**VICTORIAN STUDENTS’ PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM (VSPP) 2025:**

**TEACHERS’ PARLIAMENTARY CONVENTION**

**Topic**

*Should voting be compulsory in Australia?*

*A hand putting a ballot into a box

AI-generated content may be incorrect.*

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| **PRE READING RESOURCE** |

**Victorian Students’ Parliamentary Program (VSPP)**

**Teachers’ Parliamentary Convention**

**Tuesday 21 October 2025**

**At Parliament of Victoria**

**funded by the Victorian Government Department of Education**

**Rationale for Professional Development on Civics and Citizenship**

**Civics and Citizenship Rationale:**

**For the teachers:**

* promotes active and informed citizenship preparing students to become active contributors and participants in Australia’s democracy process
* develops students’ critical thinking skills
* upholds the democratic values that define Australia, such as freedom, equality, the rule of law, and respect for the rights of others
* responds to current and future societal needs in an ever-changing world, including the importance of diversity, inclusion, and global interconnectedness
* equips teachers with strategies to empower students to actively participate in class, in their school and in the community

**Enables students to:**

* become active and involved citizens
* participate in and sustain Australia’s democracy
* investigate political and legal systems
* understand concepts of citizenship, diversity, and identity in a democratic society
* gain the knowledge and skills necessary to question, understand and contribute to the world they live in

**Benefits for students/society:**

* enhance awareness of contemporary issues in the political and legal system
* highlights the dynamic nature of society and exposes students to diverse views
* exposes students to multiple strands within the Civics and Citizenship learning area and several of the capabilities - this supports a smart approach to learning while also demonstrating the close and interconnected relationships that exist between the Constitution, government, parliament, and the people
* requires students to gain an understanding of the subject content, consider benefits and limitations and possible alternatives surrounding the topic, before critically evaluating and reflecting on a preferred position on the question
* develop their knowledge and understanding of key legal and political institutions and processes underpinning Australia’s representative democracy
* develop an appreciation of democratic values including equality and the rule of law
* enhance their awareness of the civil rights and responsibilities of citizens
* develop an understanding of the political and legal systems that protect individuals’ rights
* empower individuals/groups to actively influence civic life

**VSPP Teachers’ Parliamentary Convention Topic**

*Should voting be compulsory in Australia?* **Context**

Compulsory voting is often justified as a way to guarantee that governments are elected by a true majority of citizens, not just the minority who tend to be the most motivated to vote. Since everyone of voting age is mandated to participate in this procedure, elections are thought to reflect the will of the whole population and thereby boost the legitimacy of elected representatives at both the State and Federal level. Furthermore, this encourages the development of policies and legislation that satisfies all members of the community, minorities included, rather than only those more likely to vote.

Australia is one of only a few democracies globally with enforced compulsory voting. Although around 21 nations worldwide have required voting legislation, only ten of these—including Australia—actually apply them. This contrasts with many other English-speaking countries, including the United States, New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom, all of which have voluntary voting systems.

Since the introduction of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1924, all eligible Australian citizens over the age of 18 are legally required to enrol and vote in federal elections, with similar laws applying in state and local elections across most of the country. Failure to vote without a valid excuse can result in a fine. This system was originally introduced to address low voter turnout and to strengthen democratic participation. After its introduction in the 1920s, voting increased from under 60% to over 91% in the first federal election conducted under this new law.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, specifically Section 245(1), states that it is the duty of every elector to vote at each election. This duty involves attending a polling place, having one's name marked off, receiving a ballot paper, marking it in a private booth, and placing it in the ballot box.

Many Australians view voting as an important civic duty—similar to jury service—arguing that the small obligation of turning up to vote far outweighs the broader benefits of safeguarding democracy and ensuring fair representation. Compulsory voting helps prevent political inequality and the marginalisation of less active or disadvantaged communities. Since its introduction, voter turnout in Australia has consistently remained above 90%, which supporters argue strengthens the credibility of elected governments, as they reflect the preferences of a broader cross-section of society. Compulsory voting encourages political parties to appeal to the entire electorate, leading to more inclusive policies rather than ones that just cater to partisan or the highly engaged voter bases. Additionally, the system is seen as promoting greater political awareness and engagement, as it encourages citizens to take a more active interest in public affairs. Ultimately, compulsory voting ensures that governments are chosen by the majority of citizens—not just the most vocal or motivated groups.

