

V1.3 19 September 2023

Community referendum education

Session guide

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Overview

Introduction

This session guide is provided for people and organisations to deliver education on the referendum process.

The presentation can be adapted to audience needs and available time.

The audience for this session is not required to have any prior understanding of referendums.

The material and accompanying PowerPoint presentation should not be altered. The AEC maintains strict political and issue neutrality. This information is provided for public awareness of the referendum process. The original can be viewed at aec.gov.au. Any additional commentary or content are not endorsed by the AEC.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- discuss the characteristics of the Australian Constitution
 - discuss the purpose of a referendum
 - discuss the reasons to vote
 - recall the process of voting at the polling place
 - demonstrate how to formally complete a ballot paper
 - describe a double majority
 - discuss how to consider the reliability of information when forming a decision on how to vote
 - recall Australian Electoral Commission temporary employment options.
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Use of this session guide

Throughout this session guide you will find:

Writing in grey boxes – this is scripted information to be read out to the audience.

Regular body text – this is extra information and guidance for facilitators.

- Facilitator note – this is information of particular note for facilitators and often lists required actions to prepare for and deliver the session.

You will also find icons that indicate if the topic is an explanation, activity or both.



Images of the slides from the session presentation are provided in this guide to indicate when you should display each slide. Relevant text is provided below the slide image.

Duration and session flexibility

This session guide is designed to be flexible and meet the needs of the audience and the available time and space. Topics can be delivered in isolation.

Topic	Duration
Welcome and agenda	5 minutes
Why vote?	5 minutes
What is a referendum?	5 minutes
Voting formally	10 minutes
Double majority	10 minutes
Informing your vote	5 minutes
Working for the AEC	5 minutes
Wrap up	5 minutes
Total	50 minutes

A Powerpoint accompanies this session. Access to this presentation is not necessary to run the learning activities. Delete or hide any slides you are not using.

- * To hide a slide in PowerPoint, right click on the slide and select 'Hide Slide'.

Materials

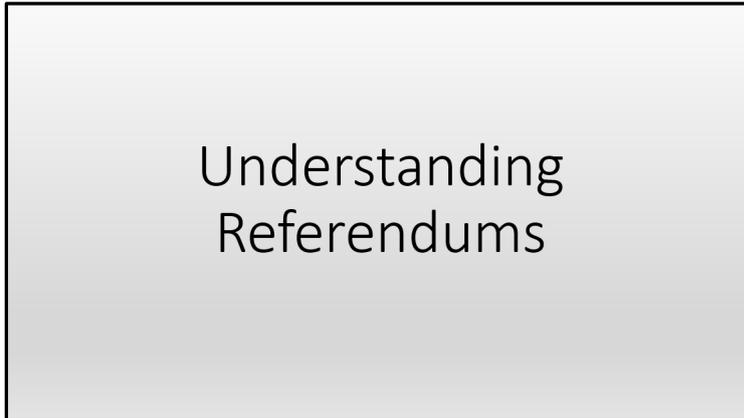
	Material	Quantity
General		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Session guide	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	PowerPoint presentation (if being used)	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Laptop and projector (if using PowerPoint)	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	PowerPoint presentation printouts in A3	1
What is a referendum?		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil	-
Process of voting		
<input type="checkbox"/>	A3 printed oversized example ballot paper	1
Double majority activity		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil	-
Informing your vote		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil	-
Working for the AEC		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil	-
Wrap up		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nil	-

Welcome and agenda

Duration | 5 minutes



Slide 1



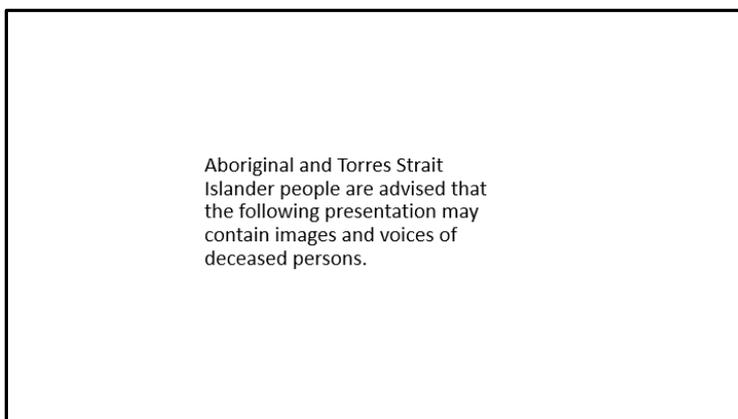
Greet participants as they arrive.

Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to start with an acknowledgment of country. In the spirit of reconciliation, I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

Cultural sensitivity warning

Slide 2



Read the text from PowerPoint slide.

Issue neutrality

Slide 3

Disclaimer

The AEC maintains strict political and issue neutrality. This information is provided for public awareness of the referendum process. The AEC is unable to control the context in which this information may be presented. The original can be viewed at aec.gov.au. Any additional commentary or content are not endorsed by the AEC.

Read the text from the PowerPoint slide.

Welcome

Start the session by:

- welcoming participants
- introducing yourself
- covering the housekeeping points as required:
 - emergency procedures for the venue
 - location of toilets
 - mobile devices – request they be turned to silent.

Introduce the session

I'm here to talk about referendums - what they are, how they work and how you can make sure your vote counts.

I don't work for the AEC. Any views I express do not necessarily reflect those of the AEC.

A referendum will be held on whether to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

For more information on the Yes and No cases for the referendum you can read the Yes/No pamphlet prepared by parliamentarians who voted for and against.

- Explain the length of the session and the main activities that will be included.

☞ If you are not presenting all elements of the session amend the 'the plan for today's session' slide

☞ More information about the Yes/No cases can be found: [Yes/No Case pamphlet](#)

Slide 4

2023 Referendum

There will be a referendum on Saturday 14 October proposing a change to the Constitution.

A proposed law:
To alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

There will be a referendum in October this year proposing a change to the Constitution. The proposed law is written here as it will be on the ballot paper. For more information see the Yes/No Pamphlet [Yes/No Case pamphlet](#)

Slide 5

The plan for today's session:



- Why vote?
- What is the Constitution?
- What is a referendum?
- Voting in a referendum
- How the results are worked out
- Inform your vote
- Working at referendums

Has anyone here voted before?

Has anyone heard of the word referendum before?

The purpose of this session is to help us build knowledge and understanding of what referendums are and about voting.

In this session we will talk about:

- *why vote?*
- *what is the Constitution?*
- *what is a referendum?*
- *voting in a referendum*
- *how the results are worked out*
- *informing your vote*
- *working at elections.*

Why vote

Duration | 5 minutes



Learning outcome

Discuss reasons to vote.

There will be a referendum to decide if Australia wants to change the Constitution (the rule book) for government.

It's important we all have our say about this change so everyone's opinions are heard.

In Australia it is compulsory for all citizens 18 years and over to enrol and vote in all federal elections and referendums.

Slide 6

Why vote?

It is important we all have our say so that everyone's opinions are heard.

In Australia it is compulsory to enrol and vote.



What is a referendum?

Duration | 5 minutes

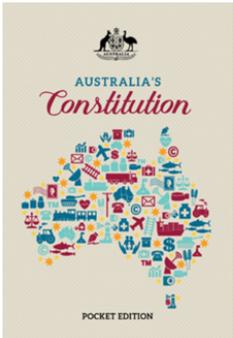


Learning outcomes

Discuss the key characteristics of the Australian Constitution.

Discuss the purpose of a referendum.

Slide 7



What is a referendum?

A referendum is a vote to change the Australian Constitution.

The Constitution is the set of rules by which Australia is run.

The Constitution

To know what a referendum is we must first understand that the Constitution is a set of rules by which Australia is run. It's like a rule book.

There are rules about how the Constitution can be changed, just like you might have at a club or community group.

It's common for communities to run themselves with a set of rules. Everyone in the community needs to be involved if those rules are going to change.

A referendum

Australia's Parliament can't change the Constitution, but it can suggest a change. It's then up to the people of Australia to decide.

This vote is called a referendum and all Australian citizens 18 years and over need to vote.

There have been 19 referendums proposing 44 changes to the Constitution. Of these only 8 changes have been successful.

