



PARLIAMENTARY
EDUCATION
OFFICE

Teaching

CIVICS



AND



CITIZENSHIP

A classroom guide



DEMOCRATIC
IDEAS



PARLIAMENTARY
PROCESSES



YEAR
LEVELS

Make civics and citizenship learning dynamic, relevant and memorable.

The PEO has thirty years' experience in developing engaging classroom resources and communicating the function, value and relevance of the Australian Parliament. We work in partnership with Australian teachers to encourage young Australians to become active and engaged citizens.

All of the activities in this booklet are aligned to the critical and creative thinking and ethical understanding general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum (8.4). Each activity is also linked to the Civics and Citizenship curriculum, and you'll find the relevant content descriptors next to each activity.

These activities use role-play, negotiation and problem solving to engage students in learning. These techniques help students comprehend complex tasks and ideas, and develop their skills in critical and creative thinking and ethical understanding. They provide a safe accessible way to understand democratic ideas and political process.

Use this booklet to help you educate young Australians to become empathetic citizens who are able to disagree and debate respectfully and understand and help sustain their system of government.

The PEO acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.



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The Parliamentary Education Office acknowledge differences in curriculum between various states and territories. Check our website for the most current curriculum alignment.

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THINKING ABOUT DEMOCRACY

What is democracy and why is it important?

Use these prompts to kick start discussion and debate.



Under each democratic idea, discussion starters are listed from easier (personally relatable) to more complex (abstract thinking). Pick and choose the ones that work best for your class.

Australia's democracy is supported by four key ideas:



**AN ACTIVE
and ENGAGED
CITIZENRY**

Citizens have a voice and can make changes in society

What is a change you'd like to see in your school or local community?

Can you do anything about it? If not, who is responsible for the problem/issue?

If the problem is bigger than your community, what could you do to make a change?

Who is responsible for Australia's democracy? How are they responsible?

Can you think of ways to make our country more democratic?

Is violence ever justifiable? Can you think of an example where violence was needed for freedom?

How can big changes be made without the use of violence?



**AN INCLUSIVE
and EQUITABLE
SOCIETY**

Everyone gets to have a say

Brainstorm a list of freedoms you think are important in your school community. Are some more important than others?

Which of these freedoms are most important to you?

Is democracy best for everyone? Why or why not?

Is it harder for some people to have their say than for others?

What's more important – majority rule or individual freedom? Why?

How might Australia be different if we were not a democracy?



**FREE and
FRANCHISED
ELECTIONS**

We get to choose who makes the decisions on our behalf

What experiences have you had with different ways of making decisions?

Why should citizens be able to choose who represents them?

Why is the media important in a democracy?

What powers do voters have between elections?

Could dictators ever be good?

What is the biggest threat to democracy?



**A RULE of LAW
for BOTH CITIZENS
and THE GOVERNMENT**

Everyone is equal before the law

When have laws or rules kept you safe or protected your freedom or rights?

Should the law ensure everyone gets a fair go?

Why is it important for everyone to follow the law?

Is everyone equal before the law? Why or why not?

Is it fair for the law to treat everyone exactly the same?

Curriculum links

Year 5 (ACHASSK115)
(ACHASSI094)
Year 6 (ACHASSI112)
Year 7 (ACHCS054)
Year 8 (ACHCK061)
(ACHCS068)

Year 9 (ACHCS082)
(ACHCS085)
(ACHCS089)
Year 10 (ACHCS095)
(ACHCS098)

Looking for a fresh discussion strategy? Try one of these!

Affinity mapping



Provide students with a discussion starter and ask them to write their responses on post-it notes (one idea per note) and place them in no particular arrangement on a wall or whiteboard.

Once lots of ideas have been generated, have students begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on.

Yes or no?



Select some discussion starters to read out to the class. Choose discussion starters that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'.

Label one side of the room 'yes' and the other side 'no'. Ask students to stand in the centre of the room.

Read out the discussion starters and ask students to respond to each by moving to one side of the room or the other.

After the class have made their decisions ask 2 or 3 students to explain their opinion and give examples to support their view.

Socratic circles



Arrange the class into a circle and provide a discussion starter, explaining the goal is to share ideas and build a shared understanding.

Allow the discussion to flow, encouraging students to ask questions and to reflect on the ideas of others.

Guide the discussion by drawing students' attention back to the topic or, where needed, introducing another discussion starter.

If you have a larger class, organise two circles, an inner circle and an outer circle. Have the outer circle listen and take notes while the inner circle discusses then have the students swap places and roles.

Think, pair, share



Give the students 1–3 minutes to think about the chosen discussion starter.

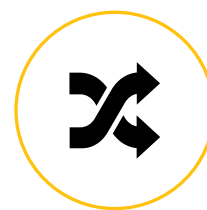
Organise students into pairs and give them 2–5 minutes to share their ideas and listen to their partner.

Ask each pair to share their thoughts with the whole class.

You may like to return to the pairs after the whole class discussion to allow students to reflect on how their thinking may have changed.

