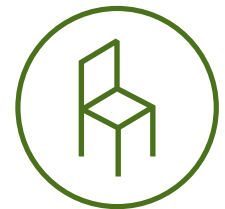**Parliamentary Education Office**

ROLE-PLAY
LESSON PLAN SERIES
FOR TEACHERS

The lesson plans use role-play to explore how federal Parliament works and to examine its main roles:

- Representing the people of Australia.
- Making and changing federal laws.
- Keeping a check on the work of the government.
- Providing a place where government is formed.

Suitable for upper primary to secondary students, they can be conducted over one to two lessons but are designed to be flexible to suit your needs.

CONTENTS

Law-making:
House of Representatives

Law-making is one of the main activities of the Parliament. Laws are made through a process of debate and decision-making. During parliamentary debates, ideas are tested, challenged, refined and ultimately accepted or rejected. This lesson involves a role-play that demonstrates how proposals for federal laws—bills—are considered by the Parliament.

OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- understand how the federal Parliament debates and votes on bills
- understand the role of government ministers, the opposition, minor parties and Independents
- explore the concepts of representation and scrutiny
- inquire into real and current issues
- practise public speaking, careful listening and quick thinking
- engage in critical thinking.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Generate discussion about the role-play by exploring some of the following questions with your students:

Who works in the House of Representatives?
- 150 members
- parliamentary officers, including: the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Serjeant-at-Arms, Hansard reporters, chamber attendants, security and broadcasting operators.

How do you become a member of the House of Representatives?
Members are elected at a federal election. Each member represents an electorate and is elected by the people who live in their electorate.

What do members of parliament do in the House of Representatives?
Members of parliament make sure the concerns and views of the people of their electorate are heard by talking about issues in Parliament. They also debate bills (proposed laws) or propose amendments (changes) to bills.

What is a law?
A law is a rule for Australia.

TOOLKIT

SEATING PLAN
How to set up your classroom.

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Ready-to-use script sets and a template to create your own scripts.

VIDEOS
To set the scene for the role-play.

PHOTOS
A series of photos you can use on a smart board.

DIAGRAMS
A series of diagrams you can use on a smart board.

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Instructions for making props and costumes.

FLOW CHART
Optional tool for running the role-play.

Setting the scene for the role-play

Before the role-play begins, you can set the scene by doing some short activities with the students. For example:

- Watch the introductory videos in the *Toolkit*.

- Ask the students to imagine that they are members of the House of Representatives. How old would they be? Where would they work? What tasks would they have? What skills would they need? What did they do before becoming a member of parliament? For more information about members of parliament, check this link: www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/members-of-the-house.html

- Ask the students to describe their electorate. Where is their electorate located? For example, is it urban, rural, coastal or inland? How would they describe the electorate and its people? For information about electorates, check the Australian Electoral Commission website: www.aec.gov.au/profiles/

- Encourage students to get into role as members of the House of Representatives and to understand that they:
  - » represent the views of their electorate
  - » may belong to the government or opposition so will be working as part of a large team
  - » may be an Independent or member of a minor party.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Conducting a law-making role-play

Scripts

The PEO scripts provide a framework for the role-play. The scripts include specific roles that can be assigned to students, and indicate what they have to do and say. You can download a full script set or a template, which allows you to write your own script, from the *Toolkit*.

Choosing a bill (proposed law)

Your class will need a bill to debate. If time allows, you may wish to have your students research the topic and write speeches prior to the role-play.

Choose the bill using one of the following options:

- Brainstorm ideas with the class.
- Select a topic to meet the requirements of a curriculum area.
- Identify a local issue that needs fixing.
- Use a bill and script set provided in the *Toolkit.*

Once you have chosen a bill, you can write its name and purpose on page one of the law-making script template, available in the *Toolkit*.

PHOTOS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape as indicated by the seating plan. The seating plan, as well as diagrams of the chamber, can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

Props and costumes

The Clerk will need a bell. You may like to use other props, such as a Mace for the Serjeant-at-Arms and gowns for the Speaker and Clerks. Instructions for making these are in the *Toolkit*.

HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES
SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

SPEAKER

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINISTERS

PRIME MINISTER

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

OPPOSITION BACKBENCHERS

MACE

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

SHADOW MINISTERS

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

INDEPENDENTS and MINOR PARTIES

SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

- Divide the class into **government, opposition, minor parties** and **Independents**. Refer to *Parliament NOW* on the PEO website for the current numbers in the chambers. Use these to work out the proportions for your parliament. **www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html**

- Select a **Speaker** — this is a non-debating role and is generally someone from the government who can exercise authority in the room.

- Select a **Clerk** (pronounced 'Clark') and **Serjeant-at-Arms** — these are parliamentary officers who do not debate or vote. A teacher may take the role of Deputy Clerk. This role does not require active participation, but puts the teacher in a central position in the room so they can assist with the running of the role-play.

- Elect party leaders — the government elects the **Prime Minister** and the opposition elects the **Leader of the Opposition.**

- Select a **minister** to introduce the bill — one who has a responsibility (portfolio) relevant to the bill. For example, the No Homework Bill would be introduced into Parliament by the Minister for Education.

- Select a **shadow minister**.

- Choose party **whips** (managers) to count the vote at the end of the debate.

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINOR PARTIES

INDEPENDENTS

SPEAKER

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK *(TEACHER)*

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

PRIME MINISTER *(ELECTED BY GOVERNMENT)*

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION *(ELECTED BY OPPOSITION)*

MINISTER

SHADOW MINISTER

PARTY WHIPS

Starting the role-play

1. The Clerk rings the bell and instructs the members to stand.

2. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker into the chamber, carrying the Mace on their right shoulder.

3. The Serjeant-at-Arms announces the Speaker, places the Mace on the table and moves to their seat.

4. The Speaker tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.

5. The Clerk stands and reads the rules of the chamber and the title of the bill (first reading).

6. The minister introduces the bill and the shadow minister responds to the bill.

7. After a few speeches from government and non-government members, the House may be adjourned. If you do not wish to adjourn, go straight to step 11.

8. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker from the chamber, holding the Mace.

9. If you choose to adjourn the debate, team members can hold party meetings to plan more speeches. Independents and minor parties can decide whether to support or oppose the bill; they may also wish to suggest changes (amendments).

Continuing the debate

10. Repeat steps 1—4.

11. The Speaker selects members to make speeches, alternating between government and non-government members.

Voting on the bill

12. When the debate is finished, the Speaker leads a 'vote on the voices' (uncounted vote) before declaring the vote.

13. If the opposition lose the vote on the voices, the opposition whip may call for a division (formal counted vote); if so, the Clerk rings the bell to let members who are not in the chamber know a vote is about to happen.

14. The Speaker conducts the division with help from the whips and then declares the vote.

Passing the bill

15. If the majority of votes are for the bill, it is agreed to and the Clerk reads the title of the bill (second reading).

16. If the majority of votes are against the bill, the bill is defeated and there is no second reading.

17. The Speaker adjourns the House.

18. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker from the chamber, holding the Mace.
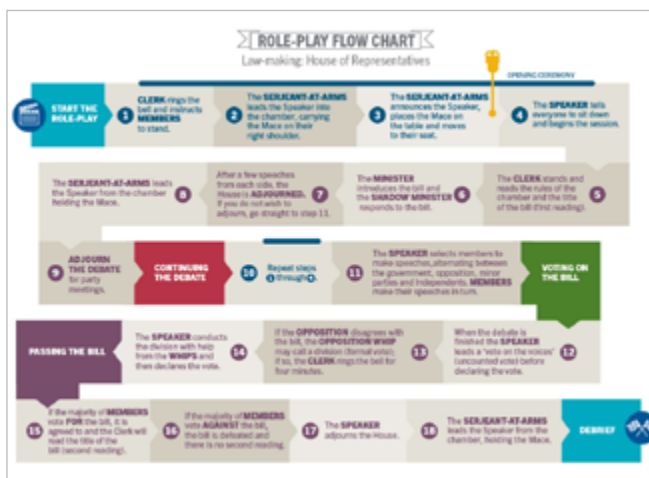
FLOW CHART
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Debrief

After the debate, explore the following questions with
your students:

Do government bills always pass this chamber?
The government has majority support in the House so will
usually get its bills passed. However a bill could be defeated
if a majority of members vote against it.

What happens if the vote is a tie?
The Speaker votes on the bill to break the deadlock.

**Is it important to get the support of the Independents and
minor parties?**
If they hold the balance of power in the House, they can
determine whether a bill will pass or not, and they can put
pressure on the government to amend the bill.

**What other major steps must a bill go through to
become a law?**
If a bill it passed by the House, it is then debated and
voted on by the Senate. If the Senate agrees to it, the bill is
signed by the Governor-General and becomes a law or Act
of Parliament.
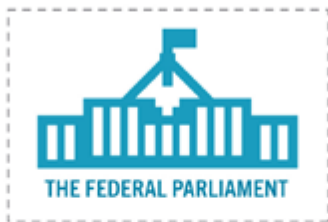
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Senate
After a bill has passed through the House of
Representatives it progresses to the Senate where it is also
debated and voted on. You might like to conduct a role-play
that follows the progress of a bill through the Senate.
To do this, check out the *Law-making: Senate* role-play
lesson plan on the PEO website.

Amendments
Both houses of Parliament can make changes, which are
called amendments, to the wording of a bill. Often the
opposition, minor party members and Independents will
agree to pass a bill if amendments are made to it. You might
like to conduct a role-play that incorporates amendments.
To do this, check out the *Amending a law* role-play
lesson plans for both the House of Representatives and the
Senate.

Committees
Committees investigate issues and bills in more detail
than is possible in the chamber. The committee process
helps parliamentarians become informed by gathering
information from government departments, experts in the
field, lobby groups and interested citizens. You might like
to conduct a role-play of a committee. To do this, check
out the *Committee* role-play lesson plan.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO
website in the *Toolkit*

Law-making:
Senate

Law-making is one of the main activities of the Parliament. Laws are made through a process of debate and decision-making. During parliamentary debates, ideas are tested, challenged, refined and ultimately accepted or rejected. This lesson involves a role-play that demonstrates how proposals for federal laws—bills—are considered by the Parliament.

OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- understand how the federal Parliament debates and votes on bills
- understand the role of government ministers, the opposition, minor parties and Independents
- explore the concepts of representation and scrutiny
- inquire into real and current issues
- practise public speaking, careful listening and quick thinking
- engage in critical thinking.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Generate discussion about the role-play by exploring some of the following questions with your students:

Who works in the Senate?
- 76 Senators
- parliamentary officers, including: the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Usher of the Black Rod, Hansard reporters, chamber attendants, security and broadcasting operators.

How do you become a senator?
Senators are elected by the people of the states and territories at a federal election.

What do senators do in the Senate?
A senator's work includes debating bills (proposed laws), proposing amendments (changes) to bills and representing the interests of people in their state or territory.

How is the Senate different to the House of Representatives?
The senators represent states and territories, not electorates. There are 76 senators and 150 members of the House of Representatives. Government is formed in the House of Representatives, and the Prime Minister and most of the ministers are in the House of Representatives.

What is a law?
A law is a rule for Australia.

TOOLKIT

SEATING PLAN
How to set up your classroom.

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Ready-to-use script sets and a template to create your own scripts.

VIDEOS
To set the scene for the role-play.

PHOTOS
A series of photos you can use on a smart board.

DIAGRAMS
A series of diagrams you can use on a smart board.

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Instructions for making props and costumes.

FLOW CHART
Optional tool for running the role-play.

TO DOWNLOAD ITEMS IN THE TOOLKIT, GO TO: www.peo.gov.au/ teaching/role-play-lesson-plans/law-making-senate.html

Setting the scene for the role-play

Before the role-play begins, you can set the scene by doing some short activities with the students. For example:

- Watch the introductory videos in the *Toolkit*.
- Ask the students to imagine that they are senators. How old would they be? Where would they work? What tasks would they have? What skills would they need? What did they do before becoming a senator? For more information about senators, check this link:
  www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/senators.html
- Ask the students to choose a state or territory to represent. Have them identify the issues important to the people in their state or territory.
- Encourage students to get into role as senators and to understand that they:
  - » represent the views of their state or territory
  - » may belong to the government or opposition so will be working as part of a large team
  - » may be an Independent or member of a minor party.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Conducting a law-making role-play

Scripts

The PEO scripts provide a framework for the role-play. The scripts include specific roles that can be assigned to students, and indicate what they have to do and say. You can download a full script set or a template, which allows you to write your own script, from the *Toolkit*.

Choosing a bill (proposed law)

Your class will need a bill to debate. If time allows, you may wish to have your students research the topic and write speeches prior to the role-play. If you have passed a bill in the *Law-making: House of Representatives* role-play, you could now debate this bill in the Senate.

Otherwise, choose the bill using one of the following options:

- Brainstorm ideas with the class.
- Select a topic to meet the requirements of a curriculum area.
- Identify a local issue that needs fixing.
- Use a bill and script set provided in the *Toolkit.*

Once you have chosen a bill, you can write its name and purpose on page one of the law-making script template, available in the *Toolkit*.

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape as indicated by the seating plan. The seating plan, as well as diagrams of the chamber, can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

Props and costumes

The Clerk will need a bell. You may like to use other props, such as a Black Rod for the Usher and gowns for the President and Clerks. Instructions for making these are in the *Toolkit*.

SENATE

SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

PRESIDENT

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE

MINISTERS

SHADOW MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

OPPOSITION BACKBENCHERS

INDEPENDENTS and MINOR PARTIES

SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

- Divide the class into **government, opposition, minor parties** and **Independents**. Refer to *Parliament NOW* on the PEO website for the current numbers in the chambers. Use these to work out the proportions for your parliament.
  www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html

- Select a **President** — this is a non-debating role and is generally someone from the government who can exercise authority in the room.

- Select a **Clerk** (pronounced 'Clark') and **Usher of the Black Rod** — these are parliamentary officers who do not debate or vote. A teacher may take the role of Deputy Clerk. This role does not require active participation, but puts the teacher in a central position in the room so they can assist with the running of the role-play.

- Elect party leaders — the government elects the **Leader of the Government in the Senate** and the opposition elects the **Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.**

- Select a **minister** to introduce the bill — one who has a responsibility (portfolio) relevant to the bill. For example, the No Homework Bill would be introduced into Parliament by the Minister for Education.

- Select a **shadow minister**.

- Choose party **whips** (managers) to count the vote at the end of the debate.

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINOR PARTIES

INDEPENDENTS

PRESIDENT (GOVERNMENT)

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK (TEACHER)

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE (ELECTED BY GOVERNMENT)

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE (ELECTED BY OPPOSITION)

MINISTER

SHADOW MINISTER

PARTY WHIPS

Starting the role-play

1. The Clerk rings the bell and asks the senators to stand.
2. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President into the chamber, carrying the Black Rod vertically in their right hand.
3. The Usher of the Black Rod announces the President and moves to their seat.
4. The President tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.
5. The Clerk stands and reads the rules of the chamber and the title of the bill (first reading).
6. The minister introduces the bill and the shadow minister responds to the bill.
7. After a few speeches from government and non-government senators, the Senate may be adjourned. If you do not wish to adjourn, go straight to step 11.
8. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President from the chamber, holding the Black Rod.
9. If you choose to adjourn the debate, team members can hold party meetings to plan more speeches. Independents and minor parties can decide whether to support or oppose the bill; they may also wish to suggest changes (amendments).

Continuing the debate

10. Repeat steps 1—4.
11. The President selects senators to make speeches, alternating between government and non-government members.

Voting on the bill

12. When the debate is finished, the President leads a 'vote on the voices' (uncounted vote) before declaring the vote.
13. If the opposition lose the vote on the voices, the opposition whip may call for a division (formal counted vote); if so, the Clerk rings the bell to let senators who are not in the chamber know a vote is about to happen.
14. The President conducts the division with help from the whips and then declares the vote. The President must always vote in a division.

Passing the bill

15. If the majority of votes are for the bill, it is agreed to and the Clerk reads the title of the bill (second reading).
16. If the majority of votes are against the bill, the bill is defeated and there is no second reading.
17. The President adjourns the Senate.
18. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President from the chamber, holding the Black Rod.
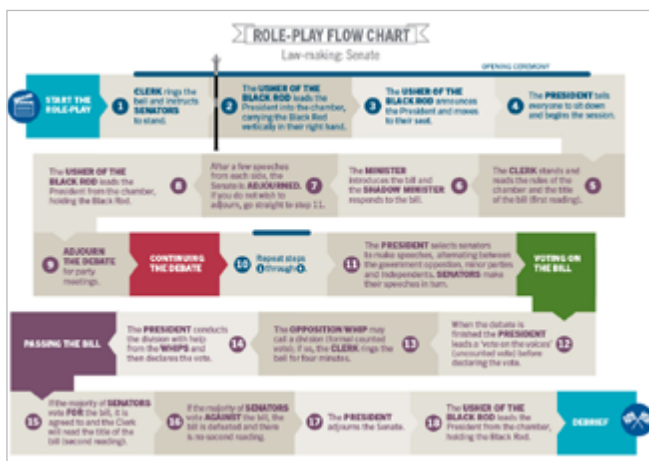
FLOW CHART
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Debrief

After the debate, explore the following questions with your students:

Do bills always pass this chamber?
A bill will only be passed if it is supported by a majority of senators. If the government doesn't have a majority, it will need to convince the opposition and/or the Independent and minor party senators to support the bill.

What happens when the vote is a tie? How is this different to the House of Representatives?
The government can only pass a bill with the support of a majority of senators. If the vote is a tie, the bill is defeated. This is different to the House of Representatives, where in the event of a tie, the Speaker casts the deciding vote. The President does not have a deciding vote in the Senate because their vote is already counted with the other votes.

How might the government get the support of the Independents and minor party senators?
If the Independents and minor party senators are unhappy with the bill, the government may have to consider making amendments (changes) to it.

What other steps must a bill go through to become a law?
If a bill started in the Senate, it is then debated and voted on by the House. If the House agrees to it, the bill is signed by the Governor-General and becomes a law or Act of Parliament. If the House has already passed the bill, and it is passed by the Senate, it then goes to the Governor-General.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

House of Representatives
If the Senate passes a bill that has not been passed by the House of Representatives, the bill is sent to the House to be debated and voted upon. You might like to conduct a role-play that follows the progress of a bill through the House of Representatives. To do this, check out the *Law-making: House of Representatives* role play lesson plan.

Amendments
Both houses of Parliament can make changes or amendments to the wording of a bill. Often the opposition, minor party members and Independents will agree to pass a bill if amendments are made to it. You might like to conduct a role-play that incorporates amendments. To do this, check out the *Amending a law* role-play lesson plans for both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Committees
Committees investigate issues and bills in more detail than is possible in the chamber. The committee process helps parliamentarians become informed by gathering information from government departments, experts in the field, lobby groups and interested citizens. You might like to conduct a role-play of a committee. To do this, check out the *Committee* role-play lesson plan.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Amending a law:
House of Representatives

In Parliament, an amendment is a change to a bill. It allows for a bill to be improved or altered as it progresses through the Parliament. This lesson involves a role-play which demonstrates how amendments to bills are introduced, debated and voted on in the House of Representatives.

NOTE: Your class should only undertake this amendment role-play if they passed the bill during their *Law-making: House of Representatives* role-play. If the bill failed in the law-making role-play it cannot be amended.

OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- research and debate current issues
- think critically and find solutions to problems
- prepare and deliver public speeches
- explore the process of law-making
- explore the concept of parliamentary scrutiny
- explore the concept of representation.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Generate discussion about the role-play by exploring some of the following questions with your students:

Who do the members of the House of Representatives represent?
Each member represents an electorate. All 150 members represent the entire Australian population.

What was said about this bill in the law-making debate?
You will need to refer to any work you did on the previous law-making debate.

What steps did the bill go through in the law-making debate?
The bill was introduced into the House of Representatives, debated and then voted on. The bill was agreed to at the vote, which means that it may now be amended.

Why would you change a bill in the Parliament?
To improve the bill, so that it works better as a law for Australia.

TOOLKIT

SEATING PLAN
How to set up your classroom.

