In Australia there are three levels of government:
• Local;
• State; and
• Federal.
Each level of government:
• holds elections;
• makes laws for citizens;
• is responsible for providing public goods and services; and
• punishes those who break the laws.
Each level of government has particular responsibilities.

Local government is responsible for providing services within their local area. These include:
• maintenance of roads and footpaths;
• garbage collection;
• town planning and building regulations;
• infant welfare centres and child care centres;
• meals on wheels;
• libraries; and
• maintenance of parks and gardens and swimming pools.

State government is responsible for:
• education: government primary and secondary schools, curriculum and assessment, coordination of higher education;
• health: public hospitals, nursing services, ambulance services, coordination of aged care, children’s, youth, mental and community health services;
• transport: public transport, major roads, vehicle registration, transport accident insurance;
State government is responsible for:
- state development: encouraging investment, employee relations, employment, workers’ compensation, information technology, sport, recreation, racing and gaming, tourism;
- natural resources and environment: agricultural development, electricity and gas supply, water supply and sewerage, forestry, land management, conservation and environment protection, national parks;
- law and order: courts and tribunals, legal aid, police, prisons;
- community services: disability services, child protection, adoption;
- housing: public housing, rental assistance;
- fair trading and consumer affairs; and
- fire and emergency services.

Federal government is responsible for:
- defence;
- foreign policy;
- immigration;
- trade and commerce;
- airports and air safety;
- post and telecommunications;
- employment and unemployment strategies;
- national public works;
- social services such as pensions and family support;
- Medicare and health funding;
- post-secondary education; and
- currency.
Classroom discussion

Discuss the answers to the following questions in class.

What would happen if...

• there was no rubbish collection?
• there were no health regulations for restaurants?
• roads were not maintained?
• Australia didn’t have a defence force?
• there were no dog or cat regulations?
• there were no public libraries?
• each State government produced its own coins?
• there were no laws against criminal behaviour?
• there were no plans or protection for the environment?
• there were no building regulations?
• people could migrate to Australia without first making an application?