

About the materials

The main purpose of these materials is to increase young people's awareness of voting and elections. The materials investigate the voting process and encourage an 'I should participate' approach to elections in general and, more broadly, encourage active participation in a democracy.

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) believes that the development of an interest in the electoral process in young people is a crucial part of a healthy democracy. These materials will provide valuable information about voting and elections and are intended to stimulate participation, understanding and interest in the democratic process.

The materials emphasise an understanding of the Victorian electoral system.

Objectives

Through participating and completing the activities contained in the book, students will be able to:

- develop an understanding of voting procedures;
- discuss the ways people participate in the electoral process;
- vote with a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities;
- develop skills in the analysis and presentation of data related to past and current elections;
- improve their skills in the observation, collection and recording of electoral information;
- analyse the relationships between those involved in the electoral process;
- describe the impact that different areas of government have on the individual;
- recognise that the electorate can protect its own freedoms and quality of life; and
- understand the role individuals can play in the electoral and democratic process.

Curriculum Links

Your Opinion Counts – Voting and Young People has been prepared to meet the aims of the Essential Learning Standards Framework. Although suitable for use in all three strands, it is most appropriate to the Physical, Personal and Social Learning strand. Of particular reference within this strand is the Civics and Citizenship domain with its related civic knowledge and understanding, and community engagement dimensions.

The Level 4 learning focus for the Civics and Citizenship domain refers to student examination of the three levels of government, as well as student exploration of ways they can actively participate in their school and community. Activities in Units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 of this resource would be most useful resources to satisfy these requirements.

The Level 5 learning focus for the Civics and Citizenship domain refers to student exploration of certain political rights, including universal suffrage and the secret ballot. This domain also refers to student consideration of the bicameral system of Australian government and how citizen representation occurs at the Federal level of government. Activities in Units 1, 2 and 3 would be most useful to satisfy these requirements.

The Level 6 learning focus for the Civics and Citizenship domain refers to student investigation of human rights, the role of political parties and the processes by which the views of others are influenced. Activities in Units 1, 3, 5 and 6 would be most useful to satisfy these requirements.

While the content and activities have been designed for use at the Year 9 and 10 levels, there is scope to use and adapt the materials to suit other areas and year levels within the secondary school system. The approach taken by the activities is most suitable for students enrolled in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and can be used as a key resource for students enrolled in Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) subjects such as International Politics and Legal Studies.

Unit 1 – Rights – what are they all about?

This unit introduces students to the question of rights by asking them to consider what it would be like to live in a society without rights. It also looks at the concept of human rights and the United Nations.

Unit 2 – Voting rights and responsibilities

This unit looks at the importance of a good voting system and considers the arguments for and against compulsory voting.

Unit 3 – Government

This unit covers the three tiers of government and examines their responsibilities. It also looks at how a political party forms government.

Unit 4 – The Victorian electoral system

This unit provides a detailed coverage of the process involved in running for parliament, and investigates the qualities that make a good representative. It also explains Victoria's preferential and proportional representation voting systems.

Unit 5 – Reviewing the electoral system

This unit is a role play activity involving the appearance, before a parliamentary committee, of several lobby groups with opinions on electoral reform.

The unit is designed to give students a working knowledge of voting issues in Victoria.

Unit 6 – Follow a Victorian State election

This unit provides a step-by-step breakdown of an election. Its aim is to have students work in groups to follow the stages of an election and analyse the different roles of the organisations and individuals involved. It is an excellent unit to study in an election year as it gives students the opportunity to see their learning in practice.

Unit 7 – Conducting a school-based election

This is a role play that encourages students to experience the political process first-hand by taking part in an election.

Acknowledgments

These materials are an initiative of the Victorian Electoral Commission. Initially, the teaching activities and strategies were developed in conjunction with the National Curriculum Services (NCS). Consideration has also been made of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) that will operate in Victorian schools from 2006.

For further information about these materials contact:

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