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Ready-to-use script sets and a template to create your own scripts.

VIDEOS
To set the scene for the role-play.

PHOTOS
A series of photos you can use on a smart board.

DIAGRAMS
A series of diagrams you can use on a smart board.

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Instructions for making props and costumes.

FLOW CHART
Optional tool for running the role-play.

TO DOWNLOAD ITEMS IN THE TOOLKIT, GO TO:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans/amending-a-law-house.html

Setting the scene for the role-play

Have students reflect on the previous law-making role-play through class discussion, or revisit any work that you may have set about the previous debate. It is important that students understand that this role-play is a continuation of the process that they started in the law-making role-play. You may wish to refer to the 'setting the scene' section of the *Law-making: House of Representatives* role-play lesson plan to prepare your students.

Main activity: Conducting an amendment role-play

Scripts

The PEO scripts provide a framework for the role-play. The scripts include specific roles that can be assigned to students, and indicate what they have to do and say. You can download a full script set or a template, which allows you to write your own script, from the *Toolkit*.

Choosing an amendment (change to the bill)

Before the role-play can start, your students will need to have at least one idea for an amendment. Amendments are changes to a bill to improve it. However, amendments cannot change the overall intention of the bill. For example, the *No Homework* bill cannot be amended to allow homework to be set one day a week because then the bill would no longer ban homework.

Have your class think about the bill they debated in the law-making role-play. Allow your students to come up with amendments using the following options:

- Brainstorm ideas with the class.
- Ask each team and the Independents to come up with their own amendments.
- Use amendment ideas suggested during the law-making debates.

When students have decided on their amendments, they can write them as formal documents using the *Amendment Template* in the *Toolkit*.

The class then meet in their teams to decide if their group will support or oppose the amendment. Students playing the role of Independents will need to decide individually if they will support or oppose the amendment. Students can then write short speeches giving reasons for their support or opposition.

PHOTOS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*
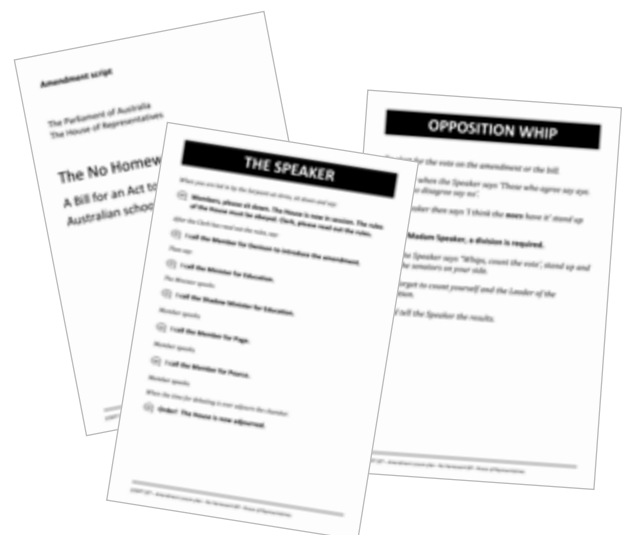
SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape as indicated by the seating plan. The seating plan, as well as diagrams of the chamber, can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

Props and costumes

The Clerk will need a bell. You may like to use other props, such as a Mace for the Serjeant-at-Arms and gowns for the Speaker and Clerks. Instructions for making these are in the *Toolkit*.

HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

SPEAKER

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

PRIME MINISTER

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

MINISTERS

OPPOSITION BACKBENCHERS

MACE

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

SHADOW MINISTERS

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

INDEPENDENTS *and* MINOR PARTIES

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

NOTE: The students should remain in the roles they were assigned in the previous law-making role-play.

- Divide the class into **government, opposition, minor parties** and **Independents**. Refer to *Parliament NOW* on the PEO website for the current numbers in the chambers. Use these to work out the proportions for your parliament.
  www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html

- Select a **Speaker** – this is a non-debating role and is generally someone from the government who can exercise authority in the room.

- Select a **Clerk** (pronounced 'Clark') and **Serjeant-at-Arms** – these are parliamentary officers who do not debate or vote. A teacher may take the role of **Deputy Clerk**. This role does not require active participation, but puts the teacher in a central position in the room so they can assist with the running of the role-play.

- Elect party leaders – the government elects the **Prime Minister** and the opposition elects the **Leader of the Opposition.**

- Select a **member** for each amendment you wish to introduce.

- Choose party **whips** (managers) to count the vote at the end of the debate.

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINOR PARTIES

INDEPENDENTS

SPEAKER

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK *(TEACHER)*

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

PRIME MINISTER *(ELECTED BY GOVERNMENT)*

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION *(ELECTED BY OPPOSITION)*

MEMBERS *(TO INTRODUCE AMENDMENTS)*

PARTY WHIPS

Starting the role-play

1. The Clerk rings the bell and tells the members to stand.
2. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker into the chamber, carrying the Mace on their right shoulder.
3. The Serjeant-at-Arms announces the Speaker, places the Mace on the table and moves to their seat.
4. The Speaker tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.
5. The Clerk stands and reads the rules of the chamber.
6. A member introduces an amendment.
7. The Speaker selects members to make speeches, alternating between the government, opposition, minor parties and Independents. Members make their speeches in turn.

Voting on the amendment

8. When the debate is finished, the Speaker leads a 'vote on the voices' (uncounted vote) before declaring the vote.
9. If the opposition lose the vote on the voices, the opposition whip may call for a division (formal counted vote) and the Clerk rings the bell. The Speaker conducts the division with help from the whips and then declares the vote.

Division vote

10. If the majority of votes are for the amendment it is agreed to.
11. If the majority of votes are against the amendment the amendment is defeated.
12. If the vote is a tie the Speaker may vote, which will result in the amendment either being agreed to or defeated. If the Speaker chooses not to vote, the amendment is defeated.

NOTE: Your class may have more amendments on this bill that they want to consider. If so, do not go to the next step yet. Instead, go back to step 6 and have the Clerk introduce the next amendment in the same way the first amendment was introduced. Repeat the process for as many amendments as you wish.

Adjournment

13. The Speaker adjourns the House.
14. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker from the chamber, holding the Mace.
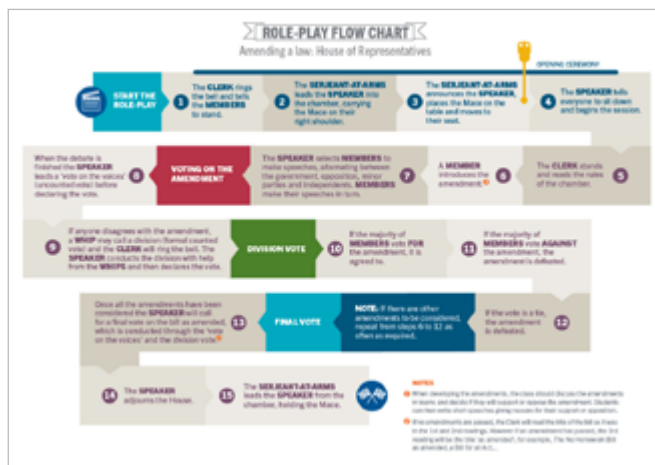
FLOW CHART
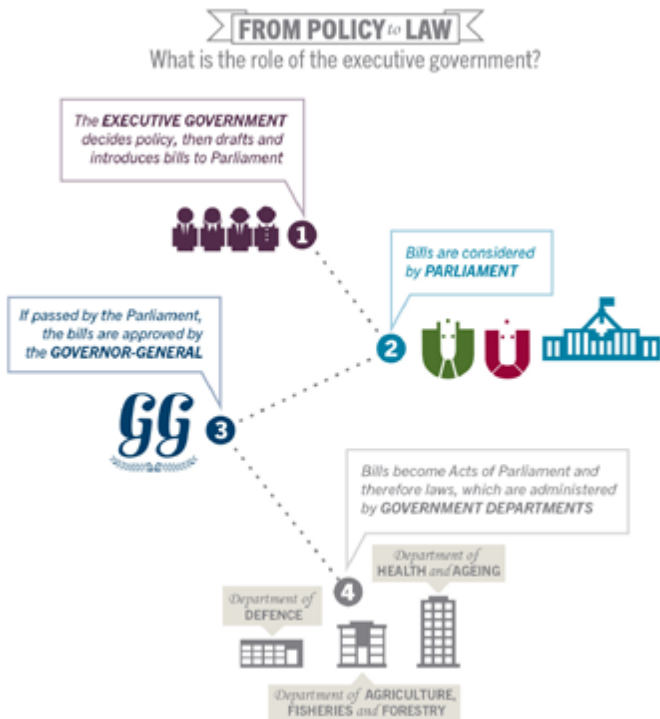Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Debrief

After the debate, explore the following questions with your students.

Where would members of parliament get ideas for amendments?
They could talk to their team members, people in their electorate and anyone else in Australia who may be affected by the bill.

Who would suggest amendments to bills?
Any member may suggest amendments, but it is often opposition members, minor party members or Independents. Unlike government members, they may not have worked on the bill before it was presented to the Parliament.

FROM POLICY to LAW
What is the role of the executive government?

The EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT decides policy, then drafts and introduces bills to Parliament **1**

Bills are considered by PARLIAMENT **2**

If passed by the Parliament, the bills are approved by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL **3**

Bills become Acts of Parliament and therefore laws, which are administered by GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS **4**

Department of DEFENCE
Department of HEALTH and AGEING
Department of AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES and FORESTRY

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Senate
After a bill has passed through the House of Representatives it progresses to the Senate where it is also debated and voted on, and possibly amended. You might like to conduct a role-play that follows the progress of a bill through the Senate. To do this, check out the *Law-making: Senate* role play lesson plan.

Committees
Committees investigate issues and bills in more detail than is possible in the chamber. The committee process helps parliamentarians become informed by gathering information from government departments, experts in the field, lobby groups and interested citizens. You might like to conduct a role-play of a committee. To do this, check out the *Committee* role-play lesson plan.

