

Your vote makes a difference

Levels of government and the role of your vote

information sheet



Why vote?

The Queensland *Human Rights Act 2019* states:

Every eligible person has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination—

- (a) to vote and be elected at periodic State and local government elections that guarantee the free expression of the will of the electors; and
- (b) to have access, on general terms of equality, to the public service and to public office.

One person, one vote

Democracy means *rule by the people*.

Under Australian democracy it is the right and responsibility of every eligible citizen to have a say in the laws and systems of government that affect them.

Voting is compulsory for all Australians over the age of 18.

Your vote not only affects you, it affects everyone in your community. Your vote carries the same weight as that of every other elector.

Where does my vote count?

Australia has three levels of government: local, state or territory, and federal. State, territory, and federal governments are established under the Australian Constitution. Local government is a function of States or territories. Each level of government makes laws and decisions that shape the way Australians live every day.

Local government

Queensland has 77 local government areas. They may also be called cities, towns, shires or regions. Local governments manage public property and provide a range of local services and activities.

Local governments can deliver services adapted to the unique needs of their region and community.

To provide these services, local governments raise money via rates and service fees. They also receive grants from state and federal governments.

Local governments are responsible for:

- cultural and sporting facilities
- town planning
- waste management
- land and coast care programs
- pet registration and rules
- taxation – rates and levies.



In Queensland, local government elections occur every four years.

Queensland state government

Queensland is divided into 93 electorates with elected representatives, who develop, debate, and pass laws for the state as members of the Queensland Parliament.

The state government also raises money from taxes but receives more than half its budget from the federal government to spend on state matters.

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Levels of government and the role of your vote

The Queensland Government is responsible for:

- education
- health care and hospitals
- cultural, sporting and recreation facilities
- emergency services
- community services
- Indigenous land rights
- environmental protection
- taxation
- public works and transport
- industrial relations
- consumer affairs
- marriage and divorce.



As you can see there are areas where local and state governments both have responsibility, such as public works, cultural facilities, environment, sport and recreation.

State elections occur every four years.

Federal government

The Federal or Commonwealth Government is responsible for the conduct of national affairs. Its areas of responsibility are stated in the Australian Constitution. These include:

- trade and commerce
- foreign policy
- defence
- tertiary education
- immigration and citizenship
- Indigenous affairs and native title
- environment, world heritage areas and national parks
- taxation
- national employment conditions
- aged care, pensions and welfare



- Medicare
- postal and telecommunications services
- marriage and divorce.

Areas where state and federal government responsibilities are shared include education, health, environment, marriage and divorce, trade and taxation.

Australian federal elections occur every three years, but can occur at any time during the three year term.

Check and update your enrolment

This is easy to do online and only takes a few minutes. Go to aec.gov.au.

For more information

If you would like to know more about the different levels of government you can visit the Parliamentary Education Office website at peo.gov.au, or the Queensland Parliament website at parliament.qld.gov.au.

The Queensland *Human Rights Act 2019* is administered by the Queensland Human Rights Commission. You can find out more about human rights law in Queensland at qhrc.qld.gov.au.