**Rumaan:** Hi, I’m Rumaan from Minaret College. I love politics, and I’m passionate about ensuring everyone has their voice heard.

Today, we’ll unpack why voting is important, and how it works.

What is democracy and why does it matter?

Democracy means rules by the people. Getting everybody to vote on every law for Australia would cost a lot of time and money. This is why we elect people from our communities to represent us and vote in parliament on our behalf. (cameras clicking) This is called representative democracy.

Democracy gives us all a say over the decisions our government makes. If we don’t think a representative is doing a good job we can choose somebody else at the next election. Democracy makes Australia a country where opinions and beliefs matter and power is shared by everybody.

To hear about a young councillor’s journey to becoming mayor, I spoke with Joseph Haweil who is now the mayor of Hume City Council. Joseph is passionate about young people having a say in issues that affect them.

Hello Joseph, thanks for coming.

**Joseph:** Hi, Rumaan, good to be here.

**Rumaan:** Can you explain the process of running for elections?

**Joseph:** There is, of course, a formal process where you nominate and then you have the election process. A lot of it is campaigning. To win a local government election people need to know you, and enough people need to think you’re a suitable person for the role to get you elected. You can take advocacy, views and perspectives from the community and give back to them by putting those changes in place.

**Rumaan:** But what do you do as councillor and mayor?

**Joseph:** As a local councillor, you set the strategy of the organisation. So you deal with its finances, you deal with local laws, you deal with policies and programmes. So as mayor I’m, under the Local Government Act, the chief spokesperson for the council and attending various events and meetings is the opportunity to hear from people. Local roads are run by council, childcare facilities, early learning, libraries, sports and recreation. They are a big part of what our role is. We also have a planning element, so that comes to people who want to build houses, new housing developments. And we have a role in the statutory and strategic planning around, you know, what goes where.

**Rumaan:** Why should young people care about voting?

**Joseph:** Voting in an election, Rumaan, is the way in which we share our perspectives but also generate change in the community. I think young people want to have their voices heard. The best way to do it is to vote, and to participate in the political process.

**Rumaan:** What can young people do to get involved in politics?

**Joseph:** I would say to young people, seek out, perhaps, like-minded people, seek out opportunities where you can help in your local community. There are so many avenues and organisations in which you can contribute. And for that reason, young people really have to get involved and I encourage them to do so.

**Rumaan:** Thank you so much. You provided us excellent insight into politics.

So how do we make democratic decisions?

Imagine you’re with a group of friends deciding what to have for lunch. Democratic decision-making requires listening to each other’s points of view, finding out more information, discussing the options, and then having everybody vote for the option that they believe is best.

It can be very difficult to please everyone when you’re making tricky decisions. Democratic decisions help us find a fair option that pleases as many people as possible.

Mitch Sprague is a student at Overnewton Anglican Community College. I wanted to chat with him about his experience as a VicSRC Student Executive Advisory Committee member.

Hello, Mitch, welcome.

**Mitch:** Hi Rumaan.

**Rumaan:** Why is voting and elections important to you?

**Mitch:** Votings and election is extremely important because it’s the foundation of our democracy. We elect representatives who represent us and our interests.

**Rumaan:** How does the VicSRC election work?

**Mitch:** So our election’s entirely online. So students nominate themselves and students who are part of our student community get to vote for who they want to be on the exec.

**Rumaan:** Do you vote for student representatives at your school?

**Mitch:** Yes.

**Rumaan:** So you were elected as a representative at your school and at the VicSRC. So what does it mean to you to be able to represent students?

**Mitch:** I think it means to act in the best interest of the people, you know, taking what they want and translating that into policies and procedures.

**Rumaan:** Do you think the voting age should be lowered?

**Mitch:** I do think the voting age should be lowered. I was part of the Youth Parliament team in 2019 who took a bill forwards to lower the voting age in Victoria to 16 for voluntary voting. I think that young people are so active in society today and we need representatives that align with our own views.

**Rumaan:** Have you enrolled to vote?

**Mitch:** Yeah, I enrolled to vote when I was 17. I actually filled out the form on my phone. So it’s really easy and simple. You just need your details and it’s a form online

**Rumaan:** Today we’ve heard from Joseph and Mitch about why voting is important.

So what can you do to make sure your voice is heard when it comes to issues that matter to you?

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