



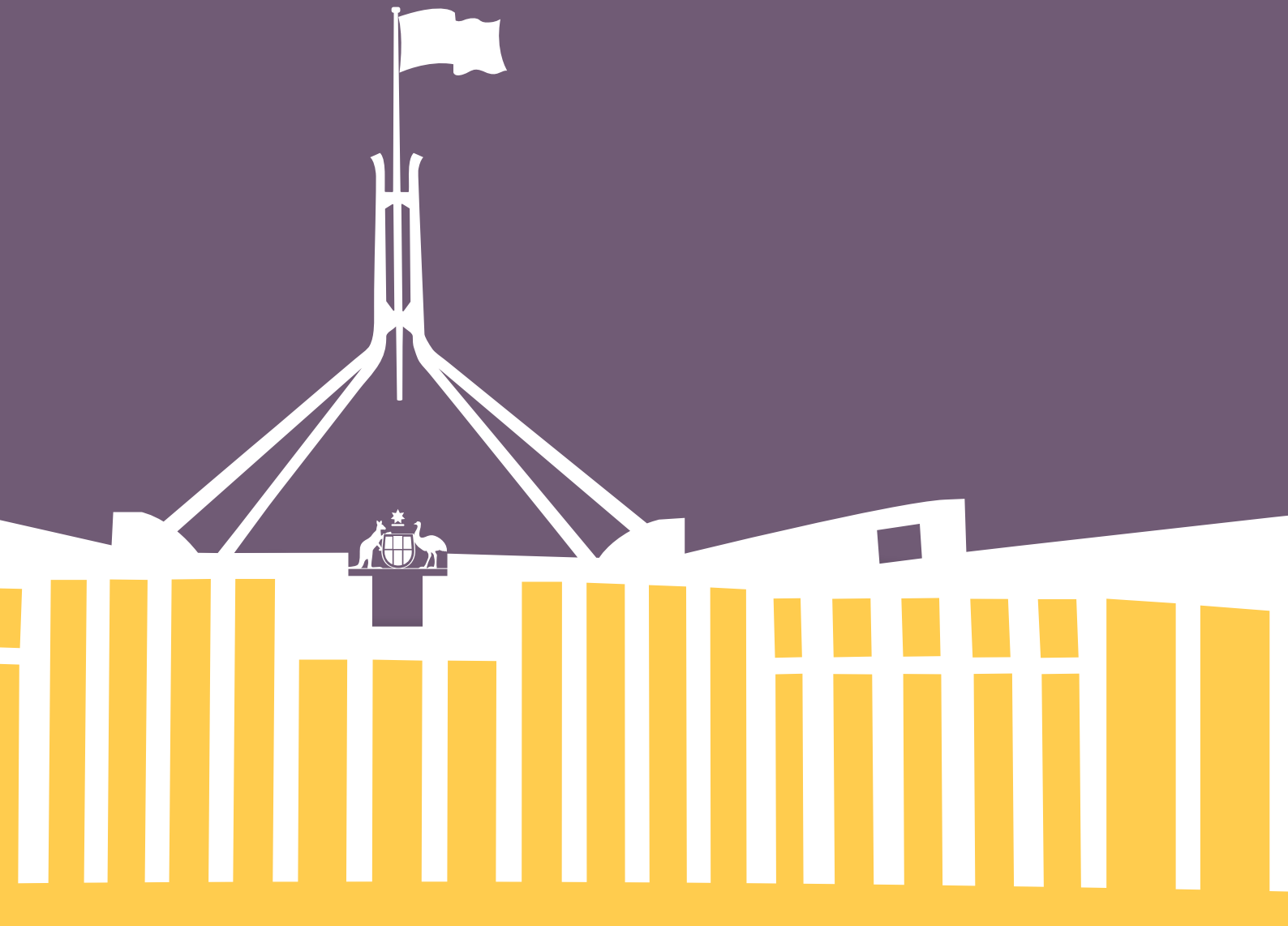
PARLIAMENTARY
EDUCATION
OFFICE

Your

PARLIAMENT

HOW THE AUSTRALIAN

PARLIAMENT WORKS





Welcome to the Australian Parliament—your Parliament!

The Australian Parliament belongs to all Australians. This booklet introduces the structure, roles and work of the Parliament. From the three levels of government to federal elections and how the Australian Government is held accountable, *Your Parliament* covers the key topics of Australia's system of government.

Through easy-to-understand text, graphics and images, *Your Parliament* will help readers understand how our democracy works. The booklet also looks at some of the ways you can be an active citizen by participating in our Parliament and democracy.

The format of *Your Parliament* allows teachers and students to select topics as they complete their units of work. To assist teachers to use this resource, *Your Parliament's* alignment with the Australian Civics and Citizenship Curriculum has been identified at the end of the booklet.

Your Parliament is also the perfect resource for those looking to refresh their knowledge of the Australian Parliament and be active citizens in Australia's democracy.



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The PEO acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, culture and community.
We pay our respects to elders past and present.



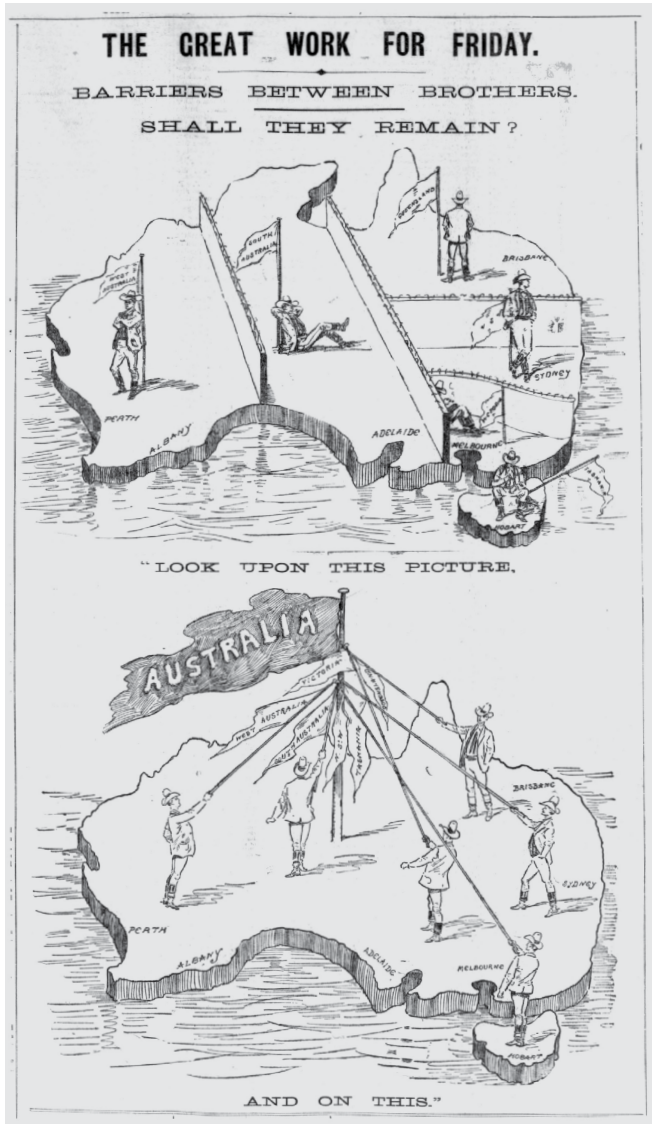
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Federation

For at least 60 000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived on these lands and practised traditional cultures and languages. In 1770 Lieutenant James Cook sailed along the east coast of the continent and claimed it for King George III of Great Britain and Ireland, and from the late 1700s British colonies were established. In 1901 these colonies (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) came together and formed the nation of Australia.



Pre-Federation

Before 1901 Australia did not exist as a nation. The 6 British colonies were like 6 separate countries. Each colony had a parliament that could make laws but was still under the authority of the British Parliament. Each had its own small defence force, issued its own stamps and collected tariffs – taxes – on goods that crossed its borders. The colonies even had different railway systems with different sized tracks, which made transport of people and goods across the continent difficult.

Federation fever

Popular support for Federation grew in the 1880s and 1890s as people realised the colonies would be stronger if they united. Federation would create a more democratic system of government and provide greater freedoms and protections for citizens. It was felt a national government was needed to make laws for matters such as trade, foreign policy, immigration and defence. Although most colonists were of British descent and looked to Britain as the 'mother country', they had started to see themselves as having a separate and unique identity. People who supported Federation felt that it was key to being and feeling more Australian.

In this cartoon from 1898, colonists are encouraged to break down the invisible barriers between them, and to federate.

FEDERATION TIMELINE

1889

Tenterfield oration
Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales, gives a speech calling for 'a great national government for all Australians'. This helps spark the Federation movement.

1891

First National Australasian Convention
A draft constitution for the new nation is written.

1897–98

Second National Australasian Convention
Representatives from each of the colonies (except Queensland and New Zealand, which had pulled out of the process) agree to changes to the draft constitution.

1898

First referendum
Voters in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania are asked to approve a constitution for the new nation.

1899

Secret premiers' conference
In order to win the support of the New South Wales and Queensland premiers, changes to the draft constitution are agreed to, including the location of the new national capital.



Path to Federation

Before the colonies could unite, they had to agree on how the new country would work and how to make sure it was fair for everyone. Federation required each colony to give some of their law-making powers to a national parliament. The colonies decided they needed a set of rules – a constitution – to explain how Australia should be run.

The Australian Constitution was written at a series of conventions – meetings – attended by representatives from the colonies. The Constitution was then approved in a number of referendums – votes of the people – held in each colony between June 1899 and July 1900. Finally, before Federation could proceed, the British Parliament had to approve the Constitution.

