

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 4 — Skills: investigating and evaluating

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Sharp questions: investigating the political, legal and civic issues of today

Curriculum placement (audit trail). Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Civics and Citizenship, Levels 7–8 band; this section is the Level 8 treatment of the strand’s investigation skill. Content description: VC2HC8S01. Elaborations drawn on: .E01 (power) and .E02 (values). No §2A exclusions apply to VC2HC8S01.

Teaching sequence (for teachers). 1 · Theory: the two moves this section trains — developing a question and refining a question. 2 · Case study A (power) with Worked example 1. 3 · Case study B (values) with Worked example 2. 4 · Scaffolded tasks, then unscaffolded tasks. 5 · The source-based inquiry task, marked with the guide at the end of the section. The figures are part of the teaching: walk through each one before the tasks that use it.

Theory

An investigation is only as good as its question. A weak question — too broad, loaded, or unclear — wastes the whole investigation. This section trains two moves:

- **Develop** a question: start with a broad contemporary issue and shape it into one question you can actually investigate.
- **Refine** a question: take a question that is not ready yet and fix it until it is.

Working definitions. The curriculum uses these terms without defining them. In this book:

- A **contemporary issue** is something happening in Australia now that people discuss and that governments, courts or regulators may act on.
- An **institution** is an established body with a recognised job in running the country — the Parliament, the High Court of Australia, or a regulator such as the eSafety Commissioner.
- A **political actor** is a person or group taking part in decision-making: a minister, a member of parliament, a party leader, a regulator, an advocacy group, an ordinary citizen.
- **Power**, here, is the ability to make decisions that bind other people — to make rules, enforce them, or strike them down. Wherever you find power, ask two questions: *who has it, and who checks it?*
- **Values** are the beliefs a society holds about what is good and fair — for example fairness, security, freedom, compassion and responsibility. A values question asks which value should weigh more when values pull against each other.

Three kinds of questions. Most investigations mix all three, but knowing the kind keeps a question honest.

Three kinds of questions for civics investigations

Type	What it asks	Example — Australia's social media minimum age
Factual	What is it? What happened? Checkable against evidence; usually one settled answer.	What is the minimum age for holding an account on the ten named platforms in Australia? (Check the law itself.)
Explanatory	Why did it happen? How does it work? Connects facts to reasons.	Why did the Commonwealth Parliament set a minimum age instead of leaving the rules to the platforms themselves?
Evaluative	Is it good, fair or effective? A judged call where the evidence must do the work; people can differ while looking at the same evidence.	Has the minimum age made online life safer for under-16s so far, and what evidence would help us tell?

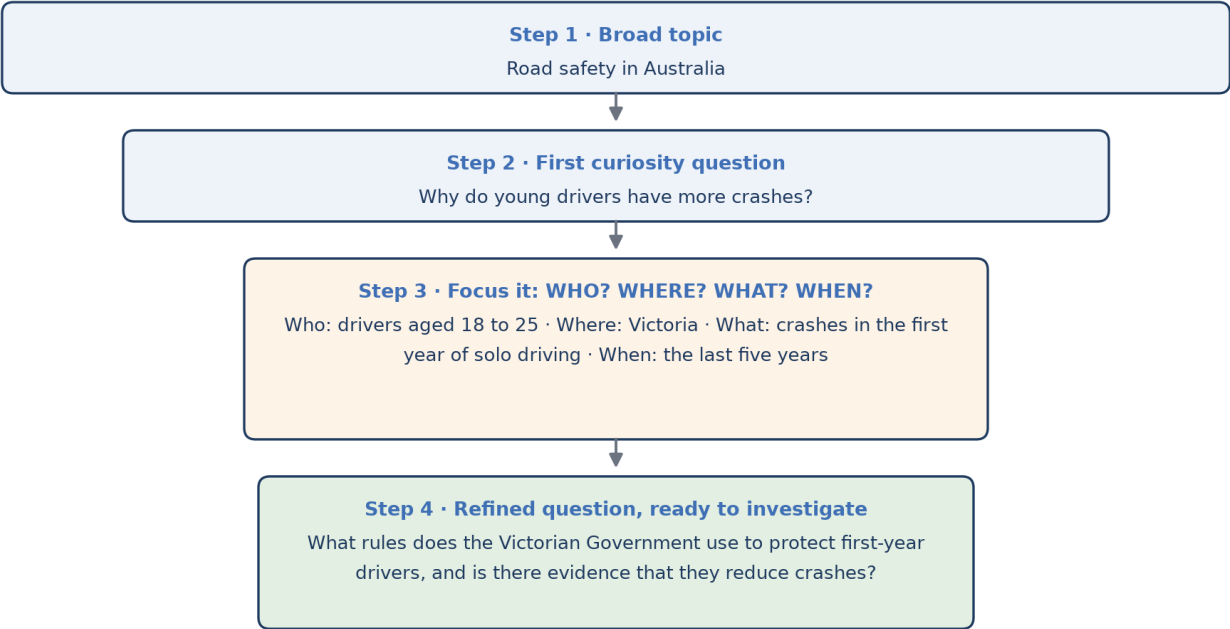
Created for this book. The example questions refer to the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 (Commonwealth).

A table of the three kinds of civics questions — factual, explanatory and evaluative — with an example of each about Australia’s social media minimum age

A factual question has a settled answer you can check. An explanatory question asks *why* or *how*. An evaluative question asks for a judged call, and the evidence must do the work: two careful people can look at the same evidence and differ.

Developing — the funnel. Developing a question is narrowing. You begin with a whole topic and cut it down until one part of it can really be investigated.

Developing a question: from a big topic to one clear question



Each step narrows the idea until one part of it can really be investigated.

Created for this book as a scaffold for developing questions.

A four-step funnel that narrows the broad topic of road safety into one refined, investigable question about first-year drivers in Victoria

The narrowing questions are *Who? Where? What? When?* — a group, a place, a thing, a time. “Road safety” is not investigable; “What rules does the Victorian Government use to protect first-year drivers, and is there evidence that they reduce crashes?” is.

Refining — five checks. Once a question exists, run it through five checks before you investigate.

Refining a question: five checks before you investigate

☐	Clear?	Could someone else repeat your question word for word without asking you anything?
☐	Focused?	Is it narrowed to one issue, one place, one group or one time?
☐	Investigable?	Could evidence answer it — a law, a report, data, a recorded decision?
☐	Open?	Could it honestly have more than one answer? Does the wording avoid pushing one side?
☐	Worthwhile?	Would answering it teach you something about power or values in Australia?

A "no" to any line is not failure — it is the signal to refine again.

Created for this book as a refining checklist.

A checklist of five refining checks — clear, focused, investigable, open and worthwhile — each with a guide question

Hidden claims. Questions can carry claims inside them without saying so. A question like “Why do politicians break their election promises?” looks open, but it has already decided that politicians break promises. List what a question assumes *before* you answer it — and apply the check symmetrically, to questions you agree with as well as questions you oppose.

Questions can smuggle claims — check before you ask

List what a question already assumes before you answer it or refine it.

Loaded question: "Why do politicians break their election promises?"

Already assumes: assumes every politician breaks promises, and does it on purpose

Fairer wording: "Which promises from the 2025 federal election campaign have been kept, and which have not? How can I check?"

Loaded question: "When will the government stop wasting money on housing schemes?"

Already assumes: assumes the government wastes money, and that housing schemes are the cause

Fairer wording: "What has the Australian Government spent on housing schemes, and what has each one produced?"

Loaded question: "How did the eSafety Commissioner finally fix social media?"

Already assumes: assumes social media is now "fixed", that the Commissioner did it, and that it came late

Fairer wording: "What has changed for under-16s since the minimum age began, and what part did the law play?"

Symmetry rule: apply this check to questions you agree with too, not only to ones you oppose.

Created for this book, applying the house rules for contested terms: audit the assumption; apply checks symmetrically.

Three loaded questions, each with the claim it already assumes and a fairer rewording, plus the symmetry rule

Values questions and the steelman rule. When a question touches values, state each side at its strongest before judging either — put the best case for each side, not the weakest. This is called steelmanning (the opposite of misstating a side to make it easy to knock down). A refined values question keeps both answers honestly possible until the evidence and reasoning have done their work.

Two directions for this section's questions follow the curriculum's elaborations:

- **.E01 — power:** develop questions about who holds power in Australian decision-making today — the institutions and the political actors (this connects to how government works in 1A and 1C).
- **.E02 — values:** refine questions about the values of contemporary Australia (this connects to the values work in 1B and 3B).

Case study A — who has the power? Australia's social media minimum age

What happened. In late 2024 the Commonwealth Parliament passed the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Commonwealth): the House of Representatives on 27 November 2024, the Senate with changes on 28 November 2024, and Royal Assent on 10 December 2024. The law took effect on 10 December 2025. From that day, people under 16 cannot hold accounts on the ten named platforms, including Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, X and YouTube. The law does not fine parents or young people. It says the platforms must take "reasonable steps" — the steps a careful platform would take — to stop under-16s holding accounts, and a platform that keeps

failing can face fines of up to about \$49.5 million. The eSafety Commissioner, Australia’s online safety regulator, names the covered platforms and checks them. In December 2025 the High Court of Australia agreed to hear a challenge to the law brought by a group called the Digital Freedom Project.

Source: Parliament of Australia, *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024*; Office of the eSafety Commissioner, esafety.gov.au; news reports for the High Court challenge — summary checked 26 August 2026.

Case study A: how Australia's social media minimum age became law

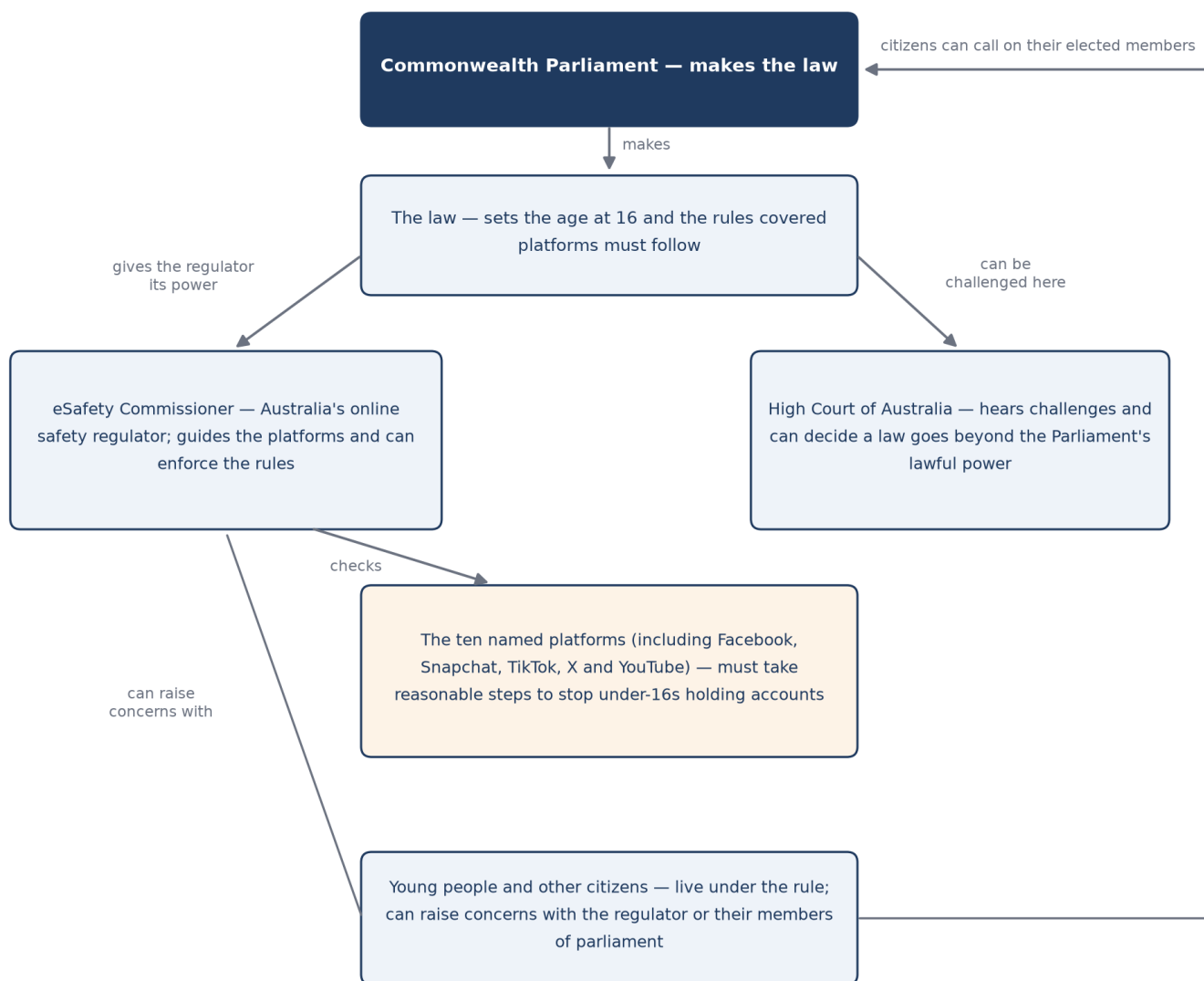


Sources: Parliament of Australia, *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024*; Office of the eSafety Commissioner, esafety.gov.au; news reports for the High Court challenge — summary checked 26 August 2026.

A timeline from 27 November 2024 to December 2025 showing the Bill passing both houses, receiving Royal Assent, the platforms being named, the minimum age taking effect, and the High Court agreeing to hear a challenge

The power map. One law shows the whole map of Australian power. The Parliament makes the law; the law hands the regulator its power to guide and enforce; the High Court can hear a challenge and decide whether the law went beyond the Parliament’s lawful power; the platforms must act; and citizens sit under the rule with the ability to raise concerns and to call on their elected members. This is exactly the question-shape of elaboration .E01 — questions about who holds power in decision-making in Australia today: the institutions and the political actors.

Case study A: who has power, and who checks it?



Created for this book from the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 (Commonwealth); the High Court challenge per news reports, summary checked 26 August 2026.

A power map: the Commonwealth Parliament makes the law; the eSafety Commissioner checks the ten platforms; the High Court can hear a challenge to the law; citizens can raise concerns and call on their elected members

Case study B — what do we value? Housing in Australia

What is happening. Many Australians — especially young adults and renters — find housing hard to afford. All three levels of government hold part of the power over it. The Commonwealth raises national money and sets national goals: the *Housing Australia Future Fund Act 2023* (Commonwealth), which received Royal Assent in November 2023, set up a \$10 billion fund, and the Australian Government shares with the states and territories a goal of 1.2 million new homes over five years from 2024–25. State governments set planning laws, release land and run public housing. Local councils approve or refuse new building in their area.

Source: *Housing Australia Future Fund Act 2023* (Commonwealth); National Housing Accord (Australian Government, with state and territory governments) — summary checked 26 August 2026.

Case study B: who has power over housing?

Australian Government (Commonwealth)	Raises national money and sets national goals — for example, the Housing Australia Future Fund (\$10 billion, set up by an Act that passed in November 2023) and a shared goal with the states and territories of 1.2 million new homes over five years from 2024-25.
State and territory governments (e.g. Victoria)	Set the planning laws, release land for building, and build and run public housing.
Local councils	Approve or refuse new building proposals in their own area.
Citizens	Vote for all three levels, make submissions on planning changes, and join resident groups.

For any housing decision, ask: which level decided it — and who checks that level?

Sources: Housing Australia Future Fund Act 2023 (Commonwealth); National Housing Accord (Australian Government, with state and territory governments) — summary checked 26 August 2026.

A table of who holds power over housing: the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, local councils, and citizens, with what each does

The values tug. Housing is also a values issue, and the steelman rule applies. The case for acting strongly rests on fairness, equality and compassion; the case for moving carefully rests on security, responsibility and care with public money. Both cases are held by real Australians, and both deserve their strongest form before anyone judges.

Case study B: the values tug — housing in Australia

Both sides give real reasons that real people hold — so both are stated at their strongest before any judging.

The case for acting strongly

Every Australian deserves a safe, stable place to live. If young people and low-income renters are locked out of housing through no fault of their own, governments have a duty to act: build more homes, help with rent, and use public money to even the odds.

Values: fairness · equality · compassion

The case for moving carefully

Many homeowners are older Australians whose home is their main savings for retirement. Rushed change can hurt people who saved all their lives. Building homes takes time, workers and careful local planning — and public money must be spent wisely.

Values: security · responsibility · care with public money

An open values question worth investigating:

"When governments decide housing policy, which should carry more weight — fairness for people who do not have a home yet, or stability for people who have saved for one?"

Both cases written for this book in the strongest form their own supporters would accept; both views are really held in Australia.

Two steelmanned cases side by side — acting strongly (fairness, equality, compassion) and moving carefully (security, responsibility, care with public money) — above one open values question about which should weigh more

Notice the shape of the open question at the bottom: it names the decision ("when governments decide housing policy") and keeps both answers honestly possible. That is what a refined values question looks like.

Worked examples

Example 1 — developing a power question from Case study A (scaffolded)

Step	What you do	Working
1	Pick the issue.	The social media minimum age (Case study A).
2	List the institutions and political actors.	Parliament; the eSafety Commissioner; the High Court; the platforms; citizens.
3	Ask the two power questions of each.	Who has the power? Who checks it? The Parliament made the rule; the Commissioner checks the platforms; the High Court can check the law; citizens can call on their members.
4	Choose one actor and shape one investigable question.	Focus on the regulator, because its power is new and current.

The developed question: “What power does the eSafety Commissioner have to make platforms follow the under-16 age rule — and who checks the Commissioner?”

Checking it. The question is explanatory (what power) plus evaluative (who checks the checker); it is focused on one actor; it is investigable, because the Act itself names the Commissioner’s powers and the Parliament and courts sit above the Commissioner; and it is open — the evidence could show the Commissioner’s powers are strong, weak, or somewhere between.

Example 2 — refining a values question about housing (scaffolded)

Start with a first question that is not ready: “Why do governments keep failing young Australians on housing?”

Step	What you do	Working
1	List the assumptions; remove the hidden claims.	“keep failing” assumes failure and blame. Remove both.
2	Focus it.	WHICH level of government? FOR WHOM? WHERE? → Commonwealth, state and local; young adults; Australia.
3	Add a test you can look up.	What would count as evidence that a level is using its power well — for example, new homes built against the 1.2 million goal?
4	Check the wording stays open.	Both “is using its power well” and “is not” must still be possible answers.

Worked Example 2: refining a values question, step by step

The first question (not ready):

"Why do governments keep failing young Australians on housing?"

Problems: assumes failure · assumes blame · does not say which government · does not say what would count as "failing"



The four refining moves:

- 1 · List the assumptions and remove the hidden claims.
- 2 · Focus it: WHICH level of government? FOR WHOM? WHERE?
- 3 · Add a test you can actually look up: what evidence would count as doing well?
- 4 · Check the wording stays open — both answers must still be possible.



The refined question (ready to investigate):

"Which level of Australian government — Commonwealth, state or local — has the most power to make housing more affordable for young adults, and how well has each level used that power? What would count as evidence that it is working?"

Created for this book as the worked model for refining a values question.

The refining model: the loaded first question, the four refining moves, and the refined question ready to investigate

The refined question: "Which level of Australian government — Commonwealth, state or local — has the most power to make housing more affordable for young adults, and how well has each level used that power? What would count as evidence that it is working?"

Practice tasks

Scaffolded tasks

S1. Sort each question below into factual, explanatory or evaluative, and say which word or phrase told you.

1. How many platforms were named under the minimum-age law as at November 2025?
2. Why did the Parliament put the duty on platforms instead of on parents?
3. Has the minimum age been fair to under-16s who use online spaces for support?

