



Our Democracy

Australia's State and Territory Governments



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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. 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 governments, 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.

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 how the state and territory governments began, discover what powers they have and the way they are elected, and hear first-hand what it's like to be a state politician.

- ▲ The Soviet Union, which existed for most of the 1900s, was an example of an oligarchy, with power held by a few selected people known as the Politburo.

Features of a democracy:

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- 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.

“

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

”


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

A timeline of state and territory governments

This timeline provides a snapshot of major events in the history of Australia's state and territory governments.

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

Date	Event	Date	Event	Date	Event	Date	Event
1790	1788 The First Fleet arrives and establishes the colony of New South Wales under Governor Arthur Phillip. ▶ page 8	1880		1960	1959 First election of David Brand as Premier of Western Australia. ▶ page 23	2000	
1800		1890	1890 The first Western Australian Government is elected. ▶ page 8		1968 First election of Joh Bjelke-Petersen as Premier of Queensland. ▶ page 21		2001 First election of Jon Stanhope as Chief Minister of Australian Capital Territory. ▶ page 29
1810		1900	1901 Federation comes into being, with a federal government and six state governments. ▶ page 9				2002 The South Australian Labor Party does a deal with an independent after the state election, to form a minority government.
1820	1825 Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) becomes a colony in its own right. ▶ page 8	1910					
1830	1829 The Swan River Colony (later part of Western Australia) is established. ▶ page 8	1920	1922 The Queensland Government abolishes the upper house of parliament. ▶ page 26		1970		2008 The Western Australian election ends with 28 seats to Labor and 28 seats to Liberal/National parties. The three independents support a Liberal/National government.
1840	1842 The colony of South Australia is established. ▶ page 8	1930	1932 Jack Lang is sacked as Premier of New South Wales by Governor Sir Phillip Game.				
1850	1851 The colony of Victoria is established. ▶ page 8		1938 First election of Thomas Playford as Premier of South Australia. ▶ page 19		1974 The first fully elected Northern Territory government is voted in. ▶ page 9		
	1855 The first New South Wales and Victorian governments are elected. ▶ page 9	1940	1939 First election of Robert Cosgrove as Premier of Tasmania. ▶ page 15	1980		2010	2010 The Liberal and Labor parties end up with 10 seats each after the Tasmanian state election. With the support of the five Greens members of parliament, a Labor-Greens government is formed. ▶ page 25
	1856 The first Tasmanian and South Australian governments are elected. ▶ page 9	1950	1955 First election of Henry Bolte as Premier of Victoria. ▶ page 13		1988 First election of Marshall Peron as Chief Minister of Northern Territory. ▶ page 25		2010 The Liberal and National parties win 45 seats in the Victorian state election, giving them a two-seat victory over the Labor Party, which had governed for eleven years.
	1859 The colony of Queensland is established and the first Queensland Government is elected. ▶ page 8			1990	1989 The first Australian Capital Territory government is elected. ▶ page 9		
					1995 First election of Bob Carr as Premier of New South Wales. ▶ page 11		
					1999 Three independents give their support to the Victorian Labor Party to form a government. ▶ page 24		

Henry Bolte, Premier of Victoria



Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Premier of Queensland



Word watch

abolishes gets rid of
Federation the joining together of different states under a central government

A history of the Australian colonies

Here is a condensed 200-year history of the **colonies**, states and territories. It begins with a single colony (New South Wales) and grows to include six states and two territories, all of which have their own political issues and challenges.

Forming the colonies: 1788–1859

Before 1788, the Australian continent was home to Indigenous Australians. On 26 January 1788, the first European settlers arrived in Botany Bay, creating the colony of New South Wales. From 1803 to 1825, Tasmania was a part of New South Wales. In 1825, it became a colony in its own right (though it was known as Van Diemen's Land back then).

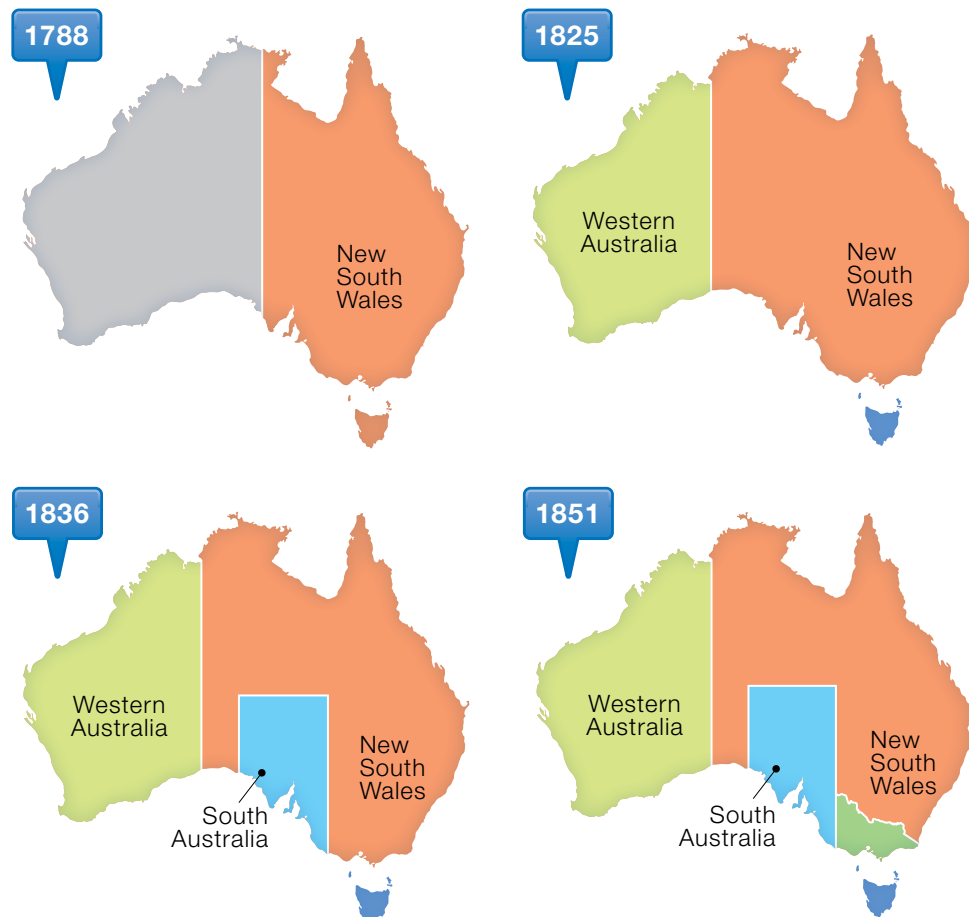
The third colony in Australia was the Swan River Colony, established in 1829. It was one of several settlements that formed Western Australia. Next, in order, came South Australia (1842), Victoria (1851) and Queensland (1859).

Tweet of the week



@BotanyBay: Tweet from First Fleet might have read 'Good surf, nice beaches, not much nightlife at the moment.'

► Between 1788 and 1851, the division of Australia changed as the colonies were formed.



Word watch

colonies lands governed by other countries

Towards self-government: 1855–1901

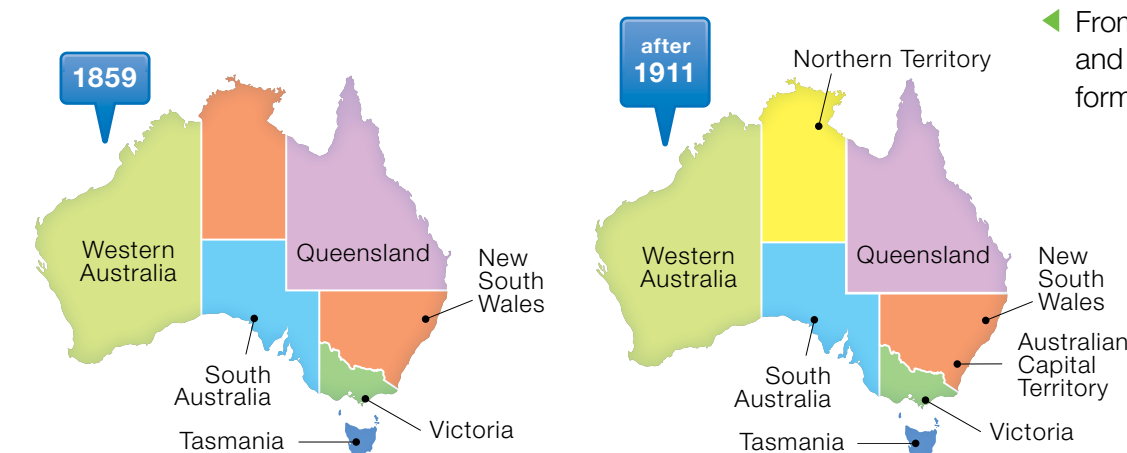
Until the 1850s, the colonies were run by governors appointed by the British Government. In 1855, New South Wales and Victoria held elections for colonial governments, which reduced the powers of the governors. Elections for colonial governments were held in Tasmania and South Australia in 1856, Queensland in 1859 and Western Australia in 1890. The colonies officially became known as states when Australia became a **federation** in 1901.

