

# Queensland Parliament Structure and Functions



Queensland's Constitution, the *Constitution Act 1867*, states that the Queensland Parliament consists of the British monarch (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 monarch 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 monarch, 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 the passage of money bills to the Legislative Assembly through official messages before their introduction.
- Appointing all ministers (members of the Executive Council), and appointing and removing officials, on the advice of the Executive Council.
- Presiding over Executive Council meetings and acting on its advice, a role known as Governor in Council.
- Issuing writs for state elections and for the election of Queensland representatives in the Australian Senate.
- Granting pardons, commuting sentences, or providing reprieves, as well as remitting fines or penalties, in the name of the monarch.

## 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.

## Composition of the Legislative Assembly 58th Parliament

Liberal National Party	52
Australian Labor Party	36
Katter's Australian Party	3
Queensland Greens	1
Independent	1
	93



The State Opening of the 58th Parliament, featuring official proceedings at Government House.

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 monarch's representative.

## **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.

## **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.



The 58th Parliament of Queensland

<sup>1</sup> 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.