S2. Run the funnel on the topic "e-scooters on footpaths in Melbourne". Write one line for each step: broad topic; first curiosity question; the four focus answers (Who? Where? What? When?); and your refined question.

S3. Run the five checks on these two questions. For every "no", fix the wording and write the question again.

1. "Is social media bad?"
2. "Should the government do more about housing?"

S4. Each question below carries a hidden claim. Write the claim, then write a fairer wording.

1. "Why is the High Court interfering with the social media law?"

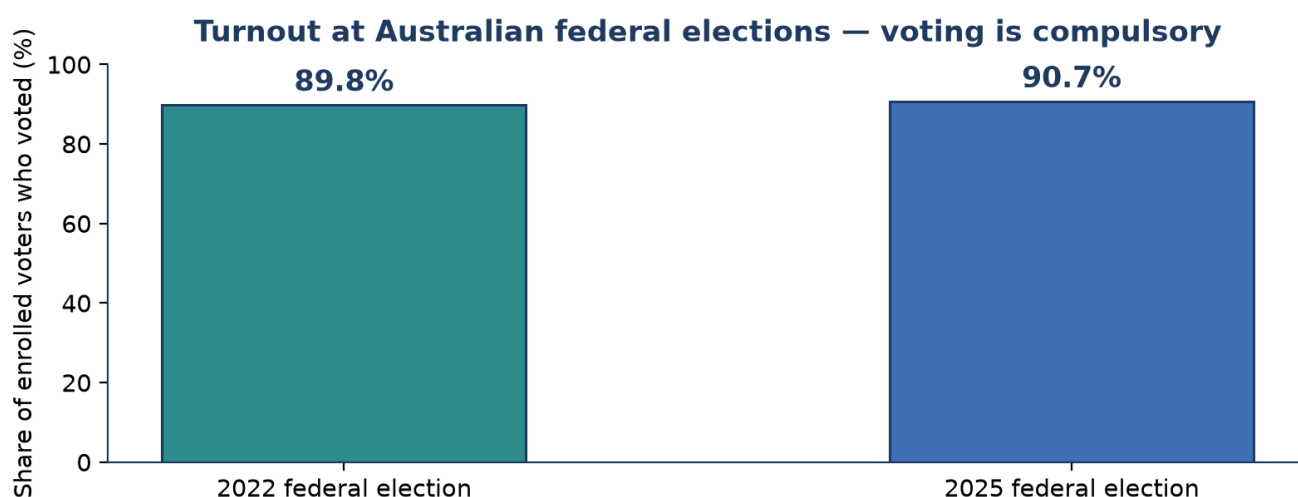
2. “When will governments admit that young people cannot afford homes?”

S5. Using the power map in Case study A, write one power question for each of these actors: the eSafety Commissioner; the High Court of Australia; citizens. Each question must ask *who has the power* and *who checks it*.

S6. With a partner, write one open values question about housing in Australia. Swap questions. Each of you circles any word that leans to one side, then rewords it together so both answers stay possible.

Tasks

T1. Voting in Australian federal elections is compulsory for enrolled adults. At the 2022 federal election, 89.8% of enrolled voters voted; at the 2025 federal election, 90.7% did.



Turnout is the share of enrolled voters who voted. About 18 million Australians were enrolled for the 2025 election.

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, participation rates for the 2022 and 2025 federal elections. Checked 26 August 2026.

A bar chart of turnout at the 2022 and 2025 federal elections: 89.8% and 90.7% of enrolled voters

Develop one investigable question about the power behind compulsory voting — for example, who has the power to enrol, check and fine voters, and who checks that power. Name the institution or actor your question is about.

T2. The Robodebt scheme (2016–2019) raised debts against welfare recipients using an income-averaging method that was later found to be unlawful. A Royal Commission into the scheme reported on 7 July 2023.

Source: Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, final report, 7 July 2023 — checked 26 August 2026.

Develop two refined questions: one about which institutions and political actors held the power to start and run the scheme, and one about who checked that power — and when the checking failed.

T3. Find one question about a current Australian issue that you agree with, and one that you disagree with (from a news story, a post, or a conversation). For each, list two things the question assumes. Then rewrite each one so the wording is fair. The symmetry rule applies: your own side gets the same audit.

T4. Using the three-levels table in Case study B, write one refined question about housing that names the level of government it targets and says what evidence would count as an answer. List two sources you would check — for example, an Act, a government report, or a data page.

Source-based inquiry task

Use the source card below. From this one source: (a) develop three questions — one factual, one explanatory, one evaluative; (b) refine each with the five checks; (c) for the evaluative one, steelman both sides first and keep your

wording open. Present your work as a table: *question | kind | one assumption you removed | evidence you would look for.*

Source card for the inquiry task: the Australian citizenship test

What it is	A test that most people applying to become Australian citizens must pass.
When it started	1 October 2007
What is in it	20 questions, each with a set of options to choose from, answered in English in 45 minutes.
The pass rules	At least 15 of the 20 questions overall AND all five questions on Australian values answered correctly.

Use this source for the inquiry task: develop and refine your own questions about it.

Source: Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, citizenship test information. Checked 26 August 2026.

A source card for the Australian citizenship test: what it is, when it started (1 October 2007), its format (20 questions with options to choose from, in English, 45 minutes), and the pass rules (at least 15 of 20 overall and all five Australian values questions correct)

Marking guide and answers

Mark the reasoning, never the conclusion. Two students can reach opposite conclusions and both score full marks if their questions are clear, focused, investigable, open and worthwhile. A “wrong” opinion does not lose marks; a loaded or uninvestigable question does.

S1. 1 factual (“how many” — a number you can check against the named list); 2 explanatory (“why”); 3 evaluative (“has it been fair” — a judged call).

S2. Accept any funnel that genuinely narrows. Sample: broad topic — e-scooters on footpaths; curiosity — why do people ride e-scooters on footpaths?; focus — who: riders and pedestrians, where: City of Melbourne, what: footpath riding rules and fines, when: since the trial rules began; refined — “What rules does the Victorian Government set for e-scooter footpath riding, and how are they enforced in the City of Melbourne?”

S3. 1 fails focused, investigable and open (“bad” is not one thing; “social media” is not one place) → sample fix: “What harms and benefits do under-16s report from social media, and which are most common?” 2 fails focused and open (“do more” assumes the government does too little) → sample fix: “What has the Australian Government done on housing so far, and how well has each measure worked?”

S4. 1 assumes the High Court is “interfering” rather than doing its job of hearing challenges → fairer: “What are the arguments for and against the social media law in the High Court challenge?” 2 assumes governments will “admit” a settled fact → fairer: “How affordable is housing for young Australians now, compared with a generation ago?”

S5. Accept any three questions that pair a power with a check. Samples: Commissioner — “What can the Commissioner do when a platform keeps failing, and can the Commissioner’s own decisions be reviewed?” High Court — “What power does the High Court have over the law itself, and who can bring a case to it?” Citizens — “What power do citizens and young people have to shape the rule, and how was that power used while the Bill was being made?”

S6. Check that the final wording passes the open check and that both partners’ leans were circled and discussed.

T1. Accept any question that names an actor and a check. Sample: “What power does the Australian Electoral Commission have to enrol voters and fine non-voters, and who checks the Commission?” (The turnout figures come from the AEC source on the chart.)

T2. Sample pair: “Which ministers and departments had the power to start and run Robodebt, and what did the law actually allow them to do?” and “Which bodies checked the scheme as it ran — the courts and the Parliament — and why did the checking come late?” Both questions stay open about *how well* each actor acted until the evidence (the Royal Commission report) is read.

T3. No sample — check the symmetry: both questions audited, both rewritten in a fair way.

T4. Accept any refined, level-named question with two checkable sources. Sample: “How well has the Victorian Government used its planning powers to release land for new homes since 2023, and what does the state’s own reporting say?” Sources: a Victorian planning Act or government data page; a report on the 1.2 million homes goal.

Inquiry task (9 marks — 3 per question). One mark each for: the kind is correct and the question suits it; a real assumption was found and removed (not just a word swap); the wording is open and the evidence named could actually be looked up. The values question also earns its third mark only if both sides are steelmanned before judging.

Comparing sources to analyse current issues

Curriculum placement (audit trail). Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Civics and Citizenship, Levels 7–8 band; this section is the Level 8 treatment of the strand’s source-analysis skill. Content description: VC2HC8S02. Elaborations drawn on (linkage only, not a teaching order): .E01, .E03 and .E04. §2A exclusion (TOC D3): VC2HC8S02 .E02 is excluded entire and is not taught here; the skill is exercised on neutral contemporary issues via .E01, .E03 and .E04.

Teaching sequence (for teachers). 1 · Theory: the four moves this section trains — locate, select, explain, compare. 2 · Worked Example 1 (the 2017 marriage law change) walks all four moves over a real, named, dated source set. 3 · Worked Example 2 (Victoria’s mental health system) trains the actor comparison and the successful-response analysis. 4 · Scaffolded tasks, then unscaffolded tasks. 5 · The source-based inquiry task, marked with the guide at the end of the section. The figures are part of the teaching: walk through each one before the tasks that use it.

Theory

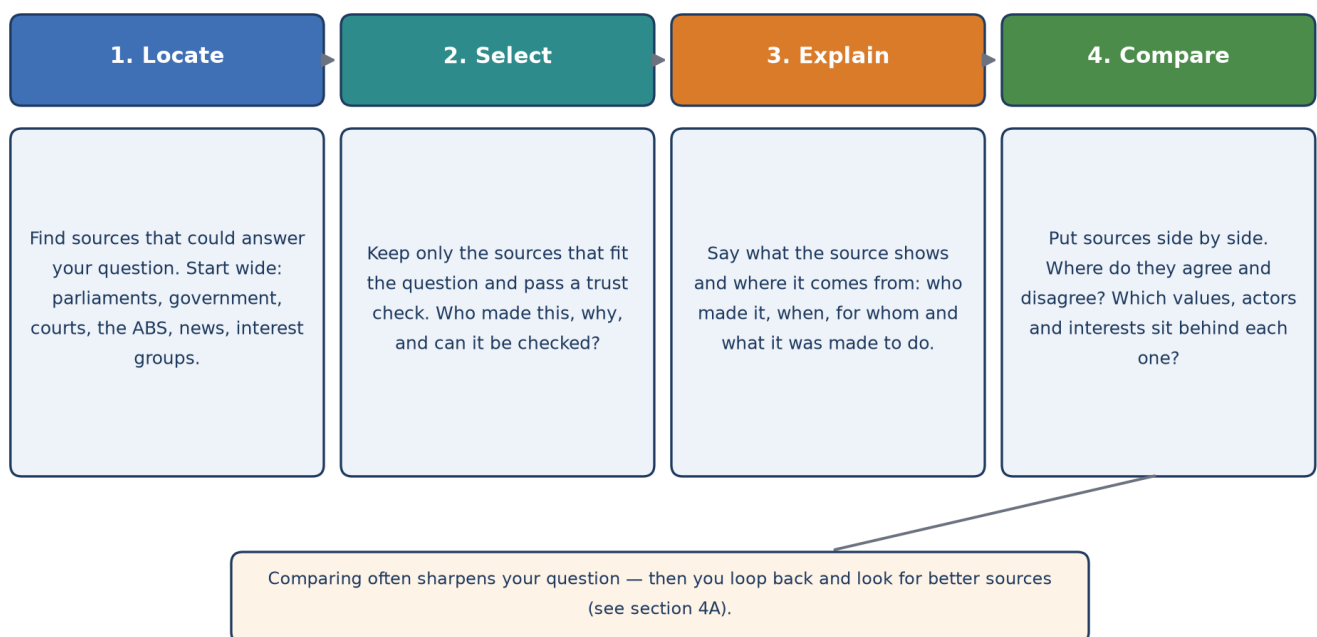
One skill, four moves. This section builds a single skill: taking a contemporary issue and working with sources until you can say something careful and checked about it.

Working definition — contemporary issue. The curriculum uses the words but does not define them. In this section, a *contemporary issue* is a matter of public argument, now or within recent memory, about what government or society should do. It has (1) more than one side, (2) something a political actor can act on, and (3) facts and values mixed together. Other definitions exist.

Working definition — political actor. A *political actor* is a person, group or body that tries to influence what government does: voters, advocacy groups, the media, courts, governments and parliaments. (Section 1C names the key institutions; section 1D covers how citizens participate.)

The four moves of source analysis

This section builds one skill in four steps. Each step has a guiding question.



Created for this book as a scaffold for VC2HC8S02 (locating, selecting, explaining and comparing).

Four connected steps labelled Locate, Select, Explain and Compare, with a note that comparing often sharpens your question so you loop back to find better sources

Figure 4.1 — The four moves of source analysis.

Move 1 — Locate. Start wide. Most civics sources in Australia come from six places, and each place is good for a different job.

Where do sources for a civics issue come from?

Type of source	Australian examples	What it is good for
Parliamentary sources	Debates, bills, Acts and committee reports from the Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au) and the Parliament of Victoria (parliament.vic.gov.au).	What was said, proposed and decided, in the words of the people who decide.
Government and official sources	Media releases, reports and web pages from government departments and Ministers.	The government's own account of its aims, actions and spending.
Court decisions	Judgments of courts such as the High Court of Australia.	How the law is interpreted and applied in a real case.
Statistics	Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au) releases, such as the 2017 postal survey results.	Counted and measured data you can compare across time and groups.
News media	Newspaper, radio, television and online news reporting.	What is happening now, and several views reported side by side.
Interest and community groups	Reports, submissions and campaigns from organisations such as Amnesty International.	The aims and arguments of groups outside government.

Created for this book. The websites named are the official sites of the bodies listed. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Table of six types of source — parliamentary, government and official, court decisions, statistics, news media, interest and community groups — with Australian examples and what each is good for

Figure 4.2 — Where sources for a civics issue come from.

Section 1D looks at how citizens are informed, including the media's role; the six types above are the places your search should touch before you decide you have “a range of sources”.

Move 2 — Select. Not everything you find gets used. A source earns its place by passing checks.

Is this source good enough to build on? Six checks

1. Origin Who made it? A person, an organisation, a government body, a court?	2. Purpose Why was it made? To inform, to persuade, to campaign, to sell something?
3. Audience Who is it made for? Voters, experts, customers, members, the public?	4. Timing When was it made? Is it new enough for your issue, and was it made before or after key events?
5. Evidence Does it show its evidence, and can you check its claims against another source?	6. Agreement Do other independent sources say the same about the facts, even if they disagree about the values?

A source can still be useful when it has a point of view. The skill is knowing what that point of view is. That is why every explanation of a source names its purpose, not just its facts.

Working definition used in this section: a source is trustworthy when (1) its claims of fact can be checked against other sources, and (2) you can see clearly what position it takes. The curriculum uses the word but does not define it; other definitions exist.

Created for this book as a scaffold for selecting sources.

Six checks in boxes — Origin, Purpose, Audience, Timing, Evidence, Agreement — with a note that a source can still be useful when it has a point of view, and a working definition of trustworthy

Figure 4.3 — Is this source good enough to build on? Six checks.

Reliability is the subject term for what Figure 4.3 tests: how far a source can be trusted for *your* question, after the checks. A source can be trustworthy for one question (what did this group argue?) and not for another (how many people agree?).

Move 3 — Explain. Say what a source shows *and* where it sits. Three words do most of the work:

- A **value** is a belief about what is good or right (equality, freedom, fairness, tradition).
- An **interest** is something a person or group stands to gain or lose.
- An **actor** is who is doing or saying something (see the political actor definition above).

Every source sits on top of values and interests. Naming them is not an insult to the source — it is the explanation half of the skill. Section 1B uses the same idea when it asks how far institutions reflect democratic values.

Move 4 — Compare. Put sources side by side and ask: where do they agree on facts? Where do they disagree, and is that disagreement about facts or about values? Which actors could achieve their aims, and why? Comparing is also where your question gets sharper — then you loop back to Move 1 (section 4A is about refining questions).

Worked examples

Worked Example 1 — the 2017 marriage law change (scaffolded)

In 2017 Australia changed its marriage law. The issue was real, public and argued from values on both sides — which makes it a strong test of the four moves.

The facts, in dates:

- 12 September 2017 — the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) began posting postal survey forms to enrolled voters.
- 15 November 2017 — the ABS released the results.
- 29 November 2017 — the Senate passed the bill 43–12 on a conscience vote (parties let members vote their own belief — see section 1A).
- 7 December 2017 — the House of Representatives passed the bill 128–4.
- 8 December 2017 — Royal Assent: the *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017* (Cth) became law (Royal Assent is the final step that makes a bill into law — see section 2C).

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey 2017*; Parliament of Australia, *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017*. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

A located and selected source set:

Worked Example 1: a located and selected source set — the 2017 marriage law change

Source A — statistics

Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey 2017*, released 15 November 2017. Of the formal responses, 61.6% voted Yes and 38.4% voted No. The response rate was 79.5% of enrolled voters (12,691,234 formal responses).

Source B — a campaign position (summary)

Groups campaigning for a Yes vote argued that same-sex couples should be able to marry, because all couples deserve equal treatment under the law. They framed the issue as one of equality and dignity.

Source C — a campaign position (summary)

Groups campaigning for a No vote argued that marriage should remain the union of a man and a woman. They also raised concerns about what the change could mean for religious freedom.

Source D — the law itself

Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017 (Cth). The law passed by the Commonwealth Parliament changed the definition of marriage. It also included protections for religious bodies and for ministers of religion.

Sources B and C are short summaries of the two main campaign positions, written for this book so that no side is quoted out of context.

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey 2017*; *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017* (Cth). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Four source cards. Source A: ABS postal survey statistics. Source B: summary of the Yes campaign position. Source C: summary of the No campaign position. Source D: the Act itself

Figure 4.4 — A located and selected source set.

Now the four moves, one step at a time.

Step 1 — Locate. Source A is statistics (ABS). Source B and Source C are interest and community group material. Source D is a parliamentary source.

Step 2 — Select. Run Source A through three checks. *Origin:* the ABS, the Commonwealth body that counts official statistics. *Evidence:* the figures are counted responses, 12,691,234 of them. *Agreement:* the numbers are quoted the same way by news outlets on both sides.

Step 3 — Explain. Source B's purpose is to persuade; its audience is voters; its values are equality and dignity. Source C's purpose is also to persuade; its values are a traditional view of marriage and religious freedom. Source D's purpose is different: it records what the Parliament decided, including protections for religious bodies.

Step 4 — Compare. B and C disagree about values, not about the survey count. A shows 61.6% Yes and 38.4% No of formal responses. D shows the Parliament's answer: the law changed, and religious protections were added at the same time.

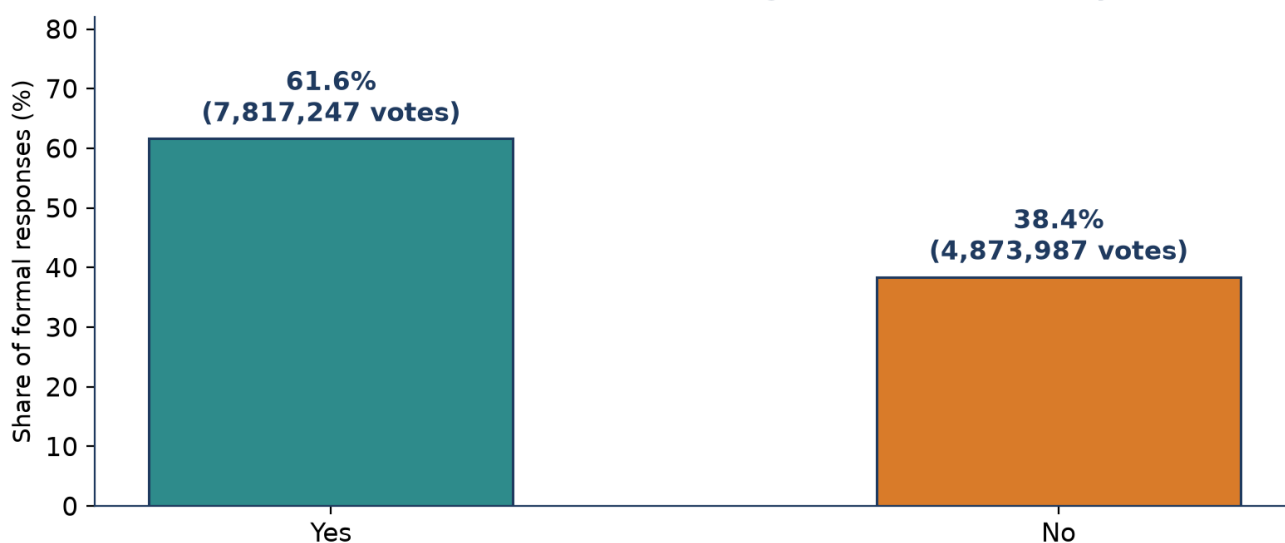
Four of the six types in Figure 4.2 are in the set. A news report or a court decision could be added later if the question needed one.

