

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 1 — Government and democracy: how Australia's democracy works

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Attribution: Classbasics Pty Ltd, vwx.au

Curriculum codes refer to the *Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0*, published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). Classbasics is not affiliated with the VCAA; the VCAA does not endorse this resource and makes no warranties regarding it.

Distribution note: this document may be distributed, and whole pages may be removed from it, provided only WHOLE pages are removed (never part of a page). This allows teachers to remove tests, exams and subtopics they do not want to issue.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content has been excluded as accuracy cannot be guaranteed, and it is better to be respectful than cover the entire curriculum inaccurately.

Significant effort has been made to ensure this content is legal. Please send any areas of concern to admin@vwx.au with appropriate document/legal references so errors can be verified and changes be made.

Contents

Section	Page
Parties, elections and the balance of power	2
Do Australia's institutions reflect democratic values?	16
Australia's Constitution: who does what	30
Staying informed and taking part in Australia's democracy	45

Parties, elections and the balance of power

Australia is a democracy: its citizens choose the people who make the laws by voting in elections. The candidates who stand for election belong to political parties, or stand alone as independents. This section looks at what parties and independents do in Australia's democracy, how votes are counted in the two houses of Parliament, and what happens after the counting: who forms the government, who becomes the opposition, and why a few crossbench members can sometimes hold the balance of power.

Recall — Levels 5 and 6 (VC2HC6K01): you have already met the main features of democratic systems: Australia's Parliament makes laws, and citizens take part by voting and by sharing their views with their representatives. This section builds on that.

Curriculum focus — VC2HC8K01 (Civics and Citizenship, Levels 7 and 8, Government and democracy)

Elaborations drawn on: VC2HC8K01.E01 · VC2HC8K01.E02 · VC2HC8K01.E03 · VC2HC8K01.E04

Theory

Parties, independents and minor parties (illustrates VC2HC8K01.E04)

At election time, most candidates stand for a **political party** — a group of people who share similar ideas about how the country should be run. Parties pick their candidates, put forward their policies (the things they promise to do), and run campaigns to win votes. After the election, the parties that do not form the government keep checking the government's work.

political party — a group of people with similar ideas about how the country should be run, who stand candidates for election under one name.

independent — a candidate who does not belong to any party. If elected, an independent member decides each vote on its own merits, not because a party tells them how to vote.

minor party — a party that is much smaller than the two big party groups, and that usually wins few seats.

Parties matter because of **party discipline**: members of Parliament from the same party are expected to vote the same way as their party on nearly every bill. That is why the result of most House votes is known before the vote is taken. A member who votes against their own party is said to be *crossing the floor* — it is allowed, but it is rare.

party discipline — the expectation that the members of a party in Parliament will vote the same way as the rest of their party.

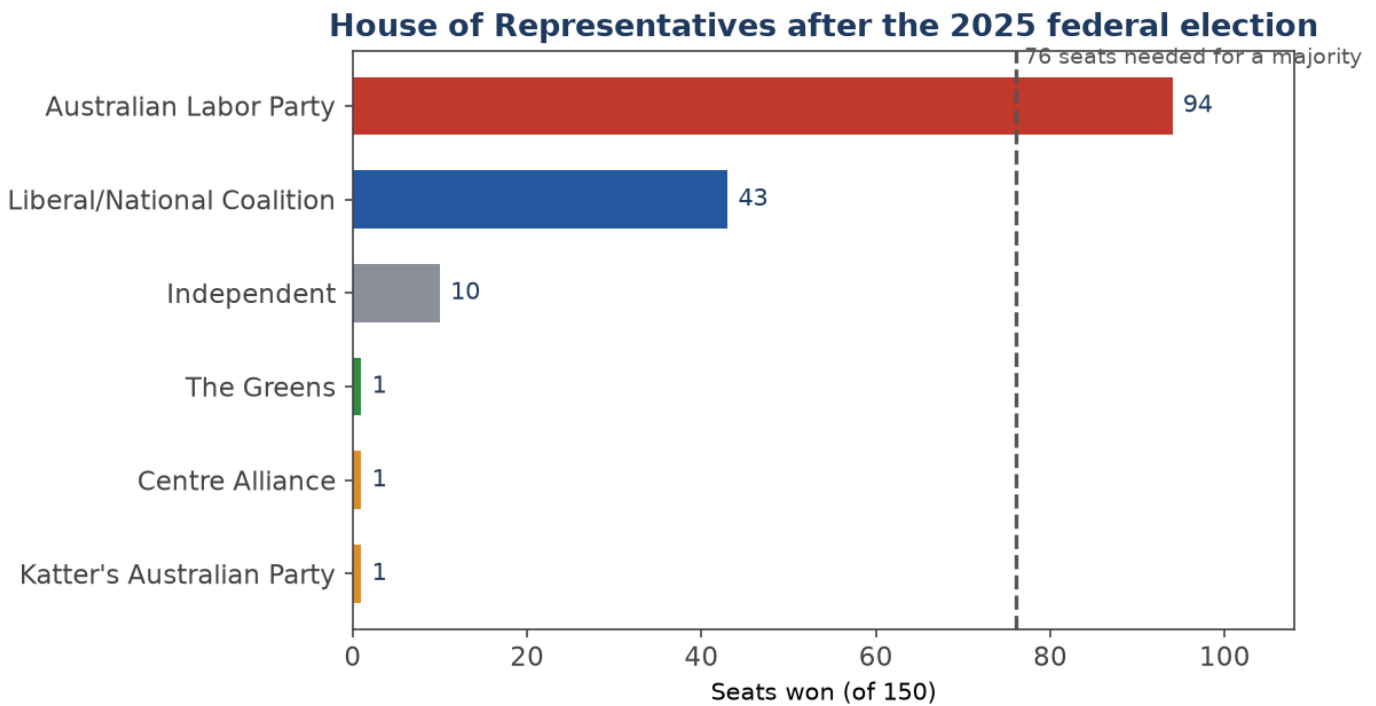
Independents and minor party members do not have to follow party discipline. In a close Parliament, that can give them a lot of influence (see Case study 1).

What Parliament looks like today (illustrates VC2HC8K01.E01)

The Commonwealth (federal) Parliament has two houses:

- the **House of Representatives**, with 150 members. Australia is split into 150 electoral divisions — areas with roughly equal numbers of voters — and each division elects one member.

- the **Senate**, with 76 senators: 12 for each of the six states and 2 for each of the two territories.

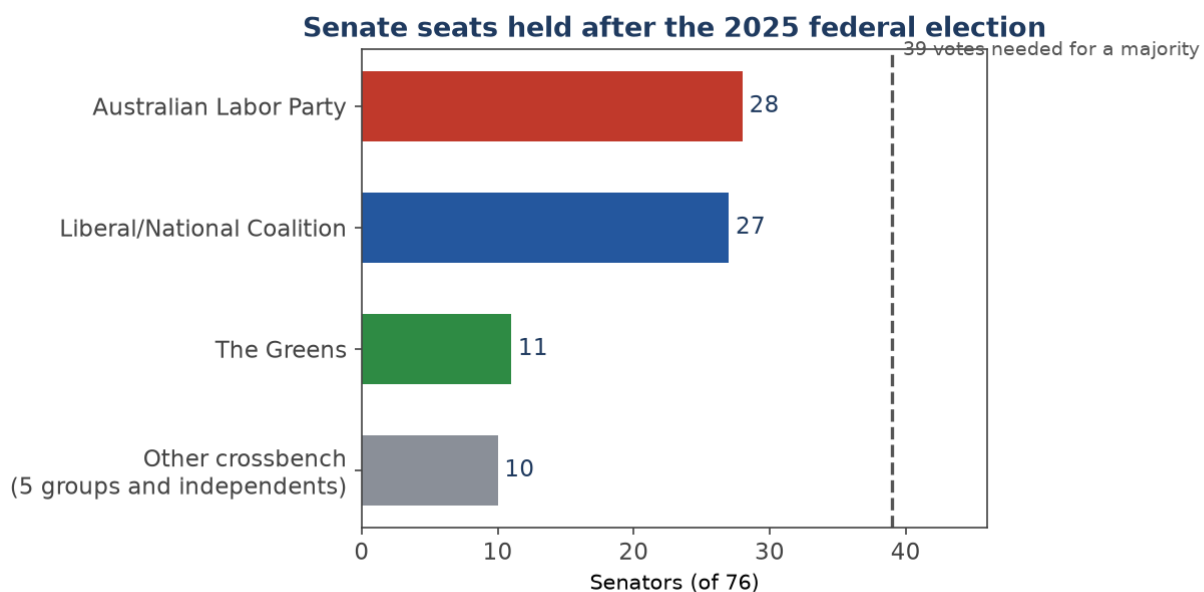


Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 2025 federal election results (results.aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Bar chart of seats won in the House of Representatives at the 2025 federal election: Australian Labor Party 94, Liberal/National Coalition 43, independents 10, the Greens 1, Centre Alliance 1 and Katter's Australian Party 1, with a dashed line at the 76 seats needed for a majority.

Figure 1. The House of Representatives after the 2025 federal election. One party won more than half the seats, so it could form a majority government. The members who are not part of the government or the opposition sit on the **crossbench**.

Every state and territory also has its own parliament, most with two houses. Victoria's Parliament, for example, has a Legislative Assembly with 88 members and a Legislative Council with 40 members (after the state election of 26 November 2022; see Sources).



Source: ABC News, 2025 federal election results — Senate, from AEC counts (abc.net.au/news/elections/federal/2025/results/senate), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Bar chart of Senate seats held after the 2025 federal election: Australian Labor Party 28, Liberal/National Coalition 27, the Greens 11 and other crossbench 10, with a dashed line at the 39 votes needed for a majority.

Figure 2. The Senate from 1 July 2025. No party holds the 39 votes needed for a majority, so the government must win support from crossbench senators to pass laws (see Case study 2).

Two ways of counting votes: preferential and proportional (illustrates VC2HC8K01 . E02)

House of Representatives — preferential voting. On a green House ballot paper, you must number *every* box, 1, 2, 3, ..., in your order of choice. Voting is compulsory for enrolled Australian citizens aged 18 and over — it is a legal duty, not a choice, and has been since 1924 (*Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, s 245).

preferential voting — a way of counting votes in which voters number all the candidates in order of choice. If no candidate has more than half of the formal votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and their votes move to the next preference on each paper. This continues until one candidate has more than half.

formal vote — a ballot paper filled in correctly, so that it counts. (A paper that is not filled in correctly is *informal* and does not count.)

The winner in each division must reach an **absolute majority** — more than half of the formal votes. Worked example 1 shows a full count.

Senate — proportional representation. On a white Senate ballot paper you may vote *above the line* (number at least six boxes for parties and groups) or *below the line* (number at least twelve boxes for individual candidates). The Senate elects several senators at once, and the counting is **proportional**: each team's seats roughly match its share of the vote.

proportional representation — a way of counting votes used when several winners are elected at once. Seats are shared out so that each team's seats roughly match its share of the vote.

To win a Senate seat, a candidate must reach a set number of votes — the number of votes needed to win a seat. (The law that sets this number is the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, s 273, which calls it the *quota*.) Worked example 2 shows how the count works.

The two systems do different jobs: preferential voting chooses **one** winner who most voters can accept; proportional representation gives each team its **fair share** of the seats. Whether one system is fairer than the other is a question you will evaluate in Q10 and in the extended response.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES — MODEL BALLOT PAPER

Division of EXAMPLE — classroom model only, not a real ballot

How to vote: number **EVERY** box, in order (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), until every box has a different number. Write only numbers.

1	NGUYEN, Alice	(Party A)
2	CARTER, Ben	(Party B)
3	DUBOIS, Chloe	(Independent)
4	ROSSI, Daniel	(Party C)
5	WALKER, Emma	(Independent)

The numbers 1 to 5 are the voter's order of preferences.

Original model created for this book from AEC voting rules (aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Model House of Representatives ballot paper for the made-up Division of Example, with five candidates and every box numbered 1 to 5 in the voter's order of preference, marked classroom model only.

Figure 3. A model House ballot paper (classroom model only, built from the AEC's voting rules). The voter's first preference is Nguyen, then Carter, then Dubois, then Rossi, then Walker. If their first-choice candidate is excluded, their vote moves to the next number still in the count.

Forming and losing government (illustrates VC2HC8K01 . E03)

After an election, the Governor-General asks the member who can win the support of a majority of the House of Representatives to form the government (Australian Constitution, s 64). In a 150-seat House, a majority is **76 or more seats**. The leader of that team becomes Prime Minister, and the next-biggest party becomes the **opposition**.

government — the party or team that can win the support of a majority of the members of the House of Representatives.

opposition — the next-biggest party or team in Parliament. Its job is to question and check the government, and to offer itself as an alternative government.

majority government — a government formed by a party or team that holds more than half of the seats in the House on its own.

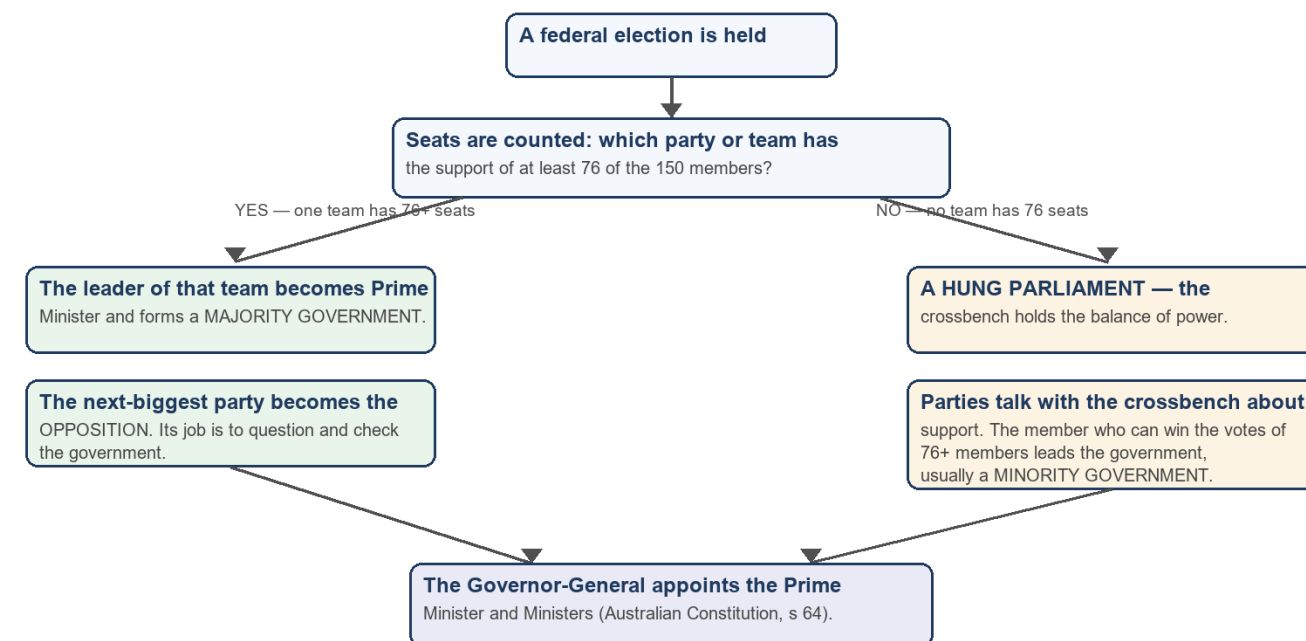
hung parliament — a Parliament in which no party or team holds more than half of the seats in the House of Representatives.

crossbench — the members of a Parliament who belong to neither the government nor the opposition (independents and minor parties). They sit on the benches that run across the chamber.

minority government — a government formed when no party has a majority, so the governing party must win the support of crossbench members to pass laws.

balance of power — the position of crossbench members in a hung parliament (or in a Senate where no side has a majority): their votes decide which team can govern, or whether a law passes.

Forming a government after a House of Representatives election



A government can also LOSE office between elections: if it loses the support of most members on a big vote (a vote of no confidence), or if it cannot pass its budget, the Prime Minister may advise the Governor-General to call an election. (Constitution, s 64.)

Original diagram created for this book.

Flowchart showing how a government is formed after a House of Representatives election: if one team holds at least 76 of the 150 seats it forms a majority government and the next-biggest party becomes the opposition; if no team holds 76 seats there is a hung parliament and the crossbench holds the balance of power, so parties negotiate with crossbench members until one leader can win the support of at least 76 members; in both paths the Governor-General then appoints the Prime Minister and Ministers under section 64 of the Constitution. A note adds that a government can lose office between elections if it loses a vote of no confidence or cannot pass its budget.

Figure 4. Forming a government — and how a government can be lost.

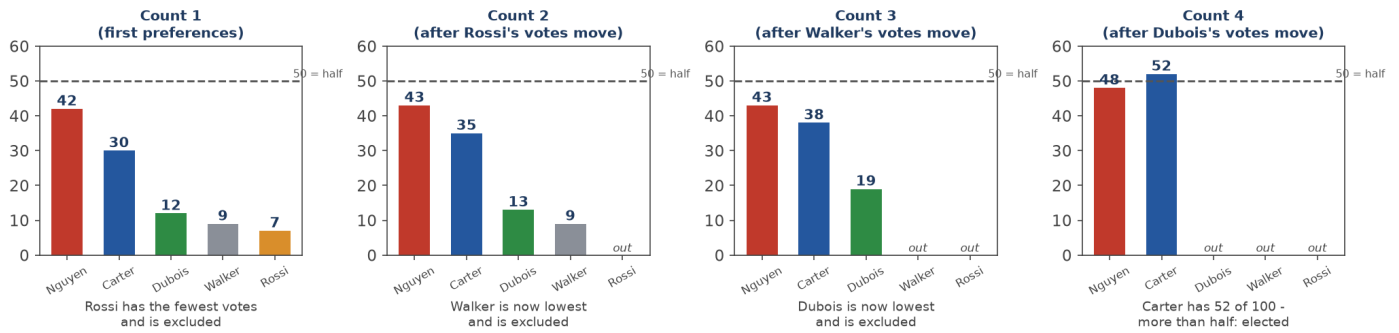
A government can lose office **between** elections, not just at them. If the House passes a vote showing it no longer has confidence in the government (a **vote of no confidence**), or if the government cannot pass its budget, the Prime Minister usually resigns or advises the Governor-General to call an election. Because party discipline keeps a majority government's members voting together, this is rare in the House of Representatives — but the Senate, where no party usually holds a majority, checks the government every sitting day.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — Counting a House election with preferences (scaffolded)

A made-up division holds an election with 100 formal votes and the five candidates from Figure 3. Figure 5 shows the count, round by round.

Preferential counting: how one candidate reaches a majority



Worked example for this book (invented votes, real method). Method as described by the Australian Electoral Commission, retrieved 26 August 2026.

Four-panel bar chart of a preferential count with 100 formal votes. Count 1 first preferences: Nguyen 42, Carter 30, Dubois 12, Walker 9, Rossi 7, so Rossi is excluded. Count 2: Nguyen 43, Carter 35, Dubois 13, Walker 9, so Walker is excluded. Count 3: Nguyen 43, Carter 38, Dubois 19, so Dubois is excluded. Count 4: Nguyen 48, Carter 52, and a dashed line at 50 shows Carter has passed half and is elected.

Figure 5. A preferential count, round by round (invented votes; the method is the real AEC method).

Step 1 — Count 1. First preferences are counted. No one has more than 50 votes (half of 100). Rossi has the fewest (7) and is excluded.

Step 2 — Count 2. Rossi's 7 votes move to each paper's next preference: Carter gains 5, Nguyen 1, Dubois 1. Still no one over 50. Walker (9) is now lowest and is excluded.

Step 3 — Count 3. Walker's 9 votes move: Dubois gains 6 (an independent's votes moving to another independent) and Carter 3. Still no one over 50. Dubois (19) is excluded.

Step 4 — Count 4. Dubois's 19 votes move: Carter gains 14 and Nguyen 5. Carter now has 52 — more than half — and is elected.

Step 5 — Check the voter from Figure 3. That voter's order was Nguyen 1, Carter 2, Dubois 3, Rossi 4, Walker 5. Their vote started with Nguyen; it never had to move, because Nguyen was never excluded. A voter who put Rossi first would have seen their vote move in Count 2. That is the point of preferential voting: even if your first choice cannot win, your vote still helps choose the winner.

Worked example 2 — Counting Senate seats proportionally (scaffolded)

Now the same made-up division elects **three** members at once, Senate-style, with the same 100 formal votes. Figure 6 shows the count.

Proportional counting: 3 seats, 100 formal votes

Step 1 — the votes



Step 2 — the number needed to win a seat

quota = (formal votes ÷ (seats + 1)) + 1 = (100 ÷ 4) + 1 = 26

Step 3 — who reaches 26?

- Nguyen (Party A) starts with 52 votes — over 26. ELECTED.
- Her 26 spare votes move to Walker, who reaches 26. ELECTED.
- Carter (Party B) has 35 votes — over 26. ELECTED. 3 seats filled.

Result: Party A won 52 votes out of 100 and gained 2 of the 3 seats. Party B won 35 votes and gained 1 seat.
Seats roughly match each team's share of the vote — that is the point of proportional counting.

Worked example for this book (invented votes, real method). Quota rule: Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth), s 273.

