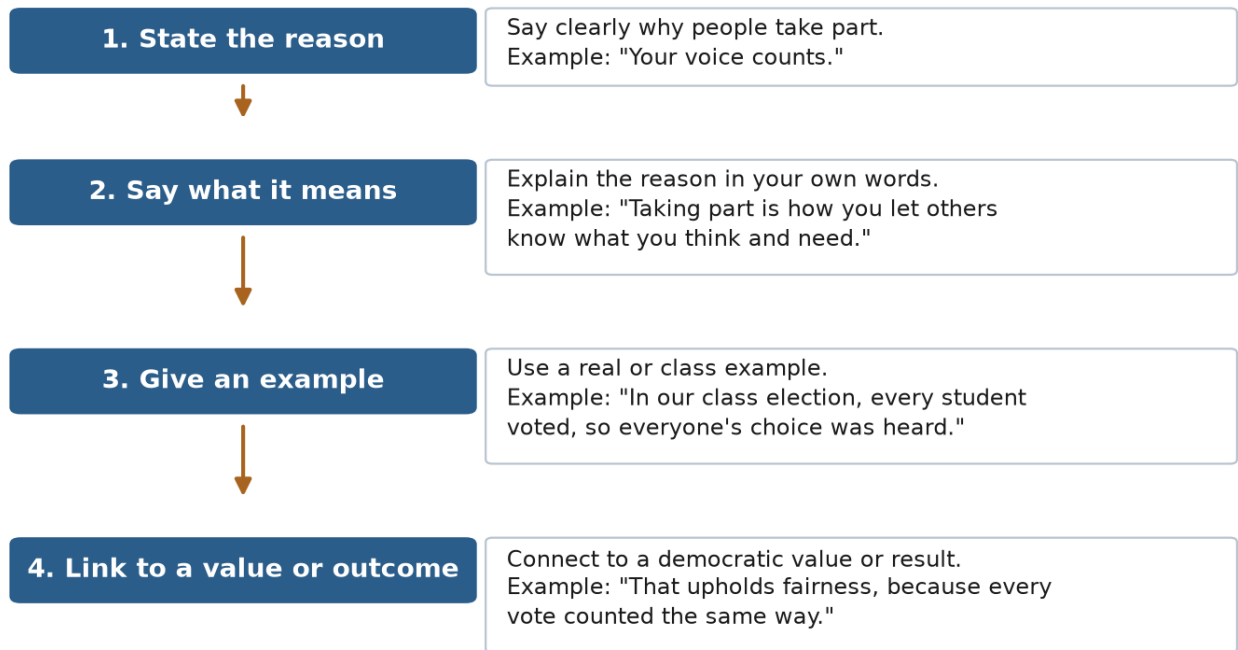
Why are these forms of participation? Because your voice enters the decision even without a ballot paper: your reasons are heard (reason 1), the decision is more likely to match what people need (reason 2), and leaders hear what the community thinks (reason 3).

### 6. How to explain a reason: the four-step frame

This section's content description asks you to **explain** reasons to participate. Use this frame to build any explanation, in writing or out loud.

# How to explain a reason for participating

Use these four steps to build your answer.



Original figure for this workbook.

*A four-step frame for explaining a reason for participating: 1 state the reason, for example your voice counts; 2 say what it means in your own words; 3 give an example, real or from class; and 4 link it to a democratic value or outcome, for example that upholds fairness because every vote counted the same way*

## Worked examples

### Example 1 — worked step by step

Your class has just run the role-play election from part 3 of the Theory. In the real world, the federal election was held on **Saturday 3 May 2025**, and the next Victorian state election is on **Saturday 28 November 2026**. Using the four-step frame, explain why taking part in elections matters for upholding democratic values.

| Step                 | Working                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Comment                                         |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1. State the reason  | Participating in elections is important because it is how every person gets a say in who represents them.                                                                                                              | Reasons 1 and 4 from the reasons table.         |
| 2. Say what it means | In Australia, enrolling and voting are compulsory for citizens who are 18 or over, and voting is by secret ballot — so every enrolled person votes once, and no one can watch or force them.                           | Use the words from the “Before we start” box.   |
| 3. Give an example   | In our class vote, every student voted once in secret, so the winner had to listen to everyone. In the real world, millions of Australians voted in the federal election on Saturday 3 May 2025, run by the Australian | One class example plus one real, dated example. |

| Step               | Working                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Comment                              |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4. Link to a value | <p>Electoral Commission.</p> <p>When everyone takes part, the result shows the people's choice. That upholds representation — and because every vote counts the same way, it upholds fairness and equality too.</p> | Values from the value-links diagram. |

The model below is the same answer with each part coloured, so you can check your own answer part by part.

## A model explanation (Worked Example 1)

Colour-code: which part of the answer does each sentence do?

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Reason</b>         | Participating in elections is important because it is how every person gets a say in who represents them.                                                                                |
| <b>What it means</b>  | In Australia, voting is compulsory for citizens who are 18 or over, and voting is done in secret. That means every enrolled person can vote once, and no one can watch or pressure them. |
| <b>Example</b>        | At the federal election on Saturday 3 May 2025, run by the Australian Electoral Commission, millions of Australians voted to choose their representatives.                               |
| <b>Link to values</b> | When people take part, the result reflects the people's choices. That upholds representation, and because every vote counts the same way, it upholds fairness and equality too.          |

*Original model written for this workbook; election facts: Australian Electoral Commission (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

*A colour-coded model explanation in four parts: Reason, participating in elections is important because it is how every person gets a say in who represents them; What it means, in Australia voting is compulsory for citizens who are 18 or over and done in secret, so every enrolled person can vote once and no one can watch or force them; Example, at the federal election on Saturday 3 May 2025 run by the Australian Electoral Commission millions of Australians voted to choose their representatives; and Link to values, when people take part the result reflects the people's choices, which upholds representation, fairness and equality*