Referendum statistics

Previous referendum dates, topics and results are available at

https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/referendums/Referendum_Dates_and_Results.htm.

Voting formally

Duration | 10 minutes



Learning outcomes

Recall the process of voting at the polling place.
Demonstrate how to formally complete a ballot paper.

Slide 8

Instructions →

The proposed change →

For your vote to count, you need to follow the instructions.

Write "YES" or "NO" in this box ←

When voting in a referendum you need to answer a question about changing the Constitution. You do this on a ballot paper, also known as a voting form. To make sure your vote is included in the count, write your answer in English.

If you approve the change, write "YES". If you do not approve, you write "NO" in English.

Slide 9

Name?

Where do you live?

Voted already?

Voting experience

Your vote is secret. No one can tell you how to vote. It's your decision.

At the polling place, if the AEC staff can speak languages other than English, they will wear a badge so you can identify them. There will also be a sign saying which languages are spoken at the polling place. Every polling place also has translated information the AEC staff can provide to you. The AEC staff also have details of interpreter services you can access.

At the polling place, the AEC staff will look up your name on the electoral roll.

To help find your name on the list, you will be asked some questions in English. If you have voted before, do you remember what you are asked before getting your voting form?

- 1. What is your full name? (This means your first and last name) – We need to ask this so you can be found on the electoral roll.*

There can be confusion between family name and given name/s. If you think that this is likely, and your name is not found on the roll, then suggest the AEC staff reverse your family name and given name when searching the electoral roll.

- 2. Where do you live? (This means the address you gave when you enrolled to vote) – You need to be asked this so the AEC staff can be sure they have found the correct person and not someone else with the same name.*

- 3. Have you voted before in this referendum? – We need to make sure voters are only voting once.*

Once you are found on the roll and your name is marked off, you will be given your voting form with the referendum question on it.

If your name is not found on the roll, you can still vote. The AEC staff will tell you what you should do.

The ballot paper has important information to help you vote correctly – this is called a 'formal vote'.

Let's look at the voting form to see how to correctly complete your vote.

☞ For this section you may print out A3 copies of the large example ballot paper. If printing is not available use the example ballot paper in slide 8 instead.

Hold up the large example ballot paper (or use slide 13 shown above) and point out the following elements.

- Heading - 'Referendum on proposed Constitutional alteration' ballot paper.
- Instructions to the voter – write “YES” or “NO” in the box opposite the question set out below.
- Proposed law– this will have a description of the proposed constitutional change that you need to decide if you approve or not.
- Question - 'Do you approve this proposed alteration?' and the box next to it to complete your response.
- The text under the box highlighting that you must write “YES” or “NO”.
 - It's important that you write “YES” or “NO” in English to make sure your vote is counted. All other responses become a judgement call as to the intent of the voter, and it could mean your vote is not “formal” and not counted.

If you need assistance to vote, you can ask someone to help you. The AEC staff can help you or you can nominate any person to help. This could be a friend, relative or another person.

Once you write your answer to the question on the voting form, put the paper in the voting box, known as a ballot box. This is a box that safely holds the votes until the AEC is ready to count them.

On voting day after everyone has finished voting the AEC opens the ballot box and counts the votes.

Refer participants to the online practice voting tool at [Practise voting - Australian Electoral Commission \(aec.gov.au\)](https://www.aec.gov.au/practise-voting)

Double majority

Duration | 10 minutes



Learning outcome

Describe a double majority.

Double majority activity

Slide 10

Referendum Results

A majority means more than half

Half

Once everyone has voted, the votes must be counted. For a referendum to be passed, and the Constitution to be changed, a double majority is required.

A majority means more than half.

Slide 11

Referendum Results

A referendum is passed when

More than half the voters in Australia

AND

More than half the voters in at least four out of the six states to vote YES

■ A national majority (more than half) of voters from all states and territories vote YES.

■ A majority (more than half) of voters in at least four of the six states vote YES.

For a referendum to be successful it needs to achieve a Double Majority.

A double majority means more than half of the voters in Australia must say “YES” and more than half of the voters in half the states must also vote “YES”.