What's the best way to make important decisions?

Investigate 4 different approaches with your class.



Decisions for ourselves and others

- 1 Divide the class into pairs. Show students the pictures of the snacks. Ask students to discuss which snack they would like for themselves, and why. Next, in their pairs, ask the students to decide:
 - What snack they would provide for their pair, and why
 - What snack they would provide for the whole class, and why
 - What snack they would provide for the class every week at school and why.
- 2 Share or tally student responses and discuss why different decisions may have been made. Did the students make different decisions for themselves than they did for others? Why might this be? Explain that representation involves making decisions for other people.

Types of decision-making

- 3 As a class come up with a practical idea which might improve your school in some way, but which might not be popular with everyone, for example:
 - No unhealthy food in the school canteen
 - First fifteen minutes of every school day is for exercise and stretching
 - Students should have to wear school uniform/stop wearing school uniform.
- 4 Tell students there are a number of ways that they could make this important decision. Use the *Decision-making table* to explain and complete the activity.
- 5 Discuss the following questions with your class:
 - Which form of decision-making was the most efficient?
 - Which form of decision-making was the most fair? Least fair? Why?
 - Can you think of a situation in which the autocratic method would be the best way to decide?
- 6 Tell the students that the federal Parliament uses majority rule rather than consensus for making decisions. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this method.

Curriculum links

Year 5 (ACHASSI103)	Year 9 (ACHCK103)
Year 6 (ACHASSI131)	(ACHCS085)
Year 7 (ACHCS058)	(ACHCS087)
Year 8 (ACHCS072)	Year 10 (ACHCS098)
	(ACHCS100)

Snacks



STRAWBERRIES







SANDWICH



CHOCOLATE CUPCAKE

Decision-making table

Decision method	Instruction	Result
 <p>AUTOCRATIC DECISION</p>	Randomly select an autocrat to decide.	
 <p>REPRESENTATIVE DECISION</p>	Divide the class into groups and ask each group to choose a representative who will make the decision on behalf of the group.	
 <p>MAJORITY DECISION</p>	<p>Open ballot: Conduct a vote with a show of hands. The majority decides.</p> <p>Secret ballot: Conduct a vote by writing on a piece of paper. Then have someone count the votes and declare the outcome.</p>	
 <p>CONSENSUS DECISION</p>	Encourage students to think of ways to compromise. Keep discussing until everyone agrees (or you run out of time).	

EXPLORING THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Why do we have three levels of government?

Investigate the responsibilities of each level by forming taskforces to respond to major events.

Organise the class into taskforces of 4 to 6 students and give each group a Scenario (page 7) and a copy of the Resource list (page 8).

- 1 Ask the students to imagine what would happen in their scenario. Who would be affected and how? Which services might be needed to help? Then ask the students to develop a plan to respond to the scenario. Who from the Resource list might be able to help and what would they do?
- 2 Ask each taskforce to present its scenario and response plan to the class and ask other students for their questions and comments.
- 3 Explore the following questions with your class:
 - Use the Three levels table (page 8) and ask students to categorise which level of government provides the services listed in their plans. Which service listed in their plans are provided by the federal government, state government, and local government? Use the Three levels table (page 8) to categorise them.
 - The three levels can cooperate in planning for and responding to major events. Can you think of other projects they might cooperate on?
 - Can you think of other organisations, such as the Red Cross or Surf Life Saving Australia, who might work with the three levels of government?



**LOCAL
COUNCILS**



**STATE/
TERRITORY
PARLIAMENTS**



**FEDERAL
PARLIAMENT**

Curriculum links

Year 5 (ACHASSI105)	Year 8 (ACHCS073)
Year 6 (ACHASSK144) (ACHASSI133)	Year 9 (ACHCS088)
Year 7 (ACHCK048) (ACHCS059)	Year 10 (ACHCS101)

Scenarios for younger students:

Bushfires in Tasmania

After a dry winter, a fire danger rating of 'extreme' has been declared across the state of Tasmania. Weather conditions are hot and windy, meaning that the danger could be upgraded to 'catastrophic' very quickly. Small fires have broken out near St Helen's (population 1500) and may spread.

Olympics in Perth

Perth has won the bid to host the next summer Olympic Games. Athletes will be coming from all over the world to compete, and up to 2 million people may visit the city to watch the games.

Student protests in Brisbane

Thousands of students are taking to the streets in Brisbane to protest standardised testing in schools. The planned protest march will go all day and may disrupt traffic in the centre of the city.

Cyclone in the Northern Territory

A category 4 cyclone is just days away from the Northern Territory. It is going to hit Darwin, which has a population of more than 100 000 people. The winds are strong enough to damage buildings, and the cyclone is likely to cause flooding across the city.

Scenarios for older students:

Centenary of Parliament moving to Canberra

More than 500 000 people will visit Australia's capital to celebrate the centenary of the federal Parliament's move from Melbourne to Canberra. Celebrations will occur throughout the month of May, and include visits by important people.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Adelaide

The heads of the governments of the 56 nations that make up the Commonwealth will be meeting in Adelaide. The meeting will also be attended by members of the royal family and, of course, a large number of protestors.

