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# DEBATE KIT: SHOULD THE VOTING AGE BE LOWERED TO 16?

TEACHING RESOURCE

**DEBATING**

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## TEACHING RESOURCE

### Introduction

The voting age in Australia used to be 21 years of age. In the 1960s and 1970s, many parliamentary democratic countries started to allow younger people to vote as many were paying taxes, driving and sometimes even fighting in wars. Because of this, it was considered appropriate that younger people should be allowed to vote and have a say in who is elected to parliament. In 1973 in Australia, the law changed so that people aged 18 could vote.

A parliamentary inquiry was launched in 2018 to consider if Australia should reduce the voting age to 16. Although it was decided not to change the voting age from 18 to 16 years old, the report from the inquiry recognised that 'there are differing views within the community, and within the Committee, about lowering the voting age to 16, it is healthy to debate our democracy.'

As of 2024, some democratic countries have reduced their voting age to 16 years old, with other similar countries considering this change also.

To help young people, this kit provides key points and website references about the debate topic to assist as starting points for research and debate planning. This kit is to accompany the 'Debate booklet' available at [seriouslysocial.org.au](https://seriouslysocial.org.au).

### Debate topic: Should Australia lower the voting age to 16 years old?

#### Affirmative arguments

- 16 year olds are able to work, pay taxes and drive.
- Lowering the voting age would increase young people's involvement and interest in politics.
- There is a lot of community support to lower the voting age.
- Lowering the voting age would introduce a habit of voting with increased participation in a more robust and representative democracy.

#### Negative arguments

- Although 16 year olds work, pay taxes and drive, this is usually under adult supervision.
- There is limited community support to lower the voting age.
- 16 year olds do not have the political awareness to be able to vote.
- Voting age should remain at 18 years as this is when people are legally adults and most capable of making adult decisions.

## Web links

Should Australia lower the voting age to 16 years old?	
Topic	Web link
The history of voting in Australia	<a href="https://bit.ly/3W68HMM">bit.ly/3W68HMM</a>
Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Lowering Voting Age and Increasing Voter Participation) Bill 2018	<a href="https://bit.ly/4d39i88">bit.ly/4d39i88</a>
Global voting ages	<a href="https://bit.ly/4d6Hkbn">bit.ly/4d6Hkbn</a>
The Conversation article: <i>Should Australia lower the voting age to 16? We ask five experts</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4cZNb2l">bit.ly/4cZNb2l</a>
Newspaper report comparing the voting age in different countries	<a href="https://bit.ly/3Q5qboQ">bit.ly/3Q5qboQ</a>
Behind The News Voting Age Experiment	<a href="https://bit.ly/443J55o">bit.ly/443J55o</a>
Teen debate about lowering New Zealand's voting age	<a href="https://bit.ly/3TZ38gC">bit.ly/3TZ38gC</a>
The Conversation article: <i>Should the voting age in Australia be lowered to 16?</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/44me10Z">bit.ly/44me10Z</a>
The Monthly article: <i>The Vietnam War revolt that lowered the voting age</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3U3iuR9">bit.ly/3U3iuR9</a>
Commissioner for Children and Young People resource on topic of reducing the voting age	<a href="https://bit.ly/44me3WF">bit.ly/44me3WF</a>



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