Humanities –
Civics and Citizenship

Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0

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# Introduction

## Rationale

Civics and Citizenship empowers students to value their belonging and contribution to their respective communities and beyond. It gives students a deep understanding of the world they live in now and teaches them to appreciate and respect diversity. A deep understanding of Australia’s federal system of government and the liberal democratic values that underpin it is essential in enabling students to become active and informed citizens who can participate in and sustain Australia’s democracy.

Civics and Citizenship is grounded in the core concepts of active citizenship from local to global; community, identity and diversity; democratic institutions and systems; democratic values; and legal systems.

Civics and Citizenship provides students with opportunities to investigate political, legal and civic systems, and examine the nature of citizenship, diversity and identity in contemporary society. Students develop knowledge and understanding of Australia’s democratic political culture, and our representative democracy and its key institutions, processes, people and actors. Emphasis is often placed on the federal system of government, and our democratic institutions and systems, which are derived from the Westminster system. The liberal democratic values that underpin our democracy, such as freedom, equality and the rule of law, are given prominence throughout. The curriculum examines how the people, as citizens, choose their governments and keep them accountable; how the system safeguards democracy by vesting people with civic rights and responsibilities; how legal systems are designed to maintain peace and stability and to protect people’s rights and promote justice; and how individuals and groups can influence society. Students evaluate the extent to which these institutions and systems achieve these aims.

The curriculum recognises that Australia is a secular nation with a culturally diverse, multi-faith society. The curriculum promotes inclusivity by developing students’ understanding of broader values, such as respect, civility, equity, justice and responsibility. It acknowledges the experiences and contributions of all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and their identities within contemporary Australia. While the curriculum has a strong focus on the Australian context, students also reflect on Australia’s position in the world, and the role of citizens today, both within Australia and in an interconnected world.

Through the study of Civics and Citizenship, students develop inquiry skills, values and dispositions that encourage responsible participation in Australia’s democracy and enable them to be active and informed citizens who question, understand and contribute to the world in which they live. By investigating contemporary issues and events, students learn to value their role in a democratic, diverse and dynamic society. They are enabled to develop informed points of view and to make positive contributions to society – locally, nationally, regionally and globally. As reflective, active and informed decision-makers, students are well placed to contribute to an evolving and healthy democracy that fosters the wellbeing of Australia as a democratic nation.

## Aims

Civics and Citizenship aims to ensure that students develop:

* a lifelong engagement with civic life as active and informed citizens, who develop and maintain a sense of belonging in their communities in the context of Australia as a secular, democratic nation with a dynamic, culturally diverse and multi-faith society, with a Christian heritage, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations
* an understanding of and a commitment to the core concepts of active citizenship from local to global; community, identity and diversity; democratic institutions and systems; democratic values; and legal systems
* skills including investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues; evaluating democratic institutions and systems; participating in civic processes; and communicating
* the capabilities and dispositions to participate responsibly in the civic life of their communities and as people in an interconnected and interdependent world.

## Structure

Civics and Citizenship is presented in 2-level bands from Level 3 to Level 10.

Civics and Citizenship is organised into 2 interrelated strands:

* Knowledge and Understanding
* Skills.

The 2 strands are interrelated and should be programmed and taught in an integrated way. The content descriptions in the 2 strands have been written so that this integration is possible at each level.

Under each strand, curriculum content is further organised into sub-strands, as shown below. The sub-strands can be taught separately or together, through the exploration of contemporary issues.

| Strand | **Knowledge and Understanding**  | **Skills** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sub-strands | Government and democracyLaws and citizensCitizenship, diversity and identity | Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issuesEvaluating democratic institutions and systemsParticipating in civic processesCommunicating |

### Knowledge and Understanding

#### Government and democracy

Students study Australian democracy and the key institutions, processes, systems and roles that people play in Australia’s system of government.

#### Laws and citizens

Students examine Australia’s legal system, the creation of laws and the rights and legal obligations of Australian citizens.

#### Citizenship, diversity and identity

Students examine the diverse meanings and values of citizenship. They also examine Australia as a culturally diverse and multi-faith society; factors that shape identity; and the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a globalised world.

### Skills

#### Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues

Students develop and modify questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues. They locate, sort and evaluate information, data and ideas from a range of sources.

#### Evaluating democratic institutions and systems

Students analyse information, data and ideas to evaluate different perspectives, beliefs and interpretations about democratic institutions and systems. They evaluate how Australian political, legal and civic institutions enhance and foster democratic values and civic participation.

#### Participating in civic processes

Students participate in and evaluate civic processes, including discussing, deliberating and negotiating outcomes. They evaluate the methods and strategies related to making decisions about civic participation or action.

#### Communicating

Students use civics and citizenship knowledge and evidence to communicate descriptions, explanations and arguments. They use evidence from sources to describe, explain and evaluate civics and citizenship issues.

### Core concepts

The Knowledge and Understanding and Skills strands develop the following core concepts with increasing complexity across Levels 3 to 10.

#### Active citizenship – local to global

Active citizenship refers to responsive and informed participation in civic life for the betterment of one’s community. Citizenship is provided through the recognition of obligations, rights and common interests, and sometimes includes legal mechanisms. Citizenship can operate at different levels, from local to global.

#### Community

A community has certain values, characteristics, rights and responsibilities common to its members, which bring the community together. People belong to communities and their identities are formed within communities. Australians are members of many diverse communities; this diversity is founded on the values of inclusivity, pluralism and democracy.

