



Australia's Electoral Process



▶ Contents

Democracy in Australia	4
A timeline of electoral milestones in Australia	6
How did the electoral process in Australia develop?	8
What voting systems are used in Australia?	12
 Your say: should kids have the vote?	16
Electing a federal government	18
Electing state and territory governments	20
Electing local governments	22
Running an election campaign	24
What role does the media play in elections?	26
Case study: federal election 2010	28
Index	32

Word watch

Look out for the 'Word watch' feature, which explains the meanings of words shown in **bold**.

Democracy in Australia

You might have heard someone say, ‘Aren’t we lucky to live in a democratic country?’ Living in a **democracy** means we are free to speak our mind and have a say in who governs us. We can all aspire to be the leader of our country.

What is democracy?

Good question! Basically, democracy is a form of government in which the people of a country have an equal say in who governs them. American President Abraham Lincoln came up with possibly the best and simplest definition of democracy. In 1863, he said that democracy was ‘Government of the people, by the people, for the people.’

Has Australia always been a democracy?

Australia has not always been a democracy. In the years following European settlement, the governor of the **colony** of New South Wales issued orders and everyone had to obey them. In fact, even when the first **federal** parliament was elected, many women were not allowed to vote. However, today, everyone over the age of 18 has the right to vote for their local, state and federal governments.



▲ In Australia, during elections everyone’s vote is equal, whether they are rich or poor, male or female, employed or unemployed.

Are all countries democracies?

Not all countries are democracies. There are other forms of government, such as:

- ✱ dictatorship: government by people who have seized power by force and who use force (or the fear of force) to maintain power
- ✱ monarchy: government by a single ruler (such as a king or queen), often from a particular family
- ✱ oligarchy: government by a few people (such as members of one family or a few military leaders)
- ✱ theocracy: government by religious leaders who enforce the law of God.

▶ Australia is a constitutional monarchy, which means that the head of state is a monarch. Australia’s head of state is Queen Elizabeth II, monarch of the United Kingdom, pictured here in 1954 during her first tour of Australia.

Features of a democracy:

- the right to vote
- every vote is of equal value
- the fate of the government is in the hands of the people
- a constitution that outlines how the country is to be governed
- freedom of thought
- freedom of religion.

In this book ...

... you can learn about the electoral process, discover the way elections are held and governments are elected in Australia, and find out what role the media plays during an election campaign.



Word watch

colony a land governed by another country
democracy the word comes from two Greek words: *demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning power. So together they mean ‘power to the people’.
federal national

I have known little communities in the Australian bush, which ... realised for me much, so much, of what I desired in a democracy.

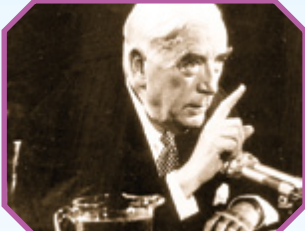

Francis Adams, English writer, 1893

A timeline of electoral milestones in Australia

This timeline provides a snapshot of major events in the history of the development of Australia's electoral system.

► Use the page reference to find more information about that event on the timeline.

compulsory required, whether a person wants to or not
hung parliament when no party has the majority of seats in the lower house of parliament

Date	Event	Date	Event	Date	Event	Date	Event
1820		1890	1890 The first independent government in Western Australia is formed. ► page 9	1910		1940	
1830	1822 A council of five people is appointed to help the governor of New South Wales consider important matters to do with governing the colony. ► page 8			1915	1915 Queensland makes voting compulsory . ► page 11	1942	1942 South Australia makes voting compulsory. ► page 11
1840		1895	1894 Women win the right to vote in South Australia. ► page 9			1945	
	1842 The council advising the governor is expanded to 36 members, some of whom are elected by landowners . ► page 8			1918	1918 The <i>Commonwealth Electoral Act</i> , containing the laws about federal elections, is introduced. ► page 10	1950	26 January 1966 Robert Menzies resigns, ending a record 18 years, 5 months as Prime Minister.
1850		1900	1899 Women win the right to vote in Queensland. ► page 9			1960	
	1855 The first independent governments in New South Wales and Victoria are formed. Some of the early independent governments are made up of both elected and selected representatives, while others are all elected. ► page 9		1 January 1901 The first appointed federal parliament is sworn in . ► page 10	1920	1919 The first federal election using the preferential voting system is held. ► page 12	1970	
	1856 The first independent governments in Tasmania and South Australia are formed. ► page 9		29–30 March 1901 The first election to elect a federal government is held. ► page 10				► Robert Menzies 
	1859 The first independent government in Queensland is formed. ► page 9		1902 The federal parliament passes the <i>Commonwealth Franchise Act</i> . ► page 9	1925	1924 The federal government makes voting compulsory. ► page 11		1974 The first fully elected government in the Northern Territory is formed. ► page 11
1860			1902 Women win the right to vote in federal elections. ► page 10		1926 Victoria makes voting compulsory. ► page 11		11 November 1975 The federal government is dismissed by the Governor-General.
			1902 Women win the right to vote in New South Wales. ► page 9		1927 The seat of government moves from Melbourne to Canberra.		
			1903 Women win the right to vote in Tasmania. ► page 9		► The original Parliament House in Canberra 	1975	
		1905	1905 Women win the right to vote in Queensland. ► page 9	1930	1928 New South Wales and Tasmania make voting compulsory. ► page 11	1980	1984 All Indigenous Australians win the right to vote. ► page 11
			1908 Women win the right to vote in Victoria. ► page 9	1935	1936 Western Australia makes voting compulsory. ► page 11	1985	1988 The first independent government in the Australian Capital Territory is formed. ► page 11
						1990	
						2000	7 September 2010 The Labor Party forms federal government with the support of independents, 17 days after an election held on 21 August resulted in a hung parliament . ► page 31
						2010	

Tweet of the week

@historyfreak: When I look at this timeline I realise we take so much for granted today.