A federation: 1901

When a federal government was created in 1901, the colonial governments had some of their responsibilities and powers removed. For example, before the federal government existed, each colony took care of its own trade and defence. Today these are very much matters for the federal government.

When were the territories formed?

The Northern Territory's first government was formed in 1947, though not all members were elected. The first fully elected Northern Territory government came into being in 1974, but with limited powers because the Northern Territory was not fully independent until 1978. Previously, it had been **administered** by New South Wales (1825–1863), South Australia (1863–1912) and the federal government (1912–1978). The Australian Capital Territory was part of New South Wales until 1909, after which it was administered by the federal government until it formed its first government in 1988.



◀ From 1859, Queensland and the territories were formed.



Word watch

administered managed
federation a system of government with a national government and several state governments

Australia's changing borders

In 1788, Australia was divided down the middle: New South Wales in the east and New Holland in the west. Over the next century, borders changed as new colonies were founded. The last change to borders was in 1911, when the Australian Capital Territory was formed.

What are the state and territory governments' responsibilities?

Australia has three levels of government and each level has specific areas of responsibility. However, a few areas of state and territory responsibility are shared with the federal government.



Hospitals

Hospitals have traditionally been the responsibility of the states and territories. Making sure that hospitals are located where they are most needed is an important decision for state governments. In recent years, federal governments have had a greater say in the way hospitals are run.

- State governments control the wages of nurses and doctors working in public hospitals.

Tweet of the week

@AlexfromVic: Am lying in hospital after op – I don't care which government pays for hospitals, so long as someone does.

Word watch

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

STATE OPPOSITION SLAMS GOVERNMENT OVER HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

The leader of the state **opposition** today criticised the government over the length of waiting lists at the state's hospitals. The waiting lists represent the number of people waiting for operations and other health procedures. Figures released yesterday

reveal a 10% increase in waiting list numbers, prompting the leader of the opposition to remark, 'These latest figures are a disgrace and are just one more reason why this government must be kicked out at the next election. The people of this state deserve better.'

Education

Another important area of responsibility is education. States and territories are responsible for public schools and ensuring that private schools follow certain government rules, such as teaching the curriculum. The responsibility for universities and other tertiary institutions is shared between the federal government and state and territory governments.

Other key areas of responsibility

Other areas that state and territory governments look after include:

- police and emergency services
- utilities (such as electricity, gas and water)
- public transport
- roads
- house and land planning
- motor vehicle registration.

- Sometimes governments form **partnerships** with private companies to build roads. The companies then charge people tolls to use those roads.



Word watch

partnerships arrangements between two or more parties

Policing the Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory does not have its own police force. Instead, it uses the Australian Federal Police, which is controlled by the federal government.

Premier snapshot

BOB CARR

Born 1947, Sydney, New South Wales

Political career
Entered state politics in 1983

Term as Premier
4 April 1995 – 3 August 2005

Claim to fame
Longest-serving Premier of New South Wales

How do the state and territory governments raise money?

The state and territory governments are responsible for a lot of services – they pay for hospitals, schools, emergency services and lots more. However, where does the money to fund all this come from?

Sources of revenue

The state and territory governments receive most of their **revenue** from:

- ✱ the federal government
- ✱ stamp duties
- ✱ payroll **tax**
- ✱ land tax
- ✱ gaming tax.

Federal government funds

The federal government gives the states and territories most of the revenue that it receives from the **goods** and services tax (GST). The GST is a 10 per cent tax on most goods and services sold in Australia. The federal government receives this 10 per cent tax from the companies who sell the good and services. From time to time, the federal government also gives the states and territories **funds** for special projects, such as the building of major roads.

