



A Day in Parliament

The chamber of the Queensland Parliament is called the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. A parliamentary sitting week generally consists of three days of sittings - Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The parliament also sits on a Friday during the annual budget week sittings. On average, the Queensland Parliament meets for approximately 15 sitting weeks per year.

The procedures for how Queensland's parliamentary sittings occur are outlined in the document titled Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly. Another document titled, the Sessional Orders of the Legislative Assembly outlines the days and hours of sittings and the order of business to be conducted by the House.

The Sessional Orders adopted by the House on 15 February 2018 state that the House shall sit on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9.30am until an automatic adjournment is declared. The automatic adjournment, when sittings cease for the day, occurs at 7.30pm on Tuesday and Wednesday and at 6.30pm on Thursdays. The different aspects of each day's parliamentary business is outlined below.

The start of a sitting day

At the start of each sitting day, bells ring throughout the building to call the 93 members of parliament to the chamber. When the bells stop, the Speaker of the House is announced by the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Speaker then opens proceedings.

Preliminary Business

The first 45 minutes of each sitting morning is dedicated to Preliminary Business. This can include: a prayer; acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land upon which parliament is assembled; Messages from the Governor; Matters concerning privilege; Speaker's Statements; Appointments; Petitions; Citizen's Right of Reply; Notifications and tabling of papers by the Clerk; Ministerial Papers; Ministerial Notices of Motion; Ministerial Statements; Personal Explanations; Tabling of Reports; and Notice of motion for disallowance of statutory instrument.

Question Time

Question time runs for one hour and is scheduled to commence at 10.15am on each sitting morning, or at the conclusion of Preliminary Business if that finishes earlier or later than its allotted 45 minutes. Question Time is when the parliament holds the government and the executive to account. In particular, it allows the opposition and Independent members to extract information and scrutinise the policies and actions of the government. The first two questions are asked by the Leader of the Opposition followed by questions alternating between government and non-government members.

Questions are generally about current government policies or programs. The standing orders dictate what sort of questions which can be asked and how the Premier or Ministers can answer them.



Legislative Assembly Chamber

Queensland Parliament Factsheet

A Day in Parliament

Each member has one minute in which to ask their question and the Premier or Minister then has three minutes to answer it. Question Time is usually the most lively and intense period of parliamentary business and the media usually focus their attention on this one section of parliamentary business each day.

Government Business

The majority of the parliament's sitting time is allocated to 'Government Business'. This is when members in the chamber debate bills which the government wishes the parliament to pass. Debate on government business commences after Question Time each morning and continues during the afternoon and early evening.

Matters of Public Interest

On Tuesdays from 2pm to 3pm, the parliamentary schedule also includes 'Matters of Public Interest'. During this period, members may talk about a matter of interest to them or their electorate. The first speaker, which is usually the Leader of the Opposition or another opposition member, has 10 minutes to speak, and each speaker after that has five minutes.

Private Member's Motions

At 6pm on Wednesdays, the parliament considers what is known as a 'Private Members' Motion'. This is a topic proposed by a non-government member with the first speaker given 10 minutes and each speaker after that given five minutes. The debate lasts for one hour.

Private Members' Statements

On Thursdays, from 2pm to 3 pm, the Parliament hears 'Private Members' Statements'. This allows 10 members to speak on a topic of interest to them for three minutes each.

Non-Government Business

The period from 12.30pm to 1pm on Wednesdays is specifically allotted to the introduction of Private Members' Bills. While any member may introduce a bill as a private member, it is generally non-government members that introduce Private Members' Bills. Private Members' Bills are then debated on Tuesdays during the period from 5.30pm to 7pm.

Adjournment Debate

The adjournment debate occurs at the end of each sitting day and lasts for 30 minutes. It gives members the opportunity to speak for three minutes on almost any matter. Unlike most other times in parliament, there are no limits to the subject that a member may raise, although most tend to speak about their electorate or their constituents.

Divisions in the Chamber

Questions before the Legislative Assembly are decided on by a vote of members who are present in the chamber. When a question is put, the Speaker usually says, "Those in favour say 'Aye', and those against say 'No'." Members respond accordingly and the Speaker determines which way the vote has gone by the number of voices heard. At this point, any member who has voted against the majority as declared by the Speaker may demand a division by calling "divide".

When a division is called, the Speaker asks for the division bells to be rung in order to alert members who are not in the chamber that a vote is about to occur.

The division bells then ring throughout the parliamentary complex for four minutes unless it is otherwise determined that they ring for one minute when a succession of votes occur with no intervening debate. Once the bells have finished, the bars of the chamber are closed and the formal count of members begins. At the end of each division, the official result is declared by the Speaker and recorded in the Record of Proceedings.

Record of Proceedings

All of the debates which occur in Parliament are recorded in writing and published in the Record of Proceedings (traditionally referred to as Hansard). This is the official report of the debates and proceedings of the parliament. Hansard is published on the parliament's

website at the end of each sitting day along with a video of each day's proceedings.

Parliamentary Committees

A parliamentary committee is a body established by legislation or by the parliament to inquire into specific matters. It is made up of a group of members, both government and

Queensland Parliament Factsheet

A Day in Parliament

non-government. Committees generally have significant powers to inquire into matters for the parliament and often seek information and views from people and organisations.

The main task of committees in Queensland is to ensure government administration is accountable to the parliament and to the people of Queensland.

Committees are able to do this in a way that the whole parliament cannot. They have more time, are more flexible, and can gather evidence by speaking to people and organisations in communities throughout the state. Committees carry out the responsibilities assigned to them by legislation or the parliament.

They consider and report on bills introduced into the parliament, consider the annual appropriation bills (the estimates process), investigate issues of public importance, consider whether policies or past decisions could be improved and make sure that public money is used appropriately. They also meet with public office holders who report to the parliament, such as the Ombudsman. Committees also conduct inquiries to examine matters in detail. After the committees have held their hearings, committee members sort through the evidence and reach a conclusion which they present to the parliament in the form of a report.



The Speaker's Chair in the Legislative Assembly Chamber