



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters report:

From Classroom to Community: Civics education and political participation in Australia

May 2026

Overview

The Australian Government thanks the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for its inquiry into the issue of civics education, engagement, and participation in Australia, and those individuals and groups who made submissions and appeared before the inquiry.

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry report *From Classroom to Community: Civics education and political participation in Australia*.

Responsibility for civics education and political participation sits across several Australia Government portfolios, with important roles also played by states and territories and local councils.

At the national level, entities such as the Australian Electoral Commission, the Parliamentary Education Office, and the Museum of Australian Democracy play a key leadership role in civics education and political participation in Australia.

The Australian Government also plays a leadership role in setting and delivering on national priorities in school education and provides resources and programs to assist schools and teachers in supporting students to learn about civics and citizenship. The administration of schools is the constitutional responsibility of state and territory governments.

The Australian Government recognises that working with states and territories and the non-government education sector is key to implementing effective improvements to civics and citizenship education, engagement, and participation for teachers and school students.

The Government will continue to work in partnership with states and territories, community organisations, and other key stakeholders to explore opportunities to improve civics and citizenship education, engagement, and participation, including progressing work through existing national policy forums and intergovernmental architecture that span education, electoral participation, and media engagement.

Final Report Recommendations

Recommendations 1, 2, 18 and 19

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education, in consultation with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and curriculum authorities in each state and territory, immediately commence investigating the viability of fully implementing and nationally aligning the civics and citizenship curriculum across Australia. This should be done with a view to creating a nationally mandated standalone civics and citizenship curriculum in the next version of the Australian Curriculum.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, working through National Cabinet, annually collect data from each state and territory outlining how the civics and citizenship component of the Australian Curriculum is being implemented.

The Committee recommends that ACARA draw on successful international models to commence work to prioritise media and digital literacy education in the next version of the Australian Curriculum as a cross-curriculum priority.

The Committee recommends that ACARA, in collaboration with universities and other academics, design media literacy tools for the next version of the Australian Curriculum to support students' critical information processing that are adaptable to a changing online environment.

The Australian Government **notes** these recommendations.

The Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0) was approved by all Education Ministers on 1 April 2022 and is being implemented progressively across Australia from Foundation to Year 10. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) maintains an overview of the [implementation of the curriculum across jurisdictions](#).

The Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences learning area includes Civics and Citizenship as a discipline from Year 3 within the subject Humanities and Social Sciences Foundation to 6. Civics and Citizenship is a standalone subject taught in Years 7 and 8, and an elective subject in Years 9 and 10.

ACARA is responsible for the implementation, data collection and reporting of the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP-CC). This assessment is conducted every three years from a sample of students in Years 6 and 10.

Data is published by jurisdiction and provides nationally comparable evidence about student achievement to inform future policy development, resource allocation, curriculum planning and intervention programs.

The administration of schools – including implementing the Australian Curriculum – is the responsibility of state and territory governments and the non-government school sector.

In October 2025, Education Ministers agreed to move to a 10-year curriculum review cycle with iterative curricular updates as required. In February 2026, they agreed to task ACARA to conduct a focused review of the Australian Curriculum to identify opportunities to

strengthen its capacity to support: an understanding and rejection of all forms of antisemitic thought and antisemitic actions, a deep understanding of Jewish Australians' history and culture, and an understanding of Australian values.

Recommendations 3 and 4

The Committee recommends that within the enhanced civics and citizenship curriculum, the Australian Government mandate a minimum of 10 hours a year of civics and citizenship education for all students nationally across Years 9 and 10.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a mandatory civics and citizenship course for all Year 11 and 12 students to prepare them to participate in electoral processes. Noting successful programs in some jurisdictions, a minimum of two pilot programs should commence across all states and territories by July 2026, with a view to integrating the programs in the next version of the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Government **notes** these recommendations.

The administration of the Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0) – including timetabling and minimum learning hours per subject – is the responsibility of state and territory governments and the non-government school sector.

The administration of schools – including setting expectations for compulsory courses or units of study – is the responsibility of state and territory governments. State and territory curriculum, assessment and certification authorities are responsible for the structure and organisation of their senior secondary courses.

The Australian Government supports programs that prepare Year 11 and 12 students to better understand Australia's democratic institutions and processes, including the National Schools Constitutional Convention (NSCC) and the World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC) program.

The NSCC is an annual event for senior secondary students that promotes learning about the Australian Constitution, how it shapes our democracy, and understanding of our democratic heritage and traditions.