Question Time
During Question Time in the Parliament, the Prime Minister and ministers are called upon to explain government decisions and actions. The *Question Time* role-play lesson plans help students understand the purpose of Question Time, in particular how it works to scrutinise (closely examine) the government.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html

Amending a law:
Senate

In Parliament, an amendment is a change to a bill. It allows for a bill to be improved or altered as it progresses through the Parliament. This lesson involves a role-play which demonstrates how amendments to bills are introduced, debated and voted on in the Senate.

NOTE: Your class should only undertake this amendment role-play if they passed the bill during the Law-making: Senate role-play. If the bill failed in the law-making role-play it cannot be amended.

OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- research and debate current issues
- think critically and find solutions to problems
- prepare and deliver public speeches
- explore the process of law-making
- explore the concept of parliamentary scrutiny
- explore the concept of representation.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Generate discussion about the role-play by exploring some of the following questions with your students:

Who do the senators represent?
Each senator represents a state or territory. Each state has 12 senators, and each territory has 2, making a total of 76 senators in the Senate.

What was said about this bill in the law-making debate?
You will need to refer to the previous law-making debate.

What steps did the bill go through in the law-making debate?
The bill was introduced, debated and then voted on. The bill was agreed to at the vote, which means that it may now be amended.

Why would you change a bill in the Parliament?
To improve the bill, so that it works better as a law for Australia.

TOOLKIT

SEATING PLAN
How to set up your classroom.

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Ready-to-use script sets and a template to create your own scripts.

VIDEOS
To set the scene for the role-play.

PHOTOS
A series of photos you can use on a smart board.

DIAGRAMS
A series of diagrams you can use on a smart board.

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Instructions for making props and costumes.

FLOW CHART
Optional tool for running the role-play.

TO DOWNLOAD ITEMS IN THE TOOLKIT, GO TO:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans/amending-a-law-senate.html

Setting the scene for the role-play

Have students reflect on the previous law-making role-play through class discussion, or by revisiting any work that you may have set about the previous debate. It is important that students understand that this role-play is a continuation of the process that they started in the law-making role-play. You may wish to refer to the 'setting the scene' section of the *Law-making: Senate* role-play lesson plan to prepare your students.

Main activity: Conducting an amendment role-play

Scripts

The PEO scripts provide a framework for the role-play. The scripts include specific roles that can be assigned to students and indicate what they have to do and say. You can download a full script set or a template, which allows you to write your own script, from the *Toolkit*.

PHOTOS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Choosing an amendment (change to the bill)

Before the role-play can start, your students will need to have at least one idea for an amendment. Amendments are changes to a bill to improve it. However, amendments cannot change the overall intention of the bill. For example, the *No Homework* bill cannot be amended to allow homework to be set one day a week because then the bill would no longer ban homework.

Have your class think about the bill they debated in the law-making role-play. Allow your students to come up with amendments using the following options:
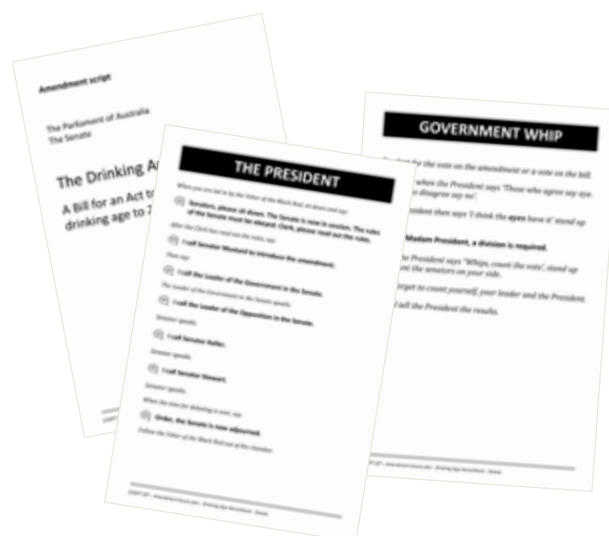
• Brainstorm ideas with the class.
• Ask each team and the Independents to come up with their own amendments.
• Use amendment ideas suggested during the law-making debates.

When students have decided on their amendments they can write them as formal documents using the *Amendment Template* in the *Toolkit*.

The class then meet in their teams to decide if their group will support or oppose the amendment. Students playing the role of Independents will need to decide individually if they will support or oppose the amendment. Students can then write short speeches giving reasons for their support or opposition.
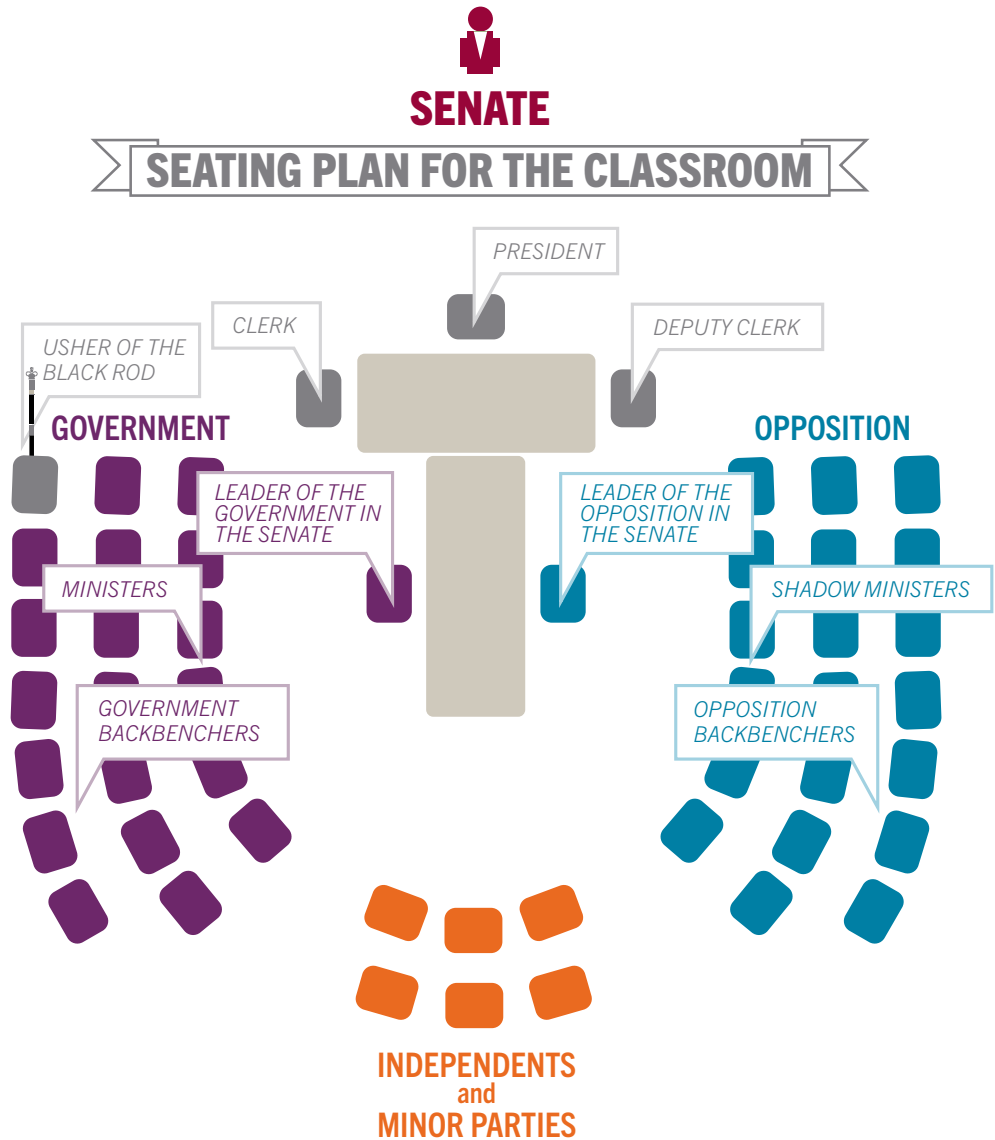

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape as indicated by the seating plan. The seating plan, as well as diagrams of the chamber, can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

Props and costumes

The Clerk will need a bell. You may like to use other props, such as a Black Rod for the Usher and gowns for the President and Clerks. Instructions for making these are in the *Toolkit*.

SENATE

SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

PRESIDENT

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE

MINISTERS

SHADOW MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

OPPOSITION BACKBENCHERS

INDEPENDENTS
and
MINOR PARTIES

SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

NOTE: The students should remain in the roles they were assigned in the previous law-making role-play.

- Divide the class into **government, opposition, minor parties** and **Independents**. Refer to *Parliament NOW* on the PEO website for the current numbers in the chambers. Use these to work out the proportions for your parliament.
www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html

- Select a **President** – this is a non-debating role and is generally someone from the government who can exercise authority in the room.

- Select a **Clerk** (pronounced 'Clark') and **Usher of the Black Rod** – these are parliamentary officers who do not debate or vote. A teacher may take the role of **Deputy Clerk**. This role does not require active participation, but puts the teacher in a central position in the room so they can assist with the running of the role-play.

- Elect party leaders – the government elects the **Leader of the Government in the Senate** and the opposition elects the **Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.**

- Select a **senator** for each amendment you wish to introduce.

- Choose party **whips** (managers) to count the vote at the end of the debate.

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINOR PARTIES

INDEPENDENTS

PRESIDENT (GOVERNMENT)

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK (TEACHER)

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE (ELECTED BY GOVERNMENT)

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE (ELECTED BY OPPOSITION)

SENATORS (TO INTRODUCE AN AMENDMENTS)

PARTY WHIPS

Starting the role-play

1. The Clerk rings the bell and tells the senators to stand.
2. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President into the chamber, carrying the Black Rod vertically in their right hand.
3. The Usher of the Black Rod announces the President and moves to their seat.
4. The President tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.
5. The Clerk stands and reads the rules of the chamber.
6. A senator introduces the amendment.
7. The President selects senators to make speeches, alternating between the government, opposition, minor parties and Independents. Senators make their speeches in turn.

Voting on the amendment

8. When the debate is finished, the President leads a 'vote on the voices' (uncounted vote) before declaring the vote.
9. If the opposition lose the vote on the voices, the opposition whip may call for a division (formal counted vote) and the Clerk rings the bell. The President conducts the division with help from the whips and then declares the vote. The President must always vote in a division.