*Source: the 2025 federal election was held on Saturday 3 May 2025, and enrolling and voting are compulsory for citizens who are 18 or over (Australian Electoral Commission; retrieved 26 August 2026); Victorian state elections are held every four years on the last Saturday of November under the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), and the next one is Saturday 28 November 2026 (Victorian Electoral Commission, 'State elections'; retrieved 26 August 2026).*

### Example 2 — worked step by step

A local surf life-saving club works to keep its beach safe. Using the four-step frame, explain how this **active citizenship** reaches a **civic goal**.

| Step                                      | Working                                                                                                                                                                                          | Comment                                        |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Name the civic goal                    | Keep the local beach safe for everyone — a goal for the whole community, not for one person.                                                                                                     | A civic goal is a shared good.                 |
| 2. Say what active citizenship means      | Active citizenship is when members of a community take part and work together to reach a shared goal.                                                                                            | The meaning from the “Before we start” box.    |
| 3. Show what the citizens did             | Members volunteer their time to keep watch over the beach, they teach young people water safety, they raise money for rescue equipment, and they ask the council for safety signs.               | The three kinds of action from the case study. |
| 4. Finish with the outcome and the reason | Because citizens worked together, the beach is safer and lives can be saved — a goal no single person could achieve alone. That is the reason to participate: working together gets things done. | Reason 5 from the reasons table.               |

*Source: surf life-saving clubs and rural fire services are named as community groups in the Victorian Curriculum (VC2HC6K08.E01); the petition process shown in this section is a real process of the Parliament of Victoria (retrieved 26 August 2026).*

## Practice questions

### Guided questions

**Q1.** Fill each gap with a word or phrase from the “Before we start” box: *active citizenship · civic goal · compulsory · deliberation · negotiated outcome · secret ballot*.

- (a) For Australian citizens who are 18 or over, voting is \_\_\_\_\_.
- (b) Keeping the local beach safe for everyone is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- (c) When no one can see or check your vote, voting is by \_\_\_\_\_.
- (d) Listening to every idea and every reason before a decision is \_\_\_\_\_.
- (e) When two year levels both want the hall and agree to share the times, that agreement is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- (f) When community members take part and work together for a shared goal, that is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q2.** Match each situation to the reason (1–5) from the reasons table that best explains it.

| Situation                                                                                                        | Reason |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| (a) A shy student votes for the first time and feels their choice mattered.                                      |        |
| (b) When many people vote, the result shows what the community wants.                                            |        |
| (c) At the next election, voters can choose a different representative if they are not happy.                    |        |
| (d) Every vote is counted the same way, and no one is watched while voting.                                      |        |
| (e) One student could not fix the broken drinking fountain alone, so the whole class signed a petition together. |        |

**Q3.** Use the voting timeline to complete these sentences.

- (a) In 1912, \_\_\_\_\_ to vote became compulsory for federal elections.
- (b) In 1924, \_\_\_\_\_ became compulsory for federal elections.
- (c) Today, Australian citizens who are \_\_\_\_\_ or over must enrol and vote.
- (d) The next Victorian state election is on Saturday \_\_\_\_\_.
- (e) An enrolled voter who does not vote without a good reason can be \_\_\_\_\_.

**Q4.** Use the sorting diagram below. Write each action in the box it belongs to: *voting in elections* · *active citizenship* · *deliberation and negotiating*.

## Sort the actions: which form of participation is each one?

Write each action in the box it belongs to (Practice question Q4).

|                                                       |                                                      |                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Voting in a class election                            | Signing a petition for a safer crossing              | Volunteering with a community group                            |
| Discussing ideas calmly before a class vote           | Writing to your local member about an issue          | Talking until the whole group can agree                        |
| <b>Voting in elections</b><br>-----<br>-----<br>----- | <b>Active citizenship</b><br>-----<br>-----<br>----- | <b>Deliberation and negotiating</b><br>-----<br>-----<br>----- |

*Original figure for this workbook.*

*A sorting activity with six action cards to sort: voting in a class election; signing a petition for a safer crossing; volunteering with a community group; discussing ideas calmly before a class vote; writing to your local member about an issue; talking until the whole group can agree. Below are three boxes with writing lines, one for each form of participation: voting in elections, active citizenship, and deliberation and negotiating*

Action

Box

- 
- (a) Voting in a class election
  - (b) Signing a petition for a safer crossing
  - (c) Discussing ideas calmly before a class vote
  - (d) Volunteering with a community group
  - (e) Talking until the whole group can agree
  - (f) Writing to your local member about an issue

**Q5.** These election steps are in the wrong order. Rewrite them in the correct order, using the classroom election diagram.

*campaign · count and declare · choose the issue · vote in secret · fix the roll · nominate*

**Q6.** Use steps 1 and 2 of the four-step frame with the reason “Your voice counts”.

- Step 1 (state the reason): One reason to participate is that your voice counts.
- Step 2 (say what it means): In your own words, what does “your voice counts” mean for a decision in your class?

## Independent questions

Answer each question in two or three full sentences. Use the four-step frame and the reasons table to help you.

**Q7.** Choose one of the five reasons from the reasons table. Explain it using all four steps of the frame, with one example from school or from Australia.

**Q8.** “One person’s voice changes nothing, so there is no point in participating.” Do you agree? Answer using two different reasons from the reasons table.

**Q9.** A class is deciding its fete idea by deliberation, not by a vote. Explain how deliberation is still a form of democratic participation, and name one democratic value it upholds.

