The start of the testable section
Part 1

Australia and its people

From this time forward, under God,*

I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,

whose democratic beliefs I share,

whose rights and liberties I respect, and

whose laws I will uphold and obey.

* A person may choose whether or not to use the words ‘under God’.
At the citizenship ceremony, you pledge your loyalty to Australia and its people. It is therefore important for you to have an understanding of Australia’s community and population, including our Indigenous heritage. It is also important for you to understand how Australia developed from its uncertain beginnings as a British colony to the stable and successful multicultural nation it is today.

In this section, you will read about some of the events that have contributed to our story. There is information about our states and territories, and there is information on the traditions and symbols that we proudly identify as being distinctly Australian.

Our people
Indigenous Australians
Australia’s first inhabitants were the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They are the Indigenous people of Australia. Australia’s Indigenous cultures are the oldest continuing cultures in the world.

Historically, Aboriginal people are from mainland Australia and Tasmania. They have lived here for between 40 000 and 60 000 years.

Torres Strait Islanders are from islands to the north of Queensland. They have a distinct cultural identity.

Indigenous people share common beliefs and traditions that still guide them today. They have a deep connection with the land that is expressed in their stories, art and dance.

Early days of European settlement
European settlement started when the first 11 convict ships, which became known as the ‘First Fleet’, arrived from Great Britain on 26 January 1788.

At this time British laws were harsh and the jails could not hold the large number of people imprisoned for their crimes. To manage this problem, the British Government decided to transport these convicts to the other side of the world; to the new colony of New South Wales.

The first governor of the colony of New South Wales was Captain Arthur Phillip. He overcame many problems in the first few years of European settlement. The colony survived and as more convicts and free settlers arrived, it grew and developed. More colonies were established in other parts of the country.

Early free settlers were from Great Britain and Ireland. This British and Irish heritage has had a major influence on Australia’s history, culture and political institutions.

In 1851, gold was discovered in the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. People from all around the world came to these colonies to try their luck at making a fortune. Chinese people arriving at this time were the first large group of migrants not from Europe. In 10 years, the population more than doubled.

The nation of Australia
Over the following decades, the separate colonies discussed the idea of becoming one nation.

In 1901, the colonies were united into a federation of states called the Commonwealth of Australia. At that time, Australia’s population was counted at about four million people. This number did not include the Indigenous people.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, migration levels rose and fell. There were programs to actively encourage British migrants to settle here, and many did.

A wave of non-British migration came after World War II, when millions of people in Europe had to leave their homelands. Large numbers came to Australia to build a new life.

In recent years, our migration and refugee programs have brought people to Australia from all over the world. People have come here to join family, to make a new life in a young country, or to escape poverty, war or persecution.

Today, Australia has a population of about 22 million people. Over one quarter of these people were born overseas. Australia is greatly enriched by the contribution these people make to our nation. While we celebrate the diversity of Australia’s people, we also aim to build a cohesive and unified nation.

Australia’s national language is English. It is part of our national identity. Everyone in Australia is encouraged to learn and use English to help them participate in Australian society. Communicating in English is also important for making the most of living and working in Australia. Other languages are also valued. In Australia’s diverse society, over 200 languages are spoken.
Australia’s states and territories

The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of states and territories. There are six states and two mainland territories. Canberra is Australia’s capital city, and each state and mainland territory has its own capital.

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<td>New South Wales (NSW)</td>
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<td>Northern Territory (NT)</td>
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Canberra is also Australia’s capital city.
The states

New South Wales was the first colony established by the British. Sydney is the capital city of New South Wales and is the nation’s largest city. Sydney’s Harbour Bridge and Opera House are national icons.

Victoria is the smallest of the mainland states. Many fine buildings in Victoria were built from the wealth created by the gold rush of the 1850s. Victoria’s capital city is Melbourne.

Queensland is the second largest state. It has the Torres Strait Islands in the north, tropical rainforests, temperate coastal areas and an often dry inland. The world famous Great Barrier Reef runs along its eastern coast. Queensland’s capital city is Brisbane.

Western Australia is the largest state. The east of the state is mostly desert, while the south-west is a rich agricultural and wine-growing area. The state is home to many large mining projects. About three-quarters of the state’s population lives in Perth, the capital city.

South Australia has a rugged coastline and many famous wine regions. Adelaide, the capital city, has many examples of fine colonial architecture.

Tasmania is the smallest state, separated from the mainland by Bass Strait. Much of the island has unspoilt wilderness landscapes. Tasmania’s capital city is Hobart.

The territories

The Australian Capital Territory is situated between Sydney and Melbourne. It is the site of the nation’s capital city, Canberra. Canberra is home to important national institutions, such as Parliament House and the High Court of Australia.

The Northern Territory has the tropics in the north and red desert soil in the south. Most of its small population live in the capital city, Darwin, and along the main highway between Darwin and Alice Springs, which is the main town near the centre of Australia.
Traditions and symbols
Important days for Australians

Australia Day
On 26 January each year, we celebrate Australia Day. Australia Day is a public holiday in every state and territory in Australia.

On Australia Day, large and small communities across Australia celebrate all that is great about Australia and being Australian. It is the biggest annual public event in Australia.

Australia Day is the day that we honour our history and all the people who have made this nation great. It is a day to rejoice in the present and commit to a happy and prosperous future together. For this reason, it is a day when many citizenship ceremonies are held across the country.

26 January is the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet from Great Britain in 1788 to set up a convict settlement for the British Government. The commander of the First Fleet was Captain Arthur Phillip.

On the eve of Australia Day, the Prime Minister announces the Australian of the Year Awards in Canberra.

Anzac Day
Anzac Day is observed on 25 April each year. Anzac Day is named after the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, which landed at Gallipoli in Turkey during World War I on 25 April 1915.

Anzac Day is a solemn day when we remember the sacrifice of all Australians who served and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. We also honour the courage and commitment of all servicemen and women.

More information about Australia Day, Anzac Day and other important national days and celebrations can be found in Part 4, Australia today.
Australia’s flags

Australia has three official flags: the Australian National Flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

Each state and territory also has its own flag. These can be found on page 11.

The Australian National Flag

The Australian National Flag is blue, white and red. It has three important parts:

• The flag of Great Britain, known as the Union Jack, is in the top left corner. The flag represents our history of British settlement.
• The Commonwealth Star is under the Union Jack. This star has seven points, one point for each of the six states and one for the territories.
• The Southern Cross, on the right, is a group of stars we see in the southern sky.

The Australian Aboriginal Flag

The Australian Aboriginal Flag is black, red and yellow. It has three important parts, and the most common interpretation of the colours is:

• The top half is black and represents the Aboriginal people of Australia.
• The bottom half is red and represents the earth and a spiritual relation to the land.
• The yellow circle represents the sun.

The Torres Strait Islander Flag

The Torres Strait Islander Flag is green, blue, black and white.

• The green stripes represent the land.
• The blue panel in the centre represents the sea.
• The black lines represent the Torres Strait Islander people.
• The white dancer’s headdress in the centre is a symbol for all Torres Strait Islanders.
• The points of the white star represent the island groups in the Torres Strait.
• The colour white is a symbol of peace.
Commonwealth Coat of Arms
The Commonwealth Coat of Arms is the official symbol of the Commonwealth of Australia. It represents our national unity. It identifies the authority and property of the Commonwealth of Australia.

- The shield in the centre represents the six states and federation.
- A kangaroo and an emu support the shield on each side. Kangaroos are native Australian animals and emus are native Australian birds.
- A gold Commonwealth Star sits above the shield.
- The background is the golden wattle, Australia’s national flower.

Australia’s national flower
Australia’s national flower is the golden wattle. This small tree grows mainly in south-eastern Australia. It has bright green leaves and many golden yellow flowers in spring. Each of the states and territories of Australia also has its own floral emblem.

Australia’s national colours
Australia’s national colours are green and gold, the colours of the golden wattle. The uniforms of our national sports teams are usually green and gold.

Australia’s national gemstone
The opal is Australia’s national gemstone. In Aboriginal legend, a rainbow touched the earth and created the colours of the opal.
Australia’s national anthem

‘Advance Australia Fair’ is Australia’s national anthem. It is sung on occasions of national importance. It is also sung at Australian citizenship ceremonies, major sporting events and at school. It unites the nation and is a public expression of the joy and pride in being Australian.

Advance Australia Fair

*Australian all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We’ve golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature’s gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history’s page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We’ll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who’ve come across the seas
We’ve boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

*While you may be tested on Australia’s national anthem, you will not be tested on the words of the anthem.
Part 2

Australia’s democratic beliefs, rights and liberties

From this time forward, under God,*

I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,

whose democratic beliefs I share,

whose rights and liberties I respect, and

whose laws I will uphold and obey.

* A person may choose whether or not to use the words ‘under God’.
Australia’s democratic beliefs, rights and liberties

At the citizenship ceremony, you pledge that you share Australia’s democratic beliefs and that you respect the rights and liberties of the people of Australia.

Australia is a democracy. A democracy is a system of government in which citizens freely choose representatives to govern the country and make laws on their behalf.

All Australians are equal under the law and no person or group is above the law. This is called the ‘rule of law’. People who hold positions of power in the Australian community must obey Australia’s laws. This includes government, community and religious leaders, as well as businesspeople and the police.

Living peacefully

We are proud to live in a peaceful country with a stable system of government. We believe that change should occur through discussion, peaceful persuasion and the democratic process. We reject violence as a way to change a person’s mind or the law.

Respect for all individuals regardless of background

People come to settle in Australia from countries all around the world. Many people have a different cultural heritage with different beliefs and traditions. In our democratic society, we are all free to follow and share these beliefs and traditions as long as they do not break Australian laws.

We value this freedom and expect all Australians to treat each other with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, country of origin, gender, sexual preference, marital status, age, disability, heritage, culture, politics, wealth or religion.

We value this mutual respect for the dignity of all people.

Compassion for those in need

In Australia, there is a spirit of ‘mateship’. This means we help and receive help from each other in times of need. A mate is often a friend, but can also be a total stranger. A mate might take a meal to an elderly neighbour, drive a friend to a medical appointment or visit someone who is lonely.

Because of this spirit of mateship, many individual people and groups help others through voluntary community work. You can also be a volunteer. Volunteering can be very satisfying. It is also a great opportunity to share knowledge, learn new skills, and increase your sense of belonging to the Australian community. Our government also supports Australians in need through social security and other services.

Our democratic beliefs

Parliamentary democracy

Australia’s system of government is a parliamentary democracy. This means that all Australians are involved in how the country is governed. The power of the government comes from the Australian people because Australian citizens regularly vote for people to represent them in parliament. Only parliament has the power to make and change the laws that govern the country.

In a parliamentary democracy, the representatives in parliament must answer to the people, through elections, for the decisions they make.

The rule of law

Australia’s laws are important for all people living in Australia. Australians recognise the value of laws in maintaining a peaceful and orderly society. All Australians have the right to be protected by Australia’s laws.

Everyone must obey Australia’s laws. If they don’t obey the law, they may be arrested by the police and have to go to court.
Our freedoms

Freedom of speech and freedom of expression

Freedom of speech allows people to say and write what they think and to discuss their ideas with others. Freedom of expression allows people to express their views through art, film, music and literature.

In Australia, we are free to say and write what we think, privately or publicly, about any topic. However, we cannot harm others.

We cannot make false allegations, encourage others to break the law or damage another person’s reputation. There are laws to protect a person's good name against false information.

It is against the law to try to make other people hate or act violently towards others because of their culture, ethnicity or background.

We are free to meet with people in public or private places for social or political discussion. We can criticise the government, peacefully protest against government decisions and campaign to change laws.

We must also respect other people's freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

Newspapers, television and radio have the same freedom.

Freedom of association

Australians are free to join any legal organisation, such as a political party, trade union, religious, cultural or social group. People can also decide not to join.

Australians can gather with others to protest against a government action or an organisation. However, all protests must be within the law. This means they must be peaceful, and must not injure any person or damage property.

Freedom of religion and secular government

Australia has a Judaeo-Christian heritage, and many Australians describe themselves as Christians. Australia has public holidays on Christian days such as Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Day.

However, the government in Australia is secular. This means that there is no official national religion.

People in Australia are free to follow any religion they choose, as long as its practices do not break Australian laws. In addition to Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and many other religions are practised freely in Australia.

Australians are also free to not follow a religion. The government treats all citizens equally, whatever their religion or beliefs.

This mix of religions contributes to making Australia a vibrant multicultural society.

Most religions have rules, but these are not laws in Australia. For example, the process of divorce, including custody of children and property settlement, must follow laws passed by the Australian Parliament. All Australians have the right to be protected by these laws. Some religious or cultural practices, such as being married to more than one person at the same time, are against Australian law.
Our equalities

Equality in Australia
There are a number of laws in Australia that make sure a person is not treated differently to others because of their gender, race, disability or age.

Equality of men and women
Men and women have equal rights in Australia. It is against the law to discriminate against a person because of their gender.

Both men and women have the right to make their own independent choices about personal matters such as marriage, and are protected by the law from intimidation or violence.

Both men and women have equal access to education and employment. Both men and women can vote and stand for parliament. Both men and women can join the Australian Defence Force and the police. Men and women are treated equally in courts of law.

Equality of opportunity
Australians do not believe in class distinctions in our society. Instead, we believe in a fair society, where everyone deserves a ‘fair go’. This means that what someone achieves in life should be a result of their hard work and talents, rather than their wealth or background. For example, a person should get a job or a promotion on the basis of their skills, ability and experience, not because of their background.

Australia has many stories of new migrants who have become leaders in business, the professions, the arts, public service and sport through their hard work and talents.
Responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship

As a permanent resident of Australia, you have already enjoyed living in a free and democratic society. When you become an Australian citizen, you will have new responsibilities. You will also have a range of new benefits.

