

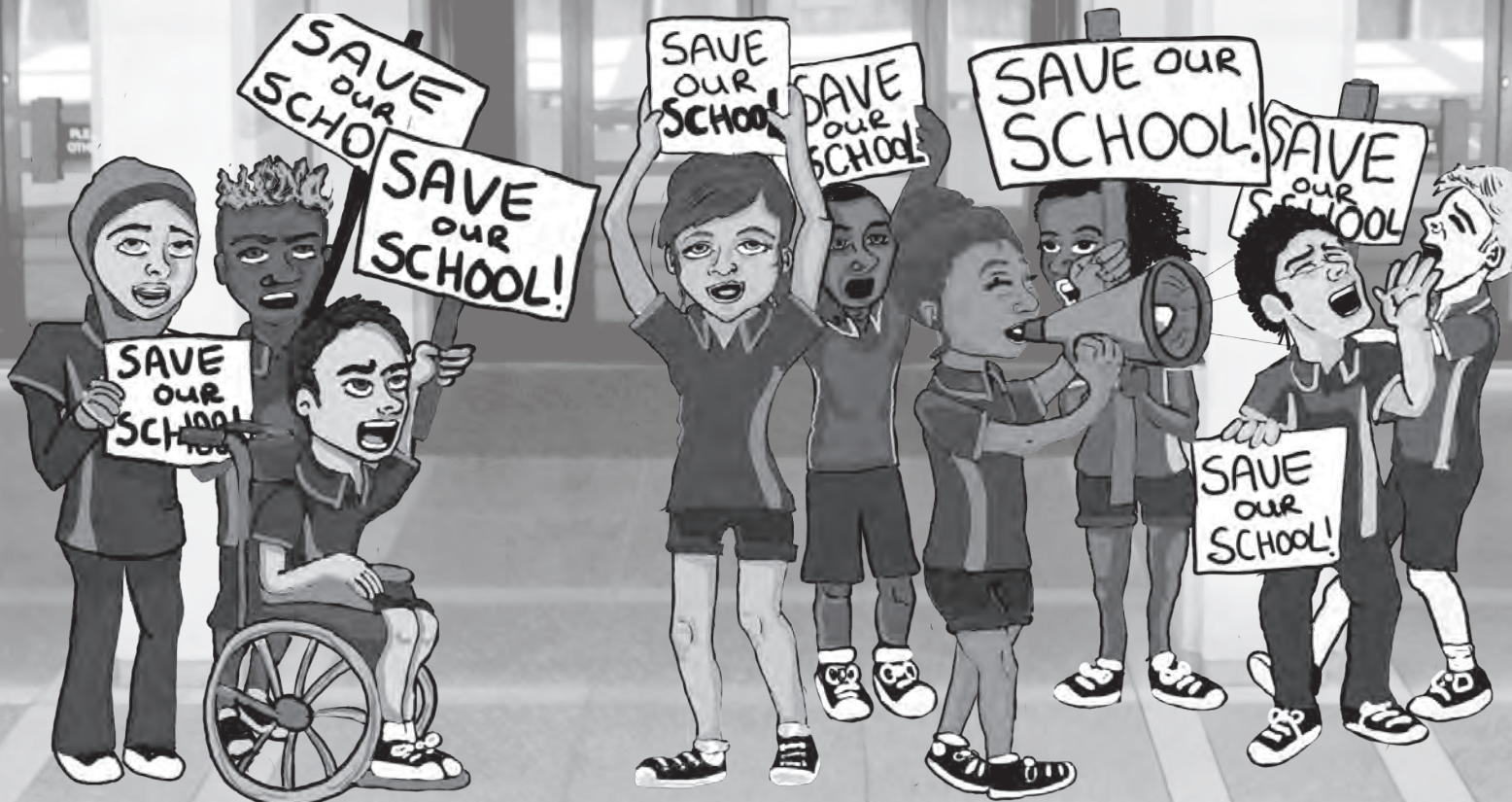


# Student Resource Book

## Years 7/8

**HOW CITIZENS CAN PARTICIPATE IN AUSTRALIA'S DEMOCRACY, INCLUDING USE OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM, CONTACT WITH THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, USE OF LOBBY GROUPS AND DIRECT ACTION (ACHCK062)**

**THE FREEDOMS THAT ENABLE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA'S DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF LAW, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF SPEECH, ASSOCIATION, ASSEMBLY, RELIGION AND MOVEMENT. (ACHCK061)**



## Module 3

# ***THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE***

We saw in module 1 how Elsie and Ellay became aware how often laws made by Parliament can affect many aspects of their daily lives. What Elsie and Ellay didn't realise is that they have the opportunity to have a real say in how these laws affect them.

As Western Australian citizens, both Elsie and Ellay have the right to participate in democracy, by visiting the Parliament of Western Australia, using the electoral system, contacting their local member, joining lobby groups and in some cases even through direct action, such as attending rallies or protests. These rights are enshrined within our democracy.

Elsie and Ellay therefore have the opportunity to exercise their freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion and movement.

This simply means that as long as they are not breaking the law, as citizens they are able to voice opinions, associate with the people they want to, follow whichever religion they may choose and not be restricted from moving around the country.