#### Democratic institutions and systems

Australia’s democracy is founded on, and within, certain political, legal and civic institutions and systems. These institutions and systems express the values underpinning our democracy. These institutions include parliaments, political parties, courts, prisons, local councils and schools. These systems include federalism, the Westminster system, representative and constitutional government, an independent judicial system and welfare systems.

#### Democratic values

Key democratic values include popular sovereignty and ‘consent of the governed’: a belief in citizens’ right to determine their own future; to choose their own governments; to be treated equally; to live freely and under the rule of law; to be accepted as part of a diverse community; and to participate as active and engaged citizens with recognised rights and responsibilities. Other democratic values include pluralism; an acceptance of the will of the majority; the protection of minorities; and an expectation that governments will be accountable to the people. Freedom is fundamental to democratic values, and includes the freedoms of speech, association, assembly, religion and movement.

#### Identity and diversity

Identity is a person’s sense of who they are, and the conception and expression of their individuality or association with a group, culture, state, nation or region of the world, regardless of their legal citizenship status. Students’ understanding of diversity includes acknowledging Australia as a culturally diverse, multi-faith and cohesive society.

#### Legal systems

Legal systems seek to establish mechanisms for order, justice and obedience in societies. Importantly, acceptance of the right of an elected legislative and executive branch to establish courts and make laws is fundamental to democratic societies. Students should understand that the rule of law is an essential democratic value. The rule of law is the agreement of all citizens, regardless of their power or position, to be equally bound by the laws of the land.

### Achievement standards

Achievement standards describe what students are typically able to understand and do, and they are the basis for reporting student achievement.

In Civics and Citizenship, students progress along a learning continuum that provides the first achievement standard at Level 4, and then at Levels 6, 8 and 10.

### Content descriptions

In Civics and Citizenship, content descriptions sequence and describe the knowledge, understanding and skills that teachers need to teach and students are expected to learn.

### Elaborations

Elaborations are examples that provide guidance on how the curriculum may be transformed into a classroom activity or learning opportunity. They are provided as advisory material only.

## Learning in Civics and Citizenship

### Contemporary issues

Civics and Citizenship is a contemporary study. Discussions surrounding contemporary issues and engaging in real-world case studies are important for relevant and meaningful learning. The discussion of contemporary issues can build democratic values, such as tolerance, and enhance civic knowledge and civic participation and engagement. Engaging students in contemporary issues provides opportunities for student voice and agency. Focusing on contemporary issues enables students to engage with key political, legal and civic issues, and to become active and informed citizens.

Making connections between what is learned in class and events or issues that are occurring in the students’ local area, Australia and the world is vital to the study of Civics and Citizenship. Understanding the contemporary landscape is important for bringing complex issues into the classroom, using them accurately and facilitating class discussions. The curriculum can be taught through relevant and contemporary contexts, real-world issues and current affairs by integrating current events, issues and case studies into teaching and learning programs through the Knowledge and Understanding strand. The contemporary issues, examples and case studies used in learning activities should be within the recent memory of students to ensure relevance and provide the opportunity for increased student engagement. Students examine contemporary issues through approaches such as class discussions, debates, civic action, role-plays, volunteering, student participatory research, community service and advocacy.

### Active citizenship

Active citizenship focuses on the actions that citizens can take to improve their community. ‘Community’ may refer to the school community, the local community, the state, the nation or the global community. The nature of active citizenship will differ between schools. Active citizenship may be as small as improving a classroom recycling program or could include large, school community social service programs, student leadership programs, volunteer programs and partnership programs with local councils or groups outside the school.

The curriculum encourages students to consider the ways in which they can participate in school, local, state, national and global communities. They are also asked to consider actions, options and responses to contemporary issues and issues of community concern, and to develop and, if possible, implement action plans to address these.

### Key questions

Key questions provide a framework for developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. They allow for connections to be made within and across the strands of Knowledge and Understanding and Skills. The key questions provided for each year level are examples only and may be used or adapted to suit local contexts.

# Curriculum

## Levels 3 and 4

### Band description

In Levels 3 and 4, students are introduced to democracy in the context of the familiar and personal, and the purpose of local government and the services it provides to the community. It examines an understanding of democracy as rule by the people, through learning about decision-making within communities. Students consider the purpose of creating rules for groups and how rules and laws affect them. Students also explain how individuals participate in their community and how belonging to diverse groups can shape personal identity.

Key questions provide a framework for developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. The following key questions are examples only and may be used or adapted to suit local contexts:

* How are decisions made democratically?
* How can local government contribute to community life?
* Why do we make rules and laws?
* How has my identity been shaped by the groups I belong to?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 4, students explain how decisions can be made democratically and the role of local government. They describe the importance of rules and distinguish between rules and laws. Students describe how people participate in their community as active citizens, their rights and responsibilities, and factors that shape a person’s identity and communities.