The WSDC supports Australia's participation in the English-language World Schools Debating Championships and the development of debating skills in schools across Australia through teaching, coaching and development programs.

Recommendations 5, 6 and 20

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through a standing item in National Cabinet, work with state and territory governments and teacher associations to develop and disseminate practical, high-quality and nationally aligned teacher professional development resources for the teaching of civics and citizenship to all

Australian students. The new resources should be in place for the next version of the Australian Curriculum and should be reviewed and updated annually.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through National Cabinet, work with state and territory governments and teacher associations, to mandate civics and citizenship, and debate-based education, in all national professional development for Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) teachers.

The Committee recommends that, further to Recommendation 5, ACARA collaborate with state and territory education authorities and teacher associations to develop guidance, resources and tools that support the delivery of education on media and digital literacy. This should cover social media, misinformation and disinformation, and artificial intelligence. Nationally consistent teacher professional development resources should be in place for the new version of the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Government **notes** these recommendations.

All Australian governments support teacher professional development through the design and delivery of curriculum support and professional learning resources. Through the \$16.5 billion Better and Fairer Schools Agreements, the Australian Government is funding reforms to build a strong and sustainable workforce, including providing access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning for teachers and school leaders and quality-assured curriculum resources.

The Australian and state and territory governments fund Scootle, a resource collection providing teachers free access to digital resources, aligned to the Australian Curriculum. Scootle includes resources that support the teaching of civics and citizenship.

In November 2024, the Australian Government launched the [Civics and Citizenship Education Hub](#). The hub includes high-quality civics and citizenship education resources, including some professional development programs, providing evidence-based curriculum materials for all teachers and school leaders.

In February 2026, the Antisemitism Education Taskforce and Education Ministers Meeting supported the development of a new Social Cohesion Hub. This hub will provide free resources to teachers, school leaders, and parents and carers to help students develop an understanding of antisemitism and strengthen understanding, inclusion and safety for all students

ACARA provides several *Curriculum Connections* to support teachers and school leaders to implement the Australian Curriculum, including:

- *Curriculum connection: Media consumers and creators* include information about social media, misinformation and disinformation; and resources and tools from various organisations; and
- *Curriculum connection: Artificial intelligence* includes the development of content elaborations for Mathematics and Digital Technologies.

Recommendations 7 and 8

The Committee recommends that, to encourage more schools from regional, remote, and very remote areas to visit Canberra, the Australian Government announce the additional loadings to the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program two years in advance to assist schools in these areas to plan a visit.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, as part of the Federal Budget process, increase the additional loadings to the PACER program to allow more schools from regional, remote and very remote areas to access trips to Canberra.

The Australian Government **notes** these recommendations.

The Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program provides financial assistance for students to visit Canberra and experience our national democratic, historical and cultural institutions first-hand.

On 17 December 2025, as part of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2025–26, the Government announced \$5.8 million over two years from 2025–26 to extend the PACER Pilot program for the 2026 and 2027 calendar years. This provides additional support for student visits to national democratic, historical and cultural institutions in Canberra, with a continuation of the additional rebates for regional, remote, and very remote schools, and those in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, as part of the Federal Budget process, increase funding for the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) at Australian Parliament House to specifically accommodate the increasing number of students visiting Canberra each year and to continue to deliver and expand digital outreach programs to students nationwide.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work more closely with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) grassroots community organisations to develop and deliver civics education programs in community centres across Australia. These programs should be provided in accessible and culturally appropriate formats. The relevant Minister should report annually to Parliament on the progress of key actions.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government works closely with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) grassroots community organisations to understand the needs and priorities of communities.

The Department of Home Affairs also provides a number of grant opportunities to support multicultural grassroots organisations to deliver activities and services that are most needed, including those tailored to diverse communities and language groups.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) specifically report on an annual basis on its work with CALD community organisations to co-design and disseminate culturally appropriate and accessible materials to support enrolling and voting at future federal elections. These materials should:

- **use a range of formats, including audio, visual, infographic and simple text that can be easily shared across social and ethnic media platforms**
- **be translated into languages for smaller and emerging migrant groups.**

The Australian Government **partially supports** this recommendation.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) currently reports through Home Affairs' Multicultural Access and Equity: Australian Government Services Report, typically published every three years. The most recent report, which covered an extended period due to the COVID pandemic (2017-2022) includes a case study on the AEC. The current reporting period ensures reporting reflects outcomes over a three-year electoral cycle.