Division vote

10. If the majority of votes are for the amendment it is agreed to.
11. If the majority of votes are against the amendment the amendment is defeated.
12. If the vote is a tie, the amendment is defeated.

NOTE: Your class may have more amendments on this bill that they want to consider. If so, do not go to the next step yet. Instead, go back to step 6 and have the Clerk introduce the next amendment in the same way the first amendment was introduced. Repeat the process for as many amendments as you wish.

Adjournment

13. The President adjourns the Senate.
14. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President from the chamber, holding the Black Rod.
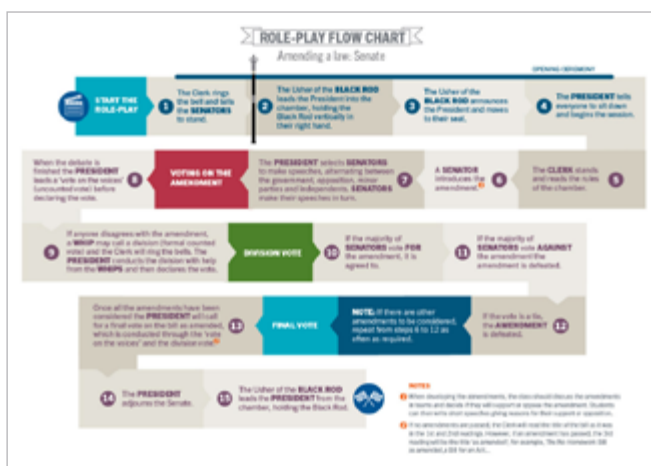
FLOW CHART
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Debrief

After the debate, explore the following questions with your students.

Where would senators get ideas for amendments?
They could talk to their team members, people in their electorate and anyone else in Australia who may be affected by the bill.

Who would suggest amendments to bills?
Any senator may suggest amendments, but it is often opposition senators, minor party senators or Independents. Unlike government senators, they may not have worked on the bill before it was presented to the Parliament.

> FROM POLICY to LAW
> What is the role of the executive government?
>
> The EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT decides policy, then drafts and introduces bills to Parliament ❶
>
> Bills are considered by PARLIAMENT ❷
>
> If passed by the Parliament, the bills are approved by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL ❸
>
> Bills become Acts of Parliament and therefore laws, which are administered by GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS ❹
>
> Department of HEALTH and AGEING
> Department of DEFENCE
> Department of AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES and FORESTRY

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

House of Representatives or Senate
If your class has debated and amended a bill in the House of Representatives and Senate, you may wish to repeat the process, but allow your class to devise its own bill. A bill and speech template is available to download from the *Toolkit*.

Committees
Committees investigate issues and bills in more detail than is possible in the chamber. The committee process helps parliamentarians become informed by gathering information from government departments, experts in the field, lobby groups and interested citizens. You might like to conduct a role-play of a committee. To do this, check out the *Committee* role-play lesson plan.

Question Time
During Question Time in the Parliament, the Prime Minister and ministers are called upon to explain government decisions and actions. The *Question Time* role-play lesson plans will help students understand the purpose of Question Time, in particular how it works to scrutinise (closely examine) the government.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html
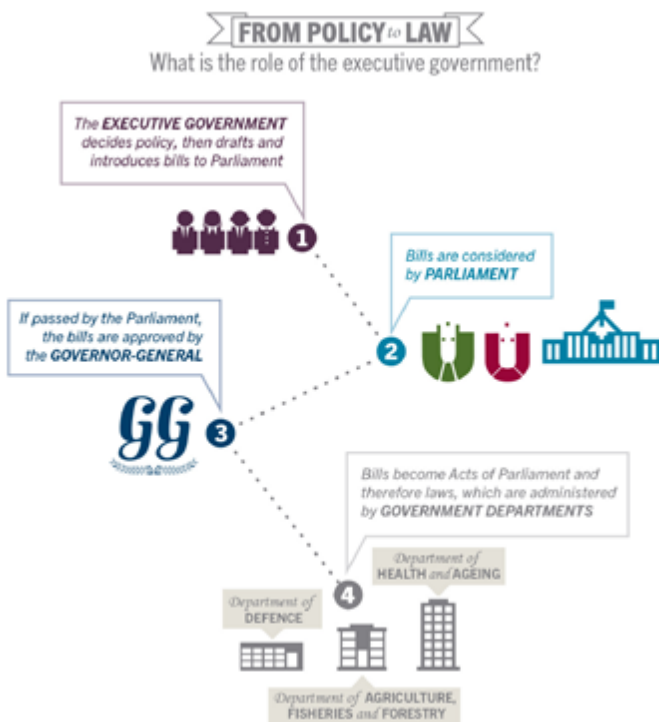
Question Time:
House of Representatives

During Question Time in the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister and ministers are called upon to answer questions and to explain government decisions and actions. This lesson involves a role-play that helps students understand the purpose of Question Time, in particular how it works to scrutinise (closely examine) the government.

🏁 OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- understand the role of government ministers, the opposition, minor parties and Independents
- explore parliamentary scrutiny and government accountability
- inquire into real and current issues
- practise public speaking, careful listening and quick thinking
- engage in critical thinking.

🔍 FOCUS QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of Question Time?
The Parliament uses Question Time to call on the government to explain its decisions and actions. This is referred to as scrutinising the government. The opposition, Independents and members of minor parties also use Question Time to raise important issues.

Who participates in Question Time and what groups do they belong to?
- government backbenchers, the opposition, Independents and members of minor parties, who ask the questions
- government ministers, who answer the questions.

How effective is Question Time in making the government explain its actions?
Question Time can bring to light issues or problems and press the government to take action. It also gives ministers the opportunity to address topical or urgent issues. However, because public and media attention focuses on Question Time, it can be used for political opportunism. The opposition might ask questions that challenge government decisions, while government backbenchers might ask ministers questions that highlight the government's achievements.
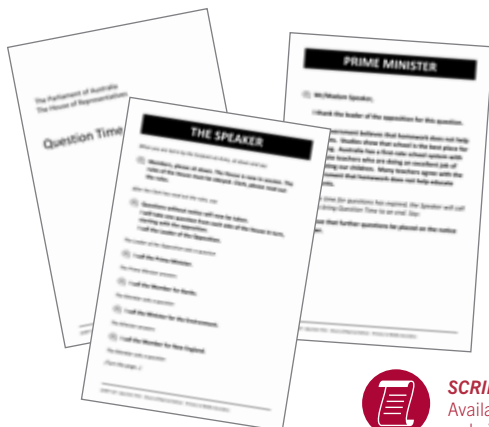
Setting the scene for the role-play

Before the role-play begins, you can set the scene by doing some short activities with the students. For example:

- Watch Question Time in the House of Representatives. You can view replays of Question Time by following this link on the Australian Parliament House website: **www.aph.gov.au/athtv**

  Note: Question Time runs for about 70 minutes, so you may wish to show the class a 10 to 15 minute excerpt of the session.

- Students could also read and discuss the PEO's Question Time Fact Sheet: **www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/question-time.html**

- After watching Question Time, discuss with the class:

  1. What is the purpose of Question Time?
  2. Was there a difference between the questions asked by the opposition and the government?
  3. How well did it work? For example, did the government explain its actions and how well did the ministers answer the questions?
  4. What was the role of the Speaker?

- Encourage students to get into role as members of the House of Representatives and to understand that they:

  » represent the views of their electorate

  » may belong to the government or opposition so will be working as part of a large team

  » may be an Independent or member of a minor party.

Students can find out more about the roles of people in Parliament by checking the Fact Sheets on the PEO website: **www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets.html**

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Main activity: Conducting a Question Time role-play

Scripts

The PEO scripts provide a framework for the role-play. The scripts include specific roles that can be assigned to students and indicate what they have to do and say. You can download a full script set or a template, which allows you to write your own script, from the *Toolkit*.

Preparing questions

Before the role-play can start, students will need questions to ask government ministers. You could use the PEO's scripted questions and answers provided in the *Toolkit*. Otherwise your students could prepare their own questions.

During Question Time, members of parliament ask ministers questions about issues that fall within their federal areas of responsibility. Create a list of current issues by either:

- brainstorming topics in the news
- listing areas of concern related to a specific unit of study
- exploring issues of local or school interest.

Once the class has created their list, they can write their questions. Questions are directed at ministers who are responsible for the relevant portfolio. For example, if the government announced a plan to ban homework, the opposition would ask the Minister for Education to explain why.