Critics of compulsory voting on the other hand argue that it infringes on individual freedom by forcing citizens to participate in a process that should be voluntary in a democratic society. They maintain that people should have the right to choose whether or not to vote, and that compulsory participation may cause resentment or apathy. This can result in an increase in informal or "donkey votes"—where voters randomly number candidates or submit blank ballots—undermining the quality and intent of the democratic process.

Those who oppose compulsory voting believe that it does not necessarily promote genuine political engagement or informed decision-making, particularly amongst those in the community who are uninterested or disengaged. In fact, some believe it leads to complacency, where people vote merely to avoid a fine rather than from a sense of civic duty. Support for compulsory voting tends to be lower among younger Australians, with some viewing the legal compulsion to vote as undemocratic or counterproductive.

There are also additional concerns raised about the administrative burden of enforcing compulsory voting laws. These include determining what counts as a valid and sufficient excuse for non-participation and processing penalties. While the standard fine for failing to vote without a valid reason is typically $20, continued non-compliance can lead to prosecution and further penalties. However, exemptions are made in certain cases, such as for religious beliefs that prohibit participation in elections.

Support for compulsory voting still remains strong in Australia, with surveys consistently showing approval rates between 70 and 74%. Any attempt to remove or replace the system would require significant support from the public. While compulsory voting is often praised for boosting participation and strengthening the validity of election outcomes, it also prompts ongoing debate about how to balance personal freedoms with the responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

Despite these discussions, compulsory voting continues to be a well-established and broadly accepted feature of Australia’s political system. Its consistent application and ability to engage voters from all areas of society emphasis its role in ensuring inclusive democratic participation.

This Convention topic invites teachers to reflect on the core values of democracy. Is it enough to encourage voluntary political engagement, or are legal requirements necessary to guarantee fairness and representation? Should the right to vote also mean the right not to vote?

Throughout this debate, teachers will explore these questions and assess whether compulsory voting still aligns with the needs and values of contemporary Australian society—or whether reform is justified.

This topic was also chosen for the 2025 Primary Schools' Parliamentary Convention – refer to the [NCS website](https://ncsonline.com.au/projects/victorian-students-parliamentary-program/primary-schools) for links to the student booklet and teacher resources developed.

[**Victorian Curriculum F-10 Version 2.0 Civics and Citizenship**](https://f10.vcaa.vic.edu.au/learning-areas/humanities/civics-and-citizenship/introduction)

**Rationale**

We teach Civics and Citizenship as part of the Humanities strand from Year 3 to Year 10. The curriculum is structured to progressively build students’ understanding of democratic principles, the role of government and their responsibilities as citizens. The topic **“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”** directly supports this aim by encouraging students to explore the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and how democratic participation shapes society.

By investigating this contemporary issue, students examine key features of Australia’s representative democracy—including the electoral system, the principle of equality, and the rule of law. They consider how government decisions are made, how citizens influence these decisions through voting, and the values that underpin compulsory voting such as fairness, civic duty, and freedom of choice.

This Convention topic also promotes critical thinking, debate, and inquiry skills as students weigh different perspectives on whether voting should be a legal requirement. It connects abstract democratic principles to real-world application, helping students see the relevance of civic participation in their own lives.

Through this learning, students develop respect for diversity, an appreciation of civic rights and responsibilities, and the ability to contribute thoughtfully and ethically to discussions about Australia’s political system—both now and into the future.

**Aims**

Civics and Citizenship aims to ensure students develop

* a lifelong engagement with civic life as active and informed citizens, who develop and maintain a sense of belonging in their communities in the context of Australia as a secular, democratic nation with a dynamic, culturally diverse and multi-faith society, with a Christian heritage, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations
* an understanding of and a commitment to the core concepts of active citizenship from local to global; community, identity and diversity; democratic institutions and systems; democratic values; and legal systems
* skills including investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues; evaluating democratic institutions and systems; participating in civic processes; and communicating
* the capabilities and dispositions to participate responsibly in the civic life of their communities and as people in an interconnected and interdependent world.

