

Committee Role Play Teacher Information Sheet

Before

**DURATION**

1 to 3 lessons

**LEVEL**

Years 7 to 12

Investigate topic

Choose a topic relevant to your students and to the curriculum. Find inspiration from the issues Parliament has been discussing recently - visit the [‘Bills this Parliament’ webpage](#) or view extracts from committee hearings on [Parliament TV](#). If you’re stuck for ideas, use the [‘Inquiry into extending school hours’](#) script.

Decide which aspect of your topic will be investigated.

Prepare terms of reference—a set of 2 to 4 guidelines—which explain the exact areas that the committee will investigate. Ensure your terms of reference specify exactly what the committee wants to learn about this topic.

Allocate roles

Form a committee

Choose 5 or 6 students to be committee members. One of these students will be the committee chair, who will run the hearing.

Divide the rest of the students into witness groups. They will answer questions from the committee. One student from each group will be the spokesperson, who will read a short prepared statement when their group gives evidence.

Encourage students to understand that:

- Members of Parliament are there to ask questions and investigate. They do not argue with witness groups, they are collecting information, and
- witness groups may want to persuade the committee to support their position. They should support their viewpoint with quality information and research.

If you have a class of 30 or more, please see the [‘additional roles sheet’](#).

Choose witness groups

As a class, discuss who might wish to provide relevant information or express an opinion to the committee. These groups are called witness groups.

Your committee will question the witness groups in order to gather a range of perspectives on the issue.

Prepare students

Give your students sufficient time to prepare. The activity works best when students have enough time to research the topic of investigation in some detail.

Distribute the ‘Student Resource - Key Roles resource’:

- Ask each witness group to prepare evidence that supports their point of view, and to write a short opening statement.
- Ask the committee to do broad research into the topic and to prepare questions to ask the witness groups. The questions for each witness group should be relevant to that group and should aim to gain information described in the terms of reference.

Inquiry example

Topic	Health - The shortage of doctors in rural communities.	
Terms of Reference	1. How many doctors there are per capita in rural areas 2. What incentives exist for rural doctors.	
Witness Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical associations• Rural healthcare workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indigenous communities• Rural elderly citizens.

Set up room

Transform the classroom into a committee room by arranging chairs and tables as shown in the seating plan provided.



KEY

- Committee
- Committee Chair
- Witness group 1
- Witness group 2
- Witness group 3

During

Run the committee inquiry

Follow this process in the Master Script:

1. The committee chair starts the hearing by introducing the committee, outlining the terms of reference and listing the witness groups.
2. The committee chair invites one of the witness groups to the table, and to state their names for the Hansard record.
3. The committee chair invites the witness group to make its opening statement.
4. The spokesperson of the witness group makes a brief opening statement outlining the group's position, and what it hopes the Parliament will do regarding the issue.
5. The committee chair invites all committee members to ask the witness group questions (5 to 8 minutes per group).
6. The committee chair thanks the witness group for attending and invites the next witness group to the table.
7. Repeat steps 2 to 6 until all witness groups have given evidence.