Flooding in Sydney

Severe weather has caused flooding in the centre of Sydney, affecting around 1 million people. Shops, businesses and government buildings are affected, as well as roads and the public transport system.

Explosions in Melbourne

A series of explosions has occurred in the city of Melbourne—the Victorian Parliament, Flinders Street Station, and the Bourke Street Mall have all been targeted. People are panicking and the public transport system has been shut down.

EXPLORING THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Resource list

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Australian Defence Force (Army, Navy, Air Force) | <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Emergency Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Ambulances and paramedics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customs officials | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental scientists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road maintenance crews | <input type="checkbox"/> Miners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration and visa staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Tax officials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctors and nurses | <input type="checkbox"/> Waste removal services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telstra | <input type="checkbox"/> Event coordinators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism operators | <input type="checkbox"/> Building inspectors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbers and sewerage experts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign makers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry and fisheries rangers | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction crews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historians | <input type="checkbox"/> Librarians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighters | <input type="checkbox"/> RSPCA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trucks and truck drivers | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone operators |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Australia Post |

Three levels table

FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL
The Australian Defense Force (Army, Navy, Air Force)	State Emergency Service	Plumbers and sewerage experts
Telstra	Firefighters	Librarians
Australian Federal Police	Police	Building inspectors
Immigration and visa staff	Trucks and truck drivers	Event coordinators
Customs officials	Doctors and nurses	Sign makers
Tax officials	Road construction crews	RSPCA
Australia Post	Ambulances and paramedics	Waste removal services
Telephone operators	Teachers	Construction crews
Historians	Forestry and fisheries rangers	Road maintenance crews
Environmental scientists	Miners	
	Farmers	
	Electrical grid workers	
	Tourism operators	

STARTING A PETITION

How can we make a difference?

Encourage your students to be active citizens and have their voices heard in their school, local community, or in Parliament.



Investigating petitions

- 1 With your class, complete the following activities:
 - Read the Petitions fact sheet on the PEO website to find out about the history of petitions and how they work in the Australian Parliament.
 - Use the Federal Parliament history timeline on the PEO website to learn about the Yirrkala Petitions in 1963. You may also like to research other historic petitions, including those that have been presented to your state or territory parliament.

Activity

- 2 Divide the class into pairs.
- 3 Set a timer and tell the students they have 10 minutes to identify:
 - An issue within the school
 - A potential solution.

Each pair writes their solution in the form of a request at the top of a piece of paper. This is their petition.
- 4 Once all the pairs have their petitions ready, put the petitions up on the walls or on tables around the room and give the class a few minutes to look at the ideas on the petitions and decide which ones to sign. Each student may sign a maximum of 3 petitions, so they must choose carefully.

What happened?

- 5 At the end of the activity, return the petitions to their writers. Ask each pair to share their ideas and how many signatures their petition received.
- 6 Discuss why some ideas got more signatures than others and ask students to share why they signed some petitions and not others.
- 7 How could students make changes to their petition to get more signatures?

Reflection

Petitions are one way to raise awareness or inspire action around the issue. What else can citizens do to highlight issues of concern?



This petition of undersigned citizens of Australia calls on the Australian government to end the export of live animals from Australia to the Middle East.

Curriculum links

Year 5 (ACHASSK118) (ACHASSI104)
Year 6 (ACHASSI132)
Year 8 (ACHCK062) (ACHCS074)
Year 9 (ACHCK079) (ACHCS089)

MAKING A LAW IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OR SENATE

Why do we need laws in Australia and how are they made?

Turn your class into a parliament and find out!



Activity materials

- Black jackets for the Speaker, Clerk and Serjeant-at Arms
- Mace (House of Representatives) or Black Rod (Senate)
- Bell

Download and print from the Classroom activities section of PEO website (PEO.gov.au):

- Write your own bill template **OR**
- one of the Scripts for the **House of Representatives** **OR**
- **Senate**
- the Master script and the Seating plans.

Preparing to make a law

Topic for debate

- 1 Choose an issue relevant to your students and to their studies, such as the amount of homework students are required to do.
- 2 As a class, develop a plan to address the issue, such as to ban homework. This plan will be your bill.
- 3 Write the name of the bill and its purpose on page 1 of the Write your own bill template from the PEO website. For example, The No Homework Bill: A bill for an Act to ban homework in all Australian schools.
- 4 Decide in which chamber – either the **House of Representatives** or **Senate** – you will first introduce the bill and set up your room to match the Seating plan (page 12) of the chamber you choose.

