

## YEAR 10 Unit 1

### Government and democracy

# Australia's democracy and the global context

A **democracy** is a system of government in which the people have the power to determine how they will be ruled or managed. As US President Abraham Lincoln stated in 1863, representative democracy is 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'. This implies that democratic governments should be elected by the people to make and implement laws on their behalf, and be able to justify their actions.

A strong and resilient democracy must be based upon the core beliefs and values held and respected by the majority of society.



chapter

# 11

## 11A

What are the key features of Australia's democracy?

- 1 List five laws that help all Australians live together in a peaceful manner.
- 2 State three basic rights or freedoms that you think all Australians should have. What laws exist to protect these basic rights?
- 3 What processes or safeguards exist in Australia to ensure our laws reflect the views and values of most Australians?

## 11B

How is Australia's democracy influenced by the international community?

- 1 Decide which of the following countries currently has the greatest influence on the 'Australian way of life': China, the UK or the United States of America. Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 In what ways do you think the UK might have influenced Australia's system of government?
- 3 Describe three recent global events that have influenced the government of Australia.

**Source 1** A key feature of a united society is a strong sense of belonging and pride in your nation.

## 11C

What are the features of a resilient democracy and a cohesive society?

- 1 What do you think the image on this spread is saying about Australia?
- 2 Why are Australians able to live together in a united society despite many people having diverse and multicultural backgrounds?



# 11.1 Key features of Australia's system of government

Australia is a unique country made up of over 24 million people. Australia's population includes Indigenous Australians, whose culture is the oldest in the world, dating back over 50000 years. It also includes people who have migrated from countries all around the world. Indeed, with over 6 million Australians – one quarter of our total population – being born overseas, Australia is truly a multicultural society. Despite the fact that many of us may eat different foods, celebrate different festivals, play different sports and embrace different religions and values, most of the time we all manage to live together in a cohesive and unified society.

## The role of government in Australia

In Australia we have a variety of systems, structures and laws designed to ensure that all members of our society can live together in a united, safe and peaceful manner. For example, we have a system of courts to enforce the law and resolve disputes in a fair and unbiased way (see Chapter 9). We also have a system of government to make laws that reflect the prevailing views and moral standards held by most Australians. Our governments also aim to ensure that all Australians are provided with access to basic services, including health care, education, roads, public transport and utilities such as water, electricity and Internet connection.

It is also considered the role of government to support all Australians in maintaining a reasonable standard of living. This involves making sure that people who wish to work have jobs, and that those who are unable to work or find it difficult to work – the elderly, people with disabilities, carers, refugees – are provided with income support and access to basic services.

## Australia's system of government

In Australia, we have a system of government where our laws are made by parliaments. A **parliament** is a group or assembly of representatives who have been elected by the people to make laws on their behalf. Once a parliament has been elected it must perform a variety of tasks including:



**Source 1** People protesting to urge the Australian government not to reduce its spending on basic services.

- making new and altering existing laws so they reflect the views and values of the majority of the people and benefit society
- discussing and debating matters that affect the voters
- examining problems that exist within society
- reviewing perceived injustices in the law.

## A federal system of government

Australia's system of government is based on a **federal system**. This means that the nation is divided into states, each of which has its own parliament that is responsible for making laws for the residents of that state. In addition, there is one central or federal parliament, which has the power to make laws that apply to the entire country. In Australia, we have six state parliaments and one Commonwealth Parliament (often referred to as the federal parliament) which is located in our nation's capital, Canberra.

In addition to the state and Commonwealth Parliaments, we also have three territories that have been given the power by the Commonwealth Parliament to have their own elected parliament to make laws that apply within each territory. These are the mainland territories of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, and offshore Norfolk Island.

Each state of Australia and the Northern Territory also has local governments. These are called local or municipal councils, and have been given the power by the state and territory parliaments to make local laws – often called by-laws – and provide services for a local community, district or region.



**Source 2** Australia's three levels of government have different law-making powers, covering areas such as defence, education, and drainage and waste collection.

The three levels of government in Australia	Examples of areas of law-making power
Commonwealth (Federal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• currency</li> <li>• defence</li> <li>• marriage</li> <li>• customs and border protection</li> <li>• Australian citizenship</li> </ul>
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primary and secondary education</li> <li>• health services</li> <li>• water</li> <li>• electricity</li> <li>• public transport</li> </ul>
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local infrastructure (e.g. provision of roads, footpaths, drainage and waste collection)</li> <li>• recreational facilities (e.g. parks, libraries and swimming pools)</li> <li>• aged care facilities</li> <li>• child care facilities</li> </ul>

**Source 3** Australia's three levels of government

## Check your learning 11.1

### Remember and understand

- 1 Outline three roles of government in Australia.
- 2 Explain why Australia's system of government is referred to as a federal system.

### Apply and analyse

- 3 Prepare a chart that distinguishes between the three levels of government in Australia.
- 4 Use the Internet to investigate the role of your state or territory government and complete the following tasks.
  - a List ten different services that your state or territory government provides to the community.
  - b List five departments or agencies that are operated by your state or territory government and briefly explain why these agencies exist.
  - c State the name of the premier or leader of your state or territory's government, and identify the political party to which he or she belongs.
  - d Outline three laws that have been introduced or changed by your state or territory government within the last two years. Suggest why these laws were introduced or changed. Discuss whether or not you support the introduction or change of these laws.

- e Imagine you could introduce two new laws in your state or territory. What would they be? Justify and compare your choice with your classmates.

- 5 Use the Internet to investigate the role of your local or municipal council and complete the following tasks.
  - a State the name of your local municipality or council.
  - b Download or prepare a map showing your municipal council's boundaries.
  - c List ten different types of services provided by your council. Indicate which of these services you or your family has used within the last 12 months.
  - d Imagine you had the power to choose three more services to be provided by your local council. What would you select? Justify your choice.

### Evaluate and create

- 6 Create a PowerPoint or poster that illustrates the role and responsibilities of one of the three levels of government in Australia. You can use online tools for poster creation.



# 11.2 Principles of Australia's system of government

A national 'system of government' broadly refers to the way in which a nation or country is managed or controlled. In Australia, our system of government is based on a variety of principles that aim to manage our nation in a fair and just manner.

## Principles of government

We have already learned that Australia's system of government is based on the federal system where, we have one central Commonwealth Parliament, six state parliaments and two mainland territory parliaments.

But there are other important principles or beliefs upon which our system of government is based. These include the underlying principles that:

- 1 governments must protect the rights and freedoms of individuals
- 2 governments must make laws that reflect the views and values of the people
- 3 governments must be accountable to the people
- 4 governments must not abuse their power.

### 1 Governments must protect the rights and freedoms of the individual

Our system of government is also often referred to as a **liberal democracy**. This means it is a system that aims to protect individual rights and freedoms, and place limits on the level of government control or interference. While the parliaments have the power to make laws that regulate the behaviour of people, they should not make laws that are excessive, or unnecessarily limit the activities of individuals.

For example, we have laws that:

- protect our broad right to freedom of speech
- protect our basic right to freedom of assembly and expression
- limit individuals from behaving in an offensive or indecent manner in public.



Source 1 The law protects our right to assembly and expression.

### 2 Governments must make laws that reflect the views and values of the people

One key principle of the system of government in Australia is that the parliaments must make laws that reflect the views, values and moral standards of the people. This is referred to as **representative government**. Australia achieves this by holding regular free and fair elections where the people can vote for individuals to represent them in parliament. If these elected members of parliament fail to make laws that represent the views and values of the majority of voters, they jeopardise their chance of being re-elected. In Australia, federal parliament elections are held every three years while elections are held for state parliaments every four years.

In Australia, voting in federal and state elections is compulsory for all eligible citizens aged over 18 years. Those who do not enrol to vote, or do not vote on election day, may be fined up to \$180. Interestingly, Australia is one of only a few nations throughout the world that has compulsory voting in elections.

For compulsory voting	Against compulsory voting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps ensure our parliaments have the support of the majority of people, not just those who voted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forces those who are uninterested to cast an ill-informed vote</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may force candidates and political parties to consider the needs of all society when making policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is a violation of individual rights</li> </ul>

Source 2 Arguments for and against compulsory voting

### 3 Governments must be accountable to the people

Another principle that underpins the Australian system of government is that the government must be accountable or answerable to the people (often referred to as the principle of **responsible government**). Being accountable to the people means that governments must be able to justify their actions and decisions to the voters.

In Australia, one way that governments are held to account is through the process of parliamentary question time, where all members of parliament are given the opportunity to question the government on its policies and actions. Often parliamentary question time can become quite intense as members of the government and the opposition debate and argue about political issues. Members of the public can also directly contact and question their local member of parliament by emailing or visiting their local member's office.

The principle of responsible government also ensures our governments are accountable by stating that any member of the government who acts in a dishonourable or irresponsible manner has a duty to resign from their position. Throughout the years many, elected members of state and federal governments have voluntarily resigned from their positions after being accused or proven to have acted dishonestly.



Source 3 Australians vote for their members of parliament in free and fair elections.



**casestudy**

**Are our politicians responsible?**

In 2014, the leader of the NSW State government, Premier Barry O'Farrell, resigned after he gave false evidence to an anti-corruption hearing that was examining corruption within the government. The Premier offered his resignation after failing to remember and declare to the hearing that he had received an expensive bottle of wine as a gift. The gift was from a business executive whose company was involved in dealings with the state government and the provision of the state's water infrastructure. All gifts received by members of the government must be declared to avoid allegations of bribery. Upon his resignation, Mr O'Farrell claimed that while he did not deliberately intend to mislead the hearing, as 'a person who believes in accountability' he accepted responsibility for his actions.



