



Teacher Resource

Federal Election Special

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN Federal Election special as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

Meet the Candidates

1. What are the two major political parties in Australia? Who are the leaders of the parties?
2. Who is Australia's current prime minister?
3. What was Anthony Albanese's childhood like?
4. Who is the leader of the opposition?
5. What jobs did Peter Dutton have before becoming a politician?
6. If you could ask Anthony Albanese or Peter Dutton a question, what would it be?

Preferential Voting

1. Explain to another student how preferential voting works.
2. To be elected using the preferential voting system a candidate must win...
 - a. 50% of the votes
 - b. 50% of the votes plus 1
 - c. 100% of the votes
3. How are votes counted in the preferential voting system?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of preferential voting? Create a T Chart.
5. What questions do you have about the preferential voting story?

Electoral Commission

1. Summarise the federal election process.
2. Who is responsible for running elections in Australia?
3. Where can people vote in the election? Give an example.
4. What is the name of the document that is issued at the start of the election process?
 - a. The writ
 - b. The ballot paper
 - c. The Constitution
5. What is the name of the document used for voting?

EPISODE 10

29 April 2025

KEY LEARNING

Students will learn more about the voting process, including an understanding of how preferential voting works. They will develop a persuasive argument for or against lowering the voting age in Australia to 16 and explore the meanings of key election words.

CURRICULUM

HASS – Year 5

The key values and features of Australia's democracy, including elections, and the roles and responsibilities of elected representatives.

Sequence information about people's lives, events, developments and phenomena using a variety of methods including timelines.

HASS – Year 6

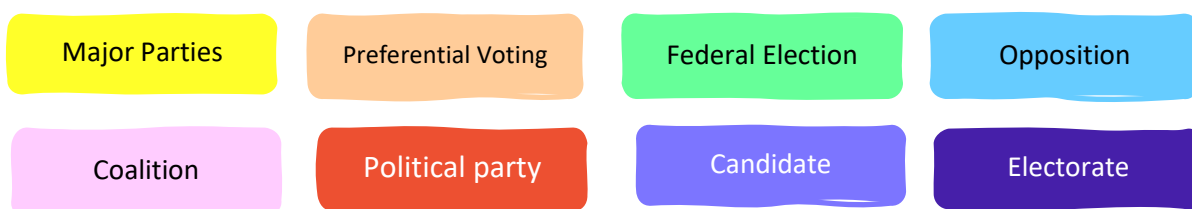
The key institutions of Australia's system of government, how it is based on the Westminster system, and the key values and beliefs of Western democracies.

Voting Age

1. How old do you have to be to vote in a federal election?
2. For a long time in Australia, the minimum voting age was 21. True or false?
3. Why do some people think the voting age should be lowered to 16?
4. Why are some people against the idea of lowering the voting age?
5. Do you think the voting age should be lowered to 16 in Australia? Why or why not?

Activity: Key words

Students will brainstorm a list of key words that relate to the BTN Election Special. Here are some words to get them started. Students can find election related words in newspapers with election coverage or online articles. Here are some words to get students started.



Ask students to write what they think is the meaning of each word (including unfamiliar words). They will swap definitions with a partner and ask them to add to or change the definition. Check these against the dictionary definition.

Additional glossary words

- Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)
- Ballot
- First-past-the-post
- Opinion poll
- Democracy
- Donkey vote
- Preferences
- Suffrage
- House of Representatives
- Senate
- Safe, fairly safe and marginal seats

Further activity

- Create a word search using your glossary words.
- Create your own quiz and test your classmates. Students can make their quizzes in [Kahoot](#) or [Quizizz](#). Make it fun, engaging, and educational!
- In your own words, write a sentence for one or more of the terms in your glossary.



Activity: Party Leaders

Students will imagine they are given the opportunity to interview the leader of one of Australia's political parties. Their task is to write a list of interview questions that they would like to ask the leader of the party. Students need to remember to write open-ended questions. Open-ended questions have no right or wrong answer and can't be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'.

Before writing their interview questions, students will need to think about the following:

- Who are the candidates for the main political parties in the 2025 Federal Election? Take a look at the PEO's [Who's who in the current parliament](#) to learn more.
- What are the main political parties in Australia? How are they similar or different?
- What issues would you like to ask about in your interview?
- Choose a topic that is important to you and your school community. What do you want the leader of the party to do about it?

Activity: Preferential voting

After watching the BTN Preferential Voting story hold a class discussion to find out what your students have learnt and what questions they have about the topic. Students can then choose one research question to learn more about preferential voting.

Discuss

- Have you ever had to vote for someone or something? What was the process?
- How are student representatives elected in your school?
- Who can vote in Australia?
- What is the preferential voting system?
- What are the advantages of preferential voting? Are there any disadvantages?

Research

- Compare the first-past-the-post voting system and preferential voting.
- Why does Australia use the preferential voting system?
- Why do minor parties like the preferential voting system?
- What does absolute majority mean?
- Do you think compulsory voting and the secret ballot are important to the voting system? Give reasons for your answer.

