

Every Vote Counts



The Federal Election, 2004 – Educational Video: Teachers' Notes

Introduction

This video is set against the background of the 2004 Federal Election, and has been designed to explain how an election is organised and conducted to groups from upper primary onwards.

Who votes? Who nominates as candidates? How are votes cast and counted?

These notes have been designed to support educators with their Civics and Citizenship programming by offering ideas for classroom discussion and suggestions for further activities.

For easy reference, the narration has been reproduced as the central text of this booklet with ideas linked to the video's content in the appropriate places.

Alongside the narration you will see boxed numerals from nought to twelve, these are the elapsed minutes of the video and, using the counter of your VCR, will help you to locate particular segments of the program.

The text of these notes contains design features to help you: discussion questions have the word *question* printed in red and italicised as a heading; activities have that word, printed in purple, as a heading; web links are printed in blue. Words in the narration printed in green have been briefly defined where they appear. A glossary has been included to assist with further electoral terms used in the video.

Before showing the video

Some general discussion of the context in which elections are held may usefully set the scene for showing the video. Points that could be introduced include:

- Are all governments elected? If not, what other means are there for determining who forms a government?
- Are all elections fair? Responses to this question might include such issues as: →

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- restrictions on voter eligibility;
 - coercion and corruption;
 - government control of media and advertising;
 - • access to voting places;
 - existence of an impartial and transparent counting process.

This video is about a Federal election – what other types of election do we have in Australia?

Section One: An election is called

Narration

00:00

Question: What other methods are there for deciding on a leader – whether of a country or anything else? What might happen if teachers, or parents, were chosen by election!

Question: Why does Australia have a Federal system?

Question: Sometimes an election is called early – what circumstances could trigger this in Australia?

Rejection of government bills in the Senate can provide the trigger, so, of course, can the dismissal of a government by the Governor General.

Electoral Roll

The list of voters entitled to vote in elections.

Question: How does the voter get her or his name on The Roll?

This information could be researched by students through the AEC website: www.aec.gov.au → What → Enrolment

Not every country chooses its government by election. So not every government has to "go to the people" by an agreed date, to determine who will lead the country.

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In Australia, governments are chosen by election – the Commonwealth government is elected for a term of not more than three years so, at the end of that term, the Prime Minister must announce the date for an election at which voters will decide who will be their representatives in the Federal Parliament for the next three years.

01:00

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The process of voting is simple: the voter's name is marked-off the **Electoral Roll**, the voter votes, the vote is counted, the candidate with a majority of votes is elected.

Question: The PM thanks the Australian public for electing him -but does the public elect the Prime Minister?

Individual voters elect individual representatives, the party or coalition with the majority of representatives forms the government; this party or coalition of parties elects a leader who is called the Prime Minister.

Australia has three levels of government, Federal is the first level and the subject of this video; the second level is State and Territory government, and the third level is local government. See AEC Education Resource 'Australian Democracy Magazine'. All are determined by election, but there are variations.

Question: What happens in your state, territory or local government area?

The video reveals many of the reasons why running an election is such a complex operation.

Question: *If students had to run an election (see P.18 of these notes): What jobs would need to be done? How could the tasks be shared out and co-ordinated?*

Nominate/Nomination

To nominate is to declare an intention of standing as a candidate in an election; the nomination is lodged with the Divisional Returning Officer by a pre-determined date.

There are about 20 million Australians –

Question: *Why are only thirteen million eligible to vote?*

Others are under age or not Australian citizens.

Activity: See individual electorate statistics in 'The Electoral Pocketbook'.

In fact, enabling such a simple process to happen with accuracy, speed and scrupulous fairness means mounting the largest logistical exercise that is ever undertaken in peacetime Australia.

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The independent body responsible for voter registration, administration of polling places, counting of the vote, registering the nomination of candidates and the many other facets of organising more than thirteen million people to vote, is, the Australian Electoral Commission.

Question: *Can students imagine how computers might change the way we vote in the future?*

Be careful to remember that any system must be equally available to, and equally useable by, all qualified voters.

Question: *What is the AEC independent of? Who else might run elections, with what drawbacks?*

In some countries government departments without full time expertise, or with the possibility of bias towards the government, have the job. Also, in some countries different regional authorities with different systems conduct elections.

Redistribution

The redrawing of electoral boundaries carried out by the AEC.

