DIGITAL PACK OUTLINE and INSTRUCTIONS

WA Electoral Commission Secondary Digital pack – a guide for class discussions on voting in Australia.

Program name	Voting in Australia's Democracy
Year	Secondary
Pack Content	[This document] PowerPoint presentation Ballot Paper Examples: _ LA_ LC Ballot paper FAST FOODS Fast food candidate signs
Lesson duration	Approximately 90 minutes

Learning Outcomes aligned to curriculum

ACHCK048:
- Students develop fundamental understanding of the different roles of the House of Representatives and the Senate in Australia's bicameral^ parliament.
  ^ A system of government or legislature that has two separate chambers or houses.

ACHCK062:
- Students follow how citizens participate in Australia's democracy, including use of the electoral system.

ACHASSK116:
- Students understand the significance of voting rights in a democratic society.
- Students can explain the importance of the secret ballot in ensuring voter privacy.
- Students understand the concept of compulsory voting and its role in promoting civic participation and representation.
- Students can describe the voting processes Electoral Commissions use to ensure electoral integrity.
- Students can articulate who is eligible to vote for election in Australia.

ACHASSK143:
- Students understand the historical context and principles of the Westminster system as it applies to Australian democracy.

ACHASSK144:
- Students can differentiate between the responsibilities of the federal, state, and local governments in Australia.
- Students can give examples of services and functions managed by each level of government.
- Students understand the importance of each level of government in addressing community needs and implementing policies.

Lesson preparation

Materials
- Make a ballot box with an A4 paper box or similar. Cut a neat slot into the top and label the box BALLOT BOX.
- Print one each of **Example Legislative Council** and **Legislative Assembly ballot papers**. Laminate to allow students to pass them around.
- Print one of each of the four **SIGNS_FAST FOOD**. Laminate.
- Print **Ballot Paper FAST FOOD**. Ensure one ballot paper for each student plus extras.
- If possible, set up voting screens – construct something that simulates four booths with dividers. Provide a pencil for each booth.

Instructions for using the PowerPoint

The *Voting in Australia's Democracy PowerPoint* contains text and images with animations. The text and images appear on click, so information appears in sequence to allow for teacher pacing.

- Practice using the presentation prior to showing your class. Each 'click' will bring text and/or images to the slide.
- Use presentation mode when showing to the class.
- The animated ballot box on the first slide is set to play continuously until the second slide is required. Click to progress to the second slide.

Instructions for extension information

Extension information provides background knowledge and for classes and students who need more challenging material. Use these points to answer more complex questions and start discussions that encourage deeper analysis and critical thinking.

Notes for individual slides

What is a democracy?	- Cover the points in the slide. - Inform students the word *democracy* comes from ancient Greek language. It is made up of two Greek words: *demos*, which means "people," and *kratos*, which means "rule" or "power." So, the literal meaning of democracy is "rule by the people".
Things to know	- Cover points in the slide. - Ask students if they know the names of any political parties or candidates. - After explaining what compulsory voting means, ask students why everyone having to vote is a good idea. Responses to elicit: - Lots of people voting: This means the results show what most people think. - Everyone's voice counts: Not just people who love (or dislike) politics. - Stable Government: With more voters, the government works better. - Focus on everyone: Politicians care about all people, not just some groups. - Cheaper campaigns: Politicians spend less money to get people to vote.
Electorates	Australia (and each state and territory) is divided into geographical areas containing a certain number of electors. These 'electorates' are separated by 'electoral boundaries' and referred to as 'electoral districts' in state elections and 'electoral divisions' in federal elections. From the 2025 election, the Western Australian upper house has a single, 'all of state' electorate. A change to boundaries is called a 'Redistribution'. This is the process of redrawing the boundaries of electoral districts/divisions to ensure that each division has roughly an equal number of voters as the population moves and changes over time. Ask students if they know what district they are in, and how to check online for their district. You may wish to direct students to boundaries.wa.gov.au to look up their district and view a map of it.
Extension information	*Compulsory voting was first introduced in Australia in Queensland in 1915 in response to a decreasing turnout of eligible voters. It was later adopted for Federal elections from 1924.*
Parliament	- After going over the points in the slide, you could tell students to think about parliament like a group school project: the Lower House writes the first draft, and the Upper House checks it over. - Ask students if the know what the job name is for MPs (Politicians).
Extension information	Australia's national and state parliaments follow Constitutions—documents that set the rules for how governments work and share power. The Federal Constitution was first drafted in 1891 to unite the six colonies into one nation.