Hands on activity

To learn more about how preferential voting works students will design their own ballot for a fun class election (for example favourite class activity, food, or movie). Before starting the activity watch this [video](#) (YouTube) made by the Australian Electoral Commission to learn about how preferential voting works.



Preferential voting (Source: [AEC – YouTube](#))

Discuss the video as a class using the following questions to find out what your students learnt.

- What are some examples of times when you vote? Give an example.
- Why is it called a secret ballot?
- What is a ballot paper?
- What are 2 different ways that votes can be counted?
- What is the difference between a simple majority and an absolute majority?
- How many votes do you need for an absolute majority?

Begin the activity

For this activity you will need the following:

- Design a ballot paper (listing at least 4 candidates)
- A box to place the votes
- A tally sheet to count the votes (use your class whiteboard to display)

Students will cast their votes in order of preference (1st, 2nd, 3rd etc) using the ballot paper they have designed. Students will use a secret ballot system of voting and place their completed ballot papers in a box. Students will then count the votes using the preferential counting method. Use the class white board to tally the votes using the preferential counting method. Continue counting/transferring the votes until you have reached an absolute majority. Refer to the AEC's [Instructions for counting](#).

Reflection on the activity

- Was the result what you expected?
- Did anyone's 2nd or 3rd choice help decide the winner?
- How is this system fairer than a simple majority?

Practise voting – House of Representatives and the Senate

Provide students with the opportunity to [practise voting](#) using a sample ballot paper provided by the Australian Electoral Commission. The AEC provides sample ballot papers to vote in the [House of Representatives](#) (green ballot paper) and the [Senate](#) (white ballot paper).

The image displays two sample Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) ballot papers. The left paper is a House of Representatives ballot paper for the State Electoral Division of Division Name. It features a list of candidates with boxes for numbering 1 to 8 in the order of choice. The right paper is a Senate Ballot Paper for the State – Election of 6 Senators. It features a list of candidates with boxes for numbering 1 to 6. Both papers include instructions on how to vote and a 'SAMPLE' watermark.

Ballot Papers (Source – [AEC](#))

Activity: Run your own election

Running an election for your class provides the opportunity for students to participate in the democratic process of choosing representatives for a range of purposes. Students will run their own election and investigate how the preferential voting system works.

Begin by watching the [Making your vote count](#) animation for an explanation of the different voting systems used to elect representatives. Watch [this animation](#) to learn about the difference between first-past-the-post and preferential voting system. Students can test their knowledge in the [Voting Challenge Quiz](#).

Visit the Australian Electoral Commission's [Get Voting website](#). Get Voting is everything you need to run a free and fair election for your class.



Activity: Voting Age

Before watching the BTN Voting Age story facilitate a class discussion asking students the following question.

How old do you think someone should be to vote? Why?

In pairs, students will respond to the question, recording their ideas on a piece of paper. Ask some volunteers in the class to share their thoughts. Follow on this discussion with a quick classroom poll “Should 16-year-olds be allowed to vote in elections?”.

After watching the BTN Voting Age story record what students already know and what they have learnt about voting. What questions do they have about voting and elections? Use the following questions to help guide discussion.

- Have you ever voted for something? Think of different situations where you have been able to have your vote. For example, in the classroom with hands-up voting, at home in family decisions or at clubs voting for new members.
- Who can vote at an election?
- How old do you have to be to vote in Australia?
- Is voting compulsory in Australia?
- How has people’s right to vote changed over the years?
- Is voting important? Give reasons for your answer.



Glossary

Create your own classroom glossary about voting. Start by brainstorming words as a class using a mind map to record your responses. Add to your list of words by downloading the BTN Voting Age story transcript and highlighting all the words that relate to voting. Find definitions for each word. Here are some words to get students started.

BALLOT BOX	CAMPAIGN	ELECTORATE
POLITICAL PARTY	ELECTORAL ROLL	ELECTION

Further activities for students:

- Choose one word/term from your glossary. Find a definition for the word and explore its meaning in more detail. Explain the meaning of the word or term to your classmates. Use examples to help explain the word's meaning.
- Visit the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) for a [glossary](#) to browse or search the meanings of key parliamentary terms.

Flowchart

Create a flowchart which shows the steps in the voting system. You could use Australia's federal voting system, or a voting system that your school might use.

Timeline

Research the history of voting in Australia and record significant events on a timeline. Which dates on the timeline do you think are especially significant? Why?

Opinion Poll

Students will conduct their own opinion poll on the issue of lowering the voting age. Working in groups, students will need to decide who their sample group will be and how many people will be polled.

- What method they will use to conduct the poll? (Face to face interviews or written responses).
- Ask students to graph the opinion poll results and display in the classroom. Students can reflect on how reliable they think the results were. What would they do differently next time?
- Students may want to film their interviews and then create a movie to present to other students.