The AEC will continue to conduct a language review each electoral cycle to ensure translated information is provided to and reaches priority CALD audiences as demographics change.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the AEC draw on successful models of community engagement conducted by its state and territory counterparts in engaging with CALD communities during the 2025 Federal Election, such as the NSW Electoral Commission's Vote Talk program. The AEC should develop and implement such programs nationally for future elections.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The AEC regularly reviews and updates its community engagement to ensure best practice, including drawing on successful models by state and territory counterparts which includes a partnership with the NSW Ethnic Communities Council to deliver a version of the Vote Talk Program.

In preparation for the 2025 federal election the AEC implemented a pilot to expand its partnerships with peak multicultural organisations in NSW, QLD, TAS and SA to deliver community electoral education and information in-language.

The pilot also included employing multicultural community electoral participation officers in 10 target divisions across New South Wales and Victoria. These officers worked with local community organisations to deliver culturally appropriate, in-language education to voters with the objective of promoting turnout and formality.

The AEC provided information kits to over 1,600 CALD community organisations and peak bodies for dissemination to their communities and members.

Community engagement approaches are evaluated after every electoral event, and refinements made to ensure it remains contemporary and is best practice. The AEC also undertakes pilots to inform future models.

The outcomes of the pilot in terms of impact on voter turnout and formality will be evaluated after the 2025 Federal Election, and learnings used to inform the approach for the next electoral event.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with CALD grassroots community organisations to train trusted members of the community as impartial ‘ambassadors’ or ‘champions’ to disseminate information about Australia’s democracy, electoral events, and voting.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

In preparation for the 2025 federal election the AEC’s electoral education delivery included a focus on community capacity building as a model to build trust and expand outreach.

The AEC’s multicultural community electoral participation officers worked in collaboration with grassroots organisations to train highly vetted community leaders, staff at migrant resource centres and staff in community hubs.

The AEC’s community education materials and translated resources were provided to community organisations to empower them to be a source of trusted information about electoral processes in their communities.

Consultation with community leaders suggests that this approach to capacity building is relevant across the electoral cycle and not just in the lead up to an election. This is supported by the volume of requests for these train the trainer style sessions.

The AEC works in similar partnership with First Nations-led organisations to support the electoral participation of First Nations peoples. Community connectors and community electoral participation officers are empowered to deliver education sessions in community, including in language. Through these initiatives, the AEC has embedded a community-led model to increase First Nations participation.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that, in order to improve enfranchisement, the AEC be appropriately funded to ensure that polling stations in regional and remote communities provide sufficient time, advance notice and culturally appropriate resources for voters; and specifically report on an annual basis on these measures.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The AEC delivers comprehensive measures to support enfranchisement for all voters and to promote voter equity across Australia, although there are voters in remote areas who remain difficult to reach. In recognition of these challenges, the Government provided \$12.9 million over two years from 2024-25 to the AEC to promote Indigenous enrolment and electoral participation (2024-25 Budget: Budget Paper No. 2, p 99).

The AEC has increased access to suitable voting services for people in remote communities. This includes increasing minimum standards for polling times and more extensive consultation with communities to inform planning processes. The AEC's approach has been strengthened by a recent internal audit into Equity of Access for Remote Voters, which recommends a multifaceted approach to improving electoral participation by increasing enrolment, turnout and formality.

Communities in the remote voter footprint receive advance notification of when remote mobile polling teams will be visiting. This includes posters, social media tiles, advertising, community radio announcements, phone calls to community members and information via AEC community partners and its community electoral participation staff.

Voters in remote and regional areas are reached through the AEC's comprehensive advertising campaign, media and social media outreach and community education program. This includes information in up to 59 languages.

A range of culturally appropriate resources is available at www.aec.gov.au/translated.

It would be more appropriate for the reporting period to occur after each federal electoral event to reflect the period when polling services are provided.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that, in order to deliver culturally appropriate and translated voter education materials for federal elections, the AEC is appropriately funded to work more closely with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission to leverage its relationships with local First Nations organisations; and specifically report on an annual basis on these measures.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The AEC and the Northern Territory Electoral Commission (NTEC) collaborate under a Memorandum of Understanding, established in 2004 when the NTEC was first established. Under this MOU, both parties agree that working closely together is beneficial in achieving the aims to enhance Indigenous electoral engagement.

The AEC also works closely with a specialist Supply Nation certified First Nations communication supplier to produce a range of resources and advertising for voters about federal elections in up to 25 First Nations languages. Translation services are provided under arrangements with language service providers including the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service and Aboriginal Interpreting Western Australia.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with youth organisations to explore more appropriate and appealing opportunities to engage a wider community of diverse young people in leadership programs that build understanding of democracy and active citizenship, outside of youth advisory groups.

