

Role play—Constitution Act Amendment Bill 1921

Setting up the role play

1 Find these items.



A **bell** (this is used in the division).



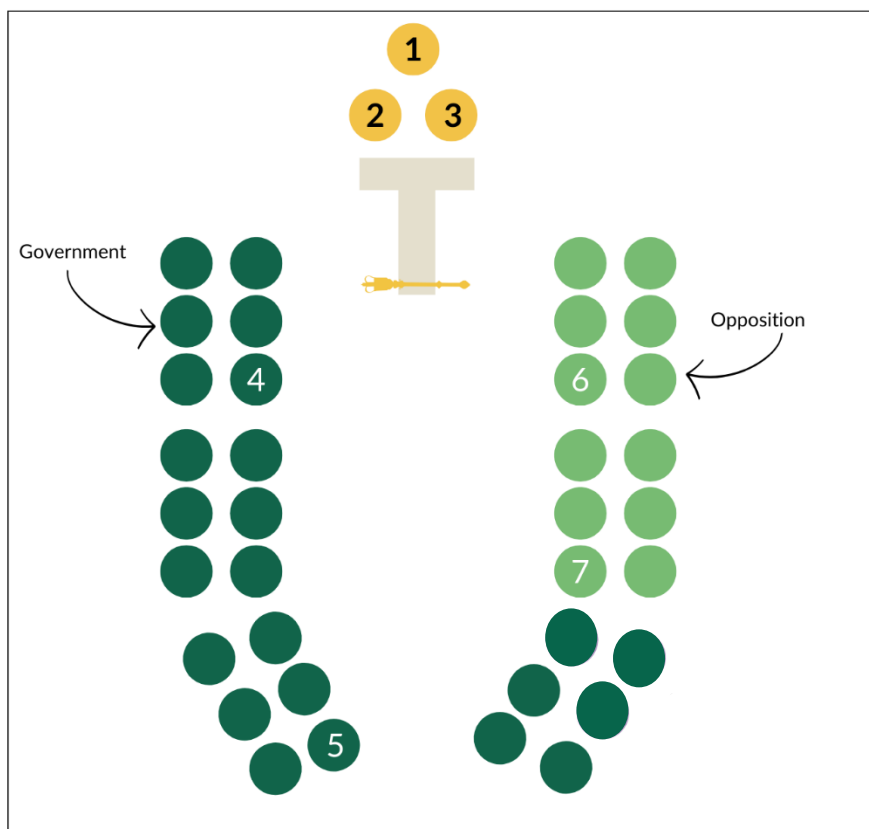
A **mace-like** object (this could be a cardboard tube painted gold).



A copy of the **role play script** for each student.

2 Set up the classroom into a mock Chamber.

Transform the classroom into a mock Chamber:



1. Speaker
2. Clerk
3. Sergeant-at-Arms
4. Premier
5. Government Whip
6. Leader of the Opposition
7. Opposition Whip

3

Allocate key roles.

1. Select students for the following roles*:

Parliamentary Service and Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker • Clerk • Sergeant-At-Arms
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premier (Government) • Government Whip (Government) • Member for Murray (Government) • Member for Don (Government) • Member for Paroo (Government) • Member for Gilbert (Government)
Opposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Opposition (Opposition) • Opposition Whip (Opposition) • Member for Pioneer (Opposition) • Member for Styx (Opposition) • Member for Staaten (Opposition) • Member for Mary (Opposition) • Member for Moonie (Opposition)

***NB:** For the purposes of this activity and to make this role play apolitical, we have changed the names of the electorates and removed allegiance to any political party that existed in 1921. In some instances, this means a Government Member in 1921 may be part of the Opposition in the Role Play.

2. Divide the remaining students into:

- Government—more than half the students.
- Opposition—remaining students.

4

Complete the role play with the students.

Sometimes students will know very little about the legislative process. You may need to explain the following key concepts:

- **Amendment:** A change to an Act or Bill.
- **Bill:** A proposed law.
- **Constitution:** A set of rules by which a state or country is run.
- **Division:** A formal recorded vote where the Members of Parliament (MP) divide into two groups to vote for or against a proposal.
- **Government:** The party who has the support of the majority of MPs elected to the Legislative Assembly. The leader of the Government is the Premier.
- **Opposition:** The next largest party that does not form the Government.
- **Second reading:** A debate on the purpose of a Bill.
- **Speaker:** The Presiding Officer of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker enforces the rules of parliament.
- **Whip:** A Member of Parliament who upholds party discipline, helps manage parliamentary business and tally votes during divisions.