Students identify questions to investigate civics and citizenship issues. They describe democratic institutions and systems using information and sources. They describe contemporary civics and citizenship issues and use consensus-building and deliberation to negotiate outcomes together.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Knowledge and Understanding

##### Sub-strand: Government and democracy

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the features of government, law and key democratic valuesVC2HC4K01 | * explaining the reasons why a particular decision-maker, such as a parent or the school principal, is the person making the decision and comparing this to a government, which makes decisions for a particular area
* identifying laws that apply to students, parents, teachers and schools
* discussing examples of freedom, fairness and equality in students’ lives
 |
| how and why decisions are made democratically in communitiesVC2HC4K02 | * nominating one person to be responsible for making classroom rules and comparing this to allowing the whole class to contribute to making classroom rules
* comparing how decisions are made within a family versus within a school
* examining the shift from monarchies to democracies over time, as in France or the USA, and where there is a mix of both, as in the UK or Japan
 |
| the roles of local government and how members of the community use and contribute to local servicesVC2HC4K03 | * examining how local government is chosen and by whom
* investigating what local government does, including the services it provides, such as environment and waste management, libraries, health services, parks, cultural events, pools and sport facilities, and arts and pet management
* describing how local government services impact on the lives of students, and discussing how local groups/organisations and students can use their voices and make responsible choices about the services that impact them and their environment
 |

##### Sub-strand: Laws and citizens

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the differences between rules and laws, why laws are important and how they affect the lives of peopleVC2HC4K04 | * discussing some rules that they might have in their family or with friends but that are not laws
* explaining that laws apply to everyone, whereas rules can just apply to particular groups
* examining classroom and/or school rules and discussing whether these are also laws
* describing laws that everyone follows all the time and explaining why it is important to follow these laws
 |
| the rights and responsibilities of people in their communitiesVC2HC4K05 | * discussing why people have rights and why those rights are important
* explaining that responsibilities come with rights, and why those responsibilities are important
* examining the communities that students are a part of, and their rights and responsibilities within those communities
 |

##### Sub-strand: Citizenship, diversity and identity

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| diversity of cultural, religious and/or social groups to which they and others in the community belong, and their importance to identityVC2HC4K06 | * identifying diversity through the different social, cultural and religious groups students belong to and describing what makes them feel that they belong to those groups
* listing and comparing the different beliefs, traditions and symbols used by groups
* recognising that the identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is shaped by Country and Place, including language and knowledge traditions
 |
| why people participate within communities and how students can actively participate and contribute to communitiesVC2HC4K07 | * identifying groups that actively participate in the local community or through a virtual community and examining their purpose
* examining how they could participate in a school or community project, for example raising money for a relevant aid project, such as supporting disadvantaged communities overseas, or working to protect a bird habitat
* investigating how an individual’s contribution can be recognised, for example school awards or an Order of Australia award
* explaining the motivations of individuals who contribute to communities, such as local community volunteers, leaders and Elders
 |

#### Strand: Skills

##### Sub-strand: Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| identify and develop questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issuesVC2HC4S01 | * identifying different questions about a contemporary political, legal or civic issue that relate to decision-making
* describing a question about people participating in communities
 |
| select and organise information, data and ideas from different sources to describe a contemporary issueVC2HC4S02 | * identifying a contemporary issue that relates to a law
* connecting a contemporary issue to a democratic or non-democratic decision that was made
* sorting the different communities they are part of into groups
* sorting a list of rights and responsibilities into either rights or responsibilities
 |

##### Sub-strand: Evaluating democratic institutions and systems

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| describe at least one political, legal or civic institution or system and why it is importantVC2HC4S03 | * identifying a local government and the services it provides to the community
* describing how local government is a democratic decision-making body
 |

##### Sub-strand: Participating in civic processes

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| use consensus-building and deliberation to discuss an issue that affects their classroomVC2HC4S04 | * deliberating about what makes good decision-making
* reaching a consensus on the difference between a rule and a law as a whole class
* reaching consensus on rules that apply in the classroom
 |

##### Sub-strand: Communicating

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| describe a civics and citizenship issue using ideas from sources and subject-specific terminologyVC2HC4S05 | * describing the rights and responsibilities of people in their communities through a poster
* drawing a picture of local government or people contributing to communities
 |

## Levels 5 and 6

### Band description

In Levels 5 and 6, students are introduced to the key values underpinning Australia’s democratic system of government and its key democratic institutions, including state/territory and federal parliaments, and the courts. Students learn about representative democracy and voting processes in Australia. Students expand on their knowledge of the law by studying how laws affect the lives of citizens, and how state/territory and federal laws are made in a parliamentary system. Students investigate the role of groups in our community and examine the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizens.

Key questions provide a framework for developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. The following key questions are examples only and may be used or adapted to suit local contexts:

* What is democracy in Australia and why is voting in a democracy important?
* What are the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government in Australia?
* How are laws developed and enforced in Australia?
* How and why do people participate in groups to achieve shared goals?
* What does it mean to be an Australian citizen?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 6, students explain the values and features of Australia’s democratic institutions and systems, including the 3 levels of government and electoral systems. They explain the roles and responsibilities of key institutions, including how legislation is made and law enforcement. Students explain the different meanings of citizenship and the roles and responsibilities associated with different kinds of citizenship.

Students develop questions to investigate civics and citizenship issues, using different sources. Students explain the values and features of democratic institutions and processes through contemporary issues. They explain reasons to participate in democratic processes and deliberate on issues that affect their communities. They use knowledge and different perspectives from sources to explain contemporary civics and citizenship issues.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Knowledge and Understanding