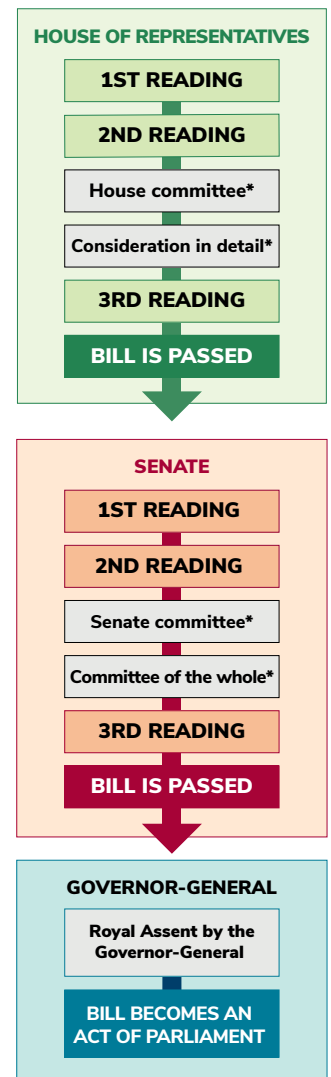
Write speeches (optional)

- Government members will support the bill,
- Opposition members will disagree with the bill,
- Independents and minor party members can choose to support, oppose or suggest changes to the bill.

If you use the same bill to debate in the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate**, you could have some students make speeches in the **House of Representatives** and some in the **Senate**.



Passage of a bill



*optional stage

Making a law (House of Representatives/ Senate) instructions

- 5 The Clerk rings the bell and instructs the members/senators to stand.
- 6 The Serjeant-at-Arms/Usher leads the Speaker/President into the chamber, carrying the Mace/Black Rod
- 7 The Serjeant-at-Arms/Usher announces the Speaker/President and moves to their seat.
- 8 The Speaker/President tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.
- 9 The Clerk stands and reads the rules of the chamber and the title of the bill (first reading).
- 10 The minister introduces the bill and the shadow minister responds to the bill.
- 11 The Speaker/President selects members/senators to make speeches, alternating between government and non-government.
- 12 When the debate is finished, the Speaker/President announces the vote. Government and opposition members/senators will vote with their team. The crossbench will choose a side.
- 13 The whips count the number of people on their side and tell the Speaker/President. The Speaker/President declares the result.
- 14 If the government wins the vote, the Clerk reads the title of the bill again (second reading).
- 15 The Speaker/President adjourns the House/Senate.
- 16 The Serjeant-at-Arms/Usher takes the Mace/Black Rod and leads the Speaker/President from the chamber.

Curriculum links

Year 5 (ACHASSI099) (ACHASSI104)
Year 6 (ACHASSK146) (ACHASSI127)
Year 8 (ACHCK063)
Year 10 (ACHCS099)

What happened?

- 17 Discuss what happened in your House of Representatives/Senate. Did the bill pass? Why or why not?
- 18 Discuss what other steps the bill needs to go through to become a law.
- 19 If you have time, repeat the above process with your class in the other house.

Reflection

After your class has debated a bill in one or both houses, explore the following questions:

- 20 If the government has a majority in the House of Representatives and will win a vote a bill, why is it important for the opposition and crossbench to participate in the debate?
- 21 Parliamentary debates are public, they are broadcast on television, radio, and the internet, they are recorded in the Hansard and reported on in the media. Why? How would our country be different if Parliament made laws in secret?
- 22 Why do we need laws in Australia?
- 23 Why is it important for the Australian people to choose members of Parliament to make decisions? What kind of person would you vote for?
- 24 How might members of the public get involved in the democratic process? Why would they want to?

MAKING A LAW IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OR SENATE

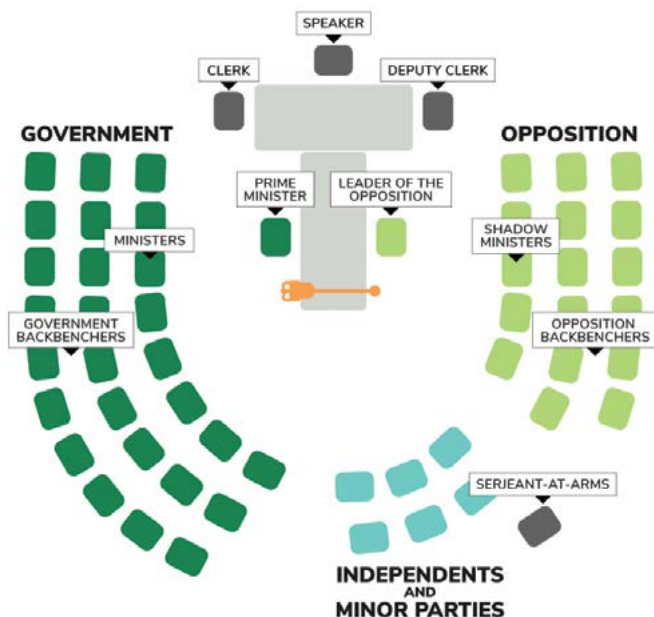
Allocate roles according to which house you have chosen