**Source 4** In 2014 NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell resigned to uphold the principle of responsible government.

Similarly, in 2015 Bronwyn Bishop was forced to step down from her senior position within the federal parliament after she was criticised for misusing her government travel entitlements by spending \$5000 to pay for a helicopter to take her from Melbourne to Geelong to attend a Liberal Party fundraising event.

**4 Governments must not abuse their power**

Another key principle that underpins Australia's system of government is that our governments must not abuse or make laws beyond their power. In order to make sure this does not occur, our system of government is based on a principle called the **separation of powers**. This principle ensures that no single group or body within our parliamentary system – that is, the government, the parliament or the courts – has power over both the political and legal systems.

The three main powers at federal level consist of:

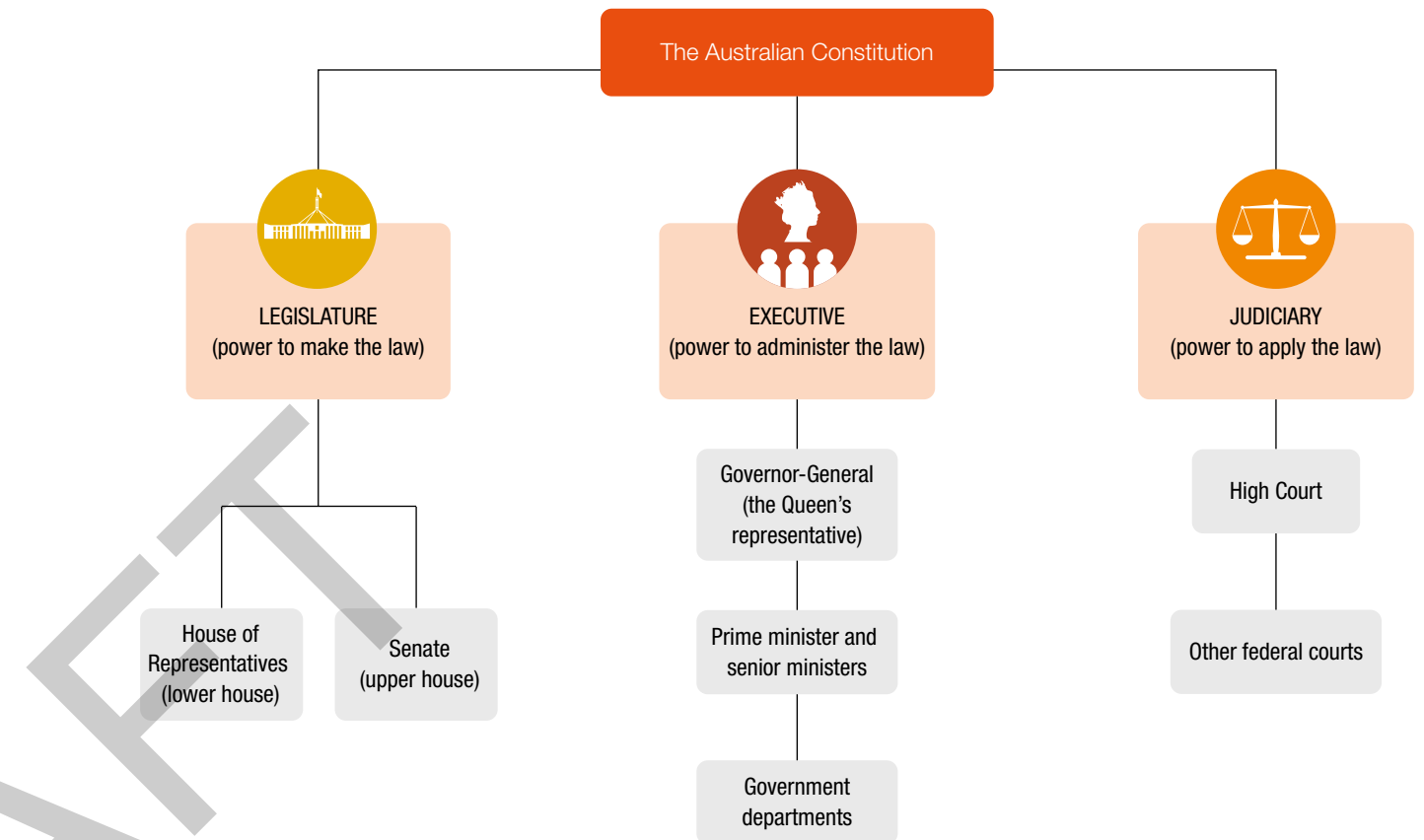
- *Executive power* – the power to administer or implement the law, held by the Governor-General (as the Queen's representative), and the prime minister and senior ministers
- *Legislative power* – the power to make the law, held by parliament
- *Judicial power* – the power to apply and interpret the law, held by the courts and allows them to enforce the law and settle disputes.

In the Constitution, the three powers are separated. In practice, the duties of the executive (senior ministers)

and the legislature (parliament as a whole) are combined. The **judiciary**, or court system, remains independent. For example, the government and the parliament have the power to make and administer the laws, but they don't have the power to apply and interpret the law, which is the role of the courts. This independent court system allows our judges to resolve disputes without any outside influence from government, party politics or voters. Judges are free from political bias, and are therefore impartial when they are applying the law.

Keeping the judiciary independent means the courts can act as a checking system, and makes sure that the parliament does not make any laws beyond its power. If a person or organisation believes that parliament has made a law that abuses its powers, they can challenge the law in court. If their challenge is successful, the law can be declared invalid by an independent and unbiased judge.

The principle of the separation of powers is an important feature of our parliamentary system. No single body can make, administer and apply the law, so this principle acts as a check to make sure that governments cannot abuse their power.



**Source 5** The principle of the separation of powers at federal level, as set out in the constitution

**Check your learning 11.2**

**Remember and understand**

- 1 The Australian system of government is based on the principle of 'liberal democracy'. Explain what is meant by this term.
- 2 Explain two other principles upon which the Australian system of government is based.
- 3 How does Australia achieve representative government?

**Apply and analyse**

- 4 With reference to the separation of powers, explain why judges are not able to be elected as members of parliament and serve in the government.
- 5 Suggest and explain one way, other than the risk of not being re-elected, that governments in Australia are held accountable for their actions.

- 6 The term 'nanny state' is used to describe a nation, state or territory where the government makes too many laws that restrict individual freedoms. Research the term 'nanny state' and suggest three federal or state laws that you believe unnecessarily restrict the rights or freedoms of individuals. Give reasons for your views.

**Evaluate and create**

- 7 Imagine you have been commissioned by the federal government to investigate compulsory voting. Undertake some research on the pros and cons of compulsory voting and prepare a 300-word submission that supports or opposes the abolition of compulsory voting in Australia.
- 8 Design a mind map using 'Australia's system of government' as the central theme or heading.

# 11.3 Australia's Commonwealth Parliament

The first inhabitants of Australia, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, had their own system of law and well established rights, responsibilities and codes of behaviour. Despite this, the British established Australia's current system of government after they began settling in Australia from 1788 onwards.

## The history of Australia's system of government

Upon arrival in Australia, the British swiftly imposed their own laws and legal system and began developing a system of government whereby each of the colonies, now called states, was able to establish its own parliament. Together with the British parliament, these colonial parliaments had the power to make laws for their own colony.



Source 1 Our parliamentary system is based on the Westminster parliamentary system.

The colonial parliaments each followed the British parliamentary model called the **Westminster parliamentary system**. Under this system of government each parliament consisted of:

- the upper house
- the lower house
- the reigning English monarch or 'crown'.

The Westminster system of parliament still exists in Australia today, with all state parliaments (except Queensland) and the Commonwealth Parliament consisting of two houses and the Crown or Queen of

England. Queensland's state parliament only consists of the lower house and the Crown.

As Australia grew throughout the 1800s it became increasingly obvious that, in addition to having separate parliaments in each colony, a central parliament was needed to make consistent laws that could apply to and benefit the entire country. Problems were beginning to arise between the colonies as each made different laws in a range of common areas. These included:

- constraints on inter-colony trade, due to the colonies having:
  - different railway systems
  - different postage stamps
  - different taxes, or tariffs
- defence concerns:
  - each colony had its own independent 'militia', or army
  - there was no uniform defence force capable of protecting the entire country
  - concern was growing over the arrival of non-British immigrants and the lack of a common immigration policy.



Source 2 This souvenir booklet was published to celebrate Federation Day on 1 January 1901 when each of the separate colonies united to form one Australian nation. This process was known as Federation.

By the 1880s each of the six colonies began formal discussions to consider which laws would be best made by a central parliament and which areas of law-making power should be kept by the individual colonies. For example, it was considered best that a central parliament be given the power to make laws on national matters that affected the whole country.

The central parliament was to be given the power to make laws relating to:

- defence
- currency
- postal services
- overseas matters
- immigration and trade.

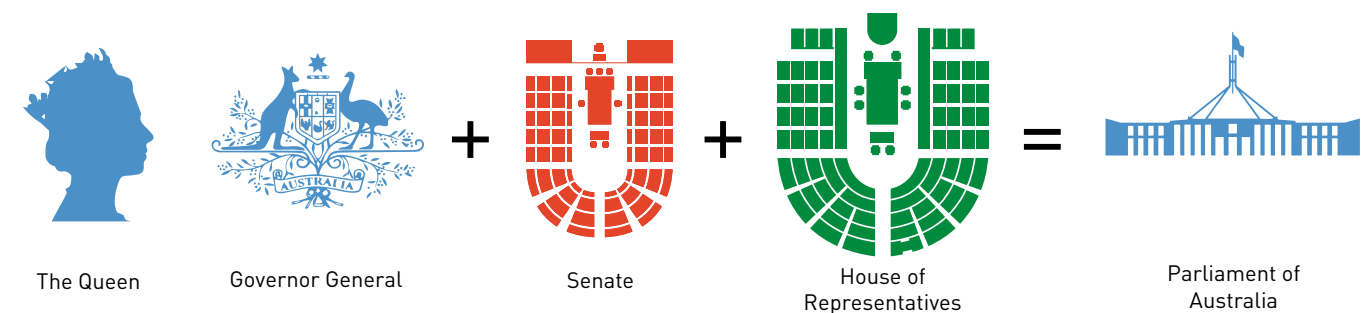
The colonial parliaments would keep the power to make laws relating to:

- hospitals
- roads
- education
- public transport
- water
- law enforcement.

In the 1890s each of the colonies sent a group of representatives to special meetings (called Conventions) where it was decided that a new central Commonwealth Parliament would be created. On 1 January 1901, known as **Federation Day**, the British Parliament passed a law called the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 (UK)* (referred to as the Constitution) to unite the separate colonies (which became states) to form one nation with a federal system of government and create the new federal or Commonwealth Parliament of Australia.

Lower House	Upper House	Crown
<b>House of Representatives</b>	<b>Senate</b>	<b>Governor-General</b>
150 members elected by the people to serve a three-year term	76 members elected by the people to serve a six-year term	One person chosen by government to serve a five-year term

Source 3 The structure of the Commonwealth Parliament



Source 4 The key elements of the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia

## The structure of the Commonwealth Parliament

In addition to creating the Commonwealth Parliament and establishing a new federal system of government, the Commonwealth Constitution outlined the structure and law-making powers of the Commonwealth Parliament. In keeping with the Westminster parliamentary system, the Constitution states that:

- the Commonwealth Parliament must consist of two houses and the Crown – that is, the Queen, who is represented by the Governor-General.
- the lower house of Commonwealth Parliament is called the House of Representatives and the upper house is called the Senate.
- all laws made by the Commonwealth Parliament must be passed or approved by a majority of members in both houses of parliament and the Crown.

### House of Representatives

The lower house in the Commonwealth Parliament, the House of Representatives, consists of 150 members. Each of these members is elected by eligible voters who live in one of 150 designated areas – called **electorates** – throughout Australia. The electorates are determined in proportion to population size, meaning that the most populated states, such as New South Wales and Victoria, have more elected representatives in the lower house. In this way, the House consists of members who can represent the views, values and desires of people from all around the country. For this reason it is often referred to as the 'People's House'. Members of the House of Representatives are elected for a three-year term.



### The main role of the House of Representatives

The main role of the House of Representatives is to:

- determine the government of the day. In simple terms, the government is the political party that has a majority of members in the lower house (that is, the party who wins at least 76 of the 150 electorates in the House). For example, at the federal election in 2013, members of the Liberal–National Party Coalition won 90 of the 150 electorates and so formed the government of the day.
- discuss, debate and scrutinise proposals for creating and changing Commonwealth laws. In fact, most proposals for introducing new or changing existing laws commence in the lower house.



Source 5 Question Time in the House of Representatives in 2015

and interests of each state of Australia. This differs from the composition of the House of Representatives, which consists of members elected from 150 different electorates throughout Australia, which are determined in proportion to population size. The Senate, however, consists of equal members from each state regardless of the state's population size. Individuals elected to the Senate, called **Senators**, are elected for a six-year term.

### The Senate

The upper house in the Commonwealth Parliament, the Senate, consists of 76 members, with 12 members being elected from each of the six states and two elected from each of the mainland territories. In this way, the Senate can, in theory, equally represent views, values



Source 6 The Senate in 2015

### The main role of the Senate

The main role of the Senate is to:

- represent the interests of the states. Given the Senate consists of an equal number of senators from each state, in theory it can equally represent the interests of each state, regardless of that state's population size. It can also help prevent the Commonwealth Parliament from passing any laws that discriminate against any particular state. This is because all proposals for new laws must be passed or agreed to by a majority of members in both houses of parliament.

### casestudy

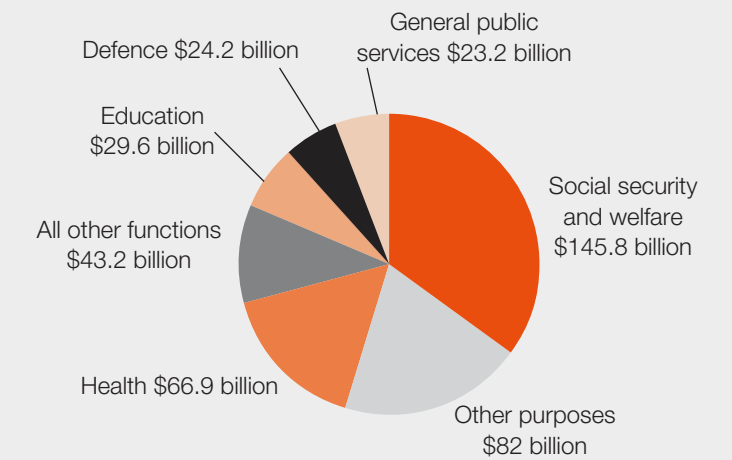
#### How does the federal government spend its money?

One of the main responsibilities of the federal government in Australia is to manage the nation's finances and provide services to the community. Each year, the federal government must prepare a **national budget** that outlines how much money the government expects to receive and how they plan to spend it. In 2015–16, the federal government had to determine how it would spend the estimated \$405 billion that it expected to receive – mainly from the imposition of taxes, including income tax and the goods and services tax (GST).

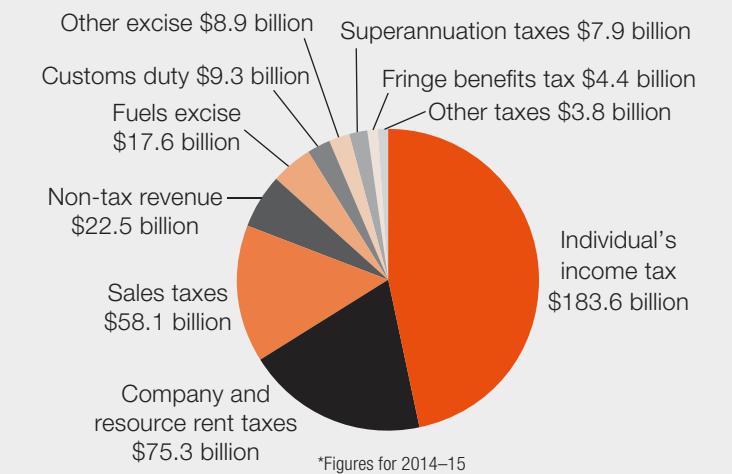
The government budgeted to spend approximately:

- 35 per cent on the provision of social security and welfare. This includes the provision of pensions and other forms of support to the aged, people with disabilities and their carers, families with children, the unemployed and veterans
- 16 per cent on health care
- 7 per cent on education
- 6 per cent on national defence.

Allocating the government revenue is a difficult task and always creates controversy. This is because some individuals and groups benefit by receiving assistance, while others feel their needs are overlooked.



Source 7 From where does the federal government gain its money?



Source 8 Where does the federal government spend its money?



## The Crown

In addition to the two houses, the third component of our Commonwealth Parliament is **the Crown**, or Queen, who is represented in Australia by the Governor-General. The Governor-General is selected by the federal government or prime minister of the day, and is always a prominent and well-respected Australian. The current Governor-General, who took up his five-year position in March 2014, is Sir Peter Cosgrove. He is a retired senior officer in the Australian Army, former Vietnam veteran, and Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force.

### The main role of the Governor-General

The main role of the Governor-General is to:

- grant royal assent or give final approval, on behalf of the Queen, for a Bill (or proposed law) to become an Act of Parliament or law.
- perform ceremonial duties. For example, the Governor-General often represents Australia at important national and international events, such as ANZAC Day ceremonies and the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. They also present awards granted under the Australian Honours system, recognising individuals who have made outstanding contributions to our society and offer encouragement to Australians by supporting a wide range of charitable, educational and cultural events.

The Governor-General may also 'dissolve', or end, the term of parliament and call a new federal election if both houses fail to agree over the passing of a significant law. This power is used rarely, and only in extreme circumstances.

### The structure of state and territory parliaments

Each state parliament throughout Australia – with the exception of Queensland, which only has a lower house – follows the Westminster parliamentary system, and consists of two houses and the Crown. The parliaments of the two mainland territories – the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory – only consist of one house and do not include the Crown. This is because they were created and given limited power to govern themselves by the Commonwealth Parliament after Federation.

The table in Source 11 outlines the structure and names of each house in the Australian state and territory parliaments.



Source 9 The Queen is represented in Australia by the Governor-General.



Source 10 In 1975, the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr (left), dissolved both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament, effectively dismissing the Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his government, and called a new election.

State	Lower House	No of elected members	Upper House	No of elected members	Crown
Victoria	Legislative Assembly	88	Legislative Council	40	Governor-General
New South Wales	Legislative Assembly	93	Legislative Council	42	Governor-General
Western Australia	Legislative Assembly	59	Legislative Council	36	Governor-General
South Australia	House of Assembly	47	Legislative Council	22	Governor-General
Tasmania	House of Assembly	25	Legislative Council	15	Governor-General
Queensland	Legislative Assembly	89	None		Governor-General
Australian Capital Territory	Legislative Assembly	25	None		None
Northern Territory	Legislative Assembly	25	None		None

Source 11 The Australian state and territory parliaments

### Check your learning 11.3

Remember and understand

- 1 Explain what is meant by the Westminster parliamentary system.
- 2 Explain the main reason that the Commonwealth Parliament was established in 1901.
- 3 Name three areas in which the Central Parliament, in the 1880s, was given law-making powers.

Apply and analyse

- 4 Go to the Australian Electoral Commission website and, using the 'Electorates' menu, find your federal electorate. Then, complete the following activities.
  - a State the name of your electorate.
  - b List the main suburbs within your electorate and state how many people live in your electorate.
  - c State the name of your electorate's sitting member, the political party (if any) to which they belong, and the percentage of first-preference votes they won at the last election.
  - d Provide a brief summary of the types of laws and reforms your member (and their political party) supports and discuss whether these views and values broadly reflect yours.
- 5 Use the Internet to research the results of the last federal election.
  - a Prepare a table showing how many electorates were won by each of the political parties or independents in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

b Which party formed the government and why?

c Analyse the composition of the Senate and suggest how it may affect the government's ability to make law.

Evaluate and create

- 6 Prepare a PowerPoint, poster or flyer that outlines the composition and role of the two houses of Commonwealth Parliament.
- 7 Create a word search puzzle or crossword using at least 12 key terms that relate to the Australian parliamentary system. You may wish to use one of the many free puzzle-making programs and apps available on the Internet.
- 8 In 1999, a proposal was put to the Australian people to remove the Crown from the Commonwealth Parliament, so Australia could become a republic. While the proposal failed, support for the republican movement has grown over recent years.
  - a Access the clip on the republic debate using the link in your obook.
  - b Investigate the strengths and weaknesses associated with Australia becoming a republic. Prepare a 500-word report that evaluates whether 'Australia should become a republic'.



# 11.4 Comparing systems of government in Australia and Indonesia

The Republic of Indonesia is made up of over 17 500 islands including the largest and most well-known islands of Java, where the capital city Jakarta is located, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Papua – the western part of New Guinea. Over 253 million people live in Indonesia, making it the fourth-most populated nation in the world, following China, India and the United States of America. Indonesia is also one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world, consisting of approximately 300 different ethnic groups who speak over 740 different languages and dialects. A range of different religions are also practised in Indonesia, with approximately 85 per cent of the population being Muslim, 6 per cent Roman Catholic, 3 per cent Protestant and the remainder mainly practicing the Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian religions.



Source 1 A range of different religions are practised in Indonesia.

INDONESIA



Source 2

Source: Shutterstock



Source 3 The Indonesian flag



Source 4 A woman votes in Bali during an Indonesian election.

## Key features of Indonesia's system of government

Indonesia's system of government is referred to as a **republic**, meaning the people vote to determine government (or Head of State) rather than having a hereditary monarch or the Crown.

### A representative democratic republic

Indonesia became a republic in 1945 after the Indonesians claimed their independence from the Dutch and Japanese. In more recent years, Indonesia has moved towards a **representative democracy** in which the people vote to elect the parliaments and governments that make and implement Indonesian law.

### History of Indonesian democracy

The Dutch ruled Indonesia for 300 years, until the Japanese invaded and occupied the nation in 1942 during World War II. After the Japanese surrendered in 1945, a small group of Indonesians set up a temporary government and declared the nation an independent republic. However, the existence of many different political and religious groups and ongoing disputes with the Dutch meant that it was difficult to form a stable government.

In 1966 General Haji Muhammad Suharto, the head of the military, was installed as the nation's president. He led the country for the next 30 years. During his authoritarian rule, President Suharto was often criticised for restricting individual freedoms, including the right to protest and freedom of speech. Suharto was also criticised for breaching human rights, including ordering the 1991 massacre of hundreds of

East Timorese, who resisted Indonesian's occupation of their nation in 1975. In 1988, after months of anti-government riots and economic and political unrest President Suharto resigned and Indonesia slowly moved towards establishing more democratically elected parliaments.

In 2004, Dr Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, won the nation's first direct presidential elections by popular vote after approximately 110 million people, or 70 per cent of the 150 million registered voters, participated in a relatively free, fair and non-compulsory election. Dr Yudhoyono was re-elected in 2009 but was unable to stand again in the 2014 elections. This was because, under changes to the Indonesian Constitution, the President can now only serve a maximum of two five-year terms. In 2014 Mr Joko Widodo was elected as the Indonesian president.

### Three levels of government

Indonesia has three levels of government: the national, **provincial** and district (or city) levels. Each of the parliaments at each level of government is elected by the people to make laws on their behalf, and elections are held once every five years, on the same day.

Having the national and provincial elections on the same day makes the electoral process challenging. Enrolment must be finalised and ballot papers must be printed and distributed throughout each of the provinces, including many in remote and isolated places. In 2014, approximately 19 700 seats were contested in the national, provincial and district parliaments, with approximately 6600 candidates standing in the national election and 16000 at provincial and district level.



## The structure of the national parliament

The Indonesian national parliament, which is responsible for making laws that apply to the whole country, is called the **People's Consultative Assembly**. It is similar to Australia's Commonwealth Parliament in that, since 2004, it consists of two houses:

- the lower house, the **People's Representative Council** (often referred to as the House of Representatives), which consists of 560 seats, or members
- the upper house, the **Regional Representatives Council**, which consists of 132 seats.

Interestingly, however, while the Indonesian parliament, the People's Consultative Assembly, consists of two houses, it differs from two house or **bi-cameral system** in that a bill or proposed law does not have to be passed by both houses to become a law. The final power to make and change laws is held solely by the People's Representatives Council (or lower house).

The political party that wins at least 281 of the 560 seats in People's Representatives Council also earns right to govern. In 2014, approximately 15 different political parties and 6600 candidates contested the national election.



**Source 5** A political party must win at least 281 seats in the lower house to secure the right to govern in Indonesia.

Each of Indonesia's 34 provinces, except one, has its own parliament, called the Provincial Legislative Assembly, that is elected by the residents of the province. Each province is then further subdivided into municipalities, or regencies, most of which also have their own parliaments or District Legislative Assemblies.

Interestingly, to encourage greater female participation in parliament, a political party could not contest the 2014 Indonesian elections unless at least 30 per cent of their candidates at each level were women.



**Source 6** President Joko Widodo (popularly known as Jokowi) was elected as the President of Indonesia in 2014.

## Separation of powers

Like Australia, the Indonesian system of government is based on the principle of the separation of powers. This means that no one group or body can ever hold each of the three main branches of power in the Indonesian parliamentary system. For example, in Indonesia:

- The power to *make the law* is held by the national, provincial and district parliaments who are elected by the people in parliamentary elections held every five years.
- The *power to administer (or implement) the law* is held by the president who is elected as the head of the Indonesian government in a separate presidential election held a few months after the parliamentary elections.
- The power to *apply and interpret the law* to resolve disputes is held by the courts and judges.

The Indonesian system of government is also similar to Australia's in that different political parties contest each election, although in Australia the two major parties (the Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party) dominate the voting while in Indonesia a variety of large and small political parties compete at election time. This means the party composition of the People's Consultative Assembly can significantly change with each election. Some of the main parties that contested the 2014 elections were:

- the Indonesia Democratic Party, led by a former president, Megawati Sukarnoputri
- the Functional Groups Party, referred to as Golkar, led by Aburizal Bakrie
- the Democratic party, referred to as the Demokrat party, led by the President at the time, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

## casestudy

### Should Indonesia have the death penalty?

In April 2015, two Australians, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, along with six other 'death row' prisoners, were executed by the Indonesian government after being convicted for drug trafficking offences. Both men were members of the 'Bali Nine', a group of nine Australians who were arrested in Denpasar, Bali, in 2004, for trying to smuggle approximately 8 kilograms of heroin, worth \$4 million, from Indonesia to Australia. Four other members of the group were also sentenced to death but had their sentences reduced to life imprisonment on appeal.

In 2014–15, Indonesia was one of 22 countries throughout the world to carry out the death penalty and, although 101 countries have abolished the use of the death penalty, there is still great support for capital punishment within Indonesia. Support for the death penalty exists particularly among members of the police and security forces and some Muslim groups who believe that it is an appropriate punishment for

those who commit very serious crimes – such as terrorism, mass murder and trafficking large quantities of illegal drugs. Those who oppose the death penalty, in Indonesia and elsewhere, argue it is 'state-approved murder' and does not make a society safer or reduce the likelihood of similar crimes happening in the future.



**Source 7** In 2015, Australian citizens Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran were executed by an Indonesian firing squad after being convicted for drug trafficking in 2005.

## Check your learning 11.4

### Remember and understand

- 1 Who ruled Indonesia before the Japanese invasion in 1942?
- 2 Who was the first directly elected president, and when was he elected?
- 3 How many levels of government does Indonesia have?
- 4 State the name and outline the basic role and structure of Indonesia's national parliament.

### Apply and analyse

- 5 Prepare a table that compares Indonesia's system of government with Australia's. Explain two main differences and two similarities between the two systems of government.
- 6 Distinguish between the types of government that existed in Indonesia under the rule of President Suharto compared to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

### Evaluate and create

- 7 Draw a timeline that illustrates key changes in the Indonesian government since the Dutch rule ended in 1942.
- 8 Conduct some Internet research into the last national elections held in Indonesia and prepare a 'summary facts sheet'. You may wish to include:
  - a the date of the parliamentary and presidential elections
  - b the voting age and number of votes cast
  - c the name of the successful parties and president.
- 9 Conduct some Internet research into Indonesia's use of the death penalty and the arguments for and against its use. Prepare an editorial for an Indonesian newspaper that discusses whether or not Indonesia should abolish the death penalty. Create an image or cartoon to support your editorial.



## 11A rich task

## Should our government limit free speech?

One basic feature of our democratic system of government is that all citizens have the broad right to freedom of speech so they can express their views and discuss economic, political and social issues without fear of being punished. But to what extent should we protect freedom of speech?

In 1975, the Australian federal government passed the *Racial Discrimination Act* to ensure that all people, regardless of their nationality and background, would be treated equally. More specifically, Section 18C of this Act effectively limits freedom of speech by making it illegal for any individual to act in a way that is reasonably likely to 'offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate' another person or group due to their race, colour, national or ethnic origin.

In 2014, the federal government announced their intention to strengthen freedom of speech by altering Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* to remove the words 'offend, insult or humiliate' so that it would only be unlawful to 'intimidate or vilify' another person or group on the basis of their race or ethnicity. The proposal created great controversy and started a debate about whether or not our laws should allow an individual the right to speak in a manner that would offend or humiliate another on the basis of their race.

Eventually this proposed change in the law was dropped because it was too controversial. Since the 2016 federal election, the issue has re-emerged because some new members of parliament, such as Victorian Senator Derryn Hinch, have expressed concerns over such laws that restrict our freedom of speech. Many prominent Australians have differing opinions regarding this proposed change, demonstrated in the following set of quotes.



**Source 1** Thousands of people protested all around the world in support of free speech after 12 people were killed in an attack on a French magazine 'Charlie Hebdo' in 2015.

'People do have a right to be bigots, you know. In a free country, people do have rights to say things that other people find offensive, insulting or bigoted.' – Commonwealth Attorney-General, George Brandis

'The best counter to a bad argument is a good one, and the best antidote to bigotry is decency, proclaimed by people engaging in a free and fair debate.' – former Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott.

'Section 18C empowers minorities with the ability to fight back, with the force of the law and the sanction of our state, in the face of the outrageous and malign, which could otherwise be the first step down a dark and evil path.' – Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Bill Shorten.

'It may make our hearts sink, but we owe it to our democracy to defend the rights of the most offensive people in our community.' – Journalist Antony Lowenstein.

'For them [journalists, politicians] it's a game, it's a debate about words and abstract principles. For people who have experienced racism, it is a deeply personal debate, and it's actually a debate about real people and real hurt.' – Labor Senator, Penny Wong.

'This matters because – if I may speak freely – plenty of white people (even ordinary reasonable ones) are good at telling coloured people what they should and shouldn't find racist, without even the slightest awareness that they might not be in prime position to make that call.' – Lawyer and media commentator, Waleed Aly.

## skilldrill: Reasoning and interpretation

## Evaluating and comparing information

One main skill you need to develop in your senior years of schooling is the ability to specifically address key 'task words' when preparing a response to a question, and avoid simply writing everything you know about a topic. The following table lists and explains the meaning of some common task words used in humanities subjects such as Commerce, Legal Studies and Economics.

Task word	Meaning
<b>Evaluate</b>	To explain (or consider) strengths and weaknesses, and provide an overall conclusion or judgment about the value or worth of what is being evaluated.
<b>Compare (or contrast)</b>	To explain and/or discuss similarities and differences.
<b>Discuss</b>	To examine all sides of an issue and provide strengths and weaknesses (if applicable). You should also provide a concluding statement that expresses your opinion.
<b>Define</b>	To provide a precise meaning.
<b>Explain</b>	To define and give reasons for.
<b>Describe</b>	To accurately depict, illustrate or outline in a logical sequence.

Two of the most important task words used in humanities subjects are *evaluate* and *compare (or contrast)*.

For the task word *evaluate*, follow these steps.

**Step 1** Provide any key definitions or basic explanations about the specified topic in an introduction.

**Step 2** Explain the strengths and weaknesses, or pros and cons, of the issue. For example, the question 'Evaluate the benefits of changing section 18C of the

*Racial Discrimination Act*' requires you to explain the strengths and weaknesses – or pros and cons – that the proposed changes will have.

**Step 3** Provide a conclusion that summarises the key points and includes your own view, based on the evidence.

For the task word *compare (or contrast)*, follow these steps:

**Step 1** Examine the texts and highlight similarities and/or differences between them. For example, the task 'Compare the views expressed in the quotes by prominent Australians about the freedom of speech' requires you to examine the set of quotes and highlight and discuss any similarities or differences.

**Step 2** Provide a conclusion that summarises the key points and includes your own view, based on evaluating the different opinions.

## Apply the skill

- Form into small groups and compare the quotes made by prominent Australians in response to changing the *Racial Discrimination Act*.
  - Read and determine the meaning of each quote and categorise each as either supporting or opposing the changes to the Act.
  - Outline and explain the similarities between the two categories of quotes – that is, those that support and those that oppose changing the Act – and the differences between the views expressed in each category.
  - In your group, discuss which quotes you most agree with.
  - Select two quotes of opposing views and research the person responsible for the statement. Suggest possible factors that may influence their position on freedom of speech.

## Extend your understanding

- Prepare a written report that discusses the extent to which our laws should uphold and protect the freedom of speech. Your report should include:
  - an explanation and evaluation of the main arguments supporting laws that protect free speech

- a comparison between two opposing views (expressed in the quotes provided)
- a conclusion expressing your personal view.



# 11.5 How Australia's democracy is shaped by international factors

As we have already seen, Australia's system of government was established by the British and as such has many features that are similar to the British system of government. For example, our system of government is broadly referred to as a **constitutional monarchy**, in that while we are self-governing and each state and federal parliament has the power to make law in accordance with its respective constitution, the Queen's representative remains the head of state.

## Evolving democracy – recognition of Indigenous Australians

Another feature of our system of government inherited from the British is that it is a democracy, meaning the people determine how they will be governed and may exercise the power to directly govern themselves or elect representatives to govern on their behalf.

Unfortunately, when the British arrived in Australia to set up the first colonies, they simply imposed British laws and failed to respect and acknowledge the rights and existing laws of the Indigenous people. In fact, when the Australian Constitution was drafted in the late 1800s, it reflected the prevailing prejudices that existed against the Indigenous people at the time.



**Source 1** The formal acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution is a symbolic step towards reconciliation.

In fact, the Constitution originally contained a clause that specifically prohibited the Commonwealth Parliament from making laws for Indigenous people. This meant that the federal parliament could not make uniform laws that applied to, and for the benefit of, Indigenous people. Indigenous people were also not counted in the national **census**, which symbolised a blatant disrespect for the people and their cultures.

It took until 1962 – 60 years after women were granted the right to vote – for all Indigenous people to be given the right to vote in Australia. It took until 1967 for a successful public vote – called a **referendum** – to change the Australian Constitution and allow the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws with regard to Indigenous people, and to include them in the national census.

Since the 1967 referendum, other significant events and changes in the law have taken place, albeit relatively slowly, to increase the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and improve democracy in Australia. These include:

- the 1975 abolition of the White Australia policy and subsequent introduction of a policy of self-determination. Indigenous peoples were given the limited right to 'cultural and linguistic management of natural resources on Aboriginal land'.
- the 1987 'Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody' which highlighted the alarmingly high proportion, and death rate, of Indigenous people in Australian prisons
- the 1992 High Court of Australia Mabo judgement, which overturned the false legal perception that Australia was an 'empty land belonging to no one' (*terra nullius*) before British colonisation, and legally recognised Indigenous land rights
- the 2008 National Apology, by Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the discriminatory and unjust policies of past governments, including policies that led to the 'Stolen Generations'.

While these changes have aimed to improve the rights of Indigenous Australian peoples, much more needs to be done to improve the living standards in Australia's Indigenous communities and acknowledge the importance of Australia's Indigenous heritage. Perhaps the next major step in evolving our democracy will be to alter the Constitution to include a formal acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians and original inhabitants of the land. This recognition would help continue the process of reconciliation between the Aboriginal peoples and the wider Australian community, and increase awareness and acknowledgment of Indigenous rights, cultures, languages and heritage.

## Evolving democracy – Australia's involvement with the United Nations

Australia's approach towards the protection of basic human rights and freedoms has reflected the democratic principles that are set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These ultimately aim to uphold the fundamental right of all people to be treated with equality and dignity. Australia

also aims to assist in the promotion and adoption of the UN human rights and standards in developing countries and, over the years, has made significant contributions to the promotion of democracy, peace and security throughout the world. In fact, Australia is the 12th largest financial contributor to the UN regular and peacekeeping budget, and has provided more than 65 000 personnel to United Nations and other multilateral peace and security operations, since 1947. Over most recent years, Australians have served in various UN peace and security operations including in the Middle East, Cyprus, Afghanistan and South Sudan.



**Source 2** Australian soldiers have been involved in UN peacekeeping missions to help restore peace and stability to East Timor.

### Check your learning 11.5

#### Remember and understand

- 1 Explain two legal changes that have taken place to improve the legal rights of Indigenous Australians.
- 2 What principle did the Mabo judgement overturn?

#### Apply and analyse

- 3 Prepare a timeline that shows the significant events and changes in the law that have taken place since the 1967 referendum to increase the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- 4 Research one of the legal changes identified on your timeline. Discuss whether the change has improved the living standards and rights of Indigenous Australians.
- 5 Conduct research into the types of rights that Australia has agreed to uphold as a signatory to the

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Explain two ways that Australia has promoted the adoption of the UN human rights and standards by other countries.

#### Evaluate and create

- 6 Research and discuss the reasons many Australians support changing the Australian Constitution to formally recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. A great place to start is the Recognise website.
- 7 Research and prepare a 300-word report on Australia's involvement in one UN peacekeeping mission. Provide the date, level of commitment – in terms of forces, personnel sent and dollars – and reasons for Australia's involvement in the mission.



## 11B rich task

## Australia's international democratic ranking

Various organisations gather statistics and publish information on global democracies in an attempt to determine which nations are the most and least democratic. The Democracy Index (which has been published by the Economist Intelligence Unit each year since 2006) is one of the most well-known surveys on global democracy.



**Source 1** Norwegians enjoy being the most democratic country in the world, according to the Democracy Index.

The Democracy Index attempts to measure the level of democracy in 167 countries and rank them in terms of regional and global performance. In order to assess the degree of democracy in each country, the Index examines approximately 60 different indicators to assess five broad criteria including:

- the nation's electoral process
- basic civil rights and freedoms
- the manner in which the government operates
- the level of political participation
- the nation's overall political culture.

**Source 2** The 10 most democratic countries in the world

1	Norway	9.93
2	Iceland	9.58
3	Sweden	9.45
4	New Zealand	9.26
5	Denmark	9.11
6	Switzerland	9.09
7	Canada	9.08
8	Finland	9.03
9	Australia	9.01
10	The Netherlands	8.92

**Source:** The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited 2015

After assessment has been made in each of these areas, each country is classified as being either a full democracy, a flawed democracy, a hybrid regime – that is, a mix of democracy and authoritarian rule – or an authoritarian regime. Then it is given a ranking from 1 to 10, with the most democratic countries being awarded 10.

According to the 2015 Democracy Index, Norway was the most democratic country in the world, with Australia ranked 9th. The United States ranked 20th, and the United Kingdom 16th. Some of the lowest ranked, or least democratic, countries in the world included North Korea, Chad, Central African Republic, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Laos and Libya.



**Source 3** Our civil rights to broad freedom of speech are protected under Australian law.

Interestingly, only 12 per cent of the 167 countries examined in the Index were classified as having a full democracy, while approximately 35 per cent were categorised as having authoritarian regimes. This is

where the nation is ruled by a central organisation or a government that is not accountable or responsible to the people, and often relies on mass acceptance by the people, rather than being popularly elected in free and fair elections.

### skilldrill: Reasoning and interpretation

#### Developing a range of questions to investigate a legal issue

One key skill that all students need to develop so they can become effective learners is the *ability to ask relevant and probing questions*. This enables us to discover new information and knowledge rather than just memorising information that has been provided to us. In fact, better students often seek to expand their knowledge and understanding of a topic or issue by asking thoughtful questions, or, as teachers like to say, by 'conducting an inquiry'.

While asking relevant and thoughtful questions is an excellent way to investigate and develop a deeper understanding of an issue or topic, it is not an easy task. It requires careful consideration and planning.

When developing a set of questions to help you explore an issue or topic, or undertake an inquiry, follow these steps:

**Step 1** Ask yourself what you already know about the general topic.

- How can the topic be simplified (or divided into small parts)?
- What sort of information might you need to collect to help investigate the topic?
- Where might you be able to obtain this relevant and useful information? For example, what references, places and people might be able to provide you with information and answer your probing questions?

**Step 2** Think about what might be the best way to examine the information and data that you collect. For example, you might examine the information in

### Extend your understanding

- 1 Create a poster or presentation that outlines and examines one or more key features of our Australian parliamentary system. For example, you may wish to use Prezi to make a class presentation, Popplet to

pairs, groups, or individually by reading, discussing, and preparing summary notes. If you work in a group you might use Google docs so each member can add information and comments throughout the research process.

**Step 3** Decide on the best way to evaluate your information. For example, you might prepare a table of pros and cons, draw diagrams and/or create a flow chart or concept map.

**Step 4** Prepare how you will present or display the information you have gathered from your inquiry questions.

#### Apply the skill

- 1 Conduct an inquiry into the extent to which Australia is a democracy. To do this you will need to:
  - a design a set of questions that will enable you to examine the topic
  - b undertake research to gather relevant information
  - c prepare and present your response.
- 2 Use the steps listed above to help you design your inquiry questions. Consider posing some questions based on the key features of a democracy that have been outlined in this chapter. For example:
  - How *free and fair* are Australian elections?
  - Does the parliament really make laws that *represent* all Australians?
  - Is the government really *accountable* to the people?
  - What are some of the *major threats* to our democracy in Australia?

prepare a mind map poster, Voki to create a recording with customised speaking characters, or Glogster to create a poster.



# 11.6 Safeguards to Australia's democratic society

In order to have a strong society that is able to meet challenges, Australia's system of government is based upon core beliefs and attitudes that are respected and valued by most people in our democratic society. For example, our democracy is based on the prevailing beliefs that the people, in free and fair elections, must elect the government and that the government must promote tolerance, cooperation and the freedom of the people by upholding basic human rights.

## The people elect the government

Each of the state, territory and federal parliaments throughout Australia is elected by the people to make laws on their behalf. Compulsory voting aims to make sure that our governments have the support of the majority of the people and not just those who bother to vote.



Source 1 Over 15 million Australians cast their vote at one of 8500 polling places in the 2016 federal election.

## Elections are free and fair

Independent state and federal electoral commissions have the role of ensuring that all state, territory and federal elections held throughout Australia are free, fair and conducted in accordance with state and Commonwealth law. For example, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is responsible for managing federal elections and maintaining the Commonwealth electoral roll, which lists the names and addresses of all eligible citizens who have enrolled to vote. The AEC must confirm that approximately 16 million people throughout Australia are able to cast their vote in secret. This can be at venues or polling booths on election day, or through postal votes for those who cannot attend a polling booth on the day of the election. The AEC must also check that votes are honestly counted.

In Australia all elections allow citizens to cast their vote in secret to reduce the risk of voters being intimidated or forced into voting for a person or party against their will. Each citizen may only vote once and every vote has the same value, regardless of whose it is.



Source 2 Malcolm and Lucy Turnbull voting in the 2016 federal election. Malcolm Turnbull was re-elected as Prime Minister.

## Governments uphold basic human rights

An underlying feature of democracy in Australia is that our parliaments and governments make and enforce laws that protect basic human rights, so that all citizens are treated with dignity, equality and mutual respect. This aims to promote social cohesion. Some basic human rights upheld by Australian laws include the right to:

- not be discriminated against on the basis of race, nationality, religion, sex, age, marital status, impairment, or disability
- broad freedom of speech, assembly and protest, which enables citizens to debate political issues and openly express their views without fear of being punished

- a fair trial and freedom from torture
- life, liberty and security of person
- working and living in a healthy environment
- basic health care and education.

Governments also aim to provide structures (including courts, tribunals, and government departments) and services (including hospitals, schools, universities, prisons, the defence and police forces) and social welfare benefits such as aged pensions and unemployment benefits. This is so that Australians can live together in a peaceful, orderly, cooperative and tolerant manner.



Source 3 Some of the demonstrations between Reclaim Australia and anti-racism groups held throughout Australia have required police intervention.

## Check your learning 11.6

### Remember and understand

- 1 Suggest three structures or services provided by Australian governments that aim to help people live together in an orderly, tolerant, and peaceful manner.
- 2 What is the aim of having a system where voting is compulsory?
- 3 List at least six basic human rights that are upheld by Australian law.

### Apply and analyse

- 4 Collect three images that express aspects of Australia's democracy.

- 5 What do you think would eventuate if core beliefs and attitudes were not protected? Give two examples of possible outcomes.

### Evaluate and create

- 6 Imagine you were employed by the federal government to improve social cohesion and unity within Australia.
  - a Explain three programs, laws or initiatives you would implement. Give reasons for your suggestions.
  - b Create an advertisement (either print or audio-visual) to promote one of your proposals.



# 11.7 Threats to Australia's democratic society

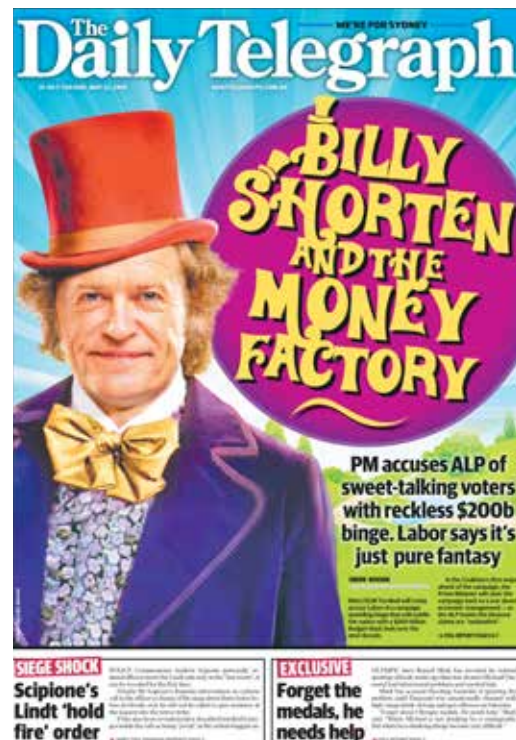
While Australia is generally a cohesive and united nation built on democratic principles, various factors including media bias, our ageing population and the existence of groups with vested interests could potentially threaten our democratic and harmonious way of life.

## Media bias and voting

A democratic system relies on individuals being able to make informed decisions about which political party (or independent candidate) would make laws that best reflects their views and values. When making such decisions, most voters gain their information from the media. It is therefore essential that the media present impartial and unbiased information, especially in the lead-up to an election. But just how impartial is the Australian media and to what extent does the content in the mainstream media reflect the political interests of their owners and the senior editors rather than an independent and unbiased view?

In Australia the two biggest and most influential media organisations, News Limited and Fairfax, and other media organisations such as the ABC, are often criticised for showing political bias. Given that News Limited and Fairfax account for approximately 85 per cent of all newspaper sales in Australia, these organisations certainly have the ability to influence a wide audience.

It is important to remember that the media is not impartial. There are digital-only media outlets as well as print media that have perceived bias or political leanings. For example, Crikey.com is often viewed as being a 'left-leaning' organisation, meaning they have less conservative views. Different media outlets also have their own way of presenting events and issues of the day. It can be an interesting exercise to scan different online news services or flick across TV news channels (on free-to-air and/or pay TV) to see how the same issue is being presented in a single day by different sources. You may notice subtle or more obvious bias across different news organisations as you look around.



Source 1 Print media is often criticised for showing political bias.

Print/digital media organisation	Publications	Perceived bias
News Corp Australia	<i>The Australian</i> <i>The Guardian</i> <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> (Sydney) <i>The Herald Sun</i> (Melbourne)	Generally recognised as supporting the Liberal-National Coalition
Fairfax Media	<i>The Age</i> (Melbourne) <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	Often viewed as supporting the Labor Party
Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC)	<i>ABC News</i> <i>Lateline</i>	Often viewed as supporting the Labor Party and the Australian Greens

Source 2 A summary of some major Australian media organisations and their perceived political biases.

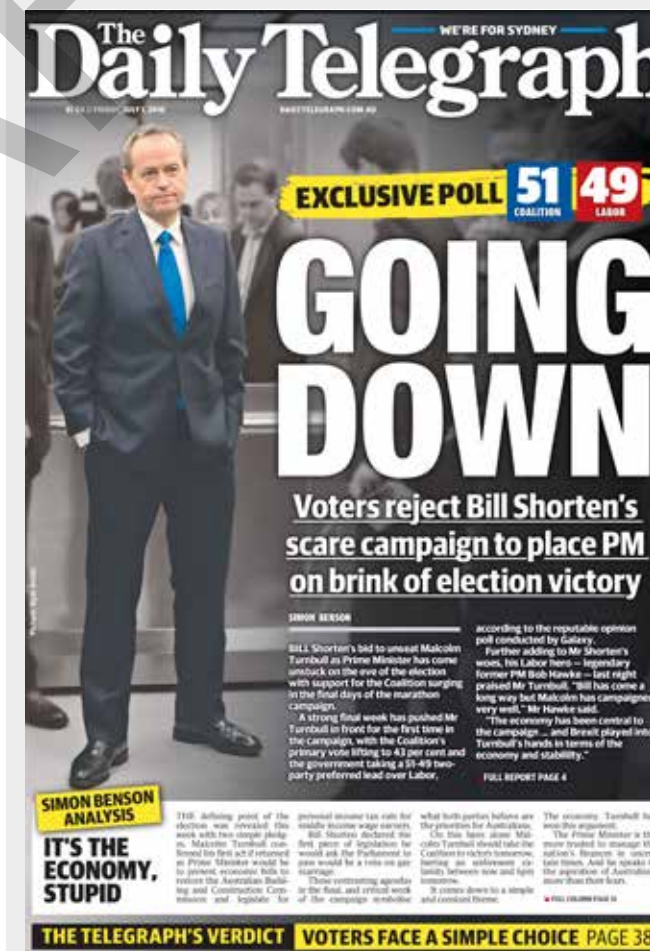
## casestudy

### Does the media decide who wins an election?

Over the years, various media organisations have been accused of showing particular bias for and against certain political parties during federal election campaigns. For example, during the 2016 federal election campaign, News Corp Australia was accused of biased anti-Labor reporting, aimed at ensuring the Liberal-National government of the day, under the leadership of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, was re-elected. News Corp Australia is mainly owned by News Limited, a media organisation managed and directed by Rupert Murdoch. News Limited is Australia's largest print media organisation selling approximately 60 per cent of the nation's daily newspapers – or approximately 17 million newspapers per week. With such a large readership it

certainly has a great ability to influence a wide audience and potentially sway many voters.

It has long been suggested that Mr Murdoch influences anti-Labor reporting in News Corp newspapers to further his business interests. For example, it is alleged that Mr Murdoch considers the Labor's party's commitment to a National Broadband Network a threat to Foxtel, another News Limited-owned company. Examples of the negative media coverage in News Corp's publications included a front-page cover of the Daily Telegraph displaying a cartoon of the Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Bill Shorten, being likened to 'Pinocchio' for allegedly telling deliberate lies to gain power. The newspaper even printed an article with a headline implying that Mr Shorten had 'man boobs' that could damage his image and hinder his chances of becoming the Prime Minister.



Source 3 The headline on the front page of the Daily Telegraph the day before election day in 2016.



Source 4 The headline on the front page of the Herald Sun the day after the 2016 election. At this point it was unclear if the Liberal-Nationals had won. The result wasn't made official until 10 July.



## An ageing society

Because families are having fewer children and life expectancy is increasing, Australia is becoming an ageing nation. This will have political consequences that could affect our democracy. For example, in the early 1970s only approximately 8 per cent of Australia's population was aged over 65 years. By 2012 this amount had increased to 13 per cent and by 2061 it is predicted to rise to 22 per cent. As more voters enter the over-65 age group, the elderly will have more political power and be able to place greater pressure on governments. Presumably, the elderly would seek to implement policies and laws that focus on their needs, including pensions, and health care for the elderly. This could sway policy making away from the priorities of younger voters, potentially unbalancing and threatening social cohesion.

## Influence of those with vested interests

Individuals and organisations with vested interests may also threaten democracy. Over recent years, there

has been an increasing concern that a small amount of very wealthy individuals and large corporations have been able to have a disproportionate amount of influence over government policy in Australia by making large donations to political parties who benefit their interests. For example, prior to the 2016 federal election, both the Liberal and Labor parties received large donations from wealthy individuals who owned businesses that might benefit from the election of either party. The Liberals received approximately \$200 000 in donations from Charles Bass, the co-founder of a major mining company, Aquila Resources, while the ALP received nearly \$200 000 from a large union group, that supports workers' rights, called United Voice. Other companies that are often amongst the largest donors to both political parties include the Australian Hotels Association, who have a vested interest in many areas of the law including liquor licencing and gaming machines, and Phillip Morris, a tobacco company who fought against the plain packaging of tobacco laws.



**Source 5** On International Women's Day in 2016, a group of childcare workers and members of United Voice chained themselves to the entrance of Premier Minister Malcom Turnbull's office demanding equal pay for women.



**Source 6** The Australian Hotels Association has a vested interest in lobbying both state and federal governments on areas of the law including liquor licencing and workers' rights in the industry.

## Check your learning 11.7

### Remember and understand

- 1 What are two threats to Australia's democratic society?
- 2 How can someone with a vested interest influence political outcomes?
- 3 Explain how an ageing society could be a potential threat to democracy.

### Apply and analyse

- 4 Consider Sources 1, 3 and 4.
  - a What do you think each image is saying about Australian society?
  - b Briefly outline what you consider to be the three biggest threats to social cohesion and unity in Australia today. Suggest ways these threats could be minimised.
  - c Collect three images that express what you consider to be the greatest strengths of, and threats to, Australian society.
- 5 Examine the headlines that appeared in a leading newspaper prior to the 2016 federal election (Sources 3 and 4).
  - a What do you think the headlines are saying to readers?
  - b Explain whether or not you believe newspapers have a responsibility to present facts and information in an unbiased manner.
  - c Do you think bias presentation of information in the media could potentially influence Australia's democracy? Give reasons for your response.

