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# Referendums and changing Australia's constitution

The Australian people vote on proposed changes to the constitution at a referendum.

The power of the Australian people to make change to the constitution is given to them by Section 128, 'Mode of altering the Constitution': '... a proposed law is submitted to the electors [and] the vote shall be taken in such a manner as the Parliament prescribes'.

For a referendum to be successful and the alteration to the constitution to be passed, a double majority vote must be achieved, which is:

- > a majority of voters in a majority of states (at least four of the six states)
- > a national majority of voters (an overall YES vote of more than a 50 per cent).

If the double majority is achieved and the proposed alteration to the constitution is approved, 'it shall be presented to the Governor-General for the Queen's assent' (Section 128).

The records in this classroom resource relate to the 1967 referendum and illustrate the process of a referendum from proposal to Royal Assent.

You can learn more about the history of the Australian Constitution on a [virtual tour](#) of our exhibition *Voices / Dhuniai: Federation, democracy and the Constitution*.

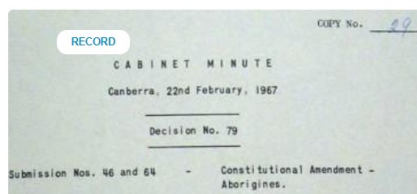
## Curriculum areas

- > Year 10 History
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- > Year 6 History
- > Year 7 Civics and Citizenship

## Questions

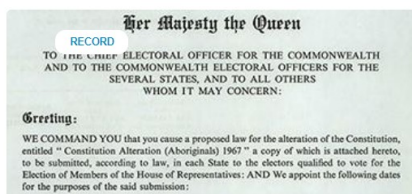
- > What is a referendum?
- > What are the various stages of the referendum process and what role does the Australian Parliament have in the process?
- > What role do the Australian people have in a referendum and what gives us this power?

## Records



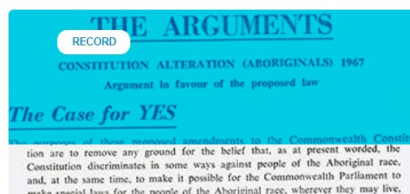
### The decision by Parliament to hold 1967 referendum – Cabinet minute →

This is a Cabinet minute recording the government's decision to hold a referendum to give parliament the power to make laws for First Australians.



### Referendum for 'Constitution Alteration (Aborigines) 1967' - writ →

A writ commanding an electoral officer to hold an election of referendum regarding an alteration to the Constitution.



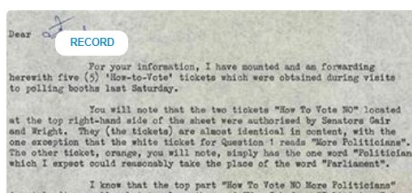
### Argument in favour of the proposed Constitution Alteration (Aborigines) 1967 →

This document summarises the arguments in favour of changing sections 51 and 127 in the Australian Constitution.



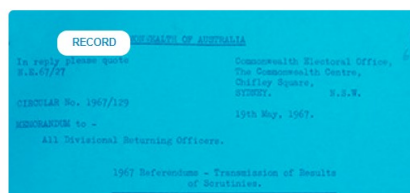
### 1967 Referendum – Western Australian ballot paper →

This is a draft of the 1967 referendum ballot paper sent by the Chief Electoral Officer to the Divisional Returning Officers of Western Australia.



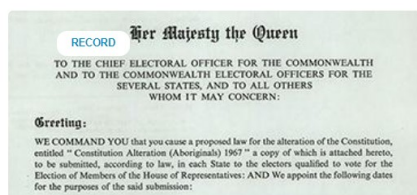
### Referendum for 'Constitution Alteration (Aborigines) 1967' - how to vote cards →

Cards handed to voters on polling day by volunteers and members of the political parties as they arrive at the polling station.



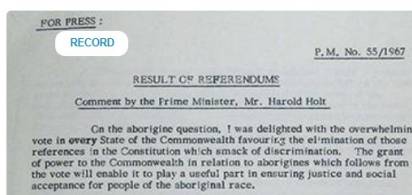
### Tally sheets for Referendum for 'Constitution Alteration (Aborigines) 1967' →

Tally sheets and instructions to the Divisional Returning Officers instructing them on how to accurately report on the count of ballot papers.



### Referendum for 'Constitution Alteration (Aborigines) 1967' - return of the writs →

These records are the 'Return of the Writ' from the electorates of Braddon and Bass in Tasmania for the 1967 referendum.



### 1967 Referendum results - Prime Minister Harold Holt responds in press release →


A speech made by Prime Minister Harold Holt on 28 May 1967, in response to Referendum results.



### Announcement of 1967 referendum results in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette →

Notice in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of the results of the 1967 referendum.

RECORD



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

## 1967 Referendum – Royal Assent to Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) →

The Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967, presented to the Governor-General, R.G. Casey, for his signature.

## Resources

RESOURCE



### The 1967 referendum →

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