	House of Representatives	Senate
Minor party members/ independents	2 to 3 students	A quarter of your class
Government	More than half of your students (even after all other roles are allocated)	Half of the remaining students
Opposition	Remaining students	The other half of the remaining students
Government leader	The Prime Minister	The Leader of the Government in the Senate
Opposition leader	The Leader of the Opposition	The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
Party whips	A team manager each for the government and opposition	A team manager each for the government and opposition
Minister (government)	A minister for the relevant portfolio to introduce the bill—for example, the Minister for Education	A minister for the relevant portfolio to introduce the bill—for example, the Minister for Education
Shadow minister (opposition)	A shadow minister – same portfolio to respond to the minister's speech	A shadow minister – same portfolio to respond to the minister's speech
Meeting chair*	Speaker	President of the Senate
Parliamentary officers*	Clerk of the House of Representatives Serjeant-at-Arms (will need a mace to carry)	Clerk of the Senate Usher of the Black Rod (will need a Black Rod to carry)

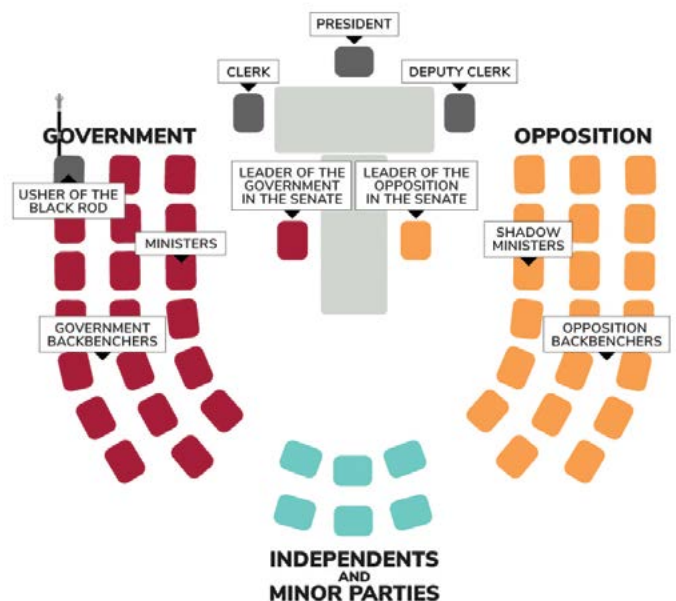
*These students can write speeches, but will not deliver them.

Chamber seating plans

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



SENATE



RUNNING A SOCIAL MEDIA ELECTION CAMPAIGN

How can candidates connect with voters?

Experience a modern election campaign in your classroom.



- ① As a class, choose 4 or 5 issues that are important to the students. For example, you may like to look at issues related to the health or education of rural and remote youth, job opportunities for young people or environmental issues that impact upon your local area.
- ② Ask students to work individually or in small groups to come up with ideas to deal with 2 or 3 of the chosen issues. For example, they may decide to increase funding for sports programs in rural schools, or to ban fishing in marine parks.
- ③ The next step is for students to decide how to advertise their ideas to the people of Australia. Many candidates and parliamentarians use social media, such as Facebook or Instagram. Ask the students to choose 1 or 2 social media platforms.
- ④ Posts need to fit the platform constraints. For example, Instagram posts need a picture or video. Ask students to design between 3 and 5 posts explaining their ideas.
- ⑤ Ask students to present their social media posts. Put the posts on a wall in the classroom. Give each student 3 to 5 post-it notes to 'like' and comment on other students' posts.
- ⑥ As a class, discuss the following questions:
 - Why did the students choose the sites they did? Who was their intended audience?
 - How effective is social media as a tool for political messages? Who does it reach? Who does it leave out? If there are people it doesn't reach, how might a candidate or parliamentarian reach those people?
 - What are the risks to candidates and parliamentarians when using social media platforms?
 - How can students and other members of the community find out who their representatives are, at the local, state and federal levels of government?
 - How can the students use social media to engage with their representatives and with their community? Discuss examples of social media campaigns which have had an impact on the community or the world.



This activity does not include holding an election. For information and resources on class elections please go to education.aec.gov.au/getvoting

Curriculum links

Year 5	(ACHASSK116)
Year 6	(ACHASSK145)
Year 8	(ACHCK061)
Year 9	(ACHCK076)

RESEARCHING THROUGH A COMMITTEE

How does the Parliament investigate issues?

Organise your class into a committee and find out!



This works as an extension activity to *Making a law in the House of Representatives* or *Senate*.

You may like to watch the Role-play the Parliament (Committee) video on the PEO website.

Topic for investigation

- 1 Choose a topic relevant to your students and their studies, such as the environment. As a group decide which aspect of this topic will be investigated, for example Australian animals at risk of becoming extinct. List 3 or 4 focus questions the committee will investigate, for example:
 - how many Australian animals are endangered?
 - what are the wider environmental consequences of animals becoming extinct?
 - How effective are efforts to save native habitats?

If you're stuck for ideas, use the *Voting Age Bill* script from the classroom activities section of PEO website (PEO.gov.au).

Choosing witness groups

- 2 As a class, discuss who might want to present their viewpoints to the committee, for example government departments, Greenpeace, National Farmers' Federation, Zoo and Aquarium Association, Forestry Union. These groups are called witness groups. Decide which witness groups your committee will question in order to hear a variety of views on the issue.