Stamp duties

Stamp duties are a tax on official documents. For example, motor vehicle registration, insurance policies and the sale of houses attract stamp duties when the paperwork is completed.

Payroll tax

Payroll tax is paid by employers based on the total wages they pay to employees. The more people they employ, the more they have to pay.

Land tax

Land tax is paid by people or companies that own land, based on the value of the land. People who live in a house they own do not pay land tax for the land the house sits on.

Gaming tax

Gaming tax is collected from gambling. This includes gambling on poker machines, lottery tickets and horse racing.

Budget time!

A government hands down a **budget** each year. The budget is a document that contains details of how much money the government expects to raise and where it plans to spend it over the following 12 months.

▼ Premier snapshot

HENRY BOLTE

Born
1908, Ballarat, Victoria

Died
1990, Bamganie, Victoria

Political career
Entered state politics in 1947

Term as Premier
7 June 1955 –
23 August 1972

Claim to fame
Longest-serving
Premier of Victoria



- ▲ The person who bought this house will pay stamp duty to their state government.



- ▲ Governments warn people not to gamble too much – but the more people gamble, the more money the government raises through gaming tax.

Word watch

funds an amount of money to be used for a specific purpose
goods products
revenue money collected
tax a fee charged by a government on a product, income or activity

Word watch

budget a financial plan

What are the lower and upper houses?

All states and territories have a lower house of parliament, and some also have an upper house. But what's the difference? Why do some parliaments need two houses, while others can manage with one?



▲ The chamber of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, or lower house

The role of the lower house

The lower house is the part of a parliament where government is formed. This means that the political party with the most members in the lower house forms government, even if they do not have a **majority** in the upper house.

The lower house is also where **legislation** is introduced. For a law to be passed, a majority of members in the lower house have to support it. If a majority votes against the law, it cannot be passed.

In both South Australia and Tasmania, the lower house is called the House of Assembly. In the other states and in the territories, the lower house is called the Legislative Assembly.

State and territory lower houses

State or territory	Number of members in lower house	Number of members needed to form government	Number of years between elections
Australian Capital Territory	17	9	4
New South Wales	93	47	4
Northern Territory	25	13	4
Queensland	89	45	3
South Australia	47	24	4
Tasmania	25*	13	4
Victoria	88	45	4
Western Australia	59	30	4

*to be increased to 35 in 2014

▶ Victoria's upper house



Conscience vote

Usually, members of a political party vote the same way on a piece of legislation. However, on certain issues, members of parliament are allowed a conscience vote, which means they vote according to their own beliefs.

The role of the upper house

The upper house is the part of a parliament where members **review** legislation that has been **proposed** in the lower house. If a majority of members in the upper house agree with the legislation from the lower house, then it becomes law. However, if a majority of upper house members disagree with the legislation, then the law cannot pass. It is sent back to the lower house, where changes may be made before it is returned to the upper house for review.

Every state except for Queensland has an upper house. The two territories do not have an upper house. In these cases, legislation has only to pass the lower house to become law. The states that have an upper house call this section of parliament the Legislative Council.

State upper houses

States	Number of members in upper house	Number of years between elections
New South Wales	42	8
South Australia	22	8
Tasmania	15	6
Victoria	40	4
Western Australia	36	4

▼ Premier snapshot

ROBERT COSGROVE

Born 1884,
Tea Tree, Tasmania

Died 1969, Hobart,
Tasmania

Political career
Entered state politics
in 1919

Terms as Premier
18 December 1939
– 18 December 1947,
25 February 1948
– 26 August 1958

Claim to fame
Longest-serving
Premier of Tasmania

Word watch

legislation laws
majority more than half

Word watch

proposed planned, put forward
review consider

Your say: should we have state and territory governments?



Australia has three levels of government – federal, state/territory and local. There are countries with far larger populations than Australia that have only two levels of government. It has been said that we should get rid of one level of government, and usually the state government is suggested as the one to go. We asked six students to discuss the question: should we have state and territory governments?

Question: First of all, who knows the differences between federal, state/territory and local governments?

Jessica: The federal government makes decisions for the whole country, while the state or territory government makes decisions for the people in one state.

Stefan: Local governments make decisions for people in a local area.

Q: That's right. Now, does anyone think that three governments are too many, or is the right number?

Lachlan: I reckon it's the right number. If we only have one government, that would not be enough because they'd have to work too hard. I don't reckon they'd keep up with it.