For more information on redistributions go to www.aec.gov.au → What → Frequently Asked Questions → Redistributions

Question: Why can't people just arrive to vote, why do they have to be "on the roll"?

The Australian Electoral Commission or, the AEC, prepares for elections by maintaining and updating the rolls, conducting the redistribution of electoral boundaries in line with changes in population, preparing the materials and places that will be necessary in an election, and informing and educating electors about voting in the election.

Question: How do we know about changes and trends in population?

The AEC relies on census information. The Australian Bureau of Statistics carries out a national census every five years.

Question: Do students remember seeing/reading advertisements of this type?

Activity: Students could design a "why you should vote" campaign using a 'catchy' slogan.

Section Two: The issue of Writs

02:00

It swings into action, and the election proper starts, with an event known as The Issue of the Writs.

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On the advice of the Prime Minister, the Governor General dissolves the parliament and issues writs which instruct the Electoral Commissioner to hold an election.

Question: What is a writ? What did the Electoral Commissioner say was written on the writs?

Activity: To see what a writ looked like 100 years ago go to the AEC CD 'Australian Referendums 1906-1999' Choose a year then select 'background'.

The House of Representatives is also called 'The People's House' and the Senate is sometimes known as 'The States House'.

Question: Can you guess why they have these 'other' names?

Division or Electorate

A defined geographic entity which returns a single member to the House of Representatives; divisions are established within boundaries determined on the basis on population.

A map showing all these electoral divisions, incorporating 2004 elections results, can be obtained from the AEC.

www.aec.gov.au → What → Contact AEC.email address

In Australia's Federal parliament there are two houses, one is the House of Representatives and the other is the Senate. At most Federal elections voters elect all of the members of the House of Representatives and approximately half of the Senators. The political party, or coalition of parties, that has the majority of members in the House of Representatives forms the government.

03:00

In the 2004 Federal Election one hundred and fifty members were elected to the House of Representatives. The number of representatives to be elected alters in line with changes in population. Each member represents about the same number of people in a given area. This area is called an electoral division or an electorate.

Question: Can students name their Federal member? Or senior government or opposition figures at the Federal level?

These names can be found at:
www.aec.gov.au → Who → Electorate search → Suburb Name

Question: Can students name the electorate in which the school is placed? In which they live?

Activity: Use the electoral map to find the divisions and, perhaps, those where other family members live. This information can be found at:
www.aec.gov.au → Who → Electorate search → suburb name

Question: What other ways of organising representation could there be apart from population?

Think of the school. People can be divided into groups based on their age, their hobbies, whether they are students or staff.

Question: What would a school parliament look like if it reflected these communities in their proper proportions?

Compulsory voting

The Commonwealth Electoral Act (Section 245) states that it is compulsory for all Australians to enrol and vote at elections.

Question: *What are the pros and cons of compulsory voting?*

Arguments for/against compulsory voting can be found at www.aec.gov.au → What → Voting → More. See 'Endnotes'

The Senate is different that representation is on a state or territory basis. Each State, irrespective of population, is represented by twelve senators and each territory is represented by two senators.



Voting for the Australian parliament is **compulsory**, and the **preferential** system of voting is used in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Voters must number the candidates listed on the ballot papers in the order of their choice. To be elected to the House of Representatives, the successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes. To be elected to the Senate candidates must gain a set quota, or number of votes.

04:00



States and territories are also known as electorates.

Question: *Can students name the eight electorates represented in the Senate?*

Question: *Who are your state's Senate representatives?*

Look at the AEC's publication 'The Electoral Pocketbook' or at www.aec.gov.au → Who → Representation → List of Senators.



Preferential voting

A method of voting in which voters complete a ballot paper by placing numbers next to each candidate on the ballot paper (official printed form on which the voter marks her or his vote to indicate their preferences). Voters are required to number all the boxes to indicate their preferences.

Activity: The AEC can conduct a 'simulated' election in your school to fully illustrate the mechanics of preferential voting. Staff are also happy to conduct SRC elections if required. Contact your nearest Divisional Office on 13 23 26 for further details.

Section Three: The Countdown

Commonwealth Electoral Act

The legislation governing the Commonwealth election process.



The voting age has changed over the years

Activity: Students can research what qualifications were enforced for voting in the early years of Australia.

