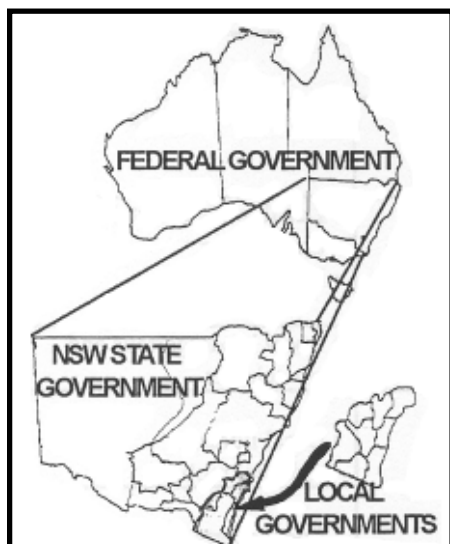





# LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA



Almost everywhere you live in Australia you will have three elected governments – Federal, State (or Territory) and Local. Each of these levels of government has its own powers, responsibilities and services and each of them is elected by the people they provide government for. The three levels of government developed in Australia at different times. By 1900, there were six self governing Australian colonies (the two territories - the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory - gained self-government later). Local governments began to be established in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1901 the six states joined together to form the new nation of Australia with a new Federal or Commonwealth Government which added a third level of government.

## LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA

	What Level?	How Many in Australia?	Leader & Executive Body	Location
	THE WHOLE NATION	1	Prime Minister, <b>Federal Parliament:</b> <b>House of Representatives</b> with 150 Members representing separate electorates (including 49 in NSW) plus <b>Senate</b> with 76 Members, 12 from each State, 2 from each of the two territories.	Canberra, ACT
	STATE OR TERRITORY	8 (6 States, 2 Territories)	Premier (or Chief Minister in Territories). For NSW: <b>Parliament of NSW:</b> <b>Legislative Assembly</b> with 93 Members representing 93 electorates plus <b>Legislative Council</b> with 42 Members representing whole State.	Macquarie Street, Sydney
	LOCAL AREA (City, Municipality, Shire)	More than 560 in Australia 152 in NSW	Mayor (or Lord Mayor), <b>City, Municipal or Shire Council</b> : Councils have from 5 to 15 Councillors. Each usually represents one section (Ward or Riding) within the local government area.	An important local centre

Each level of government is different. Often they are fully responsible for certain services or regulations, but in many cases two or three levels of government share some responsibility for a similar area, e.g. education or health. The National or Federal Government collects most taxes. It directly provides many services such as defence and pensions, and has an important role in providing funding for many other areas. State governments also raise revenue but depend very much on Federal funding to carry out their programs. Local governments raise much of their funds through rates but also depend on State and some Federal funding. Each government understands its own powers and responsibilities, and ways have been worked out for the three levels to work together. Local governments are closely linked to the State Government through its Local Government Department. State and Federal Governments work together through many systems but the most publicised ones are the Conferences which take place between the Premiers and the Prime Minister.

## WHO DOES WHAT?

It is not always easy to know which government is responsible for which service. Although the Federal Government is probably better known to many of us, the everyday things we do usually have more to do with our State or Local Governments.

Things you might do in a day...	...and which level of government gets involved.		
	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	STATE GOVERNMENT	LOCAL GOVERNMENT
<i>Shower and get ready for school</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power, gas, water, sewerage from State corporations</li> </ul>	
<i>Have breakfast</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade, imports and exports</li> <li>• Advertising</li> <li>• Currency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer laws</li> <li>• Shop and workplace laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health inspections of shops, etc</li> </ul>
<i>Catch the bus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National road funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buses, bus passes</li> <li>• Traffic laws, Police</li> <li>• Traffic lights, Road signs</li> <li>• Major roads, road taxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local roads and streets</li> <li>• Street signs</li> <li>• Bus stops</li> </ul>
<i>Go to school</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding to States</li> <li>• Higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Department</li> <li>• School funding and subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local kindergartens and Pre-schools</li> </ul>
<i>Go to the library</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State library</li> <li>• School libraries</li> <li>• Subsidies to councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local libraries and bookmobiles</li> </ul>
<i>Play sport</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Institute of Sport</li> <li>• National sports bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State sports centre</li> <li>• Funding to local councils</li> <li>• Safety, health and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local sports fields and playgrounds</li> </ul>
<i>Phone a friend</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone services</li> </ul>		
<i>Watch TV</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadcasting laws</li> <li>• ABC TV and Radio</li> </ul>		
<i>Go to the doctor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medicare</li> <li>• Funding to States</li> <li>• Drug control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitals</li> <li>• Ambulance services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community services, e.g. meals on wheels</li> </ul>
<i>Go home</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local building controls</li> <li>• Trees and footpaths</li> </ul>
<i>Put out the garbage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International treaties and national environmental policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste disposal</li> <li>• Pollution controls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garbage collection</li> <li>• Local environment</li> </ul>

### The Federal Government

The Federal or Commonwealth Government is responsible for the conduct of national affairs. Its areas of responsibility are stated in the Australian Constitution and include defence and foreign affairs; trade, commerce and currency; immigration; postal services, telecommunications and broadcasting; air travel; most social services and pensions. The Federal Government is also involved, mainly through funding, in many things largely carried out by the States, such as health, education, environmental issues, industrial relations, etc.

### State or Territory Government

Under the Australian Constitution, the States are responsible for everything not listed as a Federal responsibility. However, sometimes both levels are involved. Major State responsibilities include schools, hospitals, conservation and environment, roads, railways and public transport, public works, agriculture and fishing, industrial relations, community services, sport and recreation, consumer affairs, police, prisons and emergency services. Each state has its own constitution setting out its system of government.

### Local Government

Local Government areas vary greatly in size and character. The Sydney area is divided into about 35 cities, municipalities or shires, each with its own local council. The bigger country centres such as Bathurst or Albury have city or municipal councils. Large but less populated country areas, with a number of small towns and large rural areas, are usually shires with a Shire Council based in one of the larger towns. The power of local governments is controlled by Acts of State Parliament such as the Local Government Acts. Local Councils are concerned with matters close to our homes, such as building regulations and development, public health, local roads and footpaths, parks and playing fields, libraries, local environmental issues, waste disposal, and many community services.