

Our democratic rights

Australia's system of **government** is a federal parliamentary democracy operating under a **constitutional monarchy**. The former means that all Australian citizens over the age of 18 are able to participate actively in some parts of government; we vote for candidates from the political parties we believe will best represent us. The latter means that our head of state is Elizabeth II, the Queen of the United Kingdom; her representative in Australia is the governor-general.

As active citizens in the 21st century, we are encouraged to play a part in political processes by voting, debating, discussing, questioning and sharing our opinions and ideas. Political parties campaign for our vote at election time, and are increasingly using new forms of technology, such as social media, to target voters and present information. Social media has transformed the world of politics in many ways and has had an impact on both the way people vote and the ways in which we communicate with each other.

Source 1.0.1 These protesters in Sydney in 2016 are taking an active role in the political process by challenging the federal government's policy on the detention of children of asylum seekers.

Political parties

Political parties

A political party is an organisation formed by people with similar political views and beliefs. The primary objective of a political party is to gain seats in **Parliament**, where its political views can influence government decision-making. This is done by putting forward candidates to stand for Parliament in an **electorate** during an election. Ultimately, a political party wants to win enough parliamentary seats to gain control of Parliament and form the ruling government.

Political parties are the foundation of the Australian parliamentary system and play a crucial role in helping to shape public policy. Political parties are represented by members at federal, state and territory levels.

Australia's government and **opposition** are primarily made up of members of political parties who have been elected to Parliament. Elected candidates need to represent the interests both of the party and of their electorate. An electorate is made up of people who live in a defined area. These people are called constituents. Constituents are represented by one Member of Parliament (MP) who may or may not live in that electorate. Their representative, or MP, needs to keep abreast of the issues that affect society, and that affect their constituents in particular, in order to best represent their interests and concerns.

In Australia, if a political party's candidates are to be eligible to stand for election, the party must be registered with the Australian Electoral Commission, which is in charge of organising, conducting and supervising elections and referendums. In order to be registered, the party must have a written **constitution** that outlines the party's aims, and must have at least one of the following:

- one member in a parliament at any level of government in Australia (federal, state or territory)
- 500 eligible voting members in the party.

Role of political parties

Political parties contribute to the debate and discussion that assist in the formation of our laws. Each political party holds views that guide its policy-making. Political parties provide organisational support and develop policies, and in the past have

successfully recruited many members who attended party meetings, assisted with fundraising, worked on campaigns and handed out how-to-vote cards at booths on election day. Joining a political party provided members of the community with ways of being involved in policy development and candidate selection, and these members provided a guide to community opinions. In recent years this has changed significantly as party membership has steadily declined. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from 2006 show that only 1.3 per cent of the adult population belonged to a political party.

When Parliament is in session, political parties that hold seats in Parliament convene party meetings at which they examine and explore current and future policies, and work through community issues, to establish their policy position. Political parties can have a great deal of influence and be very powerful when their members group together and vote the same way on issues debated in Parliament.

Political parties and elections

In Australia, it is compulsory for every citizen aged 18 or over to vote in federal, state and local government elections. At election time, each party must decide which candidates to put forth for possible election. This process is known as preselection, and it means that members of the public do not have a say in which candidates will stand for election; they must choose who to vote for from those candidates presented to them by the political parties on election day. This can be problematic when voters support a particular party but are not happy with the selected candidate for their electorate. Some seats are considered 'safe'; this means that, during election time, the seat is expected to be held, with a significant majority vote, by the same party that currently holds it.

Members of political parties help prepare and present election campaigns that aim to convince the public to vote for their particular party. Campaign strategies are developed to decide what sort of publicity will be used to target voters (for example, television and radio advertisements, direct mail-outs, events and visits in electorates). Each party also develops and then presents its party platforms, which set out the key values and issues that the



Source 1.1.1 Campaign boards from the various political parties, displayed at a by-election in Western Australia in 2015

party believes are of most concern to the population and will be most appealing to voters. By presenting their platforms, parties hope to gain the votes of people who are concerned about the selected issues and hold the same views. Another important task during election campaigns is the organisation of campaign funding.

Two-party system

Australia has a two-party system of government, as we only really have two main political parties: the Liberal Party of Australia and the Australian Labor Party. After an election, one of these parties—the one with the most members voted into the House of Representatives (the Lower House)—forms the government. The other main party becomes the Opposition. In the case of the Liberal Party, it usually forms a **coalition** with the National Party of Australia, a minor party, both when in government and in opposition. There are other minor parties, such as the Greens, and also **independents**, who fill some of the seats in both

the House of Representatives and the Senate but never have enough of their members voted in to form a government or opposition.

Left and right

Political parties are sometimes referred to as being left-wing or right-wing. Their ideologies or core beliefs about the ways that society should be run help to define where they sit on the political spectrum.

Left-wing policies are traditionally defined by a strong belief that society is best served by a government with a prominent presence and a focus on social equality. Right-wing ideologies focus on self-preservation and the right of individuals to increase their personal wealth through personal endeavour, and the need for businesses to operate without government interference. The Labor Party is often referred to as being centre-left, therefore tending towards the left, while the Liberal Party is known as being centre-right and tending towards the right. However, over time both parties have developed policies that reflect both left- and right-wing ideologies.

