

# THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



- 1 Speaker
- 2 Prime Minister
- 3 Ministers
- 4 Government backbenchers

- 5 Leader of the Opposition
- 6 Shadow ministers
- 7 Opposition backbenchers

- 8 Clerk
- 9 Deputy Clerk
- 10 Serjeant-at-Arms
- 11 Mace
- 12 Hansard editor





# THE SENATE



- 1** President
- 2** Leader of the Government in the Senate
- 3** Ministers
- 4** Government backbenchers
- 5** Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
- 6** Shadow ministers
- 7** Opposition backbenchers

- 8** Clerk
- 9** Deputy Clerk
- 10** Usher of the Black Rod
- 11** Black Rod
- 12** Hansard editor

Elected senators      Parliamentary officials



# Who is responsible for Australia's democracy?

**Don't be a sheep**  
**Learn. Engage. Act.**

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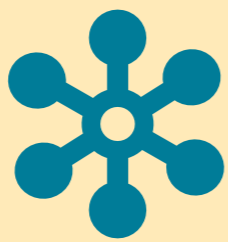




# WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy means rule by the people. The word comes from the ancient Greek words 'demos' (the people) and 'kratos' (to rule). A democratic country has a system of government in which the people have the power to participate in decision-making. Each democracy is unique and works in different ways.

Australia's democracy is supported by four key ideas



ACTIVE AND ENGAGED CITIZENS



AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY



FREE AND FRANCHISED ELECTIONS



THE RULE OF LAW FOR BOTH CITIZENS AND THE GOVERNMENT

## ACTIVE AND ENGAGED CITIZENS

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?



## AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY

Everyone gets to have a say

- What are some freedoms you think are important in your school community?
- 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?
- How might Australia be different if we were not a democracy?



## FREE AND FRANCHISED ELECTIONS

We get to choose who makes 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?
- 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?



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WHAT IS

**DEMOCRACY?**







## WHAT IS THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION?

AN ACT  
TO  
Constitute the Commonwealth of Australia.

Parliament House Art Collection,  
Art Services Parliament House

### THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION IS THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE OF OUR NATION

- The Constitution:
  - took effect on 1 January 1901 on the day Australia became a nation
  - describes how the British colonies of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia came together to form our nation.
- Before the British colonies were established, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had lived on these lands and practiced traditional cultures and languages for at least 60 000 years.

The Constitution is the set of rules by which Australia is run.



### WHAT ARE THE KEY FEATURES OF THE CONSTITUTION?

- It defines the Australian Parliament as having 3 parts:
  - the King (represented by the Governor-General)
  - the Senate
  - the House of Representatives.
- The Constitution lists the areas the Australian Parliament can make laws about. Any area not listed is the responsibility of the state and territory parliaments.
- The High Court of Australia interprets the Constitution to resolve disagreements about federal and state law-making powers.

The Constitution has 128 sections and is divided into 8 chapters.



### HOW CAN THE CONSTITUTION BE CHANGED?

- Ideas to change the Constitution can come from the government, members of parliament, community groups and individuals.
- A proposed change must first be approved by the Australian Parliament before being voted on by Australians in a referendum.
- A referendum is passed if it is approved by a majority of voters in a majority of states, and by a majority of voters across the nation. This is known as a double majority.

In 1977, the Constitution was changed to allow territory voters to participate in referendums.



### DID YOU KNOW?

- Edmund Barton became the first Prime Minister of Australia in January 1901. The first federal elections for the new Australian Parliament were held in March 1901.
- Parliament met in Melbourne while the site for a national capital was selected.
- The Constitution still includes provisions for New Zealand to join Australia as its seventh state.



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### WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE CONSTITUTION?

- The Prime Minister and Cabinet are not mentioned. These roles are based on customs taken from the British system of government.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not recognised as the traditional custodians of the land.
- Many of the rights of the Australian people are not outlined. Most of our rights are protected by common law (made by courts) and laws made by Parliament.

Tradition and conventions guide much of how the Australian Parliament and government works.



George Lohman/The Sydney Morning Herald

### HAS THE CONSTITUTION EVER BEEN CHANGED?

- Yes! Australians have agreed to 8 out of 45 proposed changes to the Constitution. For example they gave the Australian Parliament the power to:
  - provide social and welfare payments (1946)
  - make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and include them in the national population count (1967)
  - set a retirement age for federal court judges (1977).

The Constitution can only be changed with the approval of the Australian people.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why do you think Australia needs a set of rules like the Constitution?
2. What change would you make to the Constitution? How would you convince people to vote for this change in a referendum?
3. Why do you think Australian voters were given the final say about changing the Constitution rather than the Parliament?
4. Hold a class discussion to create a constitution for your classroom. What rules would you include? Why are they important to you?



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Scan for the Constitution quiz on the PEO website and Kahoot.

