



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM



**SCHOOLS' STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE
COUNCILS—A PARLIAMENTARY MODEL**

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1. MODEL FOR A SCHOOL PARLIAMENT

BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The following program materials have been developed as a parliamentary-style model for use in conducting proceedings of a primary school student representative council (SRC). It is based on a number of institutional features of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT.
- 1.2. Separately from a school's SRC arrangements, the materials can also be utilised by upper primary teachers to meet the requirements for teaching the Australian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship strand.
- 1.3. The program acquaints students with a number of key democratic concepts, including the importance of elections and the role of elected representatives in a parliamentary system. It can also be undertaken as a school outreach activity where the Assembly's education and engagement officers conduct sessions to meet the particular needs of individual schools.

STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.4. This document has been structured to assist teachers and students with the establishment and operation of a school parliament. The first section sets out the broad objectives for the school parliament model including options on the use of resources by the SRC and the classroom teacher. The second section provides detailed information on establishing a school parliament through the development of a constitution. The constitution formalises the parliament and may include options for electing members, parliamentary roles and responsibilities, suggested floor plan for a chamber and how sitting days might be organised. The final section of the document contains appendices which include a number of parliamentary templates and a training role play to support the operation of the school parliament.

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

- 1.5. The Assembly's [education and engagement program](#)¹ offers a wide range of different programs for primary school students that can be tailored to meet the needs of teachers and students.
- 1.6. Schools groups are welcome to visit the Legislative Assembly to participate in school parliament role play activities, conduct mock elections and participate in sessions with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).
- 1.7. For more information, contact the Assembly's Education and Engagement Officer on (02) 62053016 or LAeducation@parliament.act.gov.au
- 1.8. Teachers are also able to access a range of other information about the operation of the Assembly through its website at <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au>

¹ <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/Explore-your-Assembly/education-programs>

THE SCHOOL PARLIAMENT

OBJECTIVES

- 1.9. A school parliament provides an opportunity for students to be involved in school governance and decision making through a group of democratically elected students who represent the views of all students at the school. The parliament provides an opportunity to:
- involve students in democratic processes and decisions making within the school;
 - demonstrate the importance of representation and active involvement in the school community;
 - democratically elect student representatives;
 - develop student leadership and communication skills;
 - give a forum for the presentation of student ideas and opinions on school policies that directly impact students;
 - improve the school community by addressing student issues and concerns; and
 - support the teaching of the Australian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship strand.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

- 1.10. The Legislative Assembly for the ACT—the only legislature in Australia with responsibility for two [levels of government](#)² (local and state/territory levels)—is the basis of the school parliament model used in this resource.
- 1.11. The program has been developed for, but is not limited to, a whole-of-school parliament. The resources can also be used in a classroom to explore civics and citizenship curriculum to support inquiry questions such as:
- What is democracy in Australia and why is a democracy important? (ACHASSK115);
 - Why do we have laws and regulations? (ACHASSK117)
 - How are laws developed in Australia? (ACHASSK146); and
 - What are the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government in Australia? (ACHASSK144).
- 1.12. Whether the resources included in the program are used to facilitate roleplay activities, form the basis of class discussions or activities, or used as the basis of a fully-fledged school SRC, they can be scaled up or down to suit the requirements of each school and each classroom.
- 1.13. Other resources are also available on the Legislative Assembly website to support classroom teaching of civics and citizenship curriculum.

² Fact sheet—Levels of government in Australia—<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/Explore-your-Assembly/resources/fact-sheets/levels-of-government>

2. ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL PARLIAMENT—CONSTITUTION

- 2.1. In working towards the development of a school (or class) parliament, it can be useful to first establish a constitution that sets out the aims, membership and operation of the parliament. The constitution needn't be a long document or cover the wide range of issues that are included in the Australian Constitution or in the ACT Self-Government Act³ but the process of involving students in the development of such a document can be an important learning opportunity all on its own.
- 2.2. The constitution can be discussed, reviewed and amended over time and any changes can be approved through a vote of the members in the parliament, or, through a referendum of the classrooms or entire school depending on each school's requirements.
- 2.3. Below is an exploration of some of the matters which a school or class might wish to include in their constitution (a template framework for a school parliament constitution is provided in Appendix 1).
- 2.4. Schools may already have documents governing the operation of the SRC that can be used as a source document for the creation of a constitution for the parliament.

