



GENERAL COMMENTS

The examination presented an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the political systems of Australia and the United States of America. Many students took full advantage of that opportunity, displaying extensive awareness of key theoretical content, augmented by contemporary evidence and examples. Few students lacked the preparation required to provide a set of adequate responses. Most students achieved an appropriate balance between the short answer and extended response components of the examination. Few students failed to complete the examination.

Section A was well handled by most students. While specific examples are not mandatory in Section A, it was pleasing that many students added illustrative pieces of evidence to their answers. These included recent events and names of significant individuals or groups within the political system. Four questions in this Section asked students to define a single piece of terminology. In order to receive the maximum two marks for these questions, the key requirement was to clearly and concisely present the essential information in the limited space provided.

Some students wrote overly long responses or made contradictory statements. Careful thought and planning was required before writing, even for short and apparently straightforward questions. Students needed to do more than write a one-line statement. A brief expansion, explanation or example was also required in order to demonstrate complete understanding.

The remaining eight questions in Section A asked students to either describe or discuss two factors related to a specific aspect of the study design. Each of these questions was worth four marks. Students were unable to gain full marks where they merely stated or listed factors as each factor had to be elaborated on in some way. This often involved a more detailed explanation or expansion on the two key points with reference to relevant examples.

Many students used numbers or dot points to distinguish clearly between the two factors selected. This was a sensible approach as it helped students focus on the essential requirement of the question and avoid vagueness and repetition in their responses.

Sections B and C required students to write one extended response from Unit 3 and one extended response from Unit 4. Each of the extended response questions asked students to discuss an aspect of the four Areas of Study. This allowed a breadth of responses and more successful students discussed a range of factors relevant to the question. Less successful responses failed to do this, instead merely listing or reciting a series of points considered relevant. While such responses often demonstrated good knowledge of the topic, they lacked subtlety. Rather than thinking carefully about the specific demands of the question, they focused on a few key terms and wrote all they knew about them.

The more successful extended responses displayed good writing skills and a clear structure. These comprised an introduction, often expressing a contention or core argument, followed by a series of body paragraphs and a short conclusion. Successful body paragraphs dealt with a single element of the response, often commencing with a topic sentence and developing more detail as the paragraph progressed. Better students demonstrated awareness of political events and issues, particularly those which occurred during 2009, and used these effectively in their extended responses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A

Washington to Canberra

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	15	13	72	1.6

Conventions are a key feature of the Westminster system of responsible government. They are rules of conduct of government that are not codified in a written constitutional document but are followed out of tradition. Examples include the Prime Minister being a member of the Lower House of Parliament and the Governor-General acting on the advice of the Prime Minister.

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Less successful responses stated that a convention is a large meeting conducted to consider and discuss a particular matter. While such conventions have been held in Australia, this is not the meaning of the term generally associated with the Australian system of government.

Following is an example of a successful response.

A convention relates to an unwritten rule which is followed in practice. By convention, the Prime Minister is the leader of the party or parties which have a majority in the lower house. The position or role of the Prime Minister is not mentioned in the Constitution which means that conventions play a key role in our political system.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	24	12	22	16	28	2.1

This question presented difficulties for some students. Some responses described differences in the legal impact or effects of the judgments made by the US Supreme Court and the High Court of Australia. Such responses were less successful as they often involved matters of opinion or value judgments. More successful responses described two distinct differences between the structure or composition of the High Court of Australia and the US Supreme Court. Some responses highlighted two relevant aspects of either the US Supreme Court or of the High Court of Australia, but neglected to then indicate the point of difference with the other court involved.

The following is an example of a good response.

One major difference between the judiciary in either country is that in Australia there is a maximum age a justice may reach (as seen recently with Justice Kirby) before they must retire, whereas in the US system, a judge may continue until they chose to retire or die, or possibly get removed.

