



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

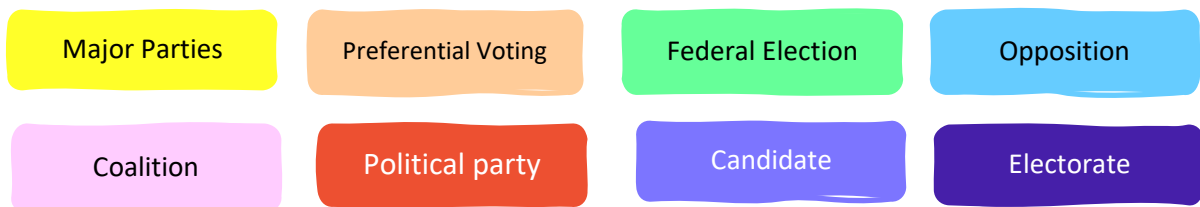
The key institutions of Australia's system of government, how it is based on the Westminster system, and the key values and beliefs of Western democracies.

## 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 (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 shows two sample ballot papers from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The left paper is a green 'House of Representatives Ballot Paper' for a State Electoral Division. It features a list of candidates with boxes for ranking them from 1 to 12. The right paper is a white 'Senate Ballot Paper' for the Election of 6 Senators. It features a grid for ranking candidates by party and an ungrouped section. Both papers include instructions on how to vote and a 'SAMPLE' watermark.

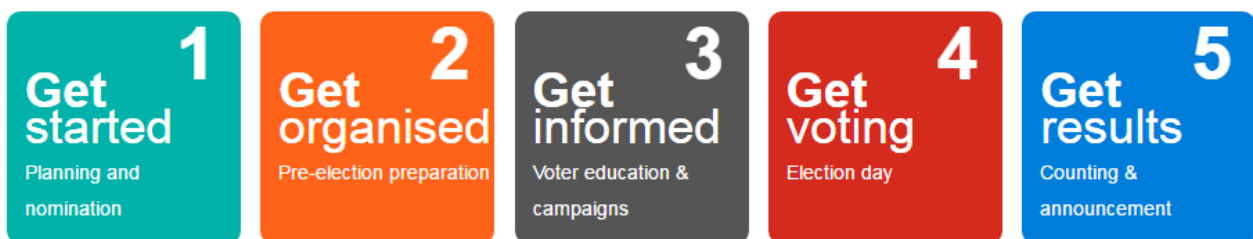
Ballot Papers (Source – [AEC](#))

## 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.

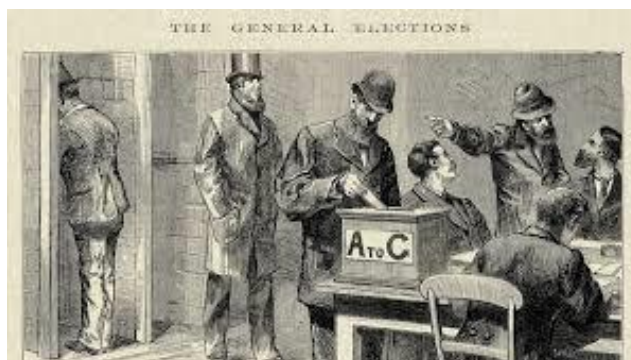
## Reflection

- 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



Teacher Resource

# BTN Transcript: Episode 10- 29/4/2025

Yaama. I'm Jack, I hope you had a great holiday and to welcome you back, we have a very special episode of BTN that's all about the big event that's happening this weekend, the election. We're going to find out more about how elections work and who we'll be voting for. Meet the people who put the whole shebang together and find out about the debate around how old voters should be. We'll also explain some of the election-y words you often hear thrown about with the help of our rookie reporters.

## Meet the Candidates

Reporter: Justina Ward

*INTRO: But before all of that, we thought we should tell you a bit more about the next Prime Minister, whether it's this guy again or this one. Let's meet Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton and learn a bit about their visions for Australia's future. Hmm.*

JUSTINA WARD, REPORTER: Alright, I hope you're ready cause it's time to meet the leaders of Australia's major political parties. Let's see who is behind door number 1. He's a Pisces, 178cm tall, has a son named Nathan, a dog named Toto, He's about to get married and has the nickname, Albo. It's 31st Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese.

Yep you have probably seen a lot of Mr Albanese over the past 3 years after he was elected in 2022 as Australia's Prime Minister. I mean he's even been on BTN.

ANTHONY ALBANESE, PRIME MINISTER: That's Anthony Albanese guest reporter for Behind the News.