Three-step diagram of a proportional count for 3 seats with 100 formal votes. Step 1 shows the votes: Party A (Nguyen, Walker) 52, Party B (Carter, Rossi) 35, Dubois (independent) 13. Step 2 shows the number needed to win a seat: 100 divided by 4, plus 1, equals 26. Step 3 shows who reaches 26: Nguyen with 52 is elected and her 26 spare votes move to Walker, who reaches 26 and is elected; Carter has 35, over 26, and is elected. The result box notes that Party A won 52 of 100 votes and gained 2 of the 3 seats, so seats roughly match each team's share of the vote.

Figure 6. A proportional count for three seats (invented votes; the quota rule is the real one, from the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, s 273).

Step 1 — the number needed to win a seat. With 100 formal votes and 3 seats, the number needed is $(100 \div (3 + 1)) + 1 = 26$.

Step 2 — who reaches it? Nguyen (Party A) starts with 52 votes — over 26 — and is elected. Her 26 spare votes move to her teammate Walker, who also reaches 26 and is elected. Carter (Party B) has 35 — over 26 — and is elected. Three seats filled.

Step 3 — compare with the votes. Party A won 52 of 100 votes (about half) and gained 2 of 3 seats. Party B won 35 votes and gained 1 seat. Dubois won 13 votes and no seat — but in a real Senate count her votes would keep moving and could still elect her. The seats roughly match each team's share of the vote: that is what *proportional* means.

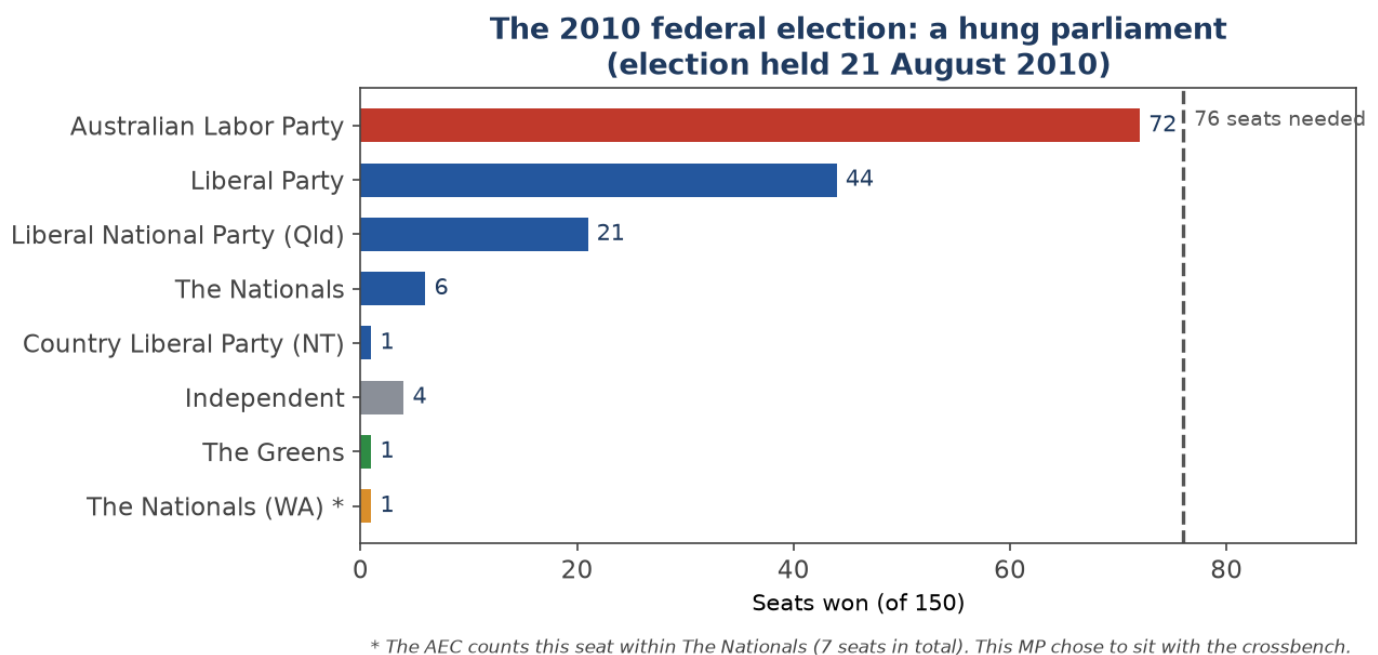
Compare the two systems. In Worked example 1, one seat went to the candidate most voters could accept. In Worked example 2, three seats were shared out to match the vote. The House uses the first method; the Senate uses the second. That is why one party often holds a House majority but rarely holds a Senate majority.

Case study 1 — The 2010 federal election: seventeen days to a government (worked treatment)

What happened. The election was held on Saturday 21 August 2010, and no team reached the 76 seats needed for a majority (Figure 7): Labor won 72 seats, and the Coalition parties (Liberal 44, LNP 21, Nationals 7 including a WA member who chose to sit with the crossbench, CLP 1) held 73. With the Greens' one seat and four independents' seats in between, Australia had a **hung parliament**.

What followed was a period of negotiation. On 1–2 September, the Greens' Adam Bandt and the independent Andrew Wilkie agreed to support Labor. On 6 September, the WA Nationals' Tony Crook said he would side with the Coalition. On 7 September, the independents Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott agreed to support Labor, while Bob

Katter said he would side with the Coalition. That gave Labor the support of 76 members (its 72, plus Bandt, Wilkie, Windsor and Oakeshott) against the Coalition's 74 — a majority, but only with crossbench support. On 14 September 2010, Julia Gillard was sworn in as Prime Minister by the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce.



Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 2010 federal election results (results.aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Bar chart of the 2010 federal election result for the 150-seat House of Representatives: Australian Labor Party 72, Liberal Party 44, Liberal National Party 21, the Nationals 6, Country Liberal Party 1, independents 4, the Greens 1, and the WA Nationals member who sat with the crossbench 1, with a dashed line at the 76 seats needed for a majority and a note that no team reached it.

Figure 7. The 2010 federal election — a hung parliament.

Who was involved. The two big party groups (Labor; the Liberal, LNP, Nationals and CLP parties); the Greens; six crossbench members (Bandt, Wilkie, Windsor, Oakeshott, Crook, Katter); and the Governor-General, who appoints the Prime Minister.

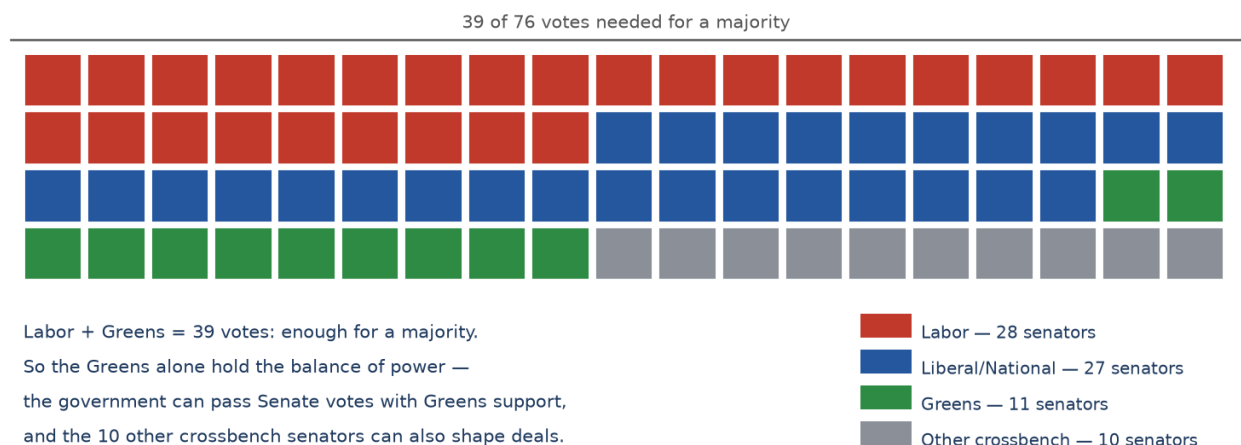
Which concepts it shows (VC2HC8K01 .E03, .E04). Hung parliament, crossbench, balance of power, minority government and negotiation. For seventeen days, neither big team could govern on its own: six crossbench members — one of every 25 members — decided who formed the government. The Gillard government was a **minority government**: it governed because crossbench members agreed to support it on the votes that mattered. It also shows the role of independents (E04): Wilkie, Windsor and Oakeshott were not bound by party discipline, so each had to be persuaded.

Sources: Australian Electoral Commission, 2010 federal election results (results.aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026; the day-by-day agreements are summarised from the Wikipedia article on the 2010 federal election (a secondary source, cross-checked against the AEC seat counts), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Case study 2 — The Senate from 1 July 2025: where the balance of power sits (worked treatment)

What happened. At the federal election of Saturday 3 May 2025, one party won a clear House majority (Figure 1). But the Senate elected at the same time tells a different story (Figure 8): from 1 July 2025 the Senate held Labor 28, the Liberal/National Coalition 27, the Greens 11 and other crossbench members 10. A majority in the Senate is 39 votes.

The Senate from July 2025: who holds the balance of power?



Source: ABC News, 2025 federal election results — Senate (from AEC counts), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Grid of 76 coloured squares showing the Senate from 1 July 2025: 28 Labor squares, 27 Liberal/National squares, 11 Greens squares and 10 other-crossbench squares, with a note that Labor plus Greens equals the 39 votes needed for a majority, so the Greens hold the balance of power.

Figure 8. The Senate from 1 July 2025, seat by seat.

Who was involved. The government (Labor), the opposition (the Coalition), the Greens, and ten other crossbench senators from several groups.

Which concepts it shows (VC2HC8K01 .E02, .E03). Proportional representation explains the shape of the room: because Senate seats are shared out to match each team's vote, no party has held a Senate majority for nearly twenty years (see Sources). In this Senate, Labor (28) plus the Greens (11) makes exactly 39 — a majority. So the Greens hold the **balance of power**: on most votes the government can pass a law with Greens support, and the Greens can block a law the government wants. On other votes the government must build a different deal with the ten other crossbench senators. Every law is a small negotiation — which is the Senate's job: to make the government explain and defend its bills.

Source: ABC News, 2025 federal election results — Senate, from AEC counts
(abc.net.au/news/elections/federal/2025/results/senate), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Use Figure 1. (a) How many seats did the Australian Labor Party win in 2025? (b) How many seats make a majority in a 150-seat House? (c) Did any team hold a majority? How can you tell from the chart? (d) How many seats did the crossbench (independents and minor parties) hold altogether?

Q2. (a) In your own words, what is preferential voting? (b) What number of the formal votes must a House candidate reach to win? (c) Name one rule that makes Australian federal elections different from elections in many other countries.

Q3. Use Figure 5. (a) Why was Rossi excluded after Count 1? (b) In Count 2, how did Carter's total change, and why? (c) Who won, and with how many votes? (d) Did the winner have more than half of the formal votes? Show the check.

Q4. Match each term to its definition. Terms: (i) hung parliament, (ii) crossbench, (iii) balance of power, (iv) minority government, (v) party discipline, (vi) opposition. Definitions: (a) members who belong to neither the government nor the opposition; (b) a government that must win crossbench support because no party has a majority; (c) the expectation that a party's members vote together; (d) a Parliament in which no team holds more than half of the House

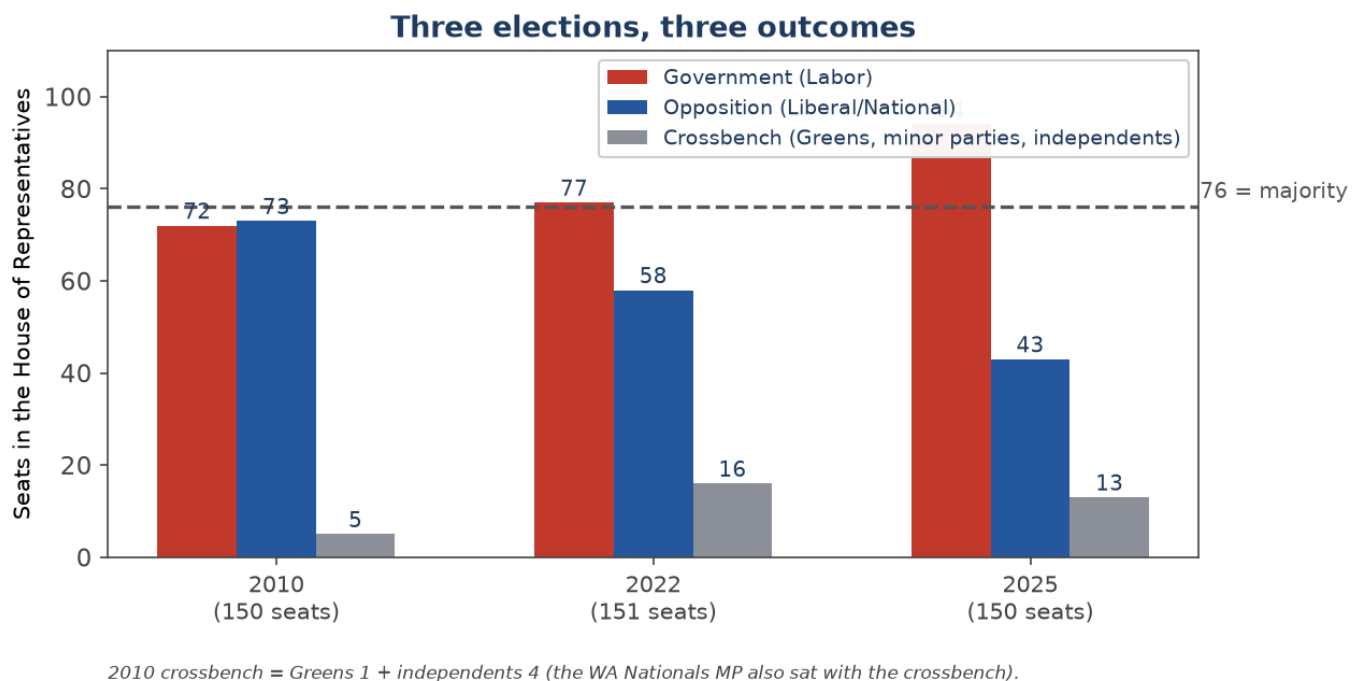
seats; (e) the next-biggest party, whose job is to question and check the government; (f) the power of crossbench members to decide which side wins a vote.

Q5. Use Figure 6. (a) Show how the number 26 is worked out. (b) Which candidates reached 26? (c) Why is this count called *proportional*? Use Party A's votes and seats in your answer.

Q6. Use Figure 4. (a) What is the first question asked after the seats are counted? (b) If the answer is *no*, who holds the balance of power while the parties negotiate? (c) Who formally appoints the Prime Minister, and under which section of the Constitution?

Unscaffolded

Q7. Use Figure 9. (a) Which of the three elections produced a hung parliament? Explain how the chart shows it. (b) Describe what happened to the size of the crossbench from 2010 to 2022 to 2025. (c) In which of the three Parliaments would a government have needed crossbench support to pass laws in the House? Give reasons.



Source: Australian Electoral Commission official results for the 2010, 2022 and 2025 federal elections (results.aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.

Grouped bar chart comparing the House of Representatives results of the 2010, 2022 and 2025 federal elections: 2010 government 72, opposition 73, crossbench 5; 2022 government 77, opposition 58, crossbench 16; 2025 government 94, opposition 43, crossbench 13; with a dashed line at the 76 seats needed for a majority.

Figure 9. Three elections, three outcomes (House of Representatives).

Q8. Describe two roles of political parties in Australia's democracy, and explain why each role matters.

Q9. An independent member is elected to the House of Representatives. Explain two ways their job in Parliament differs from the job of a member of a major party. Use the idea of party discipline in your answer.

Q10. "The Senate's voting system makes it very hard for one party to hold a majority there." Evaluate this claim using Figures 2 and 8 and the idea of proportional representation.

Q11. Explain two ways a government can lose office between elections. Why is this rare in the House of Representatives but not in the Senate?

Q12. In 2010, six crossbench members chose which side would govern. Discuss one advantage and one disadvantage of crossbench members holding the balance of power in a hung parliament.

Extended response

“When no party wins a majority, a handful of crossbench members end up holding the balance of power. That gives independents and minor parties too much influence over who governs Australia.”

Discuss this view. Use evidence from the 2010 federal election (Case study 1 and Figure 7) and from the Senate after the 2025 federal election (Case study 2 and Figure 8) to support your reasoning. In your response you should:

- explain the view **and** the strongest answer to it;
- use at least two pieces of evidence (seat numbers, dates or events from the case studies);
- use at least three of these terms correctly: hung parliament, crossbench, balance of power, minority government, negotiation, party discipline;
- end with your own reasoned conclusion.

Length: about 250–350 words.

Answers

A1. (a) 94. (b) 76. (c) Yes — Labor's 94 is more than 76, so its bar crosses the dashed majority line. (d) 13 (independents 10 + Greens 1 + Centre Alliance 1 + Katter's Australian Party 1).

A2. (a) Any answer with the same meaning: voters number all candidates in order of choice; if no one has more than half, the lowest candidate is excluded and their votes move to next preferences, until someone has more than half. (b) More than half of the formal votes (an absolute majority). (c) Voting is compulsory (a legal duty since 1924) — or: voters must number every box in the House.

A3. (a) Rossi had the fewest first-preference votes (7). (b) It rose from 30 to 35, because 5 of Rossi's excluded votes had Carter as their next preference. (c) Carter, with 52 votes. (d) Yes: half of 100 is 50, and $52 > 50$.

A4. (i)–(d); (ii)–(a); (iii)–(f); (iv)–(b); (v)–(c); (vi)–(e).

A5. (a) $(100 \div (3 + 1)) + 1 = 25 + 1 = 26$. (b) Nguyen (52), then Walker (with Nguyen's 26 spare votes), then Carter (35). (c) Party A won about half the votes (52 of 100) and won 2 of the 3 seats; Party B won about a third of the votes and 1 seat — the seats roughly match the share of the vote.

A6. (a) Does one team hold the support of at least 76 of the 150 members? (b) The crossbench. (c) The Governor-General; section 64.

A7. (a) 2010: the government bar (72) and the opposition bar (73) both sit below the 76 line, so no team had a majority. (b) The crossbench grew from 5 (2010) to 16 (2022), then fell a little to 13 (2025). (c) 2010 only: in 2022 (77) and 2025 (94) the government held 76 or more seats on its own.

A8. Any two, explained: choosing and training candidates; putting forward policies so voters can choose between teams; forming a government when they win, or forming the opposition to question and check the government; organising the Parliament's work.

A9. Any two: an independent is free to vote on each bill on its merits (no party discipline), while a major-party member is expected to vote with the party; an independent speaks for their division alone and is not part of a party's national plan; an independent may hold the balance of power in a hung parliament and must be negotiated with.

A10. The claim is sound: proportional representation shares Senate seats out to match each team's vote, so a party needs roughly half the statewide vote to hold half the seats — rare in practice. Figure 2: no party holds 39 of 76 (Labor 28, Coalition 27); Figure 8 shows the government must add the Greens' 11 (or build other deals with the 10 others) to reach 39. No party has held a Senate majority for nearly twenty years.

A11. Ways: losing a vote of no confidence in the House; failing to pass the budget. Rare in the House because party discipline keeps a majority government's members voting together; not rare in the Senate because no party usually holds a Senate majority, so the government's bills are checked (and sometimes blocked) there.

A12. Advantage: crossbench members make the big parties explain, adjust and compromise, so more views shape the government; independents answer only to their voters. Disadvantage: a very small number of members — not elected as a team and agreeing on little — can decide who governs or block laws most voters' representatives support.

ER. Responses should state the view and answer it, use at least two dated/numbered pieces of evidence (e.g. 2010: Labor 72, Coalition-side 73, six crossbench members, Gillard sworn in 14 September 2010; 2025 Senate: 28/27/11/10, 39 needed, Labor + Greens = 39), use at least three key terms correctly, and close with a reasoned conclusion. Either conclusion is acceptable; the mark is for the reasoning and the evidence, not the side chosen.

Fully-worked solutions

Q3 (model). Rossi was excluded after Count 1 because his 7 votes were the fewest of the five candidates. When a candidate is excluded, each of their votes moves to the next preference marked on it, so in Count 2 Carter's total rose from 30 to 35: five of Rossi's papers had Carter next, one had Nguyen and one had Dubois. No candidate had more than 50 votes until Count 4, when Carter reached 52 and was elected. The check: half of 100 formal votes is 50, and 52 is more than 50, so Carter had the absolute majority the method requires.

Q10 (model). The claim is sound. The Senate is counted by proportional representation: seats are shared out so that each team's seats roughly match its share of the vote, so a party needs close to half the vote to hold half the seats. Figure 2 shows the result after the 2025 election: Labor 28 and the Coalition 27, with 39 needed for a majority — neither side is close. Figure 8 shows what follows: to reach 39, the government must add the Greens' 11 seats ($28 + 11 = 39$) or build a different deal from the ten other crossbench seats. The same pattern has held for nearly twenty years: no party has held a Senate majority. So the system does what it was designed to do — share power and make the government negotiate — which is exactly why one-party Senate majorities are so hard to win.