Responsibilities – what you will give Australia
As an Australian citizen you must:
- obey the law
- vote in federal and state or territory elections, and in a referendum
- defend Australia should the need arise
- serve on a jury if called to do so.

Privileges – what Australia will give you
As an Australian citizen you have the right to:
- vote in federal and state or territory elections, and in a referendum
- apply for work in the Australian Public Service or in the Australian Defence Force
- seek election to parliament
- apply for an Australian passport and re-enter Australia freely
- receive help from an Australian official while overseas
- register children born overseas as Australian citizens by descent.

Responsibilities
Obey the law
Our representatives in government make laws to maintain an orderly, free and safe society and to protect our rights. All Australians must obey the laws made by the Australian Parliament, state and territory parliaments, and local government.

More information about some important laws in Australia can be found in Part 3, Government and the law in Australia.

Defend Australia should the need arise
While service in the Australian Defence Force is voluntary, should the need arise it is vital that all Australian citizens be committed to joining together to defend the nation and its way of life.
Serve on a jury if called to do so
Jury service is a responsibility for Australian citizens aged 18 years or over. A jury is a group of ordinary Australian men and women who listen to the evidence in a court case and decide if a person is innocent or guilty.

Any Australian who is on the electoral roll may be called to serve on a jury.

Jury service helps to make sure that the court system is open and fair.

Privileges
Apply for work in the Australian Public Service and the Australian Defence Force
If you are an Australian citizen, you can apply to join the Australian Public Service and work for the Australian Government, for example, in Centrelink, Medicare or the Australian Taxation Office.

Australian citizens also have the right to apply for a career in the Australian Defence Force (the Army, Navy and Air Force).

Seek election to parliament
Australian citizens aged 18 years or over can seek election to parliament at the federal, state or territory level. It is both an honour and a serious responsibility to serve in an Australian parliament.

Apply for an Australian passport and re-enter Australia freely
When you become an Australian citizen, you have the right to live freely in Australia.

You have the right to apply for an Australian passport. As an Australian citizen, you are free to travel overseas and return to Australia. You do not need a visa to come back to Australia.

Receive help from an Australian official while overseas
In many countries, Australia has an embassy, high commission or consulate. While you are overseas, you can ask for help from an official in times of need.

This includes emergencies such as civil unrest and natural disasters. Officials can also issue emergency passports and provide advice and support in the case of an accident, serious illness or death.

When in another country, you must obey the laws of that country.

Register children born overseas as Australian citizens by descent
Australian citizens may have children born overseas. They can register their children as Australian citizens. The children then have the same rights and responsibilities of citizenship as children born in Australia.

Participating in Australian society
Australia encourages all citizens to participate in society. Citizens who participate in society contribute to Australia in many ways. You can join neighbourhood and local communities. You can volunteer to do social and community work. You can join an arts or cultural organisation. You can also actively participate in political life.

Paying tax is another important way you directly contribute to the Australian community. Tax is paid out of the money you earn, whether it’s from a job, a business or investments.

Many of the benefits that Australians enjoy are made possible through taxes. Taxes are spent on services which include health, education, defence, roads and railways, and social security. By working and paying taxes, you can support the government to provide these important services to the Australian community. These services help make Australia the peaceful and prosperous country it is today. State and territory governments and local councils also collect taxes to pay for services.

Paying tax is required by law. Tax is collected by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) from both businesses and individuals. The ATO works to ensure all citizens are aware of their tax rights and obligations to pay the correct amount of tax.
Part 3
Government and the law in Australia

From this time forward, under God,*
I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share,
whose rights and liberties I respect, and
whose laws I will uphold and obey.

* A person may choose whether or not to use the words 'under God'.
Government and the law in Australia

At the citizenship ceremony, you pledge to uphold and obey the laws of Australia. It is important for you to understand Australia’s system of government, how the laws are made in our parliamentary democracy and how these laws are administered. It is also important to understand how you, as a citizen, will have a say in the running of the country.

How do I have my say?

Voting

In Australia, citizens aged 18 years or over must enrol to vote at federal elections. By voting, you get to have your say in who represents you in parliament. If you are not correctly enrolled, you are not able to vote in an election.

Once you are on the electoral roll, voting is compulsory in Australian federal and state or territory elections. If you do not vote in an election and do not have a good reason for not voting, you will have to pay a fine. Compulsory voting is a way to make sure that the people we elect are really the ones that the majority of the people want.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is a Commonwealth agency. It conducts federal elections and referendums and maintains the Commonwealth electoral roll. The AEC helps to provide voters with fair and honest elections. The AEC is independent of the government. Political parties or people in government cannot influence the decisions of the AEC. Votes are by secret ballot, so you are free and safe to vote for any candidate. No one else sees who you vote for. You can tell other people who you vote for, but no one can force you to tell them.