Sergeant-at-Arms and the Speaker stand outside.

All stand.

Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace and leads the Speaker into the Chamber.

Sergeant-at-Arms stops at the table.

Sergeant-at-Arms Honourable Members, Speaker.

The Sergeant-at-Arms puts the Mace in the stand at the end of the table and walks to their chair.

The Speaker stands behind their chair.

Speaker I offer a prayer on behalf of the Parliament¹.

The Speaker nods once to the Government and nods once to the Opposition.

The Speaker sits down.

All Members sit down.

Speaker I call the Premier.

Government HEAR, HEAR!

Premier I present a Bill to amend the Constitution of Queensland by abolishing the Legislative Council. I move—That the Bill be now read for a first time. ← Introduction and First reading

Speaker The question is—That the Bill be now read a first time.
Those who are of that opinion say Aye.

All Members AYE!

Speaker Those against say No.
I think the Ayes have it.
Clerk, read the title of the Bill.

Clerk Constitution Act Amendment Bill 1921.

Speaker I call the Premier.

Premier Speaker—Parliament, in order to give free and direct expression to the will of the people, must be remodelled. Everyone, I think, recognises that the Legislative Council has outlived its usefulness, and is not serving its ← Second reading

¹ Today, the Queensland Parliament program also includes an Acknowledgement of Country, but this was not the case in 1921.

purpose at the present time for the people of Queensland.

It is useless. If it is not an echo, it is an evil because it is obstructive.

One legislative Chamber elected by a broad range of people, and subject to elections every three years, is the most satisfactory parliament that can be established in any democratic country.²

I move—that the Bill be now read a second time.

Government	HEAR, HEAR!
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Speaker	I call the Leader of the Opposition.
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Leader of the Opposition	Speaker—This Bill contains something which, in my mind, is objectional, that is, that Members of the Council are to be given the privilege to use this House as a club for the whole of their days. I cannot support the Bill. ³
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Opposition	HEAR, HEAR!
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Speaker	I call the Member for Murray.
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Member for Murray	Speaker—I support the Bill for the abolition of the Chamber. If we need a Chamber of review, we want one that is elected. This will provide a safeguard for that section of the community to which Queensland must look for its future prosperity and progress. ⁴
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Government	HEAR, HEAR!
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Speaker	I call the Member for Pioneer.
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Member for Pioneer	<p>Speaker—I do not support the abolition of the Chamber. I would sooner have a hostile Upper Chamber than have no Upper chamber at all. Even where, in the past, an Upper Chamber has been hostile to the Government, the popular Chamber in the end has got its legislation through.</p> <p>I hope the Honourable Members will not consent to the passage of the Bill, which is going to abolish what has been one of the</p>
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² Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1772-1775 (The Hon EG Theodore, Premier).

³ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1781-1782 (William J Vowles, Leader of the Opposition).

⁴ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1785 (Bernard H Corser, Member for Burnett).

	most useful institutions in our Constitution during the period of responsible government in Queensland. ⁵
Opposition	HEAR, HEAR!
Speaker	I call the Member for Don.
Member for Don	Speaker—I will support this Bill to abolish the Legislative Council. I would rather see our legislation put on the statute book as quickly as possible, without any interference from the present Council. ⁶
Government	HEAR, HEAR!
Speaker	I call the Member for Styx.
Member for Styx	<p>Speaker—The Government must recognise the vote which was taken on this question some years ago. They sought a mandate from the people, and in quite clear terms the people stated they desired the retention of the Upper House.</p> <p>With their alleged belief in the principles of democracy, the Government cannot for one moment justify their present position. ⁷</p>
Opposition	HEAR, HEAR!
Speaker	I call the Member for Paroo.
Member for Paroo	<p>Speaker—The best brains of the House have been devoting their time to passing legislation in the best interests of the people of this State, and we have a body of men in the other Chamber, who, simply at their own sweet will, can hold up money Bills and reject some of the finest legislation that has even been passed by any British House of Parliament.</p> <p>Those Members who claim to have a scrap of belief in democracy should assist the Government in passing this democratic legislation. ⁸</p>
Government	HEAR, HEAR!
Speaker	I call the Member for Staaten.
Member for Staaten	Speaker—The Legislative Council is a safeguard for any legislation put through this Chamber. If it were necessary in the

⁵ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1784 (Charles Taylor, Member for Windsor).