Source A passes. One caution stays attached: the survey was voluntary, so the checks also ask *who answered* — 79.5% of enrolled voters did.

Purpose does not disqualify a source. B and C are trustworthy for what each side argued — not for how many people agreed with them. That is Source A's job.

The disagreement sits in the values layer, so the data cannot settle it on its own. Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 lay this out.

Source A as data: Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, 2017



The survey was voluntary. Response rate: 79.5% of enrolled voters (12,691,234 formal responses).

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey 2017, released 15 November 2017. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Bar chart of the postal survey result: Yes 61.6 percent (7,817,247 votes), No 38.4 percent (4,873,987 votes), with the 79.5 percent response rate noted

Figure 4.5 — Source A as data.

Worked Example 1: explaining and comparing the four sources

Source	Type	What it shows	Values or interests behind it	What it cannot show
A	Statistics (ABS)	How the public voted: 61.6% Yes, 38.4% No.	The ABS aims to provide official, counted results.	Why people voted as they did; what should be done next.
B	Campaign position (Yes)	The law should change so all couples are treated equally.	Equality and dignity for same-sex couples.	The concerns of people who voted No.
C	Campaign position (No)	Marriage should stay the union of a man and a woman; protect religious freedom.	A traditional view of marriage; religious freedom.	The experiences of same-sex couples.
D	The law (Act of Parliament)	What actually happened: the law changed, with religious protections added.	The Parliament's compromise between the two sides.	Whether the compromise works in practice.

Created for this book from the sources in Figure 4.1. The values named are read from each source's stated position.

Table comparing Sources A to D: what each shows, the values or interests behind it, and what it cannot show

Figure 4.6 — Explaining and comparing the four sources.

The model answer, with each sentence labelled so you can see the moves working:

A model comparison paragraph (Worked Example 1)

Take a position

Sources B and C took opposite positions on whether Australia's marriage law should change.

Side one, with its reason

Source B argued that same-sex couples should be able to marry, because all couples deserve equal treatment under the law.

Side two, with its reason

Source C argued that marriage should remain the union of a man and a woman, and that religious freedom needed protection.

Explain the difference

The two sources differed because they started from different values: Source B from equality, Source C from a traditional view of marriage and religious freedom.

Bring in the data

The data in Source A cannot settle a values disagreement on its own, but it showed that 61.6% of the people who responded voted Yes.

Conclude

Comparing the sources shows that this issue was a disagreement about values, not only about facts — which is why the Parliament's final law included protections for both sides' concerns.

Notice the fairness: each side gets its own sentence with its own reason, and neither side is mocked or shrunk. The analysis comes from explaining the difference, not from picking a winner.

Model text created for this book, built from Sources A-D in Figure 4.1.

A six-sentence model comparison paragraph with each sentence labelled: take a position, side one with its reason, side two with its reason, explain the difference, bring in the data, conclude

Figure 4.7 — A model comparison paragraph.

Worked Example 2 — comparing actors on Victoria’s mental health system (scaffolded)

A different issue, same four moves — this time weighted towards .E01 (who could achieve their aims) and .E04 (what a successful response looks like). For years, Victorians said mental health services were too hard to get. By 2021 the Victorian Government had run a Royal Commission and accepted every recommendation it made. (A Royal Commission is the most formal kind of public inquiry a government can set up, with strong powers to gather evidence — see section 2B for how citizens and groups feed evidence into lawmaking.)

Worked Example 2: comparing political actors on one issue — Victoria's mental health system

Actor	Aim	Methods used	What they achieved
Citizens, people using services, and advocacy groups	Better mental health services that are easier to reach.	Sharing lived experience, raising the issue in the media and the community, and pressing governments over several years.	The issue stayed on the public agenda — but these actors had no direct power to change the system.
The Victorian Government (the Executive)	Respond to public concern with a whole-of-system fix.	Established a Royal Commission in 2019 — the most formal kind of public inquiry, with strong powers to gather evidence.	Received the final report (March 2021) with 65 recommendations, accepted all 65 and began implementing them.
The Australian Government	Support young people's mental health at the national level.	Funds headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, established in 2006.	A national youth service that runs alongside Victoria's reforms.

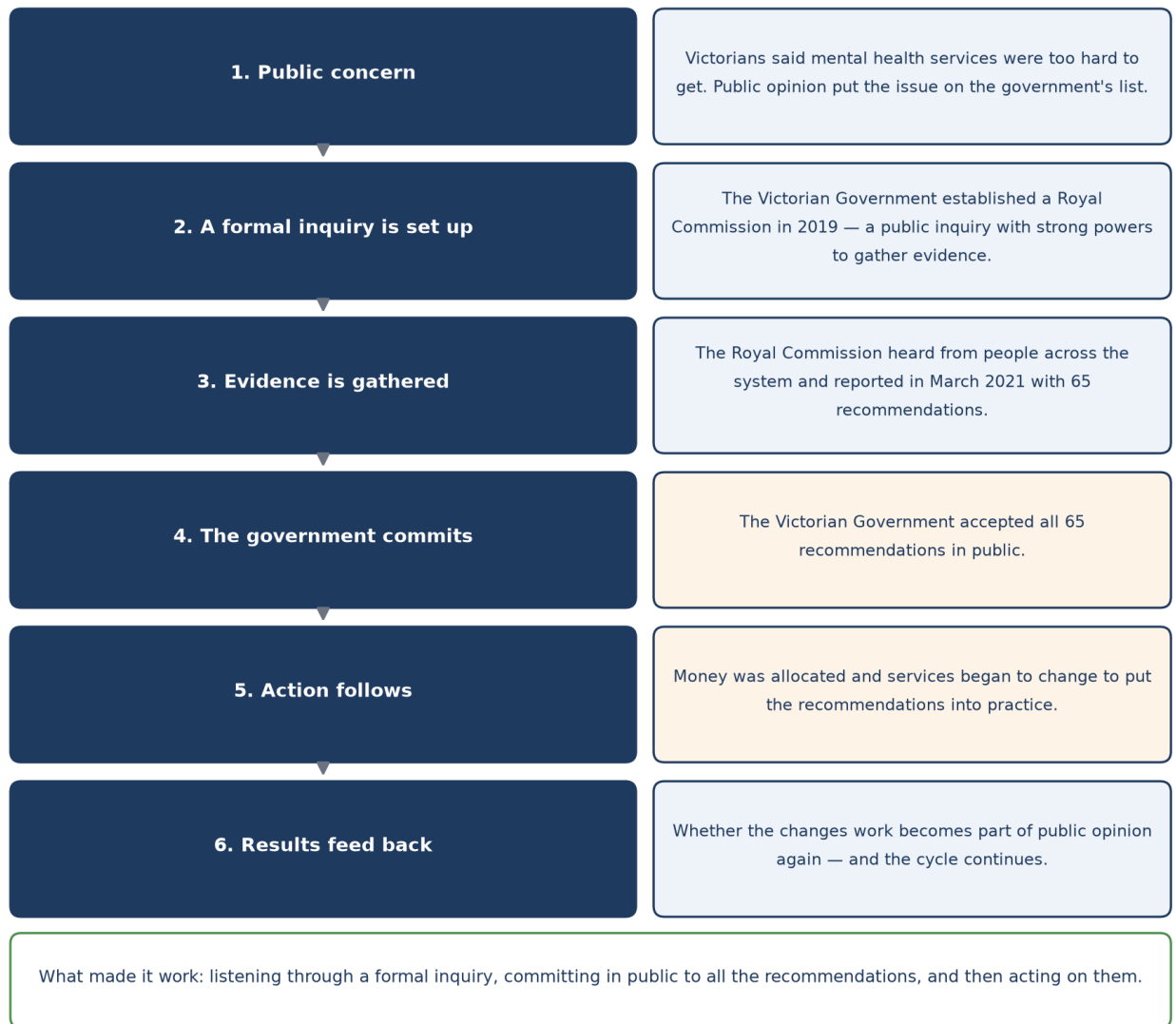
Sources: Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, March 2021; Victorian Government response, 2021; headspace (established 2006 with Australian Government funding). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Table of three actors on the issue — citizens and advocacy groups, the Victorian Government, the Australian Government — with each one’s aim, methods and what they achieved

Figure 4.8 — Comparing political actors on one issue.

Working	Comment
Step 1 — Compare ability (.E01). Citizens and advocacy groups kept the issue on the public agenda by sharing lived experience and pressing governments — but they could not change the system themselves. The Victorian Government could: it established the Royal Commission in 2019, received 65 recommendations in March 2021, accepted all 65 and began funding the changes. The Australian Government acts at a different level: it funds headspace (established 2006), a national youth service that runs alongside Victoria’s reforms.	Different actors hold different powers (section 1C explains who holds what). “Achieved more” here means “held the power to do the thing” — the citizens’ aim and the government’s aim were different jobs.
Step 2 — The successful response (.E04). The chain ran: public concern → formal inquiry → evidence gathered → public commitment → funded action → results feeding back into public opinion.	The <i>how</i> matters as much as the <i>what</i>: listening through a formal inquiry, committing in public, and then acting on the commitments.
Step 3 — A fairness check on the comparison. Advocacy groups are judged on influence, governments on powers. Comparing them by one ruler alone would misread both.	This is the same fairness rule as Figure 4.7: name each actor’s own aim before you score them.

Worked Example 2: the chain of a successful response



Sources: Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, March 2021; Victorian Government response, 2021. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Six-step chain: public concern, a formal inquiry is set up, evidence is gathered, the government commits, action follows, results feed back — with a note on what made it work

Figure 4.9 — The chain of a successful response.

Sources: Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, March 2021; Victorian Government response, 2021; headspace (established 2006 with Australian Government funding). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Match each source to its type in Figure 4.2: (a) a High Court of Australia judgment; (b) an ABS media release; (c) a report published by Amnesty International; (d) a newspaper article about a Senate debate.

Q2. Run Source C (Figure 4.4) through two checks of your choice from Figure 4.3. For each check, write one sentence of working.

Q3. For Source B, name its (a) origin, (b) purpose and (c) audience.

Q4. Figure 4.6 lists one value behind Source B and two behind Source C. In your own words, say why each side's value leads it to its position.

Q5. A student writes the inquiry question: "Why was the postal survey a waste of money?" Name the two things this question assumes, then rewrite it so it takes neither side.

Q6. Match each event to a step in Figure 4.9: (a) the Victorian Government accepts all 65 recommendations in public; (b) Victorians say services are too hard to get; (c) the Royal Commission reports in March 2021; (d) the Victorian Government establishes the Royal Commission in 2019; (e) money is allocated and services begin to change; (f) people across the system give evidence to the Royal Commission.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Using the six labelled sentences in Figure 4.7 as your shape, write your own short comparison of Sources B and C. Each side must get one sentence with its own reason, and neither side may be mocked or shrunk.

Q8. “On this issue, the Victorian Government achieved more than the advocacy groups did.” Using Figure 4.8, explain why that sentence is mostly true — and one reason why comparing these two actors is harder than it looks.

Q9. A social media post claims: “Young people are the group most affected by mental illness.” Do not argue for or against the claim. Instead: (a) name what the sentence assumes, and (b) say which type of source from Figure 4.2 could check it, and why.

Q10. A friend says: “Campaign sources like B and C are biased, so they should not be used at all.” Using the point-of-view note in Figure 4.3, explain what is wrong with that rule, and state what B and C are trustworthy *for*.

Inquiry task

Choose **one** contemporary issue and run the four moves on it yourself:

1. The Change or Suppression (Therapy) Prohibition Act 2021 (Vic) — Royal Assent 22 February 2021 — and the arguments for and against it; or
2. Food insecurity in Australia and how charities and governments respond to it; or
3. An issue of your choice, approved by your teacher.

The task. Write one inquiry question that takes no side (section 4A). Locate at least four sources using Figure 4.2 — at least two must disagree with each other, and at least one must be a data source. Record each source in the log, then write one comparison paragraph in the shape of Figure 4.7.

Inquiry task: source log

#	Details of the source (who made it, title, date, type)	What it shows (1-2 sentences)	Origin, purpose and audience	Trustworthy? Say why.	How will you use it?
1					
2					
3					
4					

Bring at least four sources. At least two must disagree with each other on the issue, and at least one must be a data source (statistics).

Blank source log table with columns for source details, what it shows, origin purpose and audience, whether it is trustworthy and why, and how it will be used

Figure 4.10 — Your source log.

How this is marked. Marks are for the reasoning steps, not for which side you end up on: a question that takes no side (1); sources that are real, named and dated (2); a trust judgement with a reason from Figure 4.3 for each source (3); each side stated with its own reason (4); and a conclusion that names whether the disagreement is about facts or about values (5).

Answers

Q1. (a) Court decisions. (b) Statistics. (c) Interest and community groups. (d) News media.

Q2. Example: *Origin* — Source C is a summary of groups campaigning for a No vote, so its origin is outside government. *Purpose* — it was made to persuade voters, so it must be read as a position, not a count. (Any two checks, with working that fits the source.)

Q3. (a) Groups campaigning for a Yes vote. (b) To persuade voters that the law should change. (c) Voters (and the wider public).

Q4. Example: Source B's value is equality — if all couples are equal before the law, the law should treat all couples the same way. Source C's values are a traditional view of marriage and religious freedom — if marriage has always been one man and one woman, changing it may pressure people who hold that belief.

Q5. It assumes (1) that the survey was a waste of money, and (2) that this is agreed, when it was one side's claim. Rewrite: "What were the costs and benefits of using a voluntary postal survey to ask enrolled voters about the marriage law?"

Q6. (a) Step 4. (b) Step 1. (c) Step 3. (d) Step 2. (e) Step 5. (f) Step 3.

Q7–Q10. See the response guide below.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. A model shape (your wording will differ): *Sources B and C took opposite positions on the 2017 marriage law. / Source B argued for change, because all couples deserve equal treatment under the law. / Source C argued against change, to protect a traditional view of marriage and religious freedom. / They differed because they started from different values. / The survey data (Source A) showed 61.6% of formal responses voted Yes, but a count cannot say which value is right. / So the issue was a values disagreement that Parliament had to settle with a law that answered both sides.* Marks are for the shape: each side named with its own reason, the difference explained, the data used for what it can show.

Q8. Mostly true: the Victorian Government held the powers that matter on this issue — it could establish a Royal Commission (2019), accept all 65 recommendations (2021) and allocate money, while citizens and advocacy groups could only press and persuade. Harder than it looks: the two actors had different aims and different tools, and the government's inquiry only happened *because* citizens kept the issue on the agenda — so "achieved more" depends which job you score. Marks are for both halves: the power difference **and** the dependence of the government's response on the citizens' pressure.

Q9. (a) It assumes the claim is already true and that "most affected" is settled, when both need checking; it also assumes age groups can be ranked on one measure. (b) Statistics — for example an ABS release or a published health survey — because ranking groups needs counted, dated data, not a campaign claim. A news report could say the claim was *made*; only a data source can check the ranking.

Q10. The rule throws away exactly the sources that show what each side argued and why. Figure 4.3 says a source can still be useful when it has a point of view — the skill is knowing what that point of view is. B and C are trustworthy for the values and reasons of each campaign; they are not trustworthy for how many people agreed (that is Source A's job).

Inquiry task. Marked on the five reasoning steps listed with the task. A strong log entry names the source (who made it, title, date, type), says in one or two sentences what it shows, names origin, purpose and audience, gives a trust judgement with a reason from Figure 4.3, and states how it will be used. A strong paragraph takes the Figure 4.7 shape and ends by naming whether the disagreement between the sources is about facts or about values.

What shaped Australia's institutions: cultural, religious and social influences

Curriculum link: Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Civics and Citizenship, Levels 7–8, VC2HC8S03. This section draws on elaboration VC2HC8S03.E01. Elaboration VC2HC8S03.E02 is a recorded exclusion for this book — see the note at the front of the book.

Australia's parliaments, courts and executive government did not arrive fully formed. They were built over time, and the society around them kept shaping them. In this section you will learn to **explain** those influences: the cultural, religious and social forces that shaped Australia's democratic institutions, with real, named and dated evidence. It builds on Section 1C (the Constitution and the key institutions), Section 2A (the principles that underpin the legal system) and Section 3A (Australia's secular, multi-faith, culturally diverse society).

Three terms this section uses precisely

- **Influence** — in this section, an *influence* is something that helps shape what an institution is like and what it does. An influence is not a command: it makes some outcomes more likely; it does not decide them. When you explain an influence, show *what* was shaped, *how*, and the *evidence* for it.
 - **Christian heritage** — the Victorian Curriculum uses this phrase but does not define it. This section therefore treats it as the beliefs, practices and institutions connected with Christianity that came to Australia mainly through British settlement from 1788 and through later migration, and that can still be seen in public life. Other uses of the phrase exist; your answers are marked on this one.
 - **Secular** — in this section, *secular* is used in the sense attached to section 116 of the Australian Constitution: the Commonwealth may not establish a religion, impose religious observance, prohibit the free exercise of any religion, or set a religious test for public office. A secular institution serves people of every faith and none. Other definitions of *secular* exist and are not interchangeable with this one.
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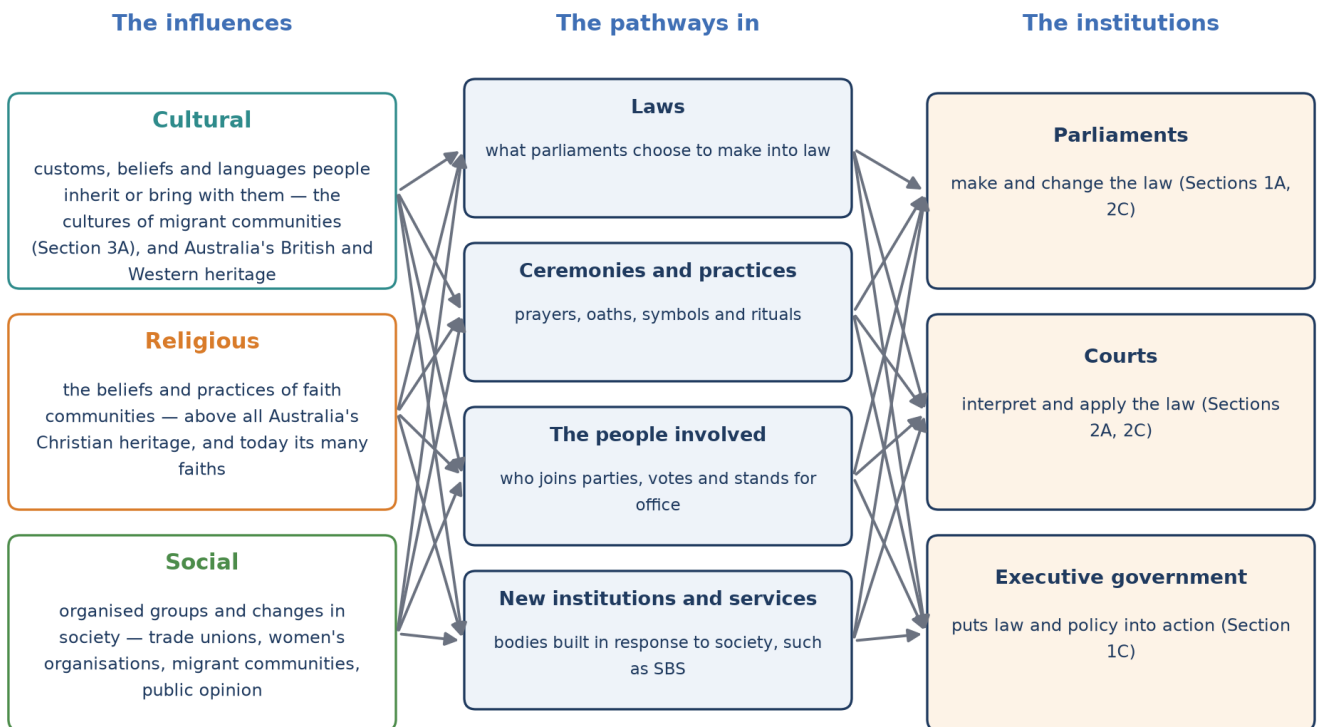
Teaching sequence

Part 1 — A framework for explaining influences

There are three kinds of influence on Australia's democratic institutions, and four pathways through which an influence gets in.

