

Junior A, Round 3

TOPIC: that Australian elections should be conducted online

1. Type of Topic: Normative

This debate is a Normative style debate, which means that the affirmative is advocating for some kind of 'change' or policy that should be adopted. A **normative style debate** is one that deals with what *should* be done, rather than what *is* currently the case. It focuses on evaluating proposed changes to the status quo based on values such as justice, fairness, efficiency, or public benefit. In these debates, the affirmative team must prove that the change they are advocating for is desirable and would lead to a better outcome overall. The negative team, on the other hand, can defend the current system or argue that the proposed change would cause more harm than good. Both sides should build principled arguments, supported by logical reasoning and real-world examples. Rather than simply discussing whether something could happen, teams should focus on whether it ought to happen, and why. Clear definitions, a strong value framework, and a structured weighing of benefits versus harms are essential for success in normative debates.

2. Background / Context

In Australia, elections are an important part of how our democracy works. Every few years, people across the country vote to decide who will represent them in Parliament, which helps decide how Australia is run. At the moment, voting usually happens in person. On election day, people go to a polling place (often a local school, church, or community centre) where they line up, get their names marked off the electoral roll, and fill out a paper ballot with their choices. This paper is then placed in a ballot box to be counted later. However, in recent years, some people have started asking whether voting should be done online. Just like we do our banking, shopping, and even schoolwork online, could voting also move to the internet? This might mean using a secure website or app to vote from home, on a phone, tablet, or computer.

There are some good reasons why people support this idea. For example, it could make voting easier for people who live far away from polling stations, such as those in remote areas of Western Australia or the Northern Territory. It might also help people with disabilities or serious illnesses who can't easily travel. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some people also started to think more seriously about online voting to avoid large gatherings and long queues. But not everyone agrees that online voting is a good idea. Some people are worried about cyber security. Could someone hack the system and change the results? Would people's votes

stay private and anonymous? There are also questions about fairness. Not every Australian has easy access to the internet or feels confident using technology. For example, older people or people in low-income communities might struggle with an online-only system.

This debate is about whether moving to online elections would improve our democracy by making voting easier and more modern, or whether it would cause problems by being less secure or harder for some people to access.

3. Questions for Consideration

1. Would online voting make elections more accessible for all Australians, especially those in remote areas or with disabilities?
2. How secure is online voting compared to traditional paper voting? Could the system be hacked or manipulated?
3. Would online voting increase voter turnout by making it easier for people to participate?
4. Do all Australians have equal access to the internet and technology needed for online voting?
5. Has online voting been used successfully in other countries? What can we learn from their experience?
6. Could online voting reduce the number of mistakes or spoiled ballots compared to paper ballots?
7. Would Australians trust the results of an online election more or less than a traditional election?
8. What are the risks if the online voting system fails or is attacked during an election?

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