Q: That's a good point. Now, what do you think about state and territory governments all having their own laws, which may be different from neighbouring states and territories.

Stefan: It would be really confusing with different road rules. If you're driving at 60 kilometres an hour in Victoria and then drive into New South Wales, you might not know what the speed limit is. You might be driving 60 when the limit there is actually 50 and you'd get caught.



Jessica: It would be better if the laws were the same because you wouldn't have to learn different rules for different states.

Lauren: I agree with Jessica. If you don't know what the rules are, there's a chance you'll get caught.



Ebony: I think that maybe we should just have a federal government, but then have people who are in charge of a state or territory, and all these people get together from time to time and make sure that the rules are the same everywhere.

Jordan: I think they should keep the states, because the federal government will just be too busy if they have to worry about all the states.

There's only one way to decide this, the same way they decide things in a parliament – it is time for a vote. Hands up those who think it would be a good idea to get rid of state/territory governments ... That's five. Now, hands up if you want to keep state/territory governments ... That's just you, Lauren. So it looks as though it's goodbye to state/territory governments.



Thanks to ...
Lauren, Jessica, Jordan, Stefan, Ebony and Lachlan, Grade 5 students from Banyule Primary School, Victoria.

Five votes to one in favour of getting rid of state and territory governments.



What is the role of the Premier and Chief Minister?

The person in charge of a state government is known as the Premier. The person in charge of a territory government is known as the Chief Minister. Premiers and chief ministers have similar roles to the Prime Minister who leads the federal government.

Planning for the future

One of the main roles for a Premier or Chief Minister is to have a plan for the future and then make it happen. **Policies** are decided following discussions with **ministers**, other members of parliament (MPs) and advisers. Laws are then written up and presented to parliament for a vote. Certain decisions made by premiers and chief ministers are in response to short-term demands, such as providing financial assistance after a natural disaster. They also make long-term decisions that affect the future success of the state or territory and its residents. Queensland Premier Anna Bligh said in 2010, 'My government is looking over the horizon, anticipating population and economic growth and what that means for our infrastructure, such as roads, rails, ports, schools and hospitals.'

- ▶ Anna Bligh became Premier of Queensland in 2007.



Tweet of the week

@Queenslander:

During the Queensland floods in January 2011, Anna Bligh showed how a premier should provide leadership.

Word watch

ministers senior members of parliament responsible for a particular area, such as health
policies courses of action planned by a government

Keeping a united front

A Premier or Chief Minister has to act strongly and swiftly if an MP publicly opposes government policy. Members of the government must be seen to support government decisions, otherwise voters will lose confidence in the government, and may even consider voting them out of office at the next election.

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

Each year, all premiers, chief ministers and the Prime Minister meet to discuss state and territory government issues and decisions that have an impact on the whole country. This meeting is called the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).



- ▶ Meetings of the COAG are attended by the Prime Minister and all of the state premiers and territory chief ministers.



▼ Premier snapshot

THOMAS PLAYFORD

Born 1896, Norton Summit, South Australia

Died 1981, Adelaide, South Australia

Political career
Entered state politics in 1933

Term as Premier
5 November 1938 – 10 March 1965

Claim to fame
Longest-serving Premier of South Australia (and in any Australian state)

What is the role of ministers and the Cabinet?

The role of governors and the Chief Administrator

States have governors and the Northern Territory has a Chief Administrator. Like the Governor-General in the federal system, they sign all new laws, give permission for an election to be held and can sack a Premier or Chief Minister who has lost the confidence of parliament.

Tweet of the week

@unhappyMP: The Premier just announced his ministers – but left me out. Not happy!

A Premier or a Chief Minister does not have the time to deal with every issue that comes across their desk. That is where members of parliament (MPs) help. The most experienced, talented and hard-working MPs in the government become ministers.

What does a minister do?

Ministers are members of parliament who are given a portfolio, which is a position of responsibility that has its own department. Within state and territory governments, these departments include health, education, emergency services and transport. Ministers can come from the lower house or the upper house.

Ministers are not expected to know everything about their portfolio or everything that happens within their department. They are advised by senior **public servants** who have the necessary experience and knowledge. Ministers decide what changes are to be made within their portfolio and then make sure these changes are carried out. If a major mistake occurs within a portfolio, the minister may have to resign from the ministry, though not from the parliament.



