



Political Representation

What are political parties?

A political party is a group of people who share common political principles or opinions. While members of a political party do not always have the same view on every subject, they share similar values and beliefs about the way their state or country should be run.

A political party can be registered in Australia if it has at least 500 members who are on the electoral roll and if it has a Constitution which sets out the aims of the party. These and other details concerning the registration of political parties are contained in part 5 of the *Queensland Electoral Act 1992*.

What is a faction?

Factions form because not everyone in a political party thinks alike. The individuals in a faction share a common view in the political party they are a member of which is not necessarily shared by every member of the political party. Therefore, a faction could be described as a group within a party.

What do political parties do during an election?

In an election, the majority of candidates belong to a political party. Each party preselects one of its members to campaign in each electorate, or however many electorates they wish to campaign in. The party then helps with their campaigning during the election period, and members of the party help to hand out how-to-vote cards at election booths on election day.

On election day, voters elect the candidate which best aligns with their ideas of how the state should be run. Those candidates who do not belong to any political party are called 'Independents'.

Following an election in Queensland, the political party which holds the majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly forms the Government. The leader of this party then becomes the Premier of Queensland. The political party with the next highest number of seats forms the Opposition. Independents along with those elected from minor parties sit on the crossbenches in Parliament.

What political parties exist in Queensland?

The political parties which dominate the Queensland Parliament are the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Liberal National Party (LNP). Other parties which have had representatives in the Queensland Parliament in recent times are Katter's Australian Party, the Palmer United Party, the Queensland Greens and the One Nation Party. Further information on these parties can be found on their web sites:

- Australian Labor Party - www.qld.alp.org.au
- Liberal National Party - www.lnp.org.au
- Katter's Australian Party - www.ausparty.org.au
- Queensland Greens - www.qld.greens.org.au

Other parties which have campaigned at recent Queensland elections include Family First and Daylight Saving for South East Queensland (DS4SEQ).

What do political parties do in Parliament?

When Parliament sits, members of each of the political parties attend party meetings. During these party meetings, members plan strategies, develop policies, examine proposed legislation



and discuss parliamentary business.

In Parliament, members of the same political party almost always vote on an issue in an identical way adhering to their party line. On rare occasions though, a member or several members of a political party vote in the opposite way to the rest of their party. This is known as 'crossing the floor'. When a vote is called for during a division in Parliament, these members literally 'cross the floor' of Parliament and sit with and vote with the opposing party.

What is a pressure group?

A pressure group is a group of people or an organisation which aims to influence the decision-making and policy-making of a political party. They are very important in the political system because they can pressure a political party to make laws in the state which are favourable to their organisation.

Political parties are often influenced by and aligned with certain pressure groups. For example, the Australian Labor Party is linked to the trade unions, and the Liberal National Party is linked to business groups and farming organisations.

What can an individual do in a political party?

In Australia, anyone can join a political party. If you want to be involved in selecting candidates (or becoming one!) and developing policies, contact the political party of your choice and find out about membership fees and how to apply.