##### Sub-strand: Government and democracy

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the features of Australia’s democratic institutions and systems, including representation in government and electoral systemsVC2HC6K01 | * discussing the meaning of democracy, the importance of the key values of Australian democracy (e.g. freedom of election and being elected; freedom of assembly and political participation; freedom of speech, expression and religious belief; the rule of law; and other basic human rights) and how students apply democratic values in familiar contexts, such as elections for student leaders including class captain or prefects
* discussing the Australian citizenship pledge and the official statement of Australian values published by the federal government and what can be learnt about key values and Australian democracy from this material
* examining the secret ballot, compulsory voting and preferential voting as key features of Australia’s democracy
* recognising the role of independent electoral commissions, such as the Australian Electoral Commission or the Victorian Electoral Commission, in administering elections that are open, free and fair
 |
| the values, principles and institutions that underpin Australia’s democracyVC2HC6K02 | * explaining the influence of the Westminster system in Australia’s democracy
* investigating democratic institutions, virtually or in situ, to examine their roles, for example Parliament House and the High Court of Australia in Canberra, or the Parliament of Victoria and the Supreme Court of Victoria in Melbourne
* examining the relationship between these values, such as the rule of law upholding equality or the importance of free and fair elections for participation
* investigating the human rights that Australians have and how they are upheld by Australia’s institutions and laws, including the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
 |
| the roles and responsibilities of the 3 levels of government in Australia VC2HC6K03 | * sorting the roles and responsibilities of the 3 levels of government (local, state/territory and federal)
* identifying situations in which federal and state/territory parliaments both have the power to make laws, and recognising that federal law will override the state/territory law if federal and state/territory laws conflict, due to the division of powers in the Constitution
* investigating the origins of new laws, for example from party policy, perhaps announced during an election campaign; from suggestions by members and senators; and from interest groups in the community
* categorising the different types of laws and regulations in their community, which level of government makes those laws, and who enforces them, for example car parking laws, health laws and pollution laws
 |

##### Sub-strand: Laws and citizens

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| how and why laws are enforced and the roles and responsibilities of key institutions, such as the police, courts and other parts of the legal system VC2HC6K04 | * examining the ways in which the police enforce criminal laws in Victoria
* discussing the options available to courts when sentencing people and the aims of these sentences
* investigating a civil law and the organisations responsible for ensuring that these laws are followed
 |
| the legal rights and responsibilities of citizens in AustraliaVC2HC6K05 | * examining where citizens gain their rights in the law, such as the Constitution and legislation relating to human rights and discrimination
* explaining the responsibilities that citizens have, such as voting, paying taxes and keeping the government accountable
* explaining the rights in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
 |
| how federal and state/territory legislation is initiated and passed through parliamentVC2HC6K06 | * role-playing passing a bill through the Commonwealth or Victorian Parliament
* writing a second-reading speech for a bill of their choosing
* investigating the number of seats in the upper house of a parliament that are not held by the government, and determining who the government needs to convince for a bill to pass through the upper house
 |

##### Sub-strand: Citizenship, diversity and identity

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the meanings of ‘citizenship’ and the rights and responsibilities of different kinds of citizenship, including local, state, national, global and digital citizenshipVC2HC6K07 | * identifying who can be an Australian citizen
* describing the rights, responsibilities and shared values of Australian citizenship and examining ways in which Australian citizens can participate in society
* comparing the responsibilities that students have as national citizens to those as global citizens
* considering the differences between different kinds of citizenship in different contexts, for example who is included and who is excluded and why
 |
| how citizens (members of communities) with shared beliefs and values work together to achieve a civic goal VC2HC6K08 | * discussing how and why people volunteer for community groups, such as religious groups and other charities, rural fire services, surf life-saving clubs, emergency services groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups and youth groups
* using social media to share and discuss ideas about how people can work together as local, regional and global citizens, for example to promote access to educational opportunities for women and girls in developing countries
* examining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the services they provide
 |

#### Strand: Skills

##### Sub-strand: Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| develop questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issuesVC2HC6S01 | * identifying or developing questions on how recent issues regarding Australia’s institutions, including the federal or state/territory parliament, or government policy, are relevant to discussions about democracy
* developing questions on why laws are enforced, based on a recent legal case or legal issue
 |
| locate, select and organise information, data and ideas from different sources to explain a contemporary issueVC2HC6S02 | * locating current crime statistics for Victoria or a local area to inform discussions on law enforcement
* sorting a selection of different areas of lawmaking into local, state/territory or federal jurisdiction
* explaining the democratic values relevant to a contemporary issue
* summarising how citizens have worked together to achieve a civic goal in relation to a contemporary issue
 |

##### Sub-strand: Evaluating democratic institutions and systems

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| explain the key values and features of democratic institutions and systemsVC2HC6S03 | * explaining how the Victorian Charter of Human Rights upholds human rights in lawmaking in Victoria’s legal system
* describing how the process of elections demonstrates the principles of free and fair elections, participation and/or representation
 |
| explain connections between contemporary issues and democratic institutions and systemsVC2HC6S04 | * describing how a contemporary issue, such as imprisonment, is relevant to the processes of the legal system
* explaining the focus of the federal or Victorian government’s response to a contemporary issue
 |

##### Sub-strand: Participating in civic processes

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| deliberate about an issue that affects their communitiesVC2HC6S05 | * discussing different communities’ responses to a contemporary issue and deciding which community they agree with and why
* coming to a consensus on an issue that affects their class or school and reflecting on how they were able to reach that consensus
 |
| explain reasons to participate in democratic processesVC2HC6S06 | * role-playing an election or electing a classroom representative and explaining how participating in elections is important for upholding democratic values
* examining how active citizenship achieves a civic goal
* explaining how deliberation and negotiating an outcome are forms of democratic participation
 |

##### Sub-strand: Communicating

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| explain contemporary civics and citizenship issues using ideas, knowledge and perspectives from different sourcesVC2HC6S07 | * creating a pamphlet to describe different political parties’ positions on a proposed law or recent policy on a contemporary issue
* presenting a speech on why they should be elected as a leader, drawing on democratic values and active citizenship
 |

## Levels 7 and 8

### Band description

In Levels 7 and 8, students develop their understanding of the principles and features of Australia’s systems of government and the main participants in Australia’s democratic institutions, including citizens. Students examine the characteristics and types of law in Australia, the democratic nature of institutions and the relationship between individuals, communities and contemporary Australian society.