Mr Albanese's story started on the 2nd of March 1963 when he was born. He grew up in Sydney with a single mum and without a lot of money. He was actually the first person in his family to finish high school. He says watching his family struggle inspired him to get involved with politics. When he was 12, he helped to organise a rent strike to stop the government housing he lived in from being sold to developers. Three years later he joined the Labor Party when he was just 15. Fast forward to 1996, Mr Albanese became the Federal Member for Grayndler, the community where he grew up. Since then he has held many Parliamentary titles but the most important, Prime Minister of Australia.

ANTHONY ALBANESE: When you grow up the way that I did with a single mum in public housing, the expectation on your career path is not to rise to the position of prime minister.

During his time as Prime Minister he had some wins and some loses. He campaigned for an Indigenous voice to parliament which was unsuccessful and brought in a law that will ban social media for anyone under 16. This election he's promised to cut taxes to help out Aussies with the cost-of-living crisis. He also wants to invest \$8.5 billion into boosting Medicare to make most doctor visits free and easier to access. As well as cut Uni debt and make TAFE free. He says he always wants to make it easier for people buying their first home by lowering deposits and invest \$1 billion into childcare to build more centres and make them more affordable.

Thank you, Anthony Albanese, you can go back behind your door. Because now it's time to find out who is behind door number 2. He's a Scorpio, stands at 185cm tall, has 3 kids, Tom, Harry and Rebecca and a dog named Ralph. His Great, great grandfather was also a politician in Queensland, and he has no nickname

that I know of anyway. It's leader of the opposition, Peter Dutton.

Yep, he's been the leader of the liberal party for the past 3 years. But his story starts in Boondall in Brisbane where he was born on the 18th of November 1970.

PETER DUTTON, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: We grew up in the suburbs and it's still a working-class suburb today. I watched my dad work hard as a brick layer than a builder. I worked out pretty early on that I wasn't hard enough to mix mud or concrete, mud as they call it.

When Mr Dutton was 18, he joined the Young Liberals. The following year he ran in his first state election, but he was unsuccessful. Eventually he joined the Queensland police, working there for nearly a decade. Before starting a construction company with his dad. This all led to his political career which kicked off again in 2001 when he won the seat of Dickson in Brisbane. Since then, he's held titles such as Health Minister, Home Affairs Minister, Minister for Defence and since 2022 he's been the leader of the Liberal Party.

This election he's promising 9 billion dollars to boost Medicare, help first homeowners by letting them deduct some of their mortgage from tax and help with the cost of living crisis by lowering petrol prices by 25 cents. He also plans to build 7 nuclear power stations and boost defence by about 21 billion over the next 5 years. So now you know who the leaders are, but ah we'll have to wait and see which one will be the next Prime Minister.

## Election Lingo: Electorates

Rookie Reporter: Marianne

Welcome to the beaches of beautiful Wentworth, the stunning scenery of Lingiari, the thrills of Moncrieff. Confused? You see, when it comes to elections, the names of the places we live, work and play are bit different and so is the map.

Australia is divided up into electorates. An electorate is a geographical area that's represented by a politician who sits in the house of representatives or lower house.

Some electorates are really, really big, some are really, really small. Some states have heaps and other have less, and that's because electorates are designed to have roughly the same amount of people in each. So that every Australian is equally represented in here.

Right now there are 151 seats in the lower house representing 151 electorates, but there can be less or more. You see Australia's population is always changing, people are born and die and arrive and leave and move so the Electoral commission has to tweak electorates to keep things fair. Sometimes it moves the boundaries and sometimes it adds or subtracts whole electorates.

This year New South Wales and Victoria have each lost an electorate. While Western Australia has gained one. That means there'll be one less seat in the lower house, but just as much competition to represent each of these 150 chunks of Australia.

## Preferential Voting

Reporter: Jack Evans

*INTRO: As you just heard, we don't vote for the Prime Minister in Australia, we vote for people who represent our electorate in the lower house and our state in the senate. And the way we vote for them is a*

*little bit different to most democracies in the world, because here in Australia we have something called preferential voting. Here's Wren to explain what that is.*

LUCAS: Alright I'm hungry.

MARIANNE: Me too.

ALED: Well, what do we want? Pizza?

THEO: My brain can't stop thinking about fried chicken.

MARIANNE: Wait, yes.

LUCAS: I'm vegetarian.

Yeah look making everyone happy isn't always simple.

ALED: How about we put it to a vote? So, one vote pizza. What did you want?