Party building

Larger political parties often develop youth wings, such as the Young Liberal Movement of Australia and Australian Young Labor. These offshoots help the political parties stay connected to the next generation of voters. They also assist in the development of young people who have an interest in establishing political careers in the future.

Hung parliaments

On rare occasions, an election can result in a **hung parliament**. This can happen when neither party succeeds in winning a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. Consequently, no party is able to pass laws without gaining support from other parties (either through the formation of a coalition or by negotiation with other parties) or independent members of parliament. Nationally, the most recent example of a hung parliament resulted from the 2010 federal election. After neither party won the required number of seats, Labor Party leader Julia Gillard was appointed caretaker prime minister until the official government could be determined. Ultimately, three independents and one Greens member gave their support to the Labor Party, meaning that the party attained the required majority of seats and thus was able to form a government.

Australian Labor Party

The Australian Labor Party is the oldest registered political party in Australia. It was formed in the 1890s by trade unions seeking political representation for workers who experienced poor working conditions. In recent times, however, the party has not maintained as strong a connection with the trade union movement as it once did. The core beliefs of the Australian Labor Party include:

- fair distribution of wealth and income
- fair and safe working conditions
- equality for all in society
- the importance of community services.

Liberal Party of Australia

The Liberal Party of Australia was established in 1944 by Sir Robert Menzies, with the aim of protecting the interests of private individuals and small business owners. Traditionally, the Liberal Party has also been supported by individuals from large corporations



Source 1.1.2 Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull (Liberal Party) and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten (Labor Party) at a National Day of Unity function at Parliament House in 2015

and the wealthier members of society. Historically, when the Liberal Party has been successful in forming a government, it has usually been in coalition with another party, most often the National Party of Australia. The core beliefs of the Liberal Party of Australia include:

- encouragement of independent profit-making
- promotion of economic growth
- less government intervention and more individual choice in private businesses.

Other significant parties

National Party of Australia

The National Party, formerly called the National Country Party, was formed in 1920 and usually develops a partnership (or coalition) with another party in order to form a government or opposition. The National Party is particularly concerned with protecting and promoting the interests of rural and regional communities. Like the Liberal Party, the National Party endorses private enterprise.

Australian Greens

The Australian Greens were formed in 1992, 20 years after the formation of Australia's first green party in Tasmania in 1972 under the name United Tasmania Group. The Greens encourage global citizenship, with a focus on environmental sustainability. The increase in awareness of environmental issues has resulted in the Greens having a more significant presence in Parliament.

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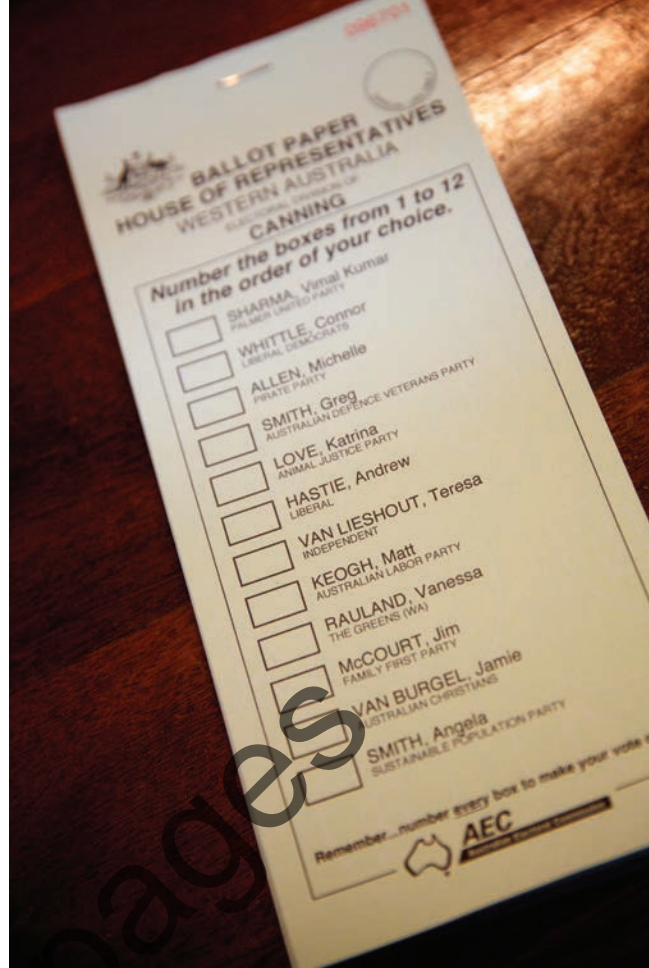
Source 1.1.3 The logos of **a** the Liberal Party, **b** the Australian Labor Party, **c** the National Party of Australia and **d** the Australian Greens

Minor parties

In recent times, support for the major political parties has begun to weaken slowly. As a consequence, there has been an increase in the number of smaller parties registered in Australia. They help to provide discussion on electoral issues; however, they do not often have many members elected to Parliament. Some of these parties are known as single-issue parties as they are generally focused on one area of concern. For example, the Arts Party aims to gain more awareness and support for the creative arts in Australia.

Independents

Independent candidates do not belong to any political party. They may have left one of the established political parties due to dissatisfaction with how the party is operating or because they feel the party is not promoting issues that they consider highly important. Historically, independents have been more successful at gaining election to state parliaments rather than Federal Parliament. However, while few independents win seats in Federal Parliament, they can still have significant influence. Because of the type of voting system used to elect representatives to the Senate (a **proportional voting system**), independent members and smaller parties can often hold the balance of power. This means that the government relies on their vote in order to get new laws passed in Parliament.