Do you know how many states we have in Australia? (6)

So half is? (3)

And more than half is? (4)

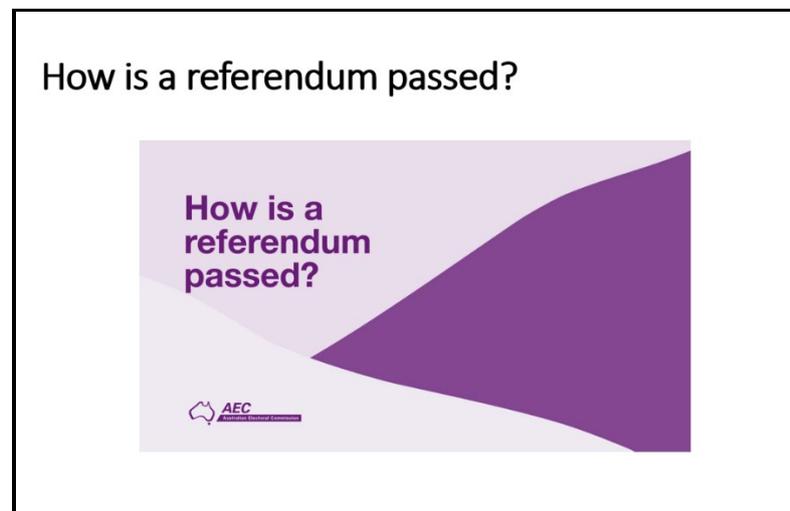
So at least 4 states need to vote “YES” for a referendum to pass.

As the territories had not been established when the Constitution was written, a referendum was held in 1977 that resulted in Territorians’ votes being included in the national total. There has not been a change to the Constitution to include them in the state vote.

A double majority means we need at least 4 out of the 6 states to vote “YES” and more than half the voters in Australia to vote “YES”.

Let’s look at how the double majority works.

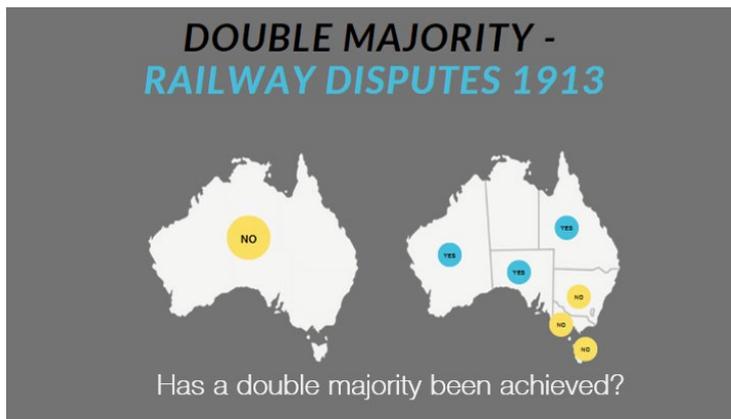
Slide 12 – alternative to slide 11



Optional: you can play the video that explains how a referendum is passed.

<https://youtu.be/b3YvUyiTPs4>

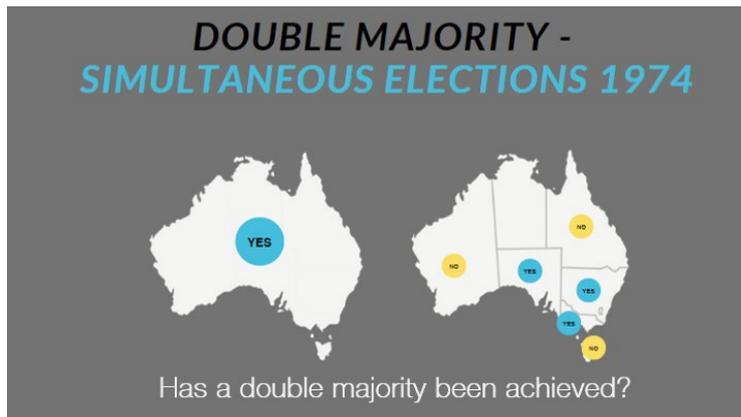
Slide 13



In this example from the 1913 referendum on railway disputes, we have a national “NO” vote and 3 states voting “YES” and 3 states voting “NO”. Is that a double majority?

No, not a majority of states and not a majority of the total population.