ADAPTING THE MODEL

- 2.5. Schools may wish to emphasise the cooperative dimensions of government and opposition interactions in a school parliament in order to promote a greater sense of unity and inclusiveness. For instance, the government, opposition and crossbench members, rather than taking up adversarial positions on various issues, could instead work together to achieve common objectives. It is not uncommon for members from different political parties to agree on legislation and to work towards similar goals—the spirit of cooperation and working across the chamber, is an approach that is likely to be more well suited in a school setting.
- 2.6. Alternatively, where the parliamentary model is being used in roleplay activities (and not student government or SRC settings), exploring the underlying nature of the adversarial political dimensions of parliamentary proceedings, the roles of government, opposition and crossbench members can be performed in a more traditional manner, where questioning, debate and disagreement on particular policies or ideas are encouraged.

³ The *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* is a Commonwealth Act, which amongst other things, established the Legislative Assembly. In many respects it is the effective constitution of the ACT.

THE CONSTITUTION

NAMING YOUR SCHOOL PARLIAMENT

- 2.7. The school parliament will need a name that formally identifies the body and creates a recognised brand for use in any communication and documentation which is produced by the parliament.

AIMS AND FUNCTIONS

- 2.8. This section sets out the purpose of the school parliament which is often based around giving students an active say in what happens in their school. The areas of responsibility for the parliament, where students can meaningfully contribute to improving their school through their representation, decisions and activities, should be clearly outlined.

MEMBERS

- 2.9. This section should set out who is eligible to be a member of the parliament, the number of members that the body will have, a code of conduct governing the behaviour of members, procedures for replacing a member who leaves (new election or recount of original votes).
- 2.10. The size of the parliament will vary for individual schools depending on their requirements. Consideration should be given to ensuring the structure and size of the parliament facilitates the timely completion of work, ensures that representation is equitable and broad based, and that students are given a sense of ownership over the body.
- 2.11. Members of a school parliament can play an important leadership role in modelling the expected standards of behaviour within the school community in order that everyone feels secure, happy and free to strive towards their full potential. All members of a school parliament are expected to adhere to the values of the school and should be demonstrated in their relationships and interactions with students and staff.

PLEDGE OF OFFICE

- 2.12. A 'pledge of office' after being elected is one way to highlight the importance of students' roles as elected representatives. A pledge could be given in front of the school community at an assembly or a special function. The pledge might be as simple as the following short statement or could include additional material from the schools' values:

I [insert name of student] willingly accept office in the [insert school name] school parliament.

I promise to carry out my duties to the school parliament to the best of my ability, bring to the attention of parliament all matters of concern to my fellow students to help make [insert school name] a school where every student can be happy and successful.

ELECTING MEMBERS

- 2.13. The number of members in a parliament will be determined by each school. However, where possible, an odd number of members is preferable as it will enable decisions or recommendations of the parliament to be decided by a majority (i.e. half of the members + 1).
- 2.14. The term of office should also be established prior to election, this could vary from a school term through to an entire school year. Elections ACT has a number of [resources](#) that can be used to help set up and run school parliament elections on its website (www.elections.act.gov.au).
- 2.15. Students interested in being a member of the school parliament would typically go through the process of nominating to stand as a candidate. Schools can facilitate a pre-election period in which students are able to address their peers—usually their class or year group—outline their ideas and plans as well as giving some general biographical information. Students should be given guidelines for nominating and campaigning to ensure a free and fair election. These could include:
- rules around eligibility for nominating;
 - guidelines for provision of candidates’ biographical information, ideas and plans that can be used during the campaign; and
 - rules on campaigning such as appropriate use of language, provision of true and accurate information, promises made are achievable and promises are not used as an inducement (e.g. “I will give a chocolate for everyone who votes for me”).
- 2.16. Elections can be held in groups determined by the school (e.g. by each class or year group). Elections should be by confidential ballot (i.e. where students write the name of their preferred candidate on a piece of paper which is placed in a secure ballot box).
- 2.17. All students are typically able to vote and if a student is standing for election they are able to vote for themselves.

