

REFERENDUM



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

everyone, everywhere, everyday



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The Scenario:

School staff and school council have met and it has been decided that school will now start at 7:30 am. The decision is final. You do not get a say.

As students at the school, you will now be required to be at school 15 minutes before this so that you are ready to start at 7:30 am.

The school day will be finished at 1:00 pm, unless you have overdue work and then you will be expected to stay until it is done.

This will be great for the school because teachers will have more time to meet and plan classes so lessons will be of a higher quality.

THINK: Spend a minute independently noting down your opinion about the scenario in the space on the Student Worksheet.

PAIR: Once everyone has had a chance to record some ideas individually, share what you have written down with a partner (or in a small group).

SHARE: Share your thoughts in a class discussion. Remember to consider each other's perspectives as unique and equally valid.

How did it feel when a decision that affected you so significantly did not take your views into consideration?

Why it is important for people to have a say about decisions that impact their lives?

Indicate your viewpoint on the statement below:

Support	=	Thumbs up
Do not support	=	Thumbs down
Indifferent	=	Thumbs sideways

“Changes should be made to the Australian Constitution without consultation of Australian voters so that the process is simple.”

Australian people are entitled to have a say about changes to the Constitution.

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

“Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”

There is a process so that Australian people can say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to proposed changes to the Constitution.

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What does this mean?

The Australian Electoral Commission defines a referendum as: “a vote of the Australian people on measures proposed or passed by the Australian Parliament.”

Source: <http://www.aec.gov.au/>

In other words...

The Parliament proposes a change to the Australian Constitution, and eligible citizens are asked if they agree or disagree with the change.

This means that any proposed change to the Australian Constitution must be put to a vote of all Australian voters in a referendum.

Chapter 8 of the Australian Constitution details the process for making changes to the Constitution.

Did you know that even Chapter 8 of the Constitution has been changed?

There was a referendum in 1977 to change Chapter 8 because it referred to the Australian states but not the territories!