

## Compulsory voting

### Why is it compulsory to enrol?

In Australia, the law says that if you are an Australian citizen, 18 years old or over, then you must enrol. You can provisionally enrol from 16 years old. With the right to enrol and vote, comes the responsibility to contribute to the way the ACT and the country is run. One way to contribute is through voting and you cannot vote until you are enrolled.

### What is compulsory voting?

Every Australian citizen (18 years or older) is required by law to vote. If an enrolled citizen fails to vote and is unable to provide a valid reason for not voting, a penalty is imposed. The penalty in the ACT is \$20. If the penalty is not paid the matter may be taken to court.

### History in Australia

Compulsory voting is a distinctive feature of the Australian political culture. It was advocated by Alfred Deakin at the turn of the century and introduced at federal elections in 1924, following the passage of a private member's bill. Compulsory enrolment for federal elections was introduced in 1911.

### Introduction of compulsory enrolment and voting laws in Australia

Jurisdiction	Compulsory enrolment	Compulsory voting
Australia	1911	1924
Queensland	1914	1914
Victoria	1923	1926
New South Wales	1921	1928
South Australia	2009	1942
Tasmania	1930	1928
Western Australia	1919	1936

In Australia voting is a civic duty comparable to other duties citizens perform like paying taxes, compulsorily attending school and performing jury duty. With compulsory voting, it is claimed that parliaments reflect more accurately the "will of the electorate". Governments must consider the total electorate in policy formulation and management. Candidates can concentrate their campaigning energies on issues rather than encouraging voters to attend the poll.