

➤ LAW-MAKING IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Target Group: **Year 6**

Australian Curriculum Reference: **History**

Adapted from Australian curriculum lessons: www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/2013/05/10/australian-government-lesson-plan-law-making-in-the-house-of-representatives/

Original lesson and supporting documents courtesy of the Parliamentary Education Office: www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans/law-making-house.html

HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- + Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders, migrants, women and children (ACHHK114).

LESSON SUMMARY

By participating in a role-play that simulates the process of law-making in the House of Representatives, students will:

- + learn to understand how the Federal Parliament debates and votes on bills
- + learn 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.

LESSON CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

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, elected by the people.*
 - + *Parliamentary officers including: the Clerk; Deputy Clerk; Serjeant-at-Arms; Hansard reporters; chamber attendants; security staff and broadcasting officers.*
- + How do you become a member of the House of Representatives?
 - + *Members are elected by the people at a Federal election.*

- + Who do members of the House of Representatives represent?
 - + *Members represent their electorates.*
- + How many members of the House of Representatives are there?
 - + *There are 150 members in the House of Representatives (one from each 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.*

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, such as the following.

- + Watch YouTube video – *How Laws are Made* (10 minutes): www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhYpkVclXbA
- + Watch YouTube video – *Parliament of Victoria Explains – How Parliament Makes Laws* (2.5 minutes): www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSCMpX9stW0
- + 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?
- + Encourage students to prepare for their ‘roles’ as members of the House of Representatives and understand that in these roles they:
 - + represent the views of their electorate
 - + may be working as part of a team (for example, they may belong to the Government or Opposition).

BODY

Preparation

You can create a more authentic atmosphere by rearranging your classroom to look like a Parliamentary chamber, and by using props and a script. This will also help students embrace their roles. Refer to the *Resources* section at the end of this Lesson Plan for guidance.

The bill

Students research the topic and write speeches prior to the role-play. Suggested research resources can be found at the end of this Lesson Plan.

The bill

<h1>Working with Vulnerable People</h1>	
Date (current date):	
Chamber:	House of Representatives
Status:	Before the house
Sponsor (teacher's name):	
<p>Summary: Introduces a national credential for adults working and volunteering with children and vulnerable people.</p>	

Set-up

Transform the classroom into a chamber by arranging chairs and tables into a horseshoe shape (refer to the *Resources* section at the end of this Lesson Plan for guidance).

Scripts

Parliamentary Education Office 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. Links to a full script and a template which allows you to write your own script are available in the *Resources* section.

Getting into role

- + Divide the class into Government, Opposition, minor parties and independents (go to the Parliamentary Education website at www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html for current numbers in the chambers). Use these numbers to gain the right proportions for your Parliament.
- + 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 up 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 for Social Services. This Minister will introduce the bill. Refer to www.dss.gov.au for more information about this Minister's role.
- + Select a Shadow Minister for Social Services.
- + Choose Party Whips (managers). The Party Whips will count the vote at the end of the debate.

You are now ready to begin the role-play.

Starting the role-play

Refer to the role-play flow chart and scripts in the *Resources* section. Use the actions below to coincide with the scripts.

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 each side, the House is adjourned.
8. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker from the chamber, holding the Mace.

Adjourn the debate for party meetings

(Optional)

The members of each team get together to plan more speeches for or against the bill, and the independents and minor parties decide whether they will support or oppose the bill. Changes (amendments) may also be suggested. If you choose not to adjourn, you can go straight to step 10 below.

Continuing the debate

9. Repeat steps 1-4 from 'Starting the role-play'.
10. 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 bill

11. When the debate is finished the Speaker leads a 'vote on the voices' (uncounted vote) before declaring the vote.
12. If the opposition disagrees with the bill, the Opposition Whip may call a division (formal counted vote). If this occurs, the Clerk rings the bell for four minutes.
13. The Speaker conducts the division with help from the whips and then declares the vote.

Passing the bill

14. If the majority of votes are for the bill, it is agreed to and the Clerk reads the title of the bill (second reading).
15. If the majority of votes are against the bill, the bill is defeated and there is no second reading.
16. The Speaker adjourns the House.
17. The Serjeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker from the chamber, holding the Mace.

Conclusion

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

- + Do Government bills always pass this chamber?
 - + *Not if a majority of independents, minor party members and Opposition members votes against the bill. The Government needs to secure a majority of members to vote for the bill in order for it to pass.*
- + What happens when the vote is a tie?
 - + *The Speaker votes on the bill to break the deadlock.*
- + Why are the independents and minor parties important?
 - + *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 steps must a bill go through to become law?
 - + *It must be debated and voted on in the Senate, and then signed by the Governor-General.*

ASSESSMENT

Teacher to determine appropriate assessment.

RESOURCES

Resources to support understanding of the bill

Legislation governing protection of vulnerable persons varies according to the particular State or Territory in which the grant recipient operates, so there is currently no overarching national approach.

To find out more, visit the following online resources.

- + *What kind of screening do I need?* (Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, Government of South Australia): www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/services/screening/what-kind-of-screening-do-i-need
- + Department of Social Services website: www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/doing-business-with-dss/vulnerable-persons-police-checks-and-criminal-offences
- + *Working with Vulnerable People: Mission Australia's response to the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Bill 2013 in Tasmania* (Access via Mission Australia website): www.missionaustralia.com.au
- + Working with Vulnerable People in the ACT: *Overview: factsheet*: www.ors.act.gov.au/publication/view/1795/title/overview-fact-sheet
- + Working with Vulnerable People in the ACT: *Factsheet*: www.forrestps.act.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/234318/Working_with_Vulnerable_People_-_overview.pdf

Resources related to Parliamentary processes

The following resources are available on the Parliamentary Education Office website.

- + Role-play flowchart (Law-making in the House of Representatives): www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/role-play_flow-chart_HoR_lawmaking.pdf
- + House of Representatives seating plan for the classroom: www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/role-play_flow-chart_HoR_lawmaking.pdf
- + Law-making script template: www.peo.gov.au/teaching/role-play-lesson-plans/law-making-house.html
- + Diagram of the Make-up of Parliament and government: www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/0104-Parliament-and-government.pdf
- + Role-play Toolkit Make it Yourself: Mace: www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/miy_mace.pdf
- + Role-play Toolkit Make it Yourself: Serjeant-at-Arms gown: www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/miy_serjeant.pdf
- + Role-play Toolkit Make it Yourself: Speaker and Clerk of the House of Representatives gown: www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/miy_clerk_speaker.pdf

Resources related to the roles of people in Parliament

- + Parliamentary Education Office resources: www.peo.gov.au/resources/peo-resources.html