



Queensland Parliament Structure and Functions

Queensland's Constitution, the *Constitution Act 1867*, states that the Queensland Parliament consists of the King (usually represented by the State Governor) and the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly consists of 93 directly elected members, representing 93 electorates. The maximum term of a parliament between elections is four years.

The Governor

The Governor is appointed by the King on the advice of the Premier, usually for a term of five years. This term may be extended if both parties are mutually agreeable. As the formal representative of the King, the Governor must always remain non-political. The Governor represents all Queenslanders and it is their duty to ensure that Queensland always enjoys stable government.

Some of the specific roles and functions of the Governor include:

- giving Royal Assent to bills passed by the Legislative Assembly
- summoning, proroguing and dissolving parliament on the advice of the Premier
- recommending by a message to the Legislative Assembly, the passing of money bills prior to their introduction in the House
- appointing all ministers (members of the Executive Council), and appointing and removing officials, on the advice of the Executive Council
- presiding over meetings of, and taking the advice of, the Executive Council. This role is titled Governor in Council
- issuing writs, for state elections, as well as issuing writs for the election of Queensland representatives in the Australian Senate; and
- granting to an offender, in the name of the King, a pardon or commutation of sentence or reprieve of the carrying out of a sentence or the remission of a fine or penalty.

The Legislative Assembly

The Queensland Parliament is a unicameral parliament, meaning that it is comprised of only one House, that is, the Legislative Assembly. There are 93 members of the Legislative Assembly with each member representing an electorate. The political party, or coalition of parties, with over 50 per cent of members elected to the Legislative Assembly forms the government.

Functions of the Legislative Assembly

To make Laws

Section 2 of the *Constitution Act 1867*, states that the Parliament has the power to make or amend laws for 'the welfare, peace and good government' of the State'. The Legislative Assembly passes bills (pieces of legislation in draft form). However, they do not become acts of parliament until the Governor gives Royal Assent by signing as the King's representative.



The Legislative Assembly Chamber

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Composition of the Legislative Assembly 57th Parliament

Australian Labor Party	52
Liberal National Party	34
Katter's Australian Party	3
Queensland Greens	2
Pauline Hanson's One Nation	1
Independent	1

To represent the people

As a representative of all the constituents in their electorate, the demands on a Member of Parliament and his/her electorate office staff can be many and varied. Members give assistance and advice to those in difficulty; act as lobbyists for local interest groups; are communicators for their party's policies; and play an active community role. During debates in the parliament, members have the opportunity to raise issues and speak on behalf of their electorates.

To provide a forum for debate

Parliamentary debates provide an opportunity for the examination of current issues and government policies and action. Parliamentary privilege affords members of the Legislative Assembly freedom of speech in Parliament. Members may not be sued for defamation for their statements made in the Parliament.

¹ The Australian Constitution specifies a few exceptions to this almost unlimited power. For example, states may not impose duties of customs and excise or raise defence forces without the consent of the Commonwealth Parliament.

To provide the Government of the day

As stated above, the party or coalition of parties with the majority of members in the Legislative Assembly forms the Government.

To grant supply

Each year, the treasurer brings down the state budget in the form of appropriation bills. Before these bills can be introduced, the Legislative Assembly must receive a message from the Governor giving permission for that to occur. It is an important element of the Westminster system that all expenditure by the Government is approved by the Parliament.

To scrutinise the actions of the Government

The government is accountable to the parliament. Members of Parliament keep a check on the government's work during debates in the parliamentary chamber and particularly during question time when non-government members and government backbenchers ask government Ministers questions about their portfolios. Parliamentary committees also scrutinise government activities and review legislation.