

SENIOR ECONOMICS AND DISCOVERING DEMOCRACY MATERIALS

CASE STUDY: HOW DO GOVERNMENTS MAKE DECISIONS IN THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

1. RATIONALE :

The aim of this unit is to demonstrate how selected materials available in the Discovering democracy Secondary Kit might be used in the teaching of Economics courses in the Senior Secondary School.

The unit developed is titled "**How do Governments make Decisions in the Australian Economy?**". Economic policy making in Australia is the result of the input of many people within our society and it is essential that all citizens understand how they can contribute to, and influence, the framing of economic policies in Australia.

2. DISCOVERING DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMICS

The following table shows the links between the materials in the Discovering Democracy Kit and economics areas of study. As syllabus topics vary from state to state, the matrix does not include specific syllabus topics

Area of Study	Lower Secondary Units	Middle Secondary Units	Australian Readers Middle Secondary
Economics of Government	Pp10-11; pp 26-31;pp55-58;pp68-71;	Pp11-21;pp32-41;pp-120-122;pp171-202;	
History of Economic Thought	P13;pp71-75	Pp21-32;pp78-100;	
Australian Economic History	Pp82-88;	Pp142-150; p151;	
Labour Economics	Pp71-75;pp82-88;pp123-1343;	Pp151-157	P62;
Environmental Economics		Pp171-202	
Income Inequality		Pp67-71;pp158-162;171-202	Pp48-55;
Population & Immigration		Pp142-150	Pp41-43
Economics ethics		Pp48-66;	
Economic Decision Making	Pp10-11; pp26-31;pp55-58;pp103-105;	Pp11-13;pp32-41; pp142-162; pp171-202;	

3. UNIT OUTLINE/OVERVIEW

The key inquiry questions for this unit area:

- What decisions do Governments make in the Australian Economy?
- How do Governments form their opinions and policies relating to issues?
- How have Government policies on various issues changed over time?
- (Optional) How do Governments make decisions about disputes over an issue in the Australian Economy?

4. INQUIRY PROCESS

4.1 What decisions do governments make in the Australian Economy?

Process	Resources
<p>1. Students to brainstorm ideas relating to the question “What decisions do governments make in the Australian Economy?”. This is to be written down by each student on a piece of paper for 1 minute. Every minute the paper is to be passed to another student who must add more ideas. This is to be done for 5-6 minutes to gather ideas.</p> <p>2. Student responses to be classified into key areas of government decision making in a reporting session.</p> <p>3. Student responses to be compared to the basic decisions within an economy of :<i>What to produce; how to produce; how much to produce; and for whom to produce.</i></p> <p>4. Students to think about how governments make decisions. Students to find in current newspapers, examples of the types of decisions made by Governments every day. Examples of these decisions to be grouped under the four key decision areas listed above</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper• Blackboard/Whiteboard• Basic Economics Texts available for any high school Economics course.• Newspapers – a collection of recent newspapers such as The Australian, The Age, The Courier Mail, Sydney Morning Herald etc.

4.2 How do Governments form their opinions and policies relating to issues?

This inquiry is designed to demonstrate to students how political parties formulate opinions and policies and how these influence the decisions they might make.

Process	Resources
<p>Teachers are to select a range of activities from “Parties to Control Parliament”. Suitable activities could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What role do political parties have in parliament and government? Pp14-21, particularly Activities 1, 3, 5 and 7.• Who do Australia’s political parties represent? Pp21-32, particularly Activities 3 and 4,• How do parties form their opinions and policies? Pp 32-40, particularly Activities 2, 3 and 4.• How do party policies become government policies after elections? <p>As a concluding activity, have students discuss “The Big Ideas” on p30 of the “Australian Reader”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discovering Democracy Middle Secondary Units pp7-41.• Australian Readers: Discovering Democracy Middle Secondary Collection

4.3 How have government policies on various issues changed over time?

Students are to:

- Identify changing representations of Australia as a nation;
- Identify and explain past changes to and future options for policies about immigration, welfare and the economy.
- Evaluate ways Government decision-making maintains cohesion and allows for diversity.

This is the main inquiry of the unit. Depending on how much time has been allocated, students can study 1, 2 or 3 areas of the inquiry. If there is sufficient time to engage all students in all areas, independent research as well as group work and class discussion can be used.

If time is not sufficient to allow all students to investigate all areas, a suggestion would be to use group work as follows.

Process	Resources
<p>1. Group students into groups of 3 or 6. Within each group, each student (or 2 students depending on group size) is to be allocated one area for investigation. Students allocated to each of the three areas are then to form into one (or more) groups depending on class size.</p> <p>2. Each group will be investigating one of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration • Welfare • The Economy <p>Each group is to investigate how the following issues within their area:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What decisions have Governments that have had major impact on the development of policy? Have these decisions always had total support within the community? Why? Why not? Have these policies changed over time? How? Why have policies changed over time? Why do different Governments make different decisions over time? <p>The areas for investigation can be found in “<i>Discovering Democracy: Middle Secondary Units</i>” as follows:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering democracy: Middle Secondary Units • Australian Readers : Discovering Democracy Middle Secondary Collection • Access to the Internet and to sites such as the ABS to update statistics etc. so that an up-to-date understanding can be developed. Access to the internet will encourage students to investigate issues to a deeper level if time is available.

- Immigration pp142-150
- The Economy pp150-157
- Welfare pp158-162

3. After investigating the topic allocated in their groups, at the conclusion of the investigation stage, students are to reform into their original groups of 3 or 6, and report to the other students what they found when they investigated their topic. This will need 1-2 periods for reporting. Each student should thus gain an insight into three areas of Government decision-making over time.

4. As a concluding activity to this inquiry, students could investigate issues from pages 60-61 of the Reader using the case studies provided.

5. There would need to be some time for the class teacher to sum up issues and clarify the role government decision making has played in the development of the Australian economy over time.

6. Finally, students could complete the activities on pp 163-165 to develop ideas about how governments need to make decisions for a fairer society for all Australians.

5. EXTENSION ACTIVITY

If teachers wish to take this issue further, students could then carry out a study about how Decision Making was carried out in the Franklin River Dispute using some or all of the materials available on pp167-202.

This unit aims to have students:

- Identify and evaluate strategies citizen groups can use to influence government decision making processes to achieve political change.
- Analyse forces which affect party policy or government action in relation to a particular issue.
- Evaluate roles played by citizens, interest groups, the media and other institutions in a resolution of a political dispute.
- Justify opinions about the resolution of a political dispute.

6. RESOURCES:

1. Discovering Democracy: Middle Secondary Units (1998) Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne

2. Australian Readers (1999) Discovering Democracy Middle Secondary Units, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne.

3. Internet Access

4. Access to Newspapers

5. Access to Economics Texts.

Compiled by Douglas Cave on behalf of the Queensland Economics Teachers' Association Inc. and Business Educators Australasia.