

Teachers' Notes

'Why should young people vote?'

This section of the website provides context for young people in terms of giving them a framework for the positive reasons behind voting.

Some young people are really passionate about voting and having their say through this medium whilst others feel disconnected from what politicians do and policies that affect their day-to-day life. Once students realise that everyday aspects of their lives are connected to politicians and policies such as public transport and education, the value of voting and the opportunity to have your say provides students with an avenue to change their future, environment and essentially make an impact.

The following views are presented by different youth characters on the 'Why should I vote' page. These views may be used as a springboard for further discussion and extension to exploratory work of issues that may currently be affecting this group.

1. "I think everybody needs to vote. If you don't vote, you don't have the right to complain about the government."*

Questions to explore are:

- Why do people complain about the government?
- What are some issues facing governments in Australia?

2. "It's really important we all have our say because we're voting for who will run our state."*

Questions to explore are:

- What parts of our society does the State government influence?
- What aspects directly affect you?

3. “When I got my part-time job and started paying tax, I wanted to have some say in how that money gets spent. Voting’s the best way to have that say.”*

Questions to explore:

- If you start working part or full-time or even on a casual basis before you turn 18, you start to pay tax but don’t have the right to vote. Therefore should the voting age be lowered?
- In which areas would you want to see your taxes spent? Research the various policies that affect you directly.

4. “We’re the future, so we should be having our say about the future we want and not just leaving it up to other people.”*

Questions to explore:

- What are some other policies that affect people other than you for example, your parents or siblings? How are these policies important even though they may not directly affect you?
- Considering you will one day be your parents’ age, how do you want to see these policies improve or stay the same?

5. “I enrolled when I was 17 so I didn’t miss my chance to vote. That meant that I could vote as soon as I turned 18. Young people need to be heard too!”*

Questions to explore (you may link this to statement three):

- What sort of responsibilities do you have at the age of 17?
- Do you think there should be a program in schools to make all 17 year olds enrol to vote? You can link this to a debate on whether voting should be made compulsory.

6. “When you vote, you’re making your opinion heard about the government. Even if it’s only a small impact, at least I’m doing my bit.”*

Questions to explore:

- How can you directly make an impact in your own world?
- Each bit contributes to the big picture. What small bit can you do today to contribute to that big picture? Let students know it could be as simple as having a conversation with a friend to increase awareness on a certain topic.

Research Projects

The following are points that were raised in the discussion section above that can be extended into a research project.

1. Exploring/Creating Policies

Students can research and investigate policies that affect them and how they could possibly improve or better their lives. This could be done in groups or individually. They could even create a new policy that they believe would better their lives.

2. Making a Difference

This is a ‘policy in action’ activity where students act on their concerns and strategise on how they can make a difference. They can contact the minister concerned or involve interest groups to lobby their ideas – the possibilities are endless!

* Adapted from the *Youth Electoral Study* at http://www.aec.gov.au/content/What/publications/youth_study_1/page03.htm