**Structure**

The topic **“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”** aligns strongly with the Victorian Curriculum for Civics and Citizenship, particularly in **Levels 5–8**. At Levels **5–6**, students explore the key features ofAustralia’s electoral process, including how citizens elect members of parliament, and the responsibilities of citizens within a democracy. This topic encourages students to consider why voting is compulsory, how elections work, and the role of voting in ensuring fair representation and citizen participation.

At Levels **7–8**, students extend their understanding by examining citizens’ rights and responsibilities, including the balance between civic duties, like compulsory voting, and freedoms such as choice and expression. They also explore how laws protect democratic values and how individuals and groups can influence political and legal systems. Discussing compulsory voting allows students to critically evaluate the tensions between rights, responsibilities, and democratic participation.

At levels **9-10** students learn about how Australia’s democracy works, citizen participation (like voting), and the ethical issues around civic duty versus personal freedom. Debating compulsory voting encourages students to think critically about democracy, compare Australia with other countries, and understand their future role as active, informed citizens.

Overall, the topic supports the curriculum’s goal of developing informed, active citizens. It promotes critical thinking, inquiry, and reasoning skills, as students investigate contemporary issues, weigh competing perspectives, and form reasoned opinions. By connecting theoretical democratic principles to a real-world issue, students gain a deeper understanding of how citizens engage with Australia’s democracy and the importance of their participation.

**Learning Intention**

* We will explore the concept of compulsory voting in Australia, understand its importance in a democratic society, and examine arguments for and against it in order to form an informed and justified conclusion.

**Success Criteria**

* I can explain what compulsory voting means in Australia, evaluate the main arguments for and against it, and confidently justify my own opinion using clear reasoning and relevant evidence.

**Links to the Curriculum**

**The Humanities: Civics and Citizenship**

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| **Strand** | **RELEVANT CONTENT DESCRIPTION** | **RELEVANT PART OF THE ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS** | **CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING ACHIEVEMENT STANDARD** |
| Government and Democracy | **Levels 3 & 4**  Students learn about how and why decisions are made democratically in communities  **VC2HC4K02**  Students learn about the roles of local government and how members of the community use and contribute to local services  **VC2HC4K03**  **Levels 5 & 6**  Students learnabout the features of Australia’s democratic institutions and systems, including representation in government and electoral systems  **VC2HC6K01**  **Levels 7 & 8**  Students learn about:  the role of political parties and independent representatives in Australian democracy, including elections, the formation of governments and the balance of power  **VC2HC8K01**  **Level 9 & 10**  Students learn about the role of the Australian Constitution in providing the basis for Australia’s federal system of government and democratic processes, including democratic institutions, and the process for constitutional change through a referendum  **VC2HC10K01** | Students can explain how some countries, like France or the USA, shifted from monarchies to democracies, and how others, like the UK or Japan, combine both systems.  Students can explain how local governments are chosen and by whom. This aligns with the topic as local council election voting is compulsory for owner/occupier ratepayers.  Students can explain key Australian democratic values, understand how these values apply in everyday elections, explore features like compulsory voting and the secret ballot, and recognise the role of electoral commissions in running fair elections.  Students can explain how different voting systems like preferential and proportional representation work. They can also investigate the roles of political parties, elected representatives and independents in Australia’s democracy.  Students can explain how the Constitution supports Australia’s democratic system—including federalism, elected parliaments, a constitutional monarchy, and the protection of rights. | **Questions and Possibilities**  Students learn about  the construction and use of open and closed questions for different purposes. For example, students can turn the closed question ‘Is voting in Australia compulsory?’ into an open question like ‘Should voting be compulsory in Australia?’ so that they can explore different points of view and have a deeper discussion**.**  **VC2CC4Q01**  Students learn about the construction of questions for identifying and building understanding of information, possibilities, processes and activities. Applying this tothis topic, they develop questions to identify key information, consider possible outcomes, understand how voting works, and examine related activities. This process builds their ability to think critically about the issue and understand the reasons for and against compulsory voting.  **VC2CC6Q01**  Students learn about  the construction of a main question and sub-questions for different purposes.  Linked to *should ‘voting be compulsory in Australia*,’ they might start with the main question about compulsory voting and develop sub-questions exploring its causes, effects, benefits, challenges, and public opinions.  **VC2CC8Q01**  Students learn about:  the construction and adaptation of questions to suit different contexts  In relation ‘*should voting be compulsory in Australia’*, this means they can adjust questions depending on who they are engaging with—for example, tailoring questions differently when speaking to politicians, voters, or election officials.  **VC2CC10Q01** |