Three kinds of influence on Australia's democratic institutions

An influence helps shape what an institution is like and what it does. It is not control.



Created for this book. Influences can also flow the other way: institutions shape society in return — the 2017 marriage law change is one example (Section 1B).

Three kinds of influence flow through four pathways into parliaments, courts and the executive government

- A **cultural influence** comes from the customs, beliefs and languages people inherit or bring with them — for example the cultures of migrant communities (Section 3A), and Australia's British and Western heritage.
- A **religious influence** comes from the beliefs and practices of faith communities — above all Australia's Christian heritage, and today its many faiths.
- A **social influence** comes from organised groups and changes in society — trade unions, women's organisations, migrant communities, public opinion.

None of these works like a switch. An influence shows up as a **law** a parliament passes, as a **ceremony or practice** an institution keeps, as **the people who join, vote or stand for office**, or as a **new institution or service** built in response to society. And influence runs both ways: institutions shape society in return — the 2017 change to the marriage law altered how many Australians live, not just what the law says (Section 1B).

Part 2 — A religious influence: Christian heritage and the parliaments

Australia's parliamentary system was modelled on Britain's, where the monarch also heads the established Church of England and bishops sit in the House of Lords. British settlers brought Christianity from 1788, and most early lawmakers were Christians — so Christian practice and teaching left traces in Australia's parliaments that are still visible today.

Traces of Christian heritage in Australia's parliaments

Trace	What happens
Opening prayers	Each sitting day, the Speaker in the House of Representatives and the President in the Senate read Christian prayers, including the Lord's Prayer. The House adopted the practice in 1909 and it continues today.
Words in the Constitution	The preamble to the Australian Constitution says the people agreed to unite 'humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God' (see Source 4.1).
Oaths of office	Before taking their seats, members of parliament swear an oath of allegiance that ends with the words 'So help me God', or make a solemn affirmation instead (Constitution, section 42 and the Schedule).
Laws shaped by Christian teaching	The Marriage Act 1961 long defined marriage in line with Christian teaching until parliament changed the definition in 2017 (Section 1B). Sunday trading rules also reflected the Christian day of worship before states relaxed them.

Sources: Australian Constitution (preamble; s 42 and the Schedule); House of Representatives and Senate practice and standing orders (prayers read each sitting day; House practice adopted 1909); Marriage Act 1961 (Cth) as amended in 2017. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Traces of Christian heritage in Australia's parliaments: opening prayers, the words of the preamble, oaths of office, and laws shaped by Christian teaching

The same founding document shows the other side of the story.

Source 4.1 Two extracts from the Australian Constitution (1900)

From the preamble (introduction):

"... humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth ..."

Section 116:

"The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth."

Notice both sides: religious language appears in the founding document, and the same document stops the Commonwealth from setting up a religion. Australia's democracy carries Christian traces and a secular rule at the same time.

Source: Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (UK), preamble and section 116. Quoted verbatim.

Source 4.1: the preamble to the Australian Constitution refers to Almighty God, while section 116 stops the Commonwealth from establishing any religion

Read the two extracts together: religious language appears in the Constitution, and the same Constitution stops the Commonwealth from setting up a religion. That is the point to hold on to — Australia’s democracy carries Christian traces **and** a secular rule at the same time.

Part 3 — A contested example, with both sides at their strongest

Not every religious influence is agreed to be a good one. Governments in Australia help fund non-government schools, including religious schools, and reasonable people disagree about that.

A contested example: government funding of religious schools

Governments in Australia help fund non-government schools, including religious schools. Is that an influence that should continue?
Two strongest views:

View 1 — funding supports choice

Religious communities run schools that many families value. Supporters argue that public funding lets parents choose schooling that matches their beliefs, and that paying for students' education is not the same thing as establishing a religion.

View 2 — public money, public schools

Critics argue that government money should support government-run schools, and that funding religious bodies weakens the secular boundary that section 116 is meant to keep. They also worry that faith-based schools can favour their own faith when enrolling students or employing staff.

What the High Court decided — and where it sits now

In *Attorney-General (Vic); Ex rel Black v Commonwealth* (1981), the 'DOGS case', the High Court held that funding religious schools does not breach section 116: 'establishing' a religion means creating something like a state church. The argument itself has not ended — parliaments still debate how religious beliefs and anti-discrimination law should fit together (Section 2B shows how citizens can influence that debate).

Source: *Attorney-General (Vic); Ex rel Black v Commonwealth* (1981) 146 CLR 559, the High Court of Australia. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Two strongest views on government funding of religious schools, and what the High Court decided in the DOGS case of 1981

Notice how to handle a contested example: state each side in its strongest form, then say what the law actually is. The High Court settled the legal question in 1981; the argument about what should happen next belongs to the parliaments, and citizens can join it through the participation methods of Section 2B.

Part 4 — The courts: heritage and adaptation

The courts carry the same double story. Australia’s courts grew out of British courts, where Christianity was the established religion; witnesses at first swore an oath on the Bible, and a judge’s oath of office still ends with the words “So help me God”. At the same time, the courts have adapted to a multi-faith and increasingly non-religious society.

The courts: Christian heritage — and adaptation to a multi-faith society

Trace or change	What it shows
The traditional oath	Australia's courts grew out of British courts, where Christianity was the established religion. Witnesses traditionally swore an oath on the Bible to tell the truth.
'So help me God'	Oaths of office for judges and justices end with these words. Justices of the High Court of Australia may instead make an affirmation (High Court of Australia Act 1979 (Cth)).
Room for every faith	In Victoria, a witness may take an oath on a religious text that is meaningful to them, or choose an affirmation. The law gives both choices the same force (Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018 (Vic); Evidence Act 2008 (Vic)).
The secular boundary	Section 116 bans religious tests for Commonwealth office. Courts apply the law in the same way to everyone, whatever they believe (the rule of law — Section 2A).

Sources: High Court of Australia Act 1979 (Cth), s 11 and the Schedule; Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018 (Vic); Evidence Act 2008 (Vic); Australian Constitution, s 116. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

The courts: Christian heritage in the traditional oath, and adaptation to a multi-faith society through affirmations and the secular boundary of section 116

An **oath** is a promise to tell the truth made by swearing on a religious text; an **affirmation** is the same promise made without religion. Giving both the same force is the rule of law at work: the law applies to everyone in the same way, whatever they believe (Section 2A).

Part 5 — Social influences: organised groups change institutions

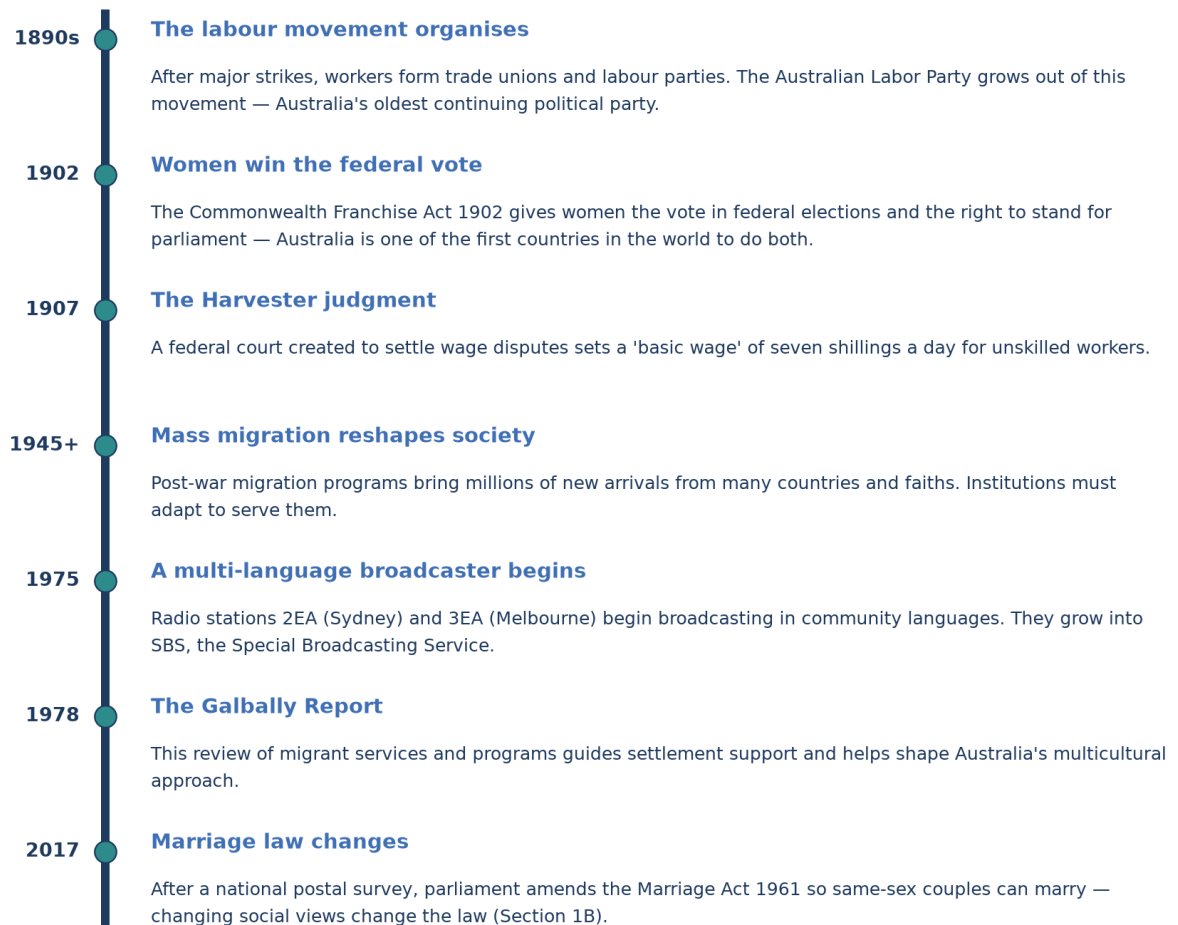
Social influences are easiest to see when organised groups win a change that lasts.

- **The labour movement.** After major strikes in the 1890s, workers organised into trade unions and labour parties. The Australian Labor Party grew out of that movement and is Australia's oldest continuing political party (Section 1A). The movement's values also reached the courts: in the **Harvester judgment (1907)**, a federal court created to settle wage disputes set a **basic wage** — a minimum for unskilled workers, on the idea that full-time work should support a family in basic comfort. The trace survives today: an independent body, the Fair Work Commission, reviews the national minimum wage every year under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Commonwealth).
- **Women's organisations.** Decades of campaigning by women's groups helped bring about the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902*, which gave women the vote in federal elections and the right to stand for parliament — Australia was one of the first countries in the world to do both.

Part 6 — Cultural influences: migration reshapes institutions

The migration programs after 1945 brought millions of new arrivals from many countries and faiths, and institutions adapted to serve a more diverse society.

Social and cultural influences changed Australia's institutions, 1890s to 2017



Sources: Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 (Cth); Ex parte H.V. McKay (the Harvester judgment), Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, 1907; SBS, founded from the 1975 ethnic radio stations; Galbally, Review of Post-Arrival Migrant Services and Programs, 1978; Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017 (Cth). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Timeline of social and cultural influences on Australia's institutions: the labour movement of the 1890s, women's federal vote in 1902, the Harvester judgment of 1907, post-war migration, the founding of SBS in 1975, the Galbally Report of 1978, and the 2017 marriage law change

Two traces are worth naming. First, the multilingual radio stations that began in Sydney and Melbourne in 1975 grew into SBS, the Special Broadcasting Service — a national broadcaster built because Australian society now speaks many languages, and informed citizens are a democratic need (Section 1D). Second, the **Galbally Report (1978)**, a review of migrant services and programs, guided settlement support and helped shape Australia's multicultural approach. A culturally diverse society did not just live inside Australia's institutions — it changed what institutions were built.

The method, in one place

To answer an “explain the influence” question like the one in VC2HC8S03:

1. **Name the influence** and say which kind it is — cultural, religious or social.
2. **Name the institution** it influenced — a parliament, a court, the executive government.
3. **Trace the pathway** — a law, a ceremony or practice, the people involved, or a new institution or service.
4. **Give real, dated evidence** — a named law, case, report or institution, with a year.
5. **Set the limits** — what balances or checks the influence (for example section 116, or the independence of the courts).

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Explain how Christian heritage has influenced the Commonwealth Parliament.

Step	What you do	What it looks like here
1. Name the institution	Pick the institution and name it.	The Commonwealth Parliament — the House of Representatives and the Senate (Section 1C).
2. Find the traces	List what you can see of the influence.	Christian prayers open each sitting day; the Constitution's preamble refers to "Almighty God"; members' oaths end with "So help me God"; the first definition of marriage followed Christian teaching.
3. Explain the link	Say why the traces are there.	Australia's parliament was modelled on Britain's, a Christian country whose monarch heads the established Church of England; British settlers brought Christianity from 1788 and most early lawmakers were Christians.
4. Set the limits	Show the influence is not control.	Section 116 stops the Commonwealth from establishing a religion or setting a religious test for office, so the parliament remains a secular institution that makes law for people of every faith and none.

The same four steps are drawn out in the figure below — use it as a checklist while you practise.

Worked Example 1: explaining a religious influence — Christian heritage and the Commonwealth Parliament



Sources: Australian Constitution (preamble; s 42 and the Schedule; s 116); House of Representatives practice — prayers read at the start of each sitting day since 1909; Marriage Act 1961 (Cth). Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked Example 1 drawn out: name the institution, find the traces, explain the link, set the limits

Example 2 — unscaffolded

Explain one social influence on Australia's democratic institutions.

Australia's system for setting wages was shaped by the labour movement, a social influence. After major strikes in the 1890s, workers organised into trade unions, and the movement helped form the Australian Labor Party, which still contests elections today. The movement's values also reached the courts: in the Harvester judgment (1907), a federal court created to settle wage disputes set a basic wage of seven shillings a day for unskilled workers, on the idea that a week of full-time work should support a family. The influence has not worn off: today the Fair Work Commission, an independent body, reviews the national minimum wage every year under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Commonwealth). And the influence had limits — it worked through institutions that parliament created, not around them.

Why this answer works: it names the influence and its kind (social), names the institutions it touched (a political party; a federal wage court; today's Fair Work Commission), gives real, dated evidence (the strikes of the 1890s; the Harvester judgment, 1907; the *Fair Work Act 2009*), and sets a limit. The model version of these steps is drawn out in the figure below.

Worked Example 2: explaining a social influence — the labour movement and the wage



Sources: Ex parte H.V. McKay (the Harvester judgment), Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, 1907; Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth); Australian Labor Party, founded from the labour movement of the 1890s. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Worked Example 2 drawn out: name the influence, follow it into institutions, trace it through a court decision, find the traces today

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Copy and complete this table in your book, using this section.

Kind of influence	What it means, in your own words	One example from this section
Cultural		
Religious		
Social		

Q2. Using the figure of parliament traces, name two traces of Christian heritage in the Commonwealth Parliament.

Q3. Read Source 4.1 (the two Constitution extracts). In your own words, state (a) one thing section 116 stops the Commonwealth from doing, and (b) why section 116 matters to an Australian who holds no religious belief.

Q4. Sort each item below into the kind of influence it best shows — cultural, religious or social.

- (a) the Lord’s Prayer read at the opening of a sitting of parliament
- (b) the founding of SBS after post-war migration
- (c) trade unions forming the Australian Labor Party
- (d) the words “Almighty God” in the Constitution’s preamble
- (e) women’s organisations campaigning for the federal vote in the 1890s

Q5. About the Harvester judgment (1907), identify (a) the social influence behind it, (b) the kind of institution that made the decision, and (c) one trace of that decision in Australia today.

Q6. Complete the sentences: “In Victoria, a witness in court may choose to make a promise by _____ or by _____. This shows the courts adapting to _____.”

Un scaffolded

Q7. Explain the influence of Christian heritage on Australia’s courts. Name one trace, and one way the courts have adapted to today’s multi-faith society.

Q8. Explain one cultural influence on Australia’s democratic institutions, using a real, named and dated example from this section.

Q9. “Australia’s parliaments carry Christian traces, but Australia is a secular democracy.” Use evidence from this section to explain both parts of this statement.

Q10. Choose one institution from Chapter 1 — a parliament, the executive government, or the High Court of Australia. Explain one religious influence and one social influence on it, and name one limit on those influences.

Source-based inquiry

In a Skills section, the inquiry is the task. Use the method from the teaching sequence.

Source 4.1 — two extracts from the Australian Constitution (1900)

From the preamble: “... humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite ...”

Section 116: “The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.”

You are investigating the question: **How far does religion influence Australia’s democratic institutions?**

- **A. Identify.** Write down two facts that Source 4.1 states directly.
 - **B. Develop.** Write two questions about religion in Australian public life that Source 4.1 raises but does not answer. (Compare with the question skills of Section 4A.)
 - **C. Explain.** Using Source 4.1 and this section, write one paragraph that explains one religious influence on the Commonwealth Parliament **and** one limit on religious influence in Australia.
 - **D. Reflect.** Two readers look at Source 4.1. One says it shows Australia was founded as a Christian country; the other says it shows religion was kept out of government. Explain how each reader can point to the same source. Then state which reading you find better supported by the evidence, and why. (There is no single “right” conclusion — marks go to the quality of your reasoning.)
-

Answers

Q1. Cultural — the customs, beliefs and languages people inherit or bring with them; example: the cultures of migrant communities shaping SBS. Religious — the beliefs and practices of faith communities; example: Christian prayers opening each sitting day of parliament. Social — organised groups and changes in society; example: trade unions forming the Australian Labor Party. (Other matching examples accepted.)

Q2. Any two of: Christian prayers (including the Lord’s Prayer) open each sitting day; the preamble refers to the blessing of “Almighty God”; members’ oaths of office end with “So help me God”; early laws such as the first definition of marriage followed Christian teaching; Sunday trading rules reflected the Christian day of worship.

Q3. (a) Any one of: establishing a religion; imposing religious observance; prohibiting the free exercise of any religion; requiring a religious test for Commonwealth office. (b) Because the Commonwealth cannot set up an official religion or a religious test for office, an Australian with no belief is served by the same institutions as everyone else and cannot be shut out of public office for what they believe.