▲ Ministers are advised on the areas they are responsible for, such as housing and aged care, so they can make informed decisions about their portfolio.

Word watch

public servants
government employees



▲ This Cabinet meeting, in December 2010, was led by Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu (right) and his deputy, Peter Ryan (left).

The role of the Cabinet

The Premier or Chief Minister and the most senior ministers of a government are members of a group known as the Cabinet. Members of the Cabinet are responsible for making major **policy** decisions about their state or territory, even in areas outside their portfolio.

The Cabinet meets regularly, usually once a week. Cabinet members are free to argue their points of view in the meeting. However, once a decision is made, every Cabinet member must publicly support the decision, even if they disagree with it.

Key Cabinet portfolios

Some of the main areas that state and territory Cabinet ministers are responsible for include:

- treasury and finances
- health
- education
- Indigenous affairs
- transport
- planning
- agriculture
- sport
- arts
- environment
- police and emergency services.

▼ Premier snapshot

JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN

Born

1911, Dannevirke, New Zealand

Died 2005, Kingaroy, Queensland

Political career

Entered state politics in 1947

Term as Premier

8 August 1968 – 1 December 1987

Claim to fame

Longest-serving Premier of Queensland

Word watch

policy a course of action planned by a government

What is the role of the opposition?

The opposition is the political party that has the second highest number of seats in the lower house of parliament. Sometimes two political parties join together to form a **coalition**, such as the Liberal and National parties.

*It is no secret that this long-term Labor Government's 'free go' cards promotion was bungled, with Labor unable to even give away all of the 400 000 'free go' cards. Now we know that less than 90 000 of the 'free go' cards have even been used – quite frankly, this **policy** has bombed.*

- ▶ In August 2010, Queensland's Shadow Transport Minister, Fiona Simpson, criticised the government's handling of transport policy.



Tweet of the week

@Avinda26: Being in opposition would be the worst – even if you make suggestions no-one really listens.

Making the government keep its promises

A political party, once it is elected, sometimes changes its mind about doing some of the things that it promised. An opposition tries to make a government accountable – that is, make it keep the promises it made during the election campaign.

The opposition pressures the government to be fair and accountable, by communicating its concerns to the public through the media, as well as asking the government questions in parliament.

- ▲ Opposition member John Paul Langbroek addresses the Queensland Government in parliament.



Governing for all Australians

An opposition also tries to make sure that the policies and laws introduced by government do not favour one group of people more than others. A state government is supposed to represent all the people in the state, not just those from a particular area such as businesses or **trade unions**.

Opposition policies

As well as keeping the government accountable, the opposition must develop their own policies to take to the next election. After all, the opposition does not want to remain in opposition, they want to become the government and implement the policies that they believe are best for the state.

The role of shadow ministers

Shadow ministers are members of the opposition party, each appointed to take a special interest in a particular portfolio. The shadow minister not only criticises the government minister who holds the portfolio but develops policies that the opposition can take to the next election to try and win government. The opposition has a shadow Cabinet made up of senior ministers.

- ▼ One of the roles of the opposition is to prepare for government. In 2011, members of the New South Wales opposition prepared for the state election.



Conflict makes news

Most **legislation** passes through parliament with the support of both the government and the opposition. However, the 20 to 25 per cent of legislation that the opposition opposes receives a lot of coverage in the media.

▼ Premier snapshot

DAVID BRAND

Born 1912, Dongara, Western Australia

Died 1979, Carnamah, Western Australia

Political career
Entered state politics in 1945

Term as Premier
2 April 1959 –
3 March 1971

Claim to fame
Longest-serving
Premier of Western
Australia

Word watch

legislation laws
trade unions organisations that fight for the rights of workers

Word watch

policy a course of action planned by a government
coalition partnership

What is the role of the independents and minor parties?

The 'balance of power'

When no political party gains enough seats at an election to rule in its own right, the support of independents or minor parties is needed to be able to govern. In this situation, the independents or minor parties have what is called the 'balance of power'. Since 1990, minority governments have held office for at least a short period in all six states and territories.

As well as major political parties, independents and minor parties also run in state and territory elections to try and win a seat in parliament.

Why do independents run for parliament?

