

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - role play

## Introduction

A lot of the work of Members of Parliament is in committees. There are many committees. Parliamentary committees are made up of Members of Parliament representing a number of different political parties and Independent Members. Currently, committees have three Government Members and three non-Government Members, with the Chairperson of the committee (a Government Member) having the casting vote.

The committees investigate many things including new laws, how Government departments spend their money and matters of importance to people in Queensland. Committees generally produce a report at the end of their investigation which makes recommendations about what the Government should do. For example, Law, Justice and Safety Committee recently conducted an inquiry into alcohol related violence.

Committees are important because they have public hearings where people who are involved in the issues being investigated can have their say. This enables many opinions and points of view from the community to be listened to before Governments make decisions. In turn, this should result in better laws and better action from Government.

We are going to have a short committee hearing now. We will need some volunteers.

- First, a good reader to be Committee Chairperson **[select, hand card, and show where to sit]**.
- Three good talkers to be witnesses **[select, hand them cards, but they can stay in seats - show them where the witness will sit at the table]**. These three are from organisations interested in today's inquiry. Just use your own names when asked.
- Three good thinkers to be Committee Members **[select, hand cards, show them where to sit]**. These three, like the Chairperson, are Members of Parliament.
- One person to be Committee Officer - this person won't get to say anything this time but they do most of the work behind the scenes for the Committee **[select and place]**.
- And one last person to be the Hansard Reporter. They have the important job of keeping a record of what everyone says. Today they can record the names of the witnesses **[select and place]**.

The rest of you are the audience. Most committee hearings are held in public so anyone can come and listen. So this is a Legislative Assembly Committee hearing and today's inquiry is into:

**A proposal to increase school hours to between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm**

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - role play

## Summary of Roles and Setting

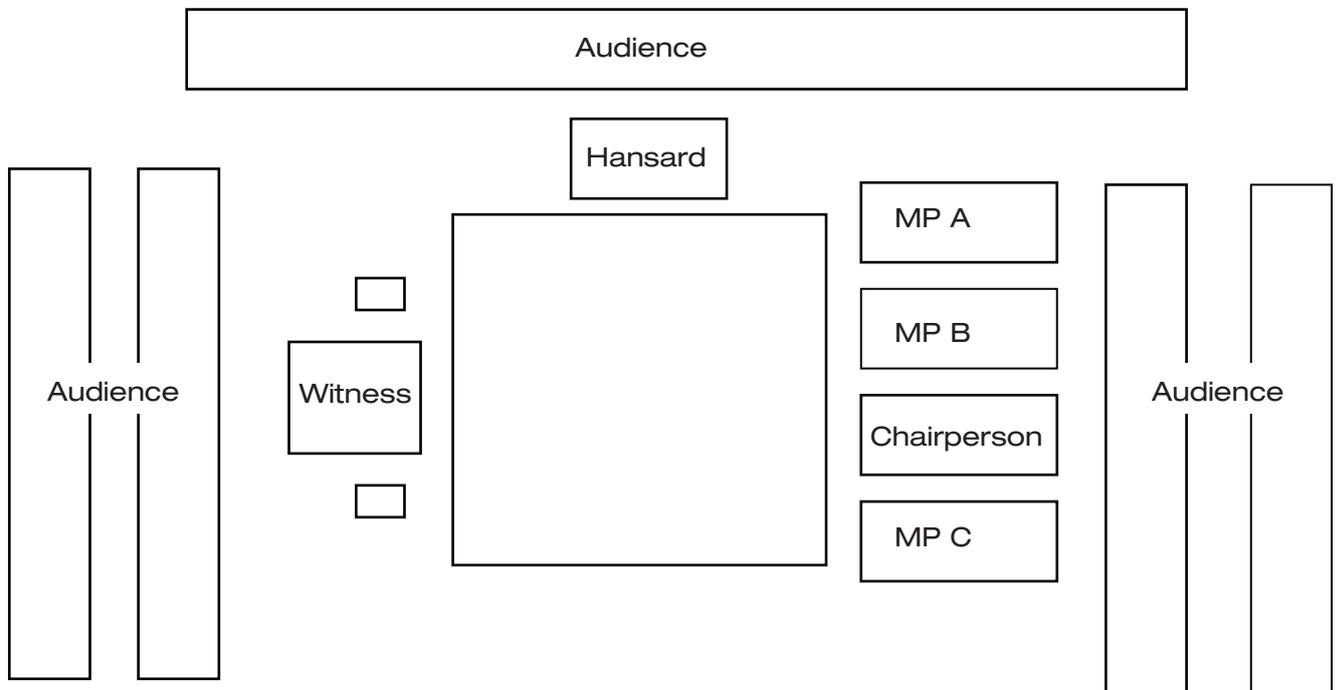
### Roles:

- Chairperson of Committees (*1 script*)
- Three witnesses representing different groups (*1 role card each*)
- Three Members of Parliament committee members (*1 role card each*)
- Committee Officer (*no role card*)
- Hansard Reporter (*no role card*)
- Audience (*everybody else*)

### Proposals being investigated by the committee:

- 1:** A proposal to increase school hours to 9.00am to 5.00pm: Witness A - represents Education Queensland, Witness B - represents Teachers Union; Witness C - represents a parents' organisation
- 2:** A proposal to ban junk foods from school canteens and schools premises: Witness A - nutritionist; Witness B - represents a parents' organisation; Witness C - represents a snack food manufacturer

### Setting:



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## Outline

**Introduction** (includes selecting students for roles and handing out role cards).

### **Chairperson and Hearing** [Chairperson script]

- Witness A speaks
- Chairperson thanks Witness A and invites questions from Committee Members
- Member A asks Witness A a question
- Witness A answers question
- Chairperson thanks Witness A who returns to audience. Chairperson invites Witness B to present Evidence
- Witness B speaks
- Chairperson thanks Witness B and invites questions from Committee Members
- Member B asks Witness B a question
- Witness B answers question
- Chairperson thanks Witness B who returns to audience
- Chairperson invites Witness C to present Evidence
- Witness C speaks
- Chairperson thanks Witness C and invites questions from Committee Members
- Member C asks Witness C a question
- Witness C answers question
- Chairperson thanks Witness C who returns to audience
- Chairperson thanks all witnesses and concludes hearing

**Conclusion** (includes thanking students for roles and retrieving role cards)

After the committee has heard from many different people and points of view and after some more research and discussion, the committee members will make up their minds about whether or not this is a good idea.

The committee will then write a report which will be presented to the Parliament. It will say what the committee thought was the best thing to do. It will make recommendations for action by the Government. The Government will consider the report and decide whether or not to accept the recommendations - often they accept some but not others. If non-Government committee members do not agree with the report, they can write a dissenting report.

Committee hearings like the one in this role play go on all the time whether Parliament is sitting or not. They are an important way in which Parliaments try to listen to the community and bring all the different ideas together to choose the best course of action.

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - role play

## Role Card : Committee Chairperson

***[The words in brackets are instructions - not words to be spoken]***

### **Committee Chairperson**

I declare open this meeting of the Queensland Legislative Assembly Committee. The terms of reference for this inquiry are that we consider the effect of increasing school hours from the present hours to between 9.00am and 5.00pm and to make recommendations to the Government on this matter. Today the Committee will be hearing from representatives of several groups who have an interest in this issue.

***[Witness A - Education Queensland.***

***Witness B - Teachers' Union.***

***Witness C - parents' association]***

I welcome the representative from Education Queensland. Please take a seat at the table.

***[Wait for witness to take seat]***

Please state your name for the Hansard record.

***[Witness states name]***

Would you like to tell the committee your views on this proposal?

***[Witness presents views]***

Thank you. Do any of the committee members have any questions?

***[Member A asks question - Witness gives an answer]***

I thank the representative of Education Queensland for attending today. You may return to your seat. ***[Witness returns to seat]***

I would now like to welcome the representative from the Teachers' Union.

***[Wait for witness to take seat]***

Please state your name for the Hansard record.

***[Witness states name]***

Would you like to tell the committee your views on this proposal?

***[Witness presents views]***

Thank you. Do any of the committee members have any questions?

***[Member B asks question - Witness gives an answer]***

I thank the representative of the Teachers' Union for attending today. You may return to your seat.

***[Witness returns to seat]***

I now welcome the representative of the Parents' Association. Please take a seat at the table.

***[Wait for witness to take seat]***

Please state your name for the Hansard record.

***[Witness states name]***

Would you like to tell the committee your views on this proposal?

***[Witness presents views]***

Thank you. Do any of the committee members have any questions?

***[Member C asks question - Witness gives an answer]***

I thank the representative of the Parents' Association for attending today. You may return to your seat. ***[Witness returns to seat]***

Thank you all for your contributions. This hearing is now adjourned. The committee will consider today's evidence and will table its report in the Queensland Parliament.