**SO, LET'S SEE HOW ELSIE AND ELLAY CAN USE  
THESE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS ...**

# ELSIE KICKS A GOAL!



Elsie and Ellay were so happy to have their cousins staying over, but still a little upset that they were not allowed to play football in the park. Their mum suggested that if they were unhappy about it they should see if they could get the regulation changed. The four cousins went on to the local council website and discovered Regulation 21 (l) covered their local park. Under this regulation, **'the practice or playing of games of any type is permitted, restricted or prohibited in designated areas'**.



**'That's great'** exclaimed Elsie, **'we don't have to get the law changed, just convince them to permit us to kick the footy in a designated area of the park'**.

The cousins then put their request in writing to their local councillor.

Following the council hearing, it was agreed that there should be a designated area within the park that children could kick the football.

To celebrate, the cousins went to the park and Elsie sunk her foot hard into the football and then watched it sail through two large trees.

**'That's a goal for democracy',**  
she yelled triumphantly.



What Elsie and Ellay did to convince their local council to change their policy is called **lobbying**. This is where you try to convince somebody to change his or her mind by offering a different point of view.

**IN THE SPACE PROVIDED, GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF WHEN YOU HAVE LOBBIED YOUR FRIENDS, PARENTS OR TEACHERS TO CHANGE THEIR MIND ON AN ISSUE THAT AFFECTED YOU ...**

Original decision \_\_\_\_\_

Why you wanted it changed \_\_\_\_\_

How I lobbied to change the position \_\_\_\_\_

In Western Australia, people who get paid to lobby members of Parliament are called **professional lobbyists**.

**LOBBYISTS ARE USED BY LOTS OF DIFFERENT INTEREST GROUPS IN ORDER TO GET THEIR POINT OF VIEW LISTENED TO BY BOTH GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION AND MINOR PARTIES, AS WELL AS INDEPENDENT MEMBERS WHO ARE NOT ALIGNED WITH ANY PARTY ...**

**... IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, ALL PROFESSIONAL LOBBYISTS MUST APPEAR ON THE REGISTER OF POLITICAL LOBBYISTS. THIS IS A WAY OF MINIMISING THE RISK OF ANY ONE INTEREST GROUP HAVING UNDUE INFLUENCE OVER GOVERNMENT POLICY.**



# SAVE OUR SCHOOL!



Elsie and Ellay couldn't wait to return to school after their holidays and tell all of their friends about their win in now being able to play ball games in the park. Unfortunately, when they arrived for the first day of term, even bigger news was breaking ...



A rumour had begun that due to falling enrolments at their school, the government was considering closing it down! Worse still was the belief that students would then have to travel twice as far in order to attend a neighbouring suburb's secondary school. **'This isn't fair!'** exclaimed Elsie, **'I won't let it happen!'**



When Elsie and Ellay returned home, they told their mother the worrying news. **'Well we live in a democracy kids, if you don't like it you could always campaign against it'** said their Mum.

**'Maybe you could get a petition started and meet with our local member.'**



The girls did exactly that. Their local member said she was happy to table the petition in Parliament and the girls set about writing letters to the media and starting a **'Save Our School'** Facebook page.

When they told their Mum all of the things they had achieved she was very proud, but a little worried that not all of the members of Parliament were aware of how concerned the community was about saving the school. **'Have you thought about direct action?'** she asked them. Both the girls looked blank. Noticing their confusion, their Mum continued, **'it simply means showing publicly that you are unhappy with a policy, law or decision'**.

This idea got the girls excited and they immediately set about campaigning amongst their fellow students to encourage as many people as possible to attend a rally at State Parliament.



When the day finally arrived, Elsie and Ellay were surprised to see so many students, teachers and parents all holding signs and shouting slogans. Eventually, the Education Minister came out to meet with the group and said she would certainly discuss the **'Save Our School'** concerns with cabinet.



That night whilst the girls were watching the television, they were surprised to see that their direct action had even made the nightly news bulletin. Better still, the final piece of footage showed the Minister for Education standing on the steps of Parliament, promising that Elsie and Ellay's school would remain open.



*'Wow, we're not even old enough to vote but we've saved our school'* exclaimed Ellay.

*'Yes dear, but you're old enough to make a difference',* said her Mum, *'now that's what I call democracy'*.

# ***CLASS ACTIVITY - TICKET TO RIDE***

Elsie and Ellay live in the inland suburb of Easterly Breeze, which in the height of summer is five degrees hotter than any coastal suburb in the Perth region.

For the girls to get to the beach to cool off, they need to catch a train and two buses. This means that it takes them over two hours travelling time and costs them lots of money as they are travelling across three transport zones. If they had a cheaper public shuttle bus leaving from their local shops that ran directly to and from the beach, it would cut their travelling time down by an hour and a half.

## ***YOUR TASK:***

### **CREATE A CAMPAIGN THAT COULD HELP ELSIE AND ELLAY LOBBY THE GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE A SUMMERTIME SHUTTLE BUS BY:**

- A) Finding out who the transport minister is and writing them a letter, outlining why you think this would be a good idea.
- B) Conducting a class forum entitled 'Easterly Breeze needs a Surf n Sand Shuttle Bus'. Half the class will need to come up with reasons to oppose the idea and half the class will need to come up with reasons to support the idea.
- C) Developing a community campaign to encourage support from your local suburb. Paint a placard focusing on the issue.
- D) Designing a petition, which could be distributed throughout the community.
- E) Developing a high visibility media event that draws attention to the issue.

***CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE JUST LEARNT HOW TO EFFECTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN AUSTRALIA'S DEMOCRACY, SEE YOU IN MODULE 4 ...***