Key questions provide a framework for developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. The following key questions are examples only and may be used or adapted to suit local contexts:

* How can I participate in Australian democracy?
* What makes Australia’s institutions democratic?
* Who influences decision-making in Australia’s institutions and how do they gain this influence?
* How might we ensure that legal mechanisms create security for all citizens in Australia?
* How does Australian citizenship affect you?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 8, students analyse the roles of key institutions and political actors in Australia’s democracy and the ways in which citizens participate in democracy. They explain the characteristics and types of law in Australia, and the principles and features of the Australian legal system, including how citizens can participate in lawmaking. Students discuss democratic values and their influence on contemporary Australian society, and the diverse perspectives of individuals and groups towards citizenship and identity. Students describe the nature of Australian society and how Australians express different aspects of their identity and communities, including cultural and religious diversity. They discuss the values that support cohesion in Australian society.

Students compare a range of sources and perspectives to refine questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues. Students analyse how the values, principles and influences that underpin democratic institutions are expressed, and who exercises power in these institutions. They explain reasons for different methods of civic participation and engage in democratic decision-making. Students develop an analysis of civics and citizenship issues using evidence from diverse perspectives.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Knowledge and Understanding

##### Sub-strand: Government and democracy

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the role of political parties and independent representatives in Australian democracy, including elections, the formation of governments and the balance of powerVC2HC8K01 | * examining the structure and composition of current parliaments, both federal and state/territory
* evaluating different voting systems, such as preferential and proportional representation
* understanding how government is formed and may be lost, through discussing concepts such as parliamentary majority, the opposition, hung parliament, minority government, party discipline and balance of power
* investigating the roles of political parties and elected representatives, including independents
 |
| the extent to which Australia’s institutions and systems reflect democratic values, such as freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion and movement VC2HC8K02 | * examining how the Executive (the Prime Minister, Ministers and their Departments) are responding to a contemporary issue, and how this responds to public opinion
* discussing how political parties within Parliament respond differently to a contemporary issue and attempt to resolve it through legislation
* analysing the democratic values in a contemporary issue and explaining how one or more institutions, such as the Victorian Parliament or Victorian Legal Aid, have responded to the issue
* comparing how Australia’s democratic institutions interpret contemporary issues, for example health care, including mental health care; refugee rights; food insecurity; or LGBTQI+ rights
 |
| the Australian Constitution and the roles and interactions of key institutions and political actors in Australia’s democracy, including the Prime Minister, the Governor-General, the Commonwealth parliament, the Ministers and Departments, State and Territory governments, and the High Court of AustraliaVC2HC8K03 | * describing the roles of each key institution and political actor and the degree to which they do or do not work with each other
* explaining the separation of powers in the Australian Constitution and why it is important for democratic government
* examining how the media depicts these key institutions and political actors, compared to their actual role
* considering how representative these key institutions and political actors are of contemporary Australian society
 |
| how citizens are informed about and can participate in Australia’s democracy, including use of the electoral system, contact with their elected representatives, use of lobby groups, interest groups and direct actionVC2HC8K04 | * investigating how elected representatives can advocate on behalf of citizens
* actively participating in democratic processes, such as voting, joining an interest group or contacting a local member
* creating a campaign for change at a school-based, local or state level
* investigating media freedom and the shaping of public opinion by analysing the reporting of a contemporary issue
 |

##### Sub-strand: Laws and citizens

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the key principles and features of the Australian legal system, including the Australian Constitution, the rule of law and the court systemVC2HC8K05 | * describing the independent judiciary and an overview of court hierarchies, both federal and state/territory
* explaining the principles of justice, fairness, equality, the rule of law and the importance of equal access to the protections provided by the law
* discussing the elements of a fair trial, including citizens’ roles as witnesses, legal representation and due process, for example in the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria
* examining how Australians can receive access to justice and can apply for legal representation, such as through legal aid
 |
| how citizens can participate in and influence lawmaking, including through contact with their elected representatives, use of lobby groups, interest groups, direct action and submissions to parliamentary committeesVC2HC8K06 | * examining the ways in which individual citizens can participate in lawmaking, such as through organised protest, activism, media or lobbying parliamentarians
* examining interest groups, such as Amnesty International, through case studies and the ways in which these groups have made submissions to parliamentary committees
* explaining the process of making submissions to parliamentary committees, using examples from the Parliament of Victoria and Commonwealth Parliament
 |
| the characteristics of laws and how laws are made in Australia through parliaments (statutory law) and through the courts (common law)VC2HC8K07 | * examining the characteristics of laws, such as reflecting society’s values; being enforceable; being known, clear and understood; and being relatively stable
* identifying the 2 chief sources of law (parliament and the courts) and analysing a case study of statutory and common law, such as consumer law
* questioning whether laws are affected by different cultural or social perspectives, such as those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
* examining how court judgments impact on the development of law, such as the role of statutory interpretation and the creation of precedent; for example, the decision in Mabo v Queensland (1992) that overturned the legal concept of terra nullius and established the concept of native title
 |
| the types of law in Australia, including criminal law and civil law, and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customary law VC2HC8K08 | * explaining what makes a crime within criminal law
* examining how civil law encompasses other areas of law
* investigating the significance of customary law for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
* examining the development and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customary law, including through local lore, the Dreaming and Songlines
 |