REPLACING MEMBERS

- 2.18. A student who leaves the school parliament will need to be replaced. There are usually two options for the replacement process:
1. **Hold a by-election**—the class or year that elected the departing member would vote again for a new member. Nominations would be called for, there would be a short campaign and the students would vote.
 2. **Countback**—involves looking at which student came second in the previous election and requires that voting information from each election is kept for possible future countbacks. This is the method used for Members of the Legislative Assembly under the Hare-Clark electoral system.⁴ Ballot papers from each election are kept and a countback is conducted to determine the next person eligible to be the new member.

⁴ More information on the Hare-Clark system is available at the Elections ACT website—www.elections.act.gov.au

PARLIAMENTARY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.19. There are a number of positions within a school parliament that perform special roles and responsibilities.⁵ These are set out below.
- 2.20. Every member of the parliament is eligible to put their hand up to stand for these positions. However, the process of appointing different roles can be useful for reinforcing leadership responsibilities that already exist within the school. For instance, school captains and vice captains would be suitable choices if they are members (schools could also examine integrating the process for electing captains into school parliament arrangements so that, for example, the school captain is Chief Minister and vice captains are Deputy Chief Minister or ministers).
- 2.21. Members can be elected to positions following a nomination process. Where there is more than one nominee, members can hold a vote. In the Assembly, positions such as Speaker and Chief Minister are elected by secret ballot using a ballot box and individual voting papers and school parliaments can adopt a similar approach for all the positions listed below.
- 2.22. The support teacher should act as the Speaker/Clerk until a member is elected to these roles. Members not standing in the election for particular positions could assist the teacher to count votes.
- 2.23. To gain a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of members' consideration could be given to rotating the roles each term or semester. This would involve members from the opposition and cross bench taking on the positions in government and conversely the government members becoming opposition and cross bench members. A complete rotation would also include the Speaker and Clerk positions.

SPEAKER

- 2.24. The Speaker is the head of the parliament and sits at the front of the chamber. The Speaker essentially chairs the meeting of the chamber. It can be useful to rotate the Deputy Speaker into the role of Speaker from time to time in order that both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are able to participate in parliamentary discussions about particular school issues (in normal parliamentary practice, when the Speaker or Deputy Speaker is in the chair, they do not participate in debates). The Speaker is responsible for maintaining order and ensuring the smooth running of the sitting by:
- chairing sittings of the school parliament;
 - ensuring members follow parliamentary procedures with the assistance of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk;
 - keeping order by ensuring the order of business is followed, that members can be heard when speaking and every member has a chance to contribute to debates;
 - overseeing votes on matters being considered by the parliament; and
 - sending a letter on behalf of all members to the school principal/executive on bills passed seeking approval for the bill to be enacted.

⁵ Fact sheet—Responsibilities of Members of the Legislative Assembly—<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/Explore-your-Assembly/resources/fact-sheets/responsibilities-of-members>

DEPUTY SPEAKER (OPTIONAL POSITION TO ALLOW ROTATION OF SPEAKER)

2.25. The Deputy Speaker, in the absence of the Speaker, performs duties of the Speaker (as outlined above) and contributes to debates and discussions in the parliament as a normal member when not in the chair.

CLERK

2.26. Traditionally the Clerk (In Australia, pronounced c-l-a-r-k) is not an elected member of a parliament but is responsible for advising the Speaker and ensuring the proceedings are conducted according to the rules. However, for the purposes of providing additional opportunities for student involvement, under this model, the Clerk is treated as an elected member and will have the opportunity to participate in debates. It is suggested that the three Clerk positions be rotated so that each student gets a chance to be a member representative as this is difficult to do while undertaking the responsibilities of Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Assistant Clerk. The Clerk may be responsible for:

- recording the minutes of each parliamentary sitting;
- presenting the minutes of previous sitting;
- assisting the Speaker with organising the parliamentary business for each sitting; and
- recording member votes on decisions made.

DEPUTY CLERK/SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

2.27. The Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms will assist the Clerk in the duties listed above and, in addition, may be responsible for:

- carrying the mace into the chamber (if school has one);⁶
- leading the Speaker into and out of the chamber at the start and end of each sitting;
- under the direction of the Speaker, removing a named member from the chamber;
- assisting with the preparation of minutes and votes of each parliamentary sitting; and
- in the absence of the Clerk, performs duties of the Clerk (as outlined above).