The timeline below shows some of the major events involved in achieving Federation.

Federation achieved

The Commonwealth of Australia was declared on 1 January 1901 at a ceremony held in Centennial Park in Sydney.

Many Australians welcomed nationhood. Up to 500 000 people lined the route of the Federation parade as it travelled from the Domain to Centennial Park and about 100 000 spectators witnessed the ceremony. During the proceedings, the first Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, was sworn in and Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, and ministers took the oath of office.



A Federation souvenir featuring Queen Victoria and the crests of the 6 new states of Australia.

Across Australia people celebrated with parades, school pageants, firework displays, sporting events, 'conversations' – discussion evenings – and special dinners. Elaborate Federation arches decorated main streets and buildings were lit up at night. In Sydney the celebrations continued for a week. It was the first time in history that a group of people had voted to create a new country.

Missing voices

Although there was widespread support for Federation, not everyone was able to take part in the process. The voices of some Australians were absent. Women in the colonies (with the exception of South Australia and Western Australia) were not able to vote, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were mostly excluded from all the proceedings and celebrations.

1899

Second referendum

All the colonies except Western Australia hold referendums and approve the proposed constitution.

1900

The constitution travels to Britain

In March, an official group of colonists including Edmund Barton—later to become Australia's first Prime Minister—travel to London to present the constitution to the British Parliament.

1900

The constitution passes

The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900 is passed by the British Parliament in July 1900.

1900

Western Australia holds referendum

In July the overwhelming majority of voters in Western Australia approve the Constitution.

1901

A new nation is born

On 1 January 1901, the colonies of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia unite and become the Commonwealth of Australia.



The Australian Constitution

Birth certificate of a nation

The Australian Constitution is the set of rules which governs Australia. The Constitution establishes the Australian Parliament, describes how Parliament works and what powers it has. It also outlines how the federal and state parliaments share power, and the roles of the executive government and the High Court of Australia. It is made up of 8 chapters and 128 sections.

Some of the key features of the Constitution include:

- an Australian Parliament and government, responsible for national decision-making and law-making
- a bicameral Parliament – one with two houses – which includes the King, (represented by the Governor-General), the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- 6 state governments, responsible for state matters
- power-sharing arrangements between the Australian and state parliaments
- the High Court of Australia, which is the final court of appeal.

The Constitution does not cover all aspects of the governing of Australia. For example, the Prime Minister is not mentioned in the Constitution. The role of the Prime Minister is an idea taken from the British system of government and it operates in Australia by custom and tradition, just as it does in Britain.

Can the Constitution be changed?

Yes! The Constitution can only be changed with the approval of the Australian people. A proposed change must be approved by the Parliament and then be voted on by Australians in a special vote called a referendum. A referendum is only passed if it is approved by a majority of voters in a majority of states, and by a majority of voters across the nation. This is known as a double majority. Territory voters are only counted in the national majority.

HOW A DOUBLE MAJORITY WORKS

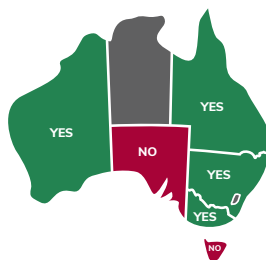
The Australian Constitution can only be changed with the support of the majority of Australian voters **AND** a majority of voters in a majority of states (ie. at least 4 states).

A REFERENDUM IS PASSED WHEN:



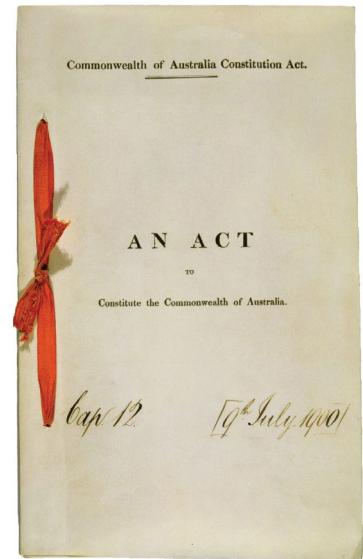
A majority – more than half – of voters from all around Australia vote **YES**.

AND



A majority – more than half – of voters in at least **4 states*** vote **YES**.

*Votes from the ACT, NT and other territories are counted in the national majority only.



Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900. An Act of the British Parliament was needed to create the Commonwealth of Australia.

Did you know?



The writers of the Australian Constitution looked at the constitutions of many countries. From the constitution of the United States, they took separate chapters for the Parliament, the Executive government and the Judiciary.

From Britain, they took the idea of government being part of and responsible to the Parliament. The way the Constitution can be changed by the Australian people in a referendum vote was inspired by the constitution of Switzerland.



Separation of powers

The first 3 chapters of the Constitution define 3 groups—the **Parliament**, the **Executive** and the **Judiciary**—and the roles they play in governing Australia. The power to make and manage Australian law is divided between these 3 groups to avoid any group having all the power. Each group works within defined areas of responsibility to keep a check on the actions of the others. This division is based on a principle called the separation of powers.



PARLIAMENT

Has the power to make and change law

The **Parliament** is made up of:

- the **King** (represented by the Governor-General),
- the **Senate** and
- the **House of Representatives**.

The Parliament has legislative power, which means it can make and change laws.



EXECUTIVE

Has the power to put law into action

The **Executive** is made up of:

- the **Prime Minister** and
- **ministers**.

The Executive puts laws into action and carries out the business of government. The Constitution gives the King executive power; in reality, it is the Prime Minister and ministers who do the work of the Executive. The Governor-General exercises the King's power on the advice of the Prime Minister.



JUDICIARY

Has the power to make judgements about the law

The **Judiciary** is made up of the **federal courts**, including the High Court.

The High Court interprets the Constitution and existing laws. It also resolves disagreements between the federal and state governments about their law-making powers.

Australia does not have a complete separation of powers because some of the roles of the Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary overlap. For example, the Prime Minister and ministers are part of the Executive and are members of Parliament, and members of the Judiciary (High Court judges) are appointed by the Governor-General, who is part of both the Parliament and the Executive.

Did you know?

Twenty referendums proposing 45 changes to the Constitution have been held since Federation. However, only 8 changes have been agreed to by the Australian people.



The Constitution and the High Court of Australia

The High Court of Australia interprets the Constitution and settles disputes about its meaning. It has the power to consider federal and state laws and decide if laws are within the powers granted in the Constitution. The High Court can invalidate any law or parts of a law it finds to be unconstitutional.

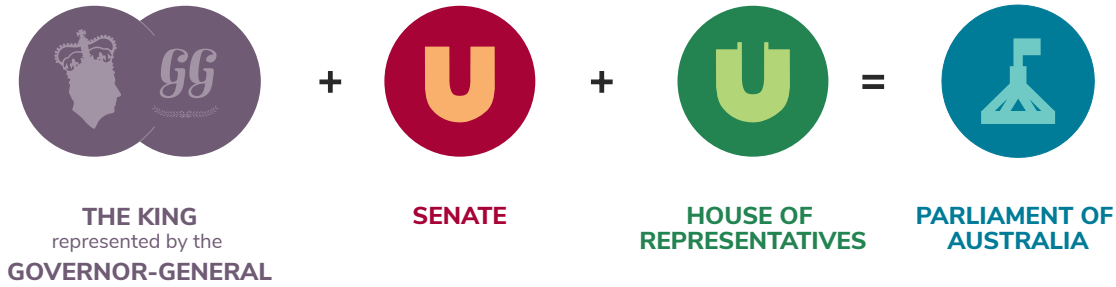


The High Court of Australia.



The Governor-General

Australia is a constitutional monarchy, which means that the King is our head of state. However, as the King lives in Britain, his powers are delegated to the Governor-General. The Governor-General has some of the responsibility for ensuring that Australia is governed according to the rules set out in the Constitution, and also has ceremonial and civic responsibilities. The Governor-General is appointed by the King, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, usually for a term of 5 years.



Constitutional role

The Australian Constitution states that the Australian Parliament will be made up of the monarch, a Senate, and a House of Representatives. This means the Governor-General (representing the King) is a part of the Australian Parliament. The Constitution gives the Governor-General the following roles:

- giving Royal Assent to a bill – proposed law – passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Governor-General may recommend changes to a bill; however, no Governor-General has ever refused to give Royal Assent
- starting the process for a federal election
- appointing times for Parliament to meet
- acting as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force.



The swearing-in ceremony in the Senate of the 28th Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC.



Ceremonial responsibilities

The Governor-General's ceremonial duties include:

- attending the opening of a new Parliament and making a speech about what the new government intends to do
- administering the oath of office to the Prime Minister, ministers, judges and other officials
- meeting foreign heads of state and ambassadors
- attending Anzac Day ceremonies
- awarding special honours.



When the Governor-General signs a bill, it is given Royal Assent.



Government House, Canberra.

Did you know?

The King appoints the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Governor-General acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and ministers and is politically neutral.



Civic role

Another important part of the role of the Governor-General is engaging with the Australian community. Some of the ways the Governor-General does this include:

- visiting places hit by national disaster, such as floods or fire
- opening and attending national and international meetings and conferences
- attending exhibitions, sporting events and functions as an official patron of organisations
- visiting regions or areas to meet people involved in a particular group or industry.



The Governor-General meeting members of the community.



Three levels of government

Governing Australia

There are three levels of government in Australia that work together to provide Australians with the services they need. Representatives are elected to federal, state or territory parliaments. Local council representatives are elected in separate elections.

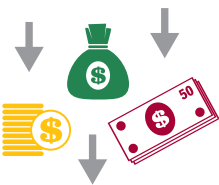
Different responsibilities

Each level of government provides different services to Australians. Sometimes these responsibilities overlap. For example, each level of government contributes money towards building and maintaining roads.