**Q10.** Two year levels both want the school hall on Friday afternoon. They talk and agree to share the times. Explain how this negotiated outcome is a form of participation, and say whose voices entered the decision.

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## Source inquiry

In Skills sections, the investigation itself is the task. Read the two sources, then follow the planner: gather your own evidence at school, organise it, and explain what you found.

### Source 1 — A two-minute speech at a school assembly

Last term our class chose our representative by voting. Every student voted once, in secret, and the winner now speaks for our whole class at the student council. We also collected 214 signatures asking the council for a safer crossing outside the school gate. Why did we do it? First, because every voice counts. Second, because decisions match what people want when many people take part. And third, because working together gets things done — one signature changes nothing, but 214 signatures got us a meeting with the council.

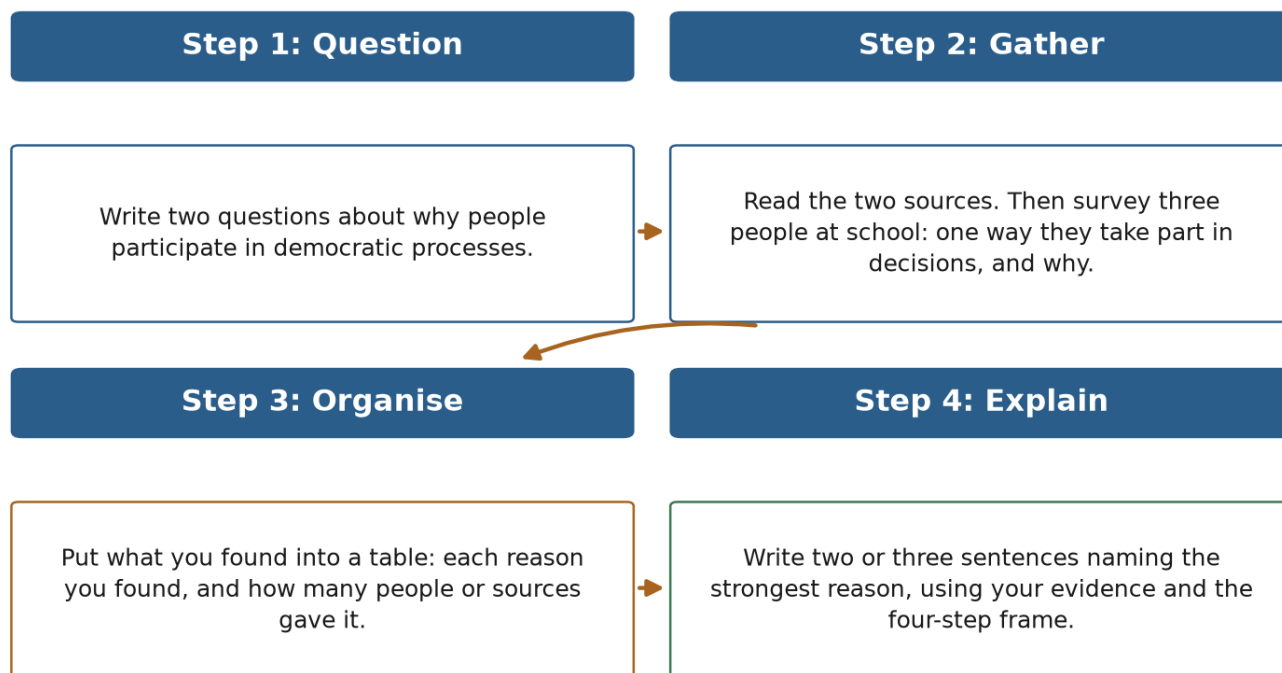
*(Written for this workbook.)*

### Source 2 — Facts box

- In Australia, citizens who are 18 or over must enrol and vote, and voting is by secret ballot.
- Enrolling became compulsory for federal elections in 1912; voting became compulsory in 1924.
- The Australian Electoral Commission ran the federal election on Saturday 3 May 2025.
- The next Victorian state election is on Saturday 28 November 2026.
- People under 18 can still participate: by deliberation, petitions, volunteering, and contacting elected members.

## Your inquiry planner: why do people participate?

Source inquiry task — the investigation itself is the task.



Original figure for this workbook.

*An inquiry planner in four steps: Step 1 question, write two questions about why people participate in democratic processes; Step 2 gather, read the two sources and survey three people at school about one way they take part in decisions and why; Step 3 organise, put what you found into a table of each reason and how many people or sources gave it; Step 4 explain, write two or three sentences naming the strongest reason using your evidence and the four-step frame*

**SQ1.** According to Source 1, name the two ways the class participated.

**SQ2.** The speech gives three reasons (“every voice counts”; “decisions match what people want”; “working together gets things done”). Match each one to a reason number (1–5) in the reasons table.

**SQ3.** Source 2 says people under 18 can still participate. Choose one way from Source 2 and explain, in two sentences, which democratic value it upholds.

**SQ4.** Step 2 of the planner asks you to survey three people at school. Write two survey questions you could ask about why people participate.

## Answers

**Q1.** (a) compulsory. (b) civic goal. (c) secret ballot. (d) deliberation. (e) negotiated outcome. (f) active citizenship.

**Q2.** (a) 1 — your voice counts. (b) 2 — decisions reflect the people. (c) 3 — leaders are kept answerable. (d) 4 — shared values are upheld. (e) 5 — working together gets things done.

**Q3.** (a) enrolling. (b) voting. (c) 18. (d) 28 November 2026. (e) fined a small amount.

**Q4.** Voting in elections: (a). Active citizenship: (b), (d), (f). Deliberation and negotiating: (c), (e).

**Q5.** Choose the issue → fix the roll → nominate → campaign → vote in secret → count and declare.

**Q6.** Sample answer: It means that my view is part of the decision too. When everyone shares what they think and need, the class decision has to take my view into account.