ASSISTANT CLERK (OPTIONAL POSITION TO ALLOW ROTATION OF CLERKS)

2.28. The Assistant Clerk may be responsible for performing the duties of the Clerk/Deputy Clerk when one of these positions is absent and contributing to the parliament as a member when not acting as the Clerk/Deputy Clerk.

⁶ Schools could consider conducting a learning activity in which students are encouraged to design and build a school mace to represent the school parliament. Schools may even consider whether there is value in having a competition to build the best mace. Find out more about the Legislative Assembly mace at <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/Explore-your-Assembly/resources/the-mace>

CHIEF MINISTER

2.29. The Chief Minister is the leader of the government responsible, with the ministers, for implementing the decisions and laws passed in the school parliament. The Chief Minister may be responsible for:

- reporting to the school parliament on work that is being done on behalf of the parliament;
- developing ideas for bills, with the help of other members;
- supporting ministers to fulfil their responsibilities;
- meeting with the principal and/or executive to discuss bills as required;
- making speeches, e.g. thanking people and presenting gifts;
- writing thank you notes for services rendered to the school/grade on behalf of the school parliament; and
- representing the school on special occasions as required.

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

2.30. The Deputy Chief Minister is the second senior member of the government leadership team. Traditionally the Deputy Chief Minister is also a minister and may be responsible for:

- supporting the Chief Minister to implement laws passed in the parliament;
- reporting to the school parliament on matters relevant to their ministerial responsibilities and student feedback;
- developing ideas for bills, with the help of other ministers and members;
- meeting with the principal and/or executive to discuss bills as required; and
- in the absence of the Chief Minister, performs duties of the Chief Minister (as outlined above).

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

2.31. The Leader of the Opposition plays an important role in a parliamentary democracy by questioning the Chief Minister and ministers on what they have been doing in order to keep the government accountable for the decisions being made. While this can be an adversarial role at times, often the opposition and the government agree about what needs to be done and will work together to ensure this happens. As noted earlier, a cooperative, non-adversarial approach may be more suited well-suited when the model is used as school parliament. The Leader of the Opposition may be responsible for:

- reporting to the school parliament on feedback that has been gathered from students;
- developing ideas for bills with the help of other members;
- organising a shadow ministry to assist with their duties in keeping government to account; and
- holding the government to account by questioning the performance of the ministers.

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

2.32. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is the second senior member of the opposition leadership team and supports the Leader of the Opposition to fulfill their responsibilities. In the absence of the Leader of the Opposition the Deputy performs the duties of the Leader of the Opposition (as outlined above).

MINISTERS

2.33. Ministers each have a portfolio and work with the Chief Minister to implement the decisions and laws passed in the school parliament. They may be responsible for:

- reporting to the school parliament on matters relevant to their responsibilities and student feedback;
- developing ideas for bills, with the help of other members;
- meeting with the principal and/or executive to discuss bills in their area of responsibility as required;
- forming and organise a committee with other members of the parliament to assist with their duties, the minister will co-ordinate committee meetings and activities; and
- providing information to the student body on decisions of the parliament.

2.34. Ministers could each take on an area of portfolio responsibility with the supervising teacher determining ministerial positions in line with school policies and requirements. The school parliament can determine the number of ministers and areas of responsibilities, suggested ministries could include, but are not limited to:

- Minister for Communication (e.g. website and newsletter information, billboard updates);
- Minister for Facilities (e.g. playground equipment, water bubblers);
- Minister for Health and Safety (e.g. sun safety, broken/unsafe surfaces or equipment);
- Minister for the Environment (e.g. Clean up Australia day, rubbish/recycling);
- Minister for Sport (e.g. sporting equipment, access); and
- Minister for Fundraising (e.g. casual clothing days, walkathon).