HOW GOVERNMENTS IN AUSTRALIA RAISE AND SPEND MONEY



The **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT** raises money through taxing incomes, spending and businesses.

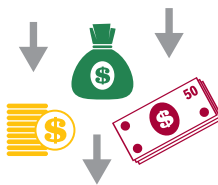


FEDERAL MATTERS SUCH AS

- MEDICARE
- DEFENCE
- IMMIGRATION
- FOREIGN POLICY



STATE/TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS receive more than half their money from the federal government and also collect taxes.



STATE MATTERS SUCH AS

- ROADS
- HOUSING
- PRISONS
- PUBLIC TRANSPORT
- POLICE and AMBULANCE SERVICES



LOCAL COUNCILS collect taxes (rates) from all local property owners and receive money from the federal and state governments.



LOCAL MATTERS SUCH AS

- TOWN PLANNING
- SEWERAGE
- LOCAL ROADS
- RUBBISH COLLECTION

Territory governments

Section 122 of the Constitution gives the federal Parliament the power to make laws for territories. The federal Parliament gave the Northern Territory self-government in 1978 and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in 1988. Both territories now have parliaments that are unicameral - they have one house called a legislative assembly. The ACT is unique in Australia because its parliament combines the responsibilities of both a local and state government.



Division of powers

How the levels of government work together is sometimes referred to as the division of powers. Under the Australian Constitution, each state kept its own parliament and most of its law-making powers. However, some state powers were transferred to the new federal Parliament which was given responsibility for matters that affected the whole nation.

CONCURRENT POWERS:

Section 51 of the Constitution lists 39 areas where the federal Parliament has law-making powers. These responsibilities—for example, taxation—can be shared with state parliaments and are known as **concurrent** powers.

EXCLUSIVE POWERS:

Other sections of the Constitution describe **exclusive** law-making powers of the federal Parliament—for example, the issuing of money, and the Commonwealth public service. State parliaments cannot make laws in these areas.

RESIDUAL POWERS:

If an area is not specifically listed in the Constitution, it remains the responsibility of the state parliaments and is known as a **residual** power—for example, the running of public schools and hospitals.

Local governments

Local councils (sometimes called Local Government Areas or LGAs) are not mentioned in the Australian Constitution but have been set up by state governments to look after the specific needs of a city or regional community. Each state and the Northern Territory has a Local Government Act that provides the rules for the creation and operation of councils, municipalities or shires.

Resolving conflicts

Because the federal Parliament and the state parliaments can make laws in the same areas, sometimes these laws conflict. Section 109 of the Constitution states that if a state parliament and the federal Parliament pass conflicting laws on the same subject, then the federal law overrides the state law.

Section 122 of the Constitution allows the federal Parliament to override a territory law at any time. The federal Parliament has only used this power a few times, and usually in cases where the territory law is controversial.

If it is unclear which level of government is responsible for law-making in a particular area, a dispute can be resolved by the High Court of Australia.



Protesters at the Franklin River.

Did you know?

Australia has one federal government, 6 state and 2 territory governments, and over 530 local councils. This means most Australians are governed by 3 sets of laws.





Australia's Parliament House

The rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne over which should be Australia's national capital led to the decision to establish a new capital city. Section 125 of the Australian Constitution states the national capital must be located in New South Wales but not within 100 miles (160 kilometres) of Sydney. It also says the Australian 'Parliament shall sit at Melbourne until it meets at the seat of Government'.

On 9 May 1901, the first Australian Parliament met in Melbourne. Officially opened by the Duke of Cornwall and York (later King George V) at a lavish ceremony held in the Exhibition Building, members of parliament were sworn in by the Governor-General. They then travelled by foot and horse-drawn carriage to Victoria's Parliament House, the temporary home of the Australian Parliament until 1927, for the first sessions of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Thirty-five different sites were investigated before the Canberra region was chosen to be the national capital in 1908. This area is part of the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. At the time, the area was used for farming. An international competition was held to design the new city and in 1912 American architect Walter Burley Griffin was selected as the winner. Construction of Canberra began the following year.



The Duke of Cornwall and York opens the first federal Parliament, 9 May 1901.

Provisional Parliament House

Planning for a permanent Parliament House was put aside during the First World War and, in 1921, the Australian Government decided to construct a provisional – temporary – building. Provisional (Old) Parliament House opened in 1927. It was designed to last for 50 years, and was a modest and functional building with 184 rooms. By the 1960s the Parliament had outgrown this building; over 3000 people were working in a space originally designed for 300. Australia's Parliament needed a permanent home.



Provisional Parliament House in Canberra, 1940s. Today the building is known as Old Parliament House.

A permanent home

On 18 September 1980, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser broke the ground to officially start construction on a new and permanent Parliament House. An international competition was held and Mitchell/Giurgola and Thorp Architects' design was selected from 329 entries. Ten thousand people worked on the construction of the building, which is made almost entirely of Australian materials. It is 300 metres long and 300 metres wide, has more than 4500 rooms and is designed to last for 200 years. The distinctive flagpole marks the exact centre of the building, stands 81 metres high and weighs 220 tonnes. Australian Parliament House was opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 9 May 1988.



The Senate and House of Representatives

Within Australian Parliament House there are the two Houses of Parliament—the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The design of Parliament House separates the two houses of Parliament. The central zone contains ceremonial and public spaces that separate the House of Representatives on the eastern side of the building from the Senate on the western side. The executive government wing is at the southern end. The design reflects and represents Australia’s bicameral parliamentary system, in which laws can only be passed if both the Senate and the House of Representatives agree. The building is built into Capital Hill to symbolise the relationship between the citizens and their representatives in Australia’s system of government, that the representatives speak for and are not above the people.

The colours of the houses are based on those used in the British Parliament, with red for the Senate and green for the House of Representatives. These traditionally rich colours have been adapted; the green used in the House and the red in the Senate are similar to the grey-green and red ochre colours of the Australian landscape.

Did you know?

Many of our parliamentary traditions have been influenced by both the United States and British (Westminster) systems. The names Senate and House of Representatives come from the United States Congress. The use of red and green are a tradition of the British Parliament.



The House of Representatives.



The Senate.



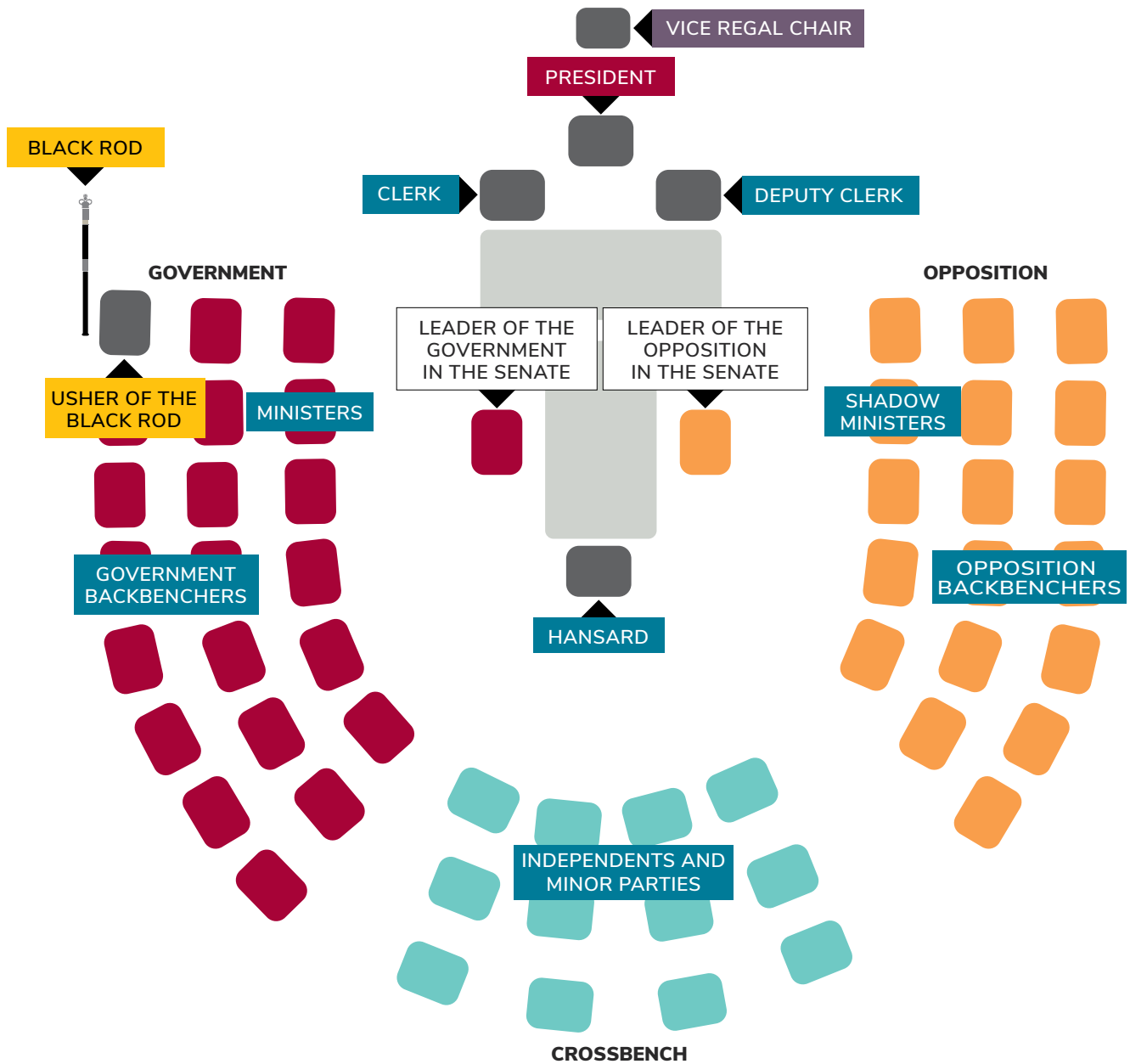
In this photograph, Australia’s permanent Parliament House is in the foreground, while the Provisional (Old) Parliament House can be seen at the top of the image.