- 6 Decide whether the following policies or law changes might potentially strengthen or threaten our democratic and cohesive society. Give reasons for your view.
  - a bringing back the death penalty as a punishment for very serious crimes like mass murder and terrorism
  - b banning the building of an Islamic mosque in a country town
  - c continuing to severely restrict the number of asylum seekers allowed into Australia
  - d abolishing compulsory voting
  - e banning political parties from advertising on television and radio during election campaigns
  - f teaching about domestic violence in primary schools

### Evaluate and create

- 7 Prepare a poster that identifies factors that strengthen our democratic and cohesive society and factors that threaten our democratic and cohesive society.
- 8 Research one country that does not have a democratic system. Evaluate the ways that this country's citizens experience their system, and compare it with Australia's democratic system. Prepare your findings in a PowerPoint to present to the class.



11C rich task

# Maintaining Australia's democratic and cohesive society

Many different factors influence **social cohesion** in Australia. For example, when the Scanlon Foundation, an organisation that aims to enhance social cohesion in Australia, conducts research, it examines five key indicators, including whether or not Australians:

- feel a *sense of belonging and pride* in being Australian
- have a *sense that social justice and equity* exists in our country
- have a *willingness to participate in voluntary work and the political process* (including have a right and willingness to vote, and protest for law changes)
- feel a *sense of legitimacy* – that is, feel accepted and not subject to discrimination
- feel a *sense of self-worth* or have a general feeling that they are happy and satisfied with life and have positive expectations about the future.



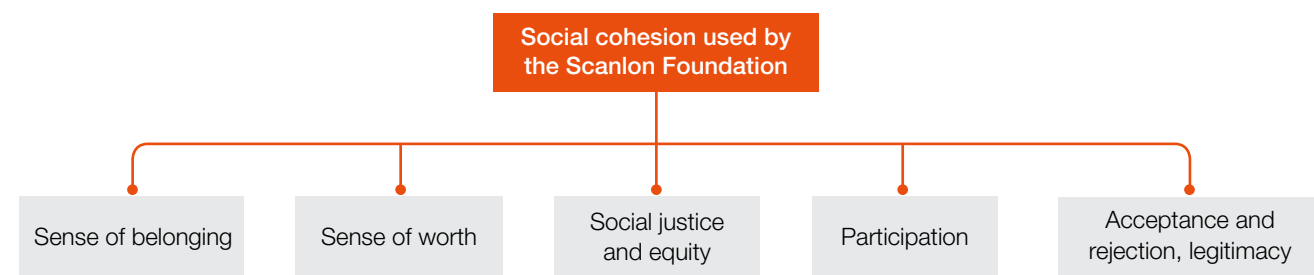
**Source 2** There are five key indicators for social cohesion in Australia, including having a sense of legitimacy and not being subject to discrimination.

Over recent years, research undertaken by the Scanlon Foundation has indicated that while Australia is a relatively tolerant society, our sense of social cohesion may have slightly diminished. For example, the foundation's 2013 national survey revealed that 16 per cent of respondents felt they had experienced discrimination on the basis of their race, ethnic origin or religion compared to only 9 per cent in 2012. Similarly, there was a decline in the level of trust respondents had in the government. Only 27 per cent indicated they trusted the federal government 'most of the time' in 2013, compared to 48 per cent in 2009. Views on immigration had also changed, with 42 per cent of respondents believing that immigration levels were 'too high', up from 37 per cent in 2012. There was also a disturbing increase in negative sentiment against asylum seekers, with approximately 80 per cent of respondents believing that asylum seekers arriving by boat should not be eligible for permanent settlement. This perhaps reflects the sentiment behind the Liberal-National Coalition election campaign strategy which included a promise to 'stop the boats'.

**Source 3** What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia?

Rank	Issue	%
1	Economy/unemployment/poverty	33.3
2	Quality of government/politicians	12.5
3	Asylum seekers – concern over the arrival of too many asylum seekers, refugees, illegal immigrants *Although, by contrast 2.6% stated the poor treatment of and lack of sympathy towards asylum seekers and refugees was the most important problem facing Australia.	9.8
4	Social issues – such as family and family breakdown, child care, drug use, lack of personal direction	6.6
5	Environment – concern over climate change and water shortages	4.9
6	Health/medical/hospitals	4.3
7	Immigration/population growth (concern)	3.4
8	Education/schools	3.0

**Source:** \*Scanlon Foundation – Mapping Social Cohesion 2013: National Report



**Source 1** Key indicators of social cohesion in Australia, as used by the Scanlon Foundation



**Source 4** Australians come from a broad range of backgrounds



**skilldrill:** Reasoning and interpretation

**Creating an online survey**

Surveys are an effective way to gather information and data so it may be more easily understood and evaluated. Many online tools and programs exist to allow for the easy generation and analysis of surveys, including Google docs, Excel, SurveyMonkey and Survey Builder.

When designing an online survey you should follow these basic steps:

**Step 1** Determine the purpose or aim of your survey. Ask yourself what information you wish to collect.

**Step 2** Design appropriate questions. Ask yourself what you already know about the general topic.

- Simplify the topic by breaking it down into small parts.
- Think about the sort of information you might need to collect to help investigate the topic.
- Identify where you might be able to obtain this information.

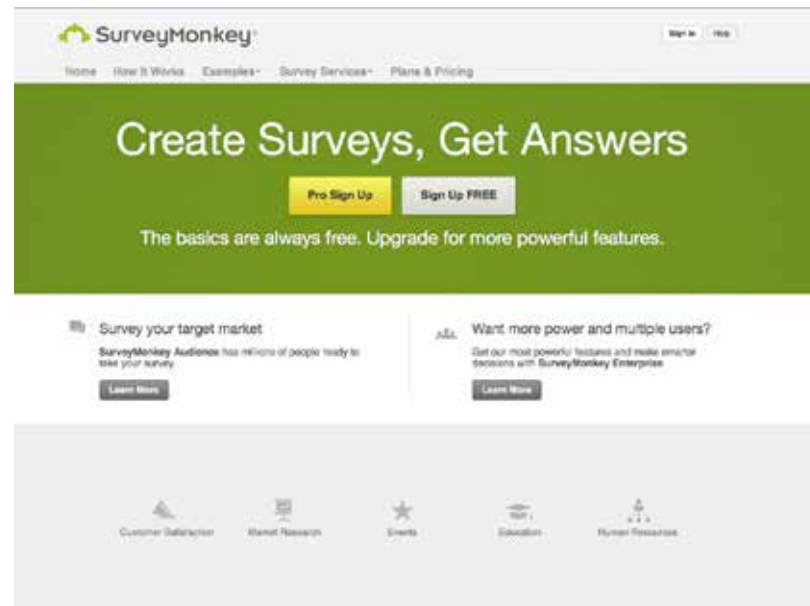
**Step 3** Consider how long you would like your survey to be. People will be reluctant to participate if the survey is too long, confusing or takes too long to complete.

**Step 4** Choose which online survey tool you will use. Go to the website and follow the steps each outlines to get started. For example, with SurveyMonkey you will need to enter your details to set up a free account to get started.

**Step 5** Select what kinds of questions you will ask. SurveyMonkey has more than 15 types of questions you can use, including multiple choice and True or False options.

To do this you should consider the range of responses you might expect to receive and provide appropriate options. For example, you may elect to use:

- 'yes or no' questions
- 'true or false' statements



Employee	Position	Performance rating	% increase	Current salary	New salary
John Smith	CEO	Exceeds	7.50%	\$250,000.00	\$268,750.00
Jane Doe	VP Sales		0.00%	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00
Bob Bean	Sales Director		0.00%	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00
Wendy Hall	Sales Director		0.00%	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00
Frank Sims	Mgr Operations		0.00%	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00
Julie Rath	CSR		0.00%	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Jim Lang	CSR		0.00%	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00

**Source 5** SurveyMonkey is a useful online tool to build and analyse surveys.

- rating scale – such as, 'on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being most likely and 5 being least likely) answer the following questions
- comment box for more personalised responses.

**Step 6** Consider what personal details and information you would like your respondents to provide or whether you would prefer to allow them to remain anonymous. Which of these forms will encourage high participation and honest responses?

**Step 7** Consider how many completed surveys you will need to form an accurate assessment. You will need to get a big enough sample size and a mixture of ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds in order to give results that represent the general population.

**Step 8** You will need to set up a mailing list to email out your surveys. Your chosen online survey platform will help you do this.

**Step 9** Prepare a chart or graph to help analyse your responses. Many online survey programs will compile this information for you.

**Apply the skill**

- 1 Source 3 presents results from a survey asking recipients 'What do you think is the most important problem facing Australia today?'
  - a Follow the steps above to design and conduct your own online survey that will help you to determine which concerns or issues currently threaten social cohesion in your community.

- b Send the survey out to those on the mailing list you have created. Remember to keep your survey relatively short so people will be more likely to complete it.
- c Prepare a summary of your findings, including a list of the top five problems or issues that concerned your respondents. Suggest possible reasons for these concerns.
- d Compare your survey results with the table provided in Source 3 and identify any similarities and differences in your findings. Suggest some reasons for any differences.
- e Explain any strengths and/or limitations associated with your survey.

**Extend your understanding**

- 1 Conduct some extra research on social cohesion. Explain what is meant by social cohesion in a sentence or two. Then, identify the three most significant factors that you believe have the potential to detract from Australia's sense of social cohesion. Jot down your ideas and then discuss your views with a partner or the class.

**Source 6** Springvale is south-eastern Melbourne is home to a diverse range of Asian cultures.

