

About Your State Parliament



Levels of Government

There are three levels of government in Australia – Local, State and Federal.

Federal: The Federal level of government is responsible for issues set out in the Australian Constitution, such as tax, international relations (external affairs), defence, migration and more. The laws made at Federal level apply Australia-wide.

State: States are responsible for issues that are not set out in the Australian Constitution – things that were left to the states at the time of federation. States deal with big issues too, like education, health, emergency services, the environment and more.

Local: There are hundreds of local councils across Australia. Councils look after matters close to home, like community services, playgrounds, rubbish collection and building permits.

The Parliament of South Australia is at State level.



Separation of Powers

In Australia, the powers to 1) make laws, 2) implement the law, and 3) make decisions about the law, are split up between different arms of government so that control doesn't rest with just one body.

Parliament/Legislature: The Parliament is the primary law maker. The elected representatives who work in the Parliament make laws for the people.

Executive: The Executive is the Ministers (sometimes called Cabinet) and the public service that work underneath the Ministers in different Government departments. The Executive implements the law, or, puts it into practice. For example, a teacher in a public school is putting into practice laws that have been made about a public education service. Another example of Executive work is the police, enforcing criminal laws that have been made by the Parliament.

Judiciary: The Judiciary is the system of courts. Courts have the primary responsibility to make decisions about the law, for example, deciding whether the law has been applied correctly, or whether it was made within the scope of its power.

The Parliament of South Australia is the Parliament/Legislature arm of government.



South Australian Parliament

There are two Houses of Parliament in our South Australian Parliament – the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council.

The House of Assembly: The House of Assembly is made up of 47 Members of Parliament (MPs). The 47 MPs have been elected to represent the South Australian people in the House for 4 years. An MP represents an electorate of approximately 25,000 voters. The political party who can form a majority of MPs in the House of Assembly becomes the Government of South Australia, and they get the ability to choose the Ministers who run the Executive.

The Legislative Council: The Legislative Council is made up of 22 Members (MLCs). MLCs are elected by the people of South Australia for 8 year terms, and MLCs represent the whole state. This means all 22 MLCs work for you. The votes are counted differently for the Legislative Council, and there are often more minor parties or independents in this House of Parliament.

The two Houses of Parliament work to represent the people of South Australia, question/scrutinise the Government, approve Government spending, and make laws for the people of South Australia.

Comparison with the Federal Parliament

	Federal Parliament	
	House of Representatives	Senate
Other Names	Lower House	Upper House
Members	151	76
Representation	Each MP represents an electorate of 110,000 voters	Each Senator represents their state or territory. There are 12 Senators for each state, and 2 for each territory.
Males	93	33
Females	58	43
Term	3 years	6 years
Voting System	Preferential	Proportional
Jurisdiction	Laws passed are for the whole of Australia	Laws passed are for the whole of Australia

	Parliament of South Australia	
	House of Assembly	Legislative Council
Other Names	Lower House	Upper House
Members	47	22
Representation	Each MP represents an electorate of 25,000 voters	Each MLC represents the whole of South Australia
Males	31	11
Females	16	11
Term	4 years	8 years
Voting System	Preferential	Proportional
Jurisdiction	Laws passed are for South Australia only	Laws passed are for South Australia only

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