



3 Levels of Government 2019

Teacher Notes

Overview

The 3 Levels of Government program is designed specifically for Years 5 to 6. Its aim is to enhance the understanding of the responsibilities of the 3 levels of government: Federal, State and Local.

In an interactive format students work in pairs to complete a series of activities that include:

- Establishing the roles, structure and responsibilities of the Federal Government
- Establishing the roles, structure and responsibilities of the State Government
- Establishing the roles, structure and responsibilities of the Local Government

Objectives

Students will:

- List the roles and responsibilities of the three levels of government
- Explain the roles of the monarch and Queen's representatives in Australia
- Summarise the responsibilities of electors in Australia

Western Australian Curriculum links

| Curriculum Code | Knowledge & Understanding |
|--|--|
| Year 6 Humanities & Social Sciences (HASS) | |
| ACHASSK144 | <u>Australia's system of government and citizenship</u> The roles and responsibilities of the three levels of government, including the shared roles and responsibilities within Australia's federal system |

Curriculum links are taken from:

<http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/p-10-curriculum/curriculum-browser/humanities-and-social-sciences>
(accessed Jan2019)

Background information for teachers

| Responsibilities of the Three Levels of Government | | |
|--|--|--|
| Federal Responsibilities | State Responsibilities | Local Responsibilities |
| Telecommunications Defence Quarantine Postal Services Pensions Immigration Income Tax Trade Foreign Policy | Education Housing Transport Power Police Hospitals & Health Payroll and Land Taxes Water Local Government The Environment Industrial Relations | Libraries Rubbish Collection Parks and Gardens Swimming Pools & Recreation Centres Local Roads Building Permits Dog Control |

1. Australia has 3 levels of Government

Australia is a Federation of 6 states and 2 territories.

Australia is a representative democracy where people elect representatives to speak and make decisions on their behalf in Parliament. In 1901 the six colonies federated forming the new nation of Australia to be governed by a Federal Parliament.

Australia is a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch (Queen) is Head of State and has limited powers. The Governor-General represents the monarch in Australia at Federal Level and each State has a Governor representing the Queen.

Representatives are elected to each of the three levels of government.

2. The 3 levels of Government are:

1. **Federal Government**
2. **State Government**
3. **Local Government**

3. Why should we have a Federal Government, six State Governments and hundreds of local government authorities?

Until 1901, Australia was made up of six separate British colonies - New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. Each developed its own parliament, laws and administration. Each was made responsible for a range of government activities, other than such matters as defence and foreign policy, which were kept in the hands of the British Government.

The colonies decided quite early that local works and services - such as road repairs, street lighting and garbage collection - could be best organised by citizens in each town or district. Each colony was mapped out into municipalities and shires, in which the property owners were given the right to elect a council to decide; what works were necessary; levy rates to pay for them and employ people to carry them out.

In 1901 the States agreed to Federate and formed the Commonwealth of Australia.

4. The Australian or Federal Government

Summary

The Australian Parliament is *bicameral*, that is it has two houses – The Senate and The House of Representatives.

All eligible Australians within their respective federal electorates under a compulsory voting system elect individual members. The party or parties (coalition) with a majority of members in the House of Representatives forms the Government.

In accordance with the Australian Constitution, the Government is responsible for all matters concerning Australia as a nation such as defence, foreign affairs, telecommunications and customs.

Role of the Senate

The Senate is one of the two houses of the Australian Federal Parliament. The Senate is often called the “States’ House”. Each State, regardless of its size or population, is represented by the same numbers of Senators to ensure equality of representation for the States. Currently it consists of 76 Senators, twelve from each of the six states and two from each of the mainland territories.

Representatives are called Senators and they are elected by a system of proportional representation for a period of six years. A system of rotation, however, ensures that half the Senate retires every three years. This system is used so that the composition of the Senate closely reflects the voting pattern of the electors.

Role of the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is one of the two houses of the Australian Federal Parliament. It is sometimes called the '*people's house*' or the '*house of government*' and is elected on a population basis. Australia is divided into single member divisions which have approximately the same number of electors in each.