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| **STRAND** | **RELEVANT CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS** | **RELEVANT PART OF ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS** |
| Citizenship, Diversity and Identity | **Levels 3 & 4**  Students learn about  why people participate within communities and how students can actively participate and contribute to communities  **VC2HC4K07**  **Level 5 & 6**  Students learn about:  the meanings of ‘citizenship’ and the rights and responsibilities of different kinds of citizenship, including local, state and national  citizenship.  **VC2HC6K07**  **Level 7 & 8**  Students learn about  how values based on freedom, respect, fairness and equality of opportunity can support social cohesion and a resilient democracy within Australian society  **VC2HC8K10**  **Level 9 & 10**  Students learn about  the challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and a cohesive society in Australia  **VC2HC10K10** | Linked to *should voting be compulsory in Australia*, students can explain how voting allows individuals to actively participate in their democratic community.  Linked to ‘*should voting be compulsory in Australia*,’ students can explain how Australian citizenship includes the responsibility to participate in democratic processes, such as voting. They can examine who is eligible to vote and consider how these responsibilities differ globally.  Linked to ‘*should voting be compulsory in Australia*, students can explain how compulsory voting reflects these values by promoting equal participation and fairness in decision-making. They can also examine how shared values unite Australia’s diverse communities and strengthen democracy, considering how voting is a way citizens contribute to social cohesion and collective responsibility.  Linked to ‘*should voting be compulsory in Australia’*, students can explain how compulsory voting encourages everyone to participate equally, supporting fairness and shared responsibility. They can also consider how voting reflects broader Australian values such as inclusion and justice, helping to unite diverse communities and strengthen democratic resilience by ensuring all voices are heard. |

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| **STRAND** | **RELEVANT CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS** | **RELEVANT PART OF ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS** |
| Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues  **Communicating** | **Levels 3 & 4**  Students learn to  identify and develop questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues  **VC2HC4S01**  **Levels 5 & 6**  Students learn to:  develop questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues.  **VC2HC6S01**  **Level 7 & 8**  Students learn to  develop and refine questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues  **VC2HC8S01**  **Level 9 & 10**  Students learn to:  develop and evaluate questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues.  **VC2HC10S01**  **Levels 3 & 4**  Students learn to  describe a civics and citizenship issue using ideas from sources and subject-specific terminology  **VC2HC4S05**  **Levels 5 & 6**  Students learn to  explain contemporary civics and citizenship issues using ideas, knowledge and perspectives from different sources  **VC2HC6S07**  **Level 7 & 8**  Students learn to:  develop an analysis of civics and citizenship issues with knowledge and evidence using multiple methods of communication  **VC2HC8S08**  **Level 9 & 10**  Students learn to:  construct evidence-based arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and different perspectives, and determine the most effective method of communication  **VC2HC10S08** | Students can investigate the question *“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”* by developing questions such as: “How can compulsory voting influence the way people participate in Australia’s democracy?”  This allows students to explore how civic participation is shaped by compulsory voting, encouraging them to consider different perspectives, decision-making processes, and the broader impact on civic participation.  Students can develop inquiry questions such as:  “How does compulsory voting reflect Australia’s democratic values and government policies?” Questions like this help students explore the legal and political reasons behind compulsory voting, its connection to democratic principles, and the role of government in maintaining this policy. They also encourage students to consider whether current laws support or challenge civic participation in Australia.  Students can develop and improve questions linked to this topic e.g.  “How does compulsory voting reflect values such as fairness and equality for contemporary Australia?”  or “What role do political institutions and leaders play in maintaining or challenging compulsory voting laws?”.  These questions allow students to examine how compulsory voting connects to Australian values and decision-making processes, while encouraging deeper inquiry into the roles of institutions and political actors in shaping civic responsibilities.  Linked to *“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”*, students can brainstorm a range of questions—such as the impact of compulsory voting on democratic participation or how it compares to voting systems in other countries. They can then evaluate which question is most likely to lead to meaningful insights, for example: “Does compulsory voting improve the fairness and inclusivity of elections in Australia?” This process encourages critical thinking and ensures students are asking purposeful,relevant questions to guide their inquiryinto this significant civic issue.  Linked to *“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”*, students can use a range of sources to describe the issue clearly. They can explain that voting is both a right and a responsibility of Australian citizens and use terms like *democracy*, *civic duty*, *representation*, and *enrolment*.  Linked to *“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”*, students can research a range of viewpoints—including government reports, expert opinions, public responses, and voter turnout data—to explore both sides of the debate.  Linked to *“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”*, students can present a well-supported analysis of the issue using multiple formats—such as a written explanation, a class presentation, a video, or a visual like a pros and cons chart. They might include evidence such as voter turnout statistics, expert opinions, and comparisons with other countries. This allows them to show a deep understanding of the issue and communicate it clearly using a variety of methods.  Linked to *“Should voting be compulsory in Australia?”*, students can create a poster or infographic presenting arguments for and against compulsory voting, supported by data and different viewpoints. They could also reflect on how they formed their opinion, considering evidence that challenges their perspective. Additionally, students can analyse how political campaigns and media communicate about voting laws and evaluate which methods best influence public opinion and encourage participation. |

