

People of Parliament: Backbench & Crossbench

Cloze Passage

Read through the following passage and select the word or phrase from the table that best fits in each space. You can use each word or phrase only once.

independent	crossbenchers	government	represent	legislation
independents	people	Legislative Assembly	three	major
backbenchers	Question Time	hung parliament	minority	cross the floor

The front rows of seats in the Legislative Assembly (1) are occupied by Government Ministers and Shadow Ministers. Other members of the Government or Opposition sit behind the front rows. These members are called backbenchers (2). The crossbench is made up of the Members of Parliament who belong to minor parties, along with those who are independents (3), meaning they don't belong to any party. These members are called the crossbench because they can cross the floor (4), which means they don't always have to vote with the parties in government or opposition.

Like all Members of Parliament, backbenchers and crossbenchers (5) must be active in their own electorates, staying in touch with the needs and opinions of the people (6) so they can effectively represent (7) their electorate in parliament. As MPs, they must also participate in making laws by speaking on motions and Bills, ask questions during Question Time (8), and serve on committees.

Sometimes, when the two major (9) parties have nearly equal numbers in the Chamber, the crossbench can play a very important role in helping one of the major parties form government (10). In this situation, crossbenchers determine whether or not legislation (11) is passed by the Parliament. This is called a 'hung parliament' (12).

In modern times, Queensland has had a hung Parliament on three (13) occasions. In 1995 the Coalition government relied on the support of the independent member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham, to guarantee supply. In 1998 and again in 2015, Labor achieved minority (14) government through the support of independent (15) Member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington.