A Federal Parliamentary Election

The country is divided into sections called electorates, each of which elects someone to parliament. People who wish to stand for election must be nominated as candidates, and then begin a campaign to convince voters in their electorate to vote for them. Candidates may be representatives of a political party or may stand as independents (not belonging to a political party).

When a Prime Minister decides to call an election, the Governor-General gives permission and issues the instruction, which is called a Writ.

Voting in elections is compulsory for Australian citizens aged 18 and over. It is the responsibility of Australian citizens to elect their government. People must enrol by filling in a form obtainable from a post office. Their names are then put on the electoral roll. At an election, when people go to a polling place on election day to vote, their names are marked off on the roll. People who do not vote are fined.

Elections are always held on a Saturday. In each electorate there are a number of polling places where people go to vote. Voters fill in their ballot papers by writing a number 1 next to the name of their first-choice candidate, then number 2 for their second choice and so on. Each candidate’s name must be given a number or preference. This is called preferential voting. Votes are counted and the candidate receiving a majority of votes is declared the winner and will take his or her place in parliament, representing the people in his or her electorate. They represent their electorates until the next election.
Use the text on BLM 4.5 to make notes in the boxes on the diagram below.

**A Federal in Parliamentary Election**

Parliament

Calling an election

Counting votes

Candidates

Election day

Campaign