



Encouraging Democratic Participation with Software

Vanessa Teague[†]

January 20, 2026

[†] Thanks to many other contributors, especially Michelle Blom, Andrew Conway & Chris Culnane.

<https://www.democracydevelopers.org.au>

info@democracydevelopers.org.au

OUTLINE

1. About
2. Ask Parliament
3. Age of Reason
4. Explain that Election
5. Where did my (STV) vote go?

About

ABOUT DEMOCRACY DEVELOPERS LTD.

- We are an Australian not-for-profit registered with the ACNC.
- We make privacy-respecting open-source software for supporting democracy.
- `https://democracydevelopers.org.au`

Today's question: *How can software encourage more meaningful democratic participation?*

THINGS WE'D BE PROUD OF

- Getting someone off X/Facebook/TikTok and doing their democratic engagement more effectively
- A Senator/MP asking a question in Parliament that came from the community using our software
- Educating someone about voting to inoculate them against misinformation

HAVE YOU ...?

1. Sent an email/letter to or had a conversation with your MP?
2. Engaged with them on social media?
3. Written a submission to a parliamentary inquiry?
4. Read (part of) a bill?
5. Put in an FoI request?
6. Organised others to do any of these things?

QUESTIONS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY

1. How many Senators do you (usually) vote for at a time?
2. Name your House of Representatives electorate or member.
3. If a state had 1.4 million votes in a (usual, half) Senate election, and a candidate got 400,000 votes, they would get elected. With (approximately) what transfer value would their surplus be distributed?
4. Australian Senate votes are counted manually - True or False?

QUESTIONS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY

1. You elect 2 Senators for a territory, and (usually) 6 for a state.
2. Try <https://electorate.aec.gov.au>
3. Quota

$$Q = \lfloor \frac{\text{votes}}{\text{seats} + 1} \rfloor + 1 \approx \frac{1.4m}{7} \approx 200,000$$

.
Transfer value

$$T = \frac{\text{votes} - \text{quota}}{\text{votes}} \approx \frac{400k - 200k}{400k} \approx 0.5.$$

4. False. But we now have an auditing requirement.

Ask Parliament

ASK PARLIAMENT

Ask Parliament let you suggest questions, which could be:

- directed to an MP to ask for an answer (e.g. from a constituent),
or
- suggested for an MP to ask someone else (e.g. in a committee).

People could up- or down-vote questions, showing parliamentarians (or journalists etc) which questions were popular.

ASK PARLIAMENT

Status: on the backburner.

Reasons: too complicated; trying to do too many things at once.

Source: <https://github.com/RightToAskOrg/>

Age of Reason

AGE OF REASON

Status: Try it out and send us feedback:

`https://ageofreason.democracydevelopers.org.au`

Objectives: Make it easy to tell your MP(s) what you think of a current bill.

Source: `https://gitlab.com/democracydevelopers/age-of-reason`

AGE OF REASON



Select one of the topics below to start writing your email.

National Topics



Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No. 1) Bill 2025



VET Student Loans (Miscellaneous Measures) Bill 2025



Universities Accord (Cutting Student Debt by 20 Per Cent) Bill 2025



Treasury Laws Amendment (Payday Superannuation) Bill 2025



Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Triple Zero Custodian and Emergency Calling Powers) Bill 2025



Superannuation Guarantee Charge Amendment Bill 2025



Explain that Election

EXPLAIN THAT ELECTION

Status: In development.

Objectives: Getting people started; helping them understand the basics, especially counting.

Source: <https://gitlab.com/democracydevelopers/explain-that-election>

EXPLAIN THAT ELECTION

12:51

Explain That Election

Select a past Australian election to explore its outcome.

[Explain](#)

Australia's Democracy

Learn about our three levels of government.

[Learn](#)

Voting and Counting

Learn about how we vote and how our votes are counted.

[Learn](#)

Get Involved

How to get involved in Australian elections.

[Learn](#)

[About & Privacy Policy](#)

12:52

▼ The House of Representatives

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#): Alex Proimos, [CC BY 2.0](#)

The House is a chamber with 150 seats. Each seat represents a geographical region in Australia called an electorate, and is held by a Member of Parliament (MP).

At each federal election, the voters of each electorate will elect a candidate to hold their seat, and represent them in the House. Each

[Federal](#)
[State/Territory](#)
[Local](#)

[Home](#)
[Our Democracy](#)
[Vote Counting](#)

[Explain](#)
[Get Involved](#)

12:54

▼ Preferential voting in action

Four candidates are vying for the role of Top Bird in the Australian Bird Republic.

Tawny. Adept at camouflage.

[Wikimedia Commons](#): Catbird, [CC-BY-SA 4.0](#)

[Preferential](#)
[Proportional](#)
[History](#)
[Resources](#)

[Home](#)
[Our Democracy](#)
[Vote Counting](#)

[Explain](#)
[Get Involved](#)

12:56

on those ballots.

The number of ballots in each stack is displayed on its bottom-right corner. The total number of votes in each candidates' tally is shown on the far-right.

Tawny 1 Tawny 4 Kookaburra 2 Emu 1 Magpie x40	Tawny 1 Tawny 2 Kookaburra 4 Emu 1 Magpie x8	48
Kookaburra 3 Tawny 1 Kookaburra 2 Emu 4 Magpie x30	Tawny 1 Kookaburra 2 Emu 4 Magpie x5	35
Emu 1 Tawny 4 Kookaburra 1 Emu 2 Magpie x25	Tawny 3 Kookaburra 1 Emu 4 Magpie x4	29
Magpie 2 Tawny 3 Kookaburra 4 Emu 1 Magpie x15	Tawny 1 Kookaburra 3 Emu 1 Magpie x4	28

[Preferential](#)
[Proportional](#)
[History](#)
[Resources](#)

[Home](#)
[Our Democracy](#)
[Vote Counting](#)

[Explain](#)
[Get Involved](#)

Where did my (STV) vote go?

WHERE DID MY (STV) VOTE GO?

Status: Try it out and send us feedback:

`https://vote.andrewconway.org/Federal%20Senate/2025/VIC/WhereDidMyVoteGo.html`

Objectives: Explain the Single Transferable Vote (STV)
(a.k.a. Senate Counting).

Source: `https://github.com/AndrewConway/ConcreteSTV`

WHERE DID MY (STV) VOTE GO?

Vote summary : 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33.....

Where did my vote listing consecutive preferences for 33 candidates go?

Count	Reason	Candidate vote sitting at	Value
1	First preference count	✓ 1 PATERSON, James Liberal/The Nationals	1
3	Surplus distribution for elected candidate PATERSON, James	✓ 2 HUME, Jane Liberal/The Nationals	Used 46% to elect PATERSON, James Surplus 54%
5	Surplus distribution for elected candidate HUME, Jane	3 HOPPITT, Kyle Liberal/The Nationals	Used 46% to elect HUME, Jane Surplus 8.2%
278	Exclusion of HOPPITT, Kyle	7 PATTEN, Fiona Legalise Cannabis Party	8.2%
284	Exclusion of PATTEN, Fiona	✓ 26 ANANDA-RAJAH, Michelle Australian Labor Party	8.2%
289	At the end of the counting ANANDA-RAJAH, Michelle was elected.		8.2% elected

- Challenges
- Privacy for this page

QUESTIONS

info@democracydevelopers.org.au

- Would a lower barrier to communicating with representatives be enough to get people engaged? If not, what else might help?
- What change do you think you can, or want to, effect through your government representatives?
- What would be a satisfying result of going through the process of engaging with government, parliament or your representative(s)?

Questions? Ideas?
info@democracydevelopers.org.au