



Index and Introduction



AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION CENTRE

Unit 4: Representative Democracy. The story of voting rights in Australia including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women – Year 5 - C & C Strand: Government & Democracy

Topic 5.2: The Constitution and the right to vote in Australia

C&C Strand: Curriculum Year 5: HASS F-6: - the key values and features of Australia's democracy, including the electoral process and the responsibilities of electors and elected representatives ([AC9HS5K06](#))

Area/Questions and key Takeaways

1. Why is voting fundamental to democracy?
2. Elections and elected - who has a say?
3. What gives government its legitimacy?
4. What does the Constitution say about the right to vote?
5. When did Indigenous Australians and women get the right to vote?
6. Why were/are some groups denied the right to vote?
7. How is voting made fair?
8. Should voting be compulsory?

Topic Summary and Goal: Students explore:

What is a democracy and why is it important to Australia? A key feature of a democracy is the right to vote. It is the votes of the people that give a government its legitimacy. But what if only some of the people vote (because some are excluded and others don't bother)? Does this undermine the legitimacy of the government?

This topic focuses on the franchise. It explores the battle of many groups to obtain the right to vote and why this was so important to them. Students consider why people have been, and in some cases still are, excluded from voting. What is the reason and is it fair? In learning about struggles for the right to vote, students begin to appreciate the value of the vote and why it should be exercised in an informed manner.

Students learn about what the Constitution says about voting, and how the protections included in the Constitution were limited at the time the Constitution was written, because of the controversy at the time about giving women the vote. But students also learn about how the High Court has since drawn a constitutional implication from sections 7 and 24 of the Constitution which would prevent people from being denied the right to vote on the grounds of their race or sex. They learn about how this constitutional implication also gave some protection to the rights of prisoners to vote.

Finally as students experience the secret ballot the effects of compulsory voting in classroom activities, they come to their own conclusions as to the value of the vote and how it should be exercised.

Teacher Reference Documents (TRDs) and Activities/Lessons

TRD 19: Right to vote - what does the Constitution say?

Lesson/Activities One: Introduction to the right to vote - What does the Constitution say?

TRD 20: Right to vote - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Lesson/Activities Two:– Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: A long history of discrimination on voting rights

TRD 21: Right to vote - Women

TRD 22: Fanny Finch and the female franchise

Lesson/Activities Three: The story of achieving the right to vote for women, including through the eyes of Fanny Finch



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSTITUTION
CENTRE**

TRD 23: Right to vote-prisoners. The story of Vickie Lee Roach

Lesson/Activities Four: Exclusions from the right to vote – Prisoners. The story of Vickie Lee Roach.

TRD 24: Migrants and their right to vote in Australia

Lesson/Activities Five: Take the Australian Citizen Test

TRD 25: Right to vote - Adults and Children

TRD 26: Right to vote - Other qualifications and disqualifications

Lesson/Activities Six: The Constitution and the right to vote in Australia

TRD 27: The secret ballot and the 'Australian ballot'

Lesson/Activities Seven: The Secret Ballot

TRD 28: Compulsory voting - burden or privilege and responsibility?

Lesson/Activities Eight: Compulsory voting - Burden or privilege or responsibility?

Achievement Standards:

By the end of Year 5, students identify the importance of values and processes to Australia's democracy and describe the roles of different people in Australia's legal system. Students will understand the long history of discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their right to vote. They will appreciate the importance of voting and why different groups, including women, had to struggle hard for the right to vote.