

Representative and responsible government, separation of powers

Representative government: the people choose a government that must act on the people's behalf. Regular elections are held to ensure this occurs. Unrepresentative governments will not be re-elected

Responsible government: government must be accountable for its actions. It is answerable to parliament and therefore to the people. An irresponsible government will be forced to resign

Separation of powers: a principle whereby no one legal body has complete control over the legal system. The Australian Constitution separates control into the legislative, executive and judicial function

Structure and role of Commonwealth and Victorian Parliaments

Victoria

Crown (Governor): gives royal assent, dissolves lower house at election

Upper house (Legislative Council): 40 members, regional areas represented, house of review

Lower house (Legislative Assembly): 88 members, houses government, represents majority of Victorians

Commonwealth

Crown (Governor-General): Gives royal assent, dissolves lower house at election

Upper house (Senate): 76 members, house of review, states' house

Lower house (House of Representatives): 150 members, houses government, represents majority of Australians

Change in the law

Reasons for change in the law: changing community values, changing expectations of the legal system, changes in community awareness, changes in technology, changes in international relations

VLRC: Role is to develop, monitor, and coordinate law reform activity in Victoria; and research and report on issues referred to it by the Attorney-General

Petitions: A written demand for change, followed by at least one signature and tabled in parliament. Allows community views to be expressed in parliament, but ineffective without a large number of signatures

Demonstrations: A gathering of a group of people showing their support for change. Can be effective with a large amount of demonstrators and media attention, but ineffective if the demonstration becomes violent

Media: A way that arguments for change can be communicated to a large group. Effective when showing a realistic representation of views, but may present a biased view that does not reflect society (e.g. radio, Facebook)

Strengths and weaknesses of parliament as a law-maker

Strength	Weakness
Supreme law-making body	Lacks total power
Can investigate a whole area of law	Broad wording may lead to loopholes
Reflects society's values as a representative body	May be influenced by pressure groups rather than society
Issues before parliament allow for public debate	Unwilling to legislate on controversial issues

Legislative process

