



AUSTRALASIAN PARLIAMENTARY EDUCATORS' CONFERENCE

**Brisbane QUEENSLAND
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Report from the Western Australian Parliamentary Education Office

The Western Australian Parliamentary Education Office, while administratively located within the Department of the Legislative Assembly, provides education services on behalf of both Houses of Parliament. It currently comprises a Parliamentary Education Officer (Manager), a Deputy Parliamentary Education Officer, two part-time Parliamentary Education Presenters and a shared Administrative Assistant. The Parliamentary Education Office is supported by the work and experience of two Parliamentary Fellows in Dr Harry Phillips and Professor David Black.

38th PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Premier Colin Barnett and his government alliance of Liberal, National and Independent members recently achieved the milestone of its third year in office.

Current make-up of the Assembly

The Barnett government currently comprises Liberal 24; Nationals 5 and Independents 3 giving the alliance 32 seats in the 59-seat Legislative Assembly. Eric Ripper as Leader of the Opposition oversees the ALP's 26 seats. One Independent Green sits on the cross-benches.

Current make-up of the Council

The 36-seat upper house is Government controlled (21 seats) and comprises 16 Liberal and 5 Nationals to an Opposition (15 seats) of 11 Labor and 4 Greens WA.

The recent *Electoral & Constitution Amendment Act 2011* brings an end to offset terms and capacity for early elections in Western Australia. The next and subsequent elections for both Houses will be concurrent and fixed-date elections, held on the second Saturday in March. In essence, both Houses will serve for a fixed four-year term.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

School visit programs

Educational visits to Parliament House continue to be in high demand with the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) maintaining a booking schedule of six timeslots each week-day for school bookings.

Educational groups typically range from Year 6 and 7 at the primary level; Years 8 and 9 and Political and Legal Studies (Years 11 and 12) at the secondary level; and students from Politics, Law, Business Law, International Studies and Journalism and Communication at the tertiary level. The PEO continues to have strong demand from TAFE and independent English Language institutions seeking programs for migrant and International students studying English and examining Australian cultural and government systems.

Visit figures [classed as '*tours conducted by the PEO*'] for the last three financial years are -

2008-09 - Total visitors 14,487. Ed groups 11,381. Other groups 3,106.

2009-10 - Total visitors 14,483. Ed groups 10,999. Other groups 3,484 .

2010-11 - Total visitors 14,809. Ed groups 12,192. Other groups 2,617 .

(YTD - Oct 2011)

2011 - 12 - Total visitors 5,885. Ed groups 4,871. Others groups 1,014.

All tours include key aspects of the history, functions, layout, roles, processes and procedures of the WA Parliament.

On *non-sitting* days students are able to supplement their experience with participation in a scripted debate based on authentic Parliamentary debates drawn from *Hansard*. The scripted debates that prove most popular and have best affinity for learners are those linked to Animal Welfare, Hoons (Reckless Driving) Legislation, Sports Drug Testing and Graffiti. For upper school students (Yrs 11&12), a recent and popular addition to the stable of debate scripts is based on the *Liquor Control Act*, which looks at licencing and banning notices, particularly related to youth behaviour.

On *sitting* days the basic tour is supplemented, wherever possible, with an opportunity to watch proceedings from the Public Gallery of each House. A debrief session is conducted to identify and elaborate on what students have witnessed in that particular session. Occasionally school groups arrive well before their scheduled start times and we now offer a self-guided 'city walk' excursion that enables students to complete a worksheet based on historical features on, around and about Parliament House and nearby points of interest.

Members of Parliament are informed of scheduled visits by groups from within their electorate and many take this opportunity to greet, take questions and profile the history of their entry to Parliament to the group.

The bulk of school visit groups come from metropolitan Perth, however, students from the regions this year have included groups from Bunbury, Albany Donnybrook and Katanning (South-West), Geraldton and Carnamah (Mid-West), Kalgoorlie (Central Goldfields) and Newman (Pilbara).

The division of class groups in the previous two school years, as well as so far this year, is:

Class groups attending Parliament House				
	Primary	Secondary	TAFE & Language	University
2009	256	115	42	12
2010	278	111	41	15
2011 (to Oct)	189	99	28	20

Parliamentary Internship Program

The PEO continues to provide and co-ordinate the Parliamentary Internship Program, giving opportunities for third and final year tertiary students of politics, law and journalism to undertake a research role while 'under the wing' of a Member of Parliament. The program has been evolving for almost 20 years between the Western Australian Parliament and the five major universities in the State. Guidance and support is given to successful students by a Member of Parliament, the Parliamentary Education Office and an academic supervisor.

