

THE GREAT STUDENT DEBATE



'THAT AUSTRALIAN POLITICS IS ALIVE AND WELL.'

An exciting national competition where students in Years 8, 9 and 10 engage in spirited debates, developing their skills while exploring key issues in Australian politics!

Eligibility: Open to students in Years 8, 9 and 10 who are new to competitive debating.



2026 COMPETITION DATES

Date	Information
27 January	Competition opens – visit seriouslysocial.org.au
5 March	Free information session about Australian politics – led by Dr Linda Botterill. Register interest at info@socialsciences.org.au
12 March	'The Great Student Debate Research Skills Webinar' – hosted by the National Library of Australia. Register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yCSOknaBOYeyFr-t2P0XpA
31 March	Entries close at 10am AEST
1 May	Finalist schools informed of their selection
17 September	Great Debate Competition – National Library of Australia, Canberra

FINALIST TEAMS WILL RECEIVE:

- a debate coaching workshop led by experts ahead of the competition,
- a contribution to travel costs to attend the debate workshop and competition in Canberra,
- the chance to showcase their skills at a live debate at the National Library of Australia!



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE EMAIL: info@socialsciences.org.au

Proudly supported by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, the University of Canberra and the National Library of Australia

2026 GREAT STUDENT DEBATE

Application Form

School information

School Name	
School Address	
State/Territory	
Postcode	
School Phone	

Contact teacher information

(A registered teacher responsible for student supervision and communication)

Full Name	
Position	
Email	
Mobile	

Debate team information

Students must be enrolled in **Years 8–10 in September 2026** and be **new to competitive debating** (having never competed outside their school). Teams can include any combination of these year levels, with registration submitted by the school.

Home-educated students may enter as a team, with all parents/carers providing signatures and contact details. If selected as finalists, all parents/carers will be contacted and terms and conditions adjusted accordingly.

	Student Name	Year Level
Speaker 1		
Speaker 2		
Speaker 3		

Debate submission information

Attach a **single PDF file** including:

- ✓ **Completed application form**
- ✓ **Three student debate plans** for the first, second, and third speakers of no more than 500 words per speaker, based on a 3 minute debate.

These should be prepared using the template found in the **Seriously Social Debate Guide for Teachers** on pages 14, 15 and 16 and included below in this application package.

The **Seriously Social Debate Kit: Australian politics is alive and well** is available to help students with debate plans.

Seriously Social documents are available at seriouslysocial.org.au

Declaration and consent

By submitting this application, the school agrees to:

- ✓ Comply with the competition rules and terms and conditions
- ✓ Ensure the nominated teacher is responsible for student supervision and consent
- ✓ Obtain parental permission for participation, travel, and media use

Authorised Representative Name	
Position	
Signature	
Date	

Submission instructions

Ensure pages 1 to 6 of this document are correctly filled in and return via email to **info@socialsciences.org.au**

Deadline: Tuesday, 31 March 2026, 10:00 AM AEST



Speaker 1 planner – *That Australian politics is alive and well*

This template provides you with a guide to plan your debate speech.

However, the sequence and order of the debate can be adapted in a way that best suits you, the topic, and your ideas.

	SCRIPT Circle: affirmative / negative
Opening introduction, e.g. 'Good afternoon everyone'	
Explain the debate topic and your team's interpretation of this.	
Explain your team's position— affirmative or negative.	
Present your main argument for or against the topic and the reasons why. List any additional arguments that you will present. Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence• Examples• Stories that help back up your argument• Sentence starters or expressions	
Conclude your speech by summarising the main points that you have made.	

500-word response in total for the entire plan.



Speaker 2 planner – *That Australian politics is alive and well*

This template provides you with a guide to plan your debate speech.

However, the sequence and order of the debate can be adapted in a way that best suits you, the topic and your ideas. The second speaker also needs to decide when to reinforce the first speaker's argument, introduce new ideas for the argument, and challenge the ideas of the first speaker from the opposing team.

SCRIPT Circle: affirmative / negative

Opening introduction, e.g.
'Good afternoon everyone'

Consider sentence starters or expressions that you can use for the rebuttal of the opposition's first speaker's arguments.

Reinforce the topic, your team's position and what the first speaker in your team has said, adding any more details or examples to strengthen the argument.

Present your main argument for or against the topic and the reasons why. List any additional arguments that you will present.

Consider:

- Evidence
- Examples
- Stories that help back up your argument
- Sentence starters or expressions

Conclude your speech by summarising the main points that you have made.

500-word response in total for the entire plan.



Speaker 3 planner – *That Australian politics is alive and well*

This template provides you with a guide to plan your debate speech. However, the sequence and order of the debate can be adapted in a way that best suits you, the topic and your ideas. The third speaker needs to decide when to reinforce the first and second speakers' arguments, introduce new ideas for the argument and challenge the ideas of the first and second speaker from the opposing team.

SCRIPT Circle: affirmative / negative

Opening introduction, e.g.
'Good afternoon everyone'

Consider sentence starters or expressions that you can use for the rebuttal of the opposition's first and second speakers' arguments.

Reinforce the topic, your team's position and what the first and second speaker in your team has said, adding any more details or examples to strengthen the argument.

Present your main argument for or against the topic and the reasons why. List any additional arguments that you will present.

Consider:

- Evidence
- Examples
- Stories that help back up your argument
- Sentence starters or expressions

Conclude your speech with a summary of the main points that your team have made and the arguments against your opposition team's arguments.

500-word response in total for the entire plan.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Seriously Social "Great School Debate"

1. Eligibility and Conditions of Entry

- 1.1 Entries are open to teams of three students from all school sectors. Home-educated students may also enter as a team, with terms and conditions adjusted accordingly.
- 1.2 Students must be enrolled in Years 8, 9 or 10 as of September 2026.
- 1.3 All team members must be new to competitive debating, meaning they have never competed in any level of debate competition outside their school.
- 1.4 Each school may enter a maximum of one team.
- 1.5 Schools must assign a registered schoolteacher who will take full responsibility for all parental consent and student protection requirements throughout the competition.

2. Entry Submission and Key Dates

- 2.1 Entries must be submitted via email to info@socialsciences.org.au by **Tuesday 31 March 2026, at 10:00 AM AEST**.
- 2.2 Selected finalist schools will be notified by **Friday, 1 May 2026**.
- 2.3 Public announcements will be made via Seriously Social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook, and seriouslysocial.org.au) after **Wednesday, 5 June 2026**.
- 2.4 Only selected finalist schools will receive direct communication from the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

3. Entry Requirements

- 3.1 There is no cost to enter the competition.
- 3.2 Schools must submit **a single PDF attachment** via email containing to info@socialsciences.org.au containing:
 - **The Great School Debate application form.**
 - **Three student debate plans** (one for each speaker).
 - The names of all team members*.
 - *If a student is unable to attend, a substitute may be considered with written approval via email to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

4. Competition Judging and Format

- 4.1 Judging of applications will be conducted by a panel of qualified educators with no affiliation to any applying schools. Finalists will be selected for debate plans that present creative, well-researched, well-referenced arguments, show thoughtful engagement with relevant rebuttals, and demonstrate broad audience appeal.
- 4.2 The final competition and an expert led debate workshop will be held in **Canberra Thursday 17 September 2026** at the National Library of Australia for the finalist teams.
- 4.3 Judging of the Great Student Debate will be informed by the judging guide found in the Seriously Social debate guide. The judges' decisions are final and not subject to appeal.



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Seriously Social "Great School Debate"

5. Financial Support for Finalist Schools

5.1 The Academy will provide a financial contribution for students located outside of a 100km radius of the ACT to participate in the Great Debate in Canberra during Social Sciences Week 2026.

5.2 Payments will be made to the school's nominated bank account within two weeks upon receipt of a signed participation agreement and a tax invoice from the finalist school.

5.3 Contributions to finalist teams are based on distances as measured in kilometres by Google Maps:

Location	Distance (km)	Contribution per student and teacher
VIC Remote	400km to 2000km to a capital city	\$300
NSW/SA Urban	Within 100km of a capital city	\$190
NSW/SA Regional	100km – 400km to a capital city	\$300
NSW/SA Remote	400km – 2000km to a capital city	\$410
NT/QLD/Tas Urban	Within 100km of a capital city	\$260
NT/QLD/TAS Regional	100km – 400km to a capital city	\$410
NT/QLD/TAS Remote	400km – 2000km to a capital city	\$560
WA Urban	Within 100km of a capital city	\$320
WA Regional	100km – 400km to a capital city	\$500
WA Remote	400km – 2000km to a capital city	\$675
Extremely Remote	More than 2000km to a capital city	\$770

5.4 Contribution amounts will be confirmed via email between the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and a nominated school leader (e.g., Business Service Manager, Accounts Officer, or Principal).



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Seriously Social "Great School Debate"

6. Supervision, Travel, and Liability

6.1 The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia does not take responsibility for any of the following:

- Parental permissions
- Travel, accommodation, or transport arrangements
- Student supervision
- Medical or first aid requirements
- Travel insurance
- Any other costs associated with a school excursion to Canberra

6.2 Schools are responsible for ensuring that all necessary permissions, travel arrangements, and supervision requirements are met.

6.3 Schools may be eligible for additional funding through the Australian Government's PACER program (www.pacer.org.au). It is the responsibility of individual schools to apply for PACER funding.

6.4 The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia is available to provide guidance and support to finalist schools regarding travel and accommodation arrangements, including sharing relevant information and contacts. However, all bookings and associated costs remain the full responsibility of the participating schools.

7. Privacy and Media Consent

7.1 The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, University of Canberra and the National Library of Australia will use photos and recordings from the Great School Debate for promotional and educational purposes.

7.2 Schools are advised that the Great Student Debate will form part of the 2026 Social Sciences Week Great Debate program with public tickets sold. Schools will be provided with free tickets for up to five adults.

7.3 Schools will be required to obtain parental consent for student images and recordings to be used for education and promotional purposes. This will be managed through the registered school contact.

8. Amendments and Discretion

8.1 The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions if necessary.