Source 1.1.4 A blank ballot paper, displaying candidates' names and their political parties, used during a federal by-election in Western Australia

ACTIVITIES

Remembering and understanding

- 1 Define the term 'political party'.
- 2 Rewrite the primary objective of political parties.
- 3 Describe the relationship between the terms 'electorate', 'constituents' and 'representative'.
- 4 Explain how political parties allow people to participate in a democracy.

Applying and analysing

- 5 Identify the advantages and disadvantages of pre-selection.
- 6 Construct an overview of the major differences between right-wing and left-wing political parties.

Evaluating and creating

- 7 Examine the history of hung parliaments in Australia. Conclude how effective they are at governing the country.

Forming government

Government in Australia

A government is a group of people with the power to rule a country or state. The structure of government in Australia is based on the democratic parliamentary system used in Great Britain, known as the Westminster system. Australia has a federal parliamentary democracy whereby the political party (or a coalition of parties) with the greatest number of elected representatives forms the government of the nation. The leader of the winning party at an election becomes the prime minister.

Before this federal system was adopted in 1901, Australia was composed of six separate British colonies, each with its own government. However, there was a growing belief that the colonies would benefit from becoming one nation and having a centralised government. **Federation** of the six colonies occurred on 1 January 1901, six months after the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* was signed by the colonies. Consequently, the first Commonwealth Parliament was formed and the colonies became states. The two territories, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, were both established 10 years after Federation.

After Federation, Australia's relationship with the monarch of Great Britain remained that of a constitutional monarchy: the monarch has a ceremonial role but the laws are made by the elected government. Where formerly the British monarch had been the head of each colony, with Federation the monarch became the head of the nation of Australia.

The federal government

The Australian Federal Parliament consists of the British monarch, who is represented by the governor-general, and the two Houses of Parliament—the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The primary role of the Australian Government is to make laws to help our society function effectively.

The government's duties include:

- formulating programs that help distribute resources to different sectors of society, such as schools, hospitals and environmental organisations
- developing political and trade relationships with other nations
- maintaining our nation's defence forces and developing policies to secure our borders
- collecting taxes and other charges to pay for various services provided.

The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is also known as the Lower House of Parliament. It has 150 members, who represent the 150 electorates around Australia. Members are elected for three-year terms. The states with larger populations contain more electorates and therefore have more representatives sitting in Parliament. Each elected representative must represent the views and values of their party as well as represent the interests of the constituents in their electorates. The political party that gains the majority of members in the Lower House at an election forms the government.

Source 1.2.1 One of the roles of the federal government is to develop political and trade relationships with other countries. On 8 July 2014, His Excellency Mr Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, visited Parliament House.





Source 1.2.2 Debate in the House of Representatives in February 2016. Members of the government are seated to the right.

Role of the majority political party

The party that controls a majority of seats in the House of Representatives forms the government. The leader of that party becomes Prime Minister of Australia. Some of the more senior and experienced members are allocated areas of responsibility by the prime minister. In the 45th Parliament, for example, Julie Bishop is Minister for Foreign Affairs and Simon Birmingham is Minister for Education and Training. The role of ministers is to introduce **bills** and to answer questions about their areas of responsibility, or **portfolio**.

Members who are not given a portfolio are called backbenchers. Backbenchers participate in debates and vote on bills, taking the party position. In rare cases members may be granted a conscience vote. They are then free to vote as they choose and do not necessarily vote according to party policy. Backbenchers represent their constituents, raising issues that affect their electorates.

Role of the minority political party

The party that gains the second-largest number of members in the House of Representatives forms the Opposition. The party in opposition organises its members in a similar way to the party in government. The party's leader takes the role of Leader of the Opposition. Senior and experienced members are selected by the leader to be responsible for portfolios that closely match those of government ministers. These members of parliament are called shadow ministers. They carefully examine what the minister

for that portfolio is doing and present the Opposition's policies in that area of responsibility. In the 45th Parliament, for example, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs is Senator Penny Wong and the Shadow Minister for Education is Tanya Plibersek. Other elected party members are backbenchers. Their role is the same as that of government backbenchers.

Role of other members

Candidates from minor political parties and independents may also gain seats as members of the House of Representatives. They are collectively referred to as the crossbench. They play the same role as backbenchers from the main political parties. They participate in debates on bills and can introduce their own bills suggesting new laws they think are important. They represent the interests of their constituents.

Crossbenchers assume more prominent roles when an election results in a minority government or a hung parliament. In both cases, neither of the major parties holds a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. In a minority government, the numbers of seats held by the government and the opposition are so close that the government has difficulty getting bills passed. The way independent and minor-party members vote on bills can determine whether bills pass or are rejected.

In a hung parliament, the government and the opposition each hold the same number of seats. Minor-party members and independents hold the balance of power. The major parties negotiate with minor-party members and independents to win their support, to be able to claim a majority and thus form a government. In the 2010 hung parliament, the Australian Labor Party gained the support of the sole Australian Greens member and three independents, allowing it to form a minority government.

Political party	Number of members
Australian Labor Party	72
Liberal–National Coalition	72
Crossbench (independents and minor parties): independents (5), Australian Greens (1)	6
Total	150

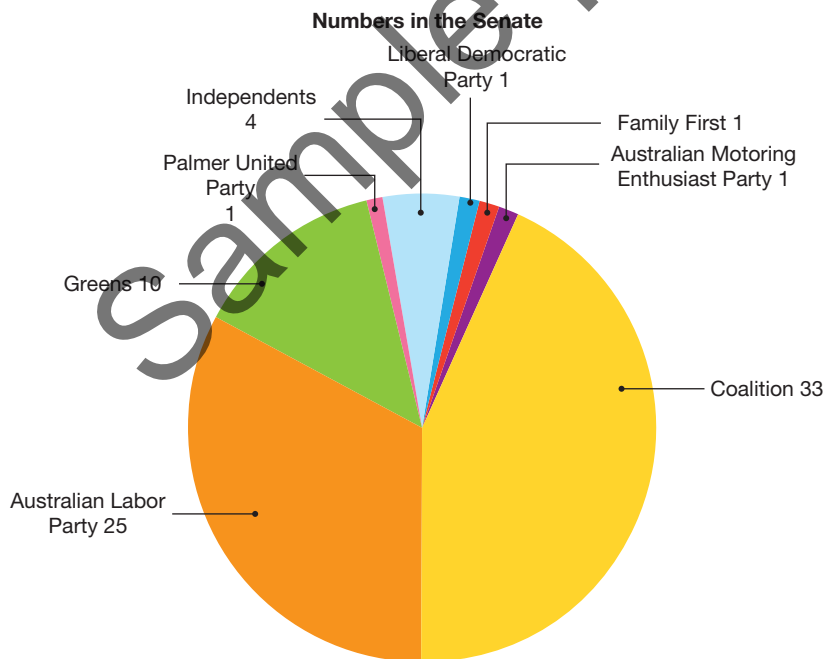
Source 1.2.3 The composition of the House of Representatives after the 2010 election that resulted in a hung parliament

The Senate

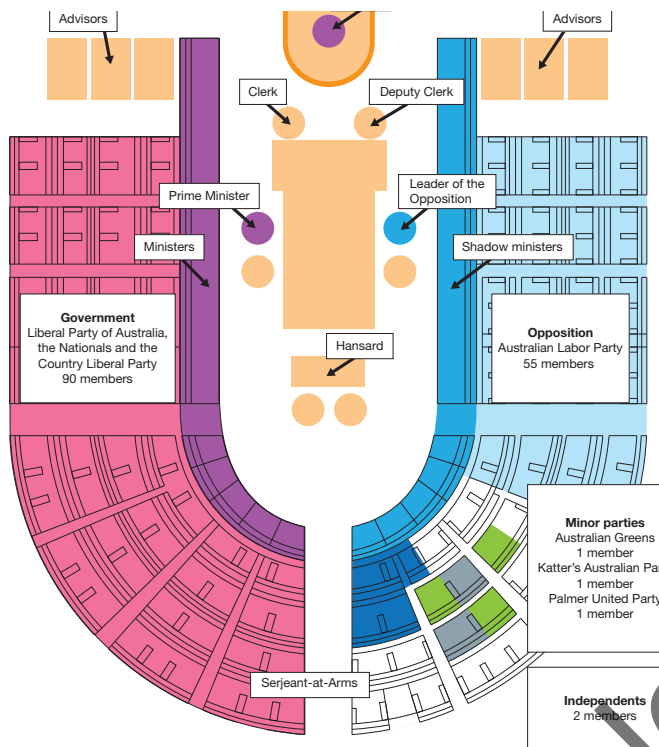
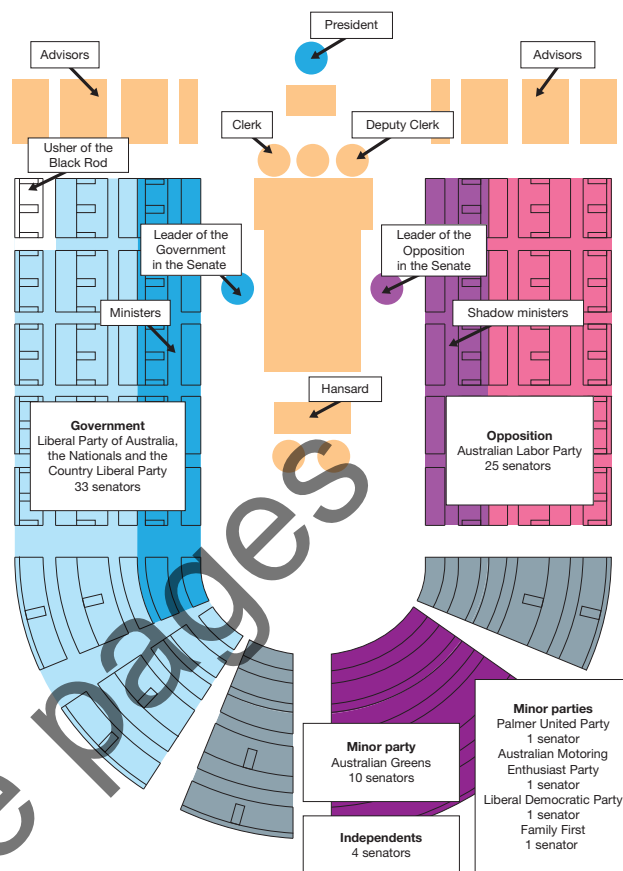
The Senate is composed of 12 senators from each state and two senators from each territory, giving a total of 76 members of the Senate. This results in equal representation among the states. The Senate is known as the Upper House because any bill introduced into Parliament must be approved by the Senate before it can become law. Unlike members of the House of Representatives, senators are elected for two terms, usually a total of six years.