Q4. (a) religious. (b) cultural. (c) social. (d) religious. (e) social.

Q5. (a) The labour movement — workers organised into unions after the strikes of the 1890s, and the value that work should support a family. (b) A court — a federal court created by parliament to settle wage disputes. (c) The Fair Work Commission reviews the national minimum wage every year under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Commonwealth).

Q6. ... by **swearing an oath on a religious text** or by **making an affirmation**. This shows the courts adapting to a **multi-faith society (a society of many faiths and none)**.

Q7. The key points: Australia’s courts grew out of British courts where Christianity was the established religion; witnesses at first swore an oath on the Bible; oaths of office end with “So help me God” (High Court of Australia Act 1979 (Commonwealth)). Adaptation: witnesses may now affirm or use a religious text meaningful to them (Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018 (Vic); Evidence Act 2008 (Vic)); section 116 bans religious tests for Commonwealth office, so the law applies to everyone in the same way.

Q8. For example: post-war migration changed Australian society, and institutions adapted — the multilingual radio stations that began in Sydney and Melbourne in 1975 grew into SBS, a national broadcaster serving a many-language society; or the Galbally Report (1978) shaped migrant services and Australia’s multicultural approach. The answer must name the influence, the institution, and the dates.

Q9. Christian traces: prayers open parliament each sitting day; the preamble refers to “Almighty God”; oaths end with “So help me God”. Secular: section 116 stops the Commonwealth establishing a religion, imposing religious observance or setting a religious test for office; in the DOGS case (1981) the High Court read section 116 narrowly, confirming that the Commonwealth has no established church. So the statement means: the institutions carry a Christian heritage in their ceremonies and history, while the law keeps government neutral between faiths and none.

Q10. Any well-supported pairing. For example, the High Court of Australia: religious influence — justices take an oath ending “So help me God” or affirm (High Court of Australia Act 1979 (Commonwealth)); social influence — public opinion and organised groups bring cases that test the law against community values (for example the NZYQ case of 2023, Section 1B); limit — the Court’s independence and the separation of powers (Section 1C) mean no religious or social group can direct its decisions.

Inquiry guidance. A: for example, the Constitution’s preamble refers to the blessing of Almighty God; section 116 stops the Commonwealth establishing a religion / imposing religious observance / prohibiting free exercise / requiring a religious test for office. B: questions must be investigable — for example, “Do all Australian parliaments open with Christian prayers?” or “How have the courts applied section 116 since 1900?” C: one paragraph joining Part 2 and Part 4 evidence with section 116 as the limit. D: the first reader points to the preamble’s religious language; the second points to section 116. The better-supported reading is that both are true at once — Australia’s institutions carry Christian traces and a secular rule, which is exactly the balance this section teaches. Marks go to how well each reading is stated in its strongest form before a conclusion is chosen.

Sources for this section

- *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* (UK) — preamble, section 42 and the Schedule, section 116. Quoted verbatim in Source 4.1 and the figures.
- House of Representatives and Senate practice and standing orders — prayers, including the Lord’s Prayer, read at the start of each sitting day (House practice adopted 1909, and continuing).
- *Marriage Act 1961* (Commonwealth), as amended by the *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017* (Commonwealth) — see Section 1B.
- *High Court of Australia Act 1979* (Commonwealth), section 11 and the Schedule — oath or affirmation for justices.
- Attorney-General (Vic); Ex rel Black v Commonwealth (1981) 146 CLR 559 (the “DOGS case”).
- *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902* (Commonwealth).
- Ex parte H.V. McKay (the Harvester judgment), 1907 — the federal wage court named in full in the figures.
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Commonwealth) — annual review of the national minimum wage by the Fair Work Commission.
- *Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018* (Vic); *Evidence Act 2008* (Vic).
- SBS — founded from the 1975 multilingual radio stations in Sydney (2EA) and Melbourne (3EA); Galbally, *Review of Post-Arrival Migrant Services and Programs*, 1978.

All sources retrieved 26 August 2026.

Democratic values and legal principles at work in Australia's institutions

Section 4D · Civics and Citizenship 8 · Content description VC2HC8S04, elaborations .E01–.E04

Earlier sections of this book gave you the pieces: Australia's democratic values (Sections 3B and 3D), the Commonwealth Parliament and the Parliament of Victoria (Section 1A), Victorian courts (Section 2A), and the rule of law (Section 2C). This section joins the pieces together. Your job is not to *describe* institutions. It is to **analyse the degree to which** democratic values and legal principles are **expressed** in them: where the value shows up, how strongly, and where it falls short.

Curriculum focus: VC2HC8S04 · draws on .E01, .E02, .E03 and .E04.

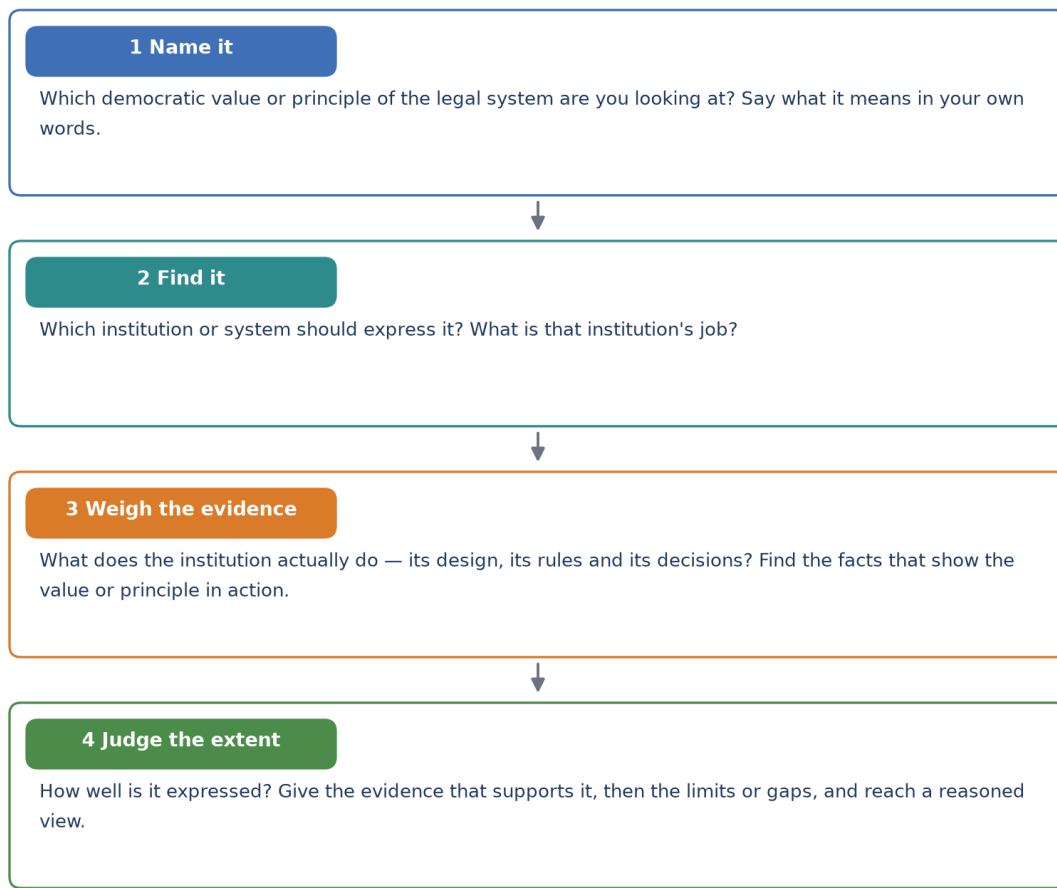
Theory

The words we use, and exactly what we mean by them. Some terms in this section are contested — thoughtful people disagree about what counts as “democratic” or “fair”. In this book we use these working definitions:

- **Democratic values** — the values named in the curriculum and in the citizenship test: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, equality of opportunity, and a fair say in how the country is run (including the right to vote and to stand for parliament).
- **Principles of the legal system (principles of justice)** — as used in Section 2A of this book: **fairness** (a fair hearing; treated as innocent until a court finds you guilty), **equality** (the same law for everyone; no one above the law), and **access** (people can actually reach the courts, not only people with money).
- **Rule of law** — the principle that everyone, including the government and the parliament itself, is bound by the law; that parliaments only have the power the Constitution gives them; and that independent courts, not politicians, decide what the law allows.
- **“The degree to which” / “to what extent”** — how strongly something is true. An institution can express a value strongly in one way and weakly in another. Good analysis weighs both sides and ends in a **measured judgement** (“mostly upholds, but ...”), never a bare “yes” or “no”.

The method. Use the four steps in Figure 1 for every analysis task in this section.

The four-step method for analysing how values and principles are expressed



ClassBasics Civics and Citizenship 8 — original analysis scaffold for Section 4D (VC2HC8504).

A four-step scaffold for analysis questions: step 1 name the value or principle being tested; step 2 find the institution and what it actually does; step 3 weigh the evidence for and against; step 4 judge the extent with a measured conclusion

Figure 1 — The four-step scaffold this section uses for “the degree to which” questions.

The big picture. Figure 2 maps each value or principle to an institution you have already met, with one way it is expressed. You will analyse each row in more detail below.

Where do we see these values and principles at work?

Democratic value or legal principle	An institution that can express it	One way it is expressed
Freedom of speech	Commonwealth Parliament	Members openly debate laws and question the government without being punished for what they say.
Equality of opportunity	Australian citizenship test	Every applicant sits the same test under the same rules.
Fairness	Victorian courts	Fair trial rules, such as hearing both sides, and the right to appeal a decision.
Equality before the law	High Court of Australia	Anyone can challenge a law, and courts can declare a law invalid if it goes beyond the power given to parliament.
Access to justice	Victorian Legal Aid	Free or low-cost legal help for people who cannot pay for a lawyer.
A 'fair go'	The Senate	Proportional voting lets smaller parties and independents win seats, not just the largest parties.

Compiled for Section 4D from content taught in Sections 1A-3B of this book. The institutions named here are real Australian institutions.

A table mapping six democratic values and legal principles to real Australian institutions, with one way each is expressed: freedom of speech in the Commonwealth Parliament; equality of opportunity in the citizenship test; fairness in Victorian courts; equality before the law in the High Court of Australia; access to justice through Victorian Legal Aid; and a fair go in the Senate

Figure 2 — Where we see these values and principles at work.

Part 1 — Citizenship and democratic values (.E01). Formal national **citizenship** is the legal status of being an Australian citizen. It carries the core democratic rights: the right to vote in federal elections and the right to stand for parliament. Two civic processes express values here. The **citizenship test** (Figure 3) checks that applicants know Australia's values and how its system works, under the same rules for everyone. The **pledge of commitment** (Figure 4), made by new citizens, promises loyalty to Australia and its people, sharing Australians' democratic beliefs, respect for the rights and liberties of all, and upholding and obeying Australia's laws.

The Australian citizenship test at a glance

Feature	What it is
Number of questions	20 multiple-choice questions
Pass mark	Answer at least 75% of all questions correctly (at least 15 of 20).
Australian values questions	5 of the questions are about Australian values. You must answer all 5 of these correctly.
Time allowed	45 minutes
When it started	The test began on 1 October 2007. The 75% pass mark and the rule that all 5 values questions must be correct applied from 19 October 2009.
Who sits it	People who apply to become Australian citizens, as part of their citizenship application.

Source: 'Australian citizenship test', Wikipedia, retrieved 26 August 2026. The test is set under the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Commonwealth).

A table summarising the Australian citizenship test: 20 multiple-choice questions; a pass mark of at least 75 percent, which is at least 15 of 20; 5 values questions that must all be correct; 45 minutes allowed; the test began on 1 October 2007 and the current pass rules applied from 19 October 2009; it is sat by people applying to become citizens

Figure 3 — The Australian citizenship test at a glance. (Source: 'Australian citizenship test', Wikipedia, retrieved 26 August 2026; the test is set under the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Commonwealth).)

The citizenship pledge: what it promises and the values behind it

What the pledge promises (summarised)	The democratic value or principle behind it
A promise of loyalty to Australia and its people	Commitment to the national community and to belonging.
Sharing Australians' democratic beliefs	Support for democracy and its values, such as freedom and a fair say in how the country is run.
Respecting the rights and liberties of all	Respect for the rights and freedoms of every other person.
Upholding and obeying Australia's laws	The rule of law: everyone, including new citizens, agrees to live under the same laws.

Source: Pledge of Commitment, Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Commonwealth), Schedule 1 — wording summarised for this book. The mapping to values is original to this section.

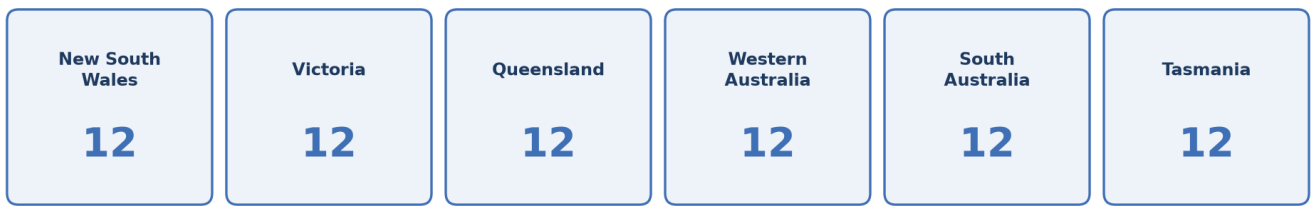
A table summarising what the citizenship pledge promises — loyalty to Australia and its people; sharing Australians' democratic beliefs; respecting the rights and liberties of all; upholding and obeying Australia's laws — and the democratic value or principle behind each promise

Figure 4 — The citizenship pledge: what it promises and the values behind it. (Source: Pledge of Commitment, Australian Citizenship Act 2007 (Commonwealth), Schedule 1 — wording summarised for this book.)

Part 2 — Does the upper house represent democracy? (.E02). The upper house of the Commonwealth Parliament is the **Senate**. Figure 5 shows how it is built. Because every original state has the same number of senators, the Senate is called a “states’ house”. Senators are elected by **proportional representation**: Figure 6 shows, with an invented model, how a quota in a multi-seat election lets groups win seats in proportion to their support. Figure 7 shows what that produced in the current Senate — no single group holds a majority, so the **crossbench** (the senators who are not in the Government or the Opposition) holds the balance. The upper house of the Parliament of Victoria, the **Legislative Council**, works in a similar way: 40 members elected from 8 regions (5 per region) by proportional voting, for 4-year terms (last election 26 November 2022; next 28 November 2026).

How the Senate is built: 76 senators, and every state gets the same number

The six states — 12 senators each ($12 \times 6 = 72$)



The two territories — 2 senators each ($2 \times 2 = 4$)



Total: $72 + 4 = 76$ senators

Every state has the same number of senators, whether it has many people or few. This makes the Senate a 'states' house'.

Senators are elected by proportional representation. State senators serve 6-year terms, and about half are elected every 3 years.

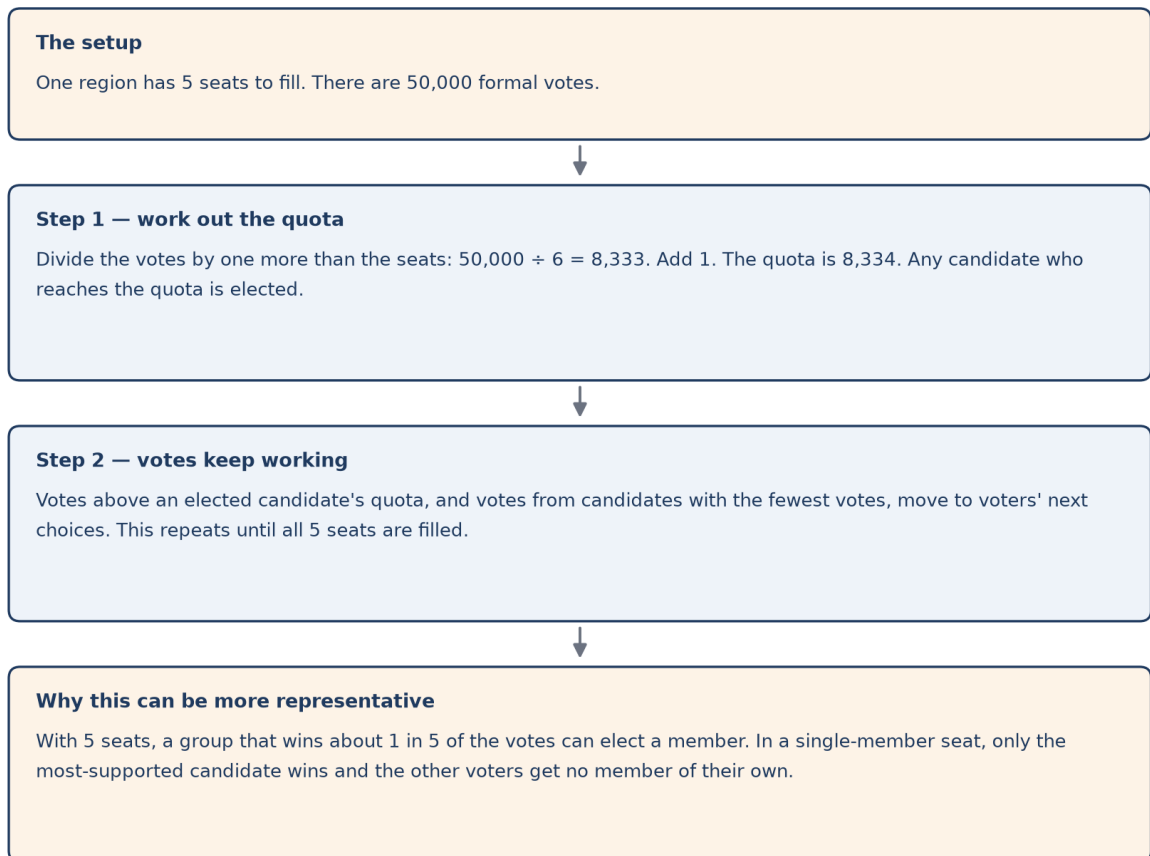
Source: the Constitution requires each original state to have the same number of senators (section 7) and 6-year terms with half elected every 3 years (section 13). The current 12 per state and 2 per territory is set by parliament (Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918).

A diagram showing how the Senate is built: the six states each have 12 senators and the two territories each have 2 senators, giving a total of 76, with notes that equal state numbers make it a states' house and that senators are elected by proportional representation

Figure 5 — How the Senate is built. (Source: Australian Constitution, sections 7 and 13; current numbers set by the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.)

How proportional representation elects a house of review

An invented model with simple numbers to show the method.