Establishing committee and witness groups

- 3 Choose 5 or 6 students to be committee members and appoint one of them as Chair. This person will run the inquiry. Divide the rest of the students into witness groups, with 3 to 5 students per group. They will answer questions from the committee.
- 4 Encourage students to understand that:
 - members of Parliament are there to ask questions and to investigate. They do not argue with witness groups, they just want information
 - witness groups may want to persuade the committee to agree with their view. They should support their ideas with evidence.

Research

- 5 The activity works best when students have enough time to research the topic of investigation in some detail. Give your witness groups time to research and prepare evidence that supports their point of view, and to write a short opening statement. Witness group statements and the committee report can be used for assessment.
- 6 Ask the committee to do broad research into the topic and to prepare questions to ask the witness groups. The questions for each witness group should be relevant to that group and should aim to get answers to their focus questions.

Set up room

- Turn the classroom into a committee room by arranging chairs and tables like this:

Running the committee inquiry

If you are using the Voting Age Bill from the website, you can follow this process in the master script.

- The committee chair starts the hearing by introducing the purpose of the committee, listing the focus questions and the witness groups and inviting the first witness group to make its opening statement.
- The witness groups take turns presenting their opening statement and answering questions from the committee members. Make sure each witness group gets a fair share of the committee's time.
- The committee session finishes when each witness group has presented.

The committee report

- Ask the committee to prepare 3 to 5 recommendations based on the evidence they have heard. These recommendations should outline what the committee thinks Parliament should do about the issue they have investigated. Ask the committee to present their recommendations to the class.

What happened?

- Review the committee process with your class and discuss the following questions:
 - Did the committee's recommendations reflect the information they were given by the witness groups?
 - Was the committee's report unanimous or was there disagreement amongst the committee?

Curriculum links

Year 6 (ACHASSK146)

Year 8 (ACHCK063)

Committee seating plan



Students participating in a PEO committee role-play at Parliament House.

CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

Does the Australian Constitution need to be changed?



Hold a referendum and let your class decide.



Activity materials

- Coloured paper
- Box (for the ballots)

Getting started

- 1 Review the referendum process. The infographic on the next page has some information. Additional information can be found on the PEO website and the AEC website.
- 2 Choose a question for your referendum. You may like to use one from a previous referendum—such as religious freedom or fixed parliamentary terms—or write your own question on a topical issue—such as press freedom on whether federal elections should be held every five years. Ensure that your question is specifically worded to change the Constitution.

Yes/No cases

- 3 Divide the class into an even number of small groups of 3 to 4 students and assign each group to research either the 'YES' or the 'NO' case for the question the class has chosen. Ensure you have the same number of 'YES' and 'NO' groups.
- 4 Give the students time to research the question and put together their case.
- 5 Combine each 'YES' group with a 'NO' group and ask them to write a pamphlet that presents each case equally. The length of the pamphlet will depend on the year level of the class and the time available.
- 6 Have each group present their pamphlets to the class so all student have a chance to understand the arguments and consider the question carefully.

Referendum

In a referendum, each vote is counted twice: once as part of the national count and once as part of their state count. Australia has 6 states but for this activity your class will have 3 and—just like the real states—each will have a different population.

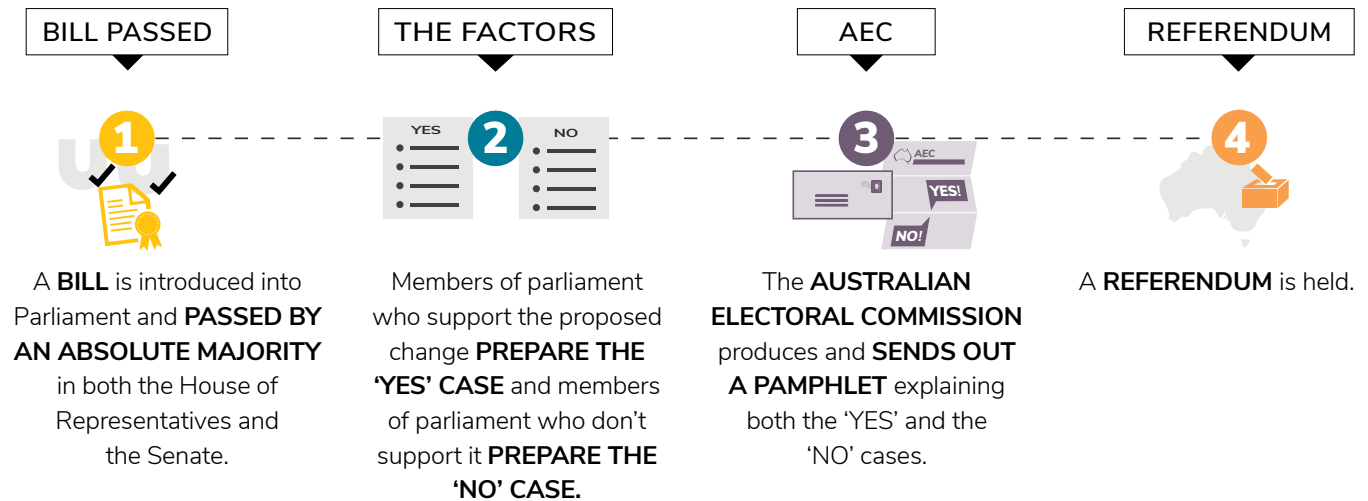
- 7 Divide the class into 3 state groups to vote, assigning each group a colour.
 - Yellow—more than half the students
 - Red—2 to 3 students
 - Blue—remaining students.
- 8 Give each student a slip of coloured paper and write the question on the board, or use the ballot paper template on the PEO website to create your own ballot papers.
- 9 Students vote by writing either 'YES' or 'NO' on their ballot paper. Keep the ballot papers for each state group separate.
- 10 Count the votes 1 state group at a time with 2 scrutineers checking the count.
- 11 Using the voting table, tally the number of 'YES' and 'NO' votes for each state group.
- 12 Determine the YES/NO result for each state group. A tied vote is a no.
- 13 Did a majority of your students vote yes? Did at least 2 of your 3 state groups vote yes? If you answered yes to both questions, you have a double majority and have made a change to the Constitution. If not, no change to the Constitution has been made.