Raising matters with your representatives

In Australia, you have the right to raise matters that concern you with your elected representative. Your views may then be taken into consideration by parliament when it is considering new laws or changes to existing laws. For example, if you have a suggestion about how to improve the immigration system, you can make an appointment to discuss it with your local member of parliament. You can also write a letter outlining your views.

In this way, ordinary Australians can have a say in forming the laws and policies of a government.

How did we establish our system of government?

Federation

Before 1901, Australia was made up of six separate, self-governing British colonies.

Within its borders, each colony had its own constitution and its own laws relating to defence, immigration, postage, trade and transport.

People wanted to unite the colonies to form a single Australian nation for a number of reasons. Trade and transport between the colonies was expensive and slow. Enforcing the law across borders was difficult. The separate colonies also had weak systems of defence. More importantly, Australia’s national identity was beginning to form. Sporting teams were representing Australia internationally and a unique Australian culture was developing in popular songs, poems, stories and art.

Uniting the nation was a difficult task, but over a period of time, the idea of one Australian nation became a reality. Australians are proud of the fact that their nation did not emerge through revolution or bloodshed, but by negotiation and referendum.

On 1 January 1901, the colonies were united into a federation of states called the Commonwealth of Australia.
The Australian Constitution

The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 is the legal document that sets out the basic rules for the government of Australia. The Australian Constitution was originally passed as part of a British Act of Parliament in 1900. On 1 January 1901, when the Constitution took effect, the Australian colonies became one independent nation, the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Australian Constitution established the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, created with a House of Representatives and a Senate. The Constitution also established the High Court of Australia, which has the power to apply and interpret the laws of Australia.

The Australian Constitution can only be changed through a special vote called a referendum.

In a referendum, there needs to be a double majority for the Australian Constitution to be changed. This means that the majority of voters in a majority of states and a majority of voters across the nation must vote for the change.

How is the power of government controlled?

The Australian Constitution divides power between three arms of government. This is to stop one person or one group of people taking over all the power to govern Australia.

**Legislative power**
Parliament has the power to make and change the laws. Parliament is made up of representatives who are elected by the people of Australia.

**Executive power**
Executive power is the power to put the laws into practice. The Executive includes Australian Government ministers and the Governor-General. Each minister is responsible for one or more government departments.

**Judicial power**
Judges have the power to interpret and apply the law. Courts and judges are independent of parliament and government.

These powers are written into the Australian Constitution.

Who is Australia’s Head of State?

Australia’s Head of State is the Queen of Australia, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In Australia, the Queen does not have a day-to-day role in government. The Queen appoints the Governor-General as her representative in Australia, on advice from the Australian Prime Minister. The Governor-General acts independently of all political parties.

In each of the states there is a Governor who represents the Queen in a role that is similar to the Governor-General.

**Constitutional monarchy**

Australia is a constitutional monarchy. A constitutional monarchy is a country in which a king or queen is the head of state but has to act in accordance with the constitution.

The Australian system of parliamentary democracy was based on the British system, developed over many centuries. In the Australian system, the leader of the Australian Government is the Prime Minister.
The role of the Governor-General

The Governor-General:

- signs all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law (this is called Royal Assent)
- signs regulations
- performs ceremonial duties
- approves the appointment of the Australian Government and its ministers, federal judges and other officials.

The Governor-General also has special powers known as ‘reserve powers’ that can only be used in specific circumstances.

Who are some of Australia’s leaders?

Head of State
The Queen of Australia

Governor-General
The representative of the Head of State in Australia

Governor
The representative of the Head of State in each Australian state

Prime Minister
The leader of the Australian Government

Premier
The leader of a state government

Chief Minister
The leader of a territory government

Government Minister
A member of parliament chosen by a government leader to be responsible for an area of government

Member of Parliament (MP)
An elected representative of the Australian people in the Australian Parliament

Senator
An elected representative of a state or territory in the Australian Parliament

Mayor or Shire President
The leader of a local council

Councillor
An elected member of a local council

How is Australia governed?

Australian Government

The Australian Government is also called the Federal Government or the Commonwealth Government.

The Australian Parliament has two Houses:

- the House of Representatives
- the Senate.

The members of both Houses are directly elected by the Australian people at federal elections. When you vote in a federal election, you usually elect representatives to each House.
The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is sometimes called the Lower House or the People’s House.

Australia is divided into federal electorates. Australians in each electorate vote for one person to represent them in the House of Representatives. This representative is called a Member of Parliament (MP).

