

# Regenerating Australia - Regenerating Democracy



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

## Teaching Sequence

Work through this resource material in the following sequence:

20 minutes	Part A. Me and Democracy - Barometer activity
30 minutes	Part B. Regenerating Democracy
60 minutes	Part C. Participating in Australia's Democracy
30 minutes	Reflection

## Part A. Me and Democracy - Barometer activity



This lesson assumes that students know about and understand the concept of democracy. If required, you could use [this lesson](#) to explore the concept of democracy in more detail.

Step 1.

Ask students to clear the furniture to the sides of the classroom, and attach the 'Strongly agree' and 'Strongly disagree' **posters** to the wall on opposite sides of the classroom. Invite students to imagine a line between each sign. That line is a continuum, with extremes at each end.

Inform students that you will make a statement, and they should stand in a position between the two signs that indicate their viewpoint.

## **Step 2.**

Read each of the following statements, allowing students time to consider their response and move to the position that indicates their view. Once students have chosen their position, invite them to turn to a person close to them, and share their view. You might also like to invite some volunteers to share their views with the class.

- I care about what the local/state/federal government does
- I know who represents our community in the federal Parliament
- I feel like I can have a say about issues that are important to me
- I understand the role I play in Australia's democracy
- I think that politicians listen to young people
- I think transparency in politics is important
- Being involved in Australia's democracy is important.

Summarise the activity by explaining that each of the statements made was about their level of engagement in civic/political/social issues.

## **Step 3.**

Ask students to configure the classroom furniture so that they can sit facing each other in groups of 3-4 people. Link the activity back to the theme of the democratic system by inviting each group to discuss their response to these questions (write the questions on the whiteboard):

1. Based on your responses during the Stand on the Line activity, do you think that you're engaged in Australia's democratic system?
2. Why might someone want to engage with the democratic system?

#### Step 4.

Invite groups to share what they have discussed with the class, and record students' thoughts on the whiteboard.

## Part B. Regenerating Democracy

#### Step 1.

Inform students that in this part of the lesson, they will watch a section from the film "Regenerating Australia" that explores what democracy could look like with an approach that is community-led and participatory.

Ask students to position themselves so that they can see the screen, and explain that this documentary explores what Australia would look like by 2030 if we simply listened to the needs of its people. "Regenerating Australia" is a 17-minute short film based on a four-month interview process with a diverse group of Australians who shared their hopes and dreams for the country's future. Emphasise that while the film is not 'real', the problems and people featured in it are real and the solutions identified could be reality!

#### Step 2.

Watch this [video](#) without interruption.

This is a clip about Regenerating Democracy from the [Regenerating Australia film](#). To access the video, use the password **EDU\_RA**.

#### Step 3.

Invite students to complete the [See, Think, Wonder Visible Thinking](#) routine on the Student Worksheet. They are asked:

- What did you SEE?
- What did it make you THINK?
- What do you WONDER?

Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the class.

#### **Step 4.**

Ask students to apply their understanding of the concepts explored in “Regenerating Australia” through a group discussion. They are asked:

- What did you see in the film that you would like to see actually happen in Australia’s democratic system? Why?

Ask students to note down the key points of their discussion in the space provided on the Student Worksheet, then ask a member from each group to share those points with the rest of the class. Summarise the discussion by highlighting the similarities and differences in the points raised by each group.

## **Part C. Participating in Australia’s Democracy**

#### **Step 1.**

Students will need a web-enabled device for this part of the lesson. Ask the class to work in their groups to explore how their elected representative votes in the federal Parliament on specific issues, then get involved in Australia’s democracy by talking directly to their MP about an issue. They can refer to the Student Worksheet for specific instructions:

1. Go to: [www.theyvoteforyou.org.au](http://www.theyvoteforyou.org.au)
2. Type in your postcode (or select the name of your local MP if you know who it is!)
3. Scroll down the page to read through how the minister voted on each issue listed
4. Click through to find out more about the issue if required
5. Note down two or three policy areas that are important to you, and how your representative voted on those issues.
6. Do you agree or disagree with how they voted? Why?

#### **Step 2.**

Invite students to think about what they want to say to their local MP. On the Student Worksheet, they are prompted with:

What do you want to say to your local MP? Is there something that really means something to you that you want them to care about and take action on? You could take inspiration from “Regenerating Australia”, and implore your local MP to make decisions that move beyond sustainability to a regenerative approach so as to reverse environmental degradation and make a positive impact on people and the planet.

The main solutions highlighted in the film are:

- Valuing, amplifying and adhering to First Nations knowledge
- Decentralised decision-making with more community involvement
- Regional investment that creates local jobs and economic activity
- Community-led clean energy projects and localised food systems
- Regenerative farming and land management practices.

### Step 3.

Invite students to share their ideas with their local MP. They are encouraged on the Student Worksheet to do so by:

- Holding a screening of “[Regenerating Australia](#)” and inviting their local MP along
- Writing an email or letter
- Sending a pre-recorded video in which they state their message directly
- Engaging via social media channels
- Booking in a face-to-face meeting
- Applying to be part of a Youth Advisory Council. There are many councils within all of the different levels and areas of government. Students could even approach their local MP with an idea about forming one in their electorate! See [here](#) for an example from NSW.



**Encourage students to search the web page of their local MP to see if they already consult with young people around important issues - this will provide students with a good place to start!**

Once students have decided on their course of action, distribute a copy of the “[Tips for engaging your MP](#)” handout and support them to read through the information.

## Step 4.

Give the class time to complete the task, ensuring that they are supported to head in the right direction and experience success.

## Reflection

On the Student Worksheet, students are asked to return to questions from the stand on the line activity, and describe any changes to their initial response as a result of the lesson's activities.

## Differentiated Learning

### Extension

#### Option 1

Encourage students to look into whether their local government, state government or federal government, consult with young people on policy and other decisions. If they do, students could work to become part of the advisory group. If they do not currently consult with young people, your class could put forward the case to consider introducing a Youth Advisory Group (YAC).

For inspiration, invite students to conduct research on how young people in Australia and in other countries around the world are organising to participate in democracy. There are some inspiring examples taking place at both local and national levels. For example, in Western Australia, a [Ministerial Youth Advisory Council](#) (MYAC) has been established to provide advice to the Minister for Youth on issues that are relevant to young people across the state. In Denmark, the Danish Parliament has established a [Youth Advisory Council](#) that consults the government and allows young people to contribute valuable input and policy advice directly to the government. Examples like this demonstrate that it is possible to regenerate democracy by giving young people a greater voice and influence with their representatives.

#### Option 2

Encourage students to research and reflect on factors that could compromise Australia's democratic system. In the case of political donations, the Australian Electoral Commission has revealed that in the financial year 2019-20, political parties in Australia received a total of 168 million dollars in donations. Of this amount, there are tens of millions of dollars in electoral funding that remain anonymous and undisclosed to the public. Invite students to conduct research and formulate ideas around the potential implications of these findings by selecting 2-3 political parties and researching who their biggest donors are. Teachers can support students with their research by explaining what a political donation is and showing how they can [search for donations](#). Students can share their reflections in a class discussion, prompted by questions about whether they think political donations influence politics, how important transparency around donations in government is, and if they have any ideas or solutions around how to keep democracy resilient and robust.

## Teacher Reflection

**Take this opportunity to reflect on your own teaching:**

- What did you learn about your teaching practice today?
- What worked well?
- What didn't work so well?
- What would you share?
- Where to next?
- How are you going to get there?

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