

Study Guide for Democracy in Australia

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN OPEN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

FOR REVIEW

1. Note down six characteristics of an open democratic society.
2. Place them in order of importance and briefly explain the reasons for your preferences.
3. What do you understand the following to mean:
 - Sovereignty of the parliament;
 - Accountability of the executive;
 - Independence of the judiciary;
 - The electoral system;
 - Anti-corruption;
 - Transparency and open government;
 - Human rights; and
 - Citizen participation?
4. Choose any two of the items and explain why they are important.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. In small groups discuss your feelings about the legal system (the courts and the police and the laws that they have to administer). Do you think these elements work adequately? If not which parts of this system would you particularly like to change?

Share your conclusions with others in a full class discussion.

2. In small groups discuss what you think about politicians. Do you think that they have an easy job? Do you think that they are often unfairly judged?

Share your conclusions with others in a full class discussion.

3. If you had the power to change anything about the behaviour of politicians what would it be?

Share your conclusions with others in a full class discussion.

4. Would you like to have more influence as a citizen in political decision making? What do you think would be needed to make this happen?
5. What aspects of our political system as you understand it would you especially like to change?
6. How do you think that citizens could best play a more active role in setting agenda for the nation?

FOR RESEARCH

1. What alternative forms of government are there?
2. Research and describe what you understand democracy to mean. Are there different forms of democracy?
3. Research the strengths and weaknesses of democracy.

FOR MORE ADVANCED RESEARCH

4. Research the best means of protecting and advancing Australia's democracy.