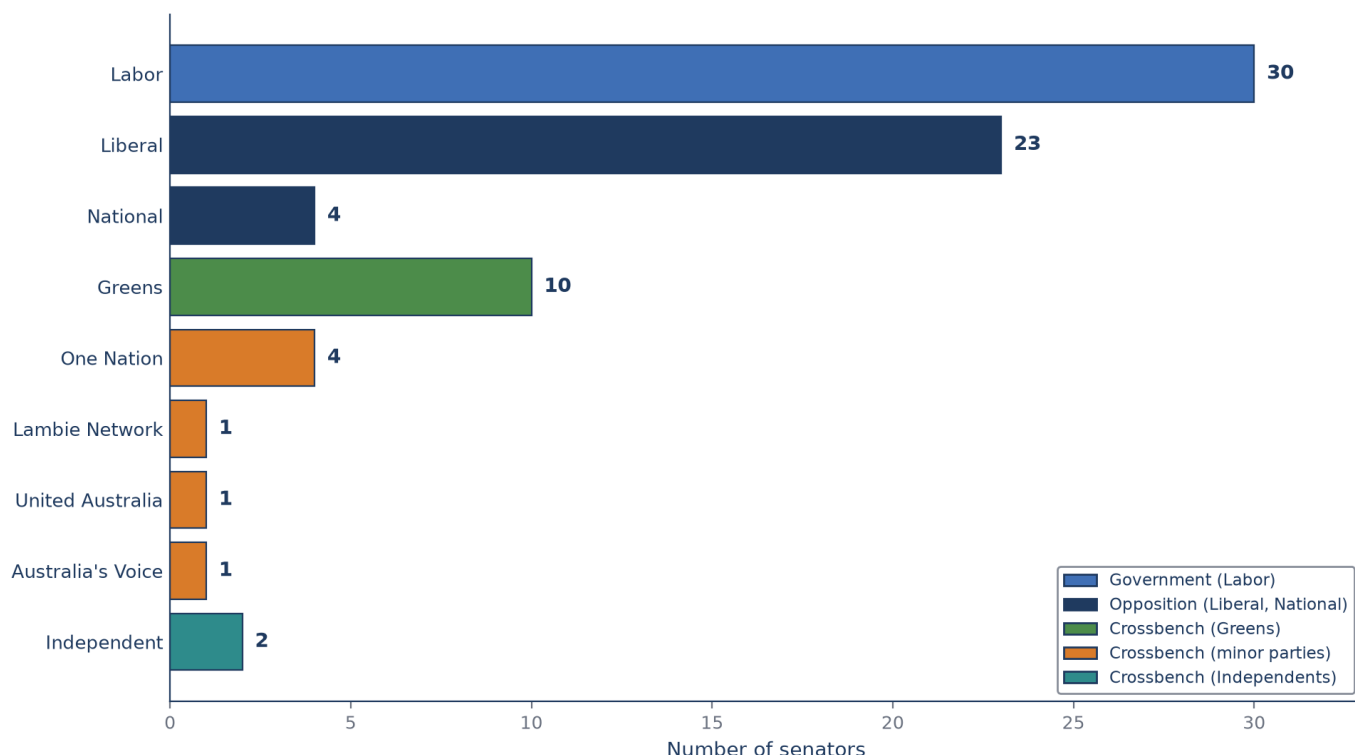


Quota formula from the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Commonwealth). The region, votes and candidates here are invented to show how the count works.

A four-step model, with invented numbers, showing how proportional representation works: a region with 5 seats and 50,000 votes has a quota of 8,334; candidates who reach the quota are elected; votes above the quota and from the lowest candidates move to next choices; and a group with about 1 in 5 of the votes can elect a member

Figure 6 — How proportional representation elects a house of review. (Quota formula from the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918; the numbers are invented to show the method.)

Party groups in the Senate: 76 senators in total (Government 30 · Opposition 27 · Crossbench 19)



Source: party numbers as reported in 'Australian Senate', Wikipedia, retrieved 26 August 2026. Party numbers change over time as senators are elected or change parties.

A bar chart of party groups in the current Senate of 76 senators: Labor 30, Liberal 23, National 4, Greens 10, One Nation 4, Lambie Network 1, United Australia 1, Australia's Voice 1, and independents 2; grouped as Government 30, Opposition 27 and crossbench 19

Figure 7 — Party groups in the Senate. (Source: 'Australian Senate', Wikipedia, retrieved 26 August 2026; party numbers change over time.)

Part 3 — Courts and the principles of justice (.E03). Figure 8 restates the three principles of justice used in Section 2A and gives the court features that try to uphold each one. Figure 9 shows where each court sits: lower courts hear most cases first, higher courts check decisions on appeal, and the **High Court of Australia** sits at the top of every hierarchy and decides whether laws are within the power the Constitution gives parliaments.

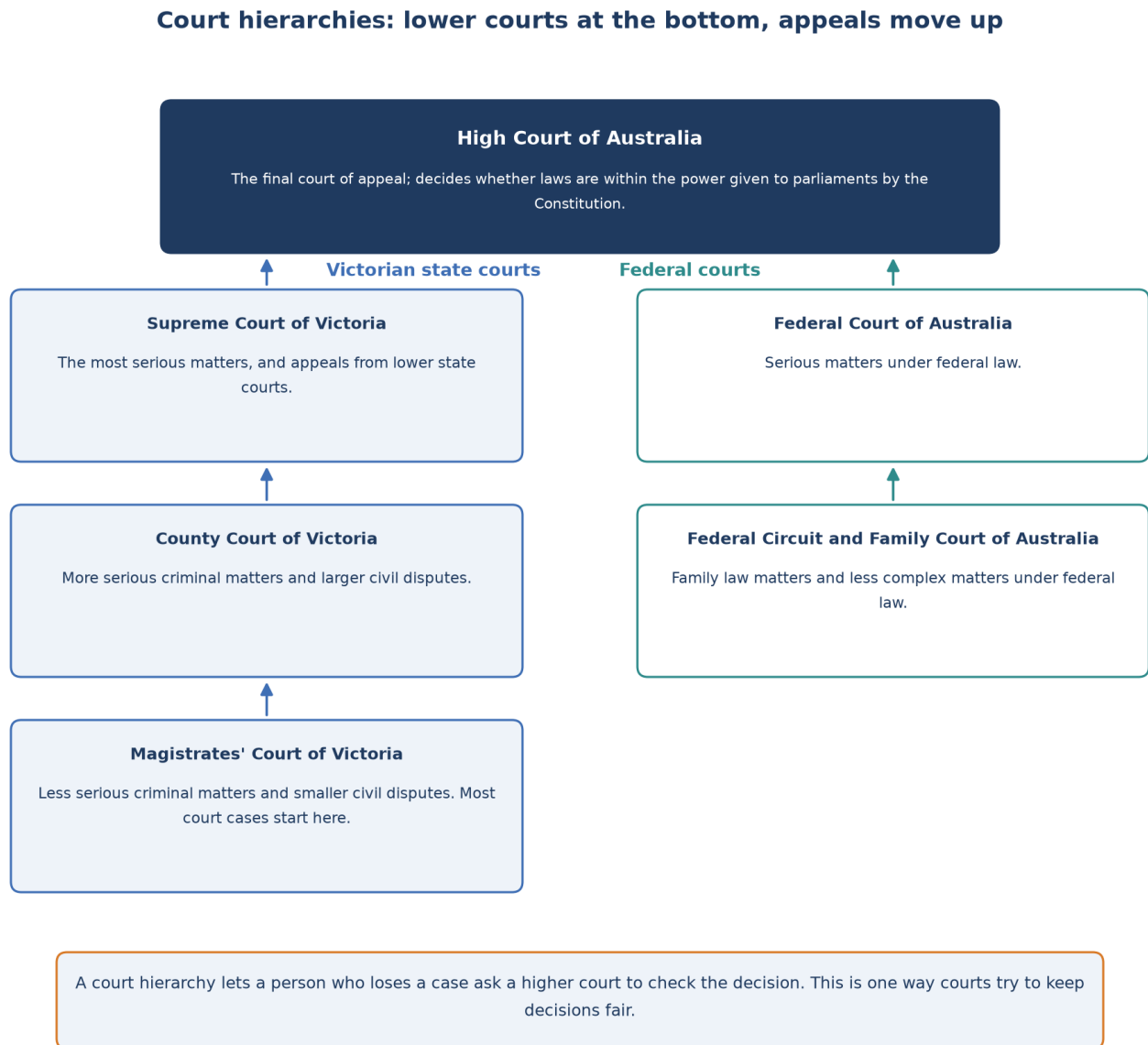
The principles of justice and how courts try to uphold them

Principle	What it means	How courts try to uphold it
Fairness	People get a fair hearing. They are treated as innocent until a court finds them guilty.	Open hearings; both sides get to speak and present their case; the right to appeal a decision.
Equality	The law treats everyone the same, including people with power and wealth.	The same courts and the same rules apply to everyone. No one is above the law.
Access	People can actually reach the courts and take part, not just people with money.	Legal help such as Victorian Legal Aid, duty lawyers at court, and interpreters.

Source: principles as used in Section 2A of this book. The examples of how courts uphold them are compiled for Section 4D.

A table of the three principles of justice — fairness, equality and access — what each means, and how courts try to uphold it: open hearings, both sides speaking and the right to appeal; the same courts and rules for everyone; and legal help such as Victorian Legal Aid, duty lawyers and interpreters

Figure 8 — The principles of justice and how courts try to uphold them.



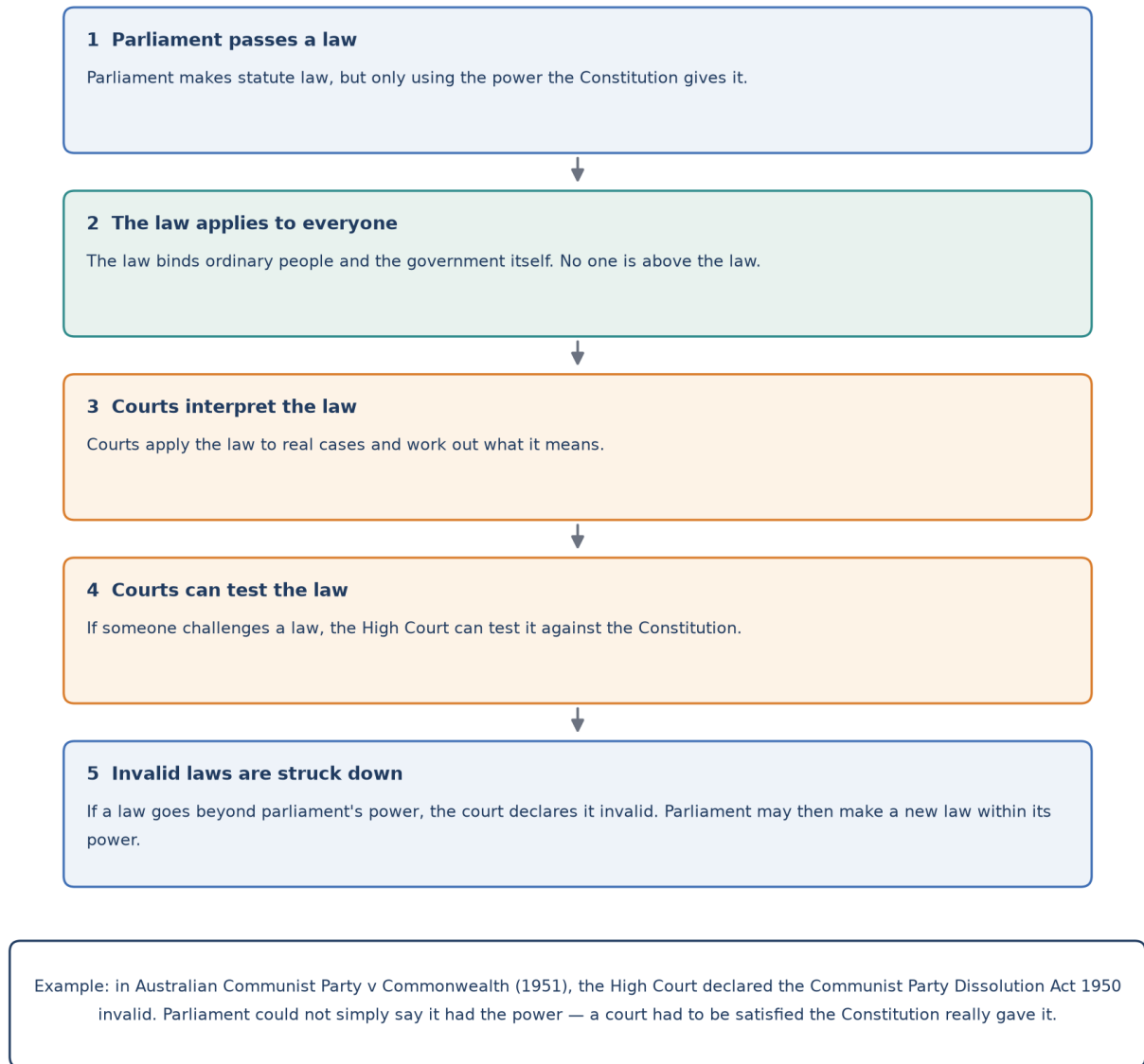
Source: court names and roles as described in Section 2A of this book; simplified here to show the hierarchy.

A diagram of court hierarchies with the High Court of Australia at the top; the Victorian ladder rises from the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to the County Court of Victoria to the Supreme Court of Victoria; the federal ladder rises from the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to the Federal Court of Australia; arrows show appeals moving up

Figure 9 — Court hierarchies: lower courts at the bottom, appeals move up.

Part 4 — The rule of law: parliaments and courts together (.E04). Figure 10 shows the rule of law at work across lawmaking: parliaments make law, the law binds everyone including the government, and independent courts can test a law against the Constitution and strike it down if it goes beyond parliament's power. Two real cases prove the point. In *Australian Communist Party v Commonwealth* (1951), the High Court declared the Communist Party Dissolution Act 1950 invalid, even though parliament had passed it in a time of fear. In *Roach v Electoral Commissioner* (2007), the High Court declared a 2006 law banning **all** prisoners from voting invalid, because sections 7 and 24 of the Constitution require the parliament to be "directly chosen by the people".

The rule of law at work: how parliaments and courts check each other



Source: High Court of Australia, *Australian Communist Party v Commonwealth* (1951) 83 CLR 1. Flow chart original to this section.

A five-step flow chart of the rule of law: 1 parliament passes a law using only the power the Constitution gives it; 2 the law applies to everyone, including the government; 3 courts interpret the law; 4 courts can test the law against the Constitution; 5 invalid laws are struck down; with the Communist Party case of 1951 as the worked example

*Figure 10 — The rule of law at work: how parliaments and courts check each other. (Source: High Court of Australia, *Australian Communist Party v Commonwealth* (1951) 83 CLR 1.)*

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded (.E01)

Analyse how far Australia's formal national citizenship upholds democratic values. Use Figures 3 and 4.

Working	Comment
Step 1 — Name it. The values to test: equality of opportunity, a fair say (the vote and the right to stand for parliament), freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and the rule of law.	Take the list from the curriculum and from the pledge (Figure 4), so the analysis tests what the curriculum means by “democratic values”.
Step 2 — Find it (evidence for). Citizenship carries the right to vote in federal elections and to stand for parliament. Every applicant sits the same test under the same rules (Figure 3), and the pledge commits new citizens to respecting the rights and liberties of all and to living under the same laws (Figure 4).	Equal rules for all applicants express equality ; the vote and the right to stand express a fair say ; the pledge expresses the rule of law .
Step 3 — Weigh it (evidence against). The rights are tied to citizenship itself. A permanent resident can live here for years, pay tax and obey the laws, yet cannot vote in federal elections or stand for parliament. The test is also a hurdle: people who share Australia’s values can still fail it.	A value tied to membership is upheld strongly <i>inside</i> the group, but only in part across the whole community.
Step 4 — Judge the extent. Formal national citizenship mostly upholds democratic values: for citizens it expresses them strongly (the vote, the right to stand, equal treatment in the test, a pledge to shared values), but by tying those rights to citizenship it leaves long-settled residents without a formal say, so the values are not upheld fully.	A measured “degree to which” judgement — both sides weighed, one side weighted more.

Example 2 — unscaffolded (.E04)

Examine why the rule of law matters so much in how courts and parliaments interact, using Australian Communist Party v Commonwealth (1951) and Figure 10.

Model answer. Parliament makes statute law, but only within the power the Constitution gives it (step 1 of Figure 10). In 1950 the Commonwealth Parliament passed the Communist Party Dissolution Act, which banned the Communist Party and let the government declare people to be communists, with severe legal consequences. The Act *said* parliament had the power; the High Court, by 6 judges to 1, was not satisfied of it, and declared the Act invalid. Judge Fullagar’s words give the rule of law in one line: “a stream cannot rise higher than its source.” The Constitution is the source of parliament’s power, so parliament cannot simply recite that it has a power — an independent court must be satisfied the power is really there. The case shows steps 2, 4 and 5 of Figure 10 at once: the government itself was bound by the law; the court tested the law against the Constitution; and an invalid law was struck down even in a time of fear, when the popular branches were sure of themselves. The relationship that results is not a conflict but a check: parliament remains the lawmaker, within its power, and the High Court remains the referee of the power. That check is what makes the rule of law **fundamental** to lawmaking — parliament’s will is law only when the Constitution allows it to be law.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1 (.E02). Figure 5 shows the number of senators for each state and territory. **(a)** Explain one way equal numbers for every state *support* democracy. **(b)** Explain one way equal state numbers can sit uneasily with the value of equality (the idea that each voter’s vote should count the same).

Q2 (.E02). The Legislative Council, the upper house of the Parliament of Victoria, has 40 members elected from 8 regions (5 per region) by proportional voting, for 4-year terms. **(a)** Name two ways it is like the Senate. **(b)** Explain why electing 5 members per region is more representative than electing 1 member per region.

Q3 (.E02). Use Figure 7. **(a)** Could the Government pass a law in the Senate on its own? Show the numbers. **(b)** What must the Government do to pass a law in the Senate? **(c)** Explain why this is why the Senate is called a “house of review”.

Q4 (.E03). Figure 8 shows three principles of justice. Match each court feature to the principle it best upholds: **(a)** both sides get to speak and present their case; **(b)** a minister and an ordinary person face the same courts and the same rules; **(c)** a duty lawyer at court helps a person who cannot pay for a lawyer.

Q5 (.E03). Victorian Legal Aid gives free or low-cost legal help to people who cannot pay for a lawyer. **(a)** Which principle of justice does this most directly express? **(b)** Give one reason access to justice can still be hard for some people (think of cost, time, language or distance).

Q6 (.E04). In *Roach v Electoral Commissioner* (2007), a 2006 law banned every person serving a prison sentence from voting in federal elections. The High Court, 4 to 2, declared the 2006 ban invalid, because sections 7 and 24 of the Constitution require the parliament to be “directly chosen by the people”. **(a)** Which branch of government made the 2006 law, and which branch tested it? **(b)** What does the case show about where each branch’s power ends?

Un scaffolded

Q7 (.E02). “The Senate does not represent democracy: Tasmania has the same 12 senators as New South Wales, with many times the people.” Analyse the degree to which the Senate represents democracy. Use Figures 5–7 and the method in Figure 1.

Q8 (.E03). Explain how Australian courts try to uphold the three principles of justice (use Figures 8 and 9), and identify one limit on how fully they achieve it.

Q9 (.E01). A permanent resident of Australia can live and work here but cannot vote in federal elections or stand for parliament. Analyse how far Australia’s formal national citizenship upholds democratic values.

Q10 (.E04). In the *Communist Party* case (1951) the High Court struck down a whole federal law; in *Roach* (2007) it struck down the 2006 ban but kept an earlier, narrower rule that prisoners serving sentences of 3 or more years cannot vote. Examine what the two cases together show about the rule of law, and about how courts and parliaments relate.

Source inquiry

Skills — questions and methods; content .E01 and .E04. Inquiry is the task: you develop the question, choose the method, and reach an evidenced conclusion.

Source box — Roach v Electoral Commissioner [2007] HCA 43. Vicki Roach was sentenced in 2006 to 6 years in prison. A 2006 change to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 banned *all* people serving a prison sentence from voting in federal elections. At the 2007 federal election, Ms Roach was not able to vote. The High Court held, 4 to 2, that the 2006 blanket ban was invalid: the Constitution (sections 7 and 24) requires the parliament to be “directly chosen by the people”, and a ban on *all* prisoners was not consistent with that requirement. The earlier rule (no vote for sentences of 3 or more years) was valid, so Ms Roach still could not vote in 2007.