Another major difference between the two systems is the procedures of appointing judges. In the US system, the President recommends a candidate, who is then passed/denied by the Congress, whereas the legislative branch in the Australian system plays no part in the appointment of judges.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	7	17	20	51	3.1

Most students were well prepared for this question. The most frequently cited limits that the Congress can impose on the US President were:

- the US Congress can limit the power of the President entirely by removal of the President through the power of impeachment
- the US Congress can limit the decision-making powers of the President by refusing to agree to the President's legislative agenda
- the US Congress can overturn a Presidential veto with a 2/3 vote
- the US Congress has the power to investigate and disapprove of secretaries to the administration and justices to the Supreme Court nominated by the President
- delaying tactics can be employed in the Senate (the filibuster) to temporarily or entirely delay the passage of Bills sent to the Congress by the President.

The following response discussed two of these points. It also includes an effective example of each key idea.

Congress can limit the power of the President by having to approve key appointments to his executive and the Supreme Court. President Obama recently appointed Sonia Sotomayor who had to undergo a gruelling Senate committee hearing. It can also limit his powers of administering government programs by withholding funding as it controls appropriation bills. The hostile Congress threatened to cut funding to American troops in Iraq during the Bush administration.

Continuity and change

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	25	21	54	1.3



Malapportionment refers to an inequality in the numbers of voters in different electorates, which undermines the democratic value of ‘one vote, one value’. Australian House of Representatives electorates are required to be approximately equal in voter population and the Australian Electoral Commission is mandated to conduct a redistribution of electorate boundaries if the number of voters within them exceeds specific margins. Tasmania is malapportioned due to the Australian Constitution’s requirement for all original Australian states to have at least five House of Representatives electorates, resulting in the average number of voters in Tasmanian electorates being less than the average in mainland electorates. The Senate electorates (covering each state) are grossly malapportioned due the constitutional requirement for representation of all states by twelve Senators.

Most students had an understanding of malapportionment, although some limited their answer to an example without first defining the expression in general terms. It is difficult to receive full marks for this style of question simply by stating an example. Some students confused malapportionment with the gerrymander, a distinctly different concept.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	4	21	21	52	3.2

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has a number of functions, including:

- the AEC supports participation by actively promoting the legal requirement of enrolment of citizens by media advertising and mail
- the AEC supports representation by monitoring electorate population size and conducting regular redistributions of House of Representatives electorates
- the AEC administers public electoral funding received by candidates
- the AEC seeks to ensure elections are conducted in a free and unbiased manner
- the AEC seeks to ensure equality and fairness by encouraging all citizens to vote by providing a range of early voting and remote voting options
- the AEC conducts Constitutional referendums.

This straightforward question presented few difficulties to most students. Some students stated that a function of the AEC is to conduct ‘free and fair’ elections and to ensure the democratic principle of ‘one vote, one value’ is adhered to. While the AEC certainly has a role in ensuring voters can vote free from pressure or coercion, the AEC has no control over the fairness of the electoral process itself or ensuring each vote is of equal value. Such matters are influenced by the legislative provisions of the Electoral Act. This Act establishes the voting systems to be used to elect the Commonwealth Parliament and is made by the Parliament. The AEC merely administers the requirements of the Electoral Act.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	5	21	25	48	3.1

This question asked students to discuss two arguments in support of compulsory voting in Australia. Some students recognised the contentious nature of compulsory voting by offering a counter argument which added to the depth of their discussion. Arguments in favour of compulsory voting included:

- voting is a civic responsibility of citizens, requiring them to participate in the democratic process
- compulsory voting encourages citizens to take an interest in the candidates and policies being promoted at an election
- representation is maximised. Most electorates have voter turnout in excess of 90 per cent, thus the elected representative can be said to have greater legitimacy than in systems where voter turnout is much lower
- as a result of compulsory voting, the Australian Government has a stronger mandate to introduce its legislative program
- compulsory voting has an educative role as voters acquire some basic understanding of the way the political system operates
- rather than devoting resources encouraging people to vote, candidates for election can focus on policies and specific appeals to voters.

The following response contains two of these elements.