**Q7.** Sample answer (reason 3): Leaders are kept answerable. This means leaders know they must explain their decisions and do a good job, or they will not be chosen again. At the 2025 federal election, voters could choose different representatives if they were not happy. That upholds fairness, because no one gets to lead without the people's say.

**Q8.** Sample answer: I disagree. One voice seems small, but reason 2 says decisions match what the community wants only when many people take part — and many “one voices” add up to 214 signatures, which got the class a meeting with the council (reason 5). If everyone said “my voice changes nothing”, no one would take part and only a few loud voices would decide.

**Q9.** Sample answer: In deliberation, every student's ideas and reasons are heard before the decision is made, so every voice still enters the decision even without a vote. That upholds equality, because every student's reasons get the same careful hearing.

**Q10.** Sample answer: Both year levels put their needs into the decision by talking, and each side gave a little until they reached an agreement everyone could live with. So the voices of both year levels entered the decision, not just the louder one — that is participation, even though no vote was held.

**SQ1.** Voting in a class election (electing a classroom representative), and signing and presenting a petition for a safer crossing.

**SQ2.** “Every voice counts” → reason 1. “Decisions match what people want” → reason 2. “Working together gets things done” → reason 5.

**SQ3.** Sample answer: Petitions uphold the value that your voice counts, because many signatures show parliament how strongly the community feels. Even under 18, my signature would be one more voice in that total.

**SQ4.** Sample answers: “What is one way you take part in decisions at school or at home?” and “Why do you choose to take part (or not)?”

## Explaining today's civic issues using different sources

Chapter 4 · Skills: participating and communicating · Section 4C · Content description VC2HC6S07 · Elaborations VC2HC6S07.E01, VC2HC6S07.E02

People in a democracy disagree about big questions: what should be against the law, how money should be spent, and who should make which rules. These big questions are called **issues**. In a democracy, people do not just argue — they **explain**. They share what they know, what they think, and how different people see the issue. In this section you will learn how to explain a civics issue using knowledge, ideas and perspectives you gather from different sources. Then you will communicate what you have learned in two real ways: you will make a **pamphlet**, and you will present a short **speech**.

**Before we start — what do these words mean here?** Some 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.

- **Issue** — a big question that people in the community disagree about and want to sort out.
- **Perspective** — a way of seeing an issue. A person's perspective is shaped by what they know, what they value, and how the issue affects them. Two people can look at the same issue and see it in different ways.
- **Political party** — an organised group of people who share ideas about how the country should be run and who put forward candidates in elections, trying to win seats in parliament. The **Australian Electoral Commission** keeps the official list of registered parties.
- **Policy** — a plan that a party or government chooses to follow on an issue.
- **Bill** — a proposed law that parliament is considering. When both houses of parliament agree to a bill and the Governor-General signs it, it becomes an **Act**, which is a real law.
- **Pamphlet** — a short printed or digital document that explains one topic to its readers.

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

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### Theory

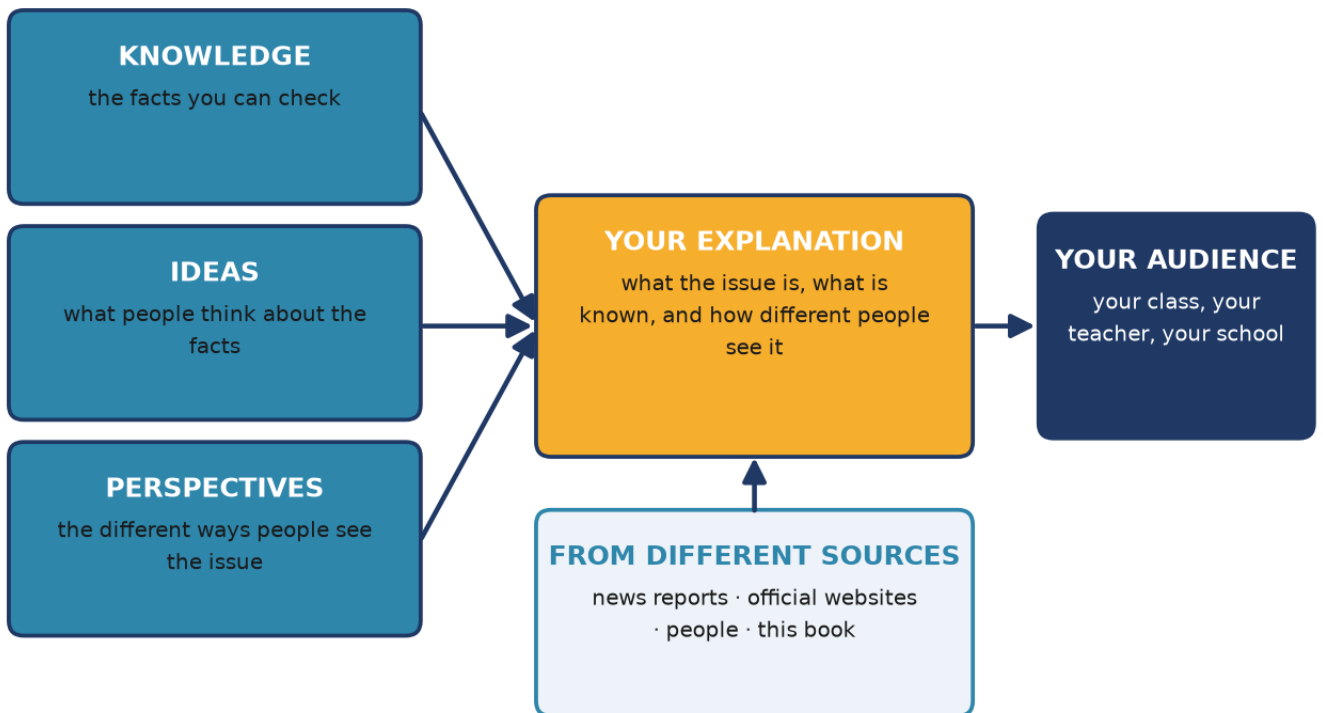
#### 1. Explaining an issue: three things to gather