Q12 (model). One advantage of crossbench members holding the balance of power is that they force the big parties to explain and adjust their plans: in 2010, six crossbench members — Bandt, Wilkie, Windsor, Oakeshott, Crook and Katter — each had to be persuaded before either side could govern, so regional and minor-party views were part of the deal that formed the government. One disadvantage is that a very small number of members can decide who governs: in a 150-seat House elected by millions of voters, six members chose the government, and those six were not elected as a team and did not agree with each other. On balance, the balance of power trades one kind of fairness (a clear winner governs alone) for another (more views must be won over). Reasonable minds differ — which is why the question asks you to argue, not to recite.

Extended response (plan). A strong response has four moves. *Move 1 — state the view in its strongest form:* a handful of members none of whom leads a majority party can decide the government, so a small share of voters' representatives wields a large share of the power. *Move 2 — answer it:* the crossbench's power comes from the voters' own choices (a hung parliament is the voters' verdict), and crossbench members are answerable to their own voters at the next election; negotiation also widens the views that shape laws. *Move 3 — evidence:* 2010 — Labor 72 and the Coalition-side 73, neither at 76; six crossbench members negotiated for seventeen days; Gillard formed a minority government and was sworn in on 14 September 2010. 2025 — the Senate's 28/27/11/10 split means 39 is the magic number, and Labor plus the Greens makes exactly 39, so the Greens hold the balance of power. *Move 4 — reasoned conclusion:* either “the influence is too large, because ...” or “the influence is proper, because ...” — the mark is earned by the evidence and the reasoning, not by the side you choose.

Sources for this section

- Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Civics and Citizenship, Levels 7 and 8 — VC2HC8K01 and elaborations (VCAA, 29 July 2026 export): the scope of this section.
- Australian Electoral Commission, official results of the 2010, 2022 and 2025 federal elections (results.aec.gov.au), retrieved 26 August 2026.
- ABC News, 2025 federal election results — Senate, from AEC counts (abc.net.au/news/elections/federal/2025/results/senate), retrieved 26 August 2026.
- Australian Electoral Commission, *Preferential voting* and *How to vote* pages (aec.gov.au), and the voting and counting rules in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, ss 245 and 273, retrieved 26 August 2026.
- Wikipedia, *2010 Australian federal election* — the timeline of crossbench agreements (secondary source, cross-checked against the AEC seat counts), retrieved 26 August 2026.
- Wikipedia, *Australian Senate* — the note that a government has held a Senate majority only from 2005 to 2007 (secondary source), retrieved 26 August 2026.
- Wikipedia, *2022 Victorian state election* — Legislative Assembly 88 and Legislative Council 40 (secondary source; the Victorian Electoral Commission site could not be reached on 26 August 2026), retrieved 26 August 2026.
- All figures are original, created for this book; real-data figures carry their source line in the figure.

Teaching sequence (teacher notes)

Suggested order, 5–6 lessons of ~50 minutes. Contemporary cases are real and dated; retrieve current figures before teaching if the Parliament has changed.

1. **Hook — a classroom election (Lesson 1).** Run a single-winner preferential election in the room using the model ballot (Figure 3): count first preferences, exclude the lowest, move votes by next preference until one candidate passes half. Debrief with the recall box (Levels 5–6, VC2HC6K01): parliaments make laws; citizens

take part by voting. Then teach the definitions: political party, independent, minor party, party discipline (E04).

2. **Parliament today (Lesson 2).** Contemporary case 1, dated: the **2025 federal election, polling day Saturday 3 May 2025** — Labor 94, Coalition 43, crossbench 13 (Figure 1); the new Senate sat from 1 July 2025 (Figure 2). Have students read both charts against the majority lines (39 and 76) and state, in one sentence each, which house forces negotiation and which does not (E01). Extend to a state parliament (Victoria: Legislative Assembly 88, Legislative Council 40, election of 26 November 2022).
3. **The two counts (Lesson 3).** Worked example 1 (Figure 5) then Worked example 2 (Figure 6), side by side. Key contrast: one winner who most voters can accept vs seats shared to match the vote. Have students re-run the House count after moving five of Rossi's preferences differently, and ask what changes (E02).
4. **Forming and losing government (Lessons 4–5).** Figure 4 as the map; Case study 1 (2010, Figure 7) as the lived example — build the 17-day timeline on the board (21 Aug election; 1–2 Sept Bandt and Wilkie; 6 Sept Crook; 7 Sept Windsor, Oakeshott, Katter; 14 Sept Gillard sworn in by Governor-General Quentin Bryce). Case study 2 (2025 Senate, Figure 8) as the standing example of a Senate balance of power. Drill the E03 concepts: hung parliament, party discipline, parliamentary majority, the opposition, minority government and the balance of power (Q4 matching as a check).
5. **Compare, evaluate, write (Lesson 6).** Figure 9 comparison (Q7), then Q10 and Q12 in pairs, then the extended response under timed conditions. Mark with the published criteria; per the house rule on contested questions, credit the reasoning and the evidence, never the conclusion.

Contemporary case 2, dated: the 2026 Farrer by-election, result declared **25 May 2026** (AEC). One Nation's candidate won on preferences, 58,294 votes (57.55%) to the independent's 42,992, in a two-candidate-preferred count the Liberal candidate did not reach. Use it as a “between elections” prompt: what a by-election is, how preferences decided the seat, and how one seat can shift the numbers in a close Parliament (link to Q11: governments lose members — and sometimes majorities — between elections).

Common misconceptions to confront. (1) “The party with the most votes always forms government” — not in a hung parliament (2010: the Coalition-side held 73 seats to Labor's 72, yet Labor governed). (2) “The Senate is elected the same way as the House” — no: proportional vs preferential (Lesson 3 contrast). (3) “Independents and crossbench members have no real role” — in 2010 they chose the government; in the 2025 Senate the Greens hold the balance of power. (4) “A minority government is an illegitimate government” — it governs with the support of a majority of the House on the votes that matter, which is the same test any government must pass.

Coverage map (D9 — elaborations as illustrations, not a teaching order). E01: Theory “What Parliament looks like today” (Figures 1–2). E02: Theory “Two ways of counting votes”, Worked examples 1–2, Q10. E03: Theory “Forming and losing government” (Figure 4), Case studies 1–2, Q4/Q6/Q11/Q12, extended response. E04: Theory “Parties, independents and minor parties”, Case study 1, Q8/Q9.

Pathways note. This section feeds forward to Years 9–10 VC2HC10K02 (how policy is shaped by parties, interest groups and the media); keep the focus here on the 7–8 band descriptors. Section 1C takes the institutions (Governor-General, Prime Minister, Parliament) in depth; keep this section's use of them to the formation and loss of government.

Do Australia's institutions reflect democratic values?

This section looks at how far Australia's institutions — parliaments, the Executive, courts and commissions — show the democratic values named in the curriculum: freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and freedom of movement. We use two real, dated cases and a five-step method called the **values lens**.

Teaching sequence

Curriculum placement. This section teaches VC2HC8K02, drawing on elaborations .E01–.E04.

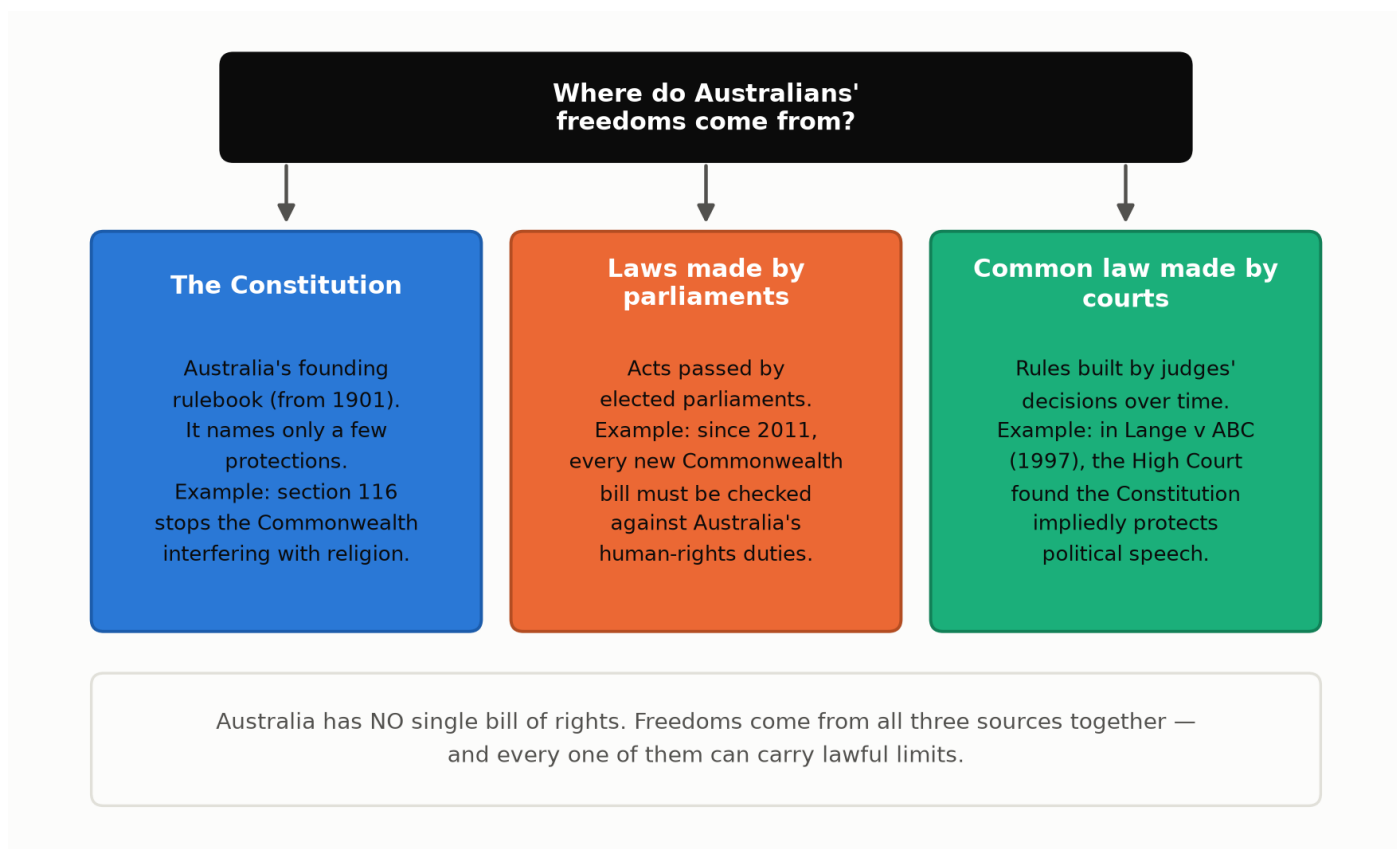
Suggested sequence (60–75 minutes per step, adaptable):

1. **Name the values.** Use the contested-terms box and the values table (Figure 2). Stress that the curriculum names five freedoms but does not define “democratic values”; our operational definition is the one in the box. Ask students for one everyday example of each freedom.
2. **Map the institutions.** Use Figure 3 (institutions map). Point out who exercises power: the people elect parliaments; parliaments make the law and support the Executive; the Executive carries out the law; courts and commissions check both. Link to the three sources of rights protection (Figure 1).
3. **Teach the method.** Work through the values lens (Figure 4) and the extent scale (Figure 5). Model one judgement aloud, placing it on the scale and giving a dated fact as proof.
4. **Case study 1 (dated contemporary case):** the 2017 marriage law reform (LGBTQI+ rights, from VCAA's example set). Run the full lens and the steelman (Figures 6–8). This carries .E01, .E02 and .E04.
5. **Case study 2 (dated contemporary case):** Victoria's mental health reform, 2019–2023 (health care, mental health included, from VCAA's example set). Run the lens again (Figure 9), naming the Victorian Parliament and Victoria Legal Aid per .E03.
6. **Compare and judge.** Use the comparison model and the practice tasks (.E04), then the extended response. Offer refugee rights or food insecurity as an investigation option for students who finish early — require one dated source line.

Assessment intent. Scaffolded tasks check naming and matching (knowledge); unscaffolded tasks check analysis (the lens, the steelman, the extent judgement); the extended response is the summative “extent to which” judgement. Mark reasoning steps, not the conclusion reached.

Theory

What is an institution? An **institution** is an established body or practice that Australians rely on to make and carry out laws and to settle disputes. The main ones are: **parliaments** (elected bodies that make **legislation**, meaning laws passed as Acts); **the Executive** (the Prime Minister or Premier, Ministers and their departments, who carry out the law and run services); and **courts**, which apply the law in real cases. Australia has no single document listing all our rights. Instead, rights are protected from three directions, shown in Figure 1.



Three columns showing the three sources of rights protection in Australia: laws made by parliaments, common law made by courts, and the Australian Constitution, with examples under each

Figure 1. Where rights are protected in Australia. Retrieved from the sources listed at the end of this section, 26 August 2026.

Constitutional protections (national). Section 116 of the Constitution stops the Commonwealth from making a law that sets up a religion or stops people from practising their religion — this is the value of **freedom of religion**. Section 92 says trade and travel between the states shall be free — part of the value of **freedom of movement**. In *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997), the High Court also found that the Constitution carries an **implied freedom of political communication** — not written in the text, but read into it by the Court — which protects public debate, and so supports **freedom of speech**.

Checks by parliament. The *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011* (Cth) requires that every new bill introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament comes with a **statement of compatibility** — a written check against human rights — and a parliamentary committee then examines the bill against those rights. Victoria has its own rights law, the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic).

Common law protections. Judges also protect freedoms through **common law** — the law made by court decisions in real cases — for example by reading laws narrowly where they would take away a freedom, unless parliament used clear words.

The value (named in the curriculum)	What it means in plain language	How it is held in Australia
Freedom of speech	Being able to say what you think, including criticising the government, without being shut up.	Not written in the Constitution as a personal right. The High Court has found an implied freedom of political communication (<i>Lange v ABC</i> , 1997). Laws about harm to reputation set limits.
Freedom of association	Being able to join groups with others: clubs, unions, parties, faith groups.	Held through judge-made common law and Acts of parliament. Parliaments can limit it in some cases, for example to stop organised crime groups.
Freedom of assembly	Being able to meet peacefully with others, including public protests and marches.	Held through common law. State laws regulate how it works in practice, for example notice for a march on a public road.
Freedom of religion	Being able to hold and practise any religion, or to hold no religion at all.	Section 116 of the Constitution stops the Commonwealth from making laws that interfere with religion.
Freedom of movement	Being able to travel within Australia, to leave it, and to return.	Section 92 of the Constitution keeps movement and trade between the states free. Common law also protects it.

All five freedoms have lawful limits: each person's freedoms stop where they would harm other people's rights.

Table with five rows, one for each democratic value: freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and freedom of movement; each row shows what the value means and where it is protected in Australia

Figure 2. The five democratic values named in the curriculum, with an everyday meaning and an Australian protection for each.

Contested term: democratic values. The curriculum does not define “democratic values”, so this section uses an **operational definition**: *democratic values are the freedoms a democratic society expects its institutions to protect*. The five named freedoms match the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), articles 13 (movement), 18 (religion), 19 (speech) and 20 (association and assembly) — a statement most countries of the world signed up to. The term is **contested**: reasonable people disagree about what each freedom should allow, and values can **clash** (for example, freedom of religion against equal treatment in Case study 1). When values clash, institutions must balance them, and we judge *how far* each response reflected the values — we do not simply pick a side.

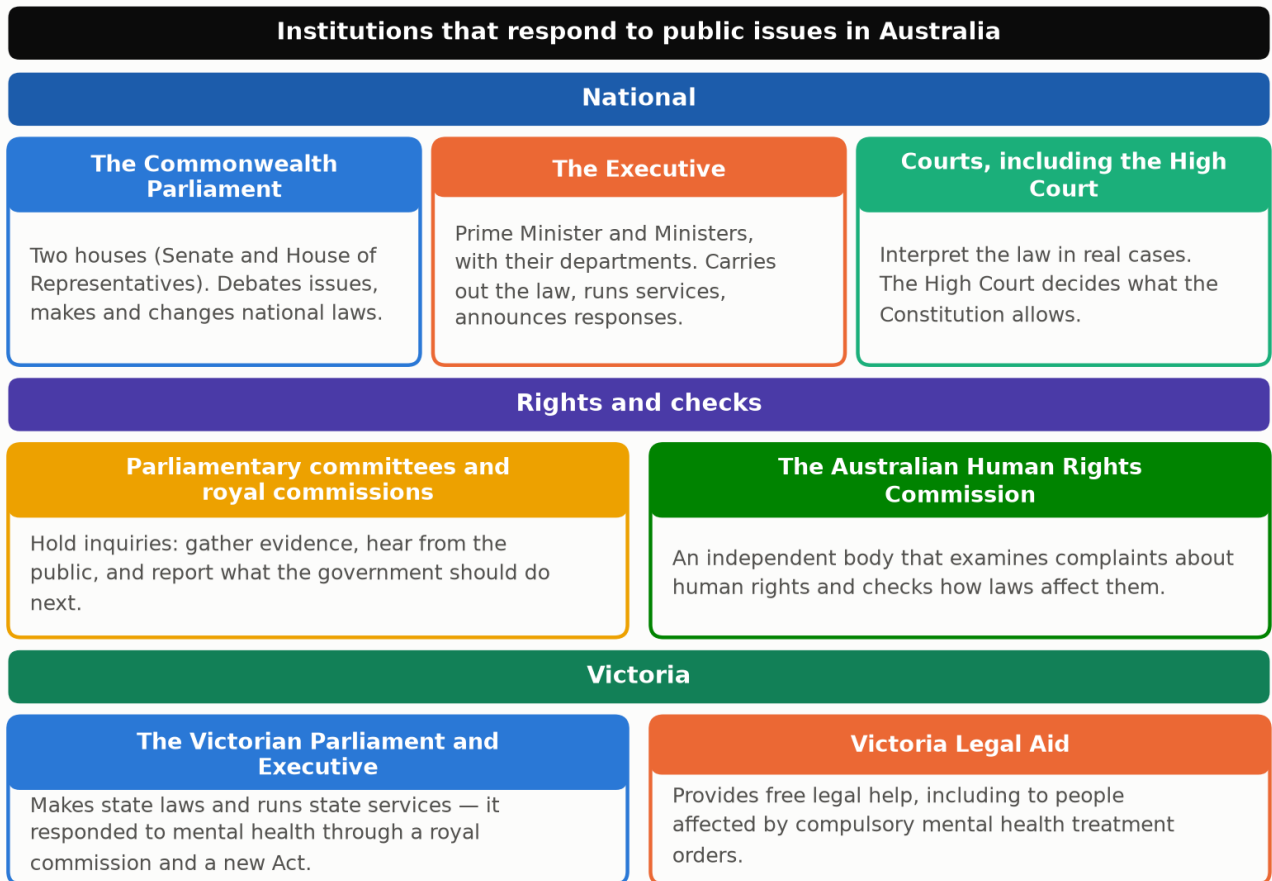


Diagram of the institutions that respond to public issues in Australia, in three bands: national (Commonwealth Parliament, the Executive, courts including the High Court), rights and checks (parliamentary committees and royal commissions, Australian Human Rights Commission), and Victoria (Victorian Parliament and Executive, Victoria Legal Aid), each with a one-line description

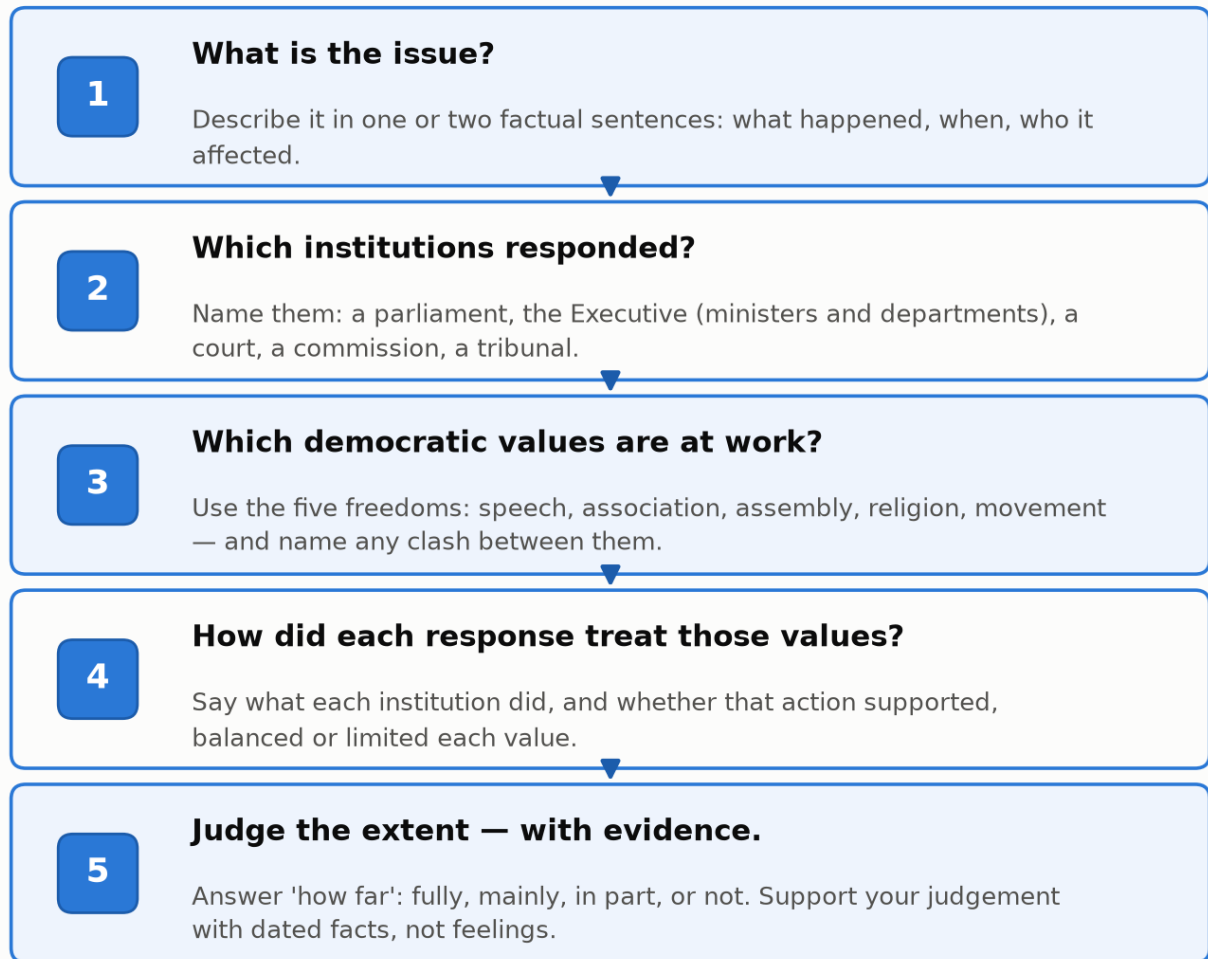
Figure 3. The institutions this section refers to, and what each one does.

