



Forming Government 2019

Teacher Notes

Overview

The *Forming Government* program is designed specifically for Year 9 students. Its aim is to enhance the students' understanding of political parties and the roles they play in Australia's system of government.

In an interactive format students complete a series of activities that include:

- Discussion of Australia's Constitutional Monarchy
- Discussion of Australia's Parliament House and the bicameral chambers, House of Representatives and the Senate
- Discussion of the government, opposition and the leaders roles
- Investigating different political parties and independent members of parliament, their roles and responsibilities

Objectives

Students will:

- Investigate roles and responsibilities of political parties and independent members of parliament
- Demonstrate through a role-play, the negotiations made in hung parliament
- Engage in a quiz to test their learning

Western Australian Curriculum Links

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|--|---|
| WA Curriculum Learning Outcome | |
| Year 9 Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) | |
| <u>ACHCK075</u> | <u>The role of political parties, and independent representatives in Australia's system of government, including the formation of governments</u> |

Curriculum Links:

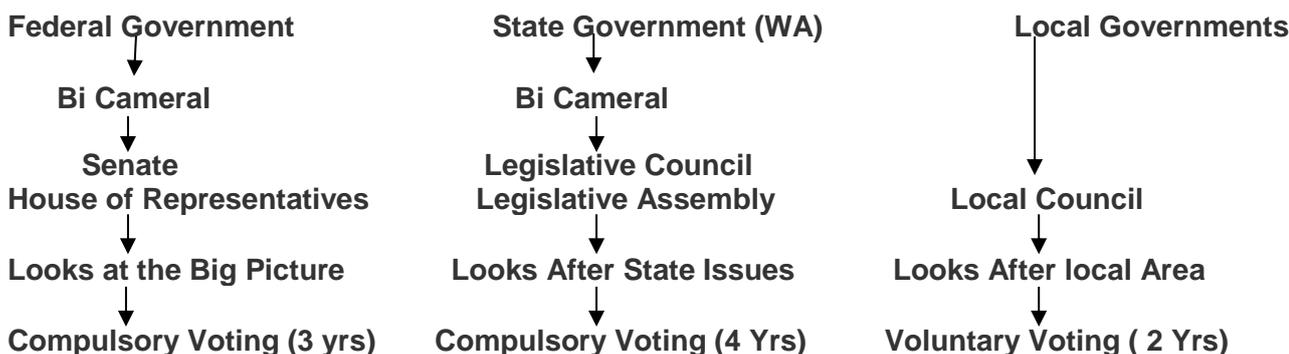
<https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/p-10-curriculum/curriculum-browser/humanities-and-social-sciences>

(accessed Feb 2019)

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS:

DEMOCRACY:

- Australia is one of the oldest continuous democracies in the world and is also a Constitutional Monarchy.
- The source of power is the Constitution Act, 1901 and the Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II. She is represented by a Governor General.
- State and Federal Parliaments still exist and responsibilities are shared between the three levels of Australia's government.



FEDERALISM

- The Australian political system can only be understood in the context of its federal structure. A federal system is one in which:
 - There is a central or national government
 - There are sovereign state or regional governments
 - There is a division of powers between the national and state governments

| ENTITY | Head of State | Head of Government | PARLIAMENT | | MEMBERS | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | | Upper House | Lower House | Upper House | Lower House |
| AUSTRALIA | Governor-General | Prime Minister | Senate | House of Representatives | Senator | MP |
| WA | Governor | Premier | Legislative Council | Legislative Assembly | MLC | MLA |

GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA

- During Federation the six British Colonies became the six States of Australia. Each state kept their own Parliament. The two mainland territories were set up later and also hold their own Parliament.
- The role of all parliaments is to represent the voters and citizens and pass laws (legislation) for the peace, order and good government of the country, the states and territories.
- The majority party has a responsibility to form government and the opposition has a responsibility to scrutinise the actions of the government to ensure they govern in the best interests of the people.

STRUCTURE OF FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

- The Australian Parliament consists of the Queen of Australia represented by the Governor-General. The Governor-General is appointed by The Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- Australian Parliament House (APH) is bicameral, (two chambers); the upper house, the Senate and the lower house, the House of Representatives.

- Members of the lower house provide wide ranging debate; scrutinise legislation and pass or reject bills which are introduced. The Senate or upper house is called a “House of Review” or the “State’s House” and a Senator’s main job is to check and review the bills that have been passed by the lower house.

The two most important differences between the two houses are:

- The Government is formed by the party that has the majority in the House of Representatives
 - Money bills, to impose taxes or spend public money may only be introduced in the House of Representatives.
- The design was based on the Westminster Parliamentary system. The Australian Constitution sets out the structure and responsibilities of our federal Parliament.
 - The Westminster System also provides conventions, not written in the Constitution. Such as, in parliament there is a government and an opposition. The government is formed by the political party that holds the majority of seats in the lower house. The opposition is the political party that has the second largest number of seats in the lower house. The government is headed by a Prime Minister, who is also responsible for selecting a cabinet of ministers. Interestingly, in 1972, Gough Whitlam held Australia’s only duumvirate ministry (ministry of two men) that governed for 14 days.
 - The role of the government is to lead the legislative process, introduce bills into the House of Representatives, and provide Cabinet. The role of the opposition is to provide alternative government. They scrutinize the work of the government, provide alternative solutions and be ready to form government themselves. In Parliament, (from the position of the Speaker), the government are located to the right of the Speaker and opposition to the left. Parliament rules are held in the “Standing Orders” document, administered by the Speaker.
 - Members of Parliament (MP’s) and Senators can be divided up into major political parties (parties capable of forming government), minor political parties (smaller parties that may be able to form a coalition government with a major party), and micro parties (single issue parties that may hold a single seat in Parliament and usually only for a single term).
 - There are also independent members of Parliament. These individuals do not belong to a political party and represent the people in their electorate or State. It is a difficult job to be an independent as they must prove to their electorate that they can make a difference to their constituents communities without belonging to a political party. Their influence is particularly strong in a hung parliament when they hold the balance of power between two major political parties.
 - A hung parliament is when the results of a general election shows no clear majority between the competing political parties. This means that no political party can claim victory and no one can concede.

