



# DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

## Democracy defined

There are many definitions of democracy and they often change due to the time and place. However, there are some generally agreed principles of democracy and four important elements<sup>1</sup>. They are:

### Principles

- A belief in the individual: since the individual is believed to be both moral and rational;
- A belief in reason and progress: based on the belief that growth and development is the natural condition of mankind and politics the art of compromise;
- A belief in a society that is consensual: based on a desire for order and co-operation not disorder and conflict;
- A belief in shared power: based on a suspicion of concentrated power (whether by individuals, groups or governments).<sup>1</sup>

### Elements

1. Legitimacy  
A legitimate government that has the authority (given by the people) to rule.
2. Justice  
Citizens live in a free society where they are all treated equally and with dignity and respect.
3. Freedom  
Citizens can make decisions, act as they wish as long as it does not break any laws and have respect for political and civil liberties.
4. Power  
Power is defined and limited, often by a written constitution.

1. Museum of Australian Democracy [www.moadoph.gov.au](http://www.moadoph.gov.au)



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## Tasks

Highlight or underline any words that you do not know. Find their definitions.

Discuss the principles and elements with your classmates.

Australia is a representative democracy. This means that in our country, eligible people vote for others to carry out the business of government. We elect them to be our voice.

## Task

Australian democracy has some core defining values. Find these on the Museum of Australian Democracy website ([www.maodoph.gov.au](http://www.maodoph.gov.au)) and fill in the missing words.

- freedom of \_\_\_\_\_ and being \_\_\_\_\_
- freedom of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ participation
- freedom of \_\_\_\_\_, expression and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- rule of \_\_\_\_\_
- other basic \_\_\_\_\_ .