Independents, like **candidates** who are members of political parties, run for parliament to represent their **electorate's** interests. Running as an independent means they do not have to conform to the **policies** of a particular political party. To have any chance of winning a seat in parliament, independents must be well known within their community. For example, many independents who do well in state and territory elections have already sat in local council. Some have been members of a political party and may even have been a member of parliament but have decided to stand as an independent.

Influential independents

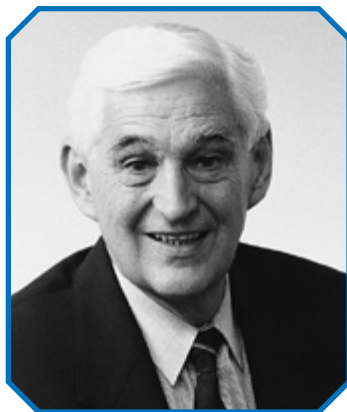
Among the independents who have won seats in a state parliament and played an influential role are Ted Mack in New South Wales, Nick Xenophon in South Australia and Craig Ingram in Victoria. Ted Mack is known as the 'father of independents' and has been elected as an independent to all three levels of government. Nick Xenophon made an impact on state government policy in South Australia, before switching to federal parliament, where he is an independent senator. Craig Ingram was one of three independents who decided which major party would form government in Victoria after the 1999 election.



▲ Craig Ingram



▲ Nick Xenophon



▲ Ted Mack

The minor parties

Minor parties do not have the financial resources or the number of members that the major political parties – Labor, Liberal and National – have. Certain minor parties, such as The Greens, have a high profile and run candidates in many seats. A **single-issue party** is unlikely to be elected but runs to highlight the issue that is important to it, such as the Daylight Saving for South East Queensland Party.

After the 2010 Tasmanian state election, no major party had a **majority** of seats in parliament. The previous Labor Government was able to remain in office with the support of The Greens.



▲ In May 2010, the 47th Tasmanian State Parliament was opened, with the Labor Government in office supported by one of the minor parties, The Greens.

Chief Minister snapshot

MARSHALL PERON

Born 1942, Perth, Western Australia

Political career
Entered Territory politics in 1974

Term as Premier
14 July 1988 – 26 May 1995

Claim to fame
Longest-serving Chief Minister in Northern Territory

Word watch

majority more than half
single-issue party party concerned about one issue only, rather than developing policies on many issues

How are state and territory governments elected?

Proportional representation

The proportional representation system of voting is used when several people on the same **ballot paper** are elected at the same time. All **candidates** who receive a certain number of votes are elected.

The state and territory election processes are not all the same. The states and territories have different voting systems and periods between elections, and even the number of houses in parliament varies. The one feature that is the same for every state and territory is that voting is **compulsory** and restricted to people over the age of 18.

Western Australia

Elections are held for both houses of parliament every four years on a date chosen by the government. Members of the lower house are elected using the preferential voting system and members of the upper house are elected using the proportional representation system.

Northern Territory

Elections are held every four years on the fourth Saturday in August, using the preferential voting system. There is only a lower house.

Queensland

Elections are held every three years on a date chosen by the government. It uses an optional preferential voting system, in which voters can vote for one, more than one, or all candidates on the ballot paper. Queensland only has a lower house, after **abolishing** its upper house in 1922.

New South Wales

Elections are held every four years on the fourth Saturday in March. Every member of the lower house faces an election on that date, using the preferential voting system. Members of the upper house serve eight-year terms, so only half of their members face election on that date, using the proportional representation system.

South Australia

Elections are held every four years on the third Saturday in March. Every member of the lower house faces an election on that date, using the preferential voting system. The members of the upper house serve eight-year terms, so only half of their members face election on that date, using the proportional representation system.

Tasmania

Elections for the lower house are held every four years on the first Saturday in May, using the Hare-Clark system. An election for some upper house members is held every year on the first Saturday in May, because the 15 upper house members serve for six years, with two (and sometimes three) members being elected each year. The upper house members are elected using the preferential voting system.

Victoria

Elections are held for both houses of parliament every four years on the last Saturday in November. Members of the lower house are elected using the preferential voting system, and members of the upper house are elected using the proportional representation system.

Australian Capital Territory

Elections are held every four years on the third Saturday in October. There is only a lower house and it uses a voting system called the Hare-Clark system, which is a form of proportional representation.

