



Index and Introduction



AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION CENTRE

Unit 6: The Constitution, Federalism and Westminster System – Year 6 - Civics and Citizenship (C & C) Strand: Government & Democracy

Topic 6.2: Introducing different elements in the Australian Constitution, Westminster influences, and the covering clauses and Preamble.

C&C Strand: Government & Democracy

Curriculum Year 6: HASS F-6: How Australia's system of government is based on the Westminster system, and the key values and beliefs of Western democracies

(AC9HS6K06)

Area/Questions and key Takeaways

1. What is a Constitution and why is it important?
2. What were the different influences on Australia's Constitution?
3. What is a preamble and what should go in one today?
4. What is the meaning of 'Commonwealth'?
5. How to design and write your own Constitution.

Topic Content:

This topic introduces the Australian Constitution. It starts by addressing the fundamental question of what a Constitution is and why it is considered binding on the people of a country. Students should gain an understanding of the type of things that are commonly included in a Constitution and the different foreign influences that affected Australia's Constitution - such as the Westminster system of responsible government from the United Kingdom, the system of federalism from the United States and the Swiss idea of the referendum.

The topic explains the basic structure of the Constitution as part of a British Act of Parliament with a preamble and covering clauses. It explains the meaning of the term 'Commonwealth' and distinguishes it from the 'Commonwealth of Nations' to avoid confusion.

Students are challenged to learn by doing - eg by writing their own Constitution for a new planet that they are colonising, or by writing a new preamble for the Constitution. This pushes students to think for deeply about Constitutions and what should be included in them, as they take ownership of their own Constitution or preamble.

Teacher Reference Documents (TRDs) and Activities/Lessons

TRD 49: What is a Constitution and Why is it Binding? (Student Resource)

TRD 50: What is a Constitution and Why is it Binding? (Teacher Resource)

Lesson/Activities One: Introduction to writing your own Constitution

Lesson/Activities Two: What would you do if you had to write a new Constitution for a new colony?



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TRD 51: Comparing the Constitution-Making Process with the United Kingdom and the United States

Lesson/Activities Three: The influences on the making of the Constitution.

TRD 52: Why was the name 'Commonwealth of Australia' chosen and what is the Commonwealth of nations today?

Lesson/Activities Four: Why does the Constitution call our country the Commonwealth of Australia and understanding the concept of common good.

TRD 53: What are the Covering Clauses of the Constitution Act?

Lesson/Activities Five: Introducing the covering clauses of the Constitution Act - a federated Australia for the common good

TRD 54: What is the significance of the Preamble to the Constitution Act?

Lesson/Activities Six: The Preamble in the Constitution Act: What does that mean?

TRD 55: A new preamble for the Australian Constitution fails in a 1999 referendum

Lesson/Activities Seven: Writing a new preamble for the Australian Constitution.

Year 6 HASS Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 6, students explain the significance of an event/development, an individual and/or group. They identify and describe continuities and changes for different groups in the past and present. They describe the causes and effects of change on society. They compare the experiences of different people in the past. Students explain the importance of people, institutions and processes to Australia's democracy and legal system. They describe the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens from primary and secondary sources.