



# How the different levels of government work for you

We live in a democracy. This means Australians over 18 vote for people to represent them and provide the services they need. It's compulsory to enrol and vote.

Australia has **three** levels of government:

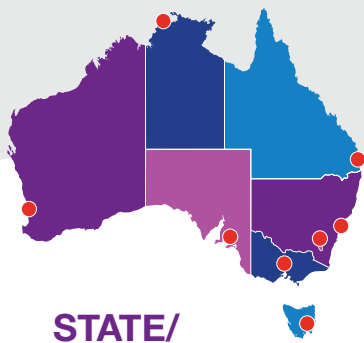
- **local governments or councils (also called shires or municipalities)**
- **state or territory governments**
- **federal government.**

By voting in elections, you help choose people to represent you in each level of government to make laws and govern on your behalf. All levels of government collect money through taxes and provide a range of services. Each level of government has its own responsibilities, although in some cases they can overlap. Here are some examples:



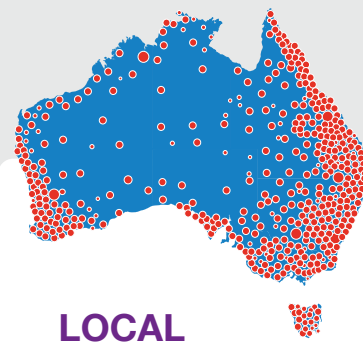
## FEDERAL

- defence
- income tax
- social welfare
- health
- immigration



## STATE/ TERRITORY

- schools
- hospitals
- public transport



## LOCAL

- local roads
- rubbish collection
- parks, libraries and art galleries

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## Federal government

A federal election is held at least every three years so Australians can vote to decide who will represent them in the federal Parliament. Federal Parliament has two houses — the House of Representatives, based on the area where you live, and the Senate, based on the state or territory where you live. The party or group of parties with more than half the people in the House of Representatives becomes the government. The head of government is the Prime Minister.

## State and territory governments

These governments make laws and decisions for their specific state or territory. Each state has a parliament of two houses (upper and lower), except for Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory which have one house called the Legislative Assembly. The leader of a state government is called the Premier. The leader of a territory government is called the Chief Minister.

## Local government

Local governments, often called city councils or shire councils, are established by state governments to look after the needs of a city or local community. The head of the council is the Mayor or Shire President. During local government elections, you will vote for people called councillors who form the council.

## Why is voting important to you?

Voting is important for many different reasons. It could be about putting your views forward; helping your family and community; wanting a seat at the table; or having a say about who represents you in Parliament. Whatever your reason, the AEC can help with the process.

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