When the Prime Minister announces the election date, voters, candidates and the AEC begin a countdown in a series of essential milestones outlined in the **Commonwealth Electoral Act**. The first of these, and therefore the first great burst of activity with which the AEC has to cope, is voters getting their names on the electoral roll – rolls close just seven days after the issue of the writs.

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An Australian citizen who will be at least eighteen on election day is eligible to vote, and whilst people can enrol at any time they sometimes don't think about it until an election is called.

Question: Why have a timetable that is set-down in law?

The countdown tries to strike a balance between the time taken to inform the electorate and organise the election and the time the country is without elected government.

Question: What are the stages in the election process?

Check the AEC Publication 'All you ever wanted to know about Australian Democracy'.

Activity: Students could suggest whether there should be other restrictions or conditions put on peoples eligibility to vote besides age. Give these alternatives;

- Bankrupts
- Prisoners
- 16yr old with a child
- People living overseas for more than 10 years
- People of unsound mind
- Non-Australian citizens

Physically arrange the class according to 'agree/disagree' opinion and have individuals give reasons for their choice.

Question: *Why do people stand for parliament? Does anyone think that, one day, they might?*

Activity: Ask the local member to visit the school, to talk about what it is actually like to be a member of the Commonwealth Parliament. Devise some 'interview questions' for the visiting member.

Question: *What would be a good name, logo and slogan for a party representing you, or your school, or your area?*

Activity: Design a poster or bumper sticker.

A "donkey vote" is where the voter numbers the candidates in the order in which they appear on the ballot paper. The random draw makes the order of appearance a matter of chance.

Question: *What might otherwise happen?*

In some countries, where candidates are listed alphabetically, people have legally changed their names to things like Aaaaab!

Within those millions of people eligible to vote is a much smaller group of people who will play a much more obvious role in the election – the candidates.

05.00

These are the people who are hoping to be elected as representatives in the Federal Parliament.

Almost everyone who is qualified to vote in a Federal election is also qualified to stand as a candidate, you don't have to be a member of a political party, you just need to be nominated according to the rules, and to pay a deposit.

Nominations close ten to twenty seven days after the issue of the writs. The following day, the draw for positions on the ballot paper is carried out in electorates all over Australia. To give all candidates an equal chance of being placed at the top of a ballot paper, these positions are determined by a double random draw.

Candidates must be qualified to vote, pay a deposit and be nominated by fifty enrolled voters who live in the electorate or by a registered officer of a registered political party. Also, they cannot have dual citizenship with another country or hold an office of profit under the crown eg public servant, teacher, policeman etc.

Question: *Why is all this necessary?*

Staff from the AEC are able to visit schools to explain these and other electoral processes. To contact your nearest Divisional Office call 13 23 26.

Question: *What is a double random draw?*

Question: *Where else is a random draw used?*

The draw for sporting events and, of course, every type of lottery draw.

Activity: Try a random draw (names in a hat) and see how many times you can draw your name out first.

Question: What sorts of things might not be allowed? What might happen if spending was unrestricted and political parties did not have to disclose where their funds came from?

Question: What sorts of questions do you imagine people would ask when phoning a call centre?

The most common questions are "Am I on the roll?" and "Where can I vote?"

On the AEC web site there is a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section – Check it out www.aec.gov.au → What → F.A.Qs.

A formal vote is a ballot paper that has been correctly filled-in; it will be counted.

Question: An informal vote is an incorrect ballot paper, it will not be counted. What might be wrong?

Ballot papers left blank; voter's name written on ballots; ticks instead of numbers, repeating numbers or not enough numbers on the ballot paper are some examples.

06:00

Candidates are now concentrating on the business of campaigning for election. Here, too, the AEC has a role to play. Part of its responsibility is to investigate complaints about political advertising and promotional material used during the election campaign.

From the issue of the writs onwards, the AEC also conducts a major advertising campaign to provide voters with information about enrolling.

Special call centres operate during the countdown period to answer hundreds of thousands of queries by would be voters.

Later, the advertising campaign addresses a range of issues from how to ensure that you cast a formal vote, to how to have your say if you are going, for any reason, to be away from home or unable to get to a polling place on election day.

Voters who have not been previously enrolled will have to get their names on the roll. This means people who have just become old enough.

Question: Who else?

People who have become Australian citizens since the last election.

Question: Who else will need to check the roll?

People who have changed their address. You must enrol for the address at which you reside.

Question: What reasons might there be for not being able to get to a polling place?

Work, religious observance, health, travelling distance from the nearest polling place are some examples.