Persuasive Text

Students will explore the issue of changing the voting age in Australia and develop a **persuasive text** for or against the following statement: *The voting age should be lowered to 16*. Encourage students to research the issue using a range of sources. The following may help students to structure their argument.

Tips

- Who is your audience? For example, are you directing your argument at kids, teachers, or politicians?
- Explore how language choices can have a big impact on persuading your audience.
- Which language devices give the report credibility and authority?
- Which are designed to create an emotional response in the listener?
- Provide facts and evidence to support your argument.
- Write in the present tense.
- Check your spelling and punctuation.

Use this *Read Write Think* [persuasion map](#) to plan your exposition text.

Introduction

- What is the point you are trying to argue?
Construct an introductory paragraph which states the issue or topic.
- Introduce the arguments that will be developed in the body of the text.

Body

- Construct arguments that support your point of view.
- Each paragraph starts with a topic sentence which introduces each point.
- The rest of the paragraph gives more reasons.
- Arguments can be ordered from strongest to weakest.

Conclusion

- Restate your position on the argument.
- Construct a concluding paragraph that provides a summary of your arguments and a call to action.

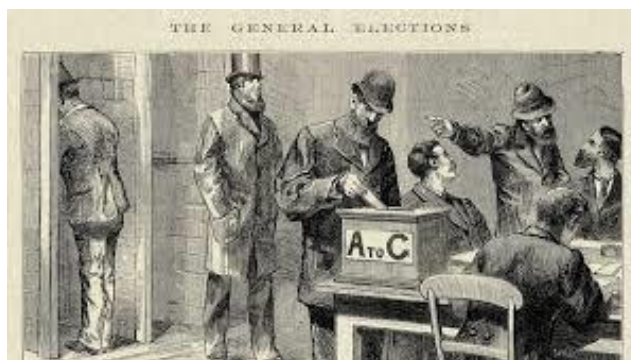
Reflection

- How difficult was it to think of points to support one side of the argument?
- Do you think you would have done a better job supporting the other side of the argument?
- Was I able to convince others of my opinion?
- Did my opinion change?
- What did you learn from this activity?

Discussion questions

Watch the BTN [History of Voting](#) story and learn about the history of voting in Australia and why not everyone has always had a say on who runs the country.

1. Who were the suffragettes?
2. Which state was the first to give women the right to vote?
3. When did all Indigenous people get the right to vote in federal elections?
4. It's compulsory for everyone over the age of _____ to vote.
5. Do you think the right to vote is important?
Give reasons for your answer.



Further Investigation

What is the secret ballot system of voting? When and why was it introduced? Why is the secret ballot important to Australia's voting system?

Activity: Election Lingo

Before watching the BTN Election Special facilitate a class discussion about election lingo. Start the discussion by asking the following question.

What words come to mind when you hear the word 'election'?

In pairs, students will respond to the question, recording their ideas on a piece of paper. Ask volunteers in the class to share their list of words and terms. As you watch the BTN Election Special add other words that you hear that you can add to your list of election lingo. Students will choose one word/term and find a definition. They will present their term and definition in a kid-friendly way to the class. Students may want to use visual aids in their presentation and give an example to help with their explanation.

BTN Explainers – Election Lingo

Election reporting can be full of words and phrases that we don't hear too often and can sound a little complicated. BTN asked some rookie reporters to explain some election terms. Watch BTN's Election Lingo videos to learn more about electorates, political parties, political seats, and the democracy sausage! Download this BTN [Teacher Resource](#) for more in depth activities.



[Electorates](#)



[Political Parties](#)



[Safe and Marginal Seats](#)



[Democracy Sausage](#)

Activity: Parliamentary Education Resources

Role-play the Parliament

Students can learn how bills (proposed laws) are introduced, debated and voted on in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Find out more here [Make a law: House of Reps](#) [Make a law: Senate](#)



Learn how government is formed in a hung parliament

Students will learn how government is formed and understand the difference between minority and majority governments. Find out more here [Negotiate a minority government](#)

What is Parliament?

Discover the structure and key functions of the Australian Parliament with this short PEO [What is Parliament?](#) video. It introduces the Parliament's roles of law-making, representing Australians, the formation of government and checking the work of the government.

Useful Websites

Meet the Candidates

- [Prime Minister Press Conference](#) – BTN
- [Prime Minister](#) – Parliamentary Education Office
- [Leader of the Opposition](#) – Parliamentary Education Office
- [Political Parties](#) – BTN

Preferential voting

- [Preferential Voting](#) (YouTube) – Australian Electoral Commission
- [Instructions for Counting Votes](#) – Australian Electoral Commission
- [Preferential Voting](#) – BTN
- [Preferential voting example](#) – PEO

Electoral Commission

- [AEC for Schools](#) – Australian Electoral Commission

Voting Age

- [Voting Age](#) – BTN
- [Why do people over 18 have to vote?](#) – PEO
- [Australian voting history in action](#) – Australian Electoral Commission