##### Sub-strand: Citizenship, diversity and identity

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| how Australia’s secular democracy and pluralist, multi-faith society draws upon diverse cultural origins, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Christian and Western heritage, and the cultures of other migrant communities VC2HC8K09 | * defining the terms ‘secular’, ‘multi-faith’, ‘diverse society’, ‘culturally diverse’, ‘Western and Christian heritage’ and ‘pluralist’, and discussing their relevance to Australia today
* investigating the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ communities and their local Nations
* identifying trends regarding religious observance and/or cultural heritage in Australian society, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other data sources
* examining the cultural and historical foundations of Australia’s British and Christian heritage and its impact on Australia’s political and legal systems
 |
| how values based on freedom, respect, fairness and equality of opportunity can support social cohesion and a resilient democracy within Australian societyVC2HC8K10 | * identifying how Australian values can include patriotism, inclusion, civility, personal and collective responsibility, compassion, freedom, equality, justice and a ‘fair go’, and evaluating the extent to which these values are reflected in Australian society
* identifying shared values across the diverse communities within Australia and how these can be expressed through customs and protocols, such as singing the national anthem, which could include investigating the history of changes to the national anthem
* examining the relationship between social cohesion and a resilient democracy
* investigating why migrants and refugees want to come to Australia and become Australian citizens
 |
| how groups express their identities, including religious and cultural identity, and how this expression can influence their perceptions of others and others’ perception of themVC2HC8K11 | * examining how people express different aspects of their personal identity through membership of multiple communities, such as cultural groups, faith groups, professional associations, trade unions, and sporting and social clubs, and how this is reflected in expressions of citizenship, for example fundraising for community services or supporting people experiencing health concerns
* investigating the collective identities of several different groups in Australia’s culturally diverse society and how these identities might be represented and perceived
* discussing the differences between legal citizenship, active citizenship and global citizenship
 |
| various experiences and perspectives of national identity and citizenship, including the connections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country and Place, and of different migrant groups VC2HC8K12 | * examining the meaning of national identity, what it means to be an Australian citizen, and the role and significance of national identity in a globalised world
* analysing different representations of Australian identity, both historical and current
* investigating the factors shaping debates about Australian identity, such as place, immigration and standard of living
* examining the types of questions asked in the citizenship test and examining how these questions reflect our national identity
 |

#### Strand: Skills

##### Sub-strand: Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| develop and refine questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issuesVC2HC8S01 | * developing questions to investigate the current power of different institutions and political actors in decision-making in Australia
* refining questions concerning the values of contemporary Australia
 |
| analyse contemporary issues by locating, selecting, explaining and comparing information, data and ideas from a range of sourcesVC2HC8S02 | * comparing the ability of political actors to achieve their aims in relation to a contemporary issue
* explaining a contemporary political, legal or civic issue concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, drawing on a range of sources, including different ideas within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
* analysing the competing values, actors and interests relevant to a contemporary issue
* analysing a successful response to a contemporary issue by a political actor and how this was achieved
 |

##### Sub-strand: Evaluating democratic institutions and systems

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| explain the cultural, religious and/or social influences on Australia’s democratic institutionsVC2HC8S03 | * discussing how Christian heritage has influenced Australia’s parliaments and/or courts
* examining the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia’s political or legal systems, such as Treaty or the Koori Court
 |
| analyse how democratic values and the principles of the legal system are expressed in Australia’s democratic institutions and systems VC2HC8S04 | * analysing the degree to which formal national citizenship in Australia upholds democratic values
* analysing the degree to which the upper house of a parliament represents democracy
* explaining how courts try to uphold the principles of justice
* examining how the rule of law is fundamental in different kinds of lawmaking and the relationship between courts and parliaments
 |
| explain how political actors exercise power in democratic institutionsVC2HC8S05 | * explaining the relationship between the Westminster system and the separation of powers in the Australian context, and the degree to which this results in checks and balances of power
* examining how the Prime Minister is chosen and the extent of their power in Australia
 |

##### Sub-strand: Participating in civic processes

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| engage in democratic decision-making, such as reaching consensus and votingVC2HC8S06 | * trying different methods of responding to a contemporary political, legal or civic issue, such as different kinds of classroom voting (e.g. first-past-the-post or preferential) and consensus-building, and reflecting on whether the result was different and why or why not
* role-playing a mock parliament
* explaining how the different methods of democratic decision-making engaged in could be used to resolve a contemporary issue
 |
| examine methods of civic participation in a local/state/national issue and explain why and how they would participate in civic processes in a particular wayVC2HC8S07 | * analysing the active citizenship from members of communities with regard to a contemporary issue
* describing different methods of participation when responding to a government policy or proposed law about a contemporary issue
* examining the effectiveness of different forms of participation in a contemporary issue and explaining why they are or are not effective
* developing and enacting an actual or hypothetical campaign about a contemporary issue using multiple methods of participation of choice
 |

##### Sub-strand: Communicating

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| develop an analysis of civics and citizenship issues with knowledge and evidence using multiple methods of communicationVC2HC8S08 | * presenting a graphical representation of the power of institutions and/or political actors in Australia
* creating a flow chart of the different ways in which laws can be made by parliaments and courts
 |

## Levels 9 and 10

### Band description

In Levels 9 and 10, students further develop their understanding of Australia’s democratic institutions and compare these with those of other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Students consider how human rights are protected in Australia and the importance of democracy and justice in Australian society. They examine the roles and responsibilities that governments, institutions and citizens have towards global issues and global citizenship.

