Enrolling to vote

In Australia, you must enrol and vote if you’re an Australian citizen aged 18 or over. If you are not enrolled, you cannot have your say on who represents you about issues that are important to you and your community.

The electoral roll

When you enrol to vote, your name and address are added to the electoral roll. The electoral roll is a list of people who are eligible to vote in the election. You need to be enrolled before you can vote.

How to enrol

You can use a computer or a smart phone to enrol to vote or update your address online at [www.aec.gov.au/Indigenous](http://www.aec.gov.au/Indigenous)

You can also pick up a form at any Australian Electoral Commission office or Australia Post outlet.

You’ll need proof of ID — that’s a driver’s licence, passport or someone who is already on the electoral roll who can confirm who you are.

The electoral roll closes shortly after the election is announced so it’s important to keep your enrolment details up-to-date.

Why do I have to enrol to vote?

Enrolment and voting is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 or over. More importantly, it is your chance to have a say in your future and in the future of your community.

Will I be fined if I haven’t enrolled in the past?

No. Even if you have not enrolled before, you can do so now and you will not be fined. However, you may be fined if you don’t vote at election time. The AEC encourages all eligible Australians to enrol to vote and keep their details up-to-date on the electoral roll.

Voting

Why voting is important
Your vote is your voice on the laws and decisions that affect you and your community.
By voting in elections, you have the opportunity to choose the person who you think will best represent your views in the Parliament. Voting is also important to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because Indigenous Australians did not achieve equal voting rights for federal elections until 1962.

When and where do I vote?
Federal election day is always on a Saturday. Voting takes place between 8am and 6pm at polling places around the country. Mobile polling teams also visit many remote areas in Australia in the weeks before election day.
If you can’t make it to a polling place on election day, you may be entitled to vote early either in person or by post. Details about how to vote early will be available from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) closer to election day.

What happens if I don’t vote?
Voting is compulsory for Australian citizens aged 18 years or older. If you do not vote and don’t have a valid and sufficient reason, you may be fined. The AEC will write to you at the address listed on the electoral roll and ask you to provide a reason why you did not vote.

Who am I voting for?
At election time, you will vote for a person to represent your area (known as an electorate) in the House of Representatives. There are 150 members in the House of Representatives. You can find out which electorate you live in on the AEC’s website.
You will also vote for senators who will represent your state or territory in the Senate. There are 12 senators for each state, and two senators for each territory.

How to make your vote count

On election day, you will receive two ballot papers: a green one for the House of Representatives and a white one for the Senate.

On the green ballot paper, you need to put a ‘1’ in the box beside the candidate who is your first choice, ‘2’ in the box beside your second choice and so on, until you have numbered every box.

You must number every box for your vote to count.

Don’t worry if you make a mistake – just ask for another ballot paper.
On the **white ballot paper** you have a choice of two ways to vote:

**EITHER**

**Above the line**
Number at least 6 boxes in the order of your choice.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Below the line**
Number at least 12 boxes in the order of your choice.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don’t worry if you make a mistake – just ask for another ballot paper.
Our Vote  Our Future

What happens on election day?

Finding a place to vote

Local schools, halls and other community venues are used as polling places or voting centres on election day. Large banners outside the venues make them easy to see.

Most polling places are open from **8am until 6pm** on election day, which is always held on a Saturday.

Mobile voting teams visit many remote communities in the weeks before election day.

At election time, you can find out where your nearest polling place will be located at [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au) or by contacting the Australian Electoral Commission on **13 23 26**.

Outside the polling place

When you arrive at the polling place, you will most likely see advertisements by political candidates and parties asking you to vote for them.

People may hand you ‘how-to-vote’ cards, which show you how to fill in your ballot papers if you want to support a particular candidate or political party.

It is your **choice** who you vote for. You **do not** have to follow any of these suggestions.

Inside the polling place

When you get inside the polling place you might need to wait in a queue before someone helps you. A polling official will ask for your name, address and if you have voted before in this election.

You will then receive your ballot papers. You can fill these out in private in the voting area or ask a family member or friend to help you. Polling officials are also available to help.

Once you’ve voted, just put your ballot papers in the ballot boxes near the door and you will have had a say about your future and the future of your community.
Our Vote Our Future

Three levels of government

Australia has three levels of government that work together to provide Australians with the services they need. The three levels are:

- local government or councils (also called shires or municipalities)
- state or territory governments
- federal government

By voting in elections, you will choose people to represent you in each level of government to make laws and govern on your behalf. Voting is how every person can have their say.

All levels of government collect money through taxes and provide a range of services. Each level of government has its own responsibilities, although in some cases these responsibilities overlap.

Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL</th>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>FEDERAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>local road maintenance</td>
<td>education</td>
<td>foreign affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garbage collection</td>
<td>transport</td>
<td>social security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreation facilities</td>
<td>health</td>
<td>immigration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Federal Government

A federal election is held at least every three years so Australians can vote to decide who will represent them in the federal Parliament.

The federal Parliament consists of two houses — the House of the Representatives and the Senate. During a federal election, you will vote for a person to represent your area (known as an electorate) in the House of Representatives. There are 150 members in the House of Representatives in total.

The political party with a majority of members in the House of Representatives becomes the federal Government. The leader of the government is called the Prime Minister.

You will also vote for senators who will represent a whole state or territory in the Senate. There are 12 senators for every state, and two senators for each territory.

State and territory governments

State and territory governments generally have a similar structure to the federal Parliament, but only make laws and decisions for the specific state or territory. Each state, apart from Queensland, has a parliament that consists of two houses. Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have one house called the Legislative Assembly, instead of a Parliament.

The leader of a state government is called the Premier. The leader of a territory government is called the Chief Minister.

When a state or territory holds an election, you will vote for a person to represent you in your state parliament or in the Legislative Assembly. State and Territory elections are run by State Electoral bodies and not by the Australian Electoral Commission.

Local government

Local governments, often called city councils or shire councils, are established by state governments to look after the particular needs of a city or local community. The head of the council is the Mayor or Shire President. During local government elections, you will vote for people called councillors who form the council. Local government elections are usually run by state electoral bodies.