Compulsory voting encourages people to participate in the democratic process (some might say it forces them). It increases peoples’ awareness of political institutions and how they run. People are more inclined to take politics seriously and show an interest if they know they are going to have to vote. It increases the representative value of governments.

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Also, compulsory voting ensures that governments across Australia are elected by a true majority. Approximately 95% of Australian vote in each election which means that government gains a strong mandate from the people and are willing to implement their policies safe in the knowledge that they were elected by the majority.

People and policy

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	17	21	62	1.5

This question was well answered by most students. They clearly recognised that the term 'lobbyist' has a more specific meaning than merely pressuring the government in relation to an aspect of public policy or taking place in a demonstration or action mounted by an interest group. Some less successful responses stated that lobbyists engaged in the process of 'lobbying'. It is difficult to successfully define a term by using it in the definition. Although not essential, some responses cited specific examples of lobbyists such as former politicians Brian Burke or Graham Richardson.

This response defined the term lobbyist successfully.

A professional or professional group or organisation with the specific aim of gaining or altering policy outcomes by petitioning policy makers of behalf of interest group or stakeholders. Groups like Amnesty International may employ lobbyists to pressure government to legislate on human rights.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	9	25	20	36	2.6

This question asked students to describe two specific (as opposed to hypothetical) actions taken by the opposition in relation to recent federal domestic policy. It required students to have accurate knowledge of recent Australian domestic public policy formulation. This presented few difficulties for students who had followed political events throughout the year as several highly published policy issues were advanced by the government in 2009 which led to actions by the opposition.

The following response describes two actions taken by the opposition during 2009.

The Opposition recently sided with Greens, Independent and Family First Senators to block the government's Emissions Trading Scheme legislation from passing through the Senate. This allowed the Opposition to push for amendments to the bill so that they would accept it. The Opposition also attempted to block the government's economic stimulus package in the Senate, however, it could not get the minor party and independent Senators onside therefore was unable to stop the policy from being legislated.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	6	17	17	54	3.1

This question allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of the influence of international events and factors on domestic policy formulation. As some major international events have occurred in recent years, most students had few problems in stating two factors. However, less successful responses did not discuss the ways in which these factors or events had influenced an aspect of domestic policy. Typically, these responses nominated a factor such as the global economy or global financial crisis but then did not explain how this affected the formulation of Australian economic policy. The most frequently cited international factors included:

- the influence of climate change and the UN Copenhagen Climate Conference on the formulation of an emissions trading scheme in Australia
- the ongoing threat of global terrorism leading to a tightening of domestic security laws
- the global financial crisis and its effect on the Australian federal budget and the introduction of the stimulus package in early 2009
- consequences of civil war in Sri Lanka and the increased rate of unauthorised arrivals in Australian waters, putting pressure on government's immigration policies.

This response contained the key elements of the question.

One obvious international factor which has influenced domestic policy is the recent global financial crisis (GFC). The GFC led to changes in the 2008-09 budget composition and appears likely to impact on future budgets.



A second international factor which has influenced domestic policy has been terrorism and the subsequent 'war on terror'. This factor has led to new legislation regarding capturing terrorists within Australia and the ability to detain them.

Contemporary Australian foreign policy

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	23	37	40	1.2

Multilateralism involves groups of states or countries cooperating on an international issue in a way that may not necessarily be directly in support of individual national interests. It is an approach to foreign policy or foreign relations which emphasises the importance of an international community of nations working together, rather than individual nations pursuing their narrow self-interest, perhaps by seeking stronger relations with chosen partners or allies.

Some students mentioned the prominent role of multilateralism in the current government's foreign policy, referring to Australia's active role in forums such as the G20 Summit, the World Trade Organisation, APEC and the United Nations. These examples helped students demonstrate their understanding of the key element. A number of less successful students oversimplified the question by equating the term multilateralism with multilateral agreement. Such responses did not receive the maximum marks allocated to the question.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	6	17	26	49	3.2

Australia's foreign aid program has various objectives, including:

- promotion of Australia as a good global citizen. Aid can be regarded as the morally correct policy to help the less fortunate
- providing expertise and funding to develop long-term economic and social stability in developing countries, particularly in our region
- to maintain regional security interests and reduce the chances of so-called failed states in Australia's region
- to advance Australia's economic national interest. Stable, economically viable states in the region provide investment and trade opportunities for Australia.