Curriculum links

Year 7 (ACHCK049)

Year 9 (ACHCS089)

How to change the Constitution



Referendum result tally

	Yellow	Blue	Red	TOTAL
NUMBER OF YES VOTES				
NUMBER OF NO VOTES				
YES OR NO				

Double majority? Yes / No

What happened?

- 14 Discuss with the class what happened in your referendum. Has the Constitution now been changed? Will the new system be adopted?
- 15 Using the double-majority graphic, explain that in Australia, a double majority is needed to change the Constitution—that is, a majority of voters in a majority of states as well as a majority of all Australians.
- 16 Explain that in Australia's history only 8 of 45 proposed changes to the Constitution have been agreed to. As a class discuss:
 - Why have most referendums been unsuccessful?
 - Should there be another way to change Australia's Constitution? If so, what should it be?

Double majority



SCENARIO ONE

- ✓ Majority of Australian voters
- ✓ Majority of voters in at least four states
- ✓ **CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION**



SCENARIO TWO

- ✗ Majority of Australian voters
- ✓ Majority of voters in at least four states
- ✗ **DON'T CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION**



SCENARIO THREE

- ✓ Majority of Australian voters
- ✗ Majority of voters in at least four states
- ✗ **DON'T CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION**

CREATING A NEW FEDERATION

What would Australia look like if we designed it now?

Give your students a chance to write a new constitution for a new federation.



- 1 Organise the class into groups using the *Group organisation information* (page 19) as a guide. Each group will represent a different colony.
- 2 Ask each group to decide between proposed projects (listed below). Which one will be best for the people in their colony? The federal government will only be able to afford to undertake one of these, and each group must vote as a block.
 - A A high-speed rail line between Melbourne and Sydney; or
 - B A hydro-electric dam in Tasmania; or
 - C Desalination plants for Adelaide, Brisbane, and Perth.
- 3 Vote, tally the votes and announce which project will go ahead.
- 4 Discuss with the class what happened in the activity.
 - If project B or C was chosen, were all the representatives voting to benefit their colony?
 - If project A was chosen, who benefits from it, and why was it chosen?Then discuss how the students felt about the vote.
 - Was everyone's voice heard?
 - Was it fair?
- 5 Tell the students how the authors of the Australian Constitution solved the challenge of creating a fair system of representation by having a bi-cameral parliament with a House of Representatives and a Senate. Law-making power was also divided between the states and the federal Parliament, and they included a High Court to resolve disagreements. Ask your students to share their opinions of our current parliamentary organisation.
 - What are the pros and cons?
 - What could be improved?
- 6 Organise the class into pairs or small groups. Ask students to use the *Constitutional options scaffold* (page 20) to design a constitution for a new federation.
- 7 Invite students to share the key points of their new constitution with the class.
- 8 If you have time, organise the students into their original groups from step 1. Ask them to discuss the merits of each new constitution and to vote on their preferred one. Then discuss why each group chose a particular constitution and how they believe it will benefit the people of the new nation.

Group organisation

Colony	Percentage	If there are 30 students in your class
New South Wales	35% of the class	10
Victoria	30% of the class	9
Queensland	15% of the class	5
South Australia	10% of the class	3
Western Australia	5% of the class (or at least one student)	2
Tasmania	5% of the class (or at least one student)	1

If your class is too small, you can either ensure a majority of students are representing New South Wales and Victoria, or you may choose to put students into 6 roughly equal groups, but give each group a vote value according to the above numbers. For example, New South Wales would have 35 votes and Tasmania would have 5.

The above percentages are based on the population of each colony in 1901. You may wish to explain that these figures, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, did not include Indigenous Australians or non-white immigrants, as they were not counted in the census at that time.