1. **Develop and refine** an inquiry question about the degree to which Australia’s rules on prisoner voting uphold democratic values. (A good question names the value, names the institution, and asks “to what degree?”.)
 2. **Analyse** your question using the four-step method (Figure 1). Use at least two pieces of evidence from the source box and one fact from this section about how voting expresses democratic values.
 3. **Conclude** with a measured judgement of 4–6 sentences stating the extent, and name one counter-view you weighed.
-

Answers

Q1. (a) Equal state numbers stop the biggest states always outvoting the rest, so smaller states' interests are heard — a kind of equality *between* states. (b) A Tasmanian voter has far fewer people per senator than a New South Wales voter, so votes are not equal in weight across the country. **Q2.** (a) Both are upper houses elected by proportional voting, with several members per region/state; both act as houses of review. (b) With 5 seats, a group with about 1 in 5 of the votes can win a seat; with 1 seat, only the most-supported candidate wins and the rest get no member of their own. **Q3.** (a) No — 30 of 76 is short of the 39 needed for a majority. (b) It must persuade some crossbench or Opposition senators (e.g. 30 + 10 Greens = 40, or deals with several groups). (c) Because no government usually controls it, the Senate must genuinely review and often amend bills. **Q4.** (a) Fairness. (b) Equality. (c) Access. **Q5.** (a) Access. (b) Any one reasoned limit, e.g. courts can be slow and costly even with help; interpreters and help are not always available in remote areas. **Q6.** (a) The parliament (Commonwealth Parliament) made the law; the courts (High Court of Australia) tested it. (b) Parliament may make voting rules, but not rules that stop the parliament being “directly chosen by the people”; the court decides where that line is. **Inquiry.** Assessed on the quality of your reasoning, not the conclusion you reach — see the solution for the marking guide.

Q7–Q10 are analysis questions. Marks are awarded for the quality of reasoning — naming the value or principle, using accurate evidence, weighing both sides, and giving a measured judgement — not for the conclusion reached. The fully-worked solutions show the reasoning a strong answer would include.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. *Step 1:* the value is representation — that the house reflects the people it represents. *Step 2, for:* the Senate is directly elected by the people of each state (Constitution section 7); proportional voting (Figure 6) lets groups win seats in proportion to support, so the Senate mirrors views that single-winner seats shut out (Figure 7 shows Greens, One Nation and independents holding the balance). *Step 2, against:* equal state numbers mean a Tasmanian vote counts for many times a New South Wales vote in Senate elections, departing from “one vote, one value”. *Steps 3–4:* the Senate represents democracy strongly in *how* it is elected (proportional, directly chosen) but departs from it in part in *how seats are shared* between states. A measured judgement, either way, must name both halves.

Q8. Courts try to uphold **fairness** through open hearings, both sides being heard, the presumption of innocence and appeals (Figures 8 and 9 — a hierarchy lets a higher court check a lower one); **equality** because the same courts and rules bind everyone, including ministers and governments; and **access** through Victorian Legal Aid, duty lawyers and interpreters. One limit, weighed honestly: legal help cannot meet every demand, and cost, delay, language and distance still keep the courts farther from some people than others — so the principles are pursued strongly but reached imperfectly.

Q9. *For:* citizenship carries the vote and the right to stand (a fair say); the test applies one equal standard to every applicant (equality); the pledge commits new citizens to everyone's rights and liberties and to the rule of law. *Against:* the rights stop at citizenship's edge — a permanent resident obeys the laws and pays tax with no federal vote, and the test is a hurdle that can exclude people who share the values. *Judgement:* formal citizenship upholds democratic values **strongly for citizens and in part for the community as a whole** — a high degree, honestly bounded.

Q10. Both cases show the same rule-of-law machinery (Figure 10): parliament legislates, but a court tests the law against the Constitution, and an invalid law falls — in 1951 against a law passed in a time of fear, in 2007 against a law passed with wide support. Together they add a second point: the court does not take over lawmaking. In *Roach* the narrower 2004 rule stood, leaving parliament free to set voting rules inside the constitutional line; in 1951 parliament remained free to legislate within its power. The relationship is a boundary, not a battle: **parliament decides what the law says, the Constitution decides what parliament may say, and the court reads the boundary.**

Inquiry marking guide. 1 mark for an inquiry question that names a value, an institution and “to what degree”; 2 marks for analysis that uses at least two accurate pieces of evidence from the source box (e.g. the 4–2 holding; the blanket ban invalid; the 3-year rule valid; Ms Roach still unable to vote in 2007) plus one fact about voting and democratic values; 1 mark for weighing a counter-view; 1 mark for a measured conclusion stating the extent. **Marks are awarded for the quality of reasoning, not for the conclusion reached: a well-reasoned “mostly upholds” and a well-reasoned “falls short” can both score full marks.**

Power in practice: political actors and checks and balances

Chapter 4 · Section 4E · Skills: Evaluating democratic institutions and systems Owns: VC2HC8S05 **Draws on:** VC2HC8S05.E01 · VC2HC8S05.E02 **Pairs with:** 1A (parties, elections and government formation) and 1C (the Constitution and key institutions)

Teaching sequence

The question this section asks. In Australia, no one person simply *has* power. Power is held by **political actors** — the people and groups who act inside our democratic institutions, such as the Prime Minister, ministers, members of parliament, senators, the Governor-General and the courts — and each actor's power is limited by other actors. This section explains *how* those actors exercise power, and *who checks it*.

A word about “power”. The Victorian Curriculum uses the word *power* but does not define it. In this section, *power* means **the ability of a person or group to make, carry out or stop decisions that affect other people**. Every task here can be answered using that definition alone. Note what kind of word it is: *power* is a **contested term** — people argue about who should hold it and how much is too much — so we always say *whose* power we mean and *what* it lets them do.

The actors. Figure 1 shows the main political actors, the institution each one sits in, and the way each exercises power.

Political actors in Australia's democratic institutions

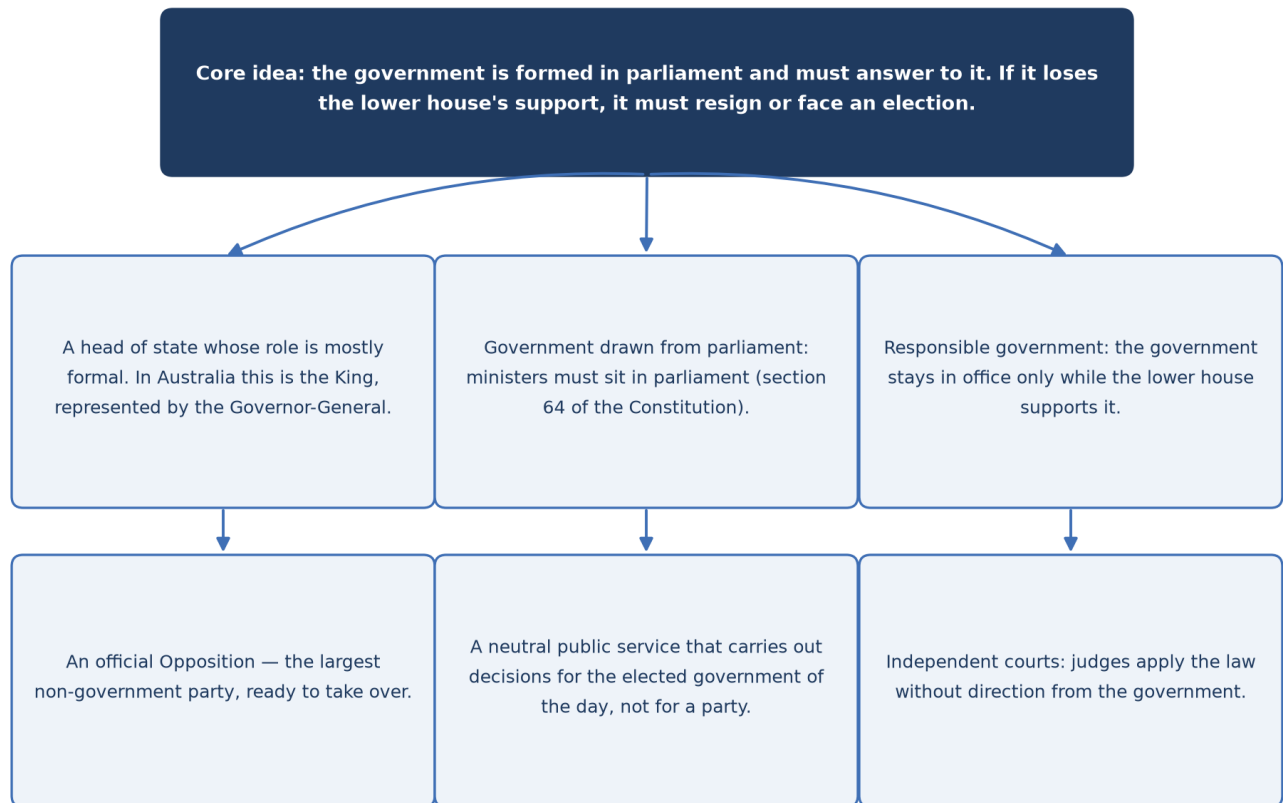
Political actor	Institution	How they exercise power
Prime Minister	Executive — Cabinet	Chairs Cabinet, sets the government's agenda, chooses ministers, advises the Governor-General.
Ministers	Executive — departments	Lead government departments and put laws and policy into action.
Government members	House of Representatives	Debate and vote on bills; their numbers keep the government in office.
The Opposition	House of Representatives	Questions the government's choices and stays ready to form a government if the government loses support.
Crossbench members and senators	Both houses	Hold the balance of power when no single party controls a house.
Governor-General	The Crown's representative	Gives royal assent to bills, appoints the Prime Minister, holds reserve powers.
High Court of Australia	Judiciary	Interprets the law and can strike down laws that go beyond the Constitution.

ClassBasics original model. Roles are based on the Australian Constitution (sections 1, 61, 64 and 71) and Westminster practice.

Table of the main political actors in Australia's democratic institutions, showing each actor's institution and how they exercise power

The system they work inside: Westminster. Australia's way of governing is built on the **Westminster system** — the system of government that began at the Palace of Westminster, the home of Britain's parliament, and was taken up by the Australian colonies and kept after federation in 1901. Its core idea is that the government is formed *inside* parliament and must answer to it. Figure 2 shows the six features Australia kept, including **responsible government** — the rule that the government stays in office only while the lower house supports it.

The Westminster system — six features Australia kept



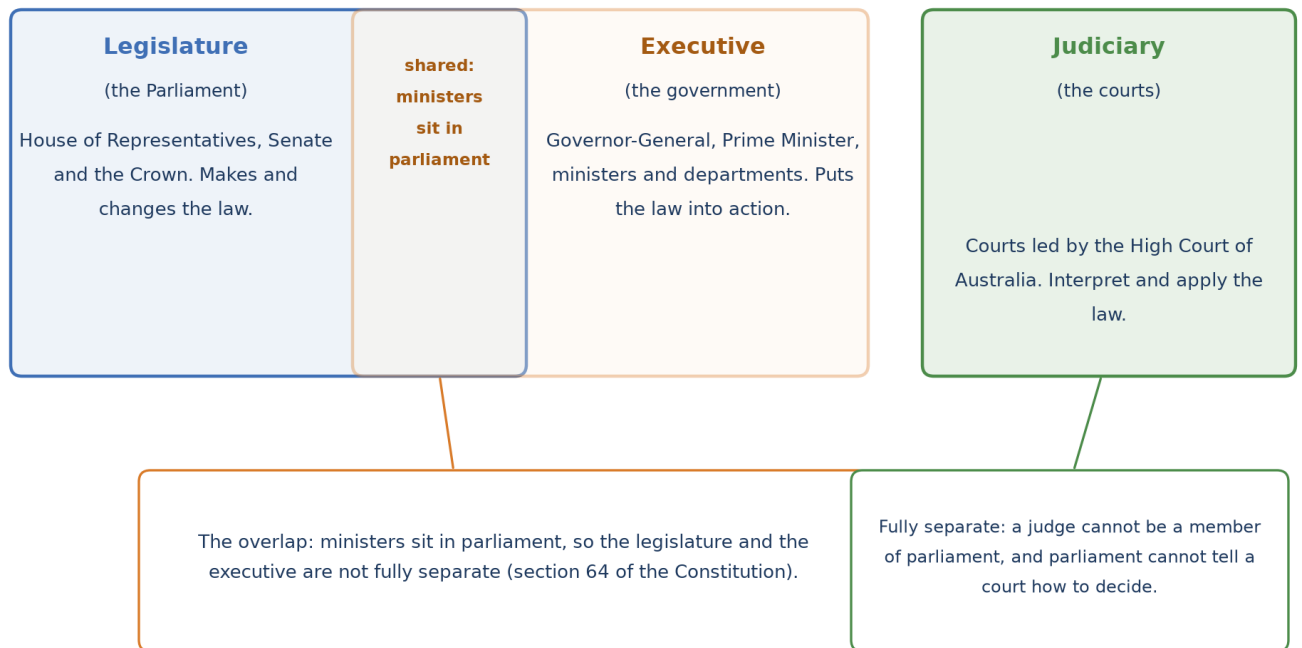
Named after the Palace of Westminster, home of Britain's parliament. ClassBasics original model.

Hub-and-spoke model of the six Westminster features Australia kept, with the core idea that government is formed in parliament and must answer to it

The second idea: separation of powers. The **separation of powers** divides government power between three branches: the **legislature** (the parliament, which makes the law), the **executive** (the Governor-General, Prime Minister, ministers and departments, which puts the law into action) and the **judiciary** (the courts, which interpret and apply the law). In a strict separation, the same people would never sit in two branches.

Australia does not do that strictly. Under section 64 of the Constitution, ministers must be members of parliament — so the legislature and the executive *overlap*, while the judiciary is kept fully separate. Because Australia blends the British Westminster model with a written constitution and strong, separate courts, an Australian political scientist named it the “Washminster” system in 1980. Figure 3 shows the blend.

Separation of powers — the Australian blend

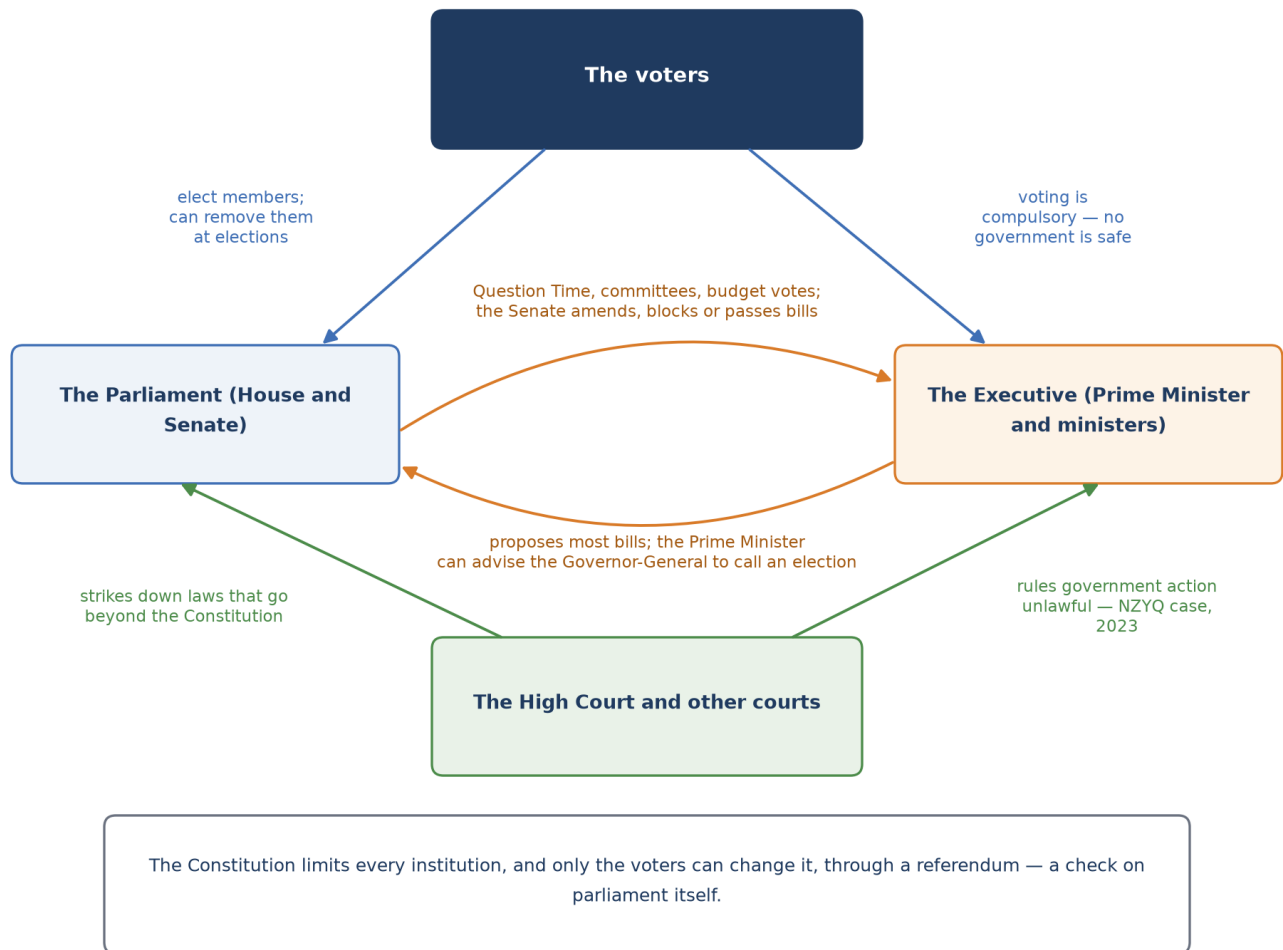


ClassBasics original model. Branch roles follow the Australian Constitution, sections 1, 61 and 71.

Model of the separation of powers in Australia, showing the legislature and executive overlapping where ministers sit in parliament, with the judiciary kept fully separate

What the blend produces: checks and balances. A **check** is a power one actor holds over another; a **balance** is the result when no single actor can act alone. Because ministers depend on parliament, and the courts are free of both, each branch can hold the others to account. Figure 4 maps who checks whom, with a real example on each arrow.

Checks and balances — who keeps whom in check



Flow model of checks and balances showing how the voters, the parliament, the executive and the High Court each limit the others' power

The degree question. The curriculum asks *how far* this produces checks and balances — not just *whether* it does. Two strong views exist. Read each in its strongest form before judging:

View 1 — the checks are strong. Governments are regularly checked: the Senate amends or blocks bills almost every year because governments rarely hold a Senate majority; the High Court has struck down Commonwealth laws many times since 1901; and voters removed the sitting government at the 2007, 2013, 2022 and 2025 elections. No Australian government can act alone for long.