Who exercises power? Power in Australia’s system starts with the people, who elect parliaments. Parliament makes the law and supports the Executive. The Executive carries out the law and runs services. Courts, committees, commissions and legal aid bodies check that power is used lawfully and in a fair way. Figure 3 maps these institutions.

The method: the values lens. To answer “the extent to which”, use the five steps in Figure 4, then place your judgement on the scale in Figure 5.

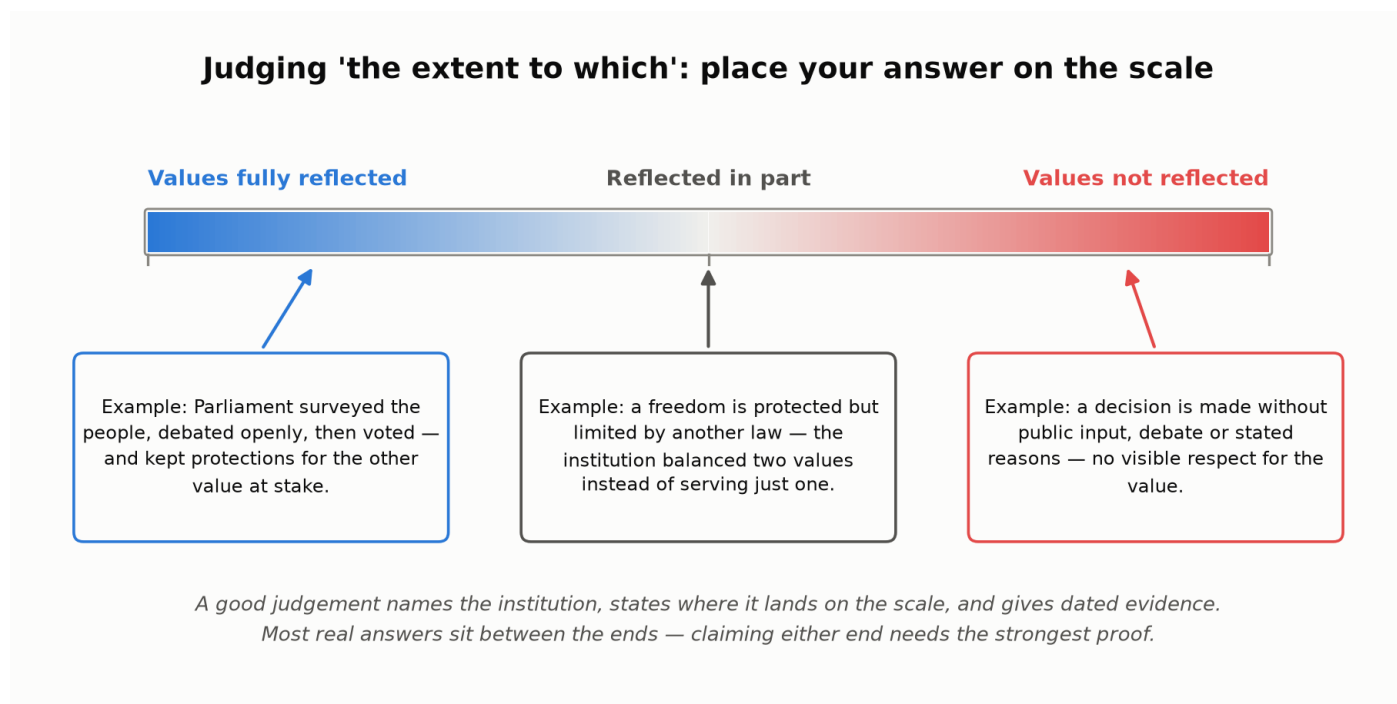
The values lens: five steps

A method for testing how far Australia's institutions reflect democratic values



Flowchart of five numbered steps: 1 what is the issue, 2 which institutions responded, 3 which democratic values are at work, 4 how did each response treat those values, 5 judge the extent with evidence

Figure 4. The values lens: five steps for testing how far institutions reflect democratic values.



Horizontal scale from “values fully reflected” in blue to “values not reflected” in red with “reflected in part” in the middle, and three example cards placed along it showing what strong, mixed and weak reflection of values looks like

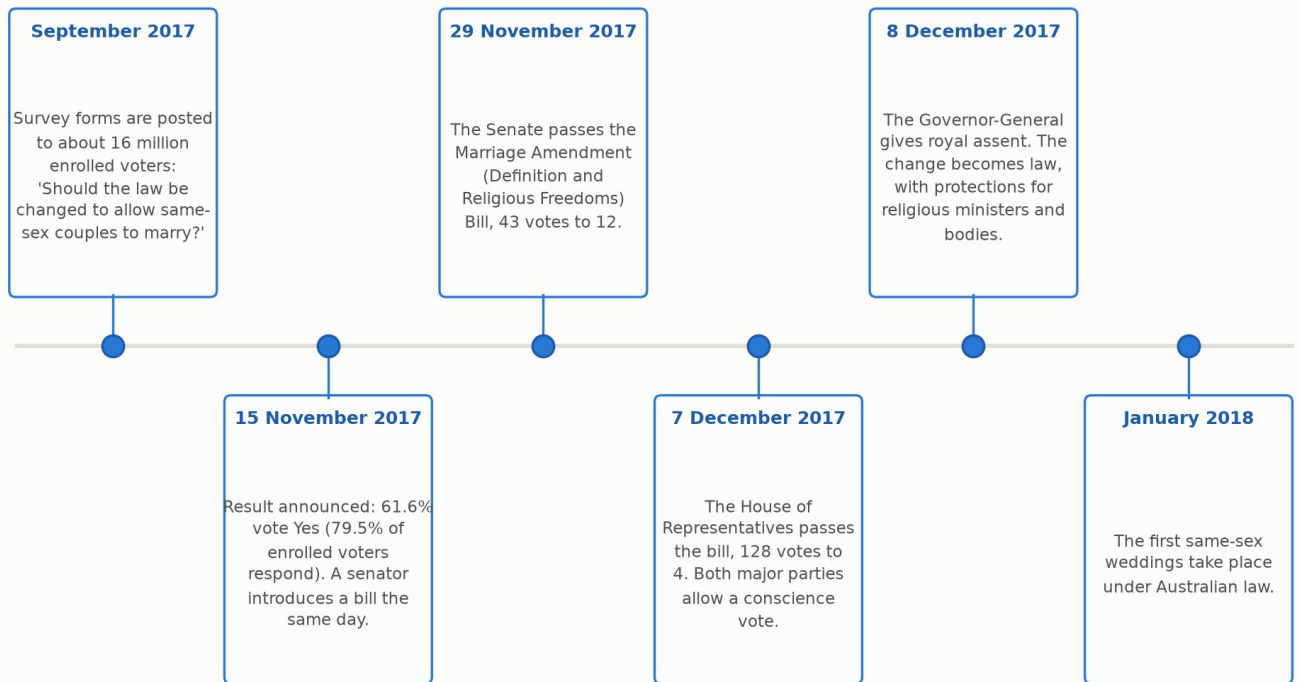
Figure 5. The extent scale: every judgement must be placed on the scale and backed with dated evidence.

Worked examples

Case study 1 — the 2017 marriage law reform (scaffolded)

The issue (LGBTQI+ rights). Until 2017, Australian law did not allow same-sex couples to marry. In 2017 the institutions responded with a **reform** — a planned change to improve the law — in a sequence anyone can check (Figure 6): the Executive organised a national postal survey run by the Australian Bureau of Statistics; the people voted; and Parliament debated and passed the *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017*.

How Australia's marriage law changed, 2017-2018



Institutions in this sequence: the people (survey), the Executive (senator and government), both houses of Parliament, the Governor-General.

Timeline of six dated events from September 2017 to January 2018 showing how Australia's marriage law changed: survey forms posted, result announced, Senate vote, House of Representatives vote, royal assent, first weddings

Figure 6. Case study 1 timeline. Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics; Parliament of Australia; retrieved 26 August 2026.

What happened, step by step.

Lens step

1. The issue

2. Institutions

3. Values at work

4. Treatment of values

5. Extent judgement

What the evidence shows

Same-sex couples could not marry under Australian law; the question was whether to change that law, and with what protections for religion.

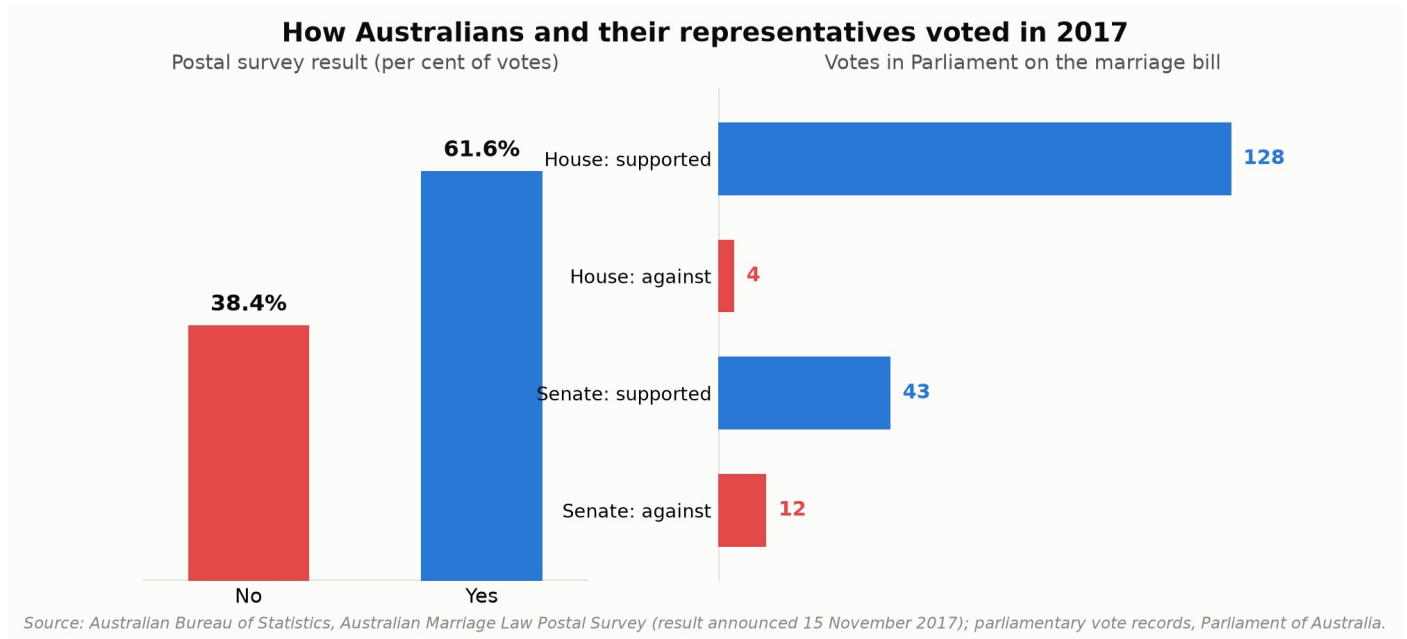
The Executive (survey and government), the people (survey), both houses of Parliament, and the Governor-General (royal assent — the final signing that makes a bill a law).

Equal treatment for same-sex couples **clashed with** freedom of religion for people whose beliefs oppose the change. Freedom of speech and assembly were used by both sides in the public campaign.

The survey let the people speak (61.6% Yes, 38.4% No; 79.5% of enrolled voters responded — Figure 7). Parliament then extended one value (equal treatment) **while** protecting the other: the Act includes protections so religious ministers and bodies are not forced to take part. Both major parties allowed a **conscience vote** — a vote where members follow their own judgement, not the party line — showing members responding to their communities (.E02).

Mainly to fully reflected, near the blue end of the scale: public input (survey), open debate, large majority votes

in both houses (128–4 and 43–12), and protections for the clashing value — all dated facts. A critic could still place it lower by arguing the survey itself was unnecessary or hurtful; the evidence for that view is the public harm many same-sex couples reported during the campaign.



Two-panel bar chart: left panel shows the postal survey result, 61.6% Yes and 38.4% No; right panel shows the parliamentary votes on the marriage bill, House 128 supported and 4 against, Senate 43 supported and 12 against

Figure 7. How Australians and their representatives voted in 2017. Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics; Parliament of Australia; retrieved 26 August 2026.

Steelman both sides. Before judging, restate each side at its strongest (Figure 8). Notice that each side is built on one of the clashing values — this is why the institutions had to balance, not simply choose.

Steelman both sides: a model for any values clash

Worked example: the 2017 debate over changing Australia's marriage law

	Side A — change the law	Side B — keep the law as it was
What is their strongest argument?	Equal treatment: same-sex couples commit to each other just as other couples do, so the law should let them marry on the same terms.	Stability and tradition: marriage as the union of a man and a woman is a long-standing social institution, and changing its definition affects everyone who relies on that meaning.
What is their best evidence?	61.6% of responding voters supported change in 2017; many allied countries had already changed their laws without the harms predicted.	38.4% of responding voters opposed change — a large minority; many faith communities asked for protections so they would not be forced to take part.
Which value do they put first?	Equality and fairness between citizens.	Freedom of religion, and protecting a traditional institution.
What is hardest for them to answer?	How to change the law while also protecting people whose sincere religious beliefs oppose the change.	How to justify treating committed same-sex couples in a different way from other couples under the law.
Starters: 'The strongest case for this side is...' · 'The best evidence is...' · 'This side struggles with...' · 'The value at the centre is...'		

Two-column table steelmanning the 2017 marriage law debate: side A change the law and side B keep the law as it was, with rows for strongest argument, best evidence, value put first, and hardest question for each side

Figure 8. A steelman of both sides in Case study 1: each side stated at its strongest before judging.

Case study 2 — Victoria's mental health reform (scaffolded)

The issue (health care, mental health included). For years, families and clinicians said Victoria's mental health system was failing people, and that **treatment orders** — orders that force a person to receive treatment — were sometimes used when less limiting care would do. The values at stake include **dignity** (treating each person as worthy of respect) and **autonomy** (people making their own decisions), balanced against the duty of institutions to care for people who are very unwell.

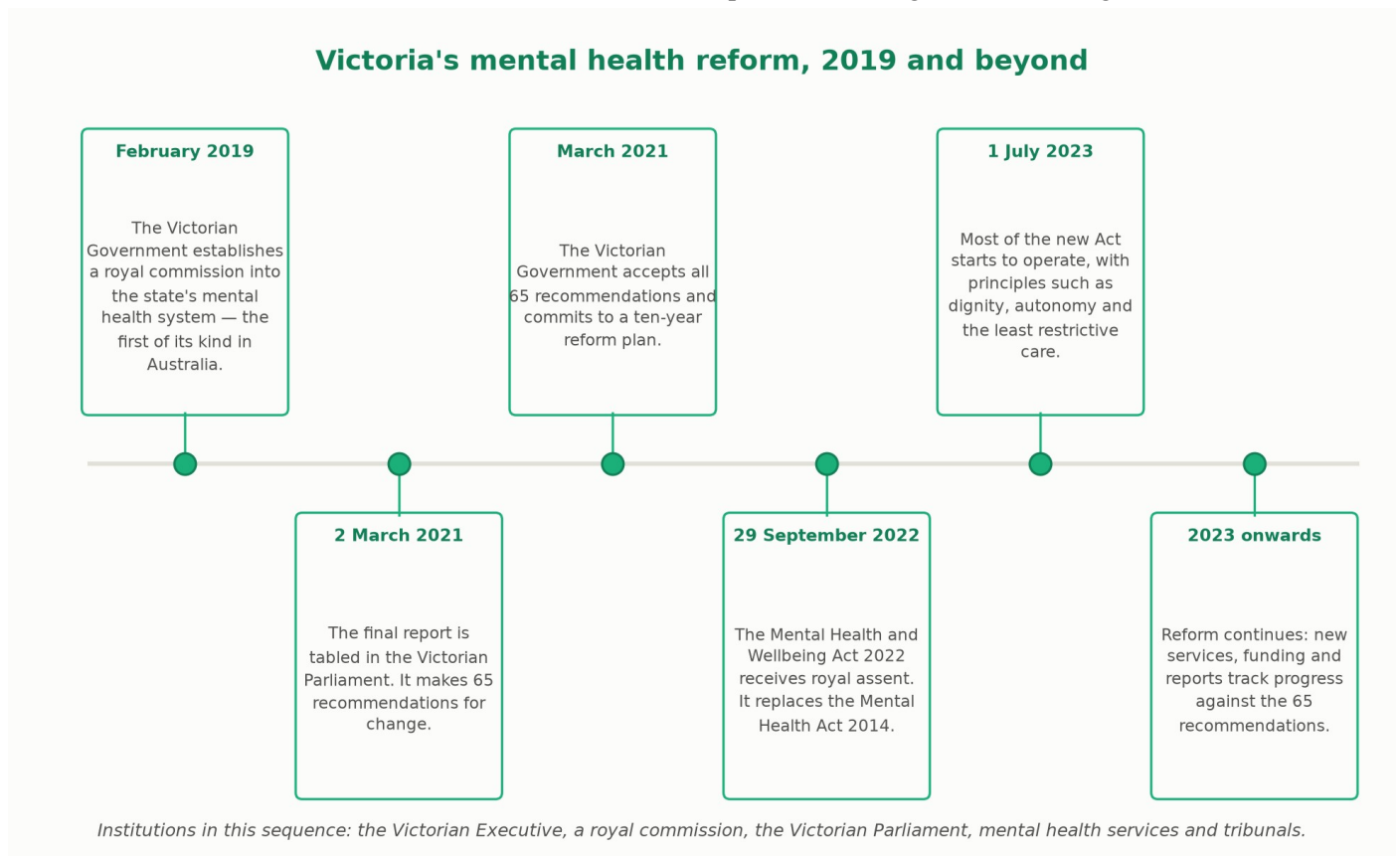
What happened, step by step.

Lens step	What the evidence shows
1. The issue	A state mental health system that many said failed the people who relied on it.
2. Institutions	The Victorian Executive (set up the inquiry and responded), a royal commission — the highest form of public inquiry a government can hold — the Victorian Parliament (passed the new law), and support bodies such as Victoria Legal Aid (.E03).
3. Values at work	Dignity and autonomy for people using services; freedom of movement and decision-making limited by treatment orders; fairness in who can get help.
4. Treatment of values	The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (established February 2019, the first of its kind

5. Extent judgement

in Australia) gathered evidence in public and made 65 recommendations (final report tabled 2 March 2021). The Government accepted all 65 (March 2021). Parliament then passed the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* (Vic) (royal assent 29 September 2022; most of it operating from 1 July 2023), which replaces the *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic) and writes dignity, autonomy and the least restrictive care — care that limits a person’s freedom as little as possible — into the law as principles. Victoria Legal Aid provides free legal help to people affected by treatment orders, checking the power of the state over the individual.

Mainly reflected, mid-to-high on the scale: public inquiry, accepted recommendations, and a new law that names the values — but reform is still underway (“2023 onwards” in Figure 9), so “fully” would need evidence that practice on the ground has changed.



Timeline of six dated events in Victoria’s mental health reform: royal commission established February 2019, final report tabled 2 March 2021 with 65 recommendations, government accepts all 65 in March 2021, Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 receives royal assent 29 September 2022, most of the Act operates from 1 July 2023, reform continues from 2023 onwards

Figure 9. Case study 2 timeline. Sources: Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System; Victorian legislation records; retrieved 26 August 2026.

Comparison model — unscaffolded (.E04)

Compare the two cases. Similarity: in both, institutions moved in the same order — public input (survey / royal commission), open debate, then legislation that extended one value while protecting another (religious protections in 2017; dignity and autonomy principles in 2022). Difference: Case study 1 was national and ended quickly (survey to

royal assent in about 15 months), while Case study 2 is a state reform still being carried out years after the law passed. Both judgements rest on dated facts, not on whether we like the outcomes.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Scaffold: use Figure 3. Name the institution that did each of the following in Case study 1: (a) organised the postal survey; (b) passed the Marriage Amendment Act; (c) gave the final signing that made the bill a law.