Key questions provide a framework for developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. The following key questions are examples only and may be used or adapted to suit local contexts:

* How does Australian democracy interact with the world?
* How might we ensure that Australia protects human rights through legal mechanisms?
* How do global actors interact with legal mechanisms around the world?
* Why is it important to be engaged and participate in Australian society?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 10, students evaluate the Australian Government’s roles and responsibilities at a regional and a global level, including its international legal obligations. They analyse the Australian Constitution as the basis of the Australian system of government, the process for constitutional change and the role of parliaments and the High Court of Australia in protecting rights. Students compare this system of government with at least one other system in the Asia-Pacific region. They evaluate the roles of key democratic institutions in public discourse and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy. Students discuss individual and group participation in global issues and global citizenship.

Using a range of sources and perspectives, students develop and evaluate questions to best investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issues, including global issues. They evaluate political, legal and civic institutions nationally and internationally. They evaluate the effectiveness of democratic decision-making and methods of civic participation, including by participating in civic processes. Students evaluate civics and citizenship issues using evidence and diverse perspectives.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Knowledge and Understanding

##### Sub-strand: Government and democracy

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the role of the Australian Constitution in providing the basis for Australia’s federal system of government and democratic processes, including democratic institutions, and the process for constitutional change through a referendum VC2HC10K01 | * understanding the aims of the authors of the Australian Constitution, including the need for compromise
* describing the process by which referendums to change the Australian Constitution are initiated and decided, including the role of the Australian Electoral Commission, and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of having a constitution that can only be amended by referendum
* investigating the extent to which the Constitution upholds and enables democratic institutions and systems, including a constitutional monarchy; a federal parliamentary system with elected legislatures; protection of states’ rights and individual rights; and representation of the interests of all Australians
* assessing the effectiveness of the process of constitutional change and the degree to which it supports popular sovereignty, through examining selected referendum proposals, for example the *Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023*, *Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967* and/or *Constitution Alteration (Establishment of Republic) 1999*
 |
| the processes through which government policy is shaped, developed and implemented, including the role of political parties, interest groups, the media and legislative processesVC2HC10K02 | * charting the process of the development of a policy from initial idea to enacted legislation
* investigating political parties’, interest groups’ and media organisations’ public viewpoint on one contemporary issue
* evaluating whether policy can effectively resolve a contemporary issue
 |
| the key features and values of Australia’s system of government compared with at least one other democratic or non-democratic system of government in the Asia-Pacific regionVC2HC10K03 | * examining key differences between Australia's system of government and one other system of government, such as a multi-party democracy versus a one-party state
* discussing possible reforms to Australian democracy using features of another democratic system that could be implemented in Australia, for example the representation of First Nations Peoples in Canada or New Zealand versus in Australia
* discussing different expressions of democracy across the Asia-Pacific region
 |
| the Australian Government’s roles and responsibilities at a regional and global level, including diplomatic relations in the Asia-Pacific regionVC2HC10K04 | * explaining the ways in which Australia contributes to and participates in the Asia-Pacific region, including membership of international organisations and participation in agreements with other countries (e.g. exchange programs, peacekeeping, election monitoring, development aid, health programs, disaster management) and internationally, including participation in the United Nations Security Council
* investigating Australia’s responsibilities and commitment to various international treaties, conventions and agendas, such as the UN Sustainable Development Agenda and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
* analysing and evaluating the reasons for and effectiveness of Australia’s participation in the region and globally around a global issue, such as human rights, war and conflict, challenges to democracy or climate
* evaluating the impacts of these issues on Australia’s identity; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ reconciliation, truth-telling and sovereignty; Australian government policies; and citizens’ choices to act in the global interest
 |

##### Sub-strand: Laws and citizens

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the key features and jurisdictions of Australia’s court system; the operations of courts and tribunals, including the roles of courts, judges, lawyers and juries in trials; and the rights of the accused and the rights of victimsVC2HC10K05 | * identifying the matters that different courts and tribunals deal with at a state/territory and a national level, and how each court or tribunal enacts the law and resolves disputes
* examining the Victorian and Australian court systems and each court’s jurisdiction, including its place in the relevant hierarchy; for example, the Koori Court is a specialised court in Victoria and determines sentencing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who plead guilty to an offence
* using sample cases to investigate the differences between civil and criminal law, and how the courts apply and interpret criminal laws and resolve civil disputes
* explaining how court judgments develop law, such as the role of statutory interpretation and the creation of precedent
 |
| the role of parliaments and the High Court of Australia in protecting rights under the Constitution, common law, and through federal and state/territory lawsVC2HC10K06 | * explaining the role of the High Court in interpreting and applying the law, using contemporary Australian examples
* examining the concepts of express and implied rights through High Court cases such as the Stolen Generations Case (*Kruger v the Commonwealth* (1997)), the Vickie Lee Roach Case (*Roach v Electoral Commissioner* (2007)) or Freedom of Political Communication (*Lange v ABC* (1997))
* evaluating the effectiveness of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and other anti-discrimination laws
 |
| how Australia’s international legal obligations shape lawmaking and government policies in Australia, including those relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and the issues related to the application of these obligationsVC2HC10K07 | * identifying and describing the influence of international courts on Australia, such as the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice or the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
* evaluating the influence of one international law on lawmaking at a state/territory or federal level, such as the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
 |
| the extent to which Australia’s legal systems provide justice compared with at least one other legal system in the Asia-Pacific regionVC2HC10K08 | * identifying the key principles of justice (fairness, equality and access) and explaining what is meant by each principle, including how each works to protect citizens and contribute to a fair society
* identifying whether there is the death penalty across legal systems in the Asia-Pacific region
* identifying and examining key differences between legal systems, such as the common law of Australia or New Zealand versus codified civil law in Thailand or Vietnam
 |