Political parties

Most of those candidates who gain seats in the Senate are voted in as representatives of a political party. Minor parties and independents also gain seats and form the crossbench. The Senate is arranged in a similar way to the House of Representatives, with a Leader of the Government and a Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, ministers with portfolios and shadow ministers, government and opposition backbenchers and crossbenchers. Debates and votes on bills from the House of Representatives typically follow political party policy. Crossbench senators often hold the balance of power.



Source 1.2.4 This chart shows the numbers of senators who held office before the dissolution of the Senate on 9 May 2016.

a**b**

Source 1.2.5 **a** The 44th Parliament in the House of Representatives after the December 2013 election. The House of Representatives contains 150 seats. Seventy-six are needed for a majority. **b** The composition of the Australian Senate after the election in 2013. The Senate contains 76 members. A majority can be achieved with fewer than 39 party members, as independents and minor parties can gain significant numbers of seats.

ACTIVITIES

Remembering and understanding

- 1 On what system is Australia's parliamentary democracy based?
- 2 Record the important details of the process of Federation in Australia.
- 3 Name the three components of Australia's Federal Parliament.
- 4 Illustrate the role of the Australian Government by creating a mind map that demonstrates its law-making powers and its duties.

Applying and analysing

- 5 Compare and contrast the Senate and the House of Representatives in terms of their composition and size.

- 6 Decide which is more important: the Senate or the House of Representatives. Present an analysis based on the role(s) played by each chamber.

Evaluating and creating

- 7 Elaborate on the current composition of Australia's Federal Parliament with reference to the numbers of representatives from major and minor parties, different genders, and Indigenous and ethnic groups. How effectively does Australia's Federal Parliament mirror its population?

Political persuasion

Influencing voters

Once an election has been called, politicians and political parties launch their election campaigns. They must try to convince the voting public to support them at election time. Persuading people to either maintain their loyalty to a particular party or change their preference to a new party is not an easy task, particularly when campaigns generally only run for approximately six weeks. There are also newly registered voters, including new citizens, whom each party will seek to influence. Parties undertake an intense period of campaigning in order to attract voters. Political parties rely on a number of different methods to influence the way people vote.

In this technology-driven era, politicians have access to a wide range of tools and methods to assist in influencing voters' choice at election time. They use the media in all forms: television, newspapers, radio and the internet. Increasingly, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are being used to connect and engage with voters, particularly younger ones. However, traditional methods of persuasion are

also consistently used and these include such things as opinion polls, public debate, doorknocking and interest groups.

The importance of persuading the public

Many factors can influence voter behaviour. Things such as family views or traditional ties, religion, social status and cultural background may all influence an individual's voting preferences. However, political parties cannot simply rely on the fact that a voter will continue to vote for a particular party.

Voters can change their preferences at any time and may be swayed by a number of factors. These could include: specific party policies which they do not agree with; the candidates who are put forth in their electorate; or whether political parties have been addressing the issues which voters feel strongly about. Until the votes are cast, an individual's choice is never certain. Sometimes, a party may win an election because of the number of people who were dissatisfied with the other party, rather than because a majority of voters actively supported the winners.



Source 1.3.1

Then Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, speaking at a federal campaign rally as part of his election campaign in 2013



Source 1.3.2 Australia's then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd (left), and then Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott (right), participate in a debate at the National Press Club in Canberra during the lead-up to the federal election in 2013.

Swing voting

Swing voters also play an important role in the outcome of an election. Swing voters are those who do not feel particular loyalty to any political party. Because their preferences are unknown and unpredictable, they can have a significant impact on the outcome of an election. Persuading these voters to vote in a certain way is therefore of critical importance for political parties.

Methods of persuasion

Political parties use a combination of the following methods of persuasion, taking into account the audience they are appealing to and the messages they are trying to get across.

Print, television and radio advertising

Political parties use the media to present an overview of their policies and to explain to audiences why a vote for them is the right choice at election time. Music, slogans (phrases designed to represent what the party stands for) and imagery are used in paid advertisements to help convince voters. Often, party advertising criticises the policies of opposing parties in an attempt to highlight their weaknesses. Advertising can be a very costly form of persuasion; however, it usually attracts a large audience and can therefore be very worthwhile.

As well, political parties and politicians often benefit from coverage in the media without paying for it. During an election campaign, politicians will often go out on the 'campaign trail'. They visit places such as schools, hospitals and workplaces in an attempt to

connect with the general public and demonstrate their interest in issues that affect voters. The media will often cover such visits, and in this way political parties gain publicity and attention for their campaign and their policies.

Public debates

A public debate allows politicians to question each other on their policies and political platforms, while also allowing the public to examine where their potential political representatives stand on the issues that concern them. It is an important principle of democracy that people be allowed to express their ideas and opinions openly, without fear of punishment, and a public debate allows important discussions to be had about aspects of society such as healthcare, education and the budget. These debates are often televised so that they can reach a larger audience, and there is usually an adjudicator—someone who runs the debate and puts questions to the candidates. Voter opinion can be significantly influenced by public debates, especially if a participant is unable to answer a question on their policies effectively or is able to make their opponent look underprepared or uninformed. How the media then covers the debate through their news stories, analyses, editorials, images, cartoons and opinion pieces can also influence voters' choices.

