The Australian Constitution

1. Create a Constitution quiz
Devise a quiz about the Australian Constitution. Write a list of ten questions and answers. For example, you could ask questions like ‘How many changes to the Constitution have Australians agreed to?’ Find a partner and take it in turns to answer each other’s questions.

2. Describe the steps for changing the Australian Constitution
You may like to present your answer in dot points or as a flow chart.

3. Create a constitution for your classroom
Hold a class discussion to decide what should be included in the constitution. Remember, a constitution is a set of rules about how something is governed. You could include rules about how students should treat each other and how they should behave in the classroom.
Divide the class into groups and ask each group to make a colourful poster illustrating one of the rules from the Classroom Constitution.

4. Design a book cover for the Australian Constitution
Imagine a children’s version of the Constitution is being created. Design a cover for this Constitution that includes symbols or images that reflect what the Constitution is about.

5. Discuss why Australians have agreed to so few changes to the Australian Constitution
Australia has held 19 referendums proposing 44 changes to the Constitution. The Australian people have only agreed to 8 of these changes.
In small groups research one of the 19 referendums. As a class, discuss why you think Australians have agreed to so few changes to the Constitution.
To find out more about referendums, check out this fact sheet on the PEO website: www.tinyurl.com/FS-Refs
Explore the 8 changes in: Get Parliament: Successful referendums www.tinyurl.com/RefsEight
You can also check the ‘Referendums and plebiscites’ section on the Australian Electoral Commission website: www.tinyurl.com/AEC-refs

This activity sheet is designed for use with Get Parliament, available from www.peo.gov.au
6. Create a pamphlet or poster for the 1999 referendum to decide whether Australia should become a republic

If the referendum had passed, the Queen and Governor-General would have been replaced by a president appointed by the federal Parliament.

Decide whether you will promote a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ vote in the referendum. You will need to do some research.

To help you, search for ‘Fast facts: The 1999 Referendum’ on The Civics and Citizenship Education website:

www.tinyurl.com/CC-1999Ref

7. Describe how Australia’s system of government was influenced by Britain and the United States

For an overview of the three systems check:

Get Parliament: Systems of government in Australia, Britain and United States

www.tinyurl.com/ThreeSystems

Find out more in the Closer Look series on the PEO website:

Parliament and Congress:

www.tinyurl.com/CL-Parl-Congress

A short history of Parliament:

www.tinyurl.com/CL-ParlHistory

Check ‘The Australian Nation: Constitution making’ on the Discovering Democracy website:

www.tinyurl.com/DD-Constitution

You could also check out this link on the Australian Parliament House website:

‘For Peace, Order and Good Government’

www.tinyurl.com/Sen-POGG

8. Change section 51

Section 51 of the Australian Constitution lists the federal Parliament’s law-making powers. Imagine you could alter section 51 by adding, removing or rewording a power. What would you change? Explain your reasons.

To view section 51, follow this link to the Constitution on the Australian Parliament House website:

www.tinyurl.com/ParliamentPowers