This question was answered competently by most students. As an important component of Australia's foreign policy, the objectives of Australia's official foreign aid program broadly coincide with the aims of foreign policy in general. Less successful responses did not appreciate this and referred to the need to 'help' other countries without providing any meaningful link to Australian foreign policy. Such responses often struggled to find a second objective or provided an objective which repeated the first point.

The following response described two clear objectives of Australia's foreign aid program.

Australia's foreign aid program, put forward by AusAid, helps to improve the economies of poorer nations in our region so that they can become better trading partners and eventually bring further prosperity to Australia.

Foreign aid in the form of law enforcement and administrative personnel can also help promote stability in those nations and the region. This helps strengthen Australia's regional security as it helps to eliminate instability in our near neighbours.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	8	24	24	39	2.9

This question provided an opportunity for students to include specific examples of how the Australian Prime Minister can influence the formulation of Australian foreign policy, and many students took advantage of this opportunity. Without the use of such evidence, there was a risk of responses being too general or repetitive to receive full marks. The influences of the Prime Minister on the formulation of contemporary Australian foreign policy include:

- the Prime Minister is the head of government and chairs Cabinet meetings. Hence the Prime Minister is able to assume the power of key decision maker in relation to foreign policy
- foreign policy can be made by ministerial statement, not necessarily requiring parliamentary approval
- the prominent role of the Prime Minister in international forums and in dealings with the leaders of other nations
- the power of the Prime Minister to appoint Ministers to the key portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Trade



- the access of the Prime Minister to the expertise and advice of the bureaucracy via the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Prime Minister's own department.

Many successful responses displayed keen awareness of the active role that the current Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has played in recent foreign policy decisions. Typically, these responses discussed Mr Rudd's obvious interest and comfort in dealing with foreign policy matters including ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, attending meetings of the United Nations and G20, and extensive overseas travel. Some students discussed the influence on foreign policy by the former Australian prime minister, John Howard. As the Area of Study is called contemporary Australian foreign policy, such examples were not as useful. This is illustrated in the following response. While it is a generally competent answer, the first example it provided was not as valuable as the second.

The prime minister can influence foreign policy because of its secretive and clandestine nature. As a result, a lot of foreign policy decisions do not have to be sanctioned by parliament so the prime minister can decide the direction of Australian foreign policy and immediately act. A good example of this was in 2001 after the World Trade Centre terrorist attack, John Howard invoked the ANZUS treaty without even consulting his Cabinet.

The prime minister can also influence foreign policy because of his ability to promote himself on the world stage. Soon after he was elected, Kevin Rudd went on a 17 day world tour in order to meet the prominent leaders of the world. The international relationships the prime minister is able to create gives him a lot of influence when it comes to formulating foreign policy.

Section B – Extended response questions

Unit 3 – Democracy in the making

Question 1

Question chosen	0	1	2
%	1	45	53

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	0	1	1	1	3	2	4	5	4	5	4	9	9	13	12	10	7	5	2	1	12.4

Few students had difficulty responding to this question in an appropriate manner by addressing the key element of the assessment criteria which related to this Area of Study. Most students accepted the validity of the statement contained in the question, often by stating that both the United States and Australia are democracies, and both have their origins in the British model of government. Other similarities cited by many students included:

- a written Constitution
- a constitutional separation of power between the three arms of government
- a bicameral legislature
- the shared names and functions of the legislative branch of government: a popularly elected House of Representatives based on individual districts/electorates and a Senate representing the states
- equal state representation for each state in the Senate
- a federal system based on a division of power between federal and state governments
- the dominant role played by two large political parties.