To explain a civics issue well, you gather three things from your sources:

- **Knowledge** — the facts you can check, such as what a law says, when it was passed, and who voted for it.
- **Ideas** — what you and other people think about those facts, such as reasons, arguments and solutions.
- **Perspectives** — the different ways that different people and groups see the issue.

Your **sources** are where you gather these things from. Sources can be people (a classmate, a local councillor), places (your school, your council's website) or texts (news reports, the eSafety Commissioner's website, the Parliament of Australia's website, this book). The diagram below shows how the three parts come together in your explanation.

## Explaining a civics issue: gather three things



*A diagram showing that knowledge, ideas and perspectives are gathered from different sources and combined into an explanation of a civics issue for an audience*

A good explanation tells the audience what the issue is, what is known about it, and how different people see it — not just what you yourself think.

### **2. Perspectives: one issue, many eyes**

People see issues in different ways because they have different **values** (the things they believe are important), different knowledge, and different lives. A law about social media, for example, looks different to a student, a parent, a teacher, and the company that runs a platform. The table below shows how one issue can be seen in several ways.

## One issue, many eyes: young people using social media

| WHO                | WHAT THEY MIGHT THINK                                                      | WHY                                                         |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| A student          | "Social media is how my friends and I talk, share and make things."        | Staying connected with friends is a big part of their life. |
| A parent           | "I worry about what my child sees and how long they scroll."               | They are responsible for their child's safety.              |
| A teacher          | "Phones and platforms can get in the way of learning and sleep."           | They see how students behave and feel at school.            |
| A platform company | "Our service connects people. Age rules cost money and may not work well." | They built the service and earn money from users.           |

*A table showing four different perspectives on one issue — young people using social media — from a student, a parent, a teacher and a platform company, with what each might think and why*

No perspective is right or wrong by itself. Each one is a way of seeing. When you explain an issue, your job is to present each perspective in its **strongest and fairest form** — the way its own supporters would agree with. Presenting a view you disagree with in a weak or silly form is not fair, and it does not help anyone think. Before you judge a view, ask: *what would the person who holds this view say is the best reason for it?*

### 3. Political parties: where perspectives meet

In Australia, many political parties put forward candidates in elections (Section 1A). Each party is, in a way, a shared perspective: a group of people who agree about how the country should be run. Parties turn their views into **policies**, and when their members are elected to parliament they vote on bills (Section 2C).

The table below lists four parties you will often hear about in federal politics, plus one more group that is not a party.

## Parties in federal politics

| PARTY OR GROUP                     | WHAT TO KNOW                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Australian Labor Party</b>      | One of Australia's two biggest parties. It won the federal election on 3 May 2025 and formed the government. |
| <b>Liberal Party of Australia</b>  | Founded in 1944 with Robert Menzies. It is the other big party and works in a team with the National Party.  |
| <b>National Party of Australia</b> | Founded in 1920 as the Country Party. It speaks for rural and regional areas.                                |
| <b>Australian Greens</b>           | Founded in 1992. It focuses on the environment and social justice.                                           |
| <b>Independents (not a party)</b>  | Members elected without belonging to any party. They vote on each issue as they see it.                      |

*The Liberal and National parties work together as a team called the Coalition. The Australian Electoral Commission keeps the official list of registered parties.*

*A table listing four Australian political parties — the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party of Australia, the National Party of Australia and the Australian Greens — and independent members, with a short fact about each*

The Liberal and National parties work together as a team. This team is called the **Coalition**. After the federal election on 3 May 2025, the Australian Labor Party won enough seats to form the government, and the Coalition became the **opposition** — the team of parties whose job is to check the government and offer a different plan (Australian Electoral Commission; retrieved 26 August 2026).

Different parties can want the same goal but disagree about the best way to reach it. Two parties can both say “we want to keep young people safe online” and still vote in different ways on the same bill. That is why, when you explain an issue, you should look at the **reasons** behind each party's position, not just the position itself.

### 4. Case study: Australia's social media law for under-16s

This section uses one real, recent issue as its case study: the federal law that stopped children under 16 from having accounts on the biggest social media platforms.

Here are the checked facts:

- The law is the **Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024**. It changes an earlier law, the Online Safety Act 2021.
- The Labor Government introduced the bill. The Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland, brought it to the House of Representatives on 21 November 2024.
- The House of Representatives voted for the bill by 96 votes to 6. The Senate voted for it by 34 votes to 19. Parliament finally passed the bill on 29 November 2024.
- The Governor-General, Sam Mostyn, signed the bill on 10 December 2024, and it became a law.
- The main rule started on **10 December 2025**. From that day, covered platforms had to take **reasonable steps** to stop Australians under 16 from having accounts.
- The eSafety Commissioner, Australia's online safety regulator, named ten platforms it expected to follow the law, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and YouTube.
- The law does **not** punish children or parents. If a young person under 16 has an account, they have not broken the law. The duty sits with the platforms. Courts can fine a platform up to about \$54.6 million for serious failures to follow the law.