“ This building will become for our nation both a forum for our differences and the instrument of our unity. A building for all Australians, a Parliament reflecting the diversity of our entire society and responding to the needs of the whole community. ”

Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the opening of Australia’s Parliament House in 1988.



The Senate



SENATE

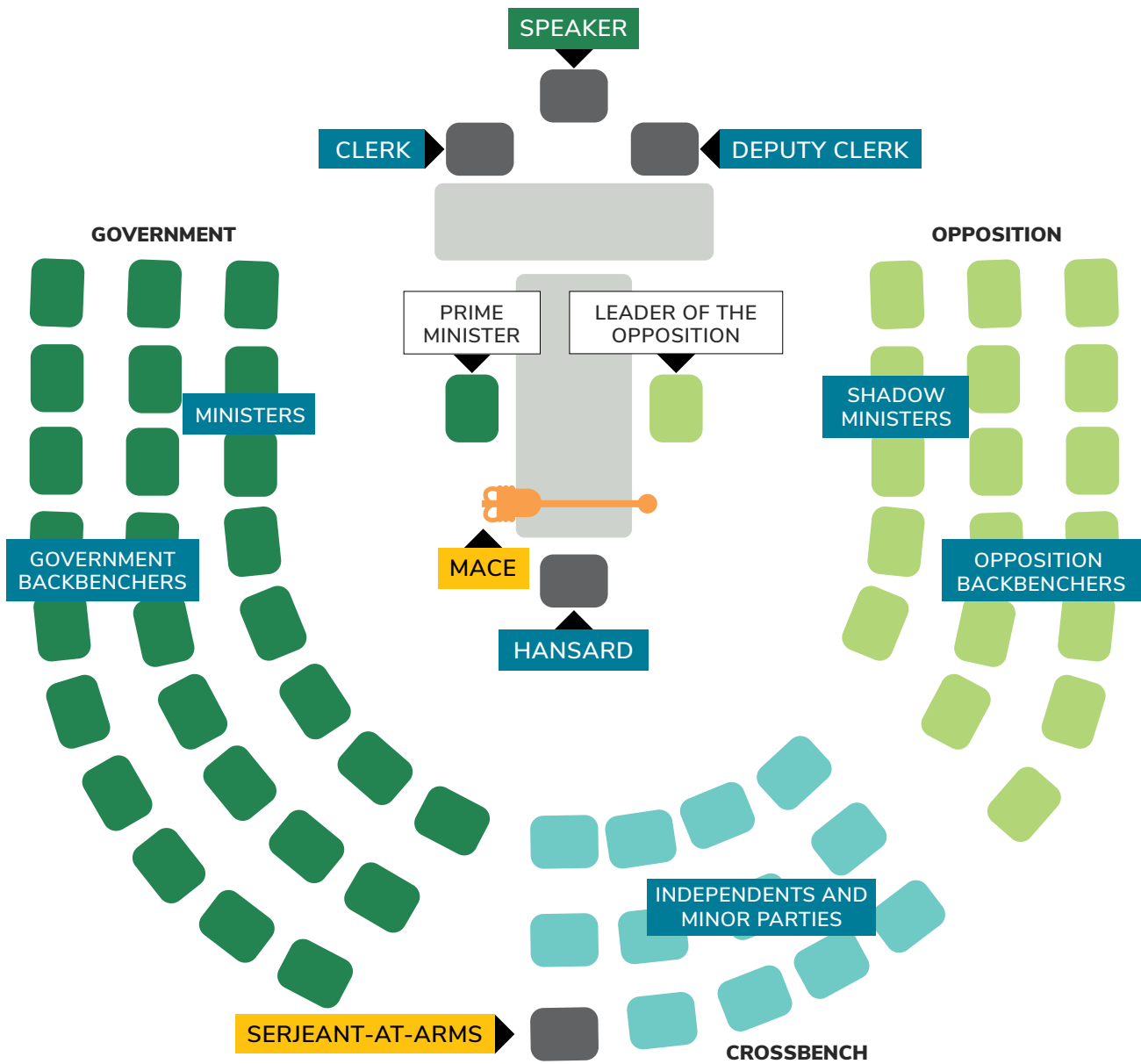
- The **President** is a senator who is responsible for running the meetings of the Senate.
- The **Vice-Regal chair** is used by the King or Governor-General. When the Vice-Regal chair is occupied, it is moved forward, and the President's chair is moved to the right.
- The **Usher of the Black Rod** is a non-elected parliamentary officer who assists the President to maintain order and helps to run the Senate.
- The **Black Rod** is a ceremonial object carried by the Usher of the Black Rod. When the Senate is in session and the Black Rod is not in use, it stands upright beside the Usher of the Black Rod's chair.

BOTH HOUSES

- A **minister** is in charge of a government department that puts law into action.
- **Shadow ministers** are opposition members who shadow – look closely at – the actions of government ministers.
- **Backbenchers** are members of parliament who are not ministers or shadow ministers. They can draw attention to issues in their community by speaking about them in Parliament.
- The **crossbench** are elected representatives who are not part of the government or opposition. They can either be independents or minor party members.



The House of Representatives



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- ➔ **Hansard** is the official written record of what is said in Parliament. The people who work to create Hansard are called Hansard editors.
- ➔ The **Clerk** is the top level non-elected parliamentary officer in the Senate and House. The Clerk and **Deputy Clerk** record meeting decisions and advise members of parliament about meeting rules.

- ➔ The **Speaker** is a member of the House of Representatives who is responsible for running the meetings of the House of Representatives.
- ➔ The Prime Minister is the leader of the government. By tradition they are always a member of the House.

- ➔ The **Serjeant-at-Arms** is a non-elected parliamentary officer who assists the Speaker to maintain order and helps to run the House of Representatives.
- ➔ The **Mace** is the symbol of the authority of the House of Representatives and the Speaker. At the start of each sitting day, the Mace is carried into the House by the Serjeant-at-Arms and placed on the central table where it sits while the House is meeting.



Electing members of parliament

Representative democracy

Australia is a representative democracy, which means the Australian people elect members of parliament to make laws and decisions on their behalf. All Australians aged 18 years and over must enrol and vote in elections.

The Australian Parliament is bicameral which means that it consists of two houses—the Senate and the House of Representatives.

There are 150 members in the House of Representatives. Each member represents an electorate in Australia. Electorates are based on population: on average, 120,658 voters live in each electorate. This means that states with larger populations have more electorates and more members in the House.

The Senate has 76 senators. Each Australian state is represented by 12 senators. The Australian Constitution gives each state equal representation in the Senate so states with larger populations did not dominate the Parliament. Since 1975, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have each been represented by 2 senators.

Did you know?

Australia is one of the few countries in the world where voting is compulsory. This was introduced in 1924.



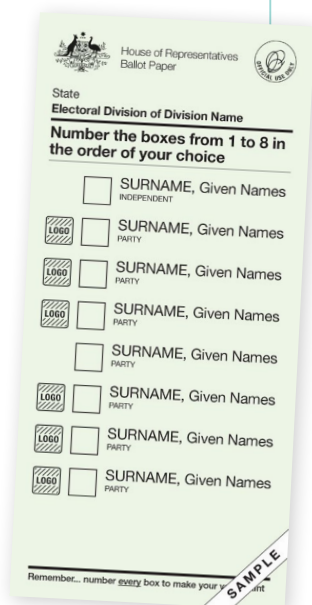
Elections

House of Representatives

Elections for the House of Representatives use a preferential voting system to elect one member for each electorate. A candidate must get an absolute majority – more than 50% of the votes – to be elected.

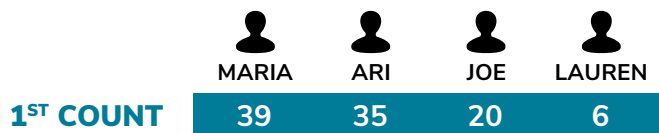
Voters write a number beside the name of every candidate on the ballot paper: 1 for their first preference, 2 for the second preference and so on.

If a candidate gets an absolute majority of first preference votes, that candidate wins. If no candidate has more than 50% of first preference votes, then the candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and their votes are transferred to the remaining candidates according to voters' second preferences. This process of excluding candidates and redistributing votes continues until one candidate achieves an absolute majority.

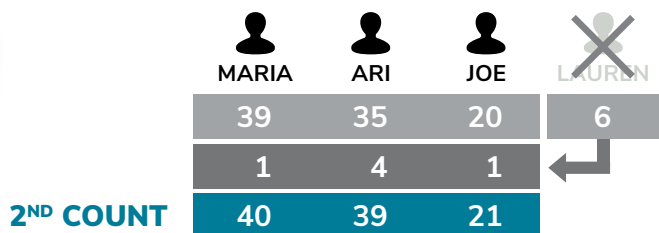


HOW PREFERENTIAL VOTING WORKS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

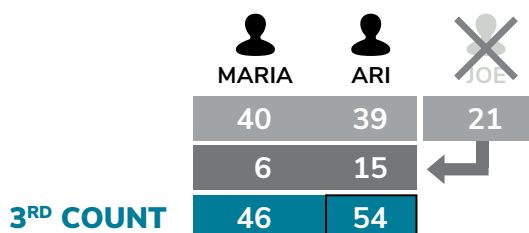
To be elected, a candidate must have an absolute majority of votes (more than 50% of the total votes). In the example below using 100 votes, the absolute majority is 51 votes or more.