##### Sub-strand: Citizenship, diversity and identity

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| individual and group participation in, and contribution to, civic life and global citizenshipVC2HC10K09 | * investigating individuals and communities, including religious and cultural groups, that actively participate in local and global civic life, and identifying gaps in civic contributions where new groups may need to form, including areas not yet supported online or in person
* investigating how migrant and diaspora communities influence Australian society
* comparing the power held or perceived by different groups and individuals in Australian society
* explaining cultural hybridity in Australia, including the role of discrimination, pride and inclusion
 |
| the challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and a cohesive society in Australia and/or in our region or globallyVC2HC10K10 | * identifying the key characteristics of cohesive, democratic societies, such as cooperation, inclusion, respect and peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the importance of an active and informed citizenry
* considering threats to Australian democracy and other democracies, such as the influence of vested interests, organised crime, corruption and lawlessness, and the impact of social media on the quality of civic debate about controversial matters
* locating and discussing a range of possible threats to the resilience of democratic societies globally, such as extreme polarisation of views and a breakdown in social consensus, and the reasons for the rise of non-democratic forces, such as extremist groups with no commitment to democratic values
* examining how a resilient democracy might be at odds with a cohesive society and how this can be resolved
 |
| the influence of a range of media, including social media, in shaping identity and attitudes to diversityVC2HC10K11 | * analysing how media represent different groups in Australian society, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, immigrant groups, male and female sporting figures and people with disability, and assessing the impact those representations have on community cohesiveness
* investigating a human rights campaign that uses social media and how members of the public have engaged with the issue
* examining media and social media ownership and how this influences public opinion and policy, nationally and internationally
* analysing the influence of misinformation and disinformation in media and social media
 |

#### Strand: Skills

##### Sub-strand: Investigating contemporary civics and citizenship issues

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| develop and evaluate questions to investigate contemporary political, legal and civic issuesVC2HC10S01 | * brainstorming questions about a contemporary local or global issue and then evaluating which question will result in the most useful answer
* developing a question to investigate how the Australian Government has responded to a regional or global issue
 |
| evaluate information, data, perspectives and ideas from a range of sources on contemporary issuesVC2HC10S02 | * evaluating sources that compare the democratic processes of Australia with the democratic processes of another country in the Asia-Pacific region
* analysing the degree to which Australia upholds one international legal obligation, using a variety of sources
* explaining multiple perspectives in responding to a global contemporary issue, such as a conflict, people movement or climate change
* examining possible changes to laws about human rights in Australia or Victoria and the multiple perspectives on these changes
 |

##### Sub-strand: Evaluating democratic institutions and systems

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| recommend changes to political, legal and/or civic institutions and justify these recommendationsVC2HC10S03 | * explaining how a political, legal and/or civic institution could better uphold human rights and/or democracy
* showing how Australia could improve a political, legal or civic institution by adopting the processes of an Asia-Pacific country, or vice versa
 |
| evaluate how the principles of justice (fairness, equality and access) are achieved through legal institutions and processesVC2HC10S04 | * analysing the extent to which a criminal trial upholds the principles of justice
* discussing the relationship between justice and incarceration
 |
| evaluate the power of Australian and international political actors with regard to contemporary issues, and these political actors’ connections with institutionsVC2HC10S05 | * explaining how political parties or interest groups have connections outside Australia
* examining the media’s influence on a political, legal or civic institution, such as courts or parliaments
* evaluating the influence of international institutions on Australia’s institutions
* explaining recommendations that the UN has made about Australian government policy and the Australian Government’s response
* examining the degree to which Australia upholds an international law
 |

##### Sub-strand: Participating in civic processes

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| evaluate the effectiveness of democratic decision-makingVC2HC10S06 | * analysing the scope of consensus-building and what democratic decision-making may be needed at a bigger scale
* evaluating the potential for democratic decision-making about global issues
 |
| participate in and evaluate the methods and strategies of civic participation with regard to contemporary issues, from local to globalVC2HC10S07 | * examining ways in which people under the age of 18 can participate in responding to a contemporary political, legal or civic issue
* determining effective ways to participate in various issues, from school and local issues to global crises
* participating in civic processes in response to a contemporary global issue by creating an awareness-raising campaign at school
* engaging with democratic institutions about a contemporary issue through at least one method of participation, such as letter-writing, a petition and/or contributing to a campaign
* examining a transnational human rights campaign and Australian citizens’ involvement in it
* explaining Australian citizens’ contributions to sustainability and responses to climate change
 |

##### Sub-strand: Communicating

| Content descriptions*Students learn to:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| construct evidence-based arguments using civics and citizenship knowledge, concepts and different perspectives, and determine the most effective method of communicationVC2HC10S08 | * using a graphical representation or flow chart to demonstrate the causes of a global crisis and how citizens can respond to it
* creating a poster that demonstrates the human rights of Australians and/or Victorians
* using reflective tools to evaluate how they came to their perspective on a contemporary issue and what evidence they used to come to that perspective, including acknowledging evidence that does not support their perspective
* deliberating about an effective resolution to a global crisis after listening to the views of classmates
* analysing the media and campaign methods of communication in relation to global issues
* analysing the most effective methods of communication when responding to contemporary issues
* determining whether some methods of communication are more effective in particular campaigns
 |