Q2. Scaffold: use Figure 2. Match each scene to the freedom it best shows: (a) a group forms a club to campaign for a cause; (b) a person writes to a newspaper criticising a minister; (c) a family drives from Victoria to New South Wales for a holiday; (d) a person joins a peaceful rally in the city; (e) a person prays with their community.

Q3. Scaffold: lens steps 1–2. For Case study 2, state the issue in one factual sentence, then name three institutions that responded.

Q4. Scaffold: sentence starter “A conscience vote shows that...”. In 2017 both major parties allowed a conscience vote on the marriage bill. What does this show about how parties within Parliament responded to the issue (.E02)?

Q5. Scaffold: use Figure 5. Place this judgement on the extent scale and say why: “Section 116 stops the Commonwealth from making a law against the free exercise of religion.”

Q6. Scaffold: use two starters from Figure 8. Write the strongest case **for one side only** of the 2017 marriage debate, using one dated fact.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Apply all five lens steps to Case study 1. Your step-5 judgement must name a place on the scale and give two dated facts as evidence.

Q8. Apply lens steps 3–5 to Case study 2. In step 4 you must refer to the Victorian Parliament **and** Victoria Legal Aid (.E03).

Q9. Compare Case study 1 and Case study 2 (.E04): one similarity and one difference in how the institutions responded, each supported with a date.

Q10. Section 92 of the Constitution says trade and travel between the states shall be free. Which democratic value does this protect, and which institution can strike down a state law that breaks it?

Q11. Investigation: choose **refugee rights** or **food insecurity** as a current issue. Find one dated, named source (.E04). Apply lens steps 1–2 to that issue and write your source line with a retrieval date.

Q12. Using the issue from Q11, steelman both sides (as in Figure 8): for each side give the strongest argument and the value it puts first.

Extended response

Prompt. “To what extent do Australia’s institutions reflect democratic values?” Answer with reference to **both** case studies in this section. (600–800 words)

What a strong response contains. (i) Names the institutions precisely (parliament, Executive, courts, commissions, legal aid). (ii) Names the values at work, including at least one **clash** of values. (iii) Steelmans the strongest opposing view of its own judgement. (iv) Places a judgement on the extent scale (Figure 5) and backs it with at least **three dated facts** from the two case studies. (v) Ends with a conclusion that answers “how far”, not just “yes or no”.

Marking note (teacher). Marks are awarded for the reasoning steps (i)–(v), not for the conclusion reached. A well-argued “mostly” outranks a poorly-argued “fully”.

Answers

Q1. (a) the Executive (with the Australian Bureau of Statistics running the survey); (b) the Commonwealth Parliament (both houses); (c) the Governor-General. **Q2.** (a) association; (b) speech; (c) movement; (d) assembly; (e) religion. **Q3.** Issue: Victoria's mental health system was failing the people who relied on it. Institutions (any three): the Victorian Executive, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the Victorian Parliament, Victoria Legal Aid. **Q4.** A conscience vote shows that parties let members respond to their own judgement and their communities, not just the party line — the issue was treated as a values question, and Parliament resolved it through legislation either way. **Q5.** High on the scale (fully or mainly): the value (religion) is protected at the highest legal level, the Constitution, and the High Court can strike down a law that breaks s 116. **Q6.** Answers vary; must state one side's strongest case with a dated fact (e.g. Side A: equal treatment, backed by the 61.6% Yes result of 15 November 2017; or Side B: freedom of religion, backed by the protections written into the 2017 Act).

Q7–Q12. See fully-worked solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. Step 1: same-sex couples could not marry under Australian law before 2017. Step 2: the Executive, the people (survey), both houses of Parliament, the Governor-General. Step 3: equal treatment clashed with freedom of religion; speech and assembly were used by both campaigns. Step 4: the survey gave public input (79.5% responded); Parliament extended equal treatment and protected religion in the one Act; both parties allowed a conscience vote. Step 5: **mainly to fully reflected** — evidence: result announced 15 November 2017 (61.6% Yes); royal assent 8 December 2017 with religious protections in the Act.

Q8. Step 3: dignity and autonomy for people using services; freedom limited by treatment orders. Step 4: the Victorian Parliament passed the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*, writing dignity, autonomy and the least restrictive care into law as principles; Victoria Legal Aid gives free legal help to people affected by treatment orders, checking state power over the individual. Step 5: **mainly reflected** — the inquiry (report tabled 2 March 2021) and the new law (operating from 1 July 2023) show the values treated as important, but reform is still underway, so “fully” needs evidence of change in practice.

Q9. Similarity: both sequences ran public input → debate → legislation that extended one value while protecting another (survey 2017 / royal commission 2019–2021; religious protections 8 December 2017 / dignity and autonomy principles, 1 July 2023). Difference: Case study 1 was national and fast (survey posted September 2017 to royal assent December 2017); Case study 2 is Victorian and long-running (still reforming from 2023 onwards).

Q10. Freedom of movement (and trade). The High Court can strike down a state law that burdens interstate movement, because s 92 is in the Constitution.

Q11. Answers vary. Example shape: issue — refugee rights: people seeking safety are held under rules that limit their movement and association. Institutions — the Commonwealth Parliament and Executive, courts, the Australian Human Rights Commission. Source line example: “Australian Human Rights Commission, annual reports on rights of people seeking asylum (retrieved 26 August 2026).” Any current, named, dated source is acceptable.

Q12. Answers vary; check that each side is stated at its strongest (steelman, not scarecrow) and that each side's first value is named.

Extended response — model structure. (1) Define democratic values using the operational definition and note the term is contested. (2) Case study 1: institutions, clash (equal treatment vs religion), judgement on the scale with two dated facts. (3) Case study 2: institutions, values (dignity, autonomy), judgement with two dated facts. (4) Steelman the strongest view against your own judgement. (5) Conclude with “the extent to which”: e.g. “Australia's institutions **mainly** reflect democratic values — they repeatedly extend and protect the named freedoms through inquiry, debate and legislation, but fall short of ‘fully’ where reform is unfinished or where reasonable people weigh a clash in different ways.” Any conclusion is acceptable if steps (1)–(5) are done with dated evidence.

Sources (retrieved 26 August 2026)

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey* — survey posted September 2017 to about 16 million enrolled voters; result announced 15 November 2017: 61.6% Yes, 38.4% No, 79.5% response rate.
- Parliament of Australia, bill records — Senate passed the Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 43 votes to 12 on 29 November 2017; House of Representatives passed it 128 votes to 4 on 7 December 2017; royal assent 8 December 2017; first same-sex weddings January 2018.
- Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System — established February 2019 (first of its kind in Australia); final report tabled 2 March 2021 with 65 recommendations; all 65 accepted by the Victorian Government in March 2021.
- Victorian legislation records — *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* (Vic), royal assent 29 September 2022, replacing the *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic), with main principles operating from 1 July 2023.
- Victoria Legal Aid — provides free legal help, including to people affected by mental health treatment orders.
- *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act* — s 92 (interstate trade and movement), s 116 (religion).
- High Court of Australia — *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997), implied freedom of political communication.
- *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011* (Cth) — statements of compatibility and parliamentary scrutiny of new bills.
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) — articles 13, 18, 19, 20.

Australia's Constitution: who does what

Chapter 1 · Government and democracy · Levels 7–8 band · This section **owns VC2HC8K03** and draws on all four of its elaborations (.E01–.E04).

Key ideas

Our working definition of democracy. The curriculum uses the word *democracy* without defining it, so this section states its own definition up front and sticks to it. A **democracy** is a system of government in which (1) adult citizens choose their representatives in free elections, (2) those representatives make and run the laws, and (3) there are real, working checks on power, so that no one person or group can use power without limit. As you read, keep asking: *which institution is the check here?*

1. The Constitution is the rulebook.

The Australian Constitution at a glance	
What it is	The rulebook for how Australia is governed. It sets up the key institutions and divides power between them.
In force from	1 January 1901, when the colonies joined together as the Commonwealth of Australia.
Layout	8 chapters and 128 sections. Chapter I sets up Parliament, Chapter II the Executive Government, Chapter III the courts.
Lawmaking	Section 51 lists 39 areas where the Commonwealth Parliament can make laws, such as defence, currency and immigration.
States	Powers not listed stay with the states (residual powers), such as schools, hospitals, police and roads (section 109 covers clashes).
Changing it	Only by a referendum (section 128): a double majority of voters across Australia and of the states.
Who interprets it	The High Court of Australia decides what the Constitution means in real disputes.

Source: Australian Constitution (1900), sections 51, 58, 61, 64, 71, 72, 109, 128.

Fact card titled “The Australian Constitution at a glance”, listing: what it is (the rulebook for how Australia is governed); in force from 1 January 1901; layout (8 chapters and 128 sections, with Chapter I setting up parliament, Chapter II the executive and Chapter III the courts); lawmaking (section 51 lists 39 areas); states (powers not listed stay with the states, and section 109 covers clashes); changing it (referendum with a double majority, section 128); and who interprets it (the High Court).

The **Constitution** is Australia’s rulebook for government. It took effect on **1 January 1901**, when the six colonies joined together as the Commonwealth of Australia. It creates the key **institutions** — the long-lasting bodies that carry on the work of government no matter which party wins — and splits power between them. It says how it can be changed, and who gets to say what it means. Changing it is hard on purpose: between 1906 and 1999, 44 proposals to change it were put to voters and only 8 succeeded; the last successful changes were in **1977**.

2. The key actors and what they do. (E01)

Australia's key institutions and political actors

Institution or actor	What they do	How they get there
Prime Minister	Leads the Australian Government; chooses Ministers; sets the government's direction.	Leader of the party or group with the support of most members of the House of Representatives.
Governor-General	Represents the King; gives Royal Assent to laws; formally appoints the Prime Minister, Ministers and judges.	Appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister. Sam Mostyn has held the role since 1 July 2024.
Commonwealth Parliament	Makes Commonwealth laws; debates and checks the government. House of Representatives: 151 members; Senate: 76 senators.	Members and senators are elected by Australian voters.
Ministers and Departments	Each Minister leads a portfolio (an area like health or defence). Government departments carry out the government's work.	Ministers are chosen by the Prime Minister from parliament; departments are staffed by public servants.
State and Territory governments	Run their own areas, such as schools, hospitals, police and roads. Each has its own parliament, led by a Premier or Chief Minister.	Elected by the voters of each state or territory.
High Court of Australia	Interprets the Constitution; decides disputes about Commonwealth laws; the final court of appeal.	Its 7 justices are appointed by the Governor-General (on the advice of the government) and serve until age 70.

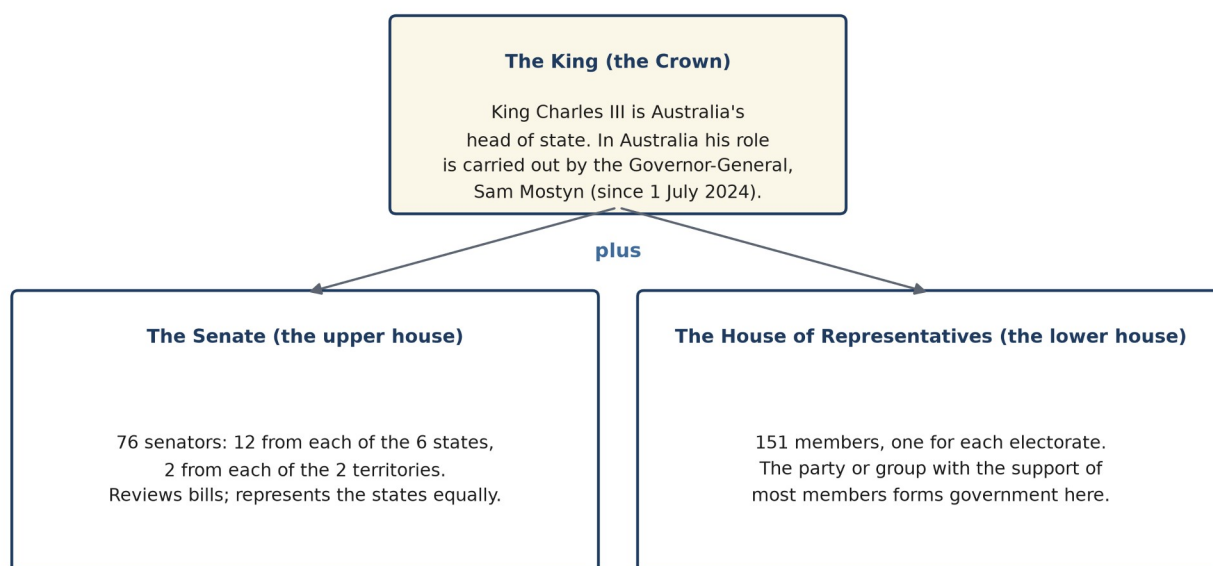
Source: Australian Constitution (1900); Governor-General of Australia, gg.gov.au (retrieved 2026-08-26).

Table with three columns (institution or actor; what they do; how they get there) and six rows: Prime Minister; Governor-General; Commonwealth parliament; Ministers and Departments; State and Territory governments; High Court of Australia.

Notice the pattern: every actor is checked by at least one other. The Prime Minister leads the government but cannot make a law alone. The parliament makes laws, but the High Court can rule a law invalid if it breaks the Constitution. The Governor-General formally appoints almost everyone, but by **convention** — the unwritten rules the system follows in practice — almost always acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and Ministers. Since **1 July 2024** the Governor-General has been Sam Mostyn, the 28th person to hold the role; she was appointed by King Charles III on the advice of the Prime Minister.

3. The Commonwealth parliament. (E01)

The Commonwealth Parliament has three parts



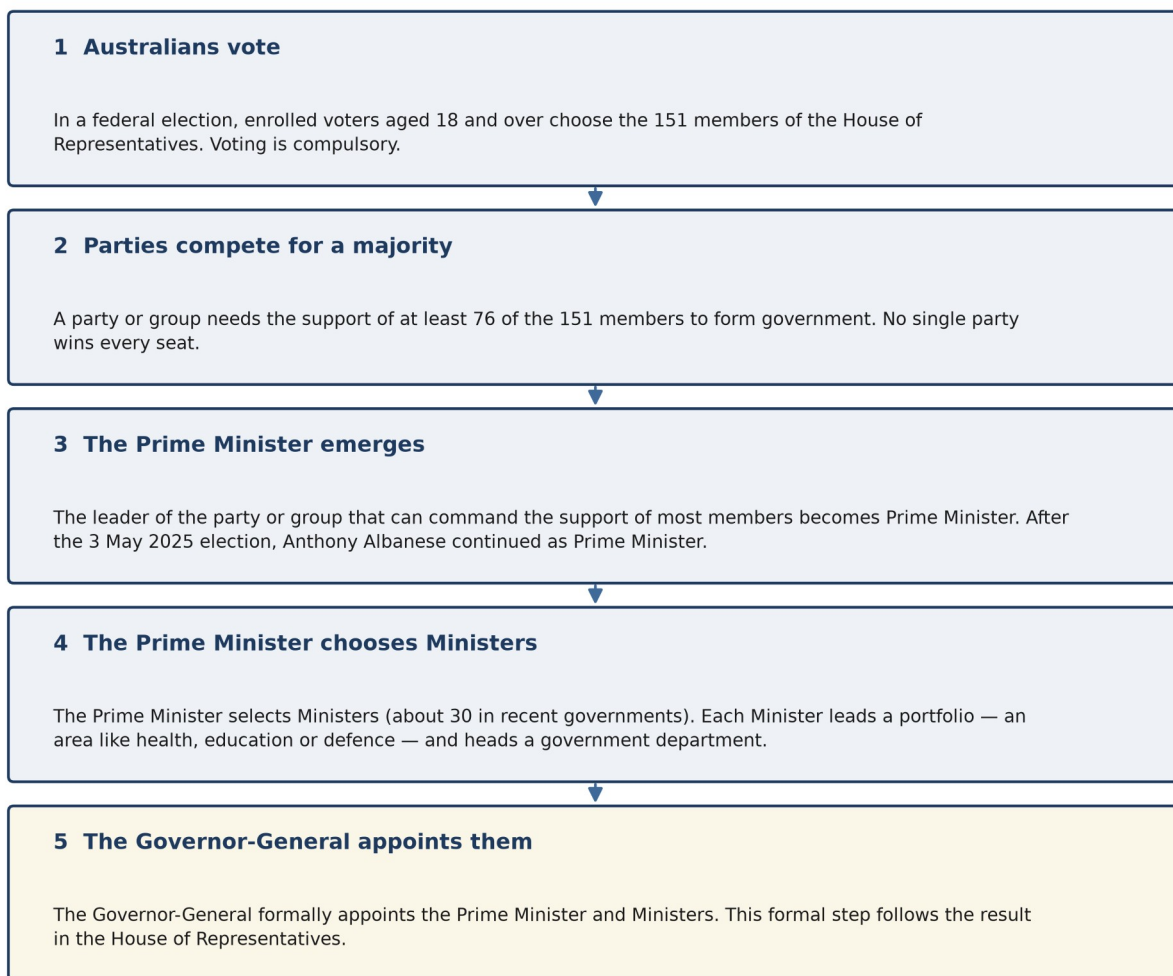
A bill (a proposed law) must pass BOTH houses, then receive Royal Assent from the Governor-General, to become a Commonwealth law.

Diagram showing the three parts of the Commonwealth parliament: the King (the Crown), whose role in Australia is carried out by the Governor-General Sam Mostyn since 1 July 2024, plus the Senate (76 senators) and the House of Representatives (151 members). A note states that a bill must pass both houses and receive Royal Assent to become law.

The Commonwealth parliament has three parts: the King (represented by the Governor-General), the Senate and the House of Representatives. A **bill** is a proposed law; it becomes law only if it passes **both** houses and receives **Royal Assent** (the Governor-General's signature). The Senate has 76 senators (12 from each state, 2 from each territory); the House has 151 members, each elected by one local area. The parliament that opened on **26 July 2022** was the 47th Parliament.

4. How a government is formed. (E01)

How the Australian Government is formed after a federal election



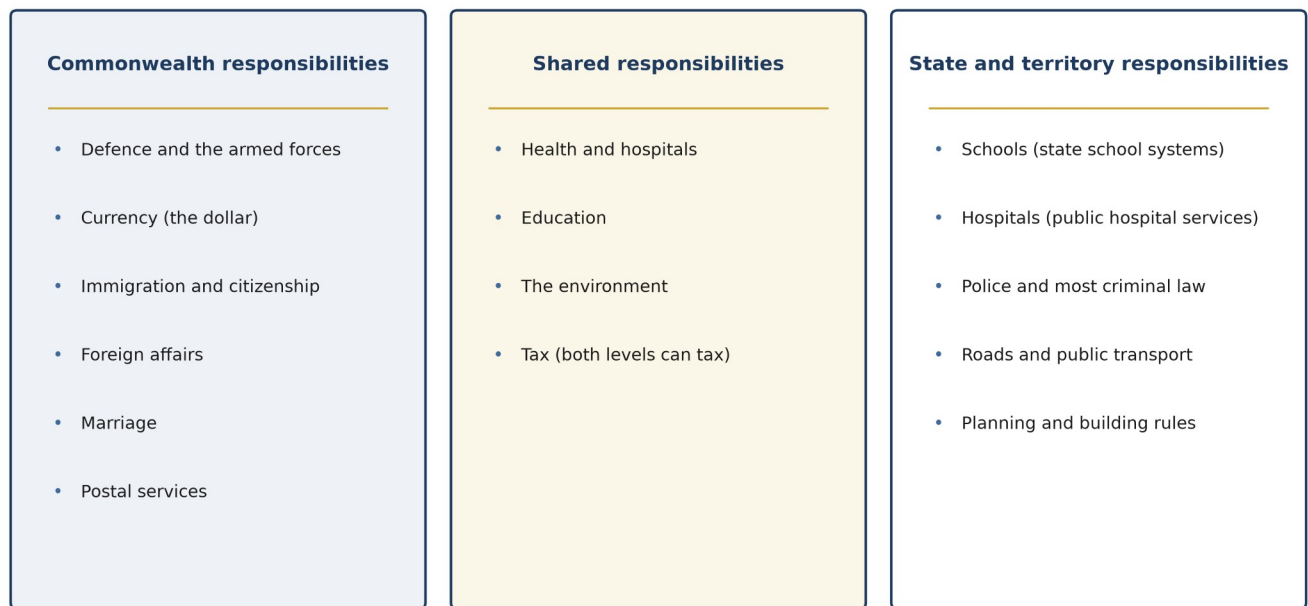
Five-step flow chart: 1 Australians vote; 2 parties compete for a majority of at least 76 of the 151 seats; 3 the leader of the party or group with the support of most members becomes Prime Minister (Anthony Albanese continued after the 3 May 2025 election); 4 the Prime Minister chooses about 30 Ministers, each leading one area of government work and a department; 5 the Governor-General formally appoints them.

A dated case to anchor this: at the federal election of **3 May 2025**, the Australian Labor Party won 94 of the 151 seats in the House of Representatives — more than the 76 needed for a majority — so its leader, Anthony Albanese, continued as Prime Minister. The main opposition grouping won 43 seats; the remaining seats went to the Greens, smaller parties and independents. The Governor-General then formally appointed Albanese and his Ministers.

Ministers and Departments. The Prime Minister chooses the Ministers (about 30 in recent governments). Each Minister leads one area of government work — such as health, education or defence — and heads a government department, the permanent organisation that does the day-to-day work. Departments are staffed by **public servants**, who keep their jobs when the government changes, so the work continues whoever wins.

5. States, territories and the split of powers. (E01)

Who is responsible for what? The federal division of powers



The Constitution lists the Commonwealth's powers in section 51. Powers not listed stay with the states (residual powers). If a valid Commonwealth law and a state law clash, the Commonwealth law prevails (section 109).

Three-column diagram. Commonwealth responsibilities (for example defence, currency, immigration and citizenship, foreign affairs, postal services); shared responsibilities (for example health, education, environment, tax); State responsibilities (for example schools, hospitals, police and most criminal law, roads and transport). A footer explains section 51, the left-over state powers and section 109.

Australia is a **federation**: power is split between the Commonwealth (national) government and the six state governments, and each level has its own parliament. Section 51 lists the 39 areas where the Commonwealth can make laws. Powers not listed — the **left-over** powers, such as schools, hospitals, police and most criminal law — stay with the states. If a Commonwealth law and a state law clash in a shared area, section 109 says the Commonwealth law wins to the extent of the clash. Each state parliament is led by a **Premier**; the two self-governing territories, which received their self-government from Commonwealth law in **1978**, are led by **Chief Ministers**.

6. Separation of powers — with an Australian overlap. (E02)

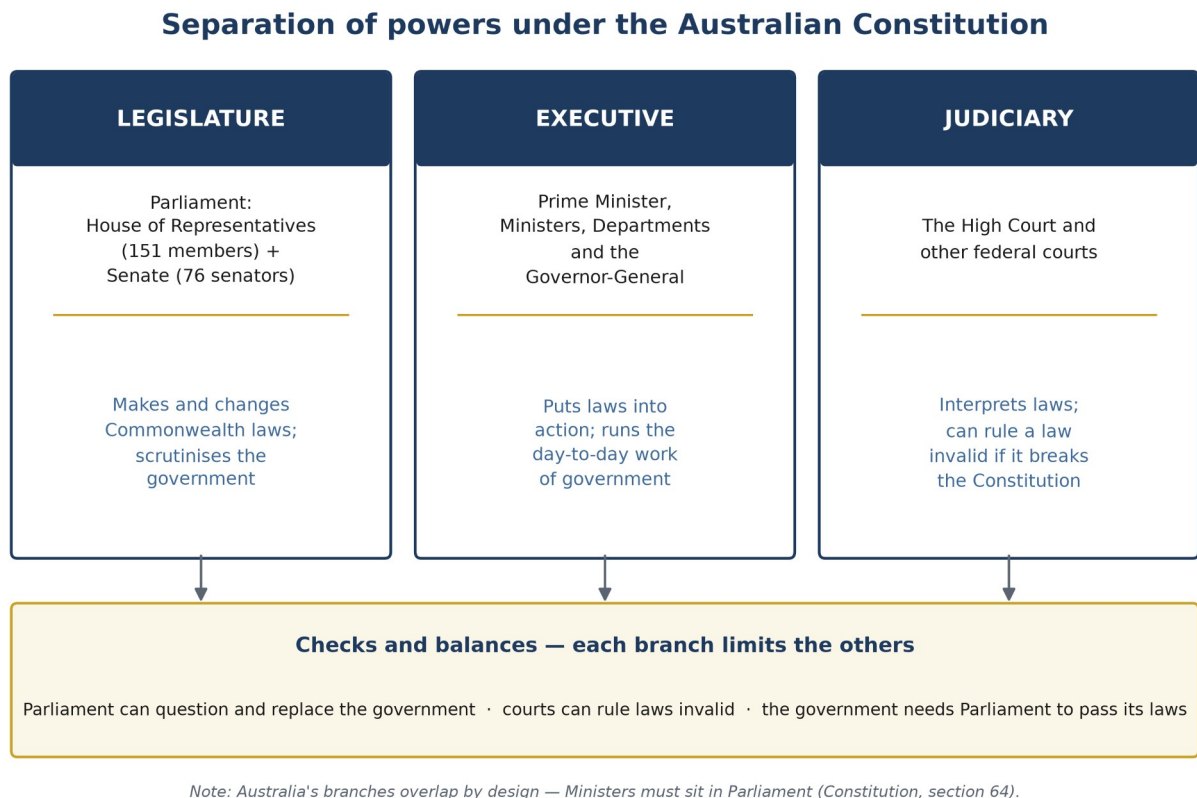


Diagram of the three branches: the legislature (parliament) makes the laws, the executive (government) runs the laws, and the judiciary (courts) judges under the laws, with arrows showing checks between the branches and a note that Ministers must sit in parliament (section 64).

The idea of splitting power three ways was famously put by the French writer Montesquieu in *The Spirit of Laws* (1748). His reason: if the same people make, run and judge the laws, there is no one left to stop them. The Constitution follows this in its first three chapters: Chapter I sets up the parliament (**legislature**, the law-makers), Chapter II the **executive** (the government, which runs the laws) and Chapter III the **judiciary** (the courts, which judge under the laws). But Australia has an overlap: section 64 requires Ministers to sit in parliament. So the executive and the legislature are joined in part, and the clearest separation is between the courts and the other two. That is why this section says *separation of powers with checks and balances*, not a perfect three-way split.

7. The High Court. (E01, E02)

The High Court of Australia

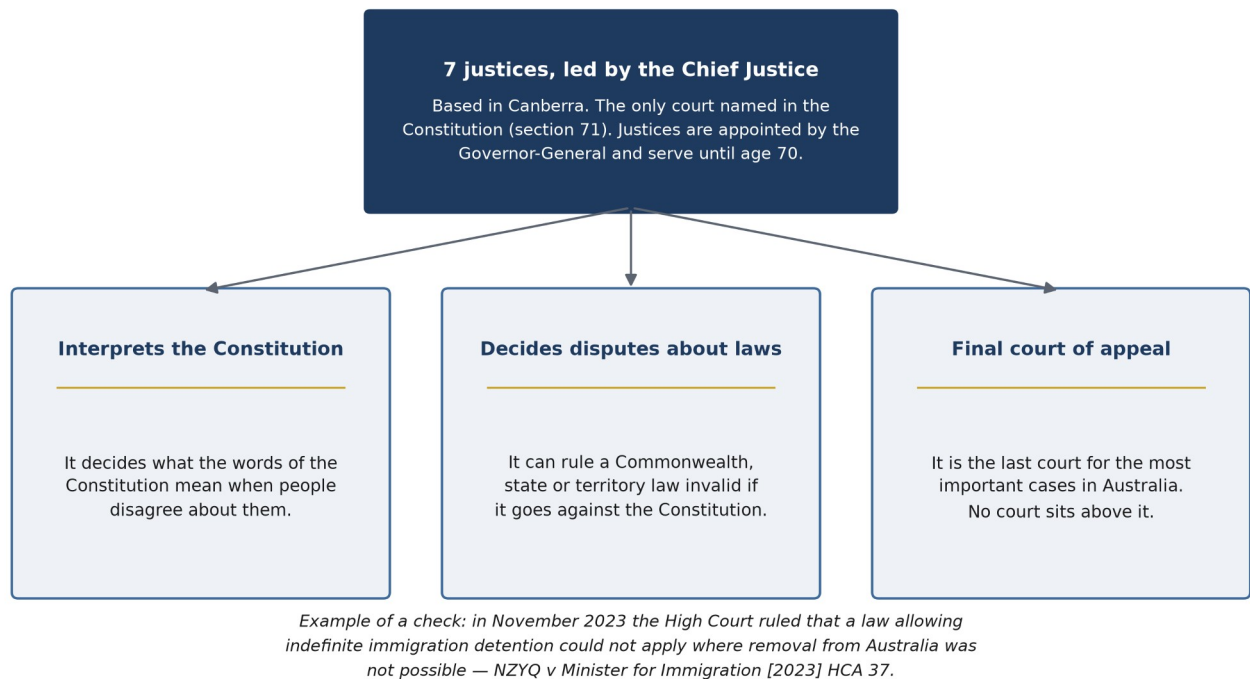


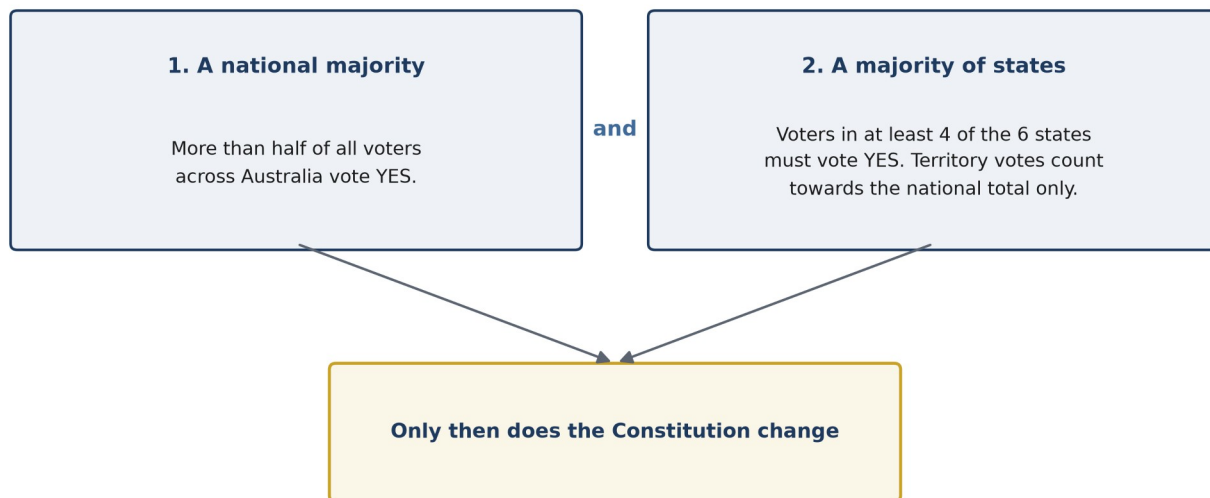
Diagram of the High Court of Australia: 7 justices led by the Chief Justice, based in Canberra, the only court named in the Constitution (section 71), justices appointed by the Governor-General and serving until age 70; three roles shown: interprets the Constitution, decides disputes about laws, and is the final court of appeal. A footer names NZYQ v Minister for Immigration (2023, HCA 37) as an example of a check.

The High Court has 7 justices, led by the Chief Justice — Stephen Gageler since **6 November 2023**. Justices are appointed by the Governor-General and serve until age 70. The Court's three big jobs are to interpret the Constitution, to rule laws invalid where they break the Constitution, and to be the final court of appeal. On **8 November 2023** the Court showed its checking role in a real case, *NZYQ v Minister for Immigration* — worked through in case study 2 below.

8. Changing the rulebook: the double majority. (E02)

Changing the Constitution: the double majority (section 128)

A referendum succeeds only if BOTH conditions are met:



Between 1906 and 1999, 44 proposals were put to Australian voters at referendums; only 8 succeeded. The last successful changes were made in 1977.

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, referendums and plebiscites (retrieved 2026-08-26).

Diagram of the double majority in section 128: a referendum succeeds only if (1) more than half of all voters across Australia vote yes, and (2) voters in at least 4 of the 6 states vote yes; territory votes count towards the national total only. A footer notes that between 1906 and 1999, 44 proposals were put and only 8 succeeded.

Section 128 says the Constitution can only be changed by a **referendum** — a national vote of the voters — and only with a **double majority**: more than half of all voters across Australia, *and* a majority of voters in at least 4 of the 6 states. (Territory votes count towards the national total only.) This is why only 8 of the 44 proposals put between 1906 and 1999 succeeded.

9. What the media shows vs what actually happens. (E03)

What the media shows vs what actually happens

The headlines below are made up for this lesson, to match patterns students may see.

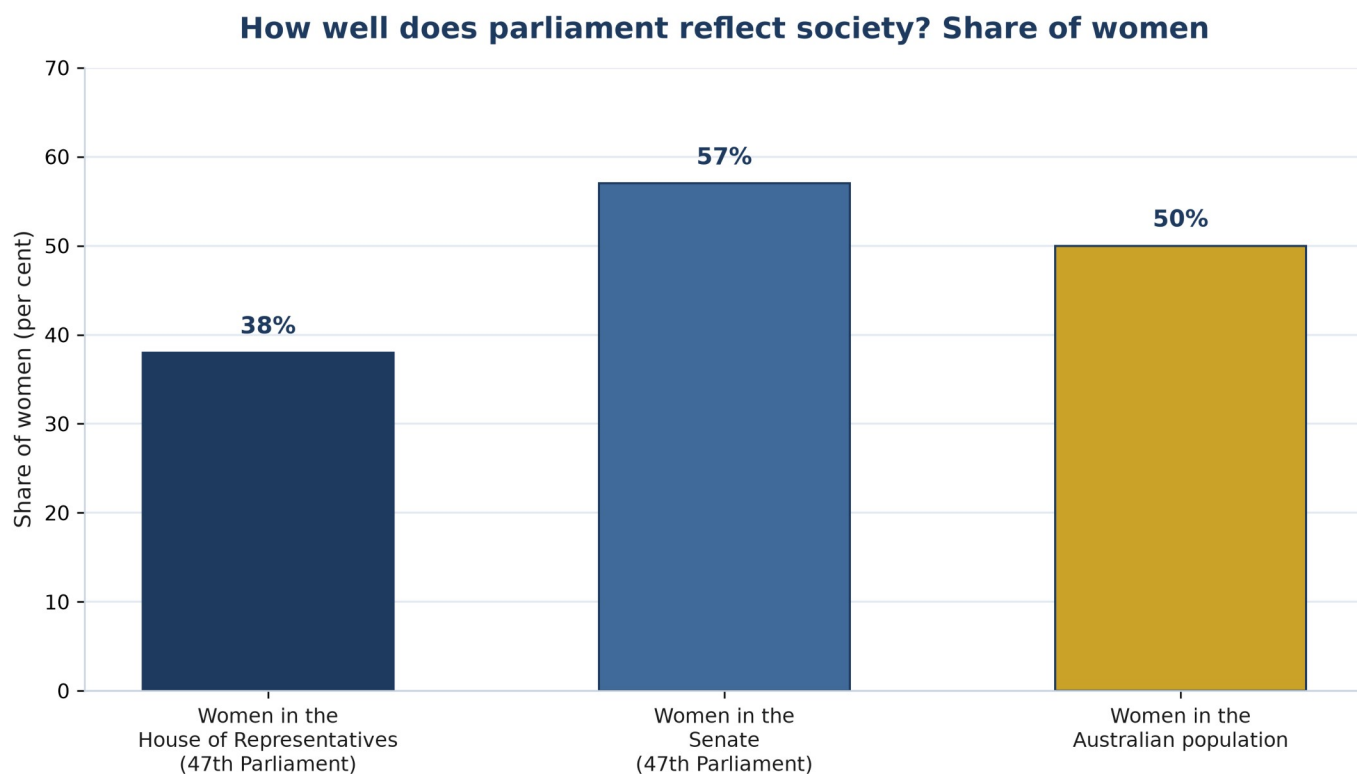
Actor	How the media often shows them (made-up examples)	The actual role
Prime Minister	"PM promises to fix the problem by Friday" — as if the Prime Minister can act alone, like a boss giving orders.	Leads the government and sets its direction, but cannot make law alone. A bill must pass both houses of parliament and receive Royal Assent to become law.
Governor-General	"Governor-General refuses to sign new law" — as if the Governor-General regularly blocks laws.	Almost always gives Royal Assent to bills that pass both houses, and acts on the advice of Ministers in nearly all matters.
High Court	"Judges block popular new law" — as if judges decide what is popular.	Decides whether the Constitution allows a law. The question is what the Constitution permits, not whether a law is popular.

To check a role, go to the source: aph.gov.au (parliament), gg.gov.au (Governor-General), hcourt.gov.au (High Court).

Three-row table comparing made-up media headlines with the actual constitutional role, for the Prime Minister, the Governor-General and the High Court; the headlines are labelled as made-up examples of patterns students may see.

The headlines in the table are made up for this lesson, on purpose: they match patterns you may see, without quoting any real outlet. Now steelman both sides of the media's shorthand. **For the shorthand:** it has a real democratic job. Most people will not read a 128-section rulebook or a 300-page bill; a short headline or clip tells voters quickly who to praise or blame at the next election, and that is a form of accountability. **Against the shorthand:** it can quietly teach a false picture — a Prime Minister who rules by announcement, a Governor-General who "blocks" laws at will, judges who rule by popularity. None of those is the actual role. The habit this section wants you to build is: treat a headline as a *signal that something happened*, and the Constitution as the *map of what can actually happen*. Whether any particular headline helps or misleads is a judgement you make case by case. That is reasoning, not a fixed conclusion, and different judgements can both be well argued.

10. How representative are these actors? (E04)



Sources: Parliament of Australia (47th Parliament, 2022–2025); ABS, Australian Demographic Statistics (2023). Retrieved 2026-08-26.

Bar chart titled “How well does parliament reflect society? Share of women”: 38 per cent of the House of Representatives and 57 per cent of the Senate (47th Parliament), compared with about 50 per cent of the Australian population.

Here is one clean measure. The 47th Parliament, which opened on **26 July 2022**, was 38 per cent women in the House of Representatives and 57 per cent women in the Senate; about 50 per cent of the Australian population is women. So on this measure one house sat well below the community and one sat slightly above it. Steelman both sides of what to make of that. **Side A — parliament should look like the people:** a parliament that mirrors society is more likely to notice when a law bears in different ways on different Australians, and more likely to be trusted by people who do not see anyone like themselves in it. **Side B — parliament should be chosen for the job:** voters and parties should pick on skill, experience and judgement; pushing for a mirror could skip the best person for an area of government work, and voters already get the final say at every election. The curriculum asks you to *consider*, so the task is to weigh both sides against the data — not to recite one answer. The same method works for other measures, such as age, birthplace or work done before parliament; gender is simply the measure with the cleanest numbers.

A contested term: head of state. Under the Constitution’s text, the King is Australia’s head of state, represented here by the Governor-General. **Republicans** argue that in practice the Governor-General does the whole job, so Australia should have an Australian citizen as its head of state; **monarchists** argue that a Crown above party politics protects the system from any one politician holding all of it. Both views are respectable and both are widely held; the constitutional fact for this section is the text as it stands. Again: reasoning, not a fixed conclusion.

Teaching sequence (for the teacher)

One sequence, eight steps. Each step names its figure, its dated case and the elaboration it serves.

1. **Hook — the headline test (E03).** Open with Figure 9. Ask: *which of these three headlines could actually happen under the Constitution?* Collect guesses; do not resolve them yet. The section returns here at step 7.
2. **The rulebook (Figure 1, E01/E02).** Walk the fact card slowly; stress that the Constitution creates the players *and* the checks. Dated anchor: in force 1 January 1901; last successful changes 1977.

3. **The actors (Figures 5, 3 and 4, E01).** Use the roles table, then the parliament diagram, then the formation flow. Dated anchors: the 3 May 2025 election (Labor 94 of 151, so Albanese continued as Prime Minister) and Sam Mostyn as Governor-General since 1 July 2024. Point out the chain of legitimacy: voters → House → Prime Minister → Ministers → Governor-General's formal appointment.
 4. **The federal split (Figure 6, E01).** Sort a quick oral list (school rules vs defence vs hospital funding) into Commonwealth / state / shared. Name section 109 as the tie-breaker.
 5. **Separation of powers (Figure 2, E02).** Attribute the idea to Montesquieu (*The Spirit of Laws*, 1748), then show the Australian overlap (section 64). *Optional one-liner for a confident class only:* on 11 November 1975, Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismissed the Whitlam government — the clearest modern example of reserve powers being used. Treat as a mention, not assessed content, and move on.
 6. **The High Court (Figures 7 and 8, E01/E02).** Teach the Court's three jobs, then the double majority. Dated anchors: Gageler Chief Justice since 6 November 2023; NZYQ decided 8 November 2023.
 7. **Close the hook (E03).** Return to step 1's question, now with the roles table in hand. Run the steelman pair (shorthand as accountability vs shorthand as false picture) and leave the judgement with the students, marked as reasoning.
 8. **Representation (Figure 10, E04).** Present the 26 July 2022 data; run the steelman pair (mirror vs merit); close by asking which *other* measures students would test, and what data they would need.
-

Worked case studies

Case study 1 — The federal election of 3 May 2025 (E01, E04)

What happened. On Saturday 3 May 2025, enrolled Australians voted in a federal election run by the Australian Electoral Commission (the independent body that runs federal votes). The Australian Labor Party won 94 of the 151 seats in the House of Representatives; the main opposition grouping won 43; the remaining seats went to the Greens, smaller parties and independents. Because 94 is more than the 76 seats needed for a majority, Labor's leader, Anthony Albanese, continued as Prime Minister, chose his Ministers, and was formally appointed — with his Ministers — by the Governor-General, Sam Mostyn.

Who was involved. The voters; the parties; the Australian Electoral Commission; the Prime Minister; the Governor-General. Note the order: none of these actors can skip the one before it. The Prime Minister is never chosen directly by the voters as “Prime Minister”; the voters choose the House, and the House's majority decides who can govern.