Extension information	*Both the Australian and Western Australian parliaments have two houses* Lower House (House of Representatives): Members represent local areas. Most laws start here. The party with the most seats forms the government. Upper House (Senate): Members represent states or territories. They review and can change or reject laws from the Lower House. A law (called a bill) must pass both houses and be signed by the Governor-General (Federal) or Governor (State) to become an Act of Parliament. *Australia uses a mix of:* Westminster system (from Britain): Two-house parliament and a monarch's representative.
	US Federal system: Power is shared between national and state governments. The Senate has strong powers to block laws. If a Bill Is Rejected Federal: If the Senate rejects a bill twice, the Governor-General can call new elections. State: If both houses disagree, a special group called the Conference of Managers tries to resolve it. If they fail, the bill doesn't pass.
Three levels of government	▪ Cover the three levels of government. ▪ Ask the students what political parties they know of, if they know which political party the Prime Minister and the Premier are from. ▪ NOTE: Research who the mayor or shire president is in your local area and add their photo to the slide. Also, find out which federal and state electorates, as well as the local government area your school is in, and who the representative is for each level of state and local.
Responsibilities	▪ Ask students what they think each level of government is responsible for. ▪ Click through the slide for the Federal, State and Local Government responsibilities.
Extension information	The responsibilities of the Federal government are outlined in the Constitution as Exclusive Powers or as Concurrent Powers shared with the states, that is, both the Commonwealth and the states may legislate. The states retain legislative powers over matters not specifically listed in the Constitution. Later, State Governments moved local services to what would become Local Governments, which are not mentioned in the Commonwealth constitution.
Who is eligible to vote? | *What is the electoral roll?*	Ensure students understand: ▪ the meaning of the word *eligible* ▪ the meaning of *enrolling* to vote ▪ The word *compulsory*
Extension information	More than **18 million** people were enrolled for the 2025 Federal election. You only need to enrol once and can vote in elections for every level of government. As of 2024, you can enrol from the age of 16 and be provisionally listed ready for your 18th birthday. While it is a requirement to be an Australian citizen, you are not eligible if you hold dual citizenship.
Ballot papers	▪ Keep explanations simple. Remind students that the Lower House is the group of MPs who make the laws, and the Upper House is the group that reviews them. ▪ Provide the laminated ballot papers for students to hand around.
Extension information	Difference in the ballot papers: the lower house ballot is used to elect a single person to represent an electorate, and the upper house ballot is to elect several people to represent a whole state.

Preferential Voting	- Use an example, such as ice cream flavours or sports to reinforce understanding of *preferences,* or - Use the names listed on the example ballot paper to see who the students would choose for their first, second, third and fourth preference. - Clicking through the slide will see a *1, 2, 3* and *4* appear in the boxes. - Reinforce that not completing the ballot properly means it will not be included in the count Ballot papers can only be marked with numbers; not ticks or crosses, or anything else, and no blank squares.
	Additional resource: You may wish to show the AEC Preferential Voting video.