Activity: Do a class survey: Where did your family vote? And plot the locations on an area map.

Question: Which overseas post takes the most votes?

Australia House in London takes more votes than any other polling place – including all of those in Australia!

Question: Can you think of a place where “getting in the vote” might be even harder than Australian troops serving overseas?

Australians working at the research bases in Antarctica could not be visited, but were able to fax their votes to the AEC in Hobart.

See www.aec.gov.au → What → Publications → Behind the Scenes → Polling Arrangements.

The AEC offers a comprehensive range of voting options for those who are unable to vote on election day. One that makes substantial logistic demands is catering for the many thousands of eligible Australian voters who will be overseas on polling day.

Most Australian overseas missions, such as embassies, become official polling places at election time.

Some eligible voters for the 2004 Election were in rather difficult to reach places. Number one on that list was Australian troops in Iraq.

Many of the interesting facts and figures of the 2004 election are included in the one useful publication. ‘Behind the Scenes: the 2004 Election Report’ This can be downloaded from the AEC web site; www.aec.gov.au → What → Publications → Behind the Scenes, and is also available on CD.



Not every person living in Australia is able to reach an official polling place on election day. For many such people the AEC Mobile Polling teams are the answer.

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Others can vote at pre-poll centres or apply for a postal vote.

Question: Hospitals and remote communities are shown in the video. Anywhere else?

Prisons and nursing homes.

Remote teams travel by four-wheel drive, light aircraft, helicopter and boat to reach communities.

Activity: Have students make a list of 'essentials' that these teams would need to take with them to conduct polling.

Those unable to attend voting places for any of a number of legitimate reasons are able to send postal votes in specially designed envelopes that ensure the legality of the vote whilst safeguarding the anonymity of the voter.

Activity: Students to about the design challenge of a postal vote form that is secure, meaning it cannot be forged or tampered with, and confidential, meaning the voter's name can be marked off the roll yet their name cannot be associated with the ballot paper.

Pre-poll voting

Votes cast at any pre-poll voting centre by voters not able to vote in their home State/Territory on election day.

Postal voting

Electors who for various reasons cannot get to a polling place in the State or Territory for which they are enrolled on polling day can apply, in writing, for a postal vote. They will be sent their ballot papers which must be posted back before the close of polling.

Facts, figures and statistics of all kinds relating to the scale and cost of the election can be researched on the AEC website.

www.aec.gov.au → What → Publications → Behind the Scenes → Polling Arrangements.

Activity: Perhaps your own school is a polling place and someone associated with the school is the Officer in Charge on Election Day. Ask that person to explain what has to be done whenever there is an election.

Equipment ranges from screens to pencils with holes in the end.

Question: Why holes in the end?
Why screens?
What sorts of signs would be required?

08:00 Election Day itself is the time when the many thousands of casual workers who will man the thousands of polling places and count the millions of votes will be tested. To ensure that they are up to the task, staff of the AEC invest many hours in training these people.

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All of the venues that are to be used as polling places will have been checked and rechecked for suitability, with light, space and access major considerations.

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And the equipment delivered to these places in every corner of the nation runs into hundreds of tonnes.

Question: *If your school wasn't a polling place would it be suitable?*

Activity: Draw up a list of selection criteria and run through it for your school.

Question: How might the time be co-ordinated?

Officers in charge use either the time signal on the ABC or the telephone time service.



School halls, church and community halls, a range of venues from the smallest rural towns to the capital cities are transformed into hundreds of identically equipped polling places, manned by identically trained polling officials.

.....
← And at the identical time, the polling places
09:00 open their doors. From eight in the morning till six at night, Australians go to the polls.

.....
Two ballot papers, one for the House of Representatives and one for the Senate, are given to each voter once they are identified on, and marked off, the certified list of voters. Voters not in their home electorate on election day are able to cast an absent vote at any polling place in their state or territory.

Question: On arriving to vote, voters are asked three questions. What are they?

→ What is your full name?
Where do you live?
Have you voted before in this election?

Question: Why is the voter's name marked off the roll?

→ To record that the voter has voted because voting is compulsory and to make sure that the person does not vote twice.

Scrutineers

People appointed by the candidates to observe the voting, sorting and counting of the votes. They may check for any possible irregularities but they must not touch any ballot paper.

Question: At the end of the polling day the number of unused, discarded and spoilt ballot papers are recorded along with those in the ballot box. Why?