In most responses, this analysis was followed by a discussion of the key differences between the US and Australian political systems. These differences include:

- the differing roles of political leadership in each system, including the Prime Minister and the President
- an elected versus an unelected Head of State
- the operation of the electoral systems. Many students discussed compulsory voting in Australia as a key difference in this regard
- the republican model of the US in comparison with Australia's constitutional monarchy
- the extensive system of checks and balances in the US
- key elements of the way the legislative branches operate in practice
- the significance of Westminster principles of responsible government in Australia
- a constitutionally entrenched Bill of Rights in the US.

Many responses concluded that, in practice, the US and Australian systems of government have more differences than similarities. In some less successful responses, this position contradicted an earlier contention that the differences are



relatively minor. This displayed a lack of planning and thought. Completing a detailed written plan would reduce the probability of such inconsistency emerging within a response. Several sophisticated responses discussed the notion that, as it evolves, the Australian system of government more closely resembles the US system. To bolster this argument, these responses pointed to the more 'Presidential' style of the Australian Prime Minister, the conduct of election campaigns and the expanding role of lobbyists in Australian politics and government.

While some responses discussed a single political institution or structure, most considered several, including the operation of the legislative branch, the role of political leadership and the systems of voting and elections. Well-structured responses devoted one or more paragraphs to each of these institutions.

As most students adopted a similar approach to the question, a key element of the more successful responses was knowledge of and confidence to use relevant evidence and examples, particularly in relation to the US political system. This relates directly to the second element of the examination's assessment criteria. Many students referred to the key differences between the nature and roles of the US President and the Australian Prime Minister, but comparatively few could then illustrate this with a specific example drawn from contemporary Australian and US politics. Such responses risked becoming little more than a list of general points, rather than a discussion as the question required. Having mentioned a point of similarity or difference, students needed to consider how that similarity or difference could be illustrated in some way. Most students would have studied numerous cases studies and examples during the year and they should be encouraged to use these in the extended responses.

Question 2

This question appealed to students with an understanding of the Australian political system and the confidence to engage in a crucial appraisal of one its major democratic values. The logical starting point for many students was to clearly define the term accountability. It involves situations in which people in positions of political power or influence are answerable or responsible to those who are affected by their decisions. Systems of government in which those exercising power are not accountable in this way are regarded as lacking a key element of democracy.

Many students successfully defined accountability but few could then explain why it is considered to be an important democratic value. Students who did make this link were rewarded as this demonstrated a more sophisticated appreciation of this aspect of the study design. Better students conveyed a conviction that democracy is not always assured and that people in power often find ways to subvert it. Weaker responses merely recited a list of ways in which Australian political institutions may fail to uphold accountability without any sense of engagement with or concern about the problems they were addressing.

Well-organised and well-structured responses discussed all three relevant political institutions: the Commonwealth Parliament, the Australian Constitution and the Commonwealth system of voting and elections. Several more specific aspects of each institution were then analysed. Many students were quite critical of the effectiveness of the Commonwealth Parliament as a means of achieving accountability. The operation of Questions without Notice (Question Time) in the Commonwealth Parliament was mentioned by many students. Better responses explained key aspects of the current operation of Question Time, highlighting ways in which the executive is able to reduce the effectiveness of this opportunity to hold the government accountable for its actions. Other aspects of parliament discussed by better responses included the role of the Presiding Officers (the Speaker and the President), the use of devices such as the gag and the guillotine, and the effectiveness of principles of responsible government, particularly individual ministerial responsibility.

Many responses were somewhat less critical of the electoral system. This indicated that while students supported some change in the operation of the Australian parliament, the element of continuity was stronger in relation to the electoral system. The role of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) in ensuring elections are conducted in a transparent and free manner was often cited. Regular redistributions of House of Representatives electorate boundaries conducted by the AEC was further evidence that the Australian electoral system meets key requirements of accountability. However, more successful responses delved into the system more deeply. In particular, reforms made to the Electoral Act in 2006 were subjected to critical analysis by some students who explained that withdrawing prisoners' voting rights, or reducing the time period for unenrolled citizens to enrol to vote, may weaken the value of accountability reflected in the electoral system. Stronger responses also cast some doubt over the effectiveness of the Senate voting system, as it is based on a significant malapportionment.