**Background Reading**

***What is a convention?***

* [The Uluru Statement](https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/)
* [Australia’s System of Government](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/about-public-sector/australias-system-of-government/)
* [Victoria’s System of Government](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/about-public-sector/victorias-system-of-government/)
* [Victoria’s Parliamentary Structure](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/about-public-sector/victorias-system-of-government/parliament/)
* [Victoria’s legislative process](https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/how-parliament-works/how-a-law-is-made/)

**Supporting material for teachers to prepare and conduct their own parliamentary convention**

***Preparing to conduct a parliamentary convention***

The following is designed to assist you with your planning for your local Convention. Where possible try to involve students in the planning of the Convention.

* Select a topic / issue for the Convention’s program (best to choose a topic that is a YES/NO question that can be voted on)
* Confirm a date for the Convention
* Draft letters of invitation to local schools to attend
* Invite appropriate speakers (try to balance our affirmative and negative views)
* Confirm and brief speakers on the topic and preferred angle of the presentation
* Book and confirm a venue/location that would be appropriate for your program (e.g. theatre-style for speaker presentations; classroom-style for discussion groups)
* Compile program / flyer or other promotional materials
* Develop pre-reading / stimulus materials or activities for students to do in preparation for the Convention
* Ensure every participant obtains a copy of program and pre-reading material
* Confirm speakers and others AV requirements
* Confirm attendee numbers
* Organise catering (if required) or can request attendees to bring their own lunch
* Print registration / name list for check-in
* Make name tags (if required)
* Conduct evaluation after the Convention

Need more information or assistance? Feel free to contact National Curriculum Services via [registrations@ncsonline.com.au](mailto:registrations@ncsonline.com.au) or call us on (03) 9415 1299.

***Sample pre-convention activities:***

* [**Pre-convention activities (Primary)**](https://ncsonline.com.au/projects/victorian-students-parliamentary-program/primary-schools)
* [**Pre-convention activities (Secondary)**](https://ncsonline.com.au/projects/victorian-students-parliamentary-program/secondary-schools)

***Conducting a parliamentary convention***

Once pre-convention activities are completed, prepare to make your own parliament and role play the legislative process in the House of Representatives.