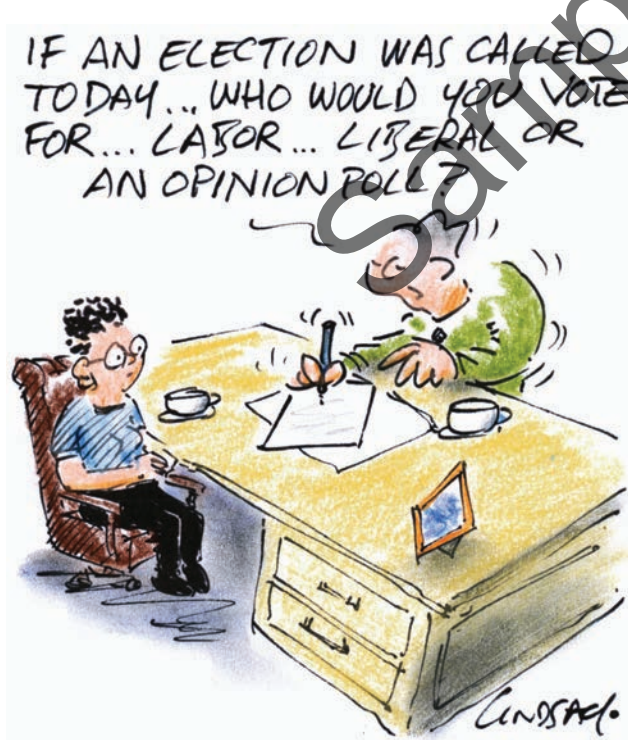
Did you know?

Political debates on Australian television now include what is known as 'the worm', a computerised graphic that reflects, in real time, how viewers feel about the candidates in the debate and which candidate they prefer, as each one answers questions and explains their party's policies.

Opinion polls

Opinion polls use responses from a sample of the public to try to predict how all voters will vote at election time. They usually demonstrate what percentage of the vote each party has (based on the sample group of people who have participated in the poll). They also show which party (on a two-party preferred basis) is likely to win the election. Opinion polls can influence how candidates are viewed and, in turn, can then influence policy decisions that politicians make.

Opinion polls that appear in the media are often conducted by independent organisations such as Roy Morgan Research and Newspoll. Political parties may also conduct their own opinion polls and other research to further investigate public opinion, especially when the results of published polls are not favourable to them or are said to be very close.



Source 1.3.3 A political cartoon demonstrating the impact opinion polls can have at election time

Opinion polls can have such an important impact on voter opinion that they are said to have influenced the departure of politicians from leadership roles. Former Labor leaders Kim Beazley and Simon Crean, for example, both lost challenges to their leadership after poor opinion polls.

Interest groups

Interest groups, or lobby groups, are groups that work to represent the interests of organisations or businesses in our society. They lobby, or petition, the government or particular politicians in order to seek support for certain issues or promote their own agendas. Examples of interest groups include environmental groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation and business groups like the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. They can have an influence on voters at election time by raising awareness about important issues that affect society and by demonstrating whether the political parties are responding to people's concerns about these issues. For example, in previous elections, environmental interest group Greenpeace has campaigned for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Voters for whom this is an issue of concern may then vote for the candidate who promises to take action on this question.

The power of the media

The media plays a very important role during the election process. Aside from the use political parties make of the media for advertising purposes, television, radio, newspapers and the internet present information that assists voters to make their choices on election day. The ways in which the media can influence voters at election time include:

- presenting news stories on government and opposition policies
- presenting opinion pieces on candidates
- analysing the policies and platforms of the candidates, providing commentary and criticism where necessary
- presenting interviews with political candidates, providing them with a platform to present their policies to the public
- providing different perspectives on political candidates through methods such as political cartoons
- acting as a watchdog by exposing any unethical or illegal behaviour by politicians.

Media bias

Despite the fact that many forms of media, such as newspapers, claim to be politically neutral and to present information that is impartial—that is, not favouring either side and independent of any influence—this may not always be the case. Many argue that media bias,

or favouritism towards one political party or another, can be seen in everything from a newspaper headline and the accompanying image to the types of questions posed to a political candidate or the amount of air time they are given on a news broadcast.



Source 1.3.4 A political cartoon by Michael Leunig, warning readers about former Prime Minister Julia Gillard's upcoming visits to marginal seats in 2013

ACTIVITIES

Remembering and understanding

- 1 Show how politicians try to influence different types of voters during an election campaign.
- 2 Give examples of the types of media that politicians use.
- 3 Identify some factors that may influence a voter's preferences.
- 4 Define the term 'swing voter'.
- 5 Describe one method of persuasion that politicians use.

Applying and analysing

- 6 Develop a set of questions that you would ask a politician if you could interview them in the lead-up to an election.
- 7 Analyse the latest state or federal opinion polls. What do they tell us about our politicians?

Evaluating and creating

- 8 Select one news outlet (television station, newspaper or website) and determine whether any bias can be detected in the way it reports political affairs. Provide evidence to support your answer.