Word watch

council a group of people specifically selected to give advice
landowners people who own land and houses
sworn in installed or introduced

How did the electoral process in Australia develop?

Secret ballot

The secret ballot is a method of secret voting. It is an important part of democratic elections because it allows people to vote for whoever they like without being pressured. It was introduced to Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania in 1856, to New South Wales in 1858, to Queensland in 1859 and to Western Australia in 1893.

How would you feel if your class held a vote for your class captain but you weren't allowed to vote because you are a girl or you come from a poor family or because you are an Indigenous Australian? It wouldn't be fair, would it? But that's exactly what happened throughout Australia's electoral history.

► Democracy means that everyone should have an equal say – even in an election for a class captain.



The governor rules the young colony

The colony of New South Wales was ruled solely by governors until 1822, when a **council** of five people was appointed to advise the governor. The five advisers held important roles in the colony and assisted the governor in making decisions.

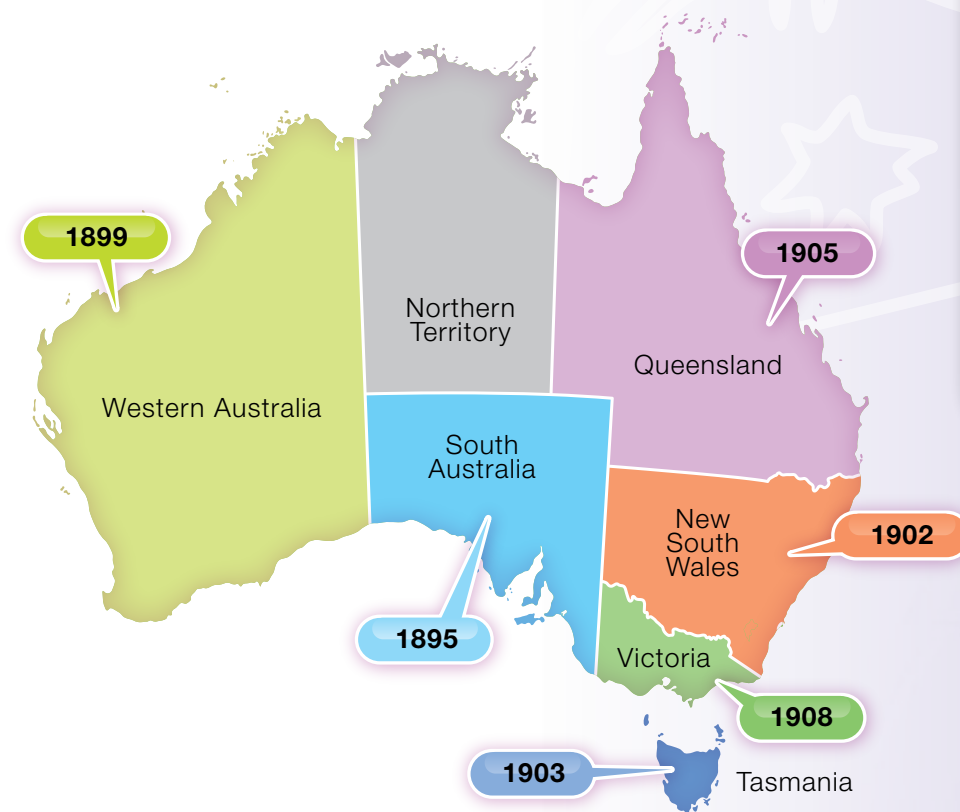
In 1842, this council was expanded to 36 members. Some were chosen because of their position, some were chosen by the British Government and some were elected by **landowners**. So, while this is considered Australia's first government, it was not fully democratic because not all members were voted into their positions.

On the road to democracy

In the mid-1850s, the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia all held elections to form parliaments independent of Britain for the first time. Queensland followed in 1859 and Western Australia in 1890. Not all of the seats in these parliaments were held by members elected by the people, but Australia was on the road to democracy.

Women and the right to vote

Australia was the second country in the world (after New Zealand) to give women the vote. South Australia was the first state to do so and the other states slowly followed. Women won the right to vote in federal elections in 1902.



▲ This map shows when women in each state won the right to vote. By the time the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory were established, all women in Australia had the right to vote.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

If a woman has brains enough to manage her household affairs, educate her children, be her husband's companion, surely she has brains enough to know who will best represent her interests in Parliament.

To the *SA Register*, 27 July 1888, from 'A Latter Day Woman'

Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902

Federal parliament passed the *Commonwealth Franchise Act* in 1902, which allowed most men and women over 21 to vote in federal elections. However, it excluded any Indigenous Australians from voting unless they were already enrolled in a state.

Indigenous Australians and the right to vote

Before 1901, Indigenous men over 21 had the right to vote in all states except Queensland and Western Australia. Indigenous women in South Australia and the Northern Territory were allowed to vote from 1895. Indigenous Australians who did not have the right to vote before 1901 were not allowed to vote in federal elections until the 1920s. Even then, some Indigenous Australians were not allowed to vote until the 1960s.

Word watch

council a group of people specially selected to give advice
landowners people who own land and houses

How did the electoral process in Australia develop?

How are electoral laws changed?

The laws surrounding Australia's electoral system are contained in the Australian **Constitution** and the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. Changes can only be made to the Australian Constitution by a vote of the Australian people. However, the federal parliament can update and make changes to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

The first federal government

In 1901, after decades of discussion, debate and arguments, Australia finally had its own federal government. The first government was not elected, but chosen by the Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, who himself was chosen by the Governor-General. This government ruled from 1 January 1901 until 30 March 1901, when the first federal election was held. At that time, there were no federal laws regarding who could vote, so voting took place under state laws, which meant that women from some states were not allowed to vote. However, in 1902, the federal parliament extended the vote to all women.



