



Student Resource Book

Year 9 & 10



Module 1

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'Let's Party'

Political Parties in WA

ACHCK075: The role of political parties and independent representatives in Australia's system of government, including the formation of governments.

Module 1

'Let's Party' Political Parties in WA



Some of us really struggle to see how a government, party or individual politician can make a difference in our lives. 'Politics is boring', 'What's Parliament have to do with me?', 'I can't vote so how can I even make a difference?' These are just some of the views you or your friends may share, but in reality, politics is anything but boring. Parliament has a huge impact on many aspects of your lives and as a young adult you can have a big influence on what goes on at the people's house on the hill.

Although in Western Australia you need to be eighteen before you can vote, if you would still like to have an impact on how our state is run you can join the Young Liberals at the age of sixteen, Young Labor at the age of fourteen and the Greens at any age under thirty. Remember that you can be any age at all to write a letter to your local member.

The Western Australian Parliament has been making decisions that impact on young West Australians since 1890. Many of the rights, opportunities and protections you have today are a direct result of people just like you campaigning for change over more than 125 years!

Waking up in the morning you may take for granted having clean, hot water to shower, power to charge your mobile phone and a bus service to get you to school. Wow! It's not even 9am and already laws made by the Parliament of Western Australia have got you showered, connected and delivered to your destination for your right to learn in a Western Australian school.

These changes happen when enough people care enough about a particular issue to push for change. Individuals, or political parties, who are voted in to become members are your representatives in Parliament. To really understand how Western Australian politics works and how government is formed it is essential to understand the role of political parties and independent representatives.

A political party is a voluntary group of people with a common **ideology** or similar views on issues and policies who establish an association to contest elections.

The main aim of political parties is to get their members' views expressed in Parliament by their elected representatives. If they win the majority of seats in the lower house, they form government and pass laws which directly impact on you.

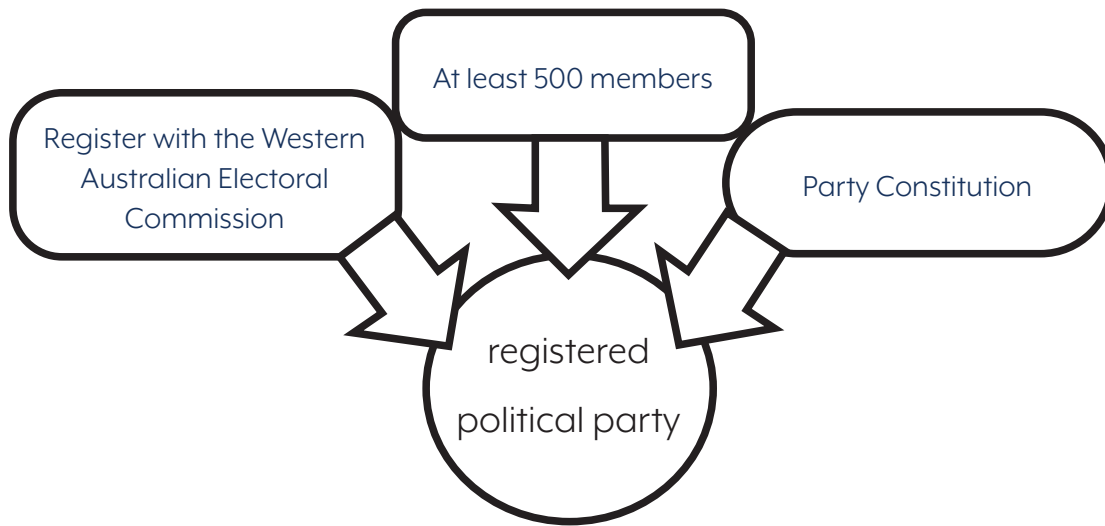
However for political parties to even enter the Western Australian Parliament, they must be registered with the WA Electoral Commission. Parties must be registered in accordance with the **Electoral Act 1907**.

The party must contain a minimum of 500 members and have a written party constitution. Under section 62c of the Electoral Act these members are required to be registered voters.

So in theory, if you are a registered voter over the age of 18, even you could start your very own political party in WA as long as you can sign up 499 like-minded people who are also registered voters.

Now there is nothing boring about that!





Class Activity: Let's Party!



Political parties are established and survive by their members being able to agree on common values and issues that they care about.

Let's see if you can do the same:

- 1.** Once you have placed yourselves in groups of four, each member is to identify a local issue in your community that is relevant to you as a young adult.