No one has 51 or more votes, so **Lauren's votes are transferred** (distributed) according to second preferences.



No one has 51 or more votes, so **Joe's votes are transferred** (distributed) according to second preferences.



Ari is elected with 54 votes.



Senate

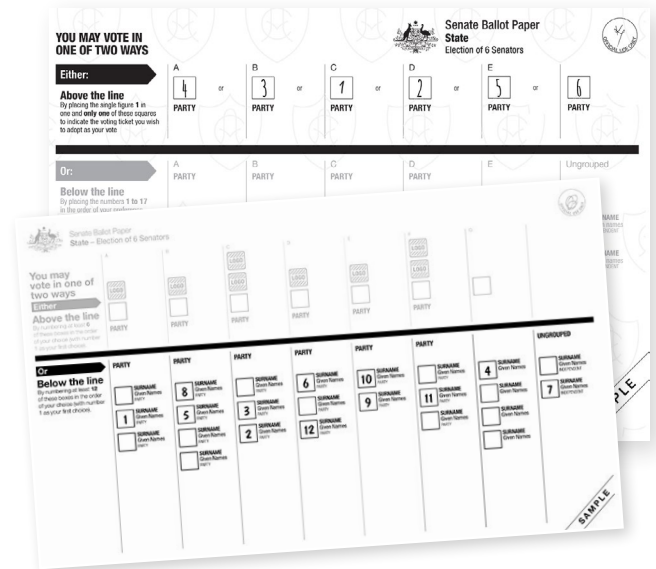
In Senate elections, Australians vote to fill more than one vacancy. Elections for the Senate use a preferential voting system known as proportional representation. This means senators must get a quota – a minimum number – of votes.

The number of votes required is identified by dividing the total number of votes (in each state or territory) by one more than the number of senators to be elected and then adding one to the result. This means it is not unusual for a wider range of independents and minor parties to be elected to the Senate than the House of Representatives.

Senate ballot papers are divided by a thick black line into 2 sections and voters have the choice of voting 'above the line' or 'below the line'.

Above-the-line voting requires voters to number at least 6 boxes from 1 to 6 for their chosen parties or groups. Voters' preferences are distributed in the order that the candidates in the chosen parties or groups are listed below the line. Preferences are distributed to the party or group of first choice, then second choice and so on, until all preferences are distributed.

Below-the-line voting requires voters to number at least 12 boxes from 1 to 12 for their chosen individual candidates. Voters' preferences are distributed to the candidates in the order of choice, as numbered on the ballot paper.



When are federal elections held?

Under section 28 of the Australian Constitution, members of the House of Representatives are elected for a maximum of 3 years, although elections may be called earlier.

State senators are elected for a period of 6 years. The Senate is normally elected on a rotating basis, with half the state senators elected every 3 years. This is known as a half-senate election. Territory senators serve the same term as members of the House of Representatives.

Usually, when an election for the House of Representatives is called, a half-senate election is held at the same time. Newly elected state senators begin their term on 1 July following the election.

Double dissolution

A double dissolution election happens when the Governor-General dissolves – shuts down – both the Senate and the House of Representatives, meaning every seat in Parliament is vacant. This is the only occasion all senators stand for election at the same time.

This type of election is held to resolve a disagreement between the Senate and House. A special meeting of both the Senate and House – called a joint sitting – can be held after this type of election to resolve an ongoing deadlock.

There have been 7 double dissolutions of the Australian Parliament: in 1914, 1951, 1974, 1975, 1983, 1987 and 2016. There has only ever been one joint sitting, which was in 1974.

CALCULATING THE QUOTA FOR ELECTING STATE SENATORS

QUOTA EQUATION

$$\frac{\text{TOTAL VOTES}}{\text{SENATORS REQUIRED} + 1} + 1 = \text{QUOTA}$$

EXAMPLE

700 000 TOTAL VOTERS
6 SENATORS REQUIRED

$$\frac{700\,000}{6 + 1} + 1 = \text{QUOTA}$$

$$700\,000 \div 7 = 100\,000$$

$$100\,000 + 1 = \text{100 001}$$

This example shows how the quota for electing 6 state senators are calculated.



Representation

Parliament represents all Australians. It is the job of each member of parliament to speak for and make decisions on behalf of the people who live in their community – their constituents.

For members of the House of Representatives, their constituents are the people who live in their electorate. For senators, it is all of the people in their state or territory.

Representatives know about the issues that affect their constituents because when Parliament is not sitting they meet with, listen to and work with the people they represent to understand their concerns.

WHAT MEMBERS DO IN THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT



DEBATE and vote on bills – proposed laws



REPRESENT the views of people in their electorate or state/territory



DISCUSS issues of national and international importance



ATTEND parliamentary party meetings to **DECIDE** on policies



SCRUTINISE – closely examine – the work of the government

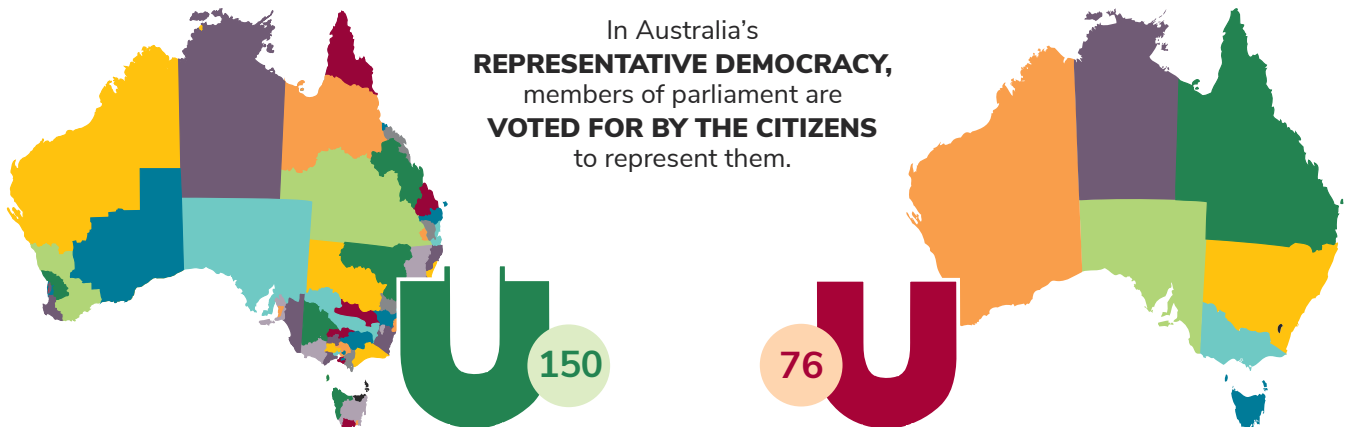


Work on parliamentary committees to **EXAMINE** important issues

Political parties

Most members of parliament belong to a political party and are elected to Parliament as a member of that party. A political party is an organisation that represents a particular group of people or set of ideas. It aims to have members elected to Parliament so their ideas can affect the way Australia is governed.

Large political parties aim to have enough of their members elected to Parliament to form government. This requires a political party or coalition of parties to have a majority of its members elected in the House of Representatives. Minor parties and independents are also represented in the Parliament.





Working together

Even though political parties have different ideas about how to solve the issues facing Australia, they all want to represent their constituents and do what they believe is right for Australia. To do this, members of parliament work together to:

- write and support bills – proposed laws
- investigate and make recommendations about issues in committees
- raise awareness of issues facing Australians.

Did you know?

Crossing the floor



Members of parliament may 'cross the floor', which means voting against the decisions of their party. This is rare because of strong party loyalty. In the past, crossing the floor was more common. Senator Reg Wright, who served in Parliament from 1950 to 1978 crossed the floor a record 150 times!



Senators and members speak on behalf of their constituents in the Senate and House of Representatives.

A TYPICAL DAY AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Parliament meets for about 59 days a year. These meeting days are called sitting days. The Senate and House meet for 4 sitting days per week for an average of 11 hours a day. It is not unusual for members of parliament to begin their day with a breakfast meeting at 7am and end at 10pm or later.

When not in the chamber, members of parliament meet with constituents, prepare speeches and serve on parliamentary committees.

Committee work is a significant part of the work of most members of parliament and offers further opportunity to consider bills and connect with the community. This diary of a typical day at Parliament House shows us how a member of parliament might spend their day.

16 MON	17 TUES	18 WED	19 THUR	20 FRI	2026 March
	07:00 Breakfast meeting with schools about healthy food in school canteens			15:30 Meeting with a constituent from the electorate about an immigration issue	
	08:00 Meet with advisors to review the day's schedule			16:00 Meeting with a lobby group from the food industry to hear its views on the junk food bill	
	09:00 Party meeting to discuss policies and prepare for Question Time			16:30 Committee hearing question witness groups about cybercrime	
	10:00 Office to read notes and prepare questions for committee hearing into cybercrime			18:00 Radio interview about banning junk food advertising on television	
	10:30 Speech in chamber on the government's bill to ban junk food in school canteens			18:30 Present petition to the House on behalf of constituents calling on the government to ban junk food advertising during children's programs on television	
	11:00 Committee hearing into pressures faced by secondary school students			19:00 Speak at dinner function hosted by the Australian Film, Television and Radio School	
	12:00 Working lunch with Year 10 students from the electorate to hear about how they juggle study and part-time work			20:00 TV interview about banning junk food advertising on television	
	13:00 Meeting with media advisor to prepare for radio interview this afternoon			20:45 Debrief with staff	
	14:00 Question Time ask the government about its policy on junk food advertising			21:20 Plan for tomorrow	
				22:00 END OF DAY	



Forming government

The Australian Government is formed in the House of Representatives. After a federal election, the party (or coalition of parties) that has the support of more than half the members (at least 76) in the House, demonstrates to the Governor-General that they have the numbers to form government. Usually, this is done by one party or coalition winning 76 or more seats themselves at the general election.