The Australian Government **supports** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's Office for Youth was created to involve young people in decision-making through mechanisms like the Youth Steering Committee and issue-based Youth Advisory Groups. The Office for Youth enhances the capability of government departments and agencies to engage effectively with young people in the design and implementation of policies and programs that affect them, in line with the Government's youth engagement strategy, *Engage!*

Through the Office for Youth, the Australian Government works alongside several organisations to ensure that diverse young people are represented in their programs. This includes partnering with the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC) and the Foundation for Young Australians to support their work to develop a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Congress, which will connect First Nations high school students from around the country and provide them with a platform to have their voices heard.

The Office for Youth also works alongside the ABC to provide young people living in regional, remote, and rural communities the opportunity to share their stories, work collaboratively to bring to life ideas to improve their local area, and network with politicians and public servants in Canberra through the ABC Takeover, ABC Heywire, and ABC Trailblazer programs. Additionally, the Office for Youth works with the youth sector to engage young people to better understand their lived experience on a range of topics.

The Australian Government funds two long-standing national programs that support school students to build their understanding of democracy and active citizenship: the National Schools Constitutional Convention (NSCC) and the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate (PACER).

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that, in recognition of the need to prioritise engagement with diverse youth, the Australian Government’s Office for Youth should identify ways to increase engagement with the Australian Parliament and to support methods for incorporating diverse youth input into political policy and processes. The Office for Youth should report annually to Parliament on its progress.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The recommendation affirms the work that is currently being delivered by the Office for Youth through the Youth Steering Committee and the Youth Advisory Groups programs – both of which focus on engaging young people across the Australian Government in policy and program design.

The Youth Steering Committee is a group of young people aged 12 to 25. They come from every state and territory. They represent the diversity of Australian communities. The committee works with the Office for Youth and the Minister for Youth on the implementation of the youth engagement strategy *Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make*. Members give advice cross cutting government policies and programs that impact young people.

The Youth Advisory Groups support young people to connect with government. They work with Ministers and government agencies on policies and programs that affect young people. The members are 16 to 25 years old and represent all kinds of different backgrounds and experiences.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with grassroots community organisations for CALD people and other vulnerable groups to develop and deliver co-designed media and digital literacy training to support members of these groups build their skills to critically evaluate information sources and identify misinformation and disinformation.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

On 16 December 2024, the Australian Government announced \$153.5 million over four years from 2025-26 for the News Media Assistance Program (News MAP). A key part of News MAP is the development of Australia’s first National Media Literacy Strategy (the Strategy), to better equip Australians to critically engage with news and media in the digital world. The Strategy will be co-designed in partnership with the media literacy research sector, education sector and communities. The consultation process for the development of the Strategy will seek input on what works to enhance media literacy capabilities across diverse communities. The Strategy will identify priority groups for future media literacy

support, including CALD and First Nations people and other vulnerable groups. The Strategy is expected to be completed in 2028.

The Government has provided the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) with \$1.5 million to support media literacy in CALD communities. FECCA is administering small grants direct to communities in 2025-26 to develop and deliver community-led media literacy awareness and resources. The grant program will include monitoring and evaluation to identify opportunities to improve media literacy in CALD communities and inform the development of the National Media Literacy Strategy.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the AEC be appropriately funded to work with state and territory electoral commissions and grassroots community organisations, to develop and disseminate factual, appropriately translated electoral information in a range of formats, including audio, visual, infographic and simple text that can be easily shared across social media platforms.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The AEC's existing range of information includes products that have been co-designed with the disability sector and First Nations communities. These are available in a range of formats including audio, visual, infographics, Easy Read, Auslan, social stories and various formats for people who are blind or have low vision.

The AEC works closely with a range of community organisations to disseminate information. This includes organisations in the disability and homelessness sectors, and within First Nations and multicultural communities.