The number of MPs for each state and territory is based on the size of its population. The people of Australia elect a total of 150 members to the House of Representatives.

The important work of the House of Representatives is to consider, debate and vote on proposals for new laws or changes to the laws. Members of the House of Representatives also discuss matters of national importance.

The Senate

The Senate is sometimes called the Upper House, the House of Review or the States’ House.

The states are equally represented in the Senate, regardless of their population size. There are 12 representatives elected from each state. Both mainland territories elect two representatives each. There are 76 representatives elected in total and they are called Senators.

Senators also consider, debate and vote on new laws or changes to the laws. Senators also discuss matters of national importance.

State and territory government

There are six states and two mainland territories in Australia. Each state has its own constitution and its own parliament. State and territory governments are based in their capital cities.

The leader of a state government is the Premier and the leader of a territory government is the Chief Minister. State governments operate in a similar way to the Australian Government. In each state, a Governor represents the Queen of Australia. In the Northern Territory, an Administrator is appointed by the Governor-General. The role and responsibilities of the Administrator are similar to those of a state Governor.

As with the Australian Government, people vote to elect a representative for their area. These representatives become a member of the state or territory parliament.

Local government

The states and the Northern Territory are divided into local government areas. These may be called cities, shires, towns or municipalities. Each area has its own local council. Councils are responsible for planning and delivering services to their local community. Citizens in each local government area vote to elect their local councillors.
What do the three levels of government do?

The Australian Government is responsible for:
- taxation
- national economic management
- immigration and citizenship
- employment
- postal services and the communications network
- social security (pensions and family support)
- defence
- trade
- airports and air safety
- foreign affairs (relations with other countries).

State and territory governments are responsible for:
- hospitals and health services
- schools
- railways
- roads and road traffic control
- forestry
- police
- public transport.

Local governments (and the Australian Capital Territory Government) are responsible for:
- street signs, traffic controls
- local roads, footpaths, bridges
- drains
- parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, sports grounds
- camping grounds and caravan parks
- food and meat inspection
- noise and animal control
- rubbish collection
- local libraries, halls and community centres
- certain child-care and aged-care issues
- building permits
- social planning
- local environmental issues.

Some responsibilities are shared between the various levels of government. The Council of Australian Government (COAG) has been set up to encourage cooperation between the levels of government.
What role do political parties play in the way Australia is governed?

A political party is a group of people who share similar ideas about how a country should be governed. They work together to have the party’s ideas turned into laws. The main political parties in Australia are the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party of Australia, the Nationals and the Australian Greens.

Most members of parliament belong to political parties. Some members of parliament do not belong to any political party. They are called Independents.

In Australia, you are free to join a political party if you choose.

How is the Australian Government formed?

After an election, the political party or coalition of parties with the majority of members in the House of Representatives forms the Australian Government. The leader of this party becomes the leader of the Australian Government, the Prime Minister.

The party or coalition of parties with the second largest number of members in the House of Representatives is known as the Opposition. Its leader is called the Leader of the Opposition.

The Prime Minister chooses MPs or Senators to become ministers. Ministers are responsible for important areas of government (called portfolios), such as employment, Indigenous affairs or the Treasury. Ministers with the most senior portfolios make up the Cabinet, which is the key decision making body of the Australian Government.

How are laws made?

Citizens of Australia elect people to represent them in the Australian Parliament.

The Australian Parliament makes and changes laws to benefit the nation.

A member of the Australian Parliament proposes a new law or a change to the law. This proposal is called a Bill.

The House of Representatives and the Senate consider, debate and vote on whether they agree with the Bill.

If the majority of members in each House of Parliament agrees to the Bill, it goes to the Governor-General.

When the Governor-General signs the Bill, it becomes a law. This is called Royal Assent.

State and territory parliaments make their own laws in a similar way.

How are laws administered?

The courts

The courts in Australia are responsible for interpreting and applying the law. They are independent of the government. The courts decide if a person has broken the law or not and decide the penalty. Every person has the right to be represented by a lawyer in court. Courts can only base their decision on the evidence before them.

Judges and magistrates

The judge or magistrate is the highest authority in the court. Judges and magistrates are independent and no one can tell them what to decide.

Judges and magistrates are appointed by the government, but the government cannot take their jobs away if it disagrees with their decisions.
As in other countries, violence towards another person is illegal in Australia and is a very serious crime. This includes violence within the home and within marriage, known as domestic or family violence. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual or psychological abuse or harm, forced sexual relations, forced isolation or economic deprivation.

Carrying weapons such as knives or guns is against the law in Australia. A person who wishes to own a gun, for example, for use on a farm, must first obtain a firearm licence from the police.

Traffic offences

Road and traffic rules are controlled by state and territory governments. People can be fined large amounts of money or even sent to prison for breaking traffic laws. To drive a car in Australia, you must have a local driver’s licence and the car must be registered. Everybody travelling in a car must wear a seatbelt. Babies must be in an approved baby car seat. Traffic laws relating to speeding and driving after drinking alcohol or taking drugs are very strict. It is also against the law to talk on a hand-held mobile phone while driving.

In conclusion

Our democratic institutions have created a peaceful and stable society. We have a rich and unique culture to share. As an Australian citizen, you will become part of our nation’s story and will contribute to our future. Australia welcomes you. Citizenship is our common bond.

In preparation for the citizenship test, try the practice test questions on pages 34 and 35.
Glossary of testable section

Australian Public Service
government departments and people employed by them
*Paul got a job in the Australian Public Service as a Centrelink officer.*

civil unrest
demonstrations and riots by large numbers of people, usually protesting against a government decision or policy
*There was civil unrest when the government passed the unpopular laws.*

coalition
the joining of two or more political parties, usually to form a government or opposition
*After the election, there was no party with a majority in the House of Representatives, so two parties with similar ideas joined to form a coalition.*

commission
a group of people with an official responsibility
*An independent commission organises the elections.*

constitutional monarchy
a country in which a king or queen is the head of state, whose powers are limited by the constitution
*Our Constitution established the Commonwealth of Australia as a constitutional monarchy, with the King or Queen of the United Kingdom as our Head of State.*

court
a place where legal cases are heard by a judge or magistrate
*When people break the law, they may go to court.*

criminal trial
the court hearing of facts about an alleged crime to decide if someone is guilty or innocent
*After the criminal trial, the bank robber was sent to jail.*

democracy
government by the people through elected representatives
*Grace was happy to live in a democracy where she could vote for her representative in parliament.*

drug trafficking
carrying or buying drugs to sell illegally
*Jess was sent to jail for drug trafficking.*

economic deprivation
a form of domestic violence, where one partner in a relationship prevents the other partner from receiving or handling money
*Lin experienced economic deprivation because her husband gave her no money.*

election
an event in which citizens choose a person to represent them in parliament
*Australian citizens aged 18 years or over must vote in an election.*
electoral roll
the list of people entitled to vote in an election or referendum
*When Jan arrived at the voting centre, the official looked for her name on the electoral roll.*

enforce the law
to make sure that people follow the law
*Police enforce the law and keep the peace.*

executive power
the power and authority to administer the laws, one of the three powers under the Australian Constitution
*Australian Government ministers and the Governor-General have executive power to administer the laws made by the Australian Parliament.*

federation
the union of colonies into one nation with the colonies retaining certain powers
*In 1901, the colonies were united into a federation called the Commonwealth of Australia.*

First Fleet
the group of 11 ships which set out from Britain under Captain Arthur Phillip to establish a convict settlement in New South Wales
*On Australia Day we remember the landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788.*

floral emblem
national flower
*Australia’s floral emblem is the golden wattle.*

forced isolation
a form of domestic violence where one partner in a relationship controls who the other partner sees and talks to, what they read and where they go
*Sandi was in forced isolation because her husband did not allow her to visit friends or family.*

from this time forward
from now and in the future
*At the citizenship ceremony, you promise to be loyal to Australia from this time forward.*

icon
a well known image
*The Opera House is a famous Sydney icon.*

Indigenous people
the original inhabitants of the land – in Australia, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
*The Indigenous people of Australia make up 2.5 per cent of the Australian population.*

Judaeo-Christian
of both the Jewish and the Christian religions
*Judaeo-Christian values are those based on lessons from the Bible.*
judicial power
the power and authority to interpret and apply the laws, one of the three powers under the Australian Constitution
*The courts in Australia have the judicial power to interpret and apply the law.*

legislative power
the power and authority to make and change the laws, one of the three powers under the Australian Constitution
*Under the constitution, parliament has legislative power, that is, the power to make laws.*

liberties (liberty)
personal freedom and independence
*In our democratic society, people have freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of association. We value these liberties.*

magistrate
a judge (leader) of a lower court
*The magistrate found the robber guilty and sent him to jail.*

mateship
helping and receiving help from others, especially in difficult times
*When my car broke down, the other drivers helped to push it in the spirit of mateship.*

national anthem
national song
*Australia’s national anthem is ‘Advance Australia Fair’.*

parliamentary democracy
a system of government based on the regular election of representatives to parliament by the citizens
*In a parliamentary democracy, the people vote for their representatives.*

permanent resident
a person who has a visa to work and live in Australia with no time limit
*Abdul’s Japanese neighbour is a permanent resident of Australia and works at a bank.*

political party
a group of people who share similar ideas about how a country should be governed
*Members of a political party meet regularly, for example, to discuss improvements to public transport.*

public service
the use of time, energy or skill for the good of the nation
*Jose provided a valuable public service by helping refugees to settle in Australia.*

referendum
a vote by all voters on a proposed change to the Australian Constitution
*In a 1967 referendum, the people voted to count Indigenous Australians in the census.*
**representative**  
a person who acts or speaks for others  
*My local council representative liked my idea and presented it at the council meeting.*