MEMBERS

2.35. Members are elected to represent all students from their class or year group. Members can perform a variety of roles including being on ministerial committees as government members, forming the shadow ministry with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition or sitting on the cross bench.⁷

⁷ Fact sheet—Structure of the parliament—<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/Explore-your-Assembly/resources/fact-sheets/structure-of-the-parliament>

- 2.36. Opposition members form a shadow ministry that is responsible for commenting on particular areas of government activity, these members are referred to as shadow ministers. In the parliament, shadow ministers will often ask questions of the ministers that they 'shadow' and will also take the lead in debating issues connected to their areas of shadow portfolio responsibility.
- 2.37. Members from minor parties and independent members sit in the section of the chamber known as the cross bench. When the government does not hold a majority of seats in the parliament, cross bench members may hold what is commonly referred to as the 'balance of power'. Their vote may decide the outcome of an issue that is before the Assembly when the government and opposition hold opposing positions.
- 2.38. Members may be responsible for:
- consulting with the students that they represent (in their class or year) to get feedback on ideas, issues or concerns they would like raised in the school parliament;
 - representing their classmates in the school parliament by raising ideas and issues discussed in class or year group meetings;
 - developing ideas for bills, with the help of all other members;
 - providing information back to students that they represent on the decisions of the parliament; and
 - helping the ministers with their duties by participating in the committees; or
 - forming the cross bench or opposition with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

SUPPORT TEACHERS

- 2.39. A support teacher with a special interest in school government can provide a vital link between the students, staff and the school management. The teacher will be able to support the students by helping them develop skills in communication, leadership and decision making. They can also help by providing information on school policy, advice on implementing decisions and administrative back-up to the members of the school parliament.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

- 2.40. Where the model is used for role play activities, classroom teachers will obviously play a key role. Classroom teachers can adapt various aspects of the model to suit the particular needs of the class. For instance, it is possible to scale down the number of positions or to relax some of the requirements around minute-taking. It is also possible to debate and discuss hypothetical policies and ideas to illustrate various features of parliamentary practice, rather than using the model to make decisions about classroom rules.