Curriculum links

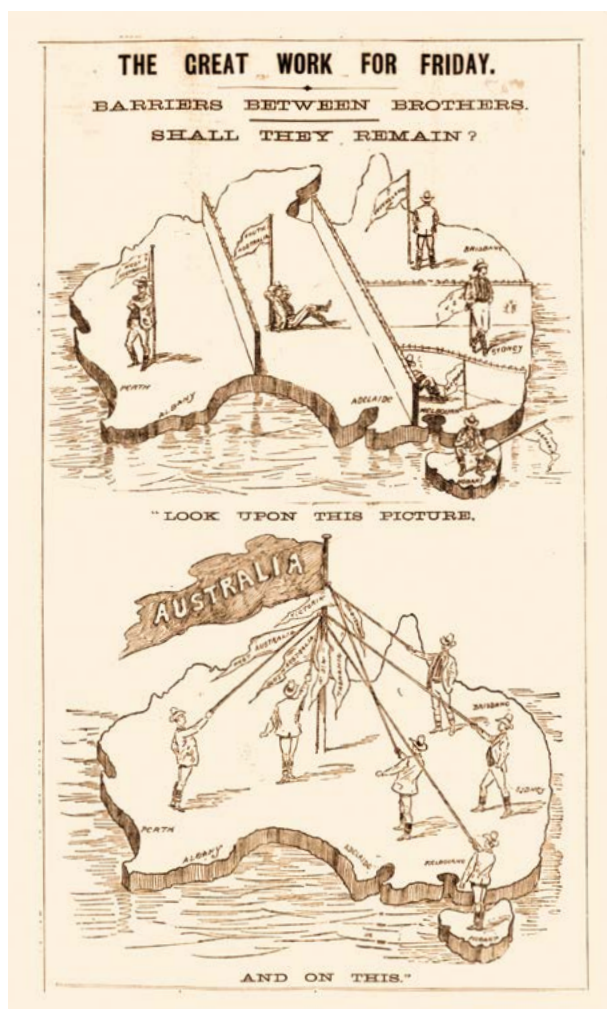
Year 6 (ACHASSI127)

Year 7 (ACHCK048) (ACHCS057)

Year 8 (ACHCS071)

Year 9 (ACHCS085) (ACHCS086)

Year 10 (ACHCS099)



A cartoon published in *The Argus* newspaper in 1898 urged colonists to federate.

CREATING A NEW FEDERATION

Constitutional options

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Create your own
Levels of government	Three levels – federal, state, and local	Two levels – federal and local	Two levels – federal and state	
Head of State	Hereditary monarchy	Appointed by the parliament	Elected by the people	
Executive government	Appointed by the Prime Minister from among elected representatives in their party	Appointed by the Head of State, may or may not be elected representatives	Made up of the Head of State, the Prime Minister and elected representatives from across the parliament	
Parliamentary structure	Bi-cameral – 2 chambers	Single chamber	Two chambers plus an advisory body appointed by the parliament or the head of state	
Parliamentary powers	Power to make laws on a limited number of topics, with remaining issues left to the other levels of government	Power to make laws on any topic, but also to delegate power to the other levels of government	Power to allow or disallow laws made by the other levels of government	
Election frequency	Elections to be held on a regular schedule	Elections to be held when decided by the head of state	Elections to be held when decided by the parliament or government	
Representation	Based on population, with each representative responsible for a similar number of voters	Proportional, with each representative sharing an electorate with a number of other representatives	Based on state or local government areas, with each electorate having the same number of representatives regardless of population	
Courts	Judges and justices appointed by the government or the parliament	Judges and justices appointed by the head of state	Judges and justices elected by the people	
Changing the constitution	Referendum of the people	Decision of the parliament	Decision of the head of state	

RESOURCES

Continue your students' parliamentary studies with these resources.



PEO.gov.au

Here you'll find even more immersive classroom activities (like the ones in this book), whole units of work aligned to the Australian Curriculum, videos for teachers on how to run the law-making and committee activities, fun quizzes and interactives. We also have other resources that you can order for your school.



APH.gov.au

Check out the Australian Parliament House website for current committee inquiries, the Parliamentary Library, and Hansard—the written record of what is said in Parliament. You can also watch parliamentary debates live!



AEC.gov.au

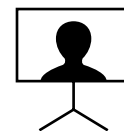
Navigate your way to the education section of the Australian Electoral Commission website to find lesson plans, teacher resources and their fantastic Get Voting kit—everything you need to run a free and fair election for your class or school.



More from the PEO

Digital programs

Our programs give students the opportunity to speak with experts and explore how Parliament works to make Australia a better place to live. Our curriculum-aligned programs explore the function and significance of Australia's democratic system of government.



Teacher professional learning

The Parliamentary Education Office provides free, accredited, professional learning for teachers and pre-service teachers. Our programs align with the Australian Curriculum, and help teachers deliver informative and engaging parliamentary and civics and citizenship curriculum for their students.



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