▲ This cartoon shows federal politicians celebrating women being granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1902.

How long is a federal government's term?

The law in the Constitution to do with the length of a federal government's **term** states:

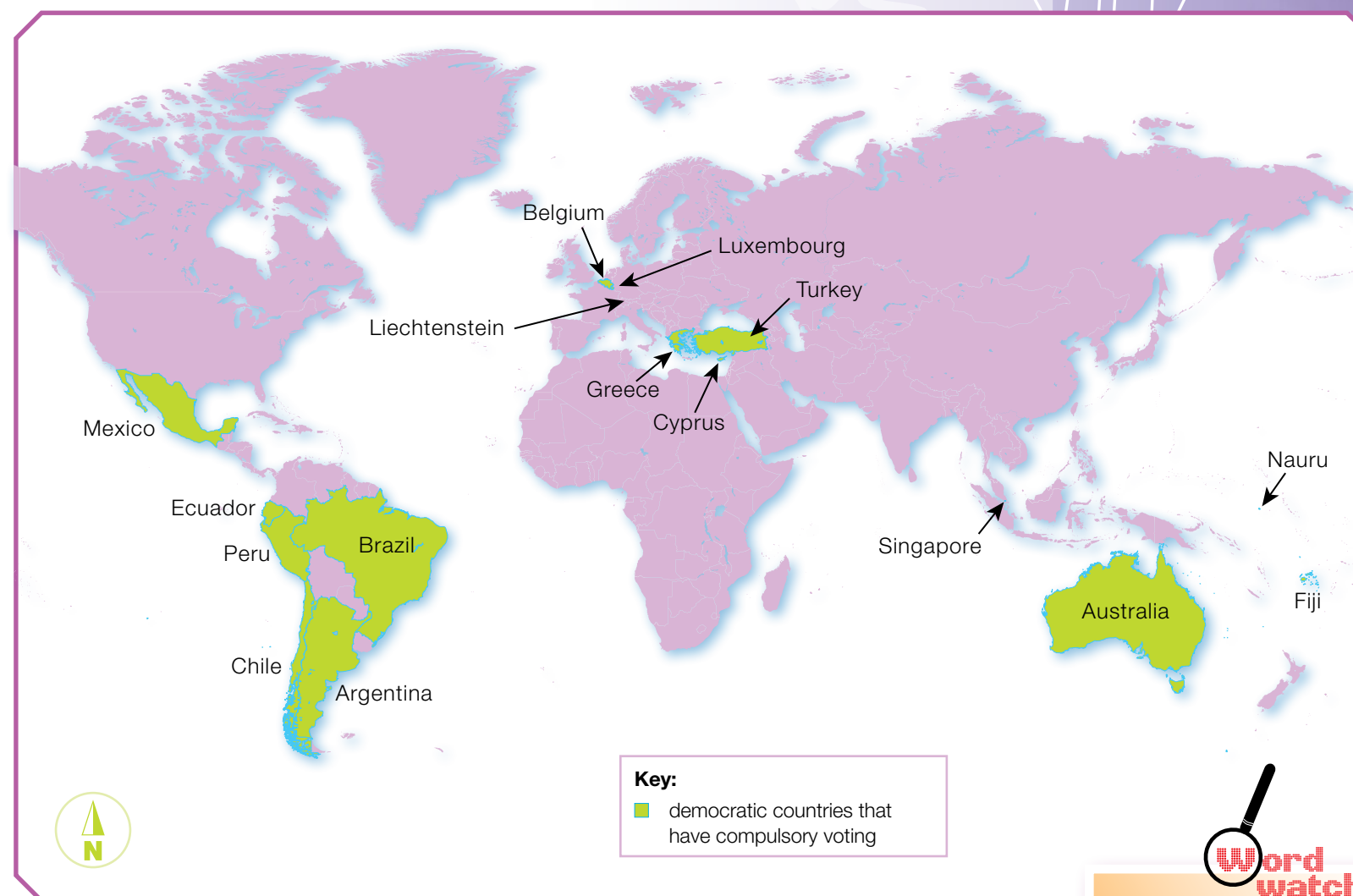
Every **House of Representatives** shall continue for three years from the meeting of the House, and no longer, but may be sooner dissolved by the Governor-General. Senators shall be chosen for a term of six years.

Compulsory voting

In 1924, the federal parliament made voting **compulsory**. They did so to involve more Australians in the electoral process. Queensland had introduced compulsory voting in 1915, and the other states followed after the federal parliament (Victoria in 1926, New South Wales and Tasmania in 1928, Western Australia in 1936 and South Australia in 1942). The exception was Indigenous Australians, for whom voting was **voluntary** until 1984.

The territories

The Northern Territory held its first election for a fully elected government in 1974. The Australian Capital Territory Government was formed in 1988.



▲ Most democratic countries have voluntary voting. However, the countries highlighted on this map have compulsory voting.

compulsory required whether a person wants to or not
voluntary not required unless a person wants to

What voting systems are used in Australia?

The person with the most votes wins, right? Well, not always. As strange as it seems, different voting systems can result in different people winning an election. Australia has several voting systems, depending on which form of government and which house of parliament is being elected.

I'm the winner, I have the most votes!

No, I'm the winner, I have the most votes!