Preferential voting

In the preferential voting system, voters select the candidates on their ballot paper in order of **preference**. If no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the number '1' votes, the preferences of the least popular candidates are given out until one candidate has received more than 50 per cent of the vote.



▲ Party workers hand out pamphlets to voters in Victoria during the 2006 state elections.

Word watch

ballot paper a ticket or paper used for voting
candidates people standing for election
compulsory required, whether a person wants to or not

Word watch

abolishing getting rid of
preference choice

Other political players: lobbyists and the media

Tweet of the week

@lobbyist101: It's hard work being a lobbyist: taking politicians out for breakfasts ... and lunches ... and dinners.

Word watch

candidates people standing for election
policies courses of action planned by a government

Political parties, members of parliament and political **candidates** are not the only players in the world of politics. Two other very important groups are lobbyists and the media. The lobbyists want to influence governments, while governments want to influence the media.

What does a lobbyist do?

Lobbyists try to convince governments to introduce certain **policies**, or try to stop certain policies being introduced. They are employed by companies or organisations that want the government to make policies that benefit their businesses or other interests. To achieve this, lobbyists:

- ✱ meet with politicians and present their point of view
- ✱ gain media coverage that supports their point of view
- ✱ create advertising and marketing campaigns that promote their point of view.

CASE STUDY

Lobbying case study: logging in Tasmanian forests

Logging involves cutting down trees in a forest, then sending them to a sawmill to be chopped up and used in wood products. Tasmania has a powerful forestry industry, and logging employs a large number of people. Tasmania also has a strong environmental movement that is opposed to the logging of old trees in the state's forests. As a result, forestry and environmental groups employ lobbyists to present their very different points of view to Tasmania's politicians. The Tasmanian Government must introduce policies that will favour the forestry industry or the environmentalists.



- ▲ In June 2004, thousands of Tasmanians marched against the logging of trees in the state's wilderness areas.

The media and the political system

The media plays a major role in the Australian political system. Politicians need the media and the media need the politicians. However, this does not mean that they are always on good terms. Politicians rely on the media to communicate their messages to the Australian public. The media relies on politicians to provide them with information and stories that the public will want to read about or watch.

In some ways, politicians are like lobbyists. They present their points of view to the media in the hope that the public who consume the media will believe their side of the story and support them.



- ▲ New South Wales Premier Kristina Keneally holds a press conference in 2010.

Social media: controlling the message

Politicians are enthusiastic users of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, because they can present their views directly to the public without their message being changed.

Chief Minister snapshot

JON STANHOPE

Born
1951, Gundagai, New South Wales

Political career
Entered territory politics in 1988

Term as Chief Minister
20 October 2001 –

Claim to fame
Longest-serving chief minister in the Australian Capital Territory

Interview with a state politician

Matthew Guy was elected to the Victorian Parliament in 2006.



State Minister
Matthew Guy

“

”

Q. What attracts you to politics?

I see politics as an opportunity to be part of a process of change in my state and in my local area.

Q. When did you first become interested in politics?

I remember watching political television ads on my parents' television. They had an old black-and-white television in their bedroom and it was the 1980 federal election, so I was six years old. And I remember sitting up late with my dad watching the 1982 state election when Labor won for the first time in 27 years and my dad telling me there'll be a lot of things being done differently in Victoria as a result of the change of government.

Q. What has been your political career path?

I joined the Liberal Party in 1990 when I was 16. Then after that I got very quickly involved in political campaigns, helping **candidates**, handing out leaflets. That experience helped me get work for a member of parliament in the country, and then in 1996 I started working for Jeff Kennett, who was the Premier of Victoria. I stood for state parliament in 2002 but lost. I tried again in 2006 and won.

Q. Why did you choose to stand for state parliament, rather than local or federal?

I think state politics is the most hands-on deliverer of services to a community. I think out of three it's the area where you can make the most difference to people.

Q. What do you think is the best thing about being in politics?

For me, the best experience has been attending citizenship ceremonies and seeing people's faces and how pleased and appreciative they are to become Australian **citizens**.

Q. And what's the worst thing about being in politics?

There is an intrusion on your family life. You become fair game for journalists and have to learn to have a very thick skin. You really do, because you can be misquoted, misrepresented or attacked, sometimes fairly and sometimes unfairly, and there is nothing you can do.

Word
watch

candidates people standing for election

citizens people who have full rights within a country

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