

# Key Parliamentary Terms

**A** **Act of Parliament** A law made by Parliament; a Bill which has passed all three readings and received Royal Assent from the Governor.

**Amendment** An alteration to a Bill or Motion by the addition or deletion of words.

**B** **Backbenchers** Members of the Parliament who are not part of the Ministry or the Shadow Ministry.

**Ballot** The process by which votes are cast in an election; how votes are gathered; and the vote itself.

**Bar of the House** A barrier(s) at the entrances to the Chamber beyond which only Members may pass. Once the three Bars are closed during a division, no Member can enter or leave the Chamber.

**Bells** The method by which Members are called to the Chamber. The bells are rung throughout all of the parliamentary buildings.

**Bicameral** A Parliament with two Houses — an Upper House and a Lower House.

**Bill** A proposal for a new law, which is presented to Parliament in draft form. It needs to be passed by the Parliament and receive Royal Assent before becoming a law.

**Budget** The Government's annual proposals for income and spending which is presented by the Treasurer.

**C** **Cabinet** Consists of all the Ministers and is responsible for the Government's policy development. Currently there are 18 Ministers (including the Premier) in Cabinet in Queensland.

**Chairperson of Committees** An elected member who holds the position of Deputy Speaker and who may, as Deputy Speaker, chair the debates during the Consideration in Detail stage of the legislative process.

**Chamber** The meeting room in which Members of the Legislative Assembly meet and participate in debates.

**Clerk of the Parliament** The most senior permanent officer in the Parliamentary Service. The Clerk records all decisions made in the Chamber and advises the Speaker on procedural matters and practices of the House.

**Coalition** The combining of two or more parties in the Parliament to act as a Government or an Opposition.

**Crown** The term for the British Monarch who is represented in the Queensland Parliament by the Governor.

**D** **Debate** A formal presentation of varying viewpoints on a Bill or any other matters before the House.

**Democracy** Government by the people. A way of governing a country or state in which the people elect representatives to form a government which makes decisions on their behalf.

**Division** A formal vote in Parliament heralded by the ringing of the bells.

**E Election** The method people use to select their representatives for Parliament.

**Electorate** An area represented by a Member of Parliament. Determined by land zoning, it includes all those people residing in that particular area who are entitled to vote.

**Executive** see 'Minister'.

**F Frontbenchers** Members of the Ministry or Opposition Shadow Ministry who occupy the front seats in the Chamber.

**G Government** The party or coalition with the majority of elected representatives in Parliament.

**Governor** The representative of the King in each State of the Commonwealth of Australia.

**H Hansard** The printed of the proceedings in Parliament. The term is also used to refer to the parliamentary staff who record, edit and produce the written record.

**House** The Chamber or room in which the Legislative Assembly meets — the Lower House.

**I Independent** A Member of Parliament who does not belong to any political party.

**L Leader of the House** A Government Member who is appointed to the position to organise and co-ordinate the Government's business in the Legislative Assembly.

**Leader of the Opposition** The leader of the party or parties (in a coalition) which has the next largest number of representatives in Parliament after the Government.

**Legislation** Bills passed by the Parliament which, as Acts, become the State's laws.

**Legislative Assembly** The Lower House in the Parliaments of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. The only House in Queensland the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

**Legislative Council** The Upper House of all States except Queensland, who Upper House was abolished in 1922.

**M Mace** The ceremonial staff which represents the authority of the Speaker and Parliament and is carried into the Chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

**Member of Parliament** A person elected to a Parliament. In Queensland, a person elected to the Legislative Assembly.

**Minister** A Member of the governing party in Parliament who is part of the Executive Government (Cabinet) and responsible for a Government Department, eg the Minister for Education.

**MP** Member of the Legislative Assembly.

**O Oath** Before Members take their seats in Parliament, the Queensland Constitution requires them to swear an oath or take an affirmation of office and allegiance to the Crown.

**Opposition** The second largest party or coalition of parties after the Government party, which has a formal status and whose role is to scrutinise the policies and administration of Government and offer alternatives to the electorate.

**P Parliament** An assembly of elected representatives forming the Legislature of a nation or state. In Queensland, the Parliament consists of the King and the Legislative Assembly.

**Petition** A formal citizens' request in writing to Parliament, supported by signatures, which asks for a particular action to be taken on a matter.

**Portfolio** A Minister's area of responsibility as a member of Cabinet.

**Premier** The leader of the governing party in each State.

**Press Gallery** A group of media people who report on Parliament. Also the actual Gallery in the House which is reserved for the media.

**Public Gallery** The Gallery or seating area above the Chamber from which people can view parliamentary proceedings.

**Q Question Time** A period of time when Members may ask questions of Ministers concerning their portfolios. This is a set time that occurs during each sitting day of Parliament.

**Q Quorum** The minimum number of Members that must be present in the Chamber for parliamentary business to be conducted. The present quorum in the Queensland Legislative Assembly is 16.

**R Referendum** A ballot which allows electors to express their views about an issue, for example, 'Should daylight saving be introduced into Queensland?'

**Royal Assent** When the King's representative, the Governor, signs a Bill which makes it an Act of Parliament or law.

**S Sergeant-at-Arms** A parliamentary officer who is the bearer of the mace and assists the Speaker of the House in maintaining order in the Chamber and the parliamentary precinct.

**Shadow Minister** A member of the Opposition who follows closely the areas of responsibility of a Government Minister, eg Minister for Education (Government), Shadow Minister for Education (Opposition).

**Sitting Day** A day on which the Parliament (that is, the Members of the Legislative Assembly) meets to conduct parliamentary business.

**Sovereign** The Sovereign (the British Monarch - King or Queen) is the highest authority in the State and is represented by the Governor.

**Standing Orders** The rules which govern the conduct of business in Parliament.

**T Treasurer** The Government Minister responsible for economic and financial policy and who prepares the Government's budget.

**Teller** A person who counts the votes in the Chamber.

**U Unicameral** A Parliament with only one House, such as Queensland — the Legislative Assembly.

**W Westminster System** The British system of government which provides the basic model for the Parliaments of Australia.

**Whip** A Member of Parliament who is responsible for organising members of his/her political party to take part in debates and votes, and assists in arranging the business of a House of Parliament. The whip acts as a teller and also counts the votes in a division.