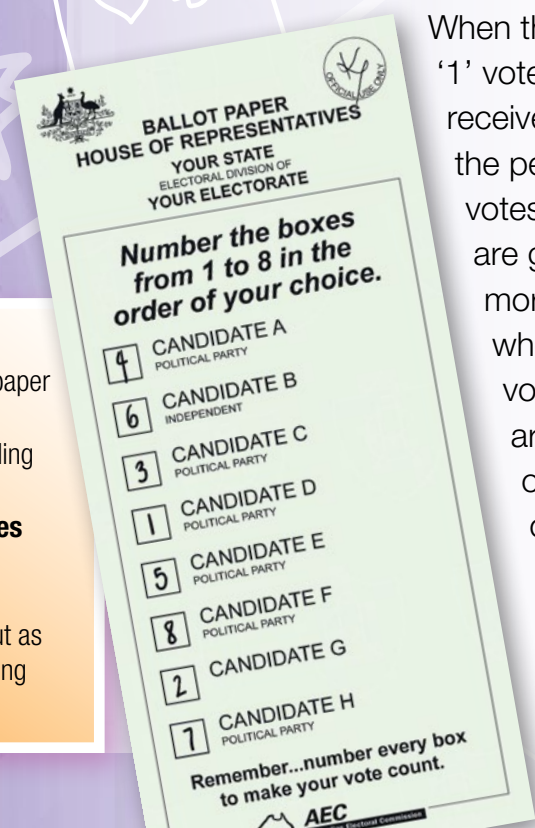
What is preferential voting?

Preferential voting requires voters to vote for all the **candidates** on their **ballot paper** in order of **preference**. That means they put '1' next to their first choice, '2' next to their second choice, '3' next to their third choice, and so on, until all of the boxes have been filled.

▲ Sometimes it is not immediately clear who has won an election.

When the votes are counted, all of the number '1' votes are counted first. If no candidate has received more than 50 per cent of the votes, the person who received the least number of votes is eliminated and their number '2' votes are given out. If still no candidate has received more than 50 per cent of the votes, the person who received the second least number of votes is eliminated and their number '2' votes are distributed. This process continues until one of the candidates has more than 50 per cent of the vote.

◀ This is an example of how a ballot paper for the **House of Representatives** is laid out.



Word watch

ballot paper a ticket or paper used for voting

candidates people standing for election

House of Representatives the lower house of federal parliament

preference vote given out as part of the preferential voting system

Preferential voting: as easy as 1, 2, 3

Here is an example to help you understand.



Round 1 scores

Ally	9
Erica	7
Alex	5
Harry	4

Round 1

Four children are standing for class captain. There are a total of 25 votes, so 13 votes are needed to win, which is more than 50 per cent of the total votes. Each candidate received some number '1' votes. Nine students voted for Ally, seven voted for Erica, five voted for Alex and Harry received four votes.

Round 2

Because Harry got the lowest number of votes, his number '2' votes are then given out to the other three candidates. One for Ally, two for Erica and one for Alex.



Round 2 scores

Ally	10
Erica	9
Alex	6

Round 3

Alex now has the lowest number of votes, so his number '2' votes are then distributed to the remaining two candidates. Ballot papers that had Harry '1' and Alex '2' are also distributed according to who got the number '3' vote. Two of Alex's votes went to Ally and Erica got four of them.



Round 3 scores

Erica	13
Ally	12

The winner is Erica, even though Ally received more number '1' votes in the first place.

Preferential voting and lower house elections

Preferential voting is used to vote for all lower houses in Australia, except in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

Tweet of the week

@sarah#146: Good on you, Erica. I voted for you. Go girl!!!

What voting systems are used in Australia?

Electoral commissions

In Australia, elections are run by electoral commissions. Every state has their own electoral commission to run state and local elections. Federal elections are run by the Australian Electoral Commission.

What is first-past-the-post voting?

First-past-the-post is the simplest system of voting, but it is not often used in Australia. Voters put a number '1' next to their preferred **candidate** and the person who receives the most number '1' votes is declared the winner. As simple as that!

What is proportional representation?

Proportional representation is used when a number of people on the same **ballot paper** are being elected at the one time. Like the preferential voting system, voters are still required to number all the boxes on the ballot paper, but the method of giving out **preferences** is very different.

YOU MAY VOTE IN ONE OF TWO WAYS

Either:

Above the line
By placing the single figure **1** in one and **only one** of these squares to indicate the voting ticket you wish to adopt as your vote

A	B	C	D	E	F
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL PARTY

Or:

Below the line
By placing the numbers **1 to 14** in the order of your preference

A	B	C	D	E	F	Ungrouped
6	3	4	7	9	13	14
CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY
	2	1	8	11	10	
	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	CANDIDATE First name PARTY	
	5			12		
	CANDIDATE First name PARTY			CANDIDATE First name PARTY		

AEC
Australian Electoral Commission

▲ This is an example of how a **Senate** ballot paper is laid out. The Australian Senate is elected using the proportional system of voting.

Quota system

Proportional representation works on a **quota** system. All candidates who receive a certain number of votes are elected. This number is worked out by dividing the total number of people who voted by one more than the number of vacancies to be filled, and then adding one. That sounds complicated, but here's an example that is easy to understand.

If your school **council** has 4 vacancies and 500 students voted, then to work out the quota you divide the number of voters (**500**) by one more than the number of vacancies

$(4 + 1 = 5)$, and then add one to the figure you get.

So,

$$500 \div 5 = 100$$

and

$$100 + 1 = 101.$$

Every candidate that has at least 101 votes is elected to the school council.

What is the Hare-Clark system?

The Tasmanian and Australian Capital Territory elections are held under the Hare-Clark system. Voters fill in their ballot paper in a similar way to the preferential and proportional representation systems, by putting a number next to every candidate based on their preference. The method of counting is similar to that under proportional representation except that the quota is only worked out after the number '1' votes have been counted and then a complicated redistribution takes place. This often takes weeks to complete.

Tweet of the week

@brianmoran: If you want to know more about the Hare-Clark system, go to http://www.elections.act.gov.au/publications/act_electoral_commission_fact_sheets/elections_act_factsheet_hare-clark_electoral_system I did and my brain still hurts.

What's in a name?