**review**  
to consider a proposal for a new law and decide whether to accept or reject it  
*The Senate, as the House of Review, debated a taxation Bill from the Lower House.*

**secret ballot**  
a system of voting where people vote privately, so no one can influence or pressure them to vote in a certain way  
*In a secret ballot, no one else watches while you write your vote.*

**secular**  
separate from religion  
*In a secular society there is no official religion.*

**set up**  
to build, establish, start  
*Governor Phillip set up the first colony in New South Wales.*

**shire**  
a local government area  
*The roads in my shire are very safe.*

**social security**  
government pensions or benefits to help unemployed people, disabled people, elderly people and others in need  
*When Trang lost her job, she had to apply for social security.*

**try your luck**  
to take a chance  
*Every year, I try my luck and bet $10 on a horse in the Melbourne Cup.*

**volunteer**  
a person who gives their time to a person or organisation without expecting payment  
*Raza is a volunteer who teaches people English in their homes.*
Practice test questions

Australia and its people

1. What do we remember on Anzac Day?
   a. The landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey
   b. The arrival of the first free settlers from Great Britain
   c. The landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove

2. What are the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag?
   a. Black, red and yellow
   b. Green, white and black
   c. Blue, white and green

3. Which official symbol of Australia identifies Commonwealth property?
   a. The national anthem
   b. Australia’s national flower
   c. Commonwealth Coat of Arms

Australia’s democratic beliefs, rights and liberties

4. Which of these statements about Australia’s system of government is correct?
   a. The Queen of Australia chooses people to form the Australian Parliament
   b. The government is elected by the people
   c. The Prime Minister chooses our Members of Parliament

5. Which of these is an example of freedom of speech?
   a. People can peacefully protest against government decisions
   b. Men and women are treated equally in a court of law
   c. Australians are free to not follow a religion

6. Which of these statements about government in Australia is correct?
   a. The government does not allow some religions
   b. Government in Australia is secular
   c. Religious laws are passed by parliament

7. Which of these is an example of equality in Australia?
   a. Everyone follows the same religion
   b. Men and women have the same rights
   c. Everyone belongs to the same political party

8. Which of these is a responsibility of Australian citizens aged 18 years or over?
   a. To attend local council meetings
   b. To vote in elections
   c. To have a current Australian passport

9. Which of these is a responsibility of Australian citizens aged 18 years or over?
   a. To do local community service
   b. To carry a passport at all times
   c. To serve on a jury if called to do so

10. Which of these statements about passports is correct?
    a. Australian citizens can apply for an Australian passport
    b. Permanent residents can hold an Australian passport
    c. Australian citizens need a passport and visa to return to Australia
11. Which of these statements about voting in Australian elections is correct?
   a. People are free and safe to vote for any candidate
   b. Voting is by a show of hands
   c. People must write their name on their vote

12. What happened in Australia on 1 January 1901?
   a. The Australian Constitution was changed by a referendum
   b. The Australian Constitution came into effect
   c. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was formed

13. What is the name of the legal document that sets out the rules for the government of Australia?
   a. The Australian Federation
   b. The Australian Commonwealth
   c. The Australian Constitution

14. What is a referendum?
   a. A vote to change the government
   b. A vote to change the Australian Constitution
   c. A vote to change the Prime Minister

15. Which arm of government has the power to interpret and apply laws?
   a. Legislative
   b. Executive
   c. Judicial

16. Which of these is a role of the Governor-General?
   a. The appointment of state premiers
   b. The signing of Bills passed by the Australian Parliament
   c. The appointment of the Head of State

17. Which of these statements about state governments is correct?
   a. All states have the same constitution
   b. Each state has its own constitution
   c. The states have no constitution

18. What is the name given to the party or coalition of parties with the second largest number of members in the House of Representatives?
   a. The Government
   b. The Opposition
   c. The Senate

19. What is the name of a proposal to make a law in parliament?
   a. Royal Assent
   b. Bill
   c. Debate

20. Who maintains peace and order in Australia?
   a. Public servants
   b. Police
   c. Lawyers

Answers:
1a, 2a, 3c, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7b, 9c, 10a, 11a, 12b, 13c, 14b, 15c, 16b, 17b, 18b, 19b, 20b
The end of the testable section