There are also members of the government in the Senate. The government may or may not hold the majority (more than half- at least 39) of seats in the Senate.

The Prime Minister is the leader of the Australian Government and by convention (tradition) is a member of the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister is chosen as leader by members of the party in government. The Prime Minister can keep their job as long as they are a member of parliament and have the support of the government.

Ministers

Ministers are members of the government who have each been given a particular area of responsibility called a portfolio. They can be members of the House of Representatives or the Senate. Most ministers are in charge of a government department, such as the Department of Defence, Department of Health or Treasury. Ministers and the prime minister make up a group called the executive government. The executive makes decisions about how the country should be run and administers – puts into action – laws made by the Parliament.

Cabinet

The most high-profile portfolios are given to the most experienced government members. These senior ministers and the prime minister form Cabinet. This is the main decision-making group within executive government.

This group meets on a regular basis and ministers present bills – proposed laws – prepared by their departments for discussion. Cabinet decides if the bills should be introduced into Parliament or if changes should be made. They spend a lot of time discussing national problems and how these can be solved.

The Cabinet Room is located in Parliament House opposite the prime minister's office and close to ministers' offices. The room is very secure and mobile phones and computers cannot be used. High security is essential because Cabinet discusses matters that affect national security.



The Cabinet Room, Australian Parliament House.



Did you know?

The ceiling in the Cabinet Room has timber marquetry panels inlaid with eucalyptus leaves. Hidden among the leaves is a cicada, a dragonfly and a blowfly. Despite these 'bugs', the room is highly secure so ministers can discuss matters which affect the nation.





Opposition

The opposition is the largest party or coalition of parties that is not in government. Its main role is to scrutinise – closely examine – the work of the government. The opposition also wants voters to see it as the ‘alternative government’. It sets out ideas and plans for how it would govern the country, explaining why it believes it would do a better job than the current government.

Shadow ministers

Shadow ministers are members of the opposition, chosen by the Leader of the Opposition. The shadow ministry has the important responsibility of scrutinising the work of the government in their portfolio. Each shadow minister concentrates on the work of a particular minister and government department. Shadow ministers also put forward and explain opposition policies.

Did you know?

Ministers and shadow ministers are also referred to as frontbenchers because they sit on the front row of the seats in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. Backbenchers are members of parliament who are not ministers or shadow ministers; they sit in the rows of seats behind the frontbench.



Crossbench

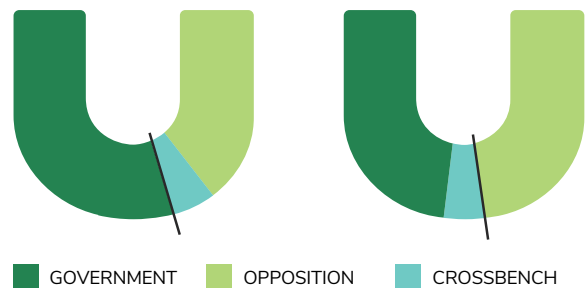
Minor parties and independents are known as the crossbench. This name refers to the benches in the houses that sit between the government and opposition. Crossbenchers play a role in decision-making and in scrutinising the work of the government. To be passed by the Parliament, a bill or proposal needs the support of the majority in both the Senate and the House. Crossbench votes can be important in deciding an issue, particularly in the Senate where the government usually doesn't have a majority.

Majority and minority government

Usually, a single party or coalition of parties is voted in with a majority of members, which is known as a majority government. If, after a federal election, no political party or coalition of parties achieves a majority in the House, it is called a hung parliament. It is still possible for a government to be formed if a party can reach majority support through agreement with independent and/or minor party members. This type of government is known as a minority government.

MAJORITY GOVERNMENT

MINORITY GOVERNMENT



Government is formed in the House of Representatives.



Making laws

One of the main roles of the Parliament is to make new laws and amend – change – old ones. Laws are rules made by parliaments and courts that have legal consequences if they are not followed.

Some laws tell us how we can play our part as responsible citizens, for example, laws about voting and discrimination. Other laws seek to look after people, such as laws providing money for health or education. Laws can also be made in response to a specific issue, such as laws to tackle cyberbullying. The Parliament also makes laws on important national matters such as defence, immigration and taxation.

In Parliament, a proposal for a new law or a change to an existing one is called a bill.

WHERE DO IDEAS FOR NEW LAWS COME FROM?



COMMITTEES

The Parliament can set up a parliamentary committee to examine a current issue. If the issue requires action, the committee may suggest a bill be introduced into Parliament.



GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Government departments advise their minister about specific problems that exist. The minister may then arrange for a bill to be drafted to fix the problem.



POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties have their own ideas about how Australia should be governed. In Parliament, members introduce bills which aim to put their party's ideas into action.



PUBLIC

Members of the public and community groups may be interested in changing or improving a specific area of Australian law. They can approach members of parliament with suggestions for bills and vote for political parties they think will make good laws.



PRIVATE MEMBERS' OR SENATORS' BILLS

Non-government members of parliament and government backbenchers can introduce bills. These are called private senators' or private members' bills.



LOBBY GROUPS

Businesses, industry groups and trade unions lobby – try to influence – the government to develop and pass bills they think are important.

Introducing bills

Most bills are introduced by the government, although any member of parliament can propose a bill. Bills can begin in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, except for bills that collect and spend taxpayers' money, which must be introduced in the House. About 90% of bills begin in the House.

Passing bills

A bill must go through several stages before it can become a law. After a bill is introduced into Parliament, members of parliament can debate and vote on it. A bill becomes a law if it is passed by both the House of Representatives and Senate in identical form (using exactly the same words) and has been assented to – signed – by the Governor-General. A bill can only be passed if a majority of parliamentarians in each house agrees. The stages a bill goes through are set out in the diagram opposite.



Amending bills

After examining a bill in detail, the Senate or House of Representatives may decide to make amendments – changes – to a bill to improve it. These amendments are also debated and voted on. Any member of parliament can suggest an amendment. If the government does not have a majority, it may have to negotiate with independents, minor parties or the opposition and make changes to a bill so it will be passed.

This process of debating and discussing bills gives all senators and members an opportunity to represent the Australian people and to work together to produce well-considered laws for the nation.

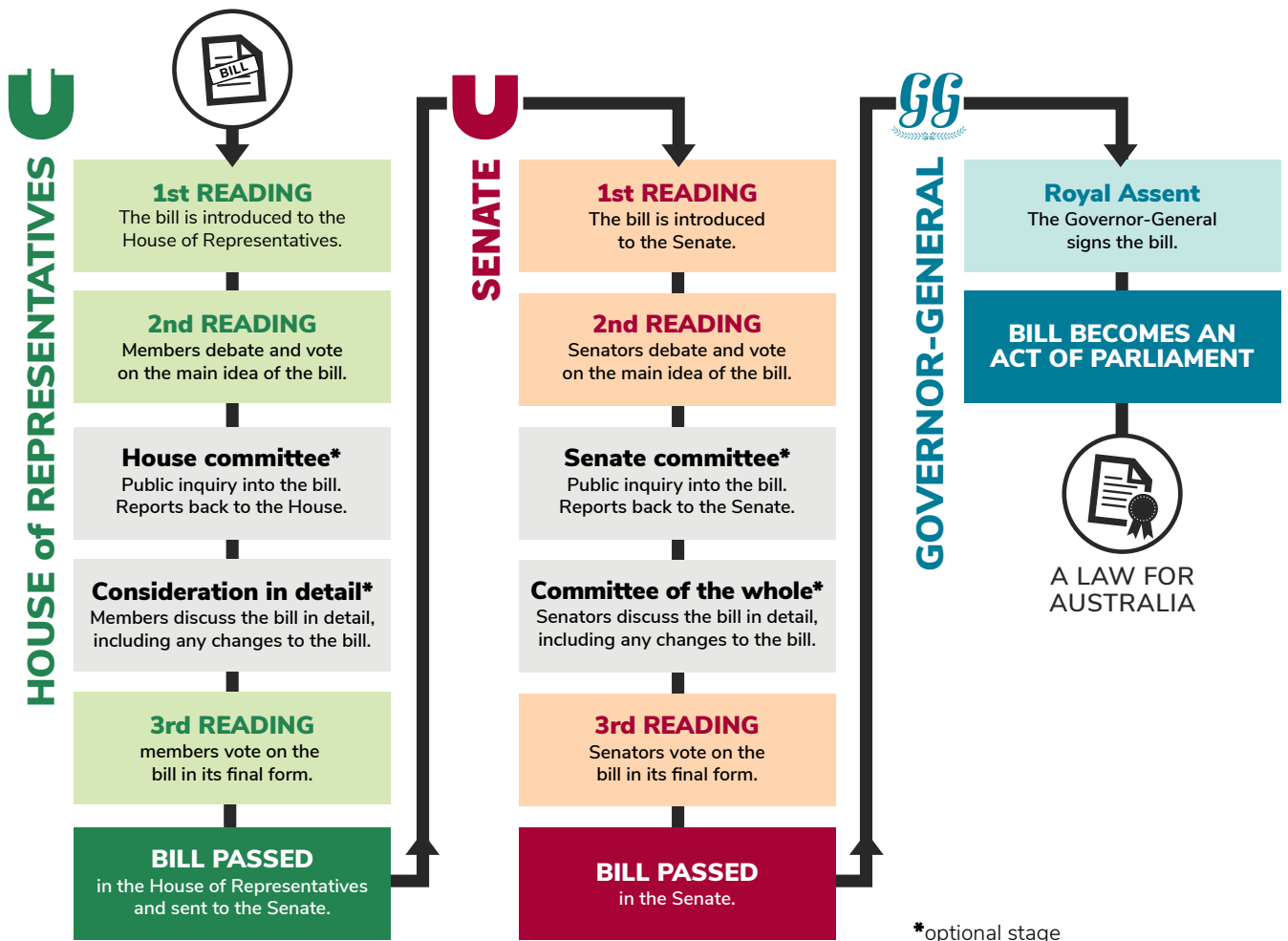
Types of laws

Statute law is made by a parliament. In the Australian Parliament a bill becomes law if it is agreed to in the same form by a majority vote in both the Senate and the House, and is signed by the Governor-General. It is then called an Act of Parliament.

