**unit three**

**roles and powers of the Prime minister, cabinet, and the ministry**

definitions

*real/political executive:* the actual government which forms the cabinet

*prime minister:* the leader of the party holding the majority of seats in the house of representatives and is commissioned by the gg under section 64

ministers: members of the executive that manage portfolios, debate policy, support cabinet, and answer to the parliament

*cabinet/inner ministry:* the prime minister and senior ministers

*outer ministry:* junior ministers and assistant ministers

section 64

*“the governor-general may appoint officers to administer such departments of state of the commonwealth”*

* prime minister is commissioned by the governor general
* ministers must be members of parliament (or become one within three months)

⤷ fuses the executive with the legislature, ensuring a westminster system

* the cabinet is appointed by the governor general

prime minister

*roles*

* advises gg on appointment of ministers and chooses cabinet
* sets cabinet agenda
* leads and guides cabinet discussion
* makes the final call on issues

sources of prime ministerial power

*being the leader of the majority party*

* pm determines processes and procedures of the house
* controls passage of legislation and debate
* effectively determines outcome of votes due to partisanship

*being the chairperson of cabinet*

* determines agenda and controls discussion
* prime minister’s opinions and priorities rule cabinet

⤷ tony abbott made many “captain’s calls” regarding knights and dames (2014) and delisting tasmanian world heritage areas (2014)

*access to information*

* receives information from all departments and agencies including highly classified

*patronage*

* can promote members from the backbench to the outer ministry, and from the outer ministry to the cabinet

⤷ marise payne promoted from minister for human services (outer) to minister for defence (inner) by turnbull (2015)

* can promote cabinet ministers to more important or prestigious portfolios

⤷ scott morrison assigned the prestigious high budget social services portfolio (2014)

* can demote and dismiss ministers or assistant ministers
* allows the pm to reward and punish members, demote potential rivals, and promote supporters

⤷ gillard attempted to placate rudd after he was deposed by giving him the foreign affairs portfolio (2010)

⤷ abbott promoted morrison from immigration portfolio to social services portfolio following his great success (2014)

*determining the election date*

* can call an election when the opposition is unstable or after the release of the government budget when the government looks favourable in the eye of the public

*being the public face of government*

* prime ministers with a good media presence can use this in their favour

⤷ howard with talkback radio

⤷ rudd with social media

* 24 hour news cycle means the pm must comment on issues often

limits of prime ministerial power

*lack of a personal mandate*

* the pm is not directly elected

⤷ abbott’s judgements on knights and dames led to instability within the cabinet and almost led to a leadership spill as he was not consulting with his ministers

*lack of cabinet solidarity*

* ministers can leak cabinet proceedings to the media to undermine pm point of view

⤷ abbott suffered many leaks regarding foreign affairs (2015)

*having cabinet or party rivals*

* pm authority is most often challenged from within the cabinet due to ambitious personalities and leadership aspirations

⤷ gillard challenged rudd and won (2010)

*constraints of their own party*

* must face their party during meetings and answer to backbenchers

*constraints of a coalition*

* agreements between parties of a coalition must be made

⤷ turnbull gave water portfolio to deputy pm barnaby joyce

*federalism*

* pm cannot override state sovereignty
* pm must negotiate with the states in coag meetings

*size and nature of the house majority*

* a small majority or minority government means prime ministership is uncertain

⤷ gillard minority relied on support from non-labor members

⤷ turnbull one seat majority in 2016 allowed members of his party to threaten to cross the floor (george christensen regarding superannuation)

*the opposition*

* opposition serves to hold the gov accountable and be a viable alternative government

⤷ abbott undermined gillard’s integrity through his anti carbon tax campaign (2013)

*negative media attention and polling*

* media is a limit of power if the pm cannot keep up with its demands
* electorates are constantly polled for approval and opinions on issues
* low or deteriorating popularity weakens pm position

⤷ turnbull announced he would challenge liberal leadership following 30 negative news polls (2015)