A step-by-step process is outlined in [**Make your own parliament**](https://peo.gov.au/teach-our-parliament/classroom-activities/parliamentary-processes-and-practices/make-a-law-house-of-representatives/)**.**

**Suggested background material to introduce this topic:**

**Historical overview of compulsory voting in Australia**

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| **Key Knowledge/Question** | **Remarks** |
| [Australian Electoral Commission - Compulsory voting in Australia](https://www.aec.gov.au/about_aec/publications/voting/) | *An outline of the history and key facts about compulsory voting in Australia since Federation, designed to provide a deeper understanding of this topic.* |
| [Parliamentary Education Office - Commonwealth Electoral Act 1924](https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/history-of-parliament/history-milestones/australian-parliament-history-timeline/events/commonwealth-electoral-act-1924) | *The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1924 – offers reasons why the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 was amended in 1924 to make voting compulsory.* |
| [Parliamentary Education Office – Why is voting compulsory?](https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/your-questions-on-notice/questions/why-is-voting-compulsory) | *Summary of why voting is compulsory in Australia.* |

**Unpacking the concept of democracy**

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| **Key Knowledge/Question** | **Remarks** |
| [Parliament of Australia – Parliament Explained: Democracy](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/About_the_House_News/News/Parliament_Explained_Democracy) | *Educational resource, explaining fundamental concepts of democracy within the context of the Australian parliamentary system.* |
| [Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House – Australia Democracy](https://www.moadoph.gov.au/explore/democracy/australian-democracy) | *Information provided outlines several key aspects of Australia’s democratic system including what a constitutional monarchy is and the importance of independent elections.* |
| [ABC News – Democracy Explained](https://www.abc.net.au/education/tv-guide/democracy-explained/105212008) | *A six-part educational series of five-minute episodes that explores key aspects of democracy, from its historical origins to its modern-day features and challenges.* |

**International Perspectives on Compulsory Voting**

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| **Key Knowledge/Question** | **Remarks** |
| [International Idea – Compulsory voting](https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout-database/compulsory-voting) | *This resource examines compulsory voting in a global context. It explores its historical development, the reasons supporting and opposing its use, how it is applied in different countries, and the varying levels of enforcement across the world.* |
| [Institute for Youth in Policy – The case for compulsory voting](https://yipinstitute.org/article/the-case-for-compulsory-voting) | *This article argues that making voting mandatory could be good for democracies struggling with low and uneven voter participation. The article suggests that voting should be seen as a duty citizens have, not just something they can choose to do or not do.* |
| [Institute for Responsive Government – What other countries can teach us about turnout](https://responsivegov.org/research/what-other-countries-can-teach-us-about-turnout/) | *This report examines how electoral reforms used in other democracies—such as compulsory voting and proportional representation—can help to significantly improve voter turnout in the United States.* |

**Debating Compulsory Voting in Australia: Resources and Perspectives**

**General Perspectives**

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| **Key Knowledge/Question** | **Remarks** |
| [SBS News – Why does Australia have compulsory voting?](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/why-does-australia-have-compulsory-voting/a839p5mbk) | *Explanation of why Australia has compulsory voting, focusing on its history, how it was introduced in the 1920s to address low voter turnout, the benefits of increased participation, public support for the system, and some criticisms about freedom of choice and voter engagement.* |
| [BBC – How compulsory voting works in Australia](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx20gy2lz4go) (video is 1.11 minutes) | *Recent article and video explaining how compulsory voting works in Australia in the context of this year’s federal election.* |
| [Vote Australia – Compulsory voting](file:///C:\Users\BethWoodhead\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Olk\Attachments\ooa-fbc0a547-861a-480c-ad27-5dda6857ebbf\9633ddda18a3d55fcc06be7e184d6a7c95f76e508e089599edda93818b206fb6\Compulsory%20voting%20-%20Vote%20Australia) | *Provides an overview of Australia's compulsory voting system, highlighting its significance and the ongoing debates surrounding it.* |
| [YouTube: The Helen Clark Foundation Compulsory Voting: Lessons from Australia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0POQTVK7uk) (video is 2.33 minutes) | *Discussion of the outcome of Australia’s recent Federal election and why New Zealand would benefit from introducing compulsory voting.* |
| [BOLTS Magazine – “An egalitarian pressure”: Australia has been requiring people to vote for 100 years](https://boltsmag.org/compulsory-voting-australia-election/) | *The article examines how compulsory voting in Australia, introduced in 1925, significantly boosted voter turnout and became a widely accepted civic duty that is embedded in fairness and equal participation, ensuring broad involvement in elections.* |
| [YouTube: Guardian Australia – Who are the Australian political parties clamouring for your vote?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CpZUiIeQn4) (video is 4.48 minutes) | *A concise overview of the major political parties—like Labor, the Liberal–National Coalition, and the Greens—as well as a selection of minor and micro parties that competed for votes in the 2025 federal election.* |
| [The Conversation – Australian democracy is not dead, but needs help to ensure its survival](https://theconversation.com/australian-democracy-is-not-dead-but-needs-help-to-ensure-its-survival-235638#:~:text=To%20renew%20its%20democracy%2C%20Australia,restore%20trust%20in%20political%20institutions) | *Interesting article about whether Australian democracy is still working. Suggest that trust in the government is decreasing. It recommends changes to make elections fairer and the government more transparent to keep democracy strong.* |
| [Pulitzer Center – Would mandatory voting work in the U.S.? Australia’s success shows the way](https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/would-mandatory-voting-work-us-australias-success-shows-way#:~:text=Democracy%20Solutions%20Project%20Australians%20have%20been%20required,high%20turnout%20and%20other%20less%20obvious%20benefits) | *This article examines the impact of Australia's compulsory voting system and explores its potential application in the United States.* |
| [Deakin University – Understanding compulsory voting in Australia](https://this.deakin.edu.au/society/understanding-compulsory-voting-in-australia) | *Another interesting article that explains why voting is compulsory in Australia, exploring its history, purpose, and effects on democracy, and compares it to voluntary voting systems like the current system in the U.S.* |

**Arguments supporting compulsory voting in Australia**

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| **Key Knowledge/Question** | **Remarks** |
| [Harvard International Review – Compulsion emboldens democracy: a deep-dive into Australia’s mandatory voting](https://hir.harvard.edu/compulsion-emboldens-democracy-a-deep-dive-into-australias-mandatory-voting/) | *This article explores how Australia’s compulsory voting system boosts democratic participation by ensuring high voter turnout through practical measures (e.g. voting on a Saturday, convenient polling places etc.) and cultural traditions (i.e. democratic sausages) that make voting accessible and positively valued.* |
| [YouTube: BBC News – Australia election: Fines, donkey votes and democracy sausages](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3y_xXZ7paVI) (video is 2.42 minutes) | *A BBC correspondent explains why more than 90% of eligible Australians will vote at the next federal election and how most Australians are in favour of compulsory voting.* |
| [Parliament of Australia – Compulsory voting, political legitimacy and public reason in Australian democracy](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Publications_and_resources/Papers_and_research/Papers_on_Parliament_and_other_resources/Papers_on_Parliament/73/Compulsory_voting_political_legitimacy_and_public_reason_in_Australian_democracy) | *This article argues that compulsory voting in Australia strengthens democracy by increasing voter turnout, ensuring fairer and more representative elections, promoting public reasoning among citizens, and helping different groups coordinate their political participation, which together enhance the credibility of democratic institutions.* |
| [ABC News – A history of compulsory voting in Australia (and why we are so good at elections)](file://C:\Users\BethWoodhead\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Olk\Attachments\ooa-fbc0a547-861a-480c-ad27-5dda6857ebbf\9633ddda18a3d55fcc06be7e184d6a7c95f76e508e089599edda93818b206fb6\A%20history%20of%20compulsory%20voting%20in%20Australia%20(and%20why%20we%20are%20so%20good%20at%20elections)%20-%20ABC%20News) | *This article article explains that compulsory voting was introduced in Australia in 1924 to boost low turnout it has ensured high voter participation, and strengthened democracy by making election results more representative, whilst promoting voting as a civic duty, despite some debates over individual freedom.* |