The Hare-Clarke voting system is named after an English lawyer, Sir Thomas Hare, who developed the system in 1859, and Andrew Inglis Clark, the Tasmanian Attorney General who made some changes to Hare's system before introducing it to Tasmania in 1897.

Word watch

ballot paper a ticket or paper used for voting
candidate someone standing for election
preferences votes given out as part of the preferential voting system
proportional a whole divided into parts
Senate the upper house of federal parliament

Word watch

council a group of people specifically selected to give advice
quota an amount that must be reached

Your say: should kids have the vote?



The voting age in Australia is 18. However, the decisions that governments make affect everyone, including those under the age of 18. We asked six students to discuss the question: should kids have the vote?

Question: Should kids have the vote? Who wants to go first?

Kelly: Well, I don't think children should vote, because children aren't actually mature enough to take the voting responsibly.

Monique: If we were to let children vote, they might have to go through a test or they might have to be a certain age, because three year olds shouldn't be allowed to vote.

Q: Good point. So what do you think might be a good age?

Monique: Teens probably understand the concept a bit better than younger children.

Felix: Yes, I think children should vote at the age of 13 because they've gone through primary school and learnt a bit about politics and how the system works.

Toby: I think if really young children are allowed to vote, they might just vote for who their parents vote for, or might not know how to fill the form out properly.

Genki: I don't think children should have a vote at all, because we haven't been around long enough to understand everything and if there was a party that promised to give lollies to people, we might just vote for them.



Q: Now let's pretend that the minimum voting age is suddenly 12 and you all have the right to vote. What sort of things would influence your vote?

Rachael: Probably education because we have to pick what we want to do in the future and our education is important.

Kelly: I think that my parents would probably influence me the most because I genuinely trust them and their views.



Monique: If all of a sudden we had to vote I'd probably pay a lot more attention to television when they talk about government. But, like Kelly said, you'd probably go towards your parents' side.

Q: If one of your heroes – a singer or actor that you really like – went on an advertisement and said 'Vote for this party', would that influence you, do you think? Or do you think it would influence other kids?

Kelly: It would definitely influence other kids, but not really me, because I know that they're just trying to get as many people as they can to vote for them.

Q: If you're going to vote, would you vote for a party that says they're going to do something good for you and your family or a party that's going to do something good for the country that might not be so good for you and your family?

**Kelly, Rachael,
Gus & Genki:**
Country

**Felix, Toby,
Monique & Jasmine:**
Family

Thanks to ...

Gus, Toby, Rachael, Jasmine, Genki, Monique, Kelly and Felix, Grade 6 students from Belrose Primary School, New South Wales.

Q: So, we've got four against four. Well, that's very interesting, because these are the type of decisions that adults have to make when choosing who to vote for – whether they put their interests first or whether they put the country's interests first. Thank you for your time.



Electing a federal government

The Prime Minister has the right to choose when an election is to be held, but they must always gain the permission of the Governor-General. When a federal election is held, all members of the **House of Representatives** face re-election. Half the senators from each of the states and all of the senators from the territories face re-election.



The Prime Minister's car is approaching the gates of Yarralumla now. All the rumours of the past few weeks were right. In a few minutes, the Prime Minister will be asking the Governor-General's permission to hold a federal election. The remaining question on everyone's lips is 'What date will the election be held?'

- ◀ When the Prime Minister approaches the Governor-General to call for an election, news reporters quickly inform the public of this important news.

Tweet of the week

@primeminister: Sitting in car on way to see G-G. Have chosen election for five weeks' time.

What does the Governor-General do?

That's right, the Prime Minister may be responsible for making all the major decisions in Australia, but an election cannot be held without the permission of the Governor-General. In fact, all new laws passed by federal parliament have to be approved by the Governor-General before they are **enacted**. This system protects Australia's democracy, because it could prevent the Prime Minister doing something that may be against Australia's best interests.

- ▶ Prime Minister Julia Gillard (left) with Governor-General Quentin Bryce after Gillard was elected in June 2010.



Voting for the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is divided into 150 **electorates**. Each electorate is represented by one member of parliament. When an election is called, voters can vote for the **candidate** they think will best represent their values and beliefs. The preferential voting system (see pages 12–13) is used to count votes in the House of Representatives. The political party that wins the most electorates forms government. Each member of the House of Representatives serves for three years before facing an election.

- ▶ Voters have their say in electing a federal government by voting at a federal election.



Three-year terms

In Australia, the federal parliament has three-year **terms**. The Prime Minister can call an election before the three years is up, but one term of government cannot last any longer than three years.

Voting for the Senate

The **Senate** is made up of 76 representatives – 12 from each state and two from each territory. Voters can choose to vote for a particular political party or for individual candidates when voting for the Senate. The **proportional** representation voting system (see pages 14–15) is used to count votes in the Senate. The Senate does not always have a majority of members from the political party that forms government in the House of Representatives. The senators representing the states serve for six years before facing an election, while the senators representing the territories serve for three years before facing an election.

Word watch

candidate a person standing for election
electorates geographical areas represented by members of parliament
proportional divided into parts
terms lengths of time governments serve between elections
Senate the upper house of federal parliament

Word watch

enacted put into force
House of Representatives the lower house of federal parliament

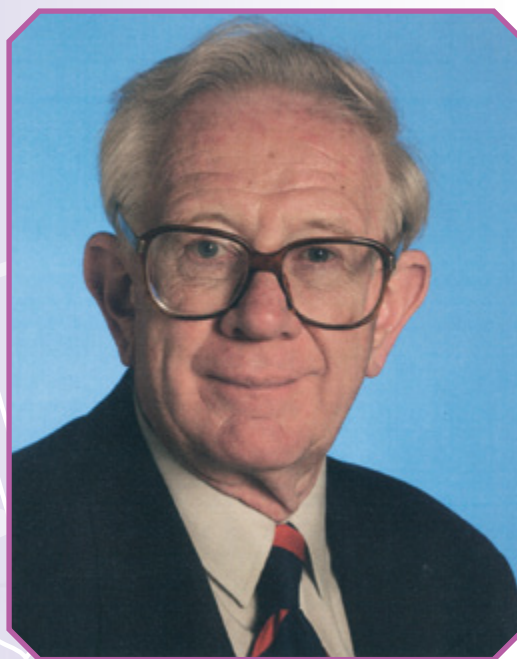
Electing state and territory governments

Do you know what a psephologist is? Well, here is a clue. They love living in Australia, because with six state governments and two territory governments barely a year goes by without a number of elections to study. That's right! A psephologist is someone who studies elections, and living in Australia gives them plenty to do.

Tweet of the week

@Aussiepsephologist:

A federal government, six states, two territories, local **councils** – what a place to live!



◀ Australian psephologist Malcolm Mackerras has written many books and articles on elections and electoral systems.

How long is a government's term?

Most state and territory governments in Australia are in office for four years. Queensland has a three-year **term**. In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the two territories, election dates are fixed by law. In Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania, the Premier has the right to pick the date of the election.

Lower house elections

All of the states and territories (except Tasmania) have preferential voting for the lower house of parliament. Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory use the Hare-Clark system (see page 15). The political party with the most seats in the lower house has the right to form government. Each state and territory has a different number of members in their lower house, so the number needed to form government varies.

Number of lower house members in state/territory parliaments

State/territory	Number of members in lower house	Number of members needed to form government
Australian Capital Territory	17	9
New South Wales	93	47
Northern Territory	25	13
Queensland	89	45
South Australia	47	24
Tasmania	25*	13
Victoria	88	45
Western Australia	59	30

* to increase to 35 in 2012

Upper house elections

All of the states except Queensland have an upper house that reviews the laws **proposed** by the lower house. The territories do not have upper houses. New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia use **proportional** representation in upper house elections, while Tasmania and Victoria use preferential voting. The number of years in office differs.

Number of upper house members in state/territory parliaments

State	Number of members in upper house	Number of years served by members of upper house
New South Wales	42	8
South Australia	22	8
Tasmania	15	6
Victoria	40	4
Western Australia	36	4

Queensland's upper house abolished

Queensland had an upper house until 1922, when it was **abolished** by the Queensland Government because it blocked laws proposed by the Government.

Replacing members

If a member of the House of Representatives resigns or dies between elections, an election for their seat takes place (this is known as a by-election). If a senator resigns or dies between elections, they are replaced by someone from the same political party.

Word watch

councils groups of people specifically selected to give advice

term the length of time a government serves between elections

Word watch

abolished got rid of
proportional divided into parts
proposed planned, put forward

Electing local governments

Local government **councillors** represent a much smaller group of voters than state or federal politicians do, so there is more opportunity for voters to get to know their local government **candidate** at election time.

Western Australia

Local government elections are held on the first Saturday in March every two years. However, councillors serve four-year **terms**, which means only half the number of councillors face an election at one time. Voting is **voluntary** in Western Australian council elections. The first-past-the-post system is used.

Before local government elections, councillors often face voters to talk about local issues.

Northern Territory

Local government elections in the Northern Territory are held every four years. Voting is **compulsory** and uses the preferential system.

South Australia

Local government elections are held on the last Saturday in March every four years. Voting is voluntary in South Australian council elections. The **proportional** representation system is used.

Queensland

Local government elections are held on the last Saturday in March every four years. It is compulsory to vote in Queensland council elections. Some councils use preferential voting, others use the first-past-the-post system.

Postal ballots

Most local government elections are held by postal ballot, which means voters fill in a **ballot paper** and then post it to the electoral commission.

New South Wales

Local government elections are held on the second Saturday in September every four years. It is compulsory to vote in New South Wales council elections. When there are just two candidates for a position, the preferential voting system is used. When there are three or more candidates, the proportional representation system is used.

Australian Capital Territory

There are no local governments in the Australian Capital Territory. The Australian Capital Territory Government acts as both a territory government and a local government.

Victoria

Local government elections are held on the last Saturday in November every four years. It is compulsory to vote in Victorian council elections. When candidates are running for just one position, the preferential voting system is used. When candidates are running for more than one position, the proportional representation system is used.

Tasmania

Local government elections in Tasmania are held every two years in October. However, councillors serve four-year terms, which means only half face an election at one time. Voting is voluntary and uses the Hare-Clark system.

ballot paper a ticket or paper used for voting
compulsory required, whether a person wants to or not
proportional divided into parts

Word watch

candidate person standing for election

councillors people elected to serve on a local council

terms the lengths of time governments serve between elections

voluntary not required unless a person wants to



Running an election campaign

The purpose of an election campaign is to influence the way people vote and to win the election. Running a campaign costs each of the major political parties millions of dollars. Among the things they have to pay for are advertising and the printing of posters and how-to-vote cards. Of course, running a campaign also involves many people.

Who's involved in a campaign?

For every **candidate** ...

there is a campaign manager ...

and strategists ...

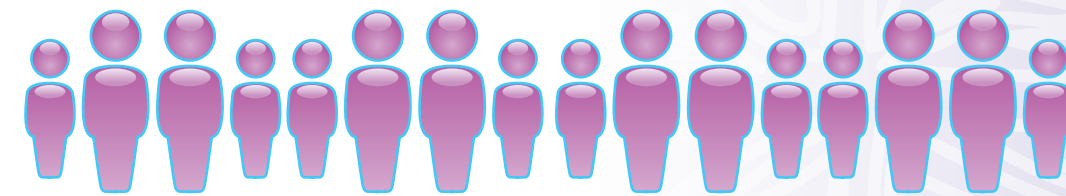
and speech writers, media advisers and **pollsters** ...



