

FACT SHEET 2

How does a referendum work?

In summary, the process has 5 steps:

1. In practice, the Government narrows down the issue and **puts the proposed constitutional change in a Bill to the Parliament** for its approval.
2. **Parliament then debates it.** This gives politicians in Parliament a chance to consider its wording and make any changes. Parliament might also ask a parliamentary committee to inquire into the change. This allows the public to send in their own views to the committee and have their say.
3. If the change is approved by both Houses, or in some cases, just one House of the Parliament, the Government **chooses a date for the referendum**, which has to be between two and six months after the change is approved by Parliament. This is to give people enough time to learn about the proposed change to the Constitution and to allow the arrangements for voting to be organised.



4. **A Yes and No case pamphlet** with no more than 2000 words for each (authorized by a majority of those members of the Parliament who voted for or against the proposed law) is posted out to voters' homes not later than two weeks before the referendum day.
5. The Australian Electoral Commission then runs the referendum.

Finally, **voters go to a polling booth** (or postal or pre poll) to vote Yes or No to making the constitutional change.

It is compulsory for all eligible Australian citizens aged 18 and older to enrol and vote in referendums, just like for federal elections. Voting in Australia today is compulsory, making it both a right and a responsibility to be enrolled and to vote at the 2023 referendum.



For a referendum to pass, it must be approved by a national majority of voters overall AND by a majority of voters in at least four out of the six States. Territory voters count for the national vote, but not when counting a majority of voters in a majority of the States. A No vote means voting for the Constitution to stay as it is, and a Yes vote means voting for the Constitution to be changed.



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