**Arguments against compulsory voting in Australia**

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| **Key Knowledge/Question** | **Remarks** |
| [Equal Rights – Delving deeper into arguments against mandatory voting](https://equalrightsorg.com/delving-deeper-into-arguments-against-mandatory-voting?) | *This article discusses key arguments against mandatory voting, including concerns about personal freedom, the risk of uninformed voting, enforcement difficulties, and the idea that compulsory voting doesn’t solve deeper political disengagement; it also suggests alternatives like better civic education and easier voting access.* |
| [Open Democracy - Compulsory voting: the case against | openDemocracy](https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/compulsory_voting_the_case_against/) | *This article examines compulsory voting, focusing on concerns about personal freedom, uninformed voting, enforcement issues, and its failure to address political disengagement, while proposing alternatives like better civic education and easier voting access.* |
| [YouTube – The Heart of Politics with Kerrie Harris – Find out what real problem with compulsory voting is in Australia!](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHGlq2IaySk) (video is 1.11 minutes) | *The video clip focuses on what the real problem with compulsory voting can be from the point of view of potential independent candidates.* |
| [The Ethics Centre – Why compulsory voting undermines democracy](https://ethics.org.au/why-compulsory-voting-undermines-democracy/) | *This article argues that compulsory voting undermines democracy by forcing uninterested or uninformed people to vote, which can weaken the quality of election outcomes, and suggests that voting should be voluntary and based on informed participation.* |

**A deeper dive into some supporting materials**

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| [National Museum Australia – Compulsory voting: does it help or hinder democracy?](https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/learning-modules/voting-defining-moments/23-compulsory-voting-does-it-help-or-hinder-democracy)  Features a range of interactive modules that explore relevant topics such as:   * 2.1 Introduction * 2.2 Stop bullying me and let me vote * 2.3 Compulsory voting: does it help or hinder democracy? * Reflection of the electoral process   **Strengths:** This resource provides a clear historical context on compulsory voting in Australia and includes interactive activities to engage learners, that align with the Australian Curriculum, making it an effective tool for understanding how compulsory voting affects democracy. |
| [State Library – Chapter 5: Compulsory Voting – for and against](https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/find-legal-answers/books-online/hot-topics-voting-and-elections/compulsory-voting-and-against)  Table that outlines the major arguments both *for* and *against* compulsory voting in Australia, structured into six direct points of comparisons.  **Strengths:** This resource provides a balanced examination of compulsory voting in Australia, making it an ideal introduction to this topic. |
| [Australia Electoral Commission – Participation in the 2025 federal election](https://www.aec.gov.au/election/fe25/participation-rates.htm)  An excellent resource that confirms that compulsory voting in Australia leads to high voter turnout (around 90%) and record enrolment (98.2%). It highlights Australia's unique system, compares it globally, and shows how the AEC supports participation through outreach and education.  **Strengths:** This resource is a comprehensive, reliable, and accessible tool for understanding voter engagement and election planning in Australia providing official and reliable data as well as participation statistics. |
| [Australian National University – Speech: Clare O’Neil on the challenges to our democracy](https://nsc.anu.edu.au/content-centre/article/news/speech-clare-oneil-challenges-our-democracy)  Clare O'Neil's speech highlights two major threats to Australian democracy: the spread of misinformation through social media and the breakdown of social cohesion. She calls for a united national effort to protect democratic values and respond to these growing challenge.  **Strengths**: This speech is effective because it clearly highlights key threats to democracy such as misinformation, foreign interference, and social division. |
| [YouTube: Constitutional Clarion – Compulsory voting, democracy sausages and the Constitution](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7YJciGycB0) (video goes for 19.22 minutes)  This comprehensive video clip highlights the connection between Australia’s compulsory voting laws, the famous “democracy sausage” tradition that brings communities together on election day, and the constitutional principles that form the foundation of this nation’s democratic system.  **Strengths**: Clearly explains Australia’s compulsory voting system and why people love the “democracy sausage” tradition on election day. It uses visuals and real stories to make the topic easy and interesting to understand. It also shows how voting is part of Australia’s culture and community. |
| [YouTube: Institute of Public Affairs – Lesh: voting should not be compulsory](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-yQC0llamM) (this video is 7:19 minutes)  Panel discussion about whether voting should be compulsory or voluntary.  **Strengths**: The panel members offered strong, well-rounded arguments supporting both sides of the compulsory voting debate. |