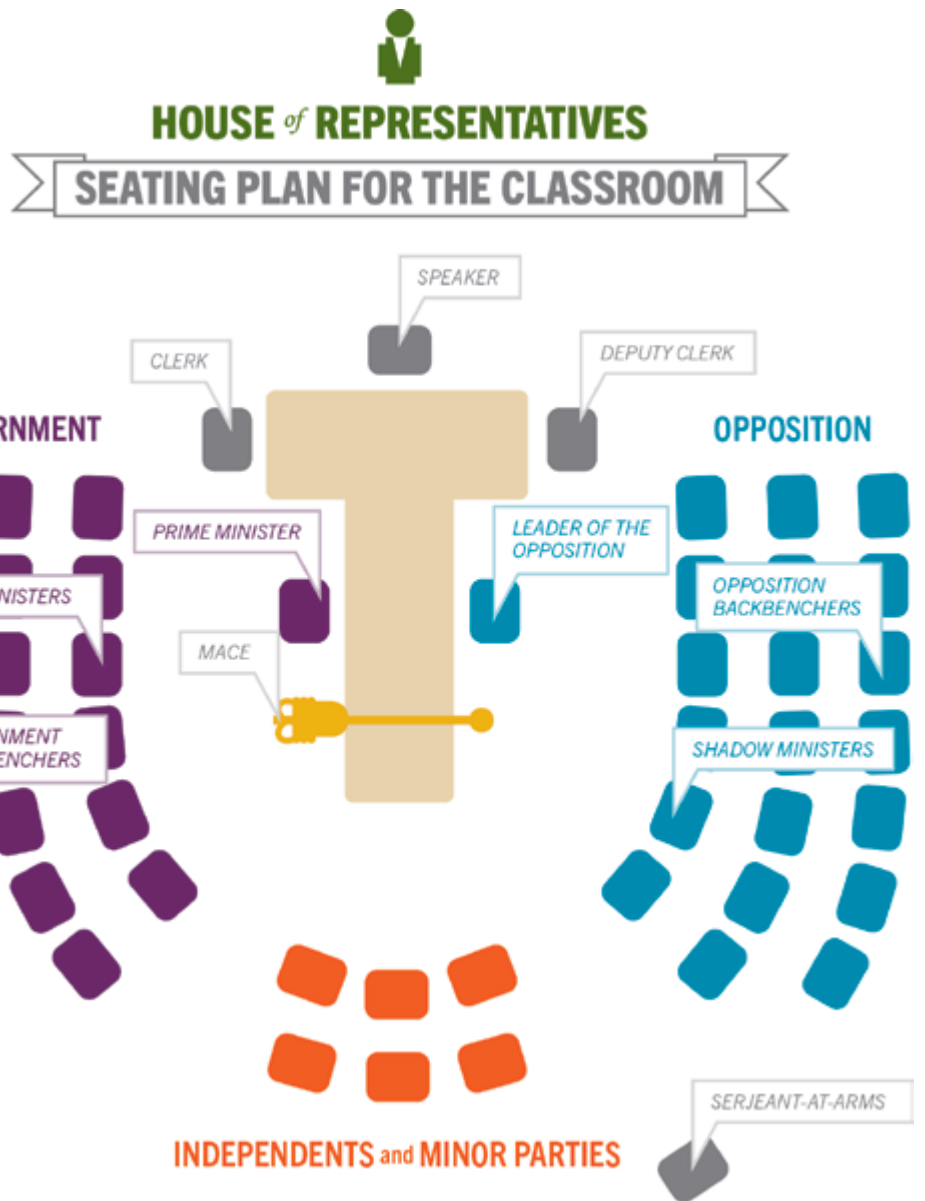The members of each team then meet to prepare questions.

- Government backbenchers prepare questions and answers with government ministers.
- Opposition backbenchers and shadow ministers plan tough questions (often on controversial topics) for government ministers.
- Independents and minor party members devise their own questions, either as a group or individually.

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape as indicated by the seating plan. The seating plan, as well as diagrams of the chamber, can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

Props and costumes

The Clerk will need a bell. You may like to use other props, such as a Mace for the Serjeant-at-Arms and gowns for the Speaker and Clerks. Instructions for making these are in the *Toolkit*.

HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES
SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

SPEAKER

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

PRIME MINISTER

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

MINISTERS

OPPOSITION BACKBENCHERS

MACE

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

SHADOW MINISTERS

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

INDEPENDENTS and **MINOR PARTIES**

SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

- Divide the class into **government, opposition, minor parties** and **Independents**. Refer to *Parliament NOW* on the PEO website for the current numbers in the chambers. Use these to work out the proportions for your parliament.
  www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html
- Divide the government into **ministers** (frontbenchers) and **backbenchers**.
- Divide the opposition into **shadow ministers** and **backbenchers**.
- Select a **Speaker** — this is a non-debating role and is generally someone from the government who can exercise authority in the room.
- Select a **Clerk** (pronounced 'Clark') and **Serjeant-at-Arms** — these are parliamentary officers who do not debate or vote. A teacher may take the role of Deputy Clerk. This role does not require active participation, but puts the teacher in a central position in the room so they can assist with the running of the role-play.
- Elect party leaders — the government elects the **Prime Minister** and the opposition elects the **Leader of the Opposition.**
- Distribute **portfolios** (areas of responsibility) to government ministers.

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINOR PARTIES

INDEPENDENTS

SPEAKER

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK *(TEACHER)*

SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

PRIME MINISTER *(ELECTED BY GOVERNMENT)*

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION *(ELECTED BY OPPOSITION)*

PORTFOLIOS *(TO GOVERNMENT MINISTERS)*

Starting the role-play

1. The Clerk rings the bell and tells the members to stand.
2. The Serjeant-at-Arms, carrying the mace on their right shoulder, leads the Speaker into the chamber.
3. The Serjeant-at-Arms announces the Speaker, places the Mace on the table and moves to their seat.
4. The Speaker tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.
5. The Clerk reads the rules of Question Time.
6. The Speaker calls a member to ask a question and then calls the relevant minister to answer the question. The Speaker repeats this step.

Ending the role-play

7. The Question Time session finishes either when there are no more questions, or when the Prime Minister requests that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.
8. The Serjeant-at-Arms, holding the mace on their right shoulder, leads the Speaker from the chamber.

Debrief

After Question Time, you might like to explore the following questions with your students.

What questions are likely to cause the government concern?
Opposition questions which attempt to highlight government weakness. They often target specific ministers and/or refer to controversial reports in the media. Such questions are usually of interest to the public.

How can ministers defend the government in Question Time?
Ministers need to show they are managing their responsibilities well. Ministers also have to be extremely well-prepared and give clear, positive answers. The government can also prepare questions which focus on its achievements.

What role does the media play in the process of scrutiny?
Media organisations are free to select the news. They publish news to mass audiences and, in doing so, may criticise the actions and decisions of the government. In this way, the media contributes to the scrutiny of the Parliament.

What is the role of Independent and minor party members during Question Time?
Like the opposition, Independents and minor party members ask the government questions; they scrutinise the government and demand accountability.

PHOTOS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
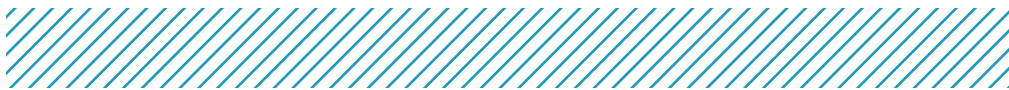
House of Representatives
To further explore the role of government ministers, conduct a law-making role-play that follows the progress of a bill through the Parliament. To do this, check out the *Law-making* role-play lesson plans.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html

HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

QUESTION TIME

GOVERNMENT MEMBER

THE PRIME MINISTER ANSWERING THE QUESTION

MINISTER

OPPOSITION MEMBER

1 An opposition member asks the Prime Minister a question

2 The Prime Minister answers the opposition member's question

3 A government member asks a minister a question

4 The minister answers the government member's question

QUESTIONS TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTERS CONTINUE ALTERNATING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT MEMBERS

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Question Time:
Senate

During Question Time in the Senate, ministers are called upon to explain government decisions and actions. This lesson involves a role-play that helps students understand the purpose of Question Time; in particular how it provides for scrutiny (close examination) of the government.

🏁 OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- understand the role of government ministers, the opposition, minor parties and Independents
- explore parliamentary scrutiny and government accountability
- inquire into real and current issues
- practise public speaking, careful listening and quick thinking
- engage in critical thinking.

🔍 FOCUS QUESTIONS

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Setting the scene for the role-play

Before the role-play begins, you can set the scene by doing some short activities with the students. For example:

- Watch Question Time in the Senate. You can view replays of Question Time by following this link on the Australian Parliament House website: **www.aph.gov.au/About_ Parliament/Senate/Whats_On/Senate_Highlights**

  Note: Question Time in the Senate runs for about one hour, so you may wish to show the class a 10 to 15 minute excerpt of the session.

- Students could also read and discuss the PEO's Question Time Fact Sheet: **www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/ question-time.html**

- After watching Question Time, discuss with the class:

  1. What is the purpose of Question Time?
  2. Was there a difference between the questions asked by the opposition and the government?
  3. How well did it work? For example, did the government explain its actions and how well did the ministers answer the questions?
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- Encourage students to get into role as senators and to understand that they:

  » represent the views of their state or territory
  » may belong to the government or opposition so will be working as part of a large team
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SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Available on the PEO
website in the *Toolkit*

Main activity: Conducting a Question Time role-play

Scripts

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Before the role-play can start, students will need questions to ask government ministers. You could use the PEO's scripted questions and answers provided in the *Toolkit*. Otherwise your students could prepare their own questions.

During Question Time, members of parliament ask ministers questions about issues that fall within their federal areas of responsibility. Create a list of current issues by either:

- brainstorming topics in the news
- listing areas of concern related to a specific unit of study
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Once the class has created their list, they can write their questions. Questions are directed at ministers who are responsible for the relevant portfolio. For example, if the government announced a plan to ban homework, the opposition would ask the Minister for Education to explain why.

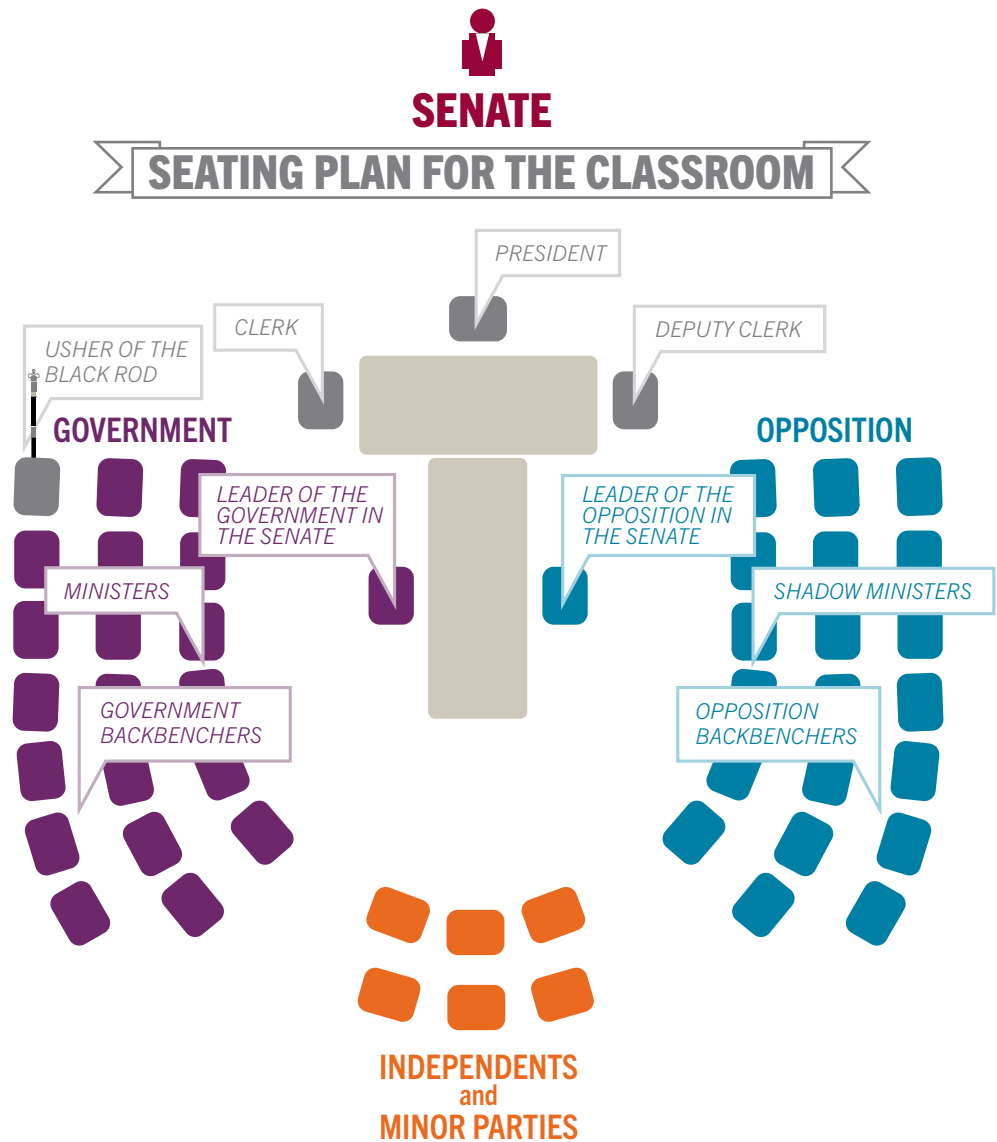The members of each team then meet to prepare questions.