Which CD concept it shows. *E01 (roles and how far they work together):* the case is a live chain of roles — voters → House → Prime Minister → Ministers → Governor-General — in which each actor's power depends on the previous actor doing its job. It also shows actors working *with* each other by convention: the Governor-General appointed the person the House's result pointed to, not a personal choice. *E04 (representation):* the same comparison method as Figure 10 can be run on the parliament elected in 2025 — ask which data you would need before claiming it does or does not reflect the community.

Case study 2 — NZYQ v Minister for Immigration (2023) (E01, E02)

What happened. A Commonwealth law allowed a person to be held in immigration detention with no fixed end, even where there was no real prospect of removing them from Australia. A man identified only as NZYQ — a pseudonym, a made-up name the Court uses to protect a person's identity — challenged his own detention. On 8 November 2023 the High Court ruled that holding him that way was unlawful, and more than 150 other people held under the same law had to be released as a result.

Who was involved. NZYQ; the Minister for Immigration (executive); the parliament that passed the law (legislature); the High Court (judiciary). All three branches, and one person, in a single case.

Which CD concept it shows. *E02 (separation of powers and why it matters):* the parliament passed the law and the executive ran it, and an independent court still said stop. That is the check working exactly as Montesquieu's reason predicts: without a separate judiciary, the body that wrote the law would also judge the law. *E01 (degree to which actors work together):* here the branches did **not** work together — the Court overruled the other two — and that conflict *is* the system functioning as designed. “Working well” in a constitution does not always mean “agreeing”.

Tasks

Scaffolded

Q1. (E01) Match each actor (A–F) to its role (1–6).

- **A.** High Court of Australia
 - **B.** Prime Minister
 - **C.** Governor-General
 - **D.** Commonwealth parliament
 - **E.** Ministers and Departments
 - **F.** State and Territory governments
1. Makes Commonwealth laws, after debate and checking the government.
 2. Runs schools, hospitals, police and roads in its own area.
 3. Interprets the Constitution and can rule laws invalid.
 4. Leads the government and chooses the Ministers.
 5. Carries out the government's work, area by area.
 6. Gives Royal Assent and formally appoints the Prime Minister.

Q2. (E01) The five steps of Figure 4 are out of order. Rewrite them in the correct order using the letters: **A.** the Prime Minister chooses the Ministers; **B.** enrolled voters choose the 151 members of the House; **C.** the Governor-General formally appoints the Prime Minister and Ministers; **D.** a party or group secures the support of at least 76 members; **E.** the leader of that party or group becomes Prime Minister.

Q3. (E02) Name the branch (legislature / executive / judiciary) doing the work in each case: (a) the Senate debates and amends a bill; (b) the High Court decides what a section of the Constitution means; (c) a government department runs the national immunisation program.

Q4. (E02) Finish the sentence in your own words, then check it against Figure 2: “If the same people made the law, ran the law and judged the law, then ...”

Q5. (E03) Two made-up headlines: (i) “PM signs order to make new law today”; (ii) “Governor-General blocks bill she dislikes”. Using Figure 9 and the roles table, write one sentence each stating the *actual* rule the headline skips.

Q6. (E04) Read Figure 10. (a) What share of the House of Representatives was women in the 47th Parliament? (b) What share of the population is women? (c) Which house sat closer to the population share, and by how many percentage points?

Unscaffolded

Q7. (E01) Explain, in two or three sentences, how the Governor-General and the Prime Minister are connected, and one way their roles differ.

Q8. (E01, E02) Section 64 requires Ministers to sit in parliament. Does that pull the executive and legislature closer together, or push them apart? Answer with a reason, and name one check that remains either way.

Q9. (E01, E02) A state passes a law about immigration and the Commonwealth already has a law about immigration that says something different. Which law prevails, under which section, and which institution would actually decide the clash if it were challenged?

Q10. (E03) With your teacher's approval, choose one real, dated news headline about the Prime Minister, the Governor-General or the High Court. State the actual role of that actor, then argue whether the headline helps or misleads the reader about it. Give the headline's outlet and date.

Q11. (E04) Using Figure 10, write two short paragraphs on whether parliament is representative enough of contemporary Australian society: paragraph one steelmans “it should mirror the community”, paragraph two steelmans “it should be chosen for the job”. End with one sentence saying which side your evidence supports *so far*, and what extra data could change your mind.

Q12. (E01–E04) True or false? Fix any false statement so it becomes true. (a) The Prime Minister can make a Commonwealth law alone. (b) A referendum succeeds if more than half of all Australian voters vote yes. (c) The High Court can rule a Commonwealth law invalid where it breaks the Constitution. (d) The Governor-General is appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Q13. (extended response, E01–E04) “The Australian Constitution gives real power to people Australians never elect — the Governor-General and the High Court. That is undemocratic.” Discuss this claim. In your response you must: define the key terms you use (including your working definition of *democracy*); describe at least two real, dated cases from this section as evidence; steelman the strongest version of the claim before answering it; and end by stating what your argument does **not** prove.

Answers and worked solutions

Q1. A–3, B–4, C–6, D–1, E–5, F–2.

Q2. B, D, E, A, C. Voters first (B); the majority number comes next (D); the leader emerges (E); the leader chooses Ministers (A); the Governor-General makes it all official (C).

Q3. (a) legislature; (b) judiciary; (c) executive.

Q4. Worked model: “...then there would be no one left to stop them, because the body that wrote the rule would also run it and judge its own breaking of it.” Any answer that lands on *no independent check* is correct; compare Montesquieu’s reason in key idea 6.

Q5. Worked models. (i) The actual rule: a new Commonwealth law must pass both houses as a bill and receive Royal Assent — the Prime Minister cannot sign one into being alone. (ii) The actual rule: by convention the Governor-General assents to bills that pass both houses; refusal based on personal dislike is not the actual role.

Q6. (a) 38 per cent. (b) About 50 per cent. (c) The Senate: 57 per cent, 7 percentage points above the population share (the House sat 12 points below it).

Q7. Model: the Governor-General formally appoints the Prime Minister, and acts on the Prime Minister’s advice in nearly all matters; but the Prime Minister’s power rests on commanding the House’s support, while the Governor-General’s role rests on appointment by the King on advice. One difference: the Prime Minister is a politician with a party; the Governor-General is expected to stand above parties.

Q8. Model: closer together — the executive is drawn from the legislature, so the two share people daily. A check that remains: the government still must win votes in both houses to pass its bills, and the Senate can reject them; and the courts remain fully separate.

Q9. The Commonwealth law prevails to the extent of the clash (section 109), and the High Court would decide the clash if challenged. (Immigration is also a section 51 area, which is why the Commonwealth law exists.)

Q10. Check for: a real, dated headline with outlet named; the actual role stated correctly; a reasoned helps/misleads judgement, not a vibe.

Q11. Check for: each side argued in its *strongest* form (not a strawman); the Figure 10 numbers used accurately (38 / 57 / about 50); a closing sentence that marks the judgement as provisional and names extra data.

Q12. (a) False — a bill must pass both houses and receive Royal Assent. (b) False — it also needs a majority of voters in at least 4 of the 6 states. (c) True. (d) True.

Q13. Marking guide (reasoning-based, not conclusion-based). Award for: **terms defined** — a working definition of *democracy* is stated and the words *undemocratic*, *appoint* and *power* are handled precisely; **evidence used** — at least two real dated cases from the section (for example 3 May 2025 election; Mostyn since 1 July 2024; NZYQ on 8 November 2023; Gageler since 6 November 2023; the 1977 referendums) used as evidence rather than decoration; **steelmanning** — the claim is strengthened before it is answered (for example: unelected actors can void laws of elected ones, and reserve powers can end a government, as in 11 November 1975); **answer with reasons** — for example, the unelected roles are formal in most cases and exercised on advice, justices are bounded by the Constitution’s text and by parliament’s power to change it (section 128), and an independent referee protects the elected system’s own rules; **limits marked** — a closing sentence stating what the argument does not prove (for example, that the current arrangements are the only possible ones, or that representation questions are settled). A well-reasoned answer on *either* side of the claim scores full marks if it meets these five bars.

Sources and retrieval notes

All figures in this section are original, generated for this workbook by the scripts in `src/`. Real-world facts carry retrieval dates; all sources below were retrieved on **2026-08-26**.

- *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act* / the Australian Constitution (1900): sections 51, 58, 61, 64, 71, 72, 109 and 128; Chapters I–III.
- Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Civics and Citizenship Levels 7–8: content description VC2HC8K03 and elaborations .E01–.E04 (scope authority for this section).
- Australian Electoral Commission: 2025 federal election results (House of Representatives totals) and referendums data (44 proposals 1906–1999, 8 carried).
- Governor-General of Australia (gg.gov.au): appointment and term of Sam Mostyn, 28th Governor-General.
- ABC News: 3 May 2025 federal election result and continuation of Anthony Albanese as Prime Minister.
- High Court of Australia: *NZYQ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* [2023] HCA 37 (8 November 2023); composition of the Court and Chief Justice Gageler’s commission (6 November 2023).
- Parliament of Australia: 47th Parliament (opened 26 July 2022), share of women in each house.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023 data): share of women in the resident population.
- Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748): source of the separation-of-powers idea.

Staying informed and taking part in Australia's democracy

Chapter 1 — Government and democracy · Section 1D Strand: Knowledge and Understanding · Sub-strand: Government and democracy Owns: VC2HC8K04 · Draws on: .E01 .E02 .E03 .E04 · MCQs in bank: 6

You cannot vote in a federal election yet — but Australia's democracy is not only about voting on election day. Between elections, people make their views known in many ways: they write to their local member of parliament, sign a petition, join a group that campaigns for a cause, march in the street, or post about an issue online. And before people can take part in any of this, they need information about what is happening. This section looks at how Australians find out about politics and issues, and the different ways they can make their voice heard — including things you can do right now.

What you will learn

This section covers one content description from the Victorian Curriculum (Levels 7 and 8), referenced here by code only.

Content description VC2HC8K04 (Civics and Citizenship, Levels 7 and 8, Government and democracy)

Elaborations drawn on: .E01 · .E02 · .E03 · .E04

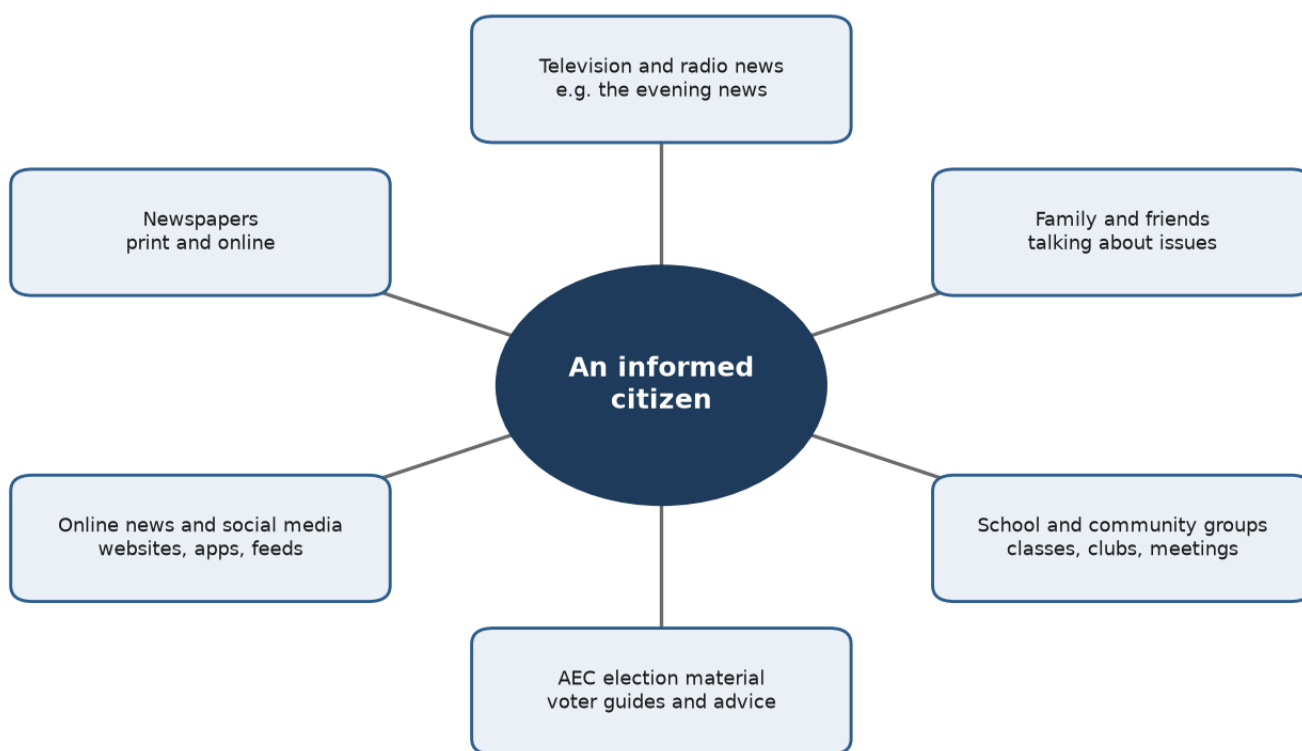
Core ideas

1. Being informed: how Australians find out about politics and issues

To take part in democracy, people first need to know what is going on. Being **informed** means finding out about issues, about what the government is doing, and about the choices on offer at an election. Australians use many channels to get this information, and different people use different ones.

How Australians find out about politics and issues

Citizens use many channels to become informed



Source: Australian Electoral Commission (aec.gov.au).

A labelled diagram showing the ways Australians find out about politics and issues, with channels such as television and radio news, newspapers, online news and social media, election material from the Australian Electoral Commission, and conversations with family, friends, school and community groups.

Many young Australians get news online and through social media, while others watch television news, listen to the radio, or read newspapers. Information also comes from the **Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)** — the independent body that runs federal elections — and from school and community groups.

One problem: not everything you see or read is accurate. **Misinformation** is false or incorrect information that is shared online or offline. Some of it is shared by mistake; some is shared on purpose to mislead people. During an election, some people or groups may try to influence how you vote using false or misleading content, including content made or changed by computer programs (sometimes called AI).

The AEC runs a campaign called **Stop and Consider** to help voters deal with this. It asks people to:

- **Stop** and understand that some election content is false or misleading.
- **Consider** the source — could it be AI? Check the content and where it came from.
- **Act** by using three simple steps: **verify** it (check it is true), **report** it on the platform where you saw it, and **ignore** it and do not share it if you are unsure.

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 'Stop and consider: digital literacy', aec.gov.au (updated 2 February 2026). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Being able to check information is itself a way of taking part in democracy, because informed citizens make better decisions.

2. The electoral system: how citizens use it

The most well-known way citizens participate is by **voting** in elections. In Australia, federal elections are run by the **Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)**, which is independent of the government. This means the government of the day does not control how elections are run or how votes are counted.

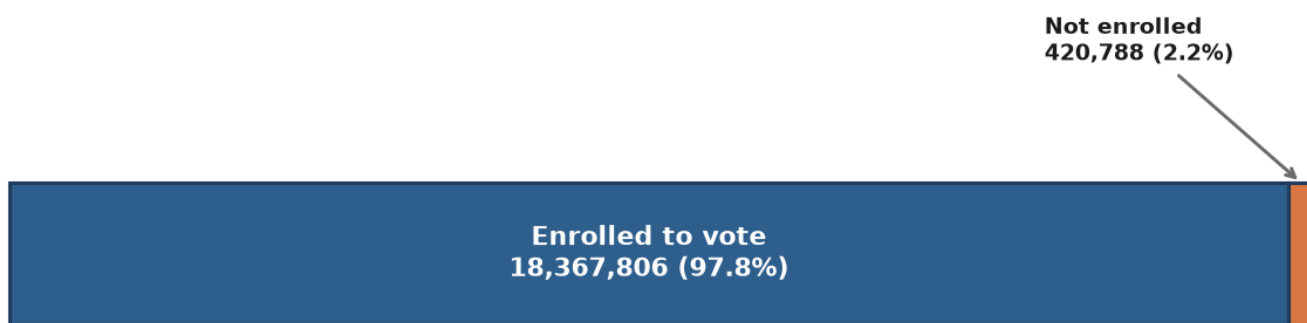
Before you can vote, you must be **enrolled**. **Enrolment** means putting your name on the electoral roll (the official list of voters) so you are able to vote. Australian citizens aged 18 years and over must enrol. If you are 16 or 17, you can enrol early so that you are ready to vote as soon as you turn 18 — the voting age is 18.

Australia also has **compulsory voting**. **Compulsory** means required by law — you must do it. Once you are enrolled, you are required to vote in federal elections. Compulsory voting was introduced for federal elections in 1924. If an enrolled person does not vote and does not have a good reason, they may have to pay a small fine (currently starting at \$20). The idea behind compulsory voting is that parliament should reflect the views of all Australians, not only the people who choose to turn up.

Because voting is compulsory, **turnout** in Australia is high. **Turnout** means the share of enrolled voters who actually vote. At the federal election held on 3 May 2025, turnout was 90.70 per cent, and 18,098,797 Australians were enrolled to vote. As at 30 June 2026, there were 18,367,806 people enrolled — that is 97.8 per cent of the Australians eligible to enrol.

Who is enrolled to vote in Australia?

Australian Electoral Commission figures, as at 30 June 2026



Nearly every eligible Australian is on the electoral roll.

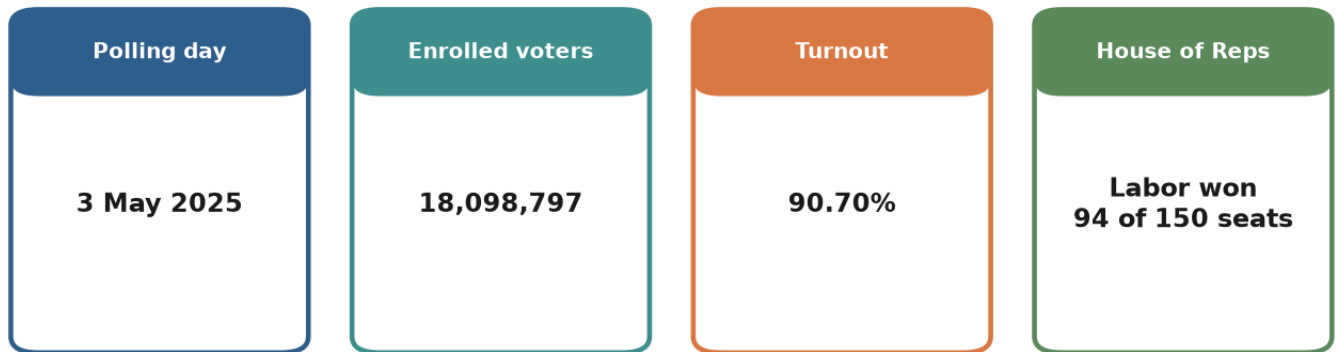
Total eligible to enrol: 18,788,594. Voting age: 18.

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, enrolment statistics (updated 14 July 2026).

A bar chart of Australian Electoral Commission enrolment figures as at 30 June 2026, showing 18,367,806 Australians enrolled to vote, which is 97.8 per cent of eligible Australians, and 420,788 eligible Australians not yet enrolled.

The 2025 Australian federal election

An election in numbers



Because voting is compulsory, most enrolled Australians vote.

Anthony Albanese (Australian Labor Party) became Prime Minister.

Source: AEC 2025 federal election results; '2025 Australian federal election', Wikipedia.

An information card summarising the 2025 Australian federal election: held on 3 May 2025, with 18,098,797 enrolled voters, a turnout of 90.70 per cent, and the Australian Labor Party winning 94 of the 150 seats in the House of Representatives.