Scrutineering

Scrutineering involves watching very carefully as the votes are counted to make sure that each vote is put on the right pile. All candidates are allowed to have their own scrutineers in the **polling booth** while the counting takes place.

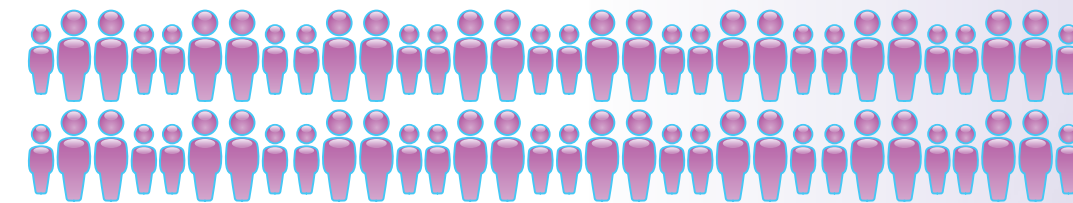
and people who put brochures in letter boxes ...



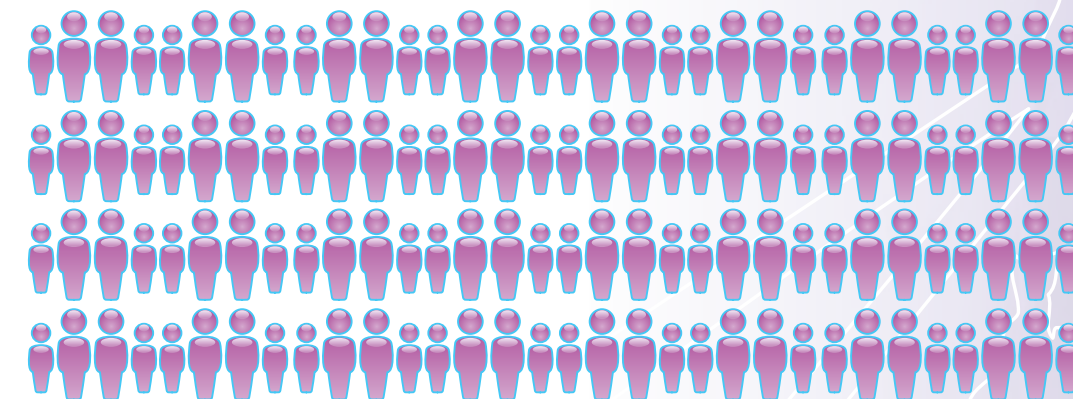
and people who put posters up around their neighbourhood ...



and people who hand out brochures outside polling booths ...



and people who watch the voting to make sure no mistakes are made ...



Yes, it takes a lot of people to run a campaign! And remember, just about every candidate in every seat needs this many people to help them.



Tweet of the week

@scrutineer: Think I will be dreaming about **ballot papers** tonight. Have so far watched more than 5000 votes being counted.

What does a strategist do?

A political strategist plans how to win an election. This could involve deciding which issues to focus on, what the candidates say, whether they appear on television or radio, and even what they wear.

Word watch

candidate person standing for election
polling booth a place where people vote
pollsters people who conduct polls (surveys of voters)

Word watch

ballot papers tickets or papers used for voting

What role does the media play in elections?

Although political **candidates** are trying to win votes, they spend a lot of time and effort delivering their messages to the media. This is because voters obtain most of their information about an election and the candidates from the media.



Television: the 'five-second grab'

Television is the main source of information for most voters, which is why politicians spend most of each day during an election campaign providing television film crews and reporters with images and short messages that will look good on daily news bulletins. Each television news story lasts only a couple of minutes, so politicians have become very good at the 'five-second grab'. The 'five-second grab' is a brief statement that sums up a politician's position on an issue. A politician will repeat this statement many times during the day to make sure it appears on the news and is seen by as many voters as possible.

- ▲ Politicians can reach the most people if they are interviewed on television.



Radio: a conversation with voters

Radio allows politicians to connect far more directly with voters than most other media. For example, on talk-back radio, politicians speak to voters and answer their questions. They can also get their message across without fear of it being cut, as occurs on most television shows. However, politicians who find awkward questions difficult to respond to do not perform well on radio.

- ▲ Radio interviews allow voters to call in and have direct conversations with politicians.

Print media: comprehensive coverage

Newspapers and magazines provide far more information than the electronic media. Newspapers devote pages and pages of coverage every day during an election campaign, which puts pressure on candidates to make sure every detail of their **policies** is correct. The day before an election, most newspapers produce an **editorial** that states who the newspaper thinks should form government.



- ▲ On 8 September 2010, the front page of newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* featured this cartoon of Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Internet: communicating with voters

Political parties are increasingly using the Internet to communicate their messages to voters. On political party websites, voters have access to complete policies, rather than the short messages they see, hear or read on other media. Some parties also post clips on YouTube to appeal to younger audiences.



- ▲ Each political party's website features news and information that is regularly updated to keep voters informed.

Tweets and blogs: connecting with voters

Many politicians send tweets to supporters and write an election blog keeping people informed about what's going on. These are easy and effective ways to communicate directly to voters with up-to-the-minute messages.

Word watch

editorial an article in a newspaper that is someone's opinion, not fact
policies things that a candidate or political party promises to do when elected

Word watch

candidates people standing for election

Case study: federal election 2010

The best way to understand how Australia's electoral system works, how campaigns are run, and how the politicians and the media use each other, is to follow an election campaign. So let's take a close-up look at the 2010 federal election.

The election is called

On 17 July 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard, leader of the Labor Party, visited the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, and asked for permission to hold an election on 21 August. The Governor-General agreed and the five-week political campaign began.



▲ Prime Minister Julia Gillard announces the election on 17 July 2010.