Sources: Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 (Cth), Federal Register of Legislation (No. 127 of 2024); Parliament of Australia, bill page; eSafety Commissioner (esafety.gov.au); all retrieved 26 August 2026.

The timeline below puts the steps in order.



A timeline showing the social media law: the bill introduced on 21 November 2024, the Senate vote on 28 November 2024, the Governor-General signing on 10 December 2024, the rule starting on 10 December 2025, and platforms checking ages from then on

What did the parties say? The table below sets out each party’s position and the strongest reason behind it.

### Party positions on the social media law (November 2024)

| PARTY OR GROUP                               | POSITION | STRONGEST REASON                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Australian Labor Party (introduced the law)  | FOR      | Big platforms, not families, should do the hard work of protecting children from harm.                                                                      |
| The Coalition (Liberal and National parties) | FOR      | Many parents want more support keeping children safe online.                                                                                                |
| Australian Greens                            | AGAINST  | A ban could push young people into hidden, less safe corners of the internet; age checks could threaten privacy. They wanted education and support instead. |
| Independents and other members               | SPLIT    | Some voted for the law and some voted against it, weighing the reasons on both sides.                                                                       |

A table showing the positions of the Australian Labor Party, the Coalition, the Australian Greens and independent members on the social media law, with the strongest reason for each position

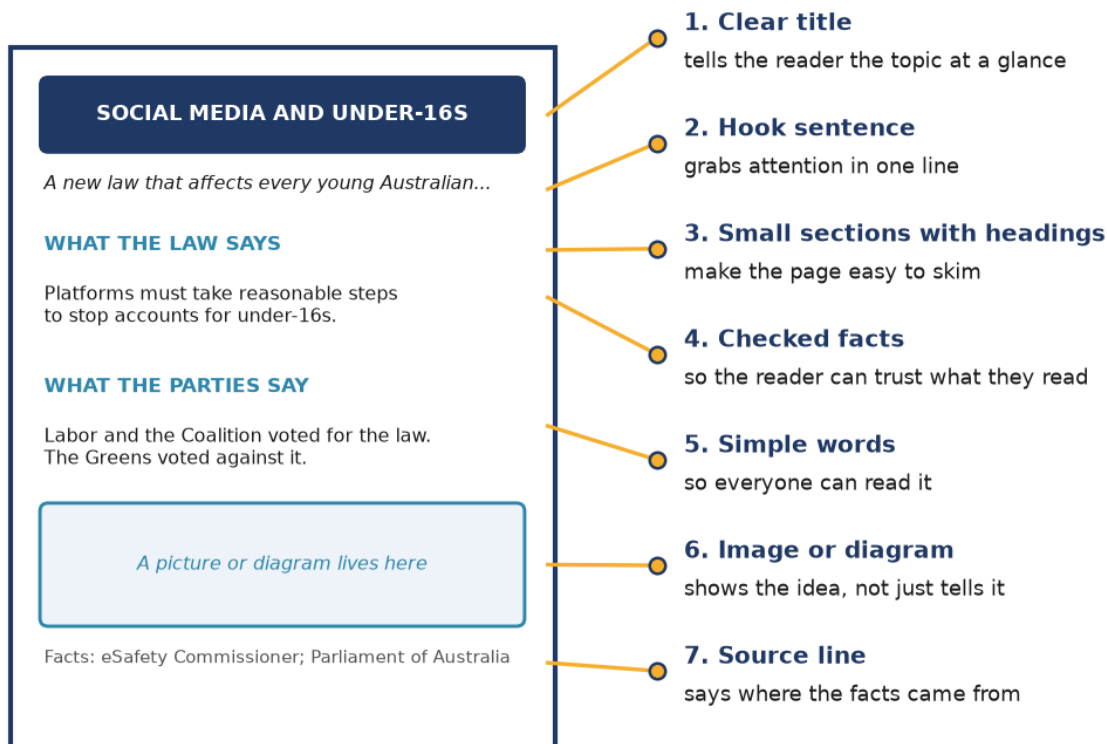
**Think about it** Both sides of this debate say they want to keep young people safe. They disagree about the best way to do it. Supporters say the law protects children and makes big platforms, not families, do the hard work. Opponents say the law could push young people into hidden, less safe corners of the internet and that age checks threaten privacy. With a partner, talk about these questions: What is the strongest reason on each side? Is it possible to agree with parts of both views? What extra knowledge would help you make up your own mind?

## 5. Communicating format 1: the pamphlet

A **pamphlet** is a short document that explains one topic to its readers. Charities, health services, councils and even parliaments use pamphlets to inform people. For your task, you will create a pamphlet that describes different political parties' positions on a proposed law or a recent policy.

A good pamphlet has clear features. The diagram below labels them.

### The features of a good pamphlet



*A labelled diagram of a pamphlet page showing its features: a clear title, a short hook sentence, small sections with headings, checked facts, simple words, an image or diagram, and a source line*

Because a pamphlet is short, every word must earn its place. Use simple words, short sentences, and facts your reader can trust. The model pamphlet below is one way to lay out the case study issue. Read it as a model, not as something to copy.

