

HOW GOVERNMENTS ARE FORMED



In a democracy citizens decide how they will be governed. Because it is impractical to call a meeting of all Victorians to make a government decision every time it is needed, we use a system of representative government.

At every election the citizens give power to a group of representatives. In Victoria, this group is usually a coalition of the Liberal and National Parties or the Australian Labor Party. A coalition is when the parties join together to form government.

At each election voters are invited to judge again the performance of their representatives. They can re-elect the Government, or replace it with the Opposition. In Victoria, despite the frequency of elections, voters have only changed government four times since the early 1950s.

These elections were in:

1955: Liberal Party elected.

1982: Australian Labor Party elected.

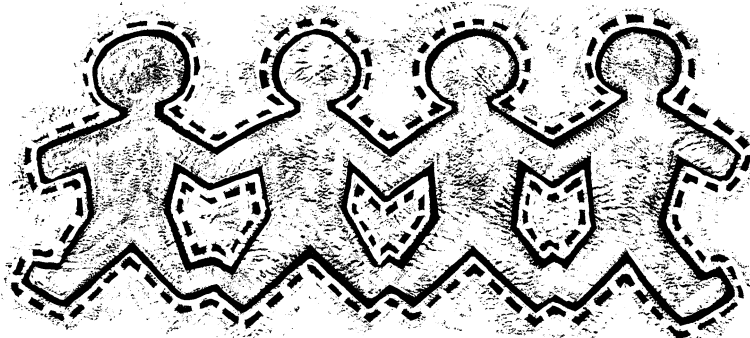
1992: Liberal National Party coalition elected.

1999: Australian Labor Party elected (with support from Independent Members).

From November 2006, the Victorian Parliament will be made up of 128 representatives sitting in two Houses:

- The Lower House called the Legislative Assembly with 88 members; and
- The Upper House or Legislative Council with 40 members.

Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected from 88 special zones or electorates. An electorate for the Legislative Assembly is called an Electoral District, and has approximately 38,000 electors.



As of the November 2006 election, Members of the Legislative Council will be elected from eight electorates. An electorate for the Legislative Council will be called a Region. Each Region will have approximately 418,000 electors. Each Region will elect five members, making a total of 40 Members of the Legislative Council.

Australian citizens may stand for election to the Victorian Parliament provided they are qualified to vote in the election and are not:

- a current judge of a Victorian Court;
- a person who has been convicted of a serious criminal offence (carrying a prison sentence of five years or more);
- a person who is bankrupt;
- a federal member of Parliament; or
- a person standing for both Houses of Parliament at the same time.

The most recent Victorian election was in 2002. The result of this election for the Lower House was as follows:

The 2002 election results

The Legislative Assembly (Lower House)

Table 3. Legislative Assembly: votes for parties and candidates contesting the 2002 Victorian State election

Party	Number of candidates	Number of successful candidates	Votes polled	Percentage of formal vote	Percentage point change since 1999 election
Australian Labor Party	88	62	1,392,704	47.95	+2.38
Liberal Party	88	17	985,011	33.91	-8.31
National Party	17	7	125,003	4.30	-0.50
Australian Greens	84	0	282,585	9.73	+8.58
Hope Party	1	0	914	0.03	-0.36
Australian Democrats	6	0	3,948	0.14	-0.14
Democratic Labor Party	1	0	1,035	0.04	-0.18
Citizens Electoral Council	18	0	9,654	0.33	+0.33
Socialist Alliance	5	0	3,274	0.11	+0.11
Christian Democratic Party	3	0	1,723	0.06	+0.04
Other Candidates	61	2	98,700	3.40	-1.32
TOTAL	372	88	2,904,551	100.00	

Note: There were 102,791 informal votes, making a total of 3,007,342 votes cast for the Legislative Assembly.

A total of 97 candidates from seven political parties contested the Upper House elections in 2002. At this election, the former system of representation for the Upper House was still in operation.

Victoria was divided into 22 provinces with two Upper House members representing each province. Each member took it in turns to stand for re-election at each State election. This meant that they each served as a province representative for two terms of Parliament. Of the 22 Upper House positions voted for at the 2002 State election, the Australian Labor Party won 17, the Liberal Party

won three and the National Party won two.

There were two by-elections on the same day for members who had been elected in 1999 and were retiring.

After the 2002 State election and the by-elections the composition of the Upper House was as follows:

Australian Labor Party	25
Liberal Party	15
National Party	4



1. Why are restrictions placed on who is allowed to stand for the Victorian Parliament?
2. How many candidates were there altogether? How many stood at each election for:
 - a. the Upper House; and
 - b. the Lower House?
3. Analyse the 2002 election results.
 - a. Which parties received the highest and lowest number of seats in each House?
 - b. The party/coalition that wins a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly forms the government of Victoria. Did any party have a clear majority in 2002?
 - c. The party/coalition that wins the second-largest number of seats in the Legislative Assembly generally forms the Opposition. Which party was this in 2002?
 - d. How many more seats would the Liberal and National Parties have needed to win to form a majority government?

4. Complete the 'find a word' and use the remaining letters to complete the statement.

Voting

N L V S R O C T I N G I S C A R I G H T
 N O A C O E T A T O B E T I A K E N F O
 R G I I R A P N M T E D E T N R O L T C
 O V O T T Y T R E P A N E I D H A V O E
 Y O U I C N C R E S A R A Z Y F Y M R Z
 E G E L O E E A P S T I U E T J P Y A T
 E F X O S D L R R N E D G N A U W L D R
 D I H P F A L E E C P N Y N L E N R O L
 O H G V C I W C K F O D T S V G T S O Y
 N V D H B R G L F G E M O A H N G A R G
 K P F E T N U G O X S R E I T Q X A C O
 E J R A I E D V X E Y H P D F I T M O H
 Y A E T T N E M A I L R A P Y N O B U C
 L S O M S R B N C P K I F O U Y M N N V
 R V C G N T O L L A B R G L B Y O M T L
 P M D M A J O R I T Y V O I P S L C I T
 H L E H Q V R F G A Q V Z B B C F I N B
 W N L V P Z V O W I S I S B A L E V G T
 T W W D V A V H P N F Y U V W L E I J I
 S V R X S W S R V H N L L E W Q P C U A

BALLOT

CAMPAIGN

CITIZEN

CIVIC

COMPULSORY

COUNTING

DEMOCRACY

DONKEY

EIGHTEEN

ELECTION

ELIGIBLE

ENROL

GOVERNMENT

LABOR

LIBERAL

MAJORITY

PARLIAMENT

POLITICS

VOTING CENTRE

PREFERENTIAL

REPRESENTATION

SEAT

VOLUNTARY