LUCAS: Sushi.

ALED: And you?

MARIANNE: Fried chicken.

ALED: Well, I guess that has the most votes.

MARIANNE AND THEO: Yes.

Look, that's one way to make a decision, but it doesn't seem like everyone's pleased. These two are pretty cheery.

MARIANNE: UNO.

But everyone else, well.

LUCAS: Can't even eat chicken. Can we please order something else?

ALED: Well, if you can't have your first choice, what would be your second?

MARIANNE: Well, you can't really go wrong with pizza?

LUCAS: Agreed.

ALED: Dumplings would be my second choice.

THEO: All I can think about is fried chicken.

Okay, while not everyone is on the same page, things are getting a bit easier. Aled might have been the only one who had pizza as their first choice, but two more people made it their second choice, which means pizza would make most people pretty happy.

ALED: Decision made. Sorry Theo.

WREN GILLETT, REPORTER: Now if you're thinking, what does any of this have to do with politics? Well good question, buckle up.

Basically, what just happened here is a pretty similar to the way Aussies vote in elections

WREN GILLETT: It's called preferential voting, and like the name suggests, it involves preferences.

Instead of just picking the candidate people like the best, Aussie voters give each one a number. One for their favourite polmie, two for their second favourite, three for their third favourite, and so on.

To get a better picture, let's pretend these guys are politicians. Now for any of these very real politicians to win their seat, they have to earn half of the votes plus one. So, if there's say, 100 voters, they'll need to win.

THEO: 51 votes.

Correct. Now let the fake voting commence.

SPONGEBOB NARRATOR: A few moments later.

Alright, fake votes are in and after the first count. It looks like Lucas is in the lead.

LUCAS: Yay.

So we continue, and we eliminate the person with the least amount of votes. Sorry Theo. But don't worry, your voters still get a say.

THEO: Wait, how?

Preferences.

You see when someone gets knocked out of an election, the vote counters will go back and see what their voters, so in this case Theo's voters, put as their second preference. Then, those votes get added to the totals of the remaining candidates.

Alright, let's check back in. So, two of Theo's voters put Lucas second, six voters put Aled second, and seven voters put Marianne second. Which means, let me just do the maths.

SPONGEBOB NARRATOR: A lot of boring math later.

It's not boring.

Aled is now in the lead.

ALED: Woohoo.

But we still haven't hit our magic number, 51. So we keep going, say goodbye to Marianne, add up the preferences again.

SPONGEBOB NARRATOR: One minute thirty-seven seconds later.

And would ya look at that, Aled wins, with 54 votes.

ALED: Yes. What do I get?

Well hopefully a better understanding of how preferential voting works.

As you can see, preferences play a pretty major role in Aussie elections and can be the difference between winning or losing.

But there are a few drawbacks with voting this way.

Preferential voting is more complex than other voting systems and counting all the votes takes extra time and money. Sometimes, it can even take days before we know who's won. Plus, it also means that a candidate who isn't the top choice for most voters can still end up winning.

But there are a lot of people who think preferential voting is the best system out there.

It allows people to vote for less popular candidates without feeling like their vote is wasted, and it encourages parties with similar views to work together instead of competing against each other. But above all, they say it helps keep everyone as happy as possible, whether we're choosing a leader or just deciding what's for dinner.

ALED: So what pizzas does everyone want?

Theo: Fried chicken.

LUCAS: Vegetarian.

MARIANNE: Wait, margarita.

THEO: That's so boring.

(ALL SPEAK AT ONCE)

## Election Lingo: Houses

Rookie Reporter: Zara

This is the house where decisions are made in Australia, but it's actually not just one house, it's two. Australia's parliament is made up of the lower house and the upper house, otherwise known as House of Representatives and the Senate.

Let's start down here. The House of Representatives is made up of 150-or-so politicians. And each one is elected to represent the people in their electorate. That includes the Prime Minister. In fact, to be Prime Minister your party has to have a majority of the seats in here. So, winning the lower house means winning the government. Every three years there's another election and the leadership can change again. Most of Australia's federal laws start out in the lower house but to become law they need to go up.

This is the upper house or the Senate. It's made up of 76 senators, twelve from each of the states and two from each of the territories. They get to decide whether to approve laws made in the lower house and they can also make laws which then have to be passed into the house of reps.

State senators get to stay in their seats for 6 years. But they don't all start at the same time. Every three years half of them are up for re-election. So, when people go to vote they get to choose who they want in the lower house and the upper house and this whole house gets a bit of a shakeup.