It could be funding to have a bus run directly from your suburb to the beach in summertime. Or maybe all students travelling to school should get free public transport. How about dropping the voting age to 16? These are just some ideas you may wish to use, or perhaps you have some of your own. When a party is deciding what they think about a certain issue, it is referred to as **policy development**.

- 2.** Once each of you has identified an issue, you need to convince the other members in the group why your issue and corresponding policy is the best. This is called lobbying.

3. After your group has voted on which issue is most important, you will then need to campaign. Develop a poster that presents your policy on the agreed issue and plan a party policy launch. Don't forget to come up with a name for your party.

4. Each group of four will then hold a launch in front of the whole class. The party that receives the most votes will be deemed the winner.

and the **WINNER**
is.....



During the activity, you may have had two votes each way for two different issues; in other words you did not have a clear majority. When this happens in Parliament and neither side has a majority to pass **bills** into **law** it is referred to as a **hung Parliament**.

When this occurs, it is up to all sides to negotiate. When this happens, each side may need to give up some ground on what they want and seek a compromise. Often this will mean that **independents** or **minor parties** may have the **balance of power**. This means that their vote could decide whether a Bill is passed or rejected. The government may need to spend time persuading the independents or minor party members to support the **bill** to ensure it passes into **law**.

However, it is important to remember that it is not only the government ministers who can introduce a bill into Parliament, but any member, be they government, opposition, minor party or indeed independent can introduce their own proposed legislation. When they do, this is referred to as a private member's bill.

Visit the WA Parliament's website www.parliament.wa.gov.au to identify **minor parties** (this means other than Liberal or Labor) which currently sit in the Western Australian Parliament.

In your class activity, you campaigned with a single policy; however generally all parties and independent members in the Western Australian Parliament have more than one policy as part of their platforms.



Until 1900 there were no established political parties in Western Australia. The first major political party to be formed in Western Australia was the Labor Party in 1901. The Country Party (now known as the National Party) first won seats in WA in the 1914 state election. The Liberal Party was formed in 1945 by combining several non-Labor parties.

Use the following links to **research six parties** within the Parliament of Western Australia and fill in the table on the following page.



www.walabor.org.au



www.waliberal.org.au



www.nationalswa.com



<https://greens.org.au/wa>



Authorised by Leo Treasure of 1/440 William St Perth 6000 for the Legalise Cannabis Western Australia Party.

Visit [Legalise Cannabis WA Party Facebook page](#)



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Political Party in WA	Main Aims/Policies	Number of Seats in the Legislative Council	Number of Seats in the Legislative Assembly



Revision

What are the three components necessary for a political party to be registered in Western Australia?

What body must the party be registered with?

When was the Labor Party formed in Western Australia?

When was the Liberal Party formed in Western Australia?

The National Party was previously known as what party?

What does a hung parliament refer to?

What is an Independent member?

What is a private member's bill?



When candidates are elected to the Parliament of Western Australia, they will sit in either the **Legislative Council** or the **Legislative Assembly**. If they are elected as one of the 59 members in the **Legislative Assembly**, they will represent their individual electorates. If they are one of the 36 members elected into the **Legislative Council** (also known as the upper house), then they will represent one of Western Australia's six regions.

If the party they belong to has more members elected than any other party in the Legislative Assembly (also known as the lower house), then they will form government. If the party they belong to receives less votes than the party which forms government, they will form the opposition.

You have probably also heard the term '**coalition**': this is when two parties enter into a formal partnership in order to collectively have greater numbers in Parliament. It is therefore possible that even though one particular party may have won more seats than any other party, it may still be denied the opportunity to form government, if two other parties join together and collectively have won more seats.

However, not all members of Parliament are aligned with the major parties. Members who are not aligned with any of the major parties may be members of minor parties. Members who are aligned to neither the major nor minor parties are known as **independents**. In the Legislative Assembly, the **government** always sits on the right hand side of the **Speaker** with the crown of the **mace** pointing towards them.

Learning Opportunity

Visit the Parliament of Western Australia website
and answer the following questions:

What is the name of your electorate?

What is the name of your region?

Who is your member in your electorate?

State which party they belong to or whether they are an independent.

Name one of the six Members for your region.

State which party they belong to or whether they are an independent.

How many members of the government are there in the Legislative Assembly?

How many members of the opposition are there in the Legislative Assembly?