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Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape as indicated by the seating plan. The seating plan, as well as diagrams of the chamber, can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

Props and costumes

The Clerk will need a bell. You may like to use other props, such as a Black Rod for the Usher and gowns for the President and Clerks. Instructions for making these are in the *Toolkit*.

SENATE

SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

PRESIDENT

CLERK

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

DEPUTY CLERK

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE

MINISTERS

SHADOW MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

OPPOSITION BACKBENCHERS

INDEPENDENTS and MINOR PARTIES

SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

MAKE IT YOURSELF
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

- Divide the class into **government, opposition, minor parties** and **Independents**. Refer to *Parliament NOW* on the PEO website for the current numbers in the chambers. Use these to work out the proportions for your parliament.
  www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html
- Divide the government into **ministers** (frontbenchers) and **backbenchers**.
- Divide the opposition into **shadow ministers** and **backbenchers**.
- Select a **President** — this is a non-debating role and is generally someone from the government who can exercise authority in the room.
- Select a **Clerk** (pronounced 'Clark') and **Usher of the Black Rod** — these are parliamentary officers who do not debate or vote. A teacher may take the role of Deputy Clerk. This role does not require active participation, but puts the teacher in a central position in the room so they can assist with the running of the role-play.
- Elect party leaders — the government elects the **Leader of the Government in the Senate** and the opposition elects the **Leader of the Opposition in the Senate**.
- Distribute **portfolios** (areas of responsibility) to government ministers.

GOVERNMENT

OPPOSITION

MINOR PARTIES

INDEPENDENTS

PRESIDENT (GOVERNMENT)

CLERK

DEPUTY CLERK (TEACHER)

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE (ELECTED BY GOVERNMENT)

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE (ELECTED BY OPPOSITION)

MINISTER

PORTFOLIOS (TO GOVERNMENT MINISTERS)

Starting the role-play

1. The Clerk rings the bell and tells the senators to stand.
2. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President into the chamber, carrying the Black Rod vertically in their right hand.
3. The Usher of the Black Rod announces the President and moves to their seat.
4. The President tells everyone to sit down and begins the session.
5. The Clerk reads the rules of Question Time.
6. The President calls a senator to ask a question and then calls the relevant minister to answer the question. The President repeats this step.

Ending the role-play

7. The Question Time session finishes either when there are no more questions, or when the Leader of the Government in the Senate requests that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.
8. The Usher of the Black Rod leads the President from the chamber, holding the Black Rod vertically in their right hand.

Debrief

After Question Time, you might like to explore the following questions with your students.

What questions are likely to cause the government concern?
Opposition questions which attempt to highlight government weakness. They often target specific ministers and/or refer to controversial reports in the media. Such questions are usually of interest to the public.

How can ministers defend the government in Question Time?
Ministers need to show that they are managing their responsibilities well. Ministers also have to be extremely well-prepared and give clear, positive answers.
The government can also prepare questions which focus on its achievements.

What role does the media play in the process of scrutiny?
Media organisations are free to select the news. They publish news to mass audiences and, in doing so, may criticise the actions and decisions of the government. In this way, the media contributes to the scrutiny of the Parliament.

What is the role of Independent and minor party members during Question Time?
Like the opposition, Independents and minor party members ask the government questions; they scrutinise the government and demand accountability.

PHOTOS
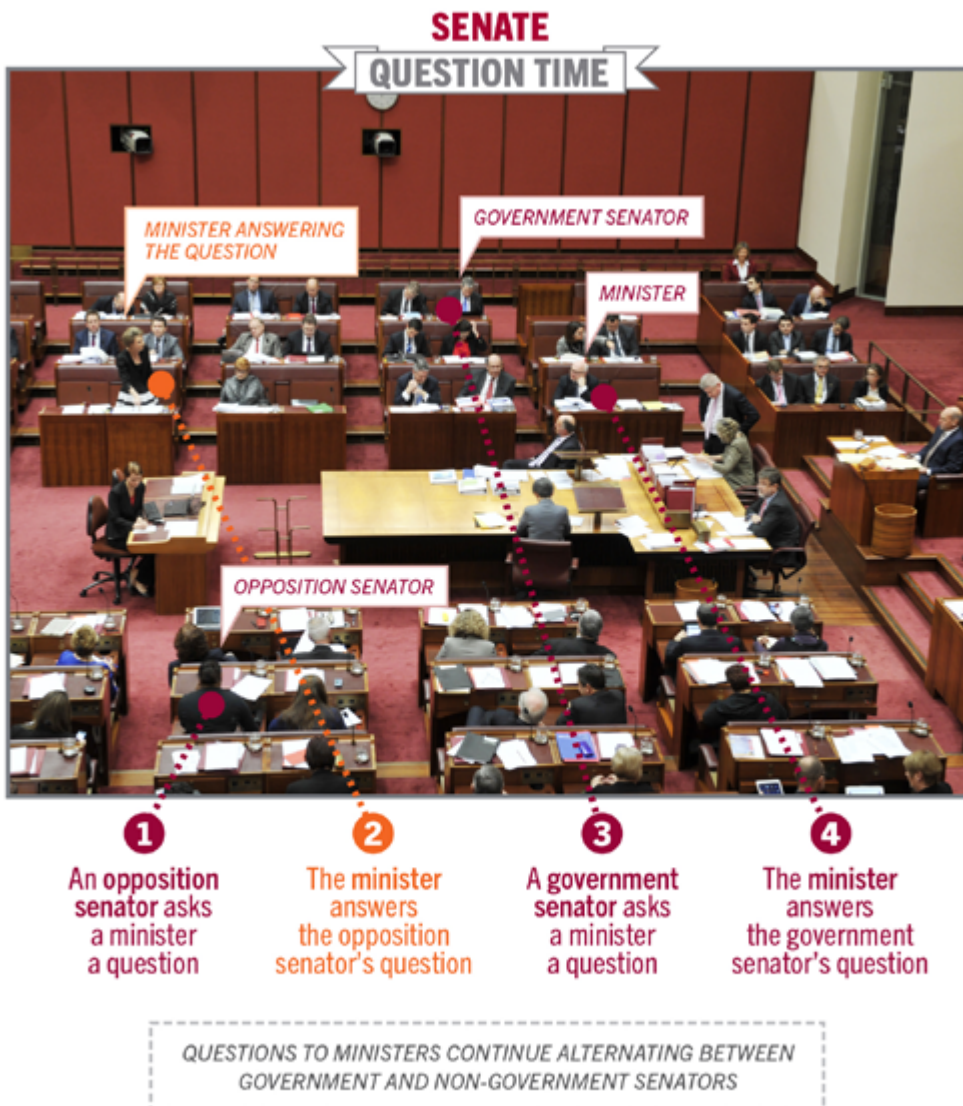Available on the PEO
website in the *Toolkit*

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

House of Representatives or Senate
To further explore the role of government ministers, conduct a law-making role-play that follows the progress of a bill through the Parliament. To do this, check out the *Law-making* role-play lesson plans.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html

SENATE
QUESTION TIME

MINISTER ANSWERING THE QUESTION

GOVERNMENT SENATOR

MINISTER

OPPOSITION SENATOR

1 An opposition senator asks a minister a question

2 The minister answers the opposition senator's question

3 A government senator asks a minister a question

4 The minister answers the government senator's question

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS CONTINUE ALTERNATING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SENATORS

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Committee:
House of Representatives or Senate

The Parliament of Australia uses the committee system to closely investigate matters of public importance and examine bills. Committees research issues, gather evidence from experts and individuals, and make recommendations. They can do this in more detail than is possible in either the House or Senate chambers. This lesson involves a role-play that helps students understand how committees are conducted and their importance to the parliamentary process.

Note: This lesson plan assumes some prior knowledge of the law-making process. The PEO does not recommend using this lesson as a starting point for studying Parliament; rather, it encourages further examination of previous lessons in this series.

OUTCOMES

By participating in this role-play, students will:

- understand the role of the Parliament in examining bills
- explore how the Parliament investigates matters of public importance
- examine government accountability and parliamentary scrutiny
- inquire into real and current issues
- engage in critical thinking
- practise public speaking.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

The committee role-play allows students to explore the following questions:

What is a committee?
A committee is made up of members of parliament and can be established by either the House of Representatives or the Senate to scrutinise bills and investigate issues in greater detail.