## Model pamphlet: what the parties say about the social media law

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND UNDER-16S — WHAT THE PARTIES SAY

| THE LAW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | WHAT THE PARTIES SAID                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | CHECK IT YOURSELF                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parliament passed this law in November 2024.</li><li>From 10 December 2025, big platforms must take reasonable steps to stop under-16 accounts.</li><li>Ten platforms were named, including TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.</li><li>No fines for children or parents. The duty sits with platforms.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Labor: FOR — platforms, not families, should protect children.</li><li>The Coalition: FOR — parents need more support keeping kids safe online.</li><li>The Greens: AGAINST — education beats bans; age checks risk privacy.</li><li>Independents: SPLIT — members voted both ways.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Check <a href="https://esafety.gov.au">esafety.gov.au</a> or <a href="https://aph.gov.au">aph.gov.au</a>.</li><li>Ask: what is the strongest reason on each side?</li><li>Your voice matters. Share what you learned.</li></ul> |

Model pamphlet for Section 4C · Facts: eSafety Commissioner; Parliament of Australia (retrieved 26 August 2026)

*A model pamphlet with three columns about the social media law: the key facts, the positions of the parties, and where readers can check the information for themselves*

### 6. Communicating format 2: the leadership speech

The second task is to present a speech on why you should be elected as a leader — for example, as a class representative, a school captain or a member of the student council. A leadership speech is your chance to show **active citizenship**: citizens working together, with knowledge and values, to make their community better (Sections 2D and 4B).

A strong leadership speech has the features in the table below. It draws on the democratic values from Section 1B, such as fairness, participation and respect.

## The features of a strong leadership speech

| FEATURE                       | WHAT IT DOES                          | EXAMPLE                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Opening hook</b>           | Grabs attention in one line           | <i>"Every voice in this class matters — including the quiet ones."</i>                      |
| <b>Who you are</b>            | Tells voters your name and the role   | <i>"My name is Alex, and I am running for class representative."</i>                        |
| <b>Your values</b>            | Shows what you stand for              | <i>"I stand for fairness: everyone should get a say."</i>                                   |
| <b>Your plan</b>              | Promises real actions, not just hopes | <i>"I will start a class ideas box and bring your ideas to the student council."</i>        |
| <b>Your knowledge</b>         | Shows you have done the homework      | <i>"Last term our class raised twenty good ideas. Not one reached the student council."</i> |
| <b>Closing call to action</b> | Asks listeners to act — here, to vote | <i>"Vote for a class where everyone is heard."</i>                                          |

*A table listing the features of a strong leadership speech, with an example of each: an opening hook, who you are, your values, your plan, your knowledge, and a closing call to action*

The model speech below shows these features in action. The labels in the margin name each part.

## Model speech: running for class representative

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>HOOK</b>        | Every voice in this class matters — including the quiet ones.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>WHO YOU ARE</b> | My name is Alex, and I am running for class representative.                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>VALUES</b>      | I stand for fairness. Everyone in this class should get a say in decisions that affect us. That is what democracy looks like up close.                                                       |
| <b>KNOWLEDGE</b>   | Last term our class raised twenty good ideas, but not one of them reached the student council. Ideas need a path.                                                                            |
| <b>PLAN</b>        | If you elect me, I will start a class ideas box, read every idea, and bring the top three to the student council each month. That is active citizenship: us working together on a real goal. |
| <b>CLOSE</b>       | I cannot do this alone. Vote for a class where everyone is heard.                                                                                                                            |

*A model leadership speech for a class representative election, with labels in the margin marking the opening hook, values, plan, knowledge and closing call to action*

### 7. Checklist before you share

Before you hand in your pamphlet or stand up to speak, check these five things:

1. **Knowledge:** Have I used facts that can be checked?
2. **Perspectives:** Have I shown more than one view of the issue?
3. **Fairness:** Have I given every view its strongest and fairest form?
4. **Sources:** Can I say where my facts came from?
5. **Audience:** Will my reader or listener understand my words?

### Worked examples

#### Example 1 — worked step by step

Your pamphlet needs a panel that explains the Australian Greens' position on the social media law **in a fair way**, even though you may disagree with it. Write the panel.

| Step                                 | Working                                                                                                                                    | Comment                                           |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1. State the position clearly        | The Australian Greens voted against the law.                                                                                               | Say what the party did, without judging it.       |
| 2. Give the party's strongest reason | They argued that a ban could push young people into hidden, less safe corners of the internet, and that age checks could threaten privacy. | Use the reason the party itself would agree with. |
| 3. Add what the party wanted         | They wanted more education and                                                                                                             | A fair panel shows the whole                      |

| Step                | Working                                                                                                      | Comment                                               |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| instead             | support for young people, alongside any rules.                                                               | position.                                             |
| 4. Finish neutrally | The Greens shared the goal of keeping young people safe but believed this law was the wrong way to reach it. | End by naming the shared goal, not by picking a side. |

*Source: Australian Greens' position from the Senate debate on the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 (Parliament of Australia; retrieved 26 August 2026).*

### Example 2 — worked step by step

You are running for class representative. Write your opening and your plan, drawing on one democratic value and one act of active citizenship.

| Step                                 | Working                                                                                                 | Comment                                              |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Hook the audience                 | Every voice in this class matters — including the quiet ones.                                           | Start with a short, strong idea.                     |
| 2. Say who you are and why you stand | My name is Alex, and I am running for class representative.                                             | Keep it short and clear.                             |
| 3. Name your value                   | I stand for fairness: everyone should get a say in decisions that affect them.                          | Use a value from Section 1B.                         |
| 4. Give a real plan                  | If you elect me, I will start a class ideas box and bring your ideas to the student council each month. | Active citizenship: working together on a real goal. |
| 5. Close with a call to action       | I cannot do this alone. Vote for a class where everyone is heard.                                       | Ask for support and end strong.                      |

## Practice questions

### Guided questions

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

| Word                | Meaning                                                 |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) perspective     | (i) a plan that a party or government chooses to follow |
| (b) political party | (ii) a way of seeing an issue                           |
| (c) policy          | (iii) a proposed law that parliament is considering     |
| (d) bill            | (iv) a group that puts forward candidates in elections  |

**Q2.** To explain a civics issue, you gather three things from your sources. Name all three.

**Q3.** Complete the table using the parties table in part 3 of the Theory.

| Party                       | One thing to know |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Australian Labor Party      | ...               |
| Liberal Party of Australia  | ...               |
| National Party of Australia | ...               |
| Australian Greens           | ...               |

**Q4.** Using the timeline in part 4 of the Theory, list the four main steps of the social media law in order, with their dates.