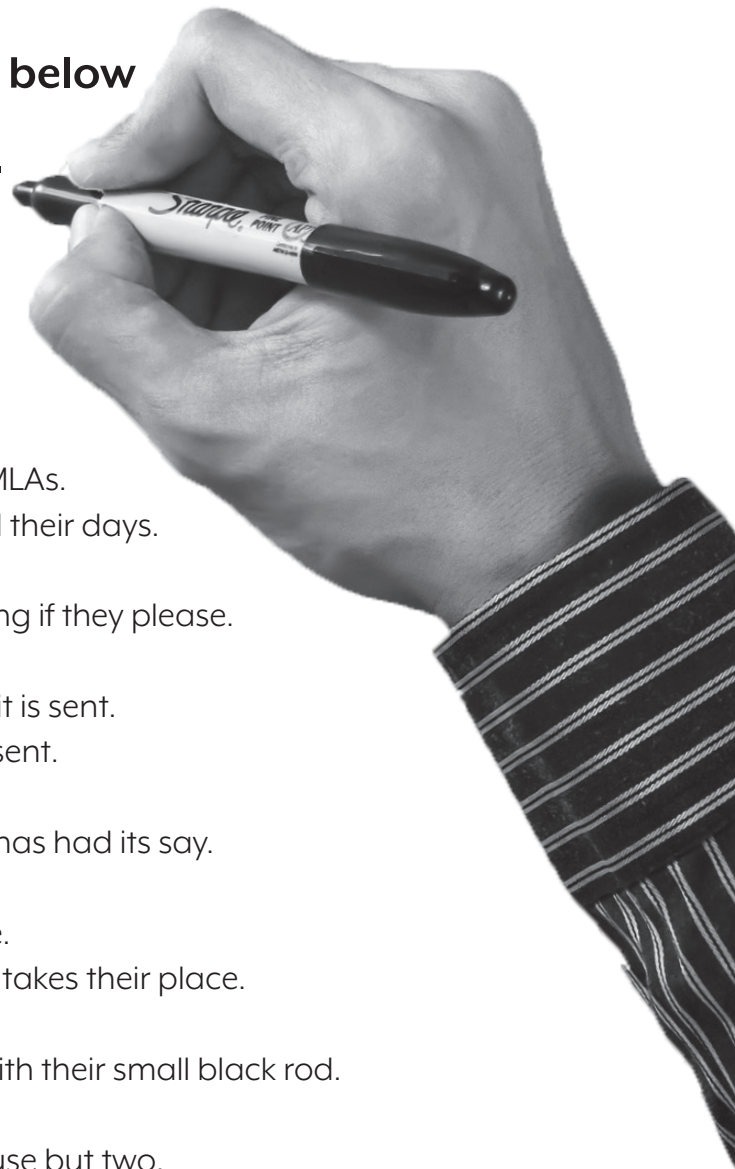
How many minor parties are there in the Legislative Council?

What is another name for the Legislative Assembly?

What is another name for the Legislative Council?

What does the term 'coalition' mean?

**Read the poem 'The People's House' below
and answer the following questions.**



'The People's House'

Members of the Legislative Assembly are known as MLAs.
Drafting Bills for four whole years is how they'll spend their days.
In the Legislative Council they're known as MLCs.
They check the bills up to three times before approving if they please.

When each house approves the Bill, to the Governor it is sent.
The Bill will then become an Act, once it has royal assent.
The Governor represents the King in our state of WA.
Who will only pass the Bill as Law, when each house has had its say.

The symbol of the Assembly is a heavy, golden mace.
Carried by the Sergeant at Arms, before the Speaker takes their place.
For the Usher in the Council, a different path is trod.
For they knock three times on the Assembly's door, with their small black rod.

This system's called bicameral, meaning not one house but two.
Our upper house is coloured red, our lower coloured blue.
In the Assembly we have a Speaker who keeps order good and fair.
In the Council we have a President who sits upon the chair

They are both a bit like umpires, their positions are protected.
And if a member's out of line, from the house they'll be ejected.
So although there's sometimes arguments and different points of view.
This historic Westminster system keeps it transparent and true.

These laws they make affect us, every single day.
Where you work or go to school or even where you play.
How much we pay for power or riding on a bus.
Don't forget that parliament is there for all of us.

So every West Australian right across our state.
Your future is in your own hands you decide your fate.
So meet your local member and come to parliament.
We call this place the people's house because it's you they represent.

'The People's House' - Questions

What does MLA stand for?

What does MLC stand for?

How long is a parliamentary term in Western Australia?

Which house reviews proposed laws?

How many houses need to approve a bill in order for it to become law?

Who is the King's representative in Western Australia?

What is the symbol of the Legislative Assembly?

What is the term given to the person carrying the above symbol?

What is the symbol of the Legislative Council?

Who carries this symbolic object?

What does the term bicameral refer to?

The President sits in which house?