Election Day	Ask students: - If anyone has been to a polling place. - If they know whether their school operates as a polling place. - Whether they have ever seen election campaign workers handing out flyers. - Explain that the flyers demonstrate how a particular party or candidate *wants* the voter to vote, and the boxes are numbered in the order that is most favourable to that candidate. - Reinforce that voters *make their own decisions* about their preferences, and that they do not have to take the "how-to-vote cards".
Voting at a Polling Place	- Walk the students slowly through the slide pathway. - Ask the students why we have voting screens for each voter. The answer is to ensure voter privacy – it is the secret ballot system. This means no one else gets to see your vote. - Ask the students why think a secret ballot is important. Responses: No one will know who you are voting for - you cannot be judged, get into arguments or be intimidated by other people. - Ask students whether voters put their names on ballot papers. Answer is no – all votes are anonymous. Voters do not add identifiable information.
Extension Information	Australia was the first country in the world to use the "secret ballot" – this was in Victoria in 1856. It became known as the "Australian" ballot. If students ask about not liking any candidates: Use this as a teachable moment about the tough choices adults face. Discuss how voters sometimes have to choose between candidates they don't like and explore ways to approach this situation.
Counting the votes	- Cover the points of the slide. Potential questions to ask students: - Why are the '1s' counted first? - What happens if no candidate gets more than half of the votes? - What do you think scrutineers are looking for?
Other ways of voting	Cover the points on the slide. Potential questions to ask students: Why is being able to vote early (before the election day) important? Anyone who is eligible to vote in a state election may apply for an early vote. Most local government elections in WA are now run as postal elections. Use the slide to answer *what if* questions – what if you are overseas, what if you are homeless, what if you are in prison – (mobile polling teams visit prisons).
Let's vote!	- Place the ballot box at the front of the class. - Ask for six volunteers – two to play the role of election workers, and four to be candidates. - Ask your election workers to stand up the front and to the side of the classroom. If possible, have a double desk set up where the elections workers can sit. - Give the ballot papers to the election workers. - Do NOT allocate the fast food signs at this stage as students may vote for the person rather than the fast food 'candidate'.

The Candidates	**Time to vote** ▪ Ask the class to form a queue to collect their ballot papers from your election workers. ▪ Remind students they are making a *preferential vote,* ensuring they know this means they need to fill in the ballot paper in order of their preference, and they must number EVERY square. ▪ If you have erected voting booths, ask the students to use these, until all students have voted. If you do not have voting screens, ask the students to return to their desks to complete the ballot paper. Remind students it is a SECRET vote – and not to discuss it or allow anyone to see their ballot paper. ▪ Ask the students to deposit their completed ballot papers into the ballot box and return to their seats. Then get the election workers to vote. ▪ Randomly allocate one fast food sign to each of the four candidate students and ask them to stand in a row at the front of the classroom. ▪ Ask the class if the candidates get to vote. The answer is yes. Then ask, "Who do you think they will vote for?" Answer is themselves (they are politicians). ▪ Allow the candidates to vote and return to the front of the class. ▪ Open the ballot box and divide the ballot papers into three piles. Give one pile to each of the election workers and keep one pile for yourself. ▪ Check the completed votes have numbers in all the squares. Instruct the election workers to do the same. If a ballot contains blank squares, it is considered an *informal* vote and removed from the count. ▪ Count the formal votes. ▪ The three of you then distribute the votes to whichever candidate received a '1' on the ballot paper. The candidates then count the number of votes they received.
The Preferential Count	NOTE: If you have a smartboard, write the counts directly into the first column. If you do not have a smartboard, draw up a large 4x4 table on the board and write the names of the fast food in the left column. Replicate the three boxes from the slide on the right side of the board. ▪ Ask each candidate for the number of votes they have received and record the numbers in the first column. ▪ Calculate the total number of formal votes (hopefully the same as the number of students in the class) and write the number in the box in the top-right corner. ▪ Get the students to help determine the Absolute Majority (half the number of valid votes plus 1). For example, if the total number of valid votes is 32, divide by 2 (=16) and then + 1 = 17. NOTE: If the total number of formal votes is an odd number, divide the number by two and round up to the next whole number, for example, 33/2=16.5, so round up to 17 – this is now more than half the vote or Absolute Majority. ▪ Write this figure in the box in the bottom-right corner. Inform students that a candidate needs to get this number of votes or higher to win. ▪ Now check – did any of the candidates achieve the Absolute Majority (or higher) in the first preference count?