The campaign begins

It immediately became obvious that the major political parties were prepared for an election to be announced. As soon as the election was called, their campaign slogans were unveiled. The Labor Party's slogan was 'Moving forward', while the Liberal Party's slogan was 'Stand up for Australia'.

Both parties had ups and downs during the campaign. The Labor Party was criticised for their treatment of former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who had been replaced as leader just weeks before the election campaign. The Liberal and National parties, who were the **opposition**, came under fire in the final week of the campaign when they refused to let the **Treasury** work out how much all their campaign promises would cost.

The policies

During an election campaign, parties release their **policies** to voters through the media. Promises made by the political parties attempting to form government included:

Labor Party

- ✱ spending \$43 billion on a fast broadband network for almost all Australians
- ✱ setting up a group of 150 Australians to discuss the issue of climate change
- ✱ introducing a **tax** on the mining industry.

Liberal and National parties

- ✱ stopping boats carrying **asylum seekers** reaching Australian shores
- ✱ spending \$1.5 billion in the area of mental health
- ✱ stopping the waste of money that the government has been responsible for.



▲ During the election, Tony Abbott and Julia Gillard, the leaders of the main political parties, held a televised debate.



Bumped by MasterChef

Traditionally, the leaders' political debates are held at 7.30 p.m. on a Sunday evening and televised to the Australian public. However, the popularity of the television show *MasterChef*, which also aired at this time, saw the political debate moved to a 6.30 p.m. timeslot.

Word watch

opposition the political party (or a combination of parties) that has the second most seats in parliament

Treasury the government department that looks after the country's money

Word watch

asylum seekers people seeking a home in a new country because they fear for their safety in their own country

policies things that a candidate or political party promises to do when elected

tax a fee charged by a government on a product, income or activity

Voting day arrives

On the morning of the election, most newspaper **polls** suggested that the election would be very close, and that is exactly how it turned out. There was no clear winner on election night, with leaders of the major parties, Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott, telling the Australian people that the result would not be known for several days.



The aftermath

When the votes were counted, the Labor Party had 72 seats, the Liberal and National Parties had 73 seats, The Greens had one seat and four seats were held by independents. That meant that no party had the 76 seats needed to form government. For 17 days, Australians did not know who their new government was going to be. Finally, three of the independents and The Greens member decided to support the Labor Party, giving them enough seats to form government.

- ◀ Rob Oakeshott was the last independent to announce he would support the Labor Party, which secured Labor's victory.

Final election results

This table shows the **House of Representatives** seats each political party won in each state and territory.

Party	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Total seats won
Labor Party	26	22	8	3	6	4	2	1	72
Liberal	16	12	0	11	5	0	0	0	44
Liberal National Party of Queensland	0	0	21	0	0	0	0	0	21
The Greens	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
The Nationals	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Country Liberals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Independent	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
TOTAL	48	37	30	15	11	5	2	2	150

Source: Australian Electoral Commission



- ◀ The final 2010 federal election results were announced on 7 September and made front page news the morning after.

Closest vote in history

The 2010 election was the closest federal election in Australia's history. When all the House of Representative votes had been counted, and all **preferences** had been **distributed**, the Labor Party had received 6 216 484 votes, and the Liberal/National Parties had received 6 185 880 votes.

Word watch

distributed given out
House of Representatives the lower house of federal parliament
preferences votes given out as part of the preferential voting system

Word watch

polls surveys of how voters plan to vote

Index

A

Abbott, Tony 29, 30
Australian Capital Territory 7, 11,
15, 21, 22
Australian Electoral Commission 14

B

ballot papers 8, 12–15, 23
Barton, Edmund 10
Belrose Primary School, New South
Wales 16–17
Bryce, Quentin 18, 28

C

colonial governments 6, 8
Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918
7, 10
Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902
6, 9
compulsory voting 7, 11, 22, 23
Constitution, Australian 10

D

dictatorship 5

E

election campaigns 5, 24–5, 26,
27, 28, 29
electoral commissions 14, 23
electoral laws 10

F

Federal Parliament 4, 6, 7, 9, 10,
11, 18, 19
first-past-the-post voting 14, 15,
22

G

Gillard, Julia 18, 27, 28, 29, 30
Governor-General 7, 10, 18, 28
Greens 31

H

Hare-Clark system 15, 20, 23
House of Representatives 10, 12,
18, 19

I

independents 7, 30–1
Indigenous Australians 7, 8, 9, 11

L

Labor Party 7, 28, 29, 30, 31
Liberal Party 28, 29, 31
Lincoln, Abraham 4
local governments 4, 22–3
lower houses of parliament 7, 13,
19, 20, 21

M

media 5, 24, 25, 26–7, 28, 29
Menzies, Robert 7
monarchy 5

N

National Party 28, 29, 30
New South Wales 6, 7, 8, 11, 17,
20, 21, 23
Northern Territory 7, 9, 11, 21, 22

O

Oakeshott, Rob 30
oligarchy 5

P

policies 27, 29
political debates 29
political strategists 25
preferential voting system 7, 12,
13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 31
proportional representation 14,
15, 19, 21, 22, 23
 psephologists 20

Q

Queensland 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 20, 21,
23

R

Rudd, Kevin 28

S

scrutineering 24
secret ballot 8
Senate 14, 19
social media 27
South Australia 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 20,
21, 22

T

Tasmania 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 20,
21, 23
terms 10, 19, 20, 22, 23
theocracy 5

U

upper houses of parliament 19, 21

V

Victoria 6, 7, 8, 9, 20, 21, 23
voluntary voting 11, 22, 23
vote counting 12, 15, 19, 24, 31
voting rights 4, 6, 9, 17
voting systems 12–15, 19, 20,
22–3

W

Western Australia 6, 7, 8, 9, 11,
20, 21, 22