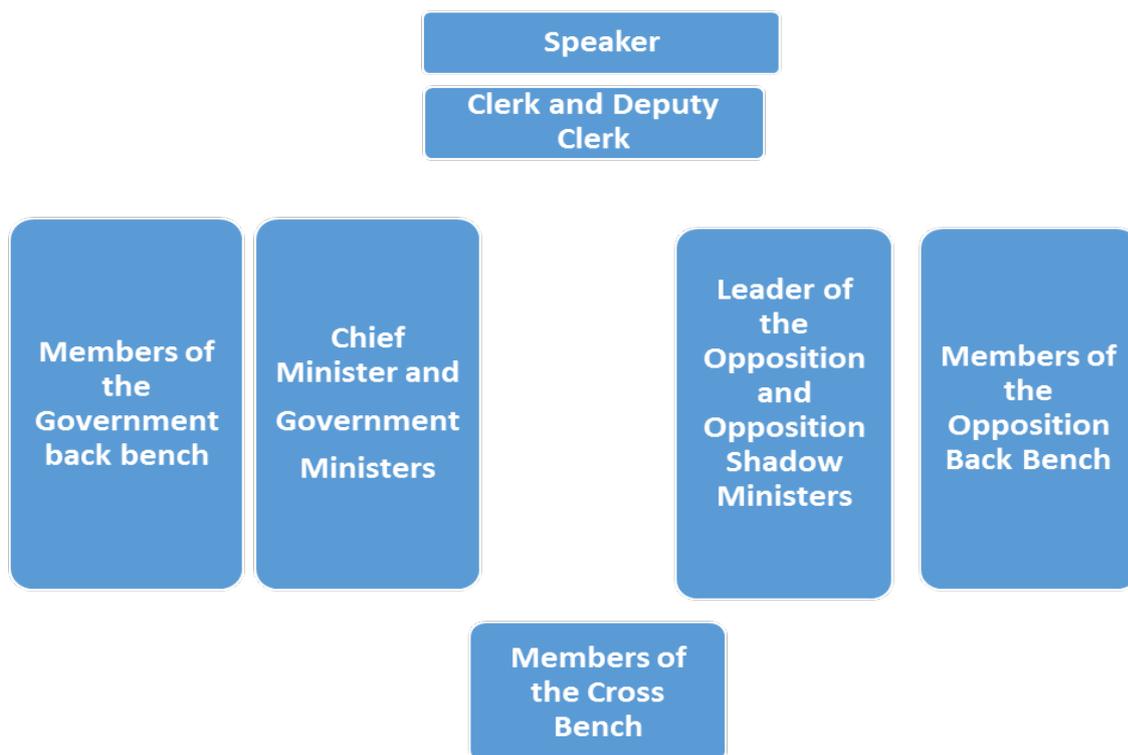
PARLIAMENTARY CHAMBER

- 2.41. The structure of the chamber will depend on the number of members in the school parliament. Traditionally, parliamentary chambers are setup with the Speaker at the front and the Clerk and Deputy Clerk sitting in front of the Speaker. Government members sit to the right of the Speaker, opposition members to the left, and cross bench at the base between the government and opposition members.

2.42. This model suggests 25 Members, which is the same number of members as the Assembly. However, numbers can be adjusted depending on size of the parliament and roles allocated. Suggested arrangements for a 25-member parliament are as follows:

- 1 x Speaker;
- 1 x Deputy Speaker (optional);
- 1 x Clerk, 1 x Deputy Clerk and 1 x Assistant Clerk (traditionally Clerks are not members, however an exception has been made for this model);
- 1 x Chief Minister
- 1 x Deputy Chief Minister
- 5 x ministers
- 1 x Leader of the Opposition
- 1 x Deputy Leader of the Opposition
- 11 x members (remaining students are not in allocated positions and can sit on government, opposition or crossbenches). They assist ministers by being part of the committees or the Leader of the Opposition by being in a shadow ministry.

2.43. To pass a bill in a 25 member parliament, 13 members need to vote yes (majority vote=half of the members+1).



SITTINGS OF THE SCHOOL PARLIAMENT

2.44. This section of the school parliament constitution should set out how sittings will operate. It needs to include:

- frequency of members meetings with their constituent group (class or year group);

- frequency of sittings (weekly, fortnightly, monthly);
- time of meeting;
- quorum (minimum number of members needed for the sitting to proceed);
- agenda (template in Appendix 2);
- minutes (template in Appendix 3);
- bills (template in Appendix 4);
- reports; and
- voting.

BILLS

2.45. A bill is a proposed law and is usually presented to the parliament by ministers. However, it can also be presented by opposition and crossbench members. In order for a bill to become an act, a majority of members in the parliament must vote in favour of the bill for it to pass. Bills in the school parliament are proposed actions that the members debate and vote on. Each bill should:

- have a formal name;
- explain the aim of the bill and why it is needed;
- how it will operate;
- how the outcomes will be measured; and
- outline the benefits of enacting the bill (either internally for the student population or externally for fundraising ventures).

2.46. An example bill is provided in Appendix 5.

2.47. In the Commonwealth, a bill does not become an act until it has been given Royal assent by the Governor-General. In the states, Royal assent is given by the Governor. In the ACT, Royal assent is not required, instead a bill becomes an act, after the Assembly has passed the bill, it has been certified by the Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel have published the act on the [ACT Legislation Register](#)⁸ at the request of the Speaker.

2.48. In the case of a school parliament, it may be useful for the school principal and/or executive to give final approval to a bill before it becomes an act (i.e. before, it is formally agreed that the proposal in the bill will be actioned). This enables the degree of self-determination facilitated by the parliament to be balanced with the need to ensure that proposals flowing from students are in line with the values and requirements of the school community and school policy.

BILL APPROVAL

2.49. All school parliament bills that have passed should be notified to the school principal and/or executive. The Speaker sends a letter on behalf of the members of the school parliament asking for approval for the bill to proceed (Appendix 6). Once the principal has approved the decision the members will be able to plan and implement the activity as outlined in the bill.

⁸ ACT Legislation Register—<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/>

- 2.50. If necessary, it is the responsibility of the Chief Minister, together with the responsible minister and accompanied by the supervising teacher, to meet with the principal and/or executive to discuss any bills from the parliament. Where there might be conflicts with school policies or other concerns, the Chief Minister could be asked to make amendments to the bill to bring it into line.

QUESTION TIME

- 2.51. Question time is an important feature of almost all Westminster-style parliaments. It gives members the chance to ask questions of government ministers without any prior notice on the topic. Questions that are asked at question time must be relevant to a minister's portfolio responsibilities (for example the environment, sport and communications).
- 2.52. Opposition members can often use question time to ask questions that scrutinise the ministers' performance. Government members (who are not ministers) will often use question time to ask questions that highlight government initiatives and achievements.

REPORTS

- 2.53. Ministers and the Leader of the Opposition all need to report to the school parliament regularly. There may not be time for every minister to report at every sitting, this will depend on the time allowed for sittings. Reporting could be allocated on a rotational basis, if there are urgent items that need to be reported, these should be prioritised. It is suggested that a time limit be allocated for the reporting period of the sitting.
- 2.54. The reports should contain information on what the member has been doing, including new ideas for bills, any problems reported to them by other members of the student body, progress on activities they and other members are planning or involved in and conclude with an action item they will be completing for the next sitting (where they will be reporting). There is scope to determine the level of reporting and the time allocated as the parliamentary term progresses to see what works and what doesn't.

VOTING

- 2.55. Every member has the right to cast one vote and for a bill to pass a majority is required (half of the members+1). Only student members can vote, the support teacher does not get a vote. In crafting the constitution, the school parliament can decide if proxy votes from absent members will be accepted.

FIRST SITTING

- 2.56. The first sitting will require the parliamentary roles to be filled. Where it is school policy that captains and vice captains are automatically members of the parliament, the position of Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister could be allocated to these roles (again, it is possible for schools to integrate elections for the captaincy positions with elections for a school parliament).

- 2.57. Alternatively, parliamentary roles can be elected by student members of the parliament by secret ballot with members submitting their vote by writing it on a slip of paper and placing it in a cardboard ballot box. In this case, the supervising teacher performs the roles of Speaker and Clerk until the positions are filled by student members.
- 2.58. After the positions have been elected, the next item of business should be discussion and acceptance of the school parliament constitution and the supervising teacher may be required to prepare a draft constitution and explain how it would operate. Members could propose amendments or discuss areas that they aren't sure about as part of this preliminary step.
- 2.59. It may be prudent that no further business is undertaken at the first meeting to allow members time to read and understand the constitution and also to meet with their representative groups (class or year) at least once.

A TYPICAL SITTING DAY

- 2.60. The parliament determines its own schedule for sitting dates and times. The sitting agenda sets out the order for business items will be debated (Appendix 2). Sitting days are structured so that debate on bills is the first order of business after the opening and acceptance of minutes. Once this has been completed the next order of business is questions and reports. Debate on any topic can be adjourned to another sitting day if more time is needed to consider an issue, this should be noted in the minutes and remain an item on the agenda until a decision has been made. Schools can adjust the order of business to suit individual requirements.

SITTING PROCEDURES

- 2.61. The formal rules which govern the conduct of business in the parliament are known as standing orders, these are set out in Appendix 7. The members have the right to amend or change the standing orders which would be done through a majority vote in the school parliament.

COMMITTEES

- 2.62. Committees should be formed to help support the work of members in the parliament. All members who do not already have specific roles in the parliament can nominate to be on a committees to help implement the decisions of the parliament.
- 2.63. Committees could be established for the term of the school parliament, with the same members on each committee assisting a specific minister or the Leader of the Opposition. Alternatively a committee can be established for each planned activity and once that activity has been completed it ceases to operate.
- 2.64. Committees explore issues in greater detail outside of the parliament. This could include developing new bills to go before the parliament, investigating options for fundraising, holding meetings with students on specific projects to ensure student feedback is considered (for example what new sporting equipment students would like) and considering student participation in community events.

AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

- 2.65. The members have the right to amend the constitution, add new information or remove information that is no longer relevant.
- 2.66. Changing the constitution is an important item of business and in Australia has to be done by referendum. The school could adopt this model which requires all students voting on any proposed change to the school parliament constitution. Alternatively, it can be done in the school parliament through a debate and vote. As the founding document of the school parliament any additions, deletions or changes to the constitution needs to be passed by a two thirds majority of the members (rather than a simple majority). The support teacher should play a role in providing advice on any impacts of changing the school parliament constitution and can also provide feedback to the parliament from the school principal and/or executive if it is relevant to the proposed change.

RESOURCES

- 2.67. A number of school parliament resources have been attached as appendices. These include templates, examples and two chamber scripts. One script is a training script to provide students with a