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - role play

## Role Card: Representative of the Department of Education

*[The words in brackets are instructions - not words to be spoken]*

### **Representative of the Department of Education**

*[You are the representative of Education Queensland and the Department is in favour of this idea. When invited by the Chairperson, take your seat at the table and begin as shown below - you will have to give your reasons for supporting the idea. There are some suggestions below if you are stuck.]*

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson and committee members.

As you know Education Queensland has been considering this idea for some time. While we can see that there are some problems we can also see that there would be many advantages if we had longer school hours.

For example ....

***[Give your reasons:***

***You could use some of these ideas -***

- ***it would make better use of expensive school buildings***
- ***there is so much to learn but not enough time in the present school day***
- ***children with working parents will not have to go home to empty houses or to expensive childcare if school times and work times are the same***
- ***longer hours might mean there would be no need for homework***

***When you are finished say: ]***

Thank you to the committee for giving us this opportunity to present our views today.

***[Now you will be asked a question by a committee member. Try to think of a good answer. If it is about having school on Saturdays, try this one:***

***Most parents don't work Saturdays. We think it would work better if normal school and work hours were much the same.***

***When the Chairperson thanks you, return to your seat.]***

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry – role play

## Role Card: Representative of the Teachers' Union

*[The words in brackets are instructions - not words to be spoken]*

### **Representative of the Teachers' Union**

*[You are the representative of the Teachers' Union and the union is not in favour of this idea. When invited by the Chairperson, take your seat at the table and begin as shown below - you will have to give your reasons for not supporting the idea. There are some suggestions below if you are stuck.]*

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson and committee members. The Teachers' Union is generally opposed to this idea because

*[Give your reasons:*

*You could use some of these ideas -*

- teachers are already too busy and stressed*
- children just can't work that long - they'd get too tired*
- it would cost more because teachers would have to be paid more*
- finishing the same time as other work would make peak hour traffic much worse and there would be a shortage of public transport*

*When you are finished say: ]*

Thank you to the committee for giving us this opportunity to present our views today.

*[Now you will be asked a question by a committee member. Try to think of a good answer. If it is about teachers working longer hours, try this one. Teachers are not paid enough but they already work long hours. They should be paid properly for the hours they work now.*

*When the Chairperson thanks you, return to your seat.]*

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - role play

## Role Card: Representative of the Parents' Association

*[The words in brackets are instructions - not words to be spoken]*

### **Representative of the Parents' Association**

*[You are the representative of the Parents' Association. The association can see both good and bad points to this idea. When invited by the Chairperson, take your seat at the table and begin as shown below - you will have to give your reasons for how you feel about the idea. There are some suggestions below if you are stuck.]*

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson and committee members.

The Parents Association can see both good and bad points in this idea. Some good points are:

*[Give your reasons - You could use some of these ideas.*

- *we wouldn't have to worry about where our children are between 3 and 5 o'clock*
- *it would make better use of the schools and cut down vandalism]*

But some bad points are:

*[Give your reasons - You could use some of these ideas.*

- *children would be tired and cranky*
- *it would cost more which means more taxes or school fees*

*When you are finished say: ]*

Thank you to the committee for giving us this opportunity to present our views.

*[Now you will be asked a question by a committee member. Try to think of a good answer. If it is about longer hours being safer for children, try this one: Longer hours would be safer while children are in school but we would be concerned about them coming home later during peak hour traffic, especially in winter when it is dark.*

*When the Chairperson thanks you, return to your seat.]*

# Parliamentary Committee Inquiry - role play

## Role Card: Committee Members

*[The words in brackets are instructions - not words to be spoken]*

### **Committee Member A**

*[You are a Member of Parliament who is on this committee. You have listened to Witness A and now you want to ask a question. There are some suggestions below if you are stuck.]*

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson and committee members. I would like to ask the Education Queensland representative this question:

*[Ask a question based on something she or he has said. If you are stuck try this -*

*Has the department thought of making the school week longer by having school on Saturdays?]*

### **Committee Member B**

*[You are a Member of Parliament who is on this committee. You have listened to Witness B and now you want to ask a question. There are some suggestions below if you are stuck.]*

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson and committee members. I would like to ask the Teachers' Union representative this question:

*[Ask a question based on something she or he has said. If you are stuck try this -*

*Would teachers agree to work longer school hours if they were paid more?]*

### **Committee Member C**

*[You are a Member of Parliament who is on this committee. You have listened to Witness C and now you want to ask a question. There are some suggestions below if you are stuck.]*

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson and committee members. I would like to ask the Parents' Association representative this question:

*[Ask a question based on something she or he has said. If you are stuck try this -*

*Would children be safer if school hours were longer?]*