Every ballot paper issued to the polling place must be accounted for.

Scrutineers appointed by the candidates, observe voting in most polling places.

Officials of the AEC similarly monitor the behaviour of candidates and their representatives, to make sure that no undue pressure is placed on or misinformation given to voters.

After the polls close, the sealed ballot boxes are opened and emptied, and votes counted, using a series of checks and double checks to ensure accuracy and integrity. Scrutineers are also present at this time, to monitor the counting of votes on behalf of their candidate.

Question: Rules govern what scrutineers can and cannot do in or near a polling place. Why?

This prevents undue pressure or intimidation.

Activity: Ask students to imagine, or even role-play, the sorts of things that might occur without such rules.

All of the processes are designed to prevent the introduction of false, or the removal of valid, ballot papers.

Question: What means might be employed to do either of these things – and why should anyone bother?

10:00

Progressive figures permit analysts to detect any swing.

Question: *What is a swing?*

The commentators focus on the marginal rather than the safe seats.

Question: *What do these terms mean?*

National Tally Room

The scene of the media and political concentration on election night, with the giant manually operated tally board as its focus. The National Tally Room is in one of the pavilions of Exhibition Park in Canberra.

Recounts

Second, subsequent counting of the votes in a polling place (or throughout a division) as required to ensure accuracy and particularly in the case of very close margins.

These votes are processed in such a way as to enable Australia to know the result of the election on the evening that the polls close, thanks to the major effort the AEC makes on election night to gather and distribute progressive figures and final tallies to the media, and the broader community.

The tally room is shadowed by the AEC's 'virtual tally room' on the world wide web which, on election night 2004, received tens of millions of hits.

Although close contests may depend on the distribution of preferences or require recounts, it is usually possible for the Prime Minister elect to claim victory on the night of the election. Counting for the Senate continues for several weeks.



Question: *Why do errors occur?*

Activity: A class might try counting matches in a box, or lollies in a pack, to see whether the results are consistent.



Whilst the Commonwealth Parliamentary term must be not more than three years long, it is not a fixed term, which means that there are circumstances where the Prime Minister can call an early election.

Question: What might these be?

What it means for the AEC is that it must always be in a state of readiness.

11:00

Once results are known the Divisional Returning Officer, the senior AEC person in each electorate, declares the poll for their electorate.

When all of the results have been declared, the Electoral Commissioner returns the now completed writs to the Governor General and the process of electing a government for the next three years is over.



However, for the AEC, the job is not yet finished. Funding entitlements must be distributed to parties and candidates, the entire election event analysed and a detailed report given to the Federal Parliament. Meanwhile the complex business of planning for the next election will already be under way.

12:00

This is the final stage of the election process.



Activity: Can the students give a summary of the stages of the election?

Monies are paid to the elected candidates after the election and this runs into the millions.

See www.aec.gov.au → How → Public Election Funding Payments.



Question: Why do taxpayers provide funds for election campaigns?

For an explanation and history of funding of elections see; www.parliament.nsw.gov.au → parliamentary services → research publications → 'Electoral Finance Law' 2001

The processes illustrated in this video are the main stages in conducting an election:

- The announcement;
- The registration of voters;
- The registration of candidates;
- The conduct of the campaign;
- Polling day;
- The scrutiny; and
- The declaration of the result

Understanding the value of these stages, and the processes needed to ensure "fair and free elections", can be achieved through holding an election. Students could hold either a simulated election, or conduct an election along appropriate, formal lines for class or school positions.

The Australian Electoral Commission has an electoral education program. This program aims to educate the Australian people about elections and voting through either a visit to one of its Electoral Education Centres, or through presentations in schools and communities conducted by AEC divisional staff. Staff can provide assistance with and/or the materials required for conducting a simulated or genuine (eg School Representative Council) election. To contact your nearest AEC office call 13 23 26

Depending on the size of the group involved, consideration should be given to the roles that need to be filled:

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In running the election – the polling place staff, including those responsible for marking the roll and handing out ballot papers, those available to help individual voters, those organising the queue; all of these would be responsible for counting the votes.

In standing for the election – the candidates, their scrutineers and campaign helpers.

The voters, of course – and perhaps, media who could conduct interviews or chair debates.

The local Divisional Returning Officer, the local Member of Parliament and a journalist from a local media organisation could all be invited to give their advice on these various roles.