Politics and social media

A changing political landscape

Today, technology is everywhere. It has penetrated all aspects of our lives, from how we do our shopping to how we communicate with one another. One of the fastest growing and most popular areas of technology is social media.

Social media is the variety of digital platforms that allow people to create and then share information online to a global network. Social media is interactive, allowing participants to ask and answer questions, share videos and photos, and communicate with people all over the world in real time. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Increasingly, people's time and attention is being directed towards social media. People get a lot of information about what is going on around the world through this channel, and this can influence or shape their understanding of issues and events that occur. Understanding this, the world of politics is starting to use social media in order to be able to engage with and influence 21st-century citizens.

Uses of social media in politics

Particularly in the lead-up to elections, political parties, individual candidates and citizens are able to use social media to communicate with each other about important issues. There are many different ways in which social media can be used to influence

people's understanding of issues and to engage in debate and discussion about relevant concerns.

Political debates

Typically, there are only two candidates involved in a political debate. However, with the use of social media applications such as Twitter (which allows users to write short statements and attach images), independents and other candidates from smaller parties, as well as other members of the main political parties, are also able to provide the public with their views and provide rebuttals of the policies presented in a debate. This widens the scope of the debate, providing voters with a variety of different perspectives. People watching the debate on television are also able to view commentaries on social media and read blog articles about it, not to mention participate in the debate themselves.

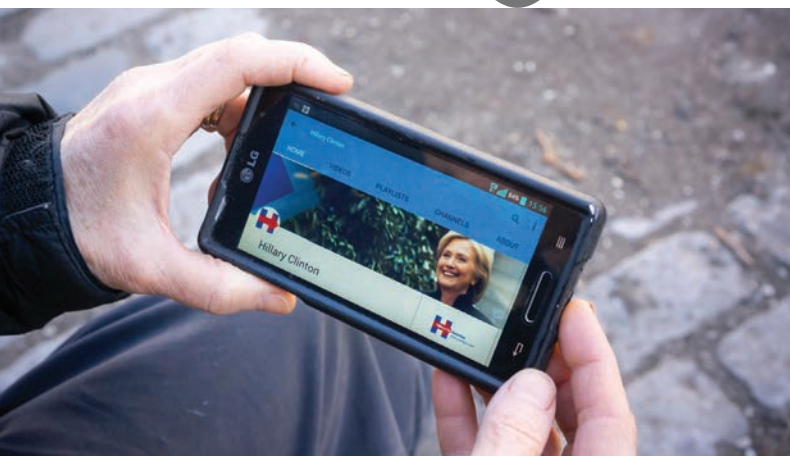
Personal social media accounts

Politicians who have personal social media accounts, such as Facebook pages or Twitter accounts, may have a closer connection with voters. Social media can make communication between a politician and a voter quicker and more direct. Citizens can actively participate in debate and direct discussion with candidates, effectively bypassing the role of the media and the candidates' offices as the providers of information. Social media accounts also help to personalise politicians in the voters' eyes. They can make candidates seem more down-to-earth and more like everyone else.

Social media tools

Different features of social media applications allow politicians to give more exposure to certain issues and policies, potentially reaching a much larger and even new audiences. A hashtag is a tag or label relating to a key term or idea that can be attached to an item and that allows social media users to find related items easily. Politicians can use hashtags to promote or draw attention to important announcements, policies or attacks against other politicians.

When people read a post on a social media platform such as Facebook, they are able to both 'like' the post and share it on their own Facebook account or with other friends. Social media posts can often be much



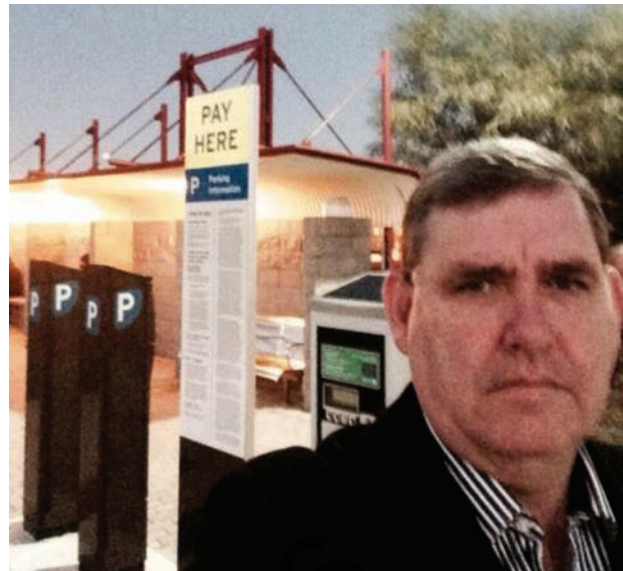
Source 1.4.1 Hillary Clinton used YouTube to announce her run for the presidency of the United States in 2016.

quicker to create than other campaign tools such as media advertising, and politicians are therefore able to use them to target voters more efficiently.

Apart from sharing or liking posts, people are also able to provide their own thoughts and opinions on the information politicians provide. And when family, friends and peers read these thoughts and opinions, it can, in turn, have an impact on their beliefs and perspectives, and possibly even their vote.

Advantages and disadvantages

Using social media accounts can have negative consequences for politicians, too. In 2014, a Victorian Liberal Party candidate was forced to step down after it was revealed he had made inappropriate comments on Twitter. Social media can provide voters with more personal insights into candidates and their lives, but this may not always influence their vote in a positive way.