The 2011 intake of Interns began their projects in August of the second semester. All parties and both Houses are represented with members having topics researched by students from 4 Western Australian universities (Curtin, UWA, Murdoch and ECU).

Topic examples from 2011

- A. Employment as a parliamentarian is unique compared to any other industry grouping.
1. What induction and professional development regimes exist in the parliaments in Australia?
 2. What induction and professional development regimes exist in parliamentary parties in Australia?
 3. If they exist, what are their comparative advantages?
 4. Recommend the key themes and essential functions for a professional development program that may be adopted in Western Australia?
- B. Many Kimberley Aboriginal communities are concerned about mining activities and industrial development proposed for their region. They are encouraged by Government and industry to abandon native title claims and sign land-use agreements.

Much has been said and written about enterprises that have the potential to deliver appropriate and sustainable economic development without the need to 'get a mine' or sign an industrial development deal.

Your task is to:

1. Read and collate the reports, list and examine their recommendations.
2. Identify the recommendations that have been put into action and report on successes and challenges.
3. Make recommendations for initiatives that should be trialed that are environmentally sustainable, culturally and socially appropriate and economically prosperous.

The Parliamentary Library supports the program providing library access for students. Completed papers are bound and provided to the Library for ongoing reference. In the past, Members have tabled and made reference to associated research in the House and the students themselves are given credits towards their degree or units of study. At the commencement of the Internship students receive a Parliament House induction and meet with their Member of Parliament, and part-way through the research project Murdoch University hosts a "Meet the Pollies" afternoon where invited Members address, engage and share experiences with the students.

Undergraduate and Ongoing Professional Teacher Development

Practising and pre-service teachers can access an ongoing professional development program that covers the relevant areas of curriculum development and active citizenship.

Support material covers:

- the concept of citizenship education;
- integrating civics and citizenship into the classroom;

- principles of democracy;
- features of Parliamentary democracy;
- whole-school approaches to civic and citizenship education;
- role play and classroom debating activities; and
- learning and teaching strategies that involve students thinking about democracy, rights and values beyond the classroom.

Adult and Community Education

In 2011 a diverse range of community and cultural groups have participated in activities that simulate the passage of legislation and deliver a program of awareness regarding the role of Parliament. These civic, community and cultural groups have included Rotary, Probus, U3A, Legacy, historical societies and friendship groups.

Other cultural groups and delegations in 2011 have visited from Indonesia, Germany, Malawi, Surabaya, Kyrgyzstan, Balochistan and China.

Public Tours

Free public tours remain a regular feature of the PEO program. Each Monday and Thursday at 10.30am a one-hour tour is delivered by one of the part-time Education Presenters. The tours tend to capture a mix of metropolitan residents, interstate and overseas visitors, and country West Australians. Word of mouth, advertising in community newspapers and *The West Australian*, as well as seniors' publications and Visitor Guide announcements of tour times all assist in promoting the service.

A brochure dedicated to outlining the public tour component of the Western Australian Parliament is distributed to visitor centres, the WA Tourist Bureau and public libraries.

The public tour program continues to spark public interest with citizens returning independently to the Public Galleries for Question Time or general business and accessing the Parliament's web broadcast of both Houses

Departmental and Public Sector Graduate Programs

Continued interest from government departments for functional and procedural insight into government and parliament has again been evident this year. The PEO also provides support to departmental graduate programs to deliver an integrated information session that steps through passage of legislation, committee stage of a Bill, the role of government advisers in the Chamber and aspects of delegated legislation. Departments availing themselves of the two-hour session in 2011 were the Departments of Premier and Cabinet, Consumer Protection, Treasury and Finance, Corrective Services, and Transport.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Outreach

Western Australia's vast distances and the remoteness of some communities, raises the issue of inclusivity in regard to appropriate levels and access to civics education. The PEO in conjunction with staff from The Constitutional Centre

and Electoral Education Centre identified this need in 2004 and continue to offer an outreach program that presents combined aspects of civics education from each agency. [JCE - Joint Civics Education]

Our target groups are lower and upper primary students and lower secondary students who-

- participate in role-play simulating the Constitution, elections and Parliamentary processes;
- benefit from the ideas and activities generated by teacher support material that springboards students to further studies in democratic process and active citizenship
- where possible, meet their member of Parliament from each House, and
- younger learners in remote areas, particularly Aboriginal communities, participate in a reading Big Book program that combines elements of decision making, laws and parliament with a reward system (swimming pool access) for school attendance. The program title is *Schoolies are Poolies*.

Other groups in the metropolitan region who have difficulty with travel or have excursion limitations can also book Outreach incursions for their students. In the 2010/11 financial year 650 regional students received the program and in the metropolitan areas 1400 students were visited.

Remote Schools Visits

Hear Me!

In 2009-10, in order to target students living in remote and isolated communities who cannot access the Joint Civics Outreach program (due mainly to presenters not residing in the region) the Education Office ran a Remote Schools visit program. The program reached 60 Remote Schools (government, Catholic and Aboriginal Independent schools)

In 2011/12 the Parliamentary Education Office will implement an extension to the *Hear Me* Program in order to support Remote School teachers in their teaching of government and parliament. Through liaison and access to regional school networks the PEO plans to offer Professional Development to teachers via a newly implemented Department of Education initiative that will enable better access and engagement with regional and remote schools.

To cover the vast geographical area that the *Hear Me* Program encompassed in 2009/10, the PEO will develop a rolling Professional Learning program that will connect with set PD days in a remote school 'pod' or network.

A coordinated approach with the Networks will assist the PEO to re-connect with the 60 remote schools visited in 2009/10 and to target the 18 schools which were not visited in 2009/10.

Future programs may also be delivered via satellite link directly to schools or to Community Resource Centres (CRCs) through the government's Westlink satellite and video conferencing facility.

Statewide Student Parliament

Once in the life of a Parliament the PEO coordinates a state-wide student parliament for students of Year 10. In late August, 2011 students congregated at Parliament for a three-day event that included the sitting day of the student parliament. Both Houses were replicated with 95 student members and corresponded to the regions and districts of the current Parliament - e.g., the student member for Kimberley came from Kununurra District High School in the Kimberley.

Two Bills were debated - a perennial favourite of lowering the voting age from 18 to 16 years of age and second to bring in compulsory Community Service for all 15 - 18 year olds.

Seniors Week

The PEO annually plans tours for inclusion in Seniors Week, an initiative of the Department for Communities and supported by Bendigo Bank. Throughout the week of November 7-11 twice daily tours of Parliament House run and include viewing the chambers, the artworks, introduction to parliamentary symbols and linked objects of interest, some of which date back to 1832. This year Seniors Week was well attended by 180 seniors.

Publications and Resources

- *A Citizen's Guide to the Western Australian Parliament* by Dr Harry Phillips.
- *Notes on the Parliament of Western Australia - Resource Book*
- *Structure and Function of the WA Parliament*
- Speaker's Welcome Sheet - message from the Speaker, an outline of the main functions of the Legislative Assembly. Unfolds to become an A3 seating plan showing photos and portfolios of Members of the House.
- DVD- *Puzzle Out Parliament - Understanding the Parliament of Western Australia.*
 - Chapter 1 - history of the WA Parliament
 - Chapter 2 - follow a Bill through Parliament
 - Chapter 3 - viewers visit points of interest in Parliament House, gather facts from footage and voice-over and then participate in a quiz.
- Set of 40 Fact Sheets (PDFs and hard copies)

Visiting education groups receive a range of handouts and information sheets -

- Features of each House
- The role of committees
- Electoral boundaries.
- Samples of *Hansard* and basic stenograph functions
- A Bills flow chart
- History Timeline
- Women of the WA Parliament
- general Parliamentary information brochures.

Interactive Technologies

Programs for in-house and external presentations using interactive whiteboard, eBeam, and interactive voting 'Keepad' technologies have also been developed. These are especially valuable on non-sitting days when students cannot observe any of Parliament 'in action'.

[demonstration during delegate report]

Internet

In conjunction with the Parliamentary IT Department, the Parliamentary Education Office maintains education webpages as part of the wider Parliament website.

An on-line booking system was developed this year whereby teachers and excursion coordinators can access an on-line booking form to secure their preferred date and timeslot. The calendar is colour coded. Available timeslots are shown in light yellow, booked (unavailable) are greyed out and sitting days are indicated with a pink tab.

This very functional system has eliminated a lot of 'telephone tag' between teachers and the PEO.

[demonstration during delegate report]

James Sollis
Education Officer
November 2011