## Electoral Commission

Reporter: Joe Baronio

*INTRO: Now we're going to meet some of the people who are in charge of running the election. They're from the Australian Electoral Commission, which was set up to keep voting smooth and fair. Here's Joe.*

Cardboard boxes, political posters galore and the smell of democracy sausages in the air.

JOSEPH BARONIO, REPORTER: Soon, all those things will be flooding polling places like this one, as Aussies head to the polls for the country's largest election ever.

In fact, around 18 million Aussies will be casting their votes, for 1,456 political candidates, in more than 7,000 polling places in Australia and overseas, staffed by more than 100,000 workers.

Yeah, running an election like this is a massive job, so let's go meet some of the people who do it.

JOSEPH BARONIO: Cam.

CAMERON STOKES, AEC: Hey Joe.

JOSEPH: Nice to meet you

This is Cameron Stokes, who's the big boss at South Australia's division of the Australian Electoral Commission, or AEC.

JOSEPH: What is the AEC and how long has it been around for?

CAMERON STOKES: So, the AEC is the national body that's responsible for running electoral events here in Australia. So, we were founded in 1984 as a commission so just over 40 years old now.

In that time, they've helped set Australia apart from other democracies, because while many countries elections are run by their governments, the AEC is an independent agency, which basically means that it's not connected to the government, making the election process fairer.

CAMERON STOKES: So, we are completely politically neutral. We are the referee right in the middle, and we make sure that everybody follows exactly the same rules right the way across the country.

And it's not just for federal government elections like this one. Over the years they've been in charge of lots of important public vote-y things, like the same-sex marriage plebiscite in 2017 and the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum in 2023.

JOSEPH: When an election is called, what steps do you take? Is there a big red button that's just panic stations? Everyone get into it?

CAMERON STOKES: It feels a little bit like that. First thing we have to do is issue the writ, which is the official document that starts the process. So, the governor general issues the writs for all of the House of Representatives elections, and the state governors issue the writs for the Senate elections. So that's the official document that gives us the go ahead. That's the big red button, really.

And then, it's time get things ready for the big election day, which this year is May the 3rd. Town halls, sports clubs and even schools in every corner of Australia are kitted out.

CAMERON STOKES: We've printed 50 million ballot papers for this election to cover the 18 million electors and even more pencils and pieces of string to attach them to the cardboard booths. It is the biggest logistical event that the country runs and getting ballot papers to voters all around the country, in the most remote parts of the country is a huge exercise. But also, really rewarding to be able to service some of those tiny communities as well.

JOSEPH: Once the voting is done and the ballots have been collected, they come here to the counting centre where they're counted. Let's go find out more.

JOSEPH: Nathan.

NATHAN, COUNTING CENTRE MANAGER: Hey, Joe, how are you mate?

JOSEPH: Nice. Nice to meet you. So, tell us a bit about where we're standing right now.

NATHAN: So, we're currently standing at what we call outpost centre Netley Hudson, it's one of our counting centres. So here we host two of the federal divisions for the upcoming federal election.

There are hundreds of these centres across the country, where counting staff have the super important job of counting thousands of ballot papers each.

JOSEPH: And has anyone ever lost count? And what happens when that happens?

NATHAN: I'm sure it's happened several times, but the answer to that is they count again.

JOSEPH: When the vote count is done, do you have, like, the inside scoop, you know, before everyone else who's won?

CAMERON STOKES: Not quite so we count the votes, and then what often happens is the media or other people will make assumptions about what the result means.

NEWSREADER: The Liberal Party cannot form government, in my opinion.

NATHAN: We will not actually say who the winner of a seat is until it is mathematically certain that it's going to go in that direction and it won't be until several weeks later that we'll say this is what happened.

CAMERON STOKES: For me, it's great to see all the plans come together. Our staff have been planning for this election for a long time now, to see it actually come together, and to see the public walk into voting centres and be given their ballot papers and vote, it's fantastic to see.

## Quiz

How often are elections held in Australia? Every three years, every four years or every six years? They're held every three years.

When people vote they fill out two papers, a green one and a white one. Is the white one for the House of Representatives or the Senate? It's for the Senate.

## Election Lingo: Majority/Minority Governments

Rookie Reporter: Aled

Elections are all about all about majorities, right? They're designed to keep a majority of people happy. To get elected a politician needs a majority of the votes. And to form government, a party needs a majority of the seats in the lower house. Simple, right? Well, not always.

After elections, things can get kinda complicated. You can end up with a majority government or you could end up with a hung parliament and a minority government.

But let's start with the easy one. A majority government is what the major parties are aiming for. It means one of them has won more than half of the seats in the lower house. So, if they want to pass a law, they know that more than half of the votes will go their way. If they can win a majority in the senate too, well even better.

But, that said, not all majorities are created equal. A big majority means the government can rest easy. But sometimes they only win by a few seats so, if one or two politicians have to quit for any reason, they can end up in sticky situation.

And occasionally no-one gets a majority at all. That's known as a hung parliament, and it means no party

has won more than half of the seats in the lower house. One might have more than the other. But that's not enough. To form government, they need to team up with minor parties and independents, to create a minority government.

In minority governments the smaller parties and independent politicians play a major role in decision-making. Their votes are the ones that keep the government in power. So, a lot of negotiation goes on to keep the government working for the majority of Australians.

## Voting Age

Reporter: Tatenda Chibika

*INTRO: If you're at school right now, chances are you won't be voting on the weekend. In Australia you have to be 18 but not everyone thinks that should be the case. Let's find out about the history of the voting age and the debate over its future. Here's Tatenda.*

TATENDA CHIBIKA, REPORTER: Growing up there are certain things you have to wait for like getting a job, learning to drive, getting a credit card, watching a scary movie or voting.

At the moment in Australia, you have to be 18 to vote. Although it hasn't always been that way. Back when Australia became a federation in 1901 the voting age was actually 21. But after two world wars and a war in Vietnam, where some young soldiers were forced to fight, lots of Australians thought it was unfair that young people could die for their country but not vote. So, in 1973 the voting age was lowered to 18.

PERSON: I think it'll turn out to be a good thing, 18-year-olds will get the vote for other people and other people will be happy about it.

PERSON: 18-year-olds have minds, and that they are aware, and that they are conscious of what's going on.

But even then, it was controversial.

NEWSREADER: Do you think 18-year-olds should get to vote at this year's elections?

PERSON: Definitely not, the majority of 18-year-olds aren't sensible enough to vote.

Now, most countries have adopted a legal voting age of 18 and a lot of Aussies are happy with that. But there are some who think the voting age should be lower.

This is Sania. She's part of Make it 16, a group which wants to lower the voting age to well 16, so that young people can have a say on laws and policies that affect them.

SANIA, MAKE IT 16 MEMBER: Historically, young people have always been the face of change. When women were fighting for the right to vote, a lot of those were still young people. The school strike for climate, that's all young people. A lot of protests for Palestine, whether you agree with or not, like are young people. Young people are definitely informed and educated and definitely also affected by politics. When people are like 'oh, but you know, you're 17 or you're 16, you don't know enough about this, this, this, this,' I think it can be a little bit unfair, bit of a double standard sometimes because young people can be just as educated as older people.

She says a lot of decisions being made in parliament now will affect young people the most.

SANIA: We need to have a say in who runs our nation, because we're going to inherit this country, and

we're going to inherit the systems and the laws as well and she's not the only one that feels that way.

KEIR STARMER, UK PRIME MINISTER: If you're old enough to go out to work, if you're old enough to pay your taxes, then you are entitled to have a say on how your taxes are spent.

That's Keir Starmer, the U.K Prime Minister who says he's looking at changing the voting age to 16 as early as next year.

Some countries including Austria, Brazil and Germany have already lowered the voting age.

And here in Australia, The Greens and some independents support the idea.

SANIA: If we didn't allow the voting age of 16, we would fall behind. You know, in an ever-changing world, we need young people to have a voice, a clear voice, a clear vote now more than ever.

But some disagree. They say when we're teenagers, our brains are still developing, and we don't really have a lot of life experience. And while some young people might be ready to make a decision on who gets to run the country others aren't. Right now, neither of the major parties have any plans to change the voting age. But there are ways for young people to get involved in politics like contacting their MPs, writing petition or taking part in protests while they wait until they're old enough to cast their vote.

So, what do you think?

KID: It should stay 18 cos kids can make silly choices.

KID: I think younger people should have a say in it because they're living here too.

KID: It gives more people a chance to express their opinions on what should be right.

KID: We should like get a say in what we want our future to be like.

KID: It's not gonna affect them, it's gonna affect us.

## Closer

If you end up at a polling station on the weekend, I hope you have fun and get a democracy sausage. BTN Live is also back this week so if you've still got questions about the election, make sure you join us. I'll see you next week with a new government and a new show. Bye.