How does a committee investigate a bill or issue?
The committee invites the community, experts and interest groups to make a written statement (submission) outlining their views about the bill or issue. It may then invite selected people or groups to appear before it to provide further information or answer questions from committee members.

What does the committee do with the information it gathers?
The committee writes a formal report which is presented to the Parliament. The report may make recommendations to act on an issue or suggest changes to a bill.

TOOLKIT

SEATING PLAN
How to set up your classroom.

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Ready-to-use script sets and a template to create your own scripts.

VIDEOS
To set the scene for the role-play.

PHOTOS
A series of photos you can use on a smart board.

DIAGRAMS
A series of diagrams you can use on a smart board.

TO DOWNLOAD ITEMS IN THE TOOLKIT, GO TO:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans/committee.html

Setting the scene for the role-play

Before the role-play begins, you can set the scene by doing some short activities with the students. For example:

- Watch a committee in the Parliament. You can view committees by following this link on the Australian Parliament House website: **www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament**

  Note: Committees run at different times of the week. You can contact the PEO for assistance in finding a time to watch a committee.

- After watching the committee, discuss with the class:
  1. What process did the hearing follow?
  2. What was the role of the chair?
  3. What was the role of the witness group?
  4. What information did the committee find out?

- Students could also read and discuss the PEO's Parliamentary Committees Fact Sheet: **www.peo.gov.au/learning/fact-sheets/parliamentary-committees.html**

Main activity: Conducting the committee role-play
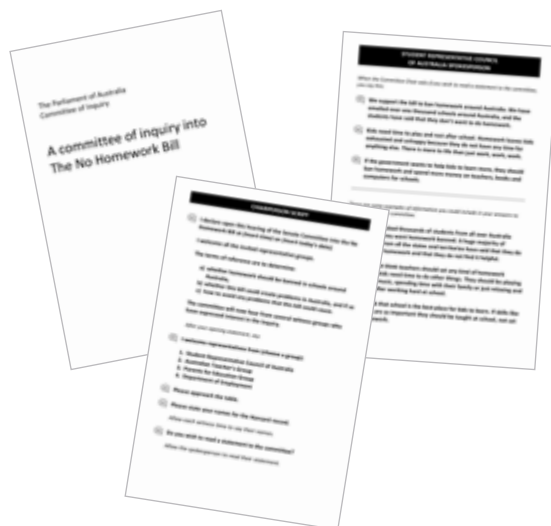
Scripts

The PEO scripts provide a framework for the role-play. The scripts include specific ideas that can be assigned to students, and indicate what they have to do and say. However, this role-play works best when your students depart from the scripts to formulate their own questions and answers. You can download a full script set or a template, which allows you to write you own script, from the *Toolkit*.

Choosing a topic for investigation

The *Toolkit* has scripts on preselected topics, which you may wish to use with your class. Alternatively your class could select their own topic for the committee to investigate. You can create a list of topics by:

- Choosing a issue that the class is required to study in the curriculum.
- Brainstorming topics in the news (for example, environmental, health and education issues).
- Exploring areas of interest to students.
- Discussing issues of importance to the school or local area.

SCRIPTS AND TEMPLATES
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Getting into role

Committee

The committee is made up of members of parliament who question witness groups and report to the Parliament on their findings. Choose five or six students to be committee members. One of these students will be the committee chair, who will run the hearing.

Witness groups

Divide the rest of the students into witness groups, with 3–5 students per group. They will answer questions from the committee. One student from each group will be the spokesperson, who will read a short prepared statement when their group gives evidence.

Encourage students to get into role and to understand that:

- members of parliament are there to ask questions and to investigate. They do not argue with witness groups, they just want information.
- witness groups may want to persuade the committee to support their position. They should support their viewpoint with quality information and research.

Setting the terms of reference

A committee needs to have a strict set of guidelines for its investigation. These are called the terms of reference and determine the exact areas that the committee will investigate. Sticking to the terms of reference gives structure to the committee's questioning, and stops it from straying off the topic. Once you have decided on your terms of reference you can write them on the Committee Chairperson's script, which is included in the script template. The script template can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

COMMITTEE

WITNESS GROUPS

COMMITTEE CHAIR

SPOKESPERSON *(ONE FROM EACH GROUP)*

The investigation

The role-play works best when students have enough time to research the topic of investigation in some detail. Each witness group should focus its research on the issue that concerns its group. They should have a particular point of view about the issue, and prepare evidence that will persuade the committee to accept their point of view.

The committee members need to have a broad understanding of the issues the witness groups may raise. This will then enable them to ask the witness group relevant questions. The committee plans questions to ask each witness group; however it may also ask spontaneous questions in response to issues raised by the group. Although witnesses prepare for questions, witnesses may be asked a range of questions by the committee without prior notice.

Once you have decided on your witness groups, record their names on the committee chair script.

A committee inquiry taking place in Parliament House

A committee inquiry taking place in Parliament House

PHOTOS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a committee room by arranging chairs and tables as shown in the diagram. A larger version of this diagram can be downloaded from the *Toolkit*.

COMMITTEE
SEATING PLAN FOR THE CLASSROOM

COMMITTEE CHAIR

THE COMMITTEE

WITNESS TABLE

WITNESS GROUP 1
WITNESS GROUP 2
WITNESS GROUP 3
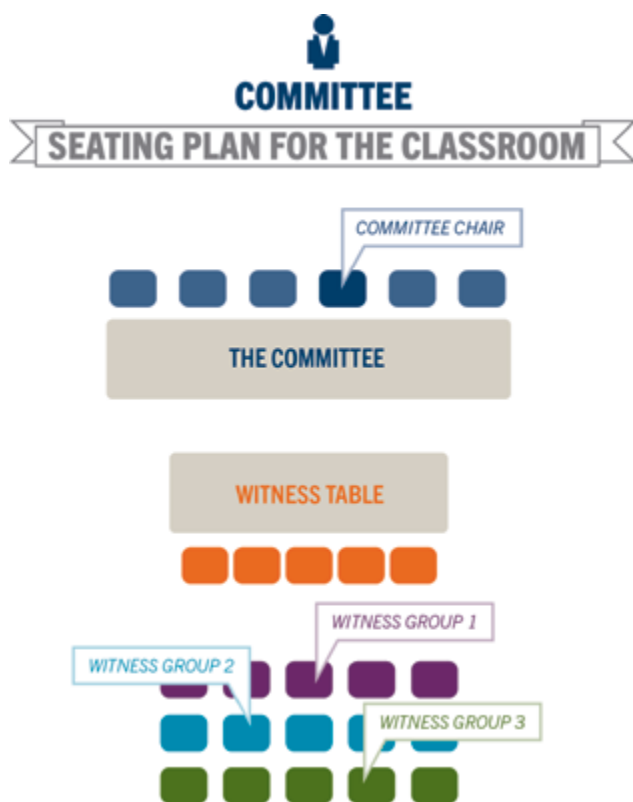
SEATING PLAN
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*

Starting the role-play

1. The committee chair starts the hearing by introducing the committee, outlining the terms of reference and listing the witness groups.

2. The committee chair invites the first witness group to the table, and to state their names for the Hansard record.

3. The committee chair invites the first witness group to make its opening statement.

4. The leader of the witness group makes a brief opening statement outlining the group's position, and what it hopes the Parliament will do regarding the issue.

5. The committee chair invites all committee members to ask the witness group questions (5–8 minutes per group).

6. The committee chair thanks the witness group for attending and invites the next group to the table.

7. Repeat steps 3–6 until all witness groups have given evidence.

Ending the role-play

8. The committee session finishes when the committee chair reads the closing statement.

9. You can ask the committee to prepare a report on the hearing. The report should outline what the committee thinks the Parliament should do about the issue they have investigated.

Debrief

After the committee, you might like to explore the following questions with your students.

What happens to the information gathered by the committee?
The committee prepares a report which is tabled in Parliament. The report may make recommendations for Parliament to consider. For example, it may suggest that Parliament introduces legislation, or amend a bill or an existing law, to deal with the issue. The government may act on these recommendations, or it may respond by developing policies or seeking further information. However, the Parliament is not obliged to act on the committee's recommendations.

How can the witness group best prepare to speak to a committee?
Witnesses should ensure that they have thoroughly researched the information that they will be presenting to the committee. They need to support any assertions they make with substantial evidence.

How does the committee respond if it receives contradictory information from witness groups?
One of the committee's main jobs is to evaluate all the information presented to it, even when that evidence may be contradictory. The committee may decide it agrees with the point of view of one witness group over another, or may make its own conclusions after taking into account all the information presented.

Who can submit information to a committee?
Anyone can submit information to a Senate or House committee. Committees provide an opportunity for organisations, groups and individuals to participate in law-making, and to have their views placed on the public record and considered as part of the decision-making process.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

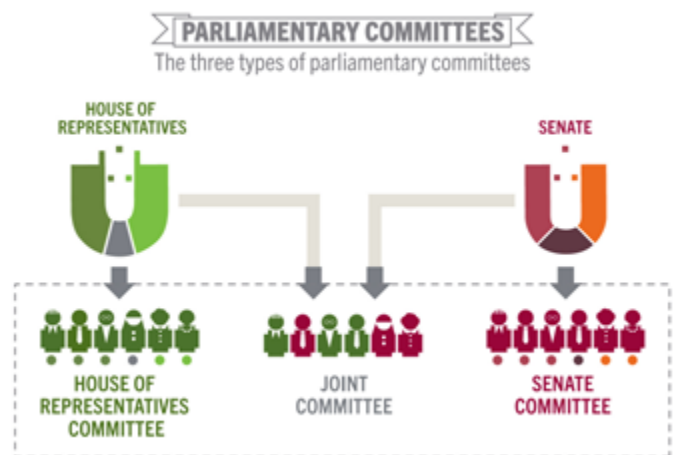Have the students write a formal report which includes:

• A summary of the evidence from the witness groups

• Any recommendations the committee wishes to make to the Parliament about the issue.

Amendments
If your committee was investigating a bill, it may recommend that the bill needs to be changed. If you want to make changes (amendments) to a bill, check out the *Amending a law* role-play lesson plans for both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Role-play lesson plans on the PEO website:
www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans.html

DIAGRAMS
Available on the PEO website in the *Toolkit*