The AEC is a member of the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ), which is a consultative council of the electoral commissioners from authorities of the Commonwealth, states and territories and New Zealand. Established in 2012, ECANZ meets three times a year to discuss all aspects of electoral administration, encourage mutual co-operation, and consider contemporary electoral challenges with a goal to improve access and equity for all eligible voters.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that as part of a national media literacy strategy, the Australian Government support research initiatives to gain a better understanding of how all Australians receive and process civics and electoral information on social media. Research should be focused on:

- **the role of social media and the impact of recommender systems on democratic processes**

- **how vulnerable groups, such as CALD communities, receive and consume information to better understand how to combat misinformation and disinformation in these communities.**

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

On 16 December 2024, the Australian Government announced \$153.5 million over four years from 2025-26 for the News Media Assistance Program (News MAP). A key part of News MAP is the development of Australia's first National Media Literacy Strategy (the Strategy), to better equip Australians to critically engage with news and media in the digital world. The Strategy will be co-designed in partnership with the media literacy research sector, education sector and communities. The consultation process for the development of the Strategy will seek input on what works to enhance media literacy capabilities across diverse communities. The Strategy will identify priority groups for future media literacy support, including CALD and First Nations people and other vulnerable groups. The Strategy is expected to be completed in 2028.

The Government has provided the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) with \$1.5 million to support media literacy in CALD communities. FECCA is administering small grants direct to communities in 2025-26 to develop and deliver community-led media literacy awareness and resources. The grant program will include monitoring and evaluation to identify opportunities to improve media literacy in CALD communities and inform the development of the National Media Literacy Strategy.

At the 2025 federal election, the Government committed \$6 million to continue the delivery of vital digital literacy and safety learning tools for all Australian school children, for free. This builds on the \$6 million committed to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation in 2022 to deliver its eSmart program. The AMF eSmart program teaches young Australians to have safe, inclusive and positive online experiences, in a structured and age-appropriate way that aligns with the school curriculum and eSafety's Best Practice Framework for Online Safety Education. The eSmart program has four key pillars, Content, Contact, Conduct, and Compulsion. Content includes the media and information learners encounter online, including videos, articles, and images. Learners are taught strategies to identify misinformation, critically evaluate the reliability of information, and recognise bias.

The AEC undertook research before the 2025 federal election to understand what voters know, think, feel and are likely to do when it comes to electoral participation and potential misinformation and disinformation. This includes research with specific cohorts to better understand any barriers to participation or channel and media preferences, such as those from multicultural backgrounds, First Nations peoples and people with disability. The evidence base guided and continues to guide the development and evaluation of national advertising campaigns and community relations activities on both traditional and emerging channels, including social media.

In the 2024-25 MYEFO, the Government provided \$1.9 million in 2024-25 to the AEC to undertake a Digital Media Literacy Program. The Program assists Australian voters to identify emerging misinformation and disinformation tactics as they engage with electoral material ahead of the 2025 federal election.

In the lead up to the 2025 federal election, the AEC delivered community education sessions in multicultural and First Nations communities around Australia, with a bespoke module on how to identify electoral misinformation and disinformation. The AEC also includes misinformation and disinformation content in its Yarn and Learn sessions with First Nations communities.

The eSafety Commissioner has conducted research into CALD families' online safety education. In December 2022, eSafety published a Position Statement: Recommender systems and algorithms, which explores both the benefits and risks to online safety of such systems. A copy of the statement is available at www.esafety.gov.au/industry/tech-trends-and-challenges/recommender-systems-and-algorithms/full-position-statement. *eSafety provides education resources and training to encourage young people and others to think critically about content they consume online, and to support communities at increased risk of online harms, including CALD communities, to be safe online.* Any new research commissioned would consider any existing evidence base.

**Suggested additional recommendations from Independent Member for Curtin,
Ms Kate Chaney MP**

Additional Recommendation 1

The Committee should recommend the establishment of a university-based centre of civics and citizenship education scholarship at a leading Australian university, which would support ACARA and relevant state authorities to develop recommendations based on the latest research and evidence.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The recommendation advocates for a centre at a university to foster academic research in the field of civics and citizenship education, encompassing research, evidence generation, and support of curriculum development.¹

Australian universities determine their own academic or corporate policies and procedures, including the course offerings in line with requirements under the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

The Department of Education notes that projects focused on research into civics and citizenship are eligible for funding through the Australian Research Council subject to existing eligibility criteria and selection processes.

Additional Recommendation 2

The Committee should recommend a ‘democratic action fund’ to fund local efforts to provide opportunities for people to experience public and community decision-making in environments that explore and experiment with new democratic methods.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

Additional Recommendation 3

The Committee should recommend collaboration between researchers, local members and candidates of all political persuasions to pilot opportunities for young people to have a say on issues in their local electorate.

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

¹ It is understood that the word ‘scholarship’ in this recommendation is used in a broader academic sense, referring to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, rather than a reference to a research scholarship or funding arrangement.