

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

FOR REVIEW

1 Australia's system of government

- 1a. On which tradition is Australia's system of government based?
- 1b. How important are elections in a democracy?
- 1c. Draw a diagram to illustrate the different powers that the parliament, the government and the legal system hold in relation to the law.
- 1d. Describe the two chambers of Parliament.
- 1e. What is the role of the Governor-General?
- 1f. What are the three major political parties in Australia?
- 1g. How is power divided within Australia's federal system?

2 Critics of the role of the state and responses to these criticisms

- 2a. Name four reasons why some would argue that the role of the state should be limited.
- 2b. Do you know what "economic rationalism" means? If not, look it up in an encyclopaedia.
- 2c. Has globalisation forced the dismantling of the welfare state in Australia?
- 2d. Name five areas that can only be dealt with by a national government.
- 2e. Why does the market economy need rules of behaviour?
- 2f. Do you know what "infrastructure" is? Can you work it out from the context? If not, look it up in the dictionary.
- 2g. Do you know what "Corporate Social Responsibility" is? If not, look it up in an online encyclopaedia.
- 2h. Why is taxation a social good?

3 What is needed to ensure a strong state?

- 3a. The Fact and Issue sheet lists seven key features that ensure a state can fulfil its various roles effectively and responsibly. List the seven features in your own words. What do you consider to be the top priorities? Rank them using a diamond ranking strategy.

FOR DISCUSSION

For each of the statements below, work in pairs to decide whether you agree or disagree and explain why. Then use each of the statements below as a starting point for a class debate.

1. Australia should become a republic.
2. The federal system, in which power is divided between the Commonwealth and the states, is inefficient and should be changed.
3. Major infrastructure should always remain in state ownership.
4. Australians should be prepared to pay higher taxes, on a par with Nordic countries, to fund better social services.
5. The best way the government can help individuals deal with the rising cost of living is by providing tax cuts so that people have more money in their pocket.
6. Australia's minor parties, (the Greens, in the past the Democrats and Family First) play an important role in national politics.

FOR RESEARCH

1. Do some further research on the Republican movement in Australia. You can start with the following questions:

What is a republic? What are the main factors driving the Republican movement? What was the 1999 referendum? What about the senate inquiry in 2004? What is the state of the Republican movement now? What is Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's stance on the possibility of a Republic? You can start your research here:

<http://www.republic.org.au/homepagehtml.htm>

2. Research the six political parties mentioned in the Fact and Issue sheet.

i) What are the origins of each party? What does each party stand for?

ii) Who is your local Member of Parliament? To which party do they belong?

ii) Which party best represents your values? Which party would you vote for if you were of voting age?

You can start your research here:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/mi-elctr.asp>

<http://www.democrats.org.au/>

<http://www.liberal.org.au/>

<http://www.alp.org.au/>

<http://greens.org.au/>

<http://www.nationals.org.au/>

<http://www.familyfirst.org.au/>

3. For advanced students:

Do some further research on Democracy. What is the history of democracy? What are the defining principles of democracy? You can use the University of Virginia's Dictionary of Ideas or the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy as a starting point:

<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhi.cgi?id=dv1-78>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democracy/>

You might also do some research on the "third wave" of democratisation. You can start your research with Stanford University's Comparative Democratisation Project:

<http://democracy.stanford.edu/>