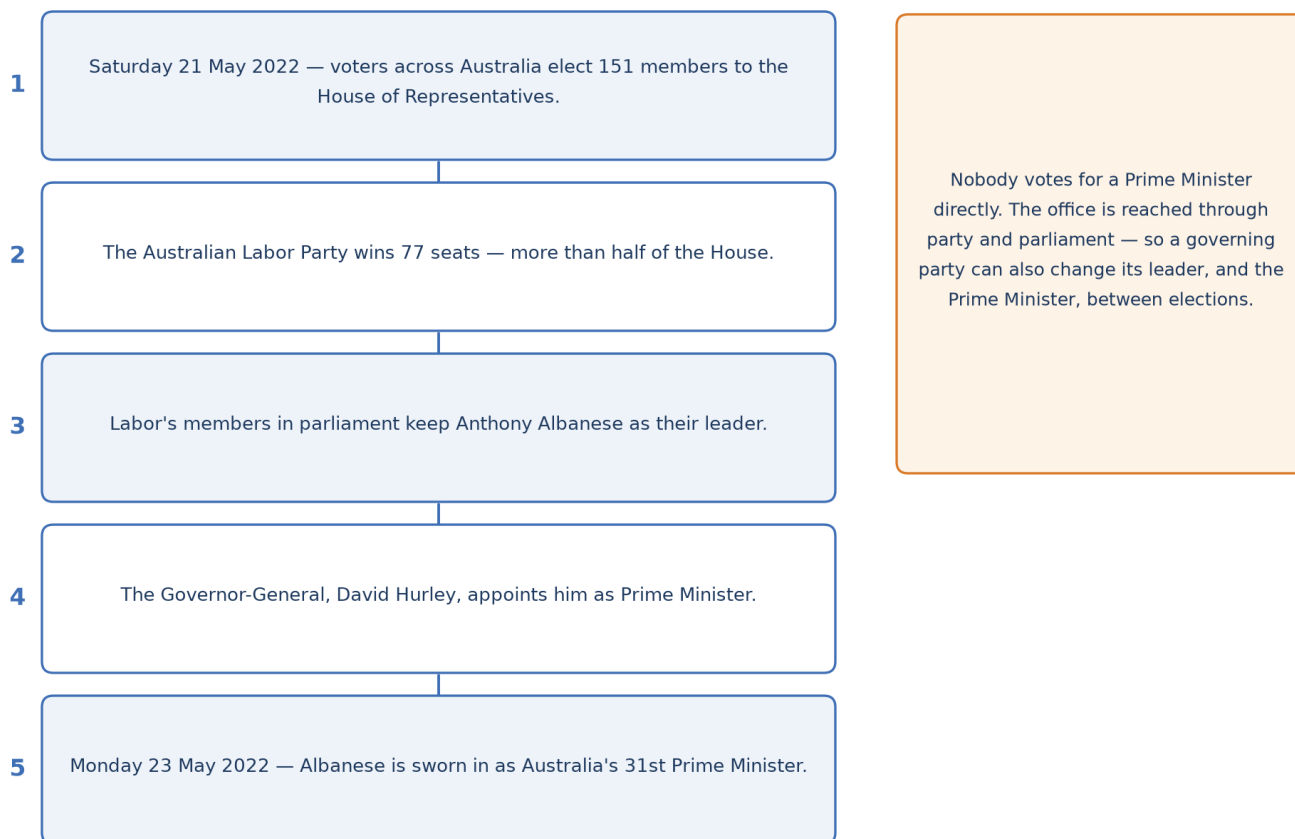
View 2 — the checks are weaker than they look. In the House of Representatives, party discipline usually means the government's own members pass what the Prime Minister wants, so the House rarely checks the executive. The Senate only checks when the government lacks a majority there (between July 2005 and November 2007 the Howard government held a Senate majority, and that check faded). The High Court acts only when someone brings a case. Between elections, a determined Prime Minister faces few firm blocks.

Both views are arguable — that is the point. A good analysis names which checks held in a given case and which did not.

The Prime Minister: chosen how, and how powerful? Figure 5 traces the 2022 election to show how a Prime Minister is actually chosen. The key fact is indirect: voters elect local members; the party that can command a majority of the House forms government; that party's leader becomes Prime Minister. The Governor-General formally

appoints the person who holds the House's support. Because the office is reached through party and parliament, a party can also swap its leader — and the Prime Minister — between elections, as happened in 2010, 2013 and 2018.

How a Prime Minister is chosen — the 2022 election



Sources: Australian Electoral Commission, 2022 federal election result; Parliament of Australia. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Flow chart of the five steps by which Anthony Albanese became Prime Minister after the 21 May 2022 election, with a side note that nobody votes for a Prime Minister directly

Figure 6 lists what the Prime Minister can do and what checks each power. Most of these powers come from **convention** — long-standing practice that is followed but not written in the Constitution — rather than from the Constitution itself.

The Prime Minister — powers and checks

Powers

Chooses ministers — and can remove them
Chairs Cabinet and sets its agenda
Advises the Governor-General, including on when to call an election (within three years)
Leads the largest party in the House of Representatives
Speaks for the government: announces and explains policy

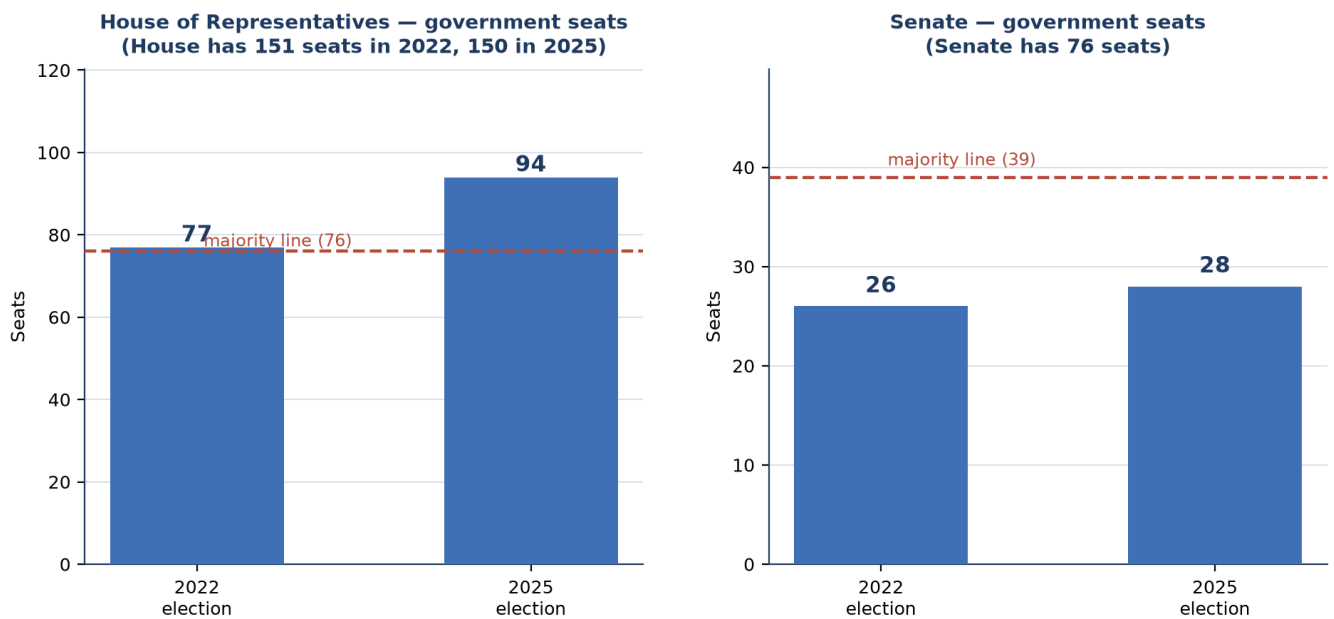
Checks

Their own party can vote to change the leader
The House can withdraw support — the government falls
The Senate can amend or reject bills
The High Court can rule laws or actions unlawful
Voters can remove the government at an election
Question Time and the media put decisions on the record daily

Most prime ministerial powers come from convention (long-standing practice), not from the Constitution. ClassBasics original model.

Two-column model listing the Prime Minister's powers on one side and the checks on those powers on the other

Numbers decide the balance. Whether the Prime Minister's power is wide or narrow depends on the seat counts. Figure 7 compares the 2022 and 2025 federal elections. In both, the government won a majority of the House of Representatives — so bills usually pass the House. In both, the government fell well short of a Senate majority — so in the Senate the government must negotiate with the **crossbench** (the senators and members who belong to neither the government nor the Opposition), who then hold the **balance of power**.



The government almost always controls the House of Representatives — but not the Senate.

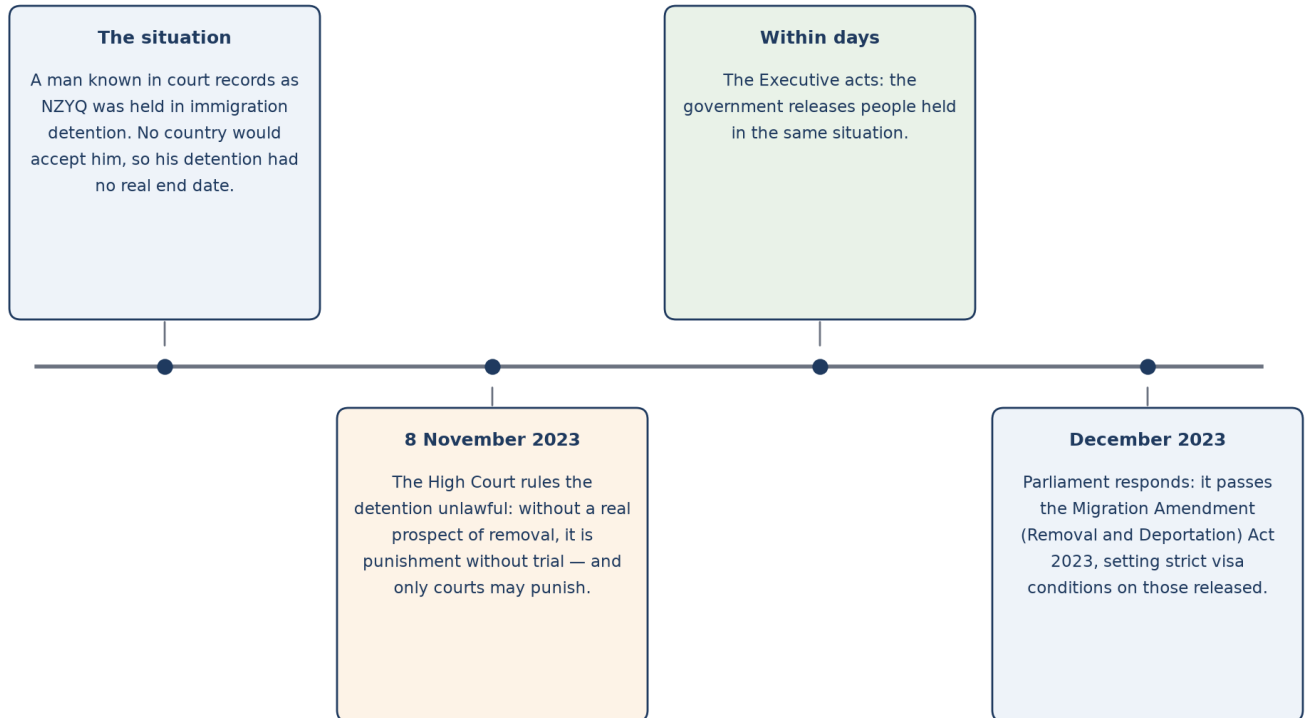
Seat counts: Australian Electoral Commission, federal election results, 2022 and 2025. Retrieved 26 August 2026.

Bar chart comparing government seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate at the 2022 and 2025 elections against the majority line, showing the government controls the House but not the Senate

A check in action. Figure 8 follows one recent case, *NZYQ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs*, decided by the High Court on 8 November 2023. The Court ruled that holding a person in immigration detention with no real prospect of removal was unlawful — detention without a court’s punishment power had gone beyond the executive’s power. Within days the government released people held in the same situation, and in December 2023 Parliament passed the *Migration Amendment (Removal and Deportation) Act 2023* to set new rules for those released. Two checks fired in one case: the judiciary on the executive, then the legislature responding with new law.

Checks in action — NZYQ v Minister for Immigration (2023)

Two checks in one case: the Court checked the Executive, and Parliament then answered with new law. Power answered power.



Source: NZYQ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs [2023] HCA 37; Migration Amendment (Removal and Deportation) Act 2023 (Cth).

Timeline of the NZYQ case of 2023, showing the High Court ruling the detention unlawful, the executive releasing detainees within days, and Parliament passing new law in December 2023

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Trace how Anthony Albanese became Prime Minister in 2022, and state what each step shows about where the power sits.

Working	Comment
Step 1: on Saturday 21 May 2022, voters elect 151 members to the House of Representatives.	The power starts with the voters — but they choose local members, not a Prime Minister.
Step 2: the Australian Labor Party wins 77 seats, more than half the House.	The party that can command a majority of the House forms government.
Step 3: Labor’s members keep Anthony Albanese as their leader.	The power to pick the leader sits with the party room, not with voters.
Step 4: the Governor-General, David Hurley, appoints Albanese as Prime Minister.	The appointment is formal: the Governor-General must choose the person who holds the House’s support.
Step 5: on Monday 23 May 2022, Albanese is sworn in as the 31st Prime Minister.	Power passes through party and parliament — which is also why a party can change its leader between elections.

Conclusion: the Prime Minister’s power is *indirect* — built up from a local seat, a party room and a House majority — not a power voters hand over directly.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Analyse the NZYQ case of 2023 as a checks-and-balances sequence: name the actor, the power used, and the result at each step.

Working	Comment
Step 1: the executive holds NZYQ in immigration detention under the <i>Migration Act 1958</i> (a Commonwealth law).	The executive is using a power given to it by a law made by parliament.
Step 2: on 8 November 2023 the High Court rules the detention unlawful — with no real prospect of removal, it is punishment, and only courts may punish.	The judiciary checks the executive: an action beyond power is stopped.
Step 3: within days, the government releases people held in the same situation.	The executive complies — a court’s ruling binds the government.
Step 4: in December 2023 Parliament passes the <i>Migration Amendment (Removal and Deportation) Act 2023</i> , setting strict visa conditions on those released.	The legislature answers with new law — within the limits the Court set.

Conclusion: two branches checked one case. The executive’s power had a legal limit, the court named it, and parliament — not the executive — wrote the new rules. That is the separation of powers working as a set of checks.

Practice

Scaffolded

Q1. Using Figure 1, name the political actor that exercises each power: (a) giving royal assent to a bill; (b) striking down a law that goes beyond the Constitution; (c) holding the balance of power when no party controls a house; (d) questioning the government’s choices while staying ready to form a government.

Q2. Using Figure 2: (a) which feature says ministers must sit in parliament? (b) which feature means a defeated government must resign or face an election? (c) in one sentence of your own, what does “responsible government” mean?

Q3. Using Figure 3: (a) name the three branches and what each does to the law; (b) which two branches overlap in Australia, and which section of the Constitution creates that overlap? (c) give one reason the judiciary is kept fully separate.

Q4. Each situation below shows a check at work. Using Figure 4, name *who* is checking *whom*: (a) the Senate amends a government bill; (b) the High Court rules a government action unlawful; (c) voters defeat the government at an election; (d) the Prime Minister advises the Governor-General to call an election.

Q5. Using Figure 5: (a) put these steps in order — (i) the Governor-General appoints the leader as Prime Minister; (ii) Labor wins 77 seats; (iii) voters elect 151 members; (iv) Labor’s members keep Albanese as leader; (v) Albanese is sworn in. (b) Who formally appoints the Prime Minister? (c) Why can a governing party change the Prime Minister between elections?

Q6. Using Figure 7: (a) in which house did the government hold a majority after both the 2022 and 2025 elections? (b) after the 2025 election, how many more Senate seats did the government need to reach the majority line of 39? (c) who holds the balance of power in that situation?

Un scaffolded

Q7. Explain how the separation of powers and the Westminster system work together in Australia, and the degree to which the result produces checks and balances. Use at least two named checks in your answer. (4–6 sentences)

Q8. “The Prime Minister is chosen by the people and is the most powerful politician in Australia.” Evaluate this claim: which parts are true, which are not, and what limits the office? Support your answer with Figures 5, 6 and 7.

Q9. Read View 1 and View 2 in the teaching sequence. For *each* view, name the strongest single piece of evidence supporting it, then give your own reasoned judgement about the degree to which Australia’s system holds executive power in check.

Q10. In the NZYQ case, the executive branch did not simply lose — Parliament then passed new law. Explain what this sequence shows about (a) the limit on executive power and (b) the way the legislature and judiciary share the job of setting that limit.

Inquiry task — the investigation itself

Who checked whom in a decision made in the last two years?

This section’s investigation is the task. Choose **one real, dated decision** made by the Australian Government, a state government or a court since 1 July 2024 — for example, a law passed, a policy announced, or a court ruling. It must be real and named; nothing may be invented.

- 1. **Develop two questions** to investigate it, one about *who exercised power* and one about *what checked that power*.
 - 2. **Locate and compare two sources** about the decision (for example, a news report and the parliament’s own page for the bill, or the court’s own summary). Record who wrote each, when, and what each adds.
 - 3. **Trace the actors.** Using the actors table in Figure 1 and the checks map in Figure 4, fill in this table:
- | Actor | Institution | Power used | Check that applied (or note “none yet”) |
|-------|-------------|------------|---|
|-------|-------------|------------|---|
- 4. **Write a 150-word analysis** that answers your two questions with evidence from your sources. Every claim about a person, date or vote must carry a source and a date. Finish with one sentence on the *degree* to which power was checked in your case — strong, partial or weak — and why.

Check before you hand in: your decision is real and dated; your two sources are named with dates; your analysis names actors and institutions by their correct titles; your judgement states its evidence.

Answers and marking guide

Q1. (a) the Governor-General; (b) the High Court of Australia; (c) crossbench members and senators; (d) the Opposition.

Q2. (a) “Government drawn from parliament” (section 64 of the Constitution); (b) responsible government; (c) any sentence that captures: the government may stay in office only while the lower house supports it.

Q3. (a) legislature — makes the law; executive — puts the law into action; judiciary — interprets and applies the law. (b) legislature and executive; section 64. (c) for example: so judges can apply the law without direction from the government, including against the government.

Q4. (a) parliament checks the executive; (b) the judiciary checks the executive; (c) the voters check the parliament (and through it the government); (d) the executive checks the parliament — it can end a parliament’s term early through advice to the Governor-General.

Q5. (a) iii, ii, iv, i, v. (b) the Governor-General. (c) because the office is reached through the party room and the House, not by a direct public vote — so the party room can change its leader.

Q6. (a) the House of Representatives (77 of 151 in 2022; 94 of 150 in 2025). (b) 11 more seats (28 held against a line of 39). (c) the crossbench.

Q7. Key points: the Westminster system fuses legislature and executive (ministers sit in parliament), so the House rarely blocks its own government; the written constitution keeps the judiciary separate and able to strike down laws; the Senate, the courts, the voters and the media supply the checks. The degree varies: strong when the government lacks a Senate majority or a case reaches the courts; weaker when a government controls both houses. Mark on: both ideas named, the overlap stated, at least two checks analysed, a judgement of degree given.

Q8. Key points: not chosen directly — voters elect members, the majority party’s leader takes the office (so “chosen by the people” is only true by that chain); genuinely powerful — chooses ministers, chairs Cabinet, advises on election timing; but limited — own party room, House confidence, Senate numbers, High Court review, voters, media. Mark on: the claim split into its true and false parts, at least three limits named with how each bites.

Q9. Key points: View 1’s strongest evidence — regular, dated checks (for example, the NZYQ ruling of 8 November 2023 binding the government, or governments removed at the 2022 and 2025 elections); View 2’s strongest evidence — House control through party discipline, and the faded Senate check of 2005–07. The judgement may fall on either side, or in between; it must cite evidence for both sides and state the degree. Mark on the reasoning, not the conclusion reached.

Q10. Key points: (a) the executive’s power to detain was a power given by statute, and the Court found its use beyond what the law and the Constitution allow — executive power has a legal edge; (b) the Court can stop an action but does not write rules; Parliament wrote the new rules (*Migration Amendment (Removal and Deportation) Act 2023*) within the limit the Court set — the limit is a joint product of the two branches.

Inquiry task guide. Award steps for: two answerable, well-scoped questions; two named, dated sources compared for what each adds; a completed actor/check table using correct titles; a 150-word analysis in which every factual claim carries a source and the closing judgement states the degree of checking with its evidence.

Section 4E delivers VC2HC8S05 with elaborations .E01 and .E02. Real referents are dated and sourced: AEC federal election results 2022 and 2025; NZYQ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs [2023] HCA 37; Migration Amendment (Removal and Deportation) Act 2023 (a Commonwealth law). All figures are original ClassBasics models.