⁶ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1785 (Cecil Elphinstone, Member for Oxley).

⁷ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1790 (Hubert E Sizer, Member for Nundah).

⁸ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1786-1787 (John Payne, Member for Mitchell).

past, when the Constitution was first set out, how much more necessary is it today?

Imagine if, by some chance, an extreme Government were returned to power. The amount of harm they might do is unlimited. I intend to vote against the abolition.⁹

Opposition

HEAR, HEAR!

Speaker

I call the Member for Gilbert.

Member for Gilbert

Speaker—I will vote in favour of this Bill because if the Legislative Council were abolished in its present form, the ground would be cleared for any other party which might come into power with a mandate from the people might introduce another form of Upper House.

I am in favour of an elective Upper House, and I am working in the direction which I think will tend to bring about an elective Upper House.¹⁰

Government

HEAR, HEAR!

Speaker

I call the Member for Mary.

Member for Mary

Speaker—There is not a session of parliament which does not bring home to use the need for two houses. If this Bill goes through, there will only be one House of Parliament in Queensland, and no appeals from it.

Our history during the last few years shows that many of the decisions come to by the Assembly have been ill considered, and in the past beneficially amended in the other Chamber. I think the people of Queensland have benefited by having a Chamber of review.¹¹

Opposition

HEAR, HEAR!

Speaker

I call the Member for Moonie.

Member for Moonie

Speaker—It is absolutely essential to have a revising Chamber to study the effects of these Bills. Session after session we pass amending legislation because Bills are rushed through under and their effects are not realised. When they have been in operation for twelve months the discovery is made that they have to be amended.

⁹ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1785 (John W Fletcher OBE, Member for Port Curtis).

¹⁰ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1791-1792 (Godfrey Morgan, Member for Murilla).

¹¹ Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1793-1793 (Edward B Swayne, Member for Mirani).

	Doing away with the Legislative Council and putting in its place a committee from this House is a step in the wrong direction and will not be for the benefit of the State. ¹²
Opposition	HEAR, HEAR!
Speaker	I call the Premier.
Premier	I thank all Honourable Members for their contributions. I particularly thank Members of the Government for their excellent speeches. I move—That the Bill be now read a second time.
Speaker	The question is—That the Bill be now read a second time. Those who are of that opinion say Aye.
Government	AYE!
Speaker	Those against say No.
Opposition	NO!
Speaker	I think the Ayes have it.
Leader of the Opposition	DIVIDE!
Speaker	The question is—That the Bill be now read a second time, for which a division has been called. Ring the bells.
<i>The Clerk of the Parliament rings the bell 4 times. When the bells cease ringing.</i>	
Speaker	Close the bars. I call on the Government Whip to act as Teller for the Ayes and the Opposition Whip to act as Teller for the Noes.
<i>Whips count members' votes.</i>	
Speaker	Will the Government Whip please advise what the Government votes are for the Ayes or Noes?
Government Whip	35 Ayes, Speaker.

¹² Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1797-1796 (Arthur Edward Moore CMG, Member for Aubigny).

Speaker	Will the Opposition Whip please advise what the Opposition votes are for the Ayes or Noes?
Opposition Whip	34 Noes, Speaker.
Speaker	Honourable Members, the result of the division is: Ayes, 35. Noes, 34 ¹³ . The division is resolved in the affirmative. I call the Premier.
Premier	I move that the House do now adjourn.
Speaker	Those who are of that opinion say Aye.
All Members	AYE!
Speaker	Those against say No. I think the Ayes have it.
<i>The Speaker stands.</i> <i>All stand.</i> <i>Sergeant-at-Arms collects Mace and leads the Speaker from the Chamber.</i>	

What happened after?

This Bill went before a Committee, before being read for a third time. After this, it went before the Legislative Council.

¹³ These numbers reflect what was recorded in Queensland, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 October 1921, 1796.