The House has 150 members (this will increase to 151 at the 2019 federal election). Each Member represents an electoral division. The boundaries of these electorates are adjusted from time to time so that they all contain approximately equal numbers of electors (because of the distribution of Australia's population they vary greatly in area from a few square kilometres to over two million square kilometres). Members are elected by a system known as preferential voting, under which voters rank candidates in order of preference.

Each member of the House of Representatives (MHR) may continue for up to three years, after which general elections for a new House must be held. Elections are may be held before the end of this period.

The head of the Australian Government is called the Prime Minister and sits in the House of Representatives.

5. The Western Australian or State Government

Summary

Western Australia has a bicameral (two houses) State Parliament. Eligible voters within their respective State electorate under a compulsory voting system elect individual members. The party or parties (coalition) with a majority of members in the Legislative Assembly forms the Government.

The Government is responsible for all matters not mentioned in the Australian Constitution including police, education, water supply, electricity supply, health, agriculture, planning and housing.

Legislative Assembly

The Legislative Assembly is the lower House of the Parliament of Western Australia, and comprises 59 members elected from single member electoral districts by a system of preferential voting. The Legislative Assembly's six principal roles and functions are:

- forming a government
- approving the finance for government operations
- scrutinising the government's performance
- legislating
- providing a forum for matters of public concern, and
- representing the people of Western Australia

Members are known as Members of the Legislative Assembly or MLA's. The political party or coalition of parties that has a majority in the Legislative Assembly forms the State Government. The leader of the Government is known as the Premier.

Legislative Council

The Legislative Council is the upper House of the Parliament of Western Australia, and comprises 36 members elected from six multi-member regions by a system of preferential representation (proportional representation). Proportional representation is a voting system designed to ensure that the mix of successful candidates in a multi-member electorate reflects as closely as possible the proportional break-up of all the valid votes cast in an election. The Legislative Council's principal roles and functions are:

- legislating, monitoring and reviewing government legislation, administration and expenditure
- gathering information and publicising issues, by using committees, question time and through parliamentary debates on motions, Bills, and by petitions presented by members on behalf of members of the public.

Members are known as Members of the Legislative Council or MLC's.

Role of Members of Parliament

Members are charged first with pursuing the interests of the majority of those constituents who elected them but more importantly they represent all constituents within their respective electorates. This can often involve heated debate, in the best tradition of parliamentary proceedings, releasing tension within our society and reflecting the will of the electorate and differences between political parties.

Often matters of policy or planning are decided through debate and negotiation at two or three levels of government.

6. Local Government

Summary

Local government representatives are elected by eligible electors in their residential wards under a non-compulsory voting system. They are responsible for a wide range of local services provided direct to electors, including libraries, rubbish removal, parks, recreation centres, bicycle paths, parking and local roads.

Municipal Councils or Shire Councils

When Western Australian was still a colony, it was decided that local works and services - such as road repairs, street lighting and garbage collection - could be best organised by citizens in each town or district. So each colony was mapped out into municipalities and shires, in which the property owners

were given the right to elect a council to decide what works were necessary, to levy rates to pay for them and to employ people to carry them out.

Local government provides for the particular needs of the local community; needs that do not have to be related to the requirements for the whole state - such as education. Local government determines what kind of buildings will be allowed in a particular area and the standards of materials and construction. It also has the power to inspect domestic and commercial premises to ensure that health regulations are being complied with.

Local government is not a totally independent level of government. Councils are established under the authority of a higher level of government (state governments) and are supervised through State Ministers for Local Government. Local governments receive funding from Federal and State governments and also obtain funds via rates and various charges e.g. dog registration and building permits.

Representatives on a Council or Shire are called Councillors and the head of the council is called the Mayor or Shire President.

Useful websites

Parliamentary Education Office (FEDERAL)

<http://www.peo.gov.au/>

Parliament of Australia

<https://www.aph.gov.au/>

Western Australian parliament (STATE)

www.parliament.wa.gov.au

Western Australian Local Government Association (LOCAL)

<http://www.walga.asn.au/Home.aspx>

Education Services Australia (LOCAL)

http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/middle_primary,9025.html