Case A:	**Case B:**
One candidate achieves the absolute majority with the first preference count and is declared the winner. For the sake of the exercise, to show how the preferential count works, demonstrate the following hypothetical: Remove enough votes from the winning candidate to bring them under the Absolute Majority and distribute them to the other candidates, so all have less than the Absolute Majority. For example, if the total number of valid votes in 32, and the winning candidate has received 19 votes, take four votes from that candidate, so they now have 15. Give the other 4 votes to the other candidates (avoid having a tie). Proceed as in Case B.	If there is no winner in the first round as none of the candidates achieves the Absolute Majority, you will redistribute some votes. **How to conduct a redistribution** 1. Strikethrough to eliminate the candidate with the least number of votes. 2. Thank that 'candidate' student, ask them to give you their ballot papers and return to their seat. 3. Ask the remaining candidates to place their ballot papers on the floor in front of them. 4. Check the 2nd preference on the ballot papers from the eliminated candidate and hand them to the appropriate remaining candidates. 5. Ask the candidates to count their additional votes. 6. Write a plus sign under the number in the first column and then the number of 2nd preference votes. See example below.

	NOTE: If there is still no Absolute Majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated, and the count proceeds as above with the 3rd preference distribution going to the remaining two candidates.

The number of votes required to win (Absolute Majority) is **20,** calculated by 50% of 38 (total number of valid votes) = 19, then + 1 vote = 20.

As reflected in the above graphic, the first result of this election is:

Pizza	7
KFC	12
McDonalds	4
Subway	15
Total valid votes	38

BUT none of the candidates has received 20 (or more) votes.
The candidate with the least number of votes is then eliminated. In this case, it is McDonalds.

McDonalds ballot papers are then redistributed to the candidates selected as 2nd preference. Three votes went to KFC, and one to Subway.

As reflected in the above graphic, the results are now:

Pizza	7 + 0	7
KFC	12 + 3	15
McDonalds	4	
Subway	15 +1	16
Total valid votes	38	

However, still no candidate has reached the Absolute Majority of 20.

- Pizza now has the least number of votes and so is eliminated.
- Pizza's seven ballot papers are now redistributed to the remaining two candidates.
- However, let's say one of Pizza's 2nd preference votes went to McDonalds. But because McDonalds is already eliminated, the vote then goes to the third preference on that ballot. In this case the 3rd preference went to Subway. So, Subway gets four votes.

We can now declare **Subway** the winner because they achieved the Absolute Majority of 20 votes.

Pizza	7 + 0	7	
KFC	12 + 3	15 + 3	18
McDonalds	4	1	
Subway	15 + 1	16 + 3 + 1	**20**
Total valid votes	38		

Additional information	
Donkey vote	Students may have heard the expression, *donkey vote*. A donkey vote is when a ballot is filled out in numerical order starting with 1. Despite its name suggesting a lack of thought, it is still a formal vote and may reflect the voter's true preferences. In the past, candidates were listed in alphabetical order, so names at the top of the list acquired a small advantage due to donkey voting. Now, candidates' names are randomly ordered so there is no point in changing your name to Aardvark.
Tie	If more than one candidate has the lowest number of votes, they can be eliminated by chance, one at time. The names of the candidates with the equal lowest votes are written onto pieces of paper and placed in a ballot box. The first name drawn is eliminated, and their preferences are then distributed to the remaining candidates. To reduce the likelihood of ties for smaller classes, prepare some additional ballot papers to add to the count. These can be referred to as early votes.
Extension information	If a government election is very close, votes are recounted to check if any have been missed or attributed to the wrong candidate. If a recount confirms a tied election and cannot be decided, the Electoral Commission must file a petition with the Court of Disputed Returns, which declares either a candidate elected, or the election as void. In the case of a void election, a by-election will be held.
Additional resources	Fact Sheets and Useful links are available on the WA Electoral Commission Education Resources webpage.