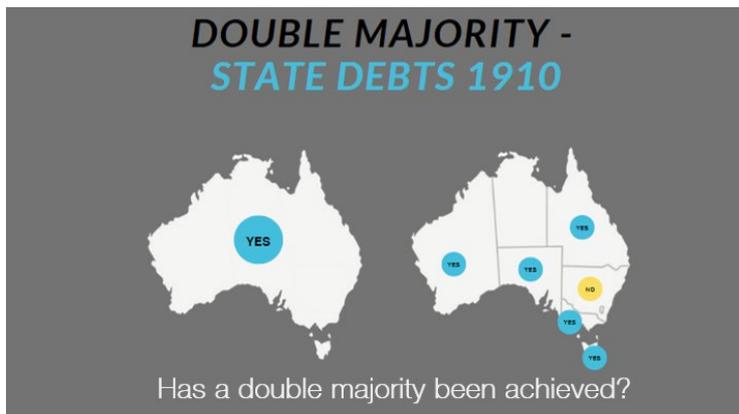
Slide 14



In this example from the 1974 referendum on simultaneous elections, we have a national “YES” vote. You’ll also see that 3 states voted “YES” and 3 states voted “NO”.

Is that a double majority? (No. There is a national majority but only 3 states voted majority YES)

Slide 15



In this example from the 1910 referendum on state debts, we have a national majority “YES” vote and 5 states who voted majority “YES”.

Is that a double majority? (Yes. There is a majority YES vote nationally and at least Four States who voted majority YES)

Informing your vote

Duration | 5 minutes



Learning outcome

Discuss how to consider the reliability of information when forming a decision on how to vote.

Slide 16

Informing your vote - Stop and consider



Check the source: Is the information Reliable? Is the information Current?

During a referendum there are a lot of things said and written about how you should vote. This may be on the radio, on social media, in a newspaper or part of a talk with other people.

Some of this information may be important for you to think about. But some of the information may be wrong, either accidentally or in some cases on purpose.

It is important to consider the information you see and hear to work out if you can trust it to help make our decision. This is especially important when there is an attempt to influence your thoughts and ideas. Some of the places you might collect information from are newspapers, television, radio, social media and friends and family.

It is important you think about where the information comes from and whether you can trust what is being said. Ask yourself does the information come from a reliable or recognised source? Is the information current – when was it published?

During referendums the AEC website has a Disinformation register (<https://www.aec.gov.au/media/disinformation-register.htm>) which lists prominent pieces of disinformation regarding the referendum process.

Working for the AEC

Duration | 5 minutes



Learning outcome

Recall Australian Electoral Commission temporary employment options.

Whenever a Federal election or referendum is held, there are opportunities to work for the AEC as a temporary employee.

This type of work offers:

- *paid work*
- *short-term employment opportunities*
- *on the job training and support*
- *a unique work experience and an opportunity to gain new skills*
- *the opportunity to contribute to your community*
- *a range of roles are available.*

You must be an Australian citizen to work for the AEC.

The AEC operates in a politically sensitive and neutral environment and all temporary employees need to complete a political neutrality declaration (a form). Being politically neutral means that you are not publicly active in political activity and do not intend to carry out this activity.

If you would like to find out more, you can go to the website on the slide (aec.gov.au/employment/working-at-elections/index.htm) for more information and to register your interest.

If you have internet connectivity you can play the video on the PowerPoint about working at an election.

Slide 17

Working at a referendum offers:

- paid work
- short-term employment opportunities
- on the job training and support
- a unique work experience and an opportunity to gain new skills.

Why work at an election?



Wrap up

Duration | 5 minutes



Closing statement

☞ Note: Facilitator to amend closing statement to reflect topics that were discussed.

Slide 18

Wrap Up...



- Why voting is important
- What is a referendum
- Filling out a voting form
- How a result is decided – Double Majority
- Stopping and considering the information

In today's session we have discussed:

- *what a referendum is*
- *filling out voting form*
- *how a result is decided including what a double majority is*
- *stopping and considering the information that forms your opinion.*

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the referendum process. Please share what you have learnt today with others in your community.

Slide 19

Translated information is available in a variety of languages on the AEC website



Translated information is available in a variety of languages on the AEC website – https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Translated_information/.