Absent Votes

Votes cast by electors who are out of their electoral divisions but still within their State or Territory on polling day. These votes may be cast at any polling place in that State or Territory.

Absolute Majority

In a House of Representatives election, a candidate must gain more than half of the formal votes to be elected. This is known as an Absolute Majority. Often this involves the distribution of preferences.

Australian Electoral Commission

An independent statutory authority that conducts federal elections and referendums, maintains the electoral rolls, conducts electoral education and promotes public awareness of electoral and parliamentary matters.

Ballot Box

The sealed container into which electors place their completed ballot paper.

Ballot Paper

A paper which shows the names of the candidates who are standing in an election. The voter numbers the boxes beside each candidate's name to show his or her preferences.

Candidate

A person who stands for election to parliament. Candidates are mostly nominated by political parties.

Commonwealth Electoral Act

The legislation governing the Commonwealth electoral process.

Certified List (of Electors)

A copy of the electoral roll for a division produced for a particular election or referendum and certified by the Australian Electoral Commissioner.

Compulsory Voting

Australian citizens, 18 years or older are required by law to enrol and vote in federal elections and referendums.

Distribution of Preferences

The process used to determine the candidate to be elected when no candidate gains an Absolute Majority of first preference votes in the first count.

Divisions (federal electoral)

Australia is divided into voting districts or electorates which are known as divisions. One member is elected from each division to the House of Representatives.

Divisional Returning Officer

The full time AEC officer responsible for maintaining the roll and conducting the election in each division

Double Random Draw

The order in which candidates' names appear on the ballot paper is determined by this method. The first draw assigns a number to each candidate and the second draw determines the order in which each candidate appears on the ballot paper.

Election

The process by which voters elect representatives to represent them in parliament.

Electoral Commissioner

The officer who performs the functions of chief executive officer of the Australian Electoral Commission.

Electoral Roll

The list of voters entitled to vote in elections and referendums.

Electors

People eligible to vote in an election. (Also known as voters)

Enrolment

The act of having your name placed on the electoral roll. If you are not enrolled you cannot vote.

Formal Vote

A vote cast in an election or a referendum that has been marked according to the rules for that election or referendum. A vote not marked correctly is an informal vote.

Funding Entitlement

The total of public funding payable based on the number of formal first preference votes obtained at a Federal election. This scheme is administered by the AEC.

Governor General

The Queen's representative in the Commonwealth of Australia.

House of Representatives

One of the two Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament. It is also known as 'The People's House' Or 'The House of Government'.

Informal Vote

A ballot paper which has been incorrectly completed or not filled in at all. Informal votes are not counted in the election of a candidate.

Mobile Polling

Mobile polling teams bring the polling to the elector. They visit electors in hospitals and nursing homes, prisons and remote locations to enable them to vote.

Nomination

The proposal for a person to become a candidate for an election.

Polling Place

Polling places are set up in each division to take the votes of the local people.

Postal Voters

Voters can apply in writing for a postal vote if for various reasons they cannot attend a polling place in the State or Territory where they are enrolled on polling day.

Postal Voting

A method of voting through the post.

Preferential Voting

A method of voting in which voters complete a ballot paper by placing numbers next to each candidate on the ballot paper to indicate their preferences. Voters may be required to number all the boxes to indicate all their preferences ('full' preferential) or to fill in one box to indicate their first preference only or more if they so wish ('optional' preferential).

Pre-Poll Voting

Votes cast at any AEC office or any pre-poll voting centre in the lead-up to polling day. Voters unable to vote in their State or Territory on election day cast these.

Quota

The proportion of votes required by a candidate to be elected to the Senate.

Redistribution

The redrawing of electoral boundaries to ensure that there are, as near as possible, equal number of electors in each division for a State or Territory.

Representative

A person elected to represent the people of a division (House of Representatives) or State/Territory (Senate).

Scrutineer

An individual appointed by candidates to ensure that voting, sorting and counting are done fairly and accurately.

Senate

One of the two Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament. It is also known as 'The States' House' or 'House of Review'.

Tally Room

The venue where the progressive voting figures for divisions are displayed when the votes are being counted on election night. The National Tally Room for federal elections is located in Canberra.

Vote

The formal act of an elector in an election to choose the candidates they wish to represent them.

Writ

A document commanding an electoral officer to hold an election or referendum. The issue of a writ starts the electoral process.