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, enrolment statistics, aec.gov.au (updated 14 July 2026); Australian Electoral Commission, 2025 federal election results, results.aec.gov.au; 'Compulsory voting', Wikipedia; '2025 Australian federal election', Wikipedia. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

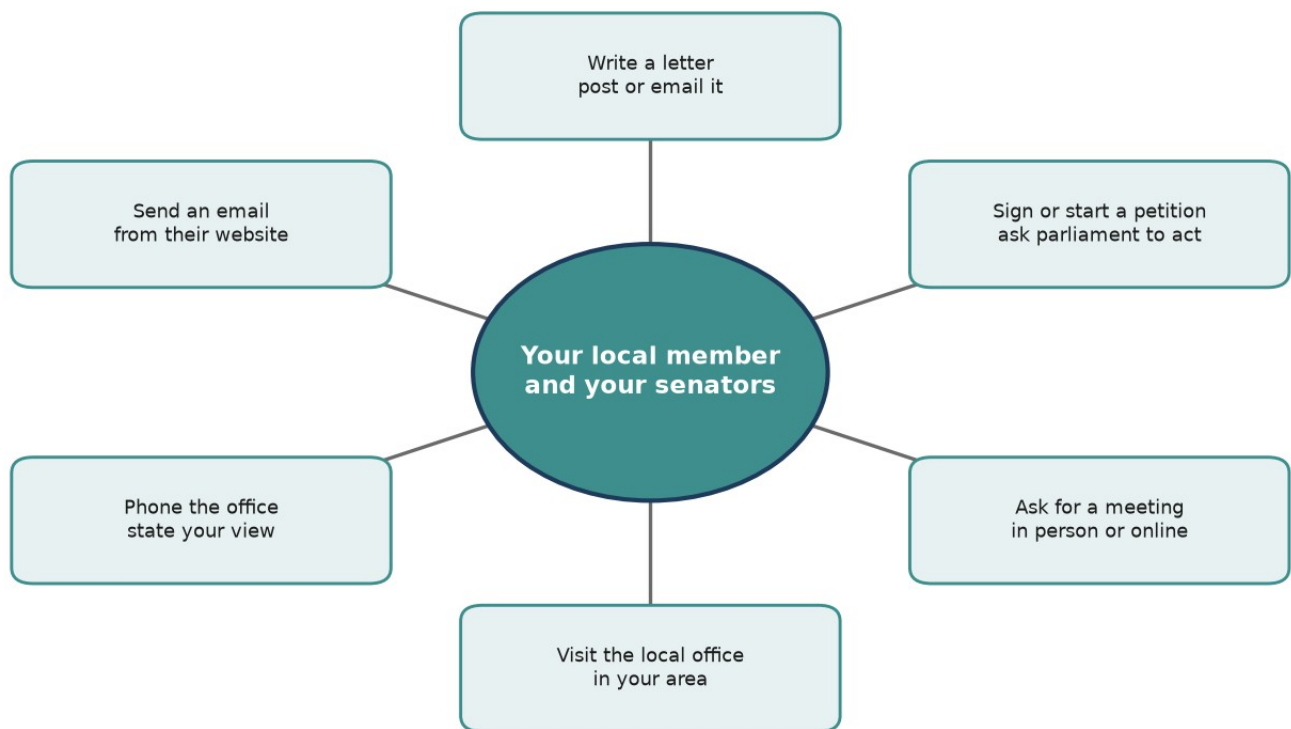
3. Contacting your elected representatives

Between elections, citizens can contact the people who represent them. Australia's federal parliament has two houses: the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate**. Your local member of the House of Representatives represents the **electoral division** where you live. An **electoral division** is the area a member represents. Senators represent your whole state or territory.

A key job of these representatives is to **advocate** for citizens — that is, to speak up for the people they represent and raise their concerns in parliament. You can contact your local member or your senators to raise an issue, ask for help, or tell them your view. You do not have to wait for an election to be heard.

Ways to contact your elected representatives

You can be heard between elections, too



Source: Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au).

A labelled diagram showing ways a citizen can contact their elected representatives, including writing a letter, sending an email, phoning or visiting the member's local office, asking for a meeting, and signing or starting a petition.

You can also sign or start a **petition**. A **petition** is a written request, signed by many people, asking parliament to take action on an issue. Petitions are formally presented to parliament, and the government usually has to respond to them. Petitions are a way for people who cannot vote yet — including you — to make their views known to parliament.

4. Lobby groups and interest groups

Citizens often join together in groups to have more say. Two important types of group are **interest groups** and **lobby groups**.

An **interest group** is a group of people who join together to campaign for a cause they share. They try to influence the government and to shape public opinion. For example, the **Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)** is Australia's national environment organisation. It was founded in 1965 and campaigns against climate pollution and the destruction of natural habitats; one of its current campaigns is called 'Speak up to save our reefs'. Other interest groups speak for farmers, workers, businesses, or young people.

A **lobby group** is a group whose job is to try to persuade the government to make decisions that help the people or organisations it represents. **Lobbying** means trying to influence the decisions of politicians and public officials. Some lobby groups are hired and paid to argue for a particular client or industry.

The Australian Government keeps a public **Register of Lobbyists** so people can see who is lobbying. In some places, only registered lobby groups are allowed to contact government representatives — for example, this has been the rule in Western Australia since April 2007.

Interest groups and lobby groups

	Interest group	Lobby group
What it is	A group of people who campaign for a cause they share	A group whose job is to persuade government to support a client
Why it acts	Members believe in the cause	Often hired and paid to argue for an industry or client
Example	Australian Conservation Foundation (environment)	A paid group lobbying for a business or industry
How it works	Campaigns, rallies, petitions, media, contacting members	Meetings with politicians and public officials

Both try to influence decisions. An interest group believes in its cause; a lobby group is often hired.

A comparison table showing the differences between an interest group and a lobby group, covering what each one is, who is involved, and examples of each.

Interest groups and lobby groups overlap — both try to influence decisions. A useful way to tell them apart is that an interest group usually campaigns for a cause its members believe in, while a lobby group is often hired to argue for a client.

Why do groups matter? A group has more voices, more knowledge and more resources than one person acting alone, so it can often have more influence on a government's decisions.

Source: Australian Conservation Foundation, 'About us', acf.org.au; 'Lobbying in Australia', Wikipedia.
Retrieved 26 August 2026.

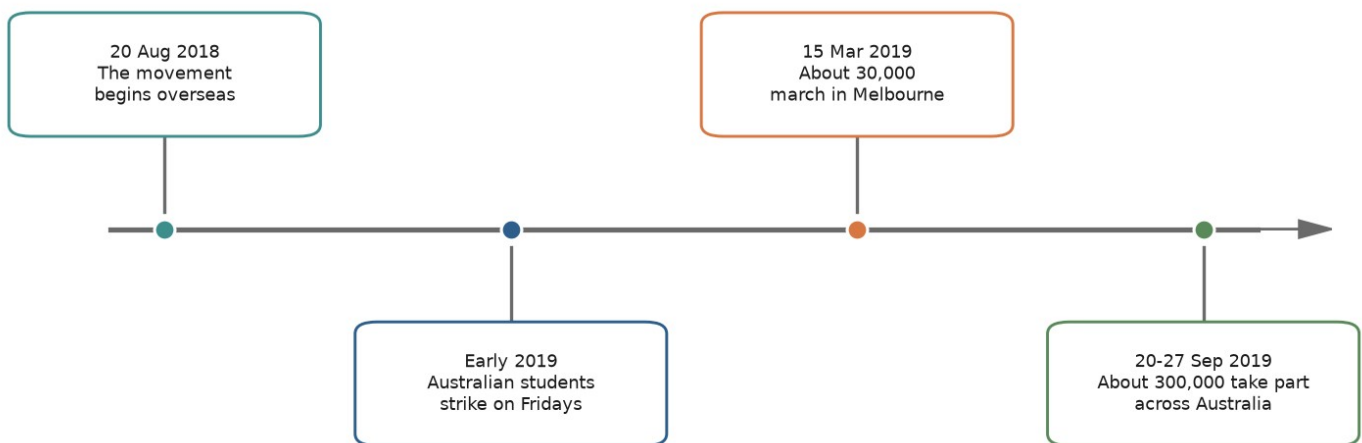
5. Direct action

Direct action is when citizens act in public and directly to draw attention to an issue, or to put pressure on those in power to act, rather than only writing letters or waiting for an election. Forms of direct action include protests, marches, rallies, strikes and boycotts. In Australia, people have the right to gather and protest peacefully, and direct action is a lawful and important part of democracy.

A recent example is the **School Strike 4 Climate**. After the movement began in August 2018, thousands of Australian school students left class on Fridays to call for stronger action on climate change. On 15 March 2019, about 30,000 people marched in Melbourne. Between 20 and 27 September 2019, about 300,000 people took part in events across Australia, according to the groups that organised them. This is a clear example of young people — many of them the same age as you — using direct action to make their views known.

School Strike 4 Climate in Australia

Young people using direct action



Figures reported by the groups that organised the events. Source: 'School strike for climate', Wikipedia.

A timeline of the School Strike 4 Climate movement in Australia, showing the movement beginning in August 2018, Friday school strikes in 2019, about 30,000 people marching in Melbourne on 15 March 2019, and about 300,000 people taking part across Australia between 20 and 27 September 2019.

Direct action works best when it is peaceful, and when people also use other channels — such as contacting their members of parliament, signing petitions, and voting when they can.

Source: 'School strike for climate', Wikipedia. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

6. A free media and how opinion forms

Public opinion means the views and beliefs that many people hold about an issue. The **media** — television, radio, newspapers and online news — plays a big role in informing citizens and in shaping public opinion.

Defining our terms: 'media freedom'

The Victorian Curriculum uses the term *media freedom* but does not define it. In this section, *media freedom* is used to mean: journalists and news organisations being able to report the news and to ask difficult questions of the government without being unfairly stopped or punished. Other definitions exist and are not interchangeable with this one.

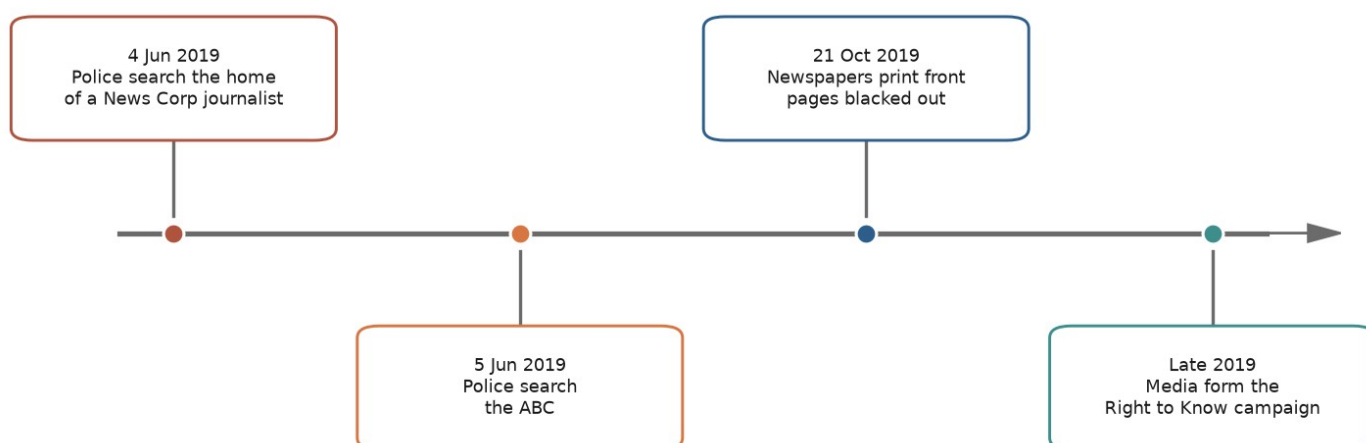
Why media freedom matters. The media is sometimes called a 'watchdog' because it watches those in power and reports on what they do. A free media helps citizens stay informed and to hold the government to account. Without media freedom, people in power could keep their actions secret, and citizens could not make informed choices.

How the media shapes public opinion. The media does not just report events — the choices it makes shape how people think about an issue. These choices include which stories to cover, what headline to use, which images to show, which words to use, and who to interview. These choices **frame** an issue in a particular way. For example, two news outlets can report the same protest using the same facts, but one leads with how large the crowd was while the other leads with the traffic problems it caused. Readers are left with different impressions, even though the basic facts are the same.

A recent Australian example shows why media freedom matters. In June 2019, police searched the home of Annika Smethurst, a journalist for News Corp Australia, over a story she had written. The next day, police searched the ABC over stories about Australia's military. Many people were concerned that such actions could discourage journalists from reporting on important issues. On 21 October 2019, newspapers printed front pages with parts blacked out, to show what it is like when information is kept secret. Major news organisations formed a campaign called **Australia's Right to Know**, calling for stronger protections so journalists can report in the public interest.

Media freedom in action: Australia's Right to Know

A 2019 campaign for press freedom



Source: 'Press freedom in Australia', Wikipedia.

A timeline of the Australia's Right to Know media freedom campaign, showing police searches of a journalist's home on 4 June 2019 and of the ABC on 5 June 2019, newspapers printing front pages with parts blacked out on 21 October 2019, and news organisations forming the Australia's Right to Know campaign.

Two views worth considering. There is a real debate about the media's role, and both sides have points worth thinking about.

- **View one.** Media freedom is essential for democracy. Without it, governments can act in secret and citizens cannot hold them to account. On this view, protecting journalists' ability to report is one of the best ways to keep power honest.
- **View two.** Media organisations are powerful too. They can be **biased** — that is, they can present only one side or support one view unfairly — and they can spread misinformation or shape opinion in ways that are not fair. On this view, there are good reasons for some rules on the media, and good reasons for citizens to check sources carefully.

These views are not simply right or wrong. The harder, more useful question is: how do we keep the media free, while also encouraging accurate and fair reporting, and helping citizens judge for themselves? That is a question you can explore in the tasks below.

Source: 'Press freedom in Australia', Wikipedia. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked case studies

These two real cases show the ideas above in action. Each one states **what happened**, **who was involved**, and **which idea from this section it shows**.

Case study 1 — The 2025 federal election: citizens informed and voting

What happened. On 3 May 2025, Australia held a federal election. In the weeks before polling day, citizens were informed by election campaigns, the media, and material from the Australian Electoral Commission — including advice to stop and consider false or misleading content. On polling day, enrolled Australians voted; because voting is compulsory, turnout was high at 90.70 per cent. The Australian Labor Party won 94 of the 150 seats in the House of Representatives, and Anthony Albanese became Prime Minister for a further term. The AEC counted the votes and declared the result.

Who was involved. Enrolled voters, the Australian Electoral Commission (which ran the election and counted the votes), candidates and political parties, and the media (which reported the campaigns and the result).

Which idea it shows. This case shows the **electoral system** in action, and how citizens **are informed** and **participate by voting** (elaborations .E01 and .E02).

Case study 2 — School Strike 4 Climate: young people use direct action

What happened. From 2018, school students in Australia and around the world left school on Fridays to call for stronger action on climate change. Large marches were held in 2019: about 30,000 people marched in Melbourne on 15 March, and about 300,000 people took part in events across Australia between 20 and 27 September (figures reported by the groups that organised them). As well as marching, students contacted members of parliament, used social media, and spoke to journalists.

Who was involved. School students, the groups that organised the events, families, the media (which reported the strikes and helped shape public opinion about climate change), and politicians who responded.

Which idea it shows. This case shows **direct action**, citizens **joining together** to influence decisions, and how **media coverage shaped public opinion** (elaborations .E02 and .E04).

Tasks — scaffolded

Q1. List four ways Australians can find out about politics and issues. Complete the table below. The first one has been done for you.

Channel	Example
Television and radio news	Watching the evening news

Q2. Explain what compulsory voting means. Complete each sentence.

- In Australia, once you are enrolled, voting in federal elections is _____.
- Compulsory voting was introduced for federal elections in the year _____.
- If an enrolled person does not vote and does not have a good reason, they may have to pay a _____.
- One reason Australia has compulsory voting is so parliament reflects the views of _____.

Q3. Match each word to its meaning. Draw a line between them. The words are in the box.

Word	Meaning
turnout	the area a member of parliament represents
enrolment	a written request signed by many people asking parliament to act
electoral division	the share of enrolled voters who actually vote
petition	putting your name on the electoral roll so you can vote

Q4. Imagine there is an unsafe road crossing near your school. You decide to contact your local member of parliament. Answer each step.

1. Which representative would you contact — your local member of the House of Representatives, or a senator? Why?
2. Write down two ways you could contact them.
3. Write one sentence you could use to explain the issue.

Q5. Complete the table to show two differences between an interest group and a lobby group. The first row has been done for you.

Point of difference	Interest group	Lobby group
Why it exists	Campaigns for a cause its members believe in	Often hired to argue for a client

Example

Another difference

Q6. The media can shape public opinion. Two news outlets report the same protest using the same facts. One leads with how large the crowd was; the other leads with the traffic problems the protest caused. Answer each question.

1. Give one choice where the two outlets were different.
2. Explain how that choice could give readers a different impression of the protest.

Tasks — unscaffolded

Q7. Explain why being informed is important for democracy. Use at least two examples in your answer.

Q8. Explain two reasons why turnout is high at Australian federal elections. Refer to compulsory voting in your answer.

Q9. “A group can often have more influence on a government’s decisions than one person acting alone.” Do you agree? Use an interest group or a lobby group as an example to explain your answer.

Q10. Choose a real Australian interest group or lobby group. Describe what it campaigns for, and explain two methods it uses to try to influence decisions.

Q11. Explain what media freedom is and why it matters for democracy. Give one example to support your answer.

Q12. Read or watch two news reports about the same current issue. Compare how each one presents the issue, and explain which choices (such as the headline, the images, or the words) might shape how people think about it.

Extended response

One way citizens participate in Australia’s democracy is by joining together and campaigning for change.

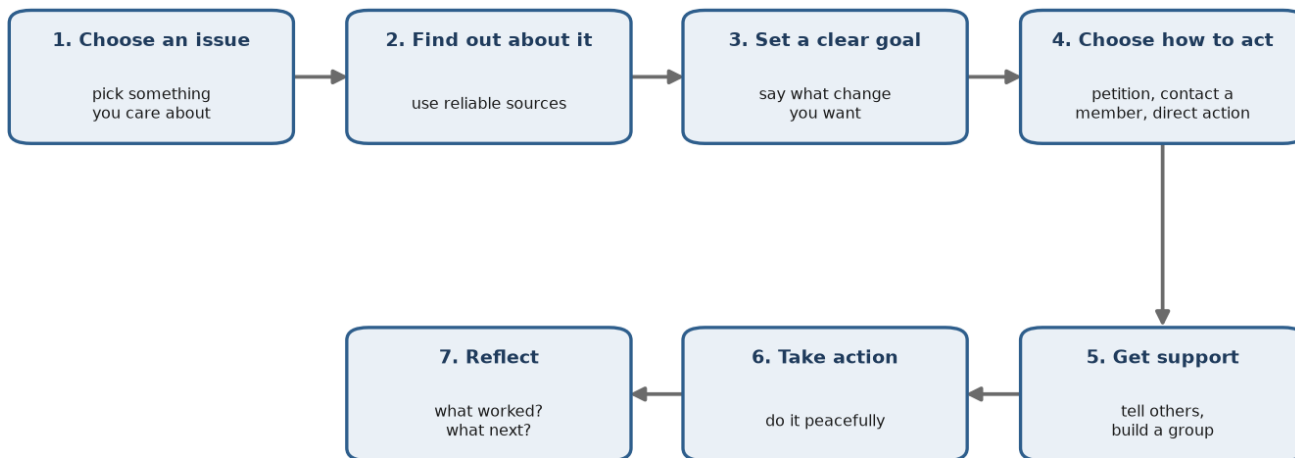
Plan a campaign for change on an issue that matters to you. Your issue can be school-based, local, or state-level. In your response, include the following:

- Describe the issue and explain why it matters.
- State clearly what change you want.
- Explain at least three actions your campaign would take (for example, starting a petition, contacting a representative, raising awareness, or a peaceful direct action).
- Explain how you would find reliable information about the issue, and how the media might help or hinder your campaign.
- Describe how you would know whether your campaign had been successful.

A strong response will: describe the issue clearly; state a clear goal; explain at least three actions; show how it would use reliable information; think about the role of the media; and suggest a way to judge success.

Run a campaign for change

Seven steps you could follow at school, locally or at state level



A campaign works best when it is informed, peaceful and uses more than one method.

A flowchart showing the steps to run a campaign for change: choose an issue, find out about it, set a clear goal, choose how to act, get support, take action, and then reflect on what worked.

Teaching sequence (teacher notes)

This block is written for the teacher. It is not student-facing text and is not part of the student vocabulary gate.

Curriculum alignment. This section owns VC2HC8K04 and draws on elaborations .E01 to .E04. It sits in Chapter 1 (Government and democracy) and hands directly to Chapter 5's participation skills. There are no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander exclusions (no §2A rows) in this section; teach the content in neutral, non-ATSI contexts throughout.

Suggested sequence (about 5 lessons).

1. **Being informed** — open with the hook (what can you do before you can vote?). Teach the information channels and the AEC's Stop and Consider campaign. Use Q1.
2. **The electoral system** — enrolment, compulsory voting and turnout, using the 2025 federal election and the AEC enrolment figures as the dated contemporary case. Use Q2–Q3 and the enrolment/election figures.
3. **Contacting representatives** — local members, senators, petitions. Use Q4. Link to .E01 (representatives advocating for citizens).
4. **Lobby groups and interest groups** — definitions, the ACF example, and the Register of Lobbyists. Use Q5, Q9, Q10.
5. **Direct action, media freedom and public opinion** — School Strike 4 Climate and the Australia's Right to Know case. Use Q6, Q11, Q12. Run the 'two views' discussion on media freedom, applying the contested-terms approach (define, steelman both sides, then evaluate).

Contemporary cases used. The 2025 federal election (3 May 2025), AEC enrolment statistics (as at 30 June 2026), School Strike 4 Climate (2019), and Australia's Right to Know (2019). All carry dated source lines in the student text. Teachers should verify figures against the listed sources before teaching, as enrolment and penalty amounts can change.

Assessment. Use the extended response as the assessed task for this section; it maps to .E03 (creating a campaign for change) and integrates being informed and participating. The success criteria are stated in the student text. Scaffold with the campaign flowchart figure.

Question bank. Six MCQs are keyed to VC2HC8K04. They concentrate on .E01 (forms of participation, contacting representatives, why interest groups matter) and on media shaping opinion and media freedom. Join book to bank on the CD code only, per the series plan's bank hazard note.

Differentiation. For students who need more support, keep the scaffolded tasks and model one contact-the-member example aloud. For students ready to extend, ask them to compare how two different media outlets covered the same event (Q12) or to evaluate whether direct action or contacting a representative is more effective for their chosen issue.

Values and balance. When running the media-freedom discussion, apply the house contested-terms rules: define the term before use, present each position in its strongest form, and mark on reasoning quality rather than on the conclusion a student reaches.