Source 1.4.2 Western Australian Labor politician Ken Travers uses Twitter to post a 'selfie' image that shares his disappointment over the state government's new \$2 parking tax.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Allows for more engagement and understanding of issues by younger voters.	Doesn't necessarily deepen understanding of political issues as social media sources are not necessarily reputable or accurate.
Allows greater personal interaction between politicians and voters.	Voters may get 'information overload' and feel overwhelmed from viewing too many different sources of social media.
Gives candidates many different channels to get their messages across.	Due to the open nature of social media, bullying and discrimination often occur as people are able to 'hide' behind their screens.
Encourages voters to be more actively involved in politics.	Allows anyone to have an influence on voters' beliefs, perspectives and voting behaviour.
Allows voters access to up-to-the-minute information on political issues.	
Can challenge the bias and remove the censorship presented by traditional media outlets.	
Can allow politicians to easily determine how voters are feeling about a particular issue or policy.	

Source 1.4.3 The advantages and disadvantages of using social media in politics

ACTIVITIES

Remembering and understanding

- 1 Interpret the meaning of the term 'digital platform'.
- 2 Cite examples of digital platforms that are used by politicians.
- 3 Explain why politicians are using social media more frequently.
- 4 Show how social media applications lend themselves to political debate.
- 5 List three advantages that a politician can gain with a personal social media account.

Applying and analysing

- 6 Discover examples of the positive and negative use of social media by politicians.
- 7 Apply your knowledge of social media to compile a list of 10 dos and don'ts for politicians when it comes to using digital platforms.

Evaluating and creating

- 8 Hashtags are a clever social media tool. Develop a list of hashtags that you think could be used to generate interest and discussion for important social issues.

Inquiry tasks

Voting for a political party

Imagine you are a member of either the Australian Labor Party or the Liberal Party of Australia. Write a persuasive letter to be sent out to voters during an election campaign, encouraging them to vote for your party. Before writing your letter, research the current key issues or platforms of your chosen political party, the programs or policies your party leader has already supported or implemented and the future direction of your party.

Structure your letter to include an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

- **Introduction** (1–2 paragraphs)—Introduce yourself, the purpose of the letter and your political party, including a brief history of the party and the core beliefs and values of your party.

- **Body** (3 paragraphs)—In three separate paragraphs, provide three different reasons members of the public should vote for your party.
- **Conclusion** (1 paragraph)—Summarise your main arguments and tie them up in a general concluding statement about why the public should vote for your party at election time.

Remember to use persuasive techniques and language in your letter, including facts and statistics, emotive language, rhetorical questions and alliteration.

A new prime minister

Imagine you were a newspaper journalist at the time that Julia Gillard became prime minister, in 2010. Working in pairs, write a newspaper article covering the historic events that led to her taking that role.



Source 1.5.1 A huge campaign poster used during the 2013 federal election campaign

Remember to include the five 'Ws' in your article:

- **Who** was involved?
- **What** happened?
- **When** did it happen?
- **Where** did it happen?
- **Why** did it happen?

Your article should include a relevant image and a related caption. You should also include real quotes from Julia Gillard or other politicians in your article. Remember to explain the term 'hung parliament' and the importance of independent and minority party members of parliament when a hung parliament occurs.

The power of persuasion

In groups of four, choose two different political advertisements (print, internet, television or radio) used during an Australian election campaign. Draw up a table using the format described below, in which you analyse each advertisement.

- Column 1: List all persuasive techniques used in the advertisement. Depending on the type of advertisement, techniques may include images, music, slogans, word choice, colour and font.
- Column 2: Explain how each technique persuades.
- Column 3: Determine and describe the likely target audience for each advertisement.

After completing your analysis of the two advertisements with a partner, write your own paragraph explaining which of the two advertisements you found more persuasive, and why.

Debating social media

Form groups of six and prepare a debate on one of the following topics:

- Social media has no place in the world of politics.
- In today's society, social media is needed to run an effective political campaign.
- All politicians should have social media accounts.

Remember that three members of the group will form the affirmative team and three members will form the negative team. The members of each team will have to prepare appropriate speeches depending on whether they are the first, second or third speaker for the team. Carry out your debate in class, with your teacher or another student as the adjudicator.

GLOSSARY

bills documents that describe a proposed law or change to a law

coalition a temporary alliance of people, factions or parties; in politics, refers to parties that cooperate to form a government.

constitution a written set of principles according to which an organisation or a nation is governed

constitutional monarchy a system of government in which the head of state is a monarch whose power is limited by a constitution

electorate a defined area that is represented by a Member of Parliament, and its residents

Federation the process that occurred in 1901 whereby Australia's independent colonies came together to form a single nation called the Commonwealth of Australia

government a body of people who have the authority to control or govern a community, state or country

hung parliament a situation in which no single political party (or coalition) holds an absolute majority of seats in the House of Representatives

independents political candidates who do not belong to any political party

opposition the main party, or coalition of parties, that has the second-largest number of members elected to the House of Representatives

parliament an assembly of the democratically elected representatives of a people; in Australia, the legislative branch of the government, which consists of three elements: the British monarch, the Senate and the House of Representatives

proportional voting system the system according to which groups of candidates and independent candidates are elected to the parliament in proportion to the number of votes they receive

swing voters voters who do not feel particular loyalty to any political party and may change the party they vote for from one election to another