**Q5.** For each group, state its position on the social media law (for, against, or split) and one reason from the positions table. (a) Australian Labor Party. (b) The Coalition. (c) The Australian Greens. (d) Independent members.

**Q6.** List four features of a good pamphlet, using the labelled diagram in part 5 of the Theory.

### **Independent questions**

Answer each question in one or two full sentences.

**Q7.** Two people can look at the same issue and see it in different ways. Explain two reasons why this happens.

**Q8.** Choose one view on the social media law that you **disagree** with. Write that view in its strongest and fairest form, the way its own supporters would agree with it.

**Q9.** Name two features of a strong leadership speech and explain why each one matters.

**Q10.** Write an opening (two or three sentences) for your own leadership speech. It must name one democratic value and one thing you plan to do.

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## **Source inquiry**

This section's inquiry task is the communication itself: you will read two sources, weigh the perspectives in them, and then create your own pamphlet and speech.

### **Source 1 — Fact file: Australia's under-16 social media law**

On 10 December 2025, a new rule began in Australia. Covered social media platforms had to take reasonable steps to stop Australians under 16 from having accounts. The rule comes from the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024, which changed the Online Safety Act 2021. Parliament passed the law in November 2024. The House of Representatives voted for it 96 to 6; the Senate voted for it 34 to 19. The eSafety Commissioner named ten platforms it expected to follow the rule, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and YouTube. Children and parents face no fines. Courts can fine a platform up to about \$54.6 million for serious failures.

*(Written for this workbook, from the eSafety Commissioner and the Parliament of Australia.)*

### **Source 2 — Two voices on the law**

**Voice A (a parent who supports the law):** "Before this law, I felt alone in saying no to social media, while every platform was built to keep my child scrolling. Now the platforms must do the hard work too. My child can focus on sport, friends and sleep."

**Voice B (a young person who opposes the law):** "I used a gaming platform to stay close to cousins overseas and to learn from people who make things. A ban does not teach me to be safe online. I would rather learn good habits with support than be shut out completely."

*(Written for this workbook. The voices show real arguments on each side of the debate, in their strongest form.)*

**SQ1.** From Source 1, state (a) the date the rule started, and (b) what covered platforms must do.

**SQ2.** Source 1 says children and parents face no fines. Why do you think the law puts the duty on platforms instead? Give one reason.

**SQ3.** Which party's reasons does Voice A sound most like, and which party's reasons does Voice B sound most like? Use the positions table in part 4 of the Theory to help you.

**SQ4.** Both voices say they care about young people's safety. In one or two sentences, explain how their views still differ.

### **The task — now you communicate.**

Choose one:

- **Option 1:** Create a one-page pamphlet about the social media law (or another recent issue your teacher approves). It must describe at least two parties' positions in a fair way, use checked facts, and carry a source line.
- **Option 2:** Write and present a speech of one to two minutes on why you should be elected to a leadership role in your class or school. It must draw on at least one democratic value and one act of active citizenship.

Use the checklist from part 7 of the Theory before you submit.

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## Answers

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

**Q2.** Knowledge (facts you can check), ideas (what people think about the facts), and perspectives (the different ways people see the issue).

**Q3.** Australian Labor Party — formed the federal government after the May 2025 election. Liberal Party of Australia — founded in 1944 with Robert Menzies. National Party of Australia — founded in 1920 as the Country Party; speaks for rural and regional areas. Australian Greens — founded in 1992.

**Q4.** The bill was introduced on 21 November 2024; the Senate voted for it on 28 November 2024; the Governor-General signed it on 10 December 2024; the rule started on 10 December 2025.

**Q5.** (a) For — platforms, not families, should do the hard work of protecting children. (b) For — many parents want more support keeping children safe online. (c) Against — a ban could push young people into hidden, less safe corners of the internet. (d) Split — independents voted both ways.

**Q6.** Any four of: a clear title; a short hook sentence; small sections with headings; checked facts; simple words; an image or diagram; a source line.

**Q7.** Sample answer: People have different values, so they care about different things first. People also have different knowledge and different lives, so the issue affects them in their own way. Two people can look at the same issue and see it in different ways.

**Q8.** Sample answer (for a student who supports the law, giving the opposing view in a fair way): “The Greens say the law could push young people into hidden, less safe spaces, and that age checks threaten privacy. They want education and support, which would help young people learn to be safe rather than just shutting them out.”

**Q9.** Sample answer: A **plan** matters because voters need to know what you will actually do, not just what you hope for. A **closing call to action** matters because a speech should ask listeners to act — here, to vote.

**Q10.** Sample answer: “Every student in this class deserves to be heard. That is what fairness means to me. If you elect me, I will start an ideas box and bring your ideas to the student council.”

**SQ1.** (a) 10 December 2025. (b) They must take reasonable steps to stop Australians under 16 from having accounts.

**SQ2.** Sample answer: Platforms build the services and earn money from them, so they are in the best place to make the services safe. Children do not have the power to change how a platform works.

**SQ3.** Voice A sounds most like the Labor or Coalition reasons (platforms should do the hard work; parents need support). Voice B sounds most like the Greens’ reasons (education and support over bans; worry about shutting young people out).

**SQ4.** Sample answer: Both want young people to be safe, but Voice A believes rules on platforms are the best way to get there, while Voice B believes learning good habits with support works better than being shut out.