Some responses had little or nothing to say about the effectiveness of the Australian Constitution in upholding the democratic value of accountability. This was a weakness as it could be argued that an unelected Australian Head of State demonstrates an obvious failure of a key Australian political institution to reflect accountability. A brief



discussion of the dismissal of the Whitlam government by the then Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, in 1975 was a relevant example, and it was pleasing that many students had awareness of an event which remains a powerful reminder of the Constitutional authority of the Governor-General.

Although not a specific requirement of the question, some students referred to ways in which the three relevant Australian political institutions could be reformed so as to make them more accountable. This added discussion was useful, provided it did not dominate or overwhelm the key elements of the question.

Section C – Extended response questions

Unit 4 – The challenge of power

Question chosen	0	1	2
%	1	45	53

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	0	1	1	1	3	2	4	5	4	5	4	9	9	13	12	10	7	5	2	1	11.6

Question 1

This question tested students' appreciation of the public policy-making process in Australia. Many students demonstrated this, arguing that the influence of minor parties and independents varies considerably. In some instances, they play a vital role, while in others, they are effectively sidelined. Some weaker responses locked themselves into too categorical a position, by either strongly disagreeing or strongly agreeing with the contention within the question. This obliged them to focus on evidence which supported their argument, while ignoring the evidence which did not.

Although the question asked students to discuss two specific influences on the formulation of domestic policy in Australia, it was not essential that responses be limited to these factors. Numerous other factors and forces can exert influence over the public policy-making process. Many students broadly agreed with the contention contained in the question and, having done so, extended their discussion into consideration of other influences, including the role of the executive, interest groups, the media, the opposition and the bureaucracy. However, some students failed to recognise this possibility and hence placed limitations on the development of their responses. These students focused too heavily on the influence, or lack of influence, of minor parties and independents, and lacked the depth of knowledge to discuss their role in detail, producing responses which were too short to obtain a grade in the upper range.

Most responses made reference to the role of minor parties and independents in recent domestic policy formulation by the Rudd Government. The increase in the tax on ready to drink alcoholic drinks (so-called 'alcopops') and the 2009 Economic Stimulus Package were popular and quite appropriate examples of domestic policy making. These responses focused on the vital role played by the Australian Senate in policy formulation and most students were aware that minor parties and independents currently hold the balance of power in the Upper House. If the opposition will not support a government Bill, all seven minor party and independent Senators must vote with the government for legislation to pass. In discussing issues such as 'alcopops' and the stimulus package, some students displayed good knowledge of the roles of Senator Steve Fielding (Family First, Victoria), and Senator Nick Xenophon (Independent, South Australia). They were less knowledgeable of the role of the five Australian Greens Senators. It was disappointing that some students wrote quite extensive responses which failed to name a single minor party or independent member of parliament.

Very few students mentioned any of the three independents who are members of the current House of Representatives (Bob Katter [Kennedy], Tony Windsor [New England] and Rob Oakeshott [Lyne]). As the government holds a significant majority in the House of Representatives, these independents exercise comparatively little influence over policy formulation in the Lower House, and a recognition and discussion of that was justified, particularly in responses which agreed with the contention contained in the question. Better responses highlighted the policy-making influence of the Nationals (a minor party) when in coalition with the Liberal Party.

While some responses referred to several specific aspects of contemporary domestic public policy, others concentrated on a single policy issue. The formulation of the Rudd Government's emissions trading scheme (the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme or CPRS) was discussed by many students. This was a suitable choice as it contained many aspects of the policy formulation process. Many students recognised the emphasis placed on evidence in the assessment criteria. These students displayed extensive current knowledge of the formulation of the CPRS, and used it to demonstrate the



lack of influence of minor parties and independents in policy making in circumstances in which the opposition and the government can reach a bipartisan position.