Delegated law is made by ministers or senior government officials under a power delegated – given – to them by an Act of Parliament. This power allows detailed rules and regulations to be made to an existing – primary – law without having to be debated and passed by the Parliament. Delegated laws can be vetoed – rejected – by the Senate and House.

Common law is made by judges in a court, using precedent – decisions made in previous similar cases – to decide how they will rule on the case before them.

THE USUAL PATH OF A BILL





Parliamentary committees

There is often limited time in the Australian Parliament to debate complex issues during a normal sitting day. Parliamentary committees are set up by the Senate and House of Representatives to investigate bills – proposed laws – or issues in detail. A committee may have weeks or even months to closely study an issue. This can help the Parliament make better informed decisions.

Committee membership

Most members of parliament, except ministers, serve on parliamentary committees. These committees are usually made up of 6 to 10 government and non-government members. Committees may consist solely of senators or members of the House of Representatives, or they may be established as joint committees, which include both senators and members the House of Representatives.

Committee inquiries

A committee investigation into a bill or issue is called an inquiry. The committee invites experts, officials and members of the public to make written submissions outlining their views about the bill or issue. Committee members read the submissions and may invite selected people or groups to meet with the committee to provide further information or answer questions. These meetings are called hearings.

Committee hearings can take place at Parliament House and anywhere in Australia. Committees sometimes use teleconferencing and videoconferencing technology for these hearings, allowing them to listen to evidence from a wide variety of people.

Most hearings are held in public and can be watched by anyone but occasionally a hearing is held in private if very sensitive issues are being examined.

After the hearings are finished the committee writes a formal report which is presented to the Parliament. This report outlines the results of the committee's investigations and may suggest changes to the bill, government policy or make other recommendations.

Through their work, committees scrutinise – closely examine – the work of the government and help inform the Parliament during the law-making process.



A committee hearing held in Parliament House.



Types of committees

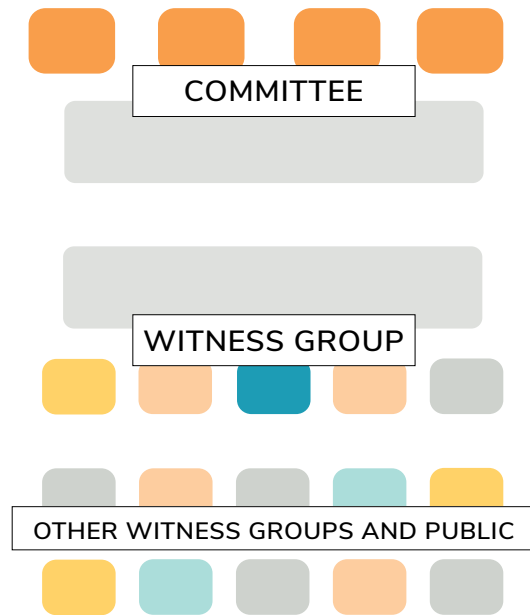
Standing committees are ongoing and examine issues and make recommendations to the Parliament across many different subject areas. For example, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters may examine how an election was run or whether the voting age should be changed.

Select committees are set up for a limited time to examine one specific issue. For example, the Senate Select Committee on the Cost of Living inquired into pressures facing Australians.

Estimates are Senate committee hearings that examine how the government is spending Budget funds. The only witnesses who appear before estimates are ministers and senior public servants from government departments.

Committees are a powerful way to bring Parliament to the people and allow for a greater variety of opinions to be heard.

COMMITTEE HEARING SEATING ARRANGEMENT



A committee inquiry hearing, Borroloola, Northern Territory.

Did you know?

A key part of being a senator is examining issues and proposals for new laws. Much of this work is done in parliamentary committees. Senators spend on average over 4 times as many hours in committee meetings than they do in the Senate.



A committee inquiry hearing, Kangaroo Island, South Australia.



Scrutiny and accountability

The Australian Government is accountable to the Parliament, which means it is expected to explain what it is doing and why. It is up to the Parliament, in particular the opposition and the crossbench, to hold the government to account. It does this by scrutinising – closely examining – the work of the government. Much of this public scrutiny happens in Senate estimates hearings and during Question Time.

Senate estimates

Senate estimates allows senators to scrutinise how the government is spending taxpayers' money. Three times a year, senators ask government ministers and senior public servants about the work of their department. They may be asked to explain the purpose of the programs and services provided by their department, outline how they are run and how much they cost.

Under detailed questioning from non-government senators, ministers and department officials may reveal details about government decisions and spending that have not been made public. Estimates hearings may lead to improvements in the way government departments operate. They also remind the government it is accountable to Parliament and to Australians for its policies and actions.

All estimates hearings, like most committee hearings, are open to the media and the public, are broadcast live and are available on demand.

The Australian people can livestream committee hearings at aph.gov.au



Question Time in the Senate.

Question Time

During Question Time, the Prime Minister and ministers are asked to explain government decisions and actions. Question Time takes place in the Senate and House of Representatives at 2pm every sitting day and usually runs for about an hour.

The opposition and the crossbench use Question Time to raise important issues, and to put pressure on the government to ensure its decisions are in the national interest. The opposition may also ask questions aimed at both highlighting weaknesses in the government's performance and presenting itself as an alternative government.

In contrast, members of the government ask ministers questions that give them a chance to highlight their strengths and successes. These questions and answers are often organised beforehand and are known as Dorothy Dixers after a newspaper advice columnist who wrote her readers' questions as well as the replies.

Question Time is often the liveliest part of the sitting day. It is broadcast on television and radio, streamed on the internet, available on demand, and is widely reported on by the media. This gives the public an opportunity to observe Parliament at work.



Public records

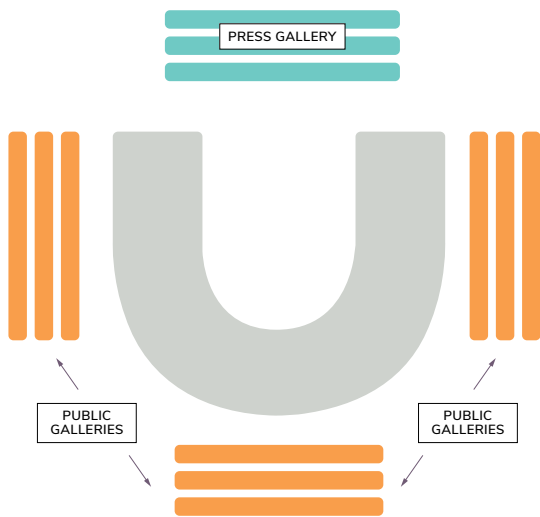
Official records are kept of what is said and done in Parliament. Anyone can check these records to see what was said about a bill or issue, and to find out about decisions made by the Parliament. These records are an important way of keeping Parliament open and accountable to Australians.

Hansard is an edited transcript – written record – of what is said in Parliament. Hansards for the Senate and House of Representatives are available online the morning after each sitting day. These, and Hansards of committee hearings can be found at aph.gov.au

The official records of the Senate and House of Representatives are the Journals of the Senate, and Votes and Proceedings. They list each vote that is held and how each member of parliament voted.

The Parliament also produces informal records, including the Dynamic Red (Senate) and Live Minutes (House), which are produced each sitting day and updated to record events as they happen. Live and recorded video of parliamentary meetings are also available at aph.gov.au

PUBLIC AND PRESS GALLERIES IN THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT



The press gallery

The press gallery consists of over 250 journalists and other staff who work for newspapers, television, radio stations and organisations that collect and publish information. The press gallery also describes the area of Parliament House in which journalists work.

The role of the press gallery is to gather information and publish stories about what happens in the Australian Parliament. These stories might be about Question Time, or policies and decisions of the government, opposition or other members of parliament.

The press gallery is influential because journalists and media organisations choose which events to report on. They decide which members of parliament to interview and which issues to examine. Journalists have a professional responsibility to research an issue carefully and to compare information from different sources. Through this process the media has an important role of scrutinising the work of the Parliament.

The Australian people also have an important role in scrutinising the government and the work of all elected representatives. We can all be active citizens by learning about, engaging with and following the work of the Parliament.

Members of the press gallery taking photos in the House of Representatives.





Active citizenship

Our democracy is strengthened by the participation of all Australians. Active citizens engage with their school, community and others around Australia to help make changes to improve the lives of Australians. The Australian Parliament encourages Australians to have their say on the law-making process to make sure the best decisions are made.

Active citizenship is a responsibility of all Australians and an important way to keep our democracy healthy and strong.

Learn

Learning about Australia's system of government and about current issues affecting Australians are 2 ways you can be a responsible active citizen.

You can do this by:

- understanding how our system of government works by exploring websites such as peo.gov.au or visiting Parliament House in person
- keeping up to date with current issues by reading or watching the news online, on social media or in print media.

Vote

Voting in Australia is compulsory, which means all Australian citizens aged 18 years or over have the right to vote and must participate in elections. Citizens can enrol to vote once they turn 16, although they can't vote until they turn 18.

Voting is a powerful way citizens can have their say about who represents them in Parliament. If the people of Australia do not like the actions of a government, they have a chance to elect new representatives in the Senate and House of Representatives and perhaps change the government.

With the right to vote comes the responsibility to make an informed decision. Being informed about the policies and actions of current representatives and candidates is a valuable way to do this.

Contribute

Community groups are a vital part of life in Australia. Some provide support for people in need, others work to improve local communities. For example, Clean Up Australia organises events for people to join together and clean up their local area. Other groups work to shape government policy or encourage Parliament to make laws related to a particular issue. For example, Amnesty International advocates on behalf of refugees. Volunteering with groups like these are a great way to actively contribute to your local community and be a global citizen.

Joining a political party or volunteering to support an independent candidate are other ways to be an active citizen. Most political parties will allow anyone 16 years or older to join.

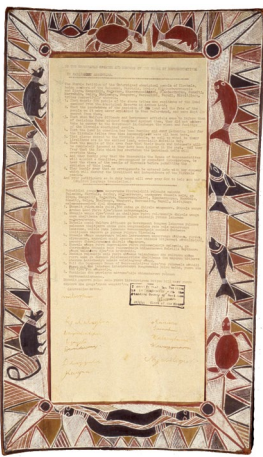
Voter at the ballot box in regional Australia.





Contact members of parliament

Australians can phone, write to or email members of parliament. You can contact your member of the House of Representatives or your senators about things that are important to you. If you have a view about a particular subject (such as health, education or the environment) you can contact the government minister responsible for that area. Contact details for all members of parliament are available on the Parliament House website at aph.gov.au



The Yirrkala petition, written in English and Yolgnu languages, and decorated with Aboriginal bark paintings.

Petitions

Citizens can raise matters of importance and influence decisions made in Parliament by starting or signing a petition. A petition is a request by a group of citizens for Parliament to take note of and perhaps solve a particular problem. The right to petition dates to the 13th century in Britain; it is the oldest way individuals or groups can ask Parliament to take action on an issue. A petition contains a list of signatures of people who support a request. When completed it is formally presented to Parliament and entered into the parliamentary records.

Parliamentary committees

Any member of the public can write a submission to a parliamentary committee inquiry to express their views and provide information which may be helpful. For example, a committee investigating the National Disability Insurance Scheme received submissions from primary school students about the importance of assistance dogs to people living with a disability. After a committee reads written submissions, they can get more information by asking members of the public to attend a hearing. The committee will then write a report which is presented to Parliament.

Public meetings and protests

Australians who are concerned about an issue can seek to raise public awareness by organising public meetings or protests. They can invite members of parliament to attend, to listen to their concerns and answer questions. Media coverage of these meetings and protests can put pressure on Parliament to act on the issue.

Protests have been part of many effective campaigns for change, including extending voting rights to women and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ending Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and changing the Marriage Act.

Participating in online forums, writing a letter or email to a newspaper, and contacting media outlets are also effective ways for you to be an active citizen.

Public rally in support of same-sex marriage.



Did you know?

Every year over 300 petitions are presented to Parliament. Petitions are one of the ways Australians can raise matters of importance and influence decisions made by the Parliament. A petition only needs one signature to be presented but most are signed by many people.





Alignment with the Australian Curriculum – Civics and Citizenship

This table shows how the chapters in *Your Parliament* align with the knowledge and understanding content descriptions of the Australian Curriculum V9.0 Civics and Citizenship subject of the History and Social Sciences learning area. For a detailed explanation of each description, visit the Australian Curriculum website:

[Home | V9 Australian Curriculum.](#)

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP YEAR LEVEL CONTENT DESCRIPTORS								
Chapters	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Federation					AC9HC7K01		AC9HC9K01	
The Australian Constitution				AC9HS6K06	AC9HC7K01 AC9HC7K03		AC9HC9K01	AC9HC10K03
The Governor-General				AC9HS6K06	AC9HC7K01			AC9HC10K01
Three levels of government		AC9HS4K08		AC9HS6K07	AC9HC7K01		AC9HC9K02	
Australia's Parliament House				AC9HS6K06				
Senate and House of Representatives			AC9HS5K06	AC9HS6K06	AC9HC7K01			
Electing members of parliament			AC9HS5K06			AC9HC8K01 AC9HC8K02		AC9HC10K01
Representation			AC9HS5K06		AC9HC7K01			
Forming government				AC9HS6K06	AC9HC7K01	AC9HC8K02		AC9HC10K02
Making laws				AC9HS6K06	AC9HC7K01	AC9HC8K03	AC9HC9K02	
Parliamentary committees				AC9HS6K06		AC9HC8K01 AC9HC8K03	AC9HC9K02 AC9HC9K05	
Scrutiny and accountability					AC9HC7K01	AC9HC8K01	AC9HC9K02	
Active citizenship	AC9HS3K07		AC9HS5K07		AC9HC7K02	AC9HC8K01	AC9HC9K05	



For more PEO curriculum-aligned material including the most up to date version of this booklet visit [Parliamentary Education Office.](#)

PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Federation

Page 2:

THE GREAT WORK FOR FRIDAY Barriers between Brothers, *The Argus*, 1 June 1898, National Library of Australia, NX11

Page 3:

Pictorial Souvenir of the Federation of Australia 1st January 1901
Unknown designer, Museums Victoria
<https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1916270>

The Australian Constitution

Page 4:

Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900: Original Public Record Copy (1900)
Parliament House Art collection,
Art Services Parliament House
High Court Of Australia
Department of the Senate

The Governor-General

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The swearing-in ceremony in the Australian Senate of the 28th Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC
Mel Adams/DPS AUSPIC

Page 7:

The Governor-General signing a bill
Mel Adams/DPS AUSPIC
Government House, Canberra
Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General

The Governor-General meeting members of the community
Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General

Three levels of government

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Protesters at the Franklin River
Photo credit: Tasmanian Wilderness Society
National Archives of Australia:
A6135, K16/2/83/4

Australia's Parliament House

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The Duke of Cornwall and York opens the first federal Parliament, 9 May 1901
State Library of Victoria
R.C. Strangman, *Old Parliament House*, Canberra, with sheep in foreground, c1940s, National Library of Australia, obj-144026013

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House of Representatives,
Paul Furness/DPS AUSPIC
Senate, Gil Thomas/DPS AUSPIC
Australia's Parliament House Parliament House, Canberra, Nick Pitsas/CSIRO



Resources

Continue parliamentary studies with these resources.

Parliamentary Education Office

Here you'll find even more immersive classroom activities (like those in this book), whole units of work aligned to the Australian Curriculum, videos for teachers, quizzes and interactives. We also have other resources you can order for your school including print copies of the Australian Constitution.

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PEO Digital programs


Our free digital programs give students the opportunity to explore the function and significance of Australia's democratic system of government. Our Australian Curriculum aligned digital programs are suitable for any point in your study of civics and citizenship as an introduction, consolidation or going further for your classroom learning.



Introducing Parliament
Duration: 30 minutes
Years: 3–4



Inside Parliament: representation and law-making
Duration: 50 minutes
Years: 5–8



Power and the people: Australia's Constitution
Duration: 50 minutes
Years: 9–12

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Whether you're new to teaching civics, a seasoned educator, a pre-service teacher, or a curriculum leader – our free, self-paced course is designed for you.

Build knowledge, boost confidence, and bring parliament to life in your classroom. The course features:

- 7 interactive lessons
- on-demand learning – your progress is automatically saved
- downloadable teaching strategies to compliment lesson topics
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ENROL NOW

Representation

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Senator speaking in the Senate
Kira Kealy/DPS AUSPIC
Member speaking in the House of Representatives
Paul Furness/DPS AUSPIC

Forming government

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The Cabinet Room, Australian Parliament House
Department of the Senate

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House of Representatives
Paul Furness/DPS AUSPIC

Parliamentary committees

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Parliamentary committees
Paul Furness/DPS AUSPIC

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Mining Rehabilitation Inquiry hearing, Borroloola
Department of the Senate
Faunal Extinction Inquiry hearing,
Kangaroo Island
Nicholas Craft/Department of the Senate

Scrutiny and accountability

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Question Time in the Senate
Paul Furness/DPS AUSPIC

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Members of the Press Gallery taking photos
in the House of Representatives
David Foote/DPS AUSPIC

Active citizenship

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Voting at ballot box in regional Australia
Australian Electoral Commission

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Yirrkala petition
Yirrkala artists, Dhuwa moiety, Yirrkala Bark
Petition 14.8.1963, 46.9 x 21cm, natural ochres
on bark, ink on paper, House of Representatives,
Canberra
Yirrkala petition
Yirrkala artists, Yirritja moiety, Yirrkala Bark
Petition 28.8.1963, 46.9 x 21cm, natural ochres
on bark, ink on paper, House of Representatives,
Canberra
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Our mission is to educate about, and inspire enthusiasm for, Australia's parliamentary democracy.

We foster active and engaged citizens of all ages.

Located in Australia's Parliament House, we are leaders in civics and citizenship education.



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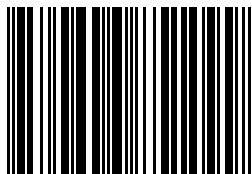


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ISBN 978-0-646-85109-9



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