| FEDERAL ELECTION 2010 | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| | Number of seats won |
| LABOR PARTY | 72 |
| LIBERAL NATIONAL COALITION | 72 |
| INDEPENDENTS | 4 |
| MINOR PARTIES | 2 |
| TOTAL | 150 |
| HUNG OR NOT HUNG? | HUNG |

- The results (left) demonstrate a hung parliament, 2010 in the House of Representatives.
- Julia Gillard (leader of the Labor Party) was able to negotiate successfully with one minor party and three independents; in order to form a minority government (76 members) in the House of Representatives, 2010.
- The Governor General (Quentin Bryce) invited Julia Gillard to form Government in 2010, making her the first female Prime Minister of Australia.

References:

ABC NEWS. (2010). *Julia Gillard (left) and Quentin Bryce*. Photograph, viewed 17 of April, 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-06-24/julia-gillard-left-and-quentin-bryce/875618>

King, S. (2016). *Power, Accountability & Rights*. South Perth, Western Australia: Political and Legal Educators Association of Western Australia (Incorporated).

Parliamentary Education Office (PEO). (2017). *Independents Fact Sheet*, viewed 26 March, 2018, <https://www.peo.gov.au/learning/factsheets/independents.html>

Parliamentary Education Office (PEO). (2017). *Political Parties Fact Sheet*, Image, viewed 22 March, 2018, <https://www.peo.gov.au/learning/factsheets/political-parties.html>

Willmott, J. (2011). *Power & Governance, 2nd Edition*. Western Australia: Politics Law Publishing.

VOTING PROCESS: ELECTIONS:

| Federal/ State/ Territory | Fixed Term Election (Lower House) | Term (Lower House) | Fixed election date (Lower House) | Method to vote (Lower House) | Fixed Term Election (Upper House) | Term (Upper House) | Date (Upper House) | Method to vote (Upper House) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| Australia (Federal Parliament) | No fixed term election | 3 years term | No fixed date | PVS | Fixed term. | 6 years. (Half Senate elections every 3 years). | Held at the same time as the House of Representatives. | PR |
| Western Australia | Fixed term election | 4 years term | Second Saturday in March | Full PVS | No fixed term. | 4 years. (Full Legislative Council elections every 4 years). | Held on the same date as the Assembly | PR |

VOTING SYSTEMS EXPLAINED

Preferential Voting Systems of Australia's Parliaments (PVS):

- Preferential Voting is required in Australia
- The term "preferential voting" means voters can indicate an order of preferences for candidates on the ballot paper, i.e. who they want as their 1st choice, 2nd choice and so on.
- On a ballot paper, placing a "1" in a box next to a candidate is considered the first preference or primary vote.
- To be elected, candidates must receive an absolute majority of votes (51% or more) of the total formal votes cast.
- If the absolute majority is not gained from the primary votes, then preferences from the lowest scoring candidate are re-distributed or transferred, using a process of elimination, until a majority is reached.

Preferential Voting is used in the House of Representatives:

- When voting for the House of Representatives voters must rank all candidates in order of preference—they may not just vote for one candidate.
- Preferential voting systems can be classified into the following 4 categories:

Full Preferential Voting (FPV):

- Means numbering every box on the ballot paper in your preferred order. If every square is not numbered, your vote could be deemed informal and may not be counted. This is used to vote for the lower house in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia & South Australia.

Optional Preferential Voting (OPV):

- The number "1" preference must be marked in the square next to their first choice candidate. They have the option to mark "2" and "3" and so on. This is found in New South Wales to vote for the lower house.

Partial Preferential:

- The elector must show a minimum number of preferences as set out on the ballot paper. e.g. voting for the Tasmanian Legislative Council.

Proportional representation (PR):

- These systems are used for elections in multi-member electorates to elect candidates who receive a set proportion of the vote.
- For example, this is done in Tasmania to vote for members of the lower house. It is called the Hare Clarke System.
- For the lower house (the House of Assembly), 5 members must be elected per electorate. To be elected, a candidate must reach a quota of 16.7% of the formal votes.
- The ballot uses a Single Transferable Vote (STV). The vote moves as indicated in order of preference from 1-2-3 so on.
- PR (STV) is also used for voting for a Senate election. Voting may be done above or below the line. At least six boxes must be numbered above the line, or at least 12 boxes below the line.

Websites on Voting:

- WA:
<https://www.elections.wa.gov.au/vote/voting-systems-wa>
- Preferential Voting:
<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/explainer-what-is-preferential-voting>
- House of Representatives Voting:
https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/Powers_practice_and_procedure/00_-_Infosheets/Infosheet_8_-_Elections_for_the_House_of_Representatives
- Senate Voting:
https://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/How_to_Vote/Voting_Senate.htm