Other responses used the CPRS as a case study in the policy formulation process more broadly, discussing the important role played by expert opinion, public consultation, lobbying by interest groups and international pressure in the development of the CPRS throughout 2008 and 2009. This was a successful approach, provided the response did not merely become a narrative or 'story' about the CPRS with few references to minor parties or independents, or acknowledgment that if circumstances were different, the minor party and independent Senators could become very influential players in the policy formulation process.

Question 2

This was a challenging question. In essence, it asked students to discuss the relative importance of two major influences on the formulation of contemporary Australian foreign policy: external, international forces, factors or issues; and domestic factors originating inside Australia, described in the question as 'domestic politics.' External issues include natural disasters and emergencies, terrorist attacks, climate change, pressure from allies, obligations under international treaties and conventions, and people seeking political asylum in Australia. Many students stressed the importance of such issues, arguing that, by its very nature, much Australian foreign policy is reactive, is made 'on the run' and does not seek to gauge the full political implications of the policy before it is implemented. Due to its geographic location, Australia is often called on or feels obliged to offer immediate assistance to people in desperate need of protection and the basic necessities of life. This aspect of foreign policy is largely bipartisan and so beyond the influence of domestic politics. It was pleasing that many students had excellent knowledge of recent Australian foreign policy responses to these external issues, including the 2009 Sumatran earthquake and the Samoan tsunami.

Some students misinterpreted the question by discussing the effects of foreign policy decisions on domestic politics rather than analysing the influence of domestic politics on the formulation of foreign policy.

Many students had difficulty interpreting the phrase 'domestic politics'. Comparatively few students discussed it directly in their responses and weaker students placed too much emphasis on external issues. Some substituted the words 'policy' or 'issues' in place of 'politics' and failed to refer to 'domestic politics' at all. Others assumed domestic politics referred to Australia's national interests, particularly economic interests, and argued that Australian foreign policy was clearly formulated in response to these interests. While these approaches were partially successful, they did not fully appreciate the meaning of domestic politics in its more literal sense. This relates to factors such as public opinion, the electoral appeal of particular foreign policies to Australian voters, interest group campaigns and the role of the media within Australia. Some of the more successful responses confronted the issue of how important and influential these factors are in the formulation of Australian foreign policy. The following excerpt illustrates this.

Foreign policy is not something that will affect most citizens' daily life and for this reason, it is likely to be ignored by voters . . . Another reason why foreign policy is not a domestic issue is that it's usually created in response to a specific event and not as part of an election promise or election platform. This also stops it becoming a big political issue because the Opposition can't dredge it up as a failed political promise.

The following excerpt also demonstrated a genuine understanding of this key element of the question.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in 2007 was in direct response to global pressure to act on climate change in a sustainable and multilateral way. Not only did Rudd's signing of the Protocol align Australia with a plethora of other nations, but it allowed him, along with his Cabinet Ministers, to play out a domestic policy game under the guise of fulfilling the Kyoto requirements, and respond to domestic calls to reduce carbon emissions in Australia with the Emissions Trading Scheme. This legislation has not only responded to international events but has become the foundation for the breakdown of the Opposition, and highlighted the government's commitment to proactive policy domestically.

More successful responses also discussed the possible tensions which can arise between the two major influences on Australian foreign policy referred to in the question. These responses addressed a key element of the examination assessment criteria: an evaluation of Australian foreign policy formulation. This was complemented by the use of relevant, contemporary evidence to support the discussion, which is another criteria element used to assess the examination. For instance, in late 2009 the Australian government policy response to increased numbers of people seeking political asylum in Australia (most notably, those taken on board the Australian ship, *Oceanic Viking*) demonstrated the pressures on Australian foreign policy from domestic political sources, as well as the pressure to respond to an immediate, external issue. Some students displayed excellent knowledge of this matter and, more significantly, could apply it to the requirements of the question. These responses discussed the pressure on Australia to act as a 'good global citizen' by allowing more people to apply for asylum within Australia, alongside pressure (much

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of it from domestic sources) not to weaken Australia's border protection laws or accede to the demands of people smugglers.