*minority government*

* as support for the major parties decrease, the likelihood for minority govs increase
* minority govs must compromise to form government, limiting power

⤷ bandt forced gillard to introduce a carbon tax (2010)

cabinet

* executive committee of senior ministers
* drawn from and accountable to parliament
* constitutionally chosen by gg but conventionally chosen by pm

cabinet conventions

*cabinet secrecy*

* cabinet room is soundproof, highly secure, and regularly swept for listening devices
* meetings are secret for thirty years, and breaches are a criminal offence
* creates a safe space for ministers to present arguments and clarify issues
* creates government unity, or cabinet solidarity

*cabinet solidarity*

* allows a single government position on an issue through consensus, majority, prime ministerial authority, or party room (caucus) pressure
* all ministers must publicly agree with the decision made
* if a minister does not agree, they should resign from the executive and move to the backbench (westminster convention)

⤷ gary punch (minister for telecommunications and aviation support) stood down following cabinet support of a runway that directly affected his electorate in nsw (1993)

⤷ stewart west (minister for immigration and ethnic affairs) stood down as he could not support a cabinet decision on uranium mining (1983)

⤷ barnaby joyce (minister for agriculture) did not stand down despite publicly criticising the development of a coal mine within his new england seat (2015)

*cabinet committees*

* subdivided groups of ministers focusing on specific areas of government activity
* meet separately from cabinet and report decisions to cabinet for approval
* some committees, such as the national security committee, can make a final decision without referring them to the whole cabinet

cabinet roles

*being a critical link in the westminster chain of accountability*

1. the people directly elect a parliament in a general election
2. the lower house chooses government by giving its confidence to a **group of ministers who form cabinet/government** (government indirectly elected by the people)
3. these indirectly elected cabinet ministers **head the appointed government departments and provide democratically mandated policy direction**
4. government departments implement the mandated policy **under their minister’s direction** and **provide expert advice to the minister**
5. the parliament, representing the people, **holds the ministers collectively and individually responsible for their administration of government** under westminster convention

*developing and communicating the narrative and vision of the government*

* cabinet solidarity, government ideology, and government discipline create the narrative

⤷ labor = social democratic, progressive. liberal = liberalism, conservative

* broad principles influence their arguments and approaches to policies and keep their message and narrative consistent

*developing and implementing policies*

* policies derive from election promises, responses to emerging issues, and political strategies
* implemented through legislation or regulation

⤷ regulation - abbott government issuing a ‘investment mandate directive’ to the clean energy finance corporation to stop investing in wind power

*coordinating the machinery of government*

* administering and coordinating departments to avoid conflicts and wasting resources
* ministers provide policy guidance downwards and departments provide advice upwards

*acting as an information exchange*

* sorts and prioritises information provided by public service, reports, court decisions, etc
* ensures cabinet power is exercised consistently and in response to correct information

*responding to crises*

* exercising power rapidly and decisively in response to natural disasters, terrorism, etc

factors affecting cabinet functioning

*the prime minister*

* personality and history of pm influences cabinet

*relationships between ministers (and parties, in a coalition)*

* affects whether decisions are made through consensus or majority/pm authority
* compromises may have to be made between parties in a coalition

*timing*

* new governments may struggle with decision making due to a lack of experience
* old governments may lack vigour and new ideas

*nature of the decision*

* some decisions may be deliberated for long periods of time while some must be made quickly in order to respond to a crisis

quizlet

https://quizlet.com/\_7gzm98

example essay structure

introduction - distinguish between political and constitutional executive, overview, strong thesis with argument

paragraph 1 - sources and limits of pm power, evaluate

paragraph 2 - cabinet conventions

paragraph 3 - factors affecting cabinet functioning

conclusion - restate argument, brief overview of examples

practice essay questions

explain how and evaluate the extent to which the power of prime ministers may be usurped by other parts of the ‘real’ or ‘constitutional’ executive. {25 marks}

“since 2007, australia has seen five changes to the office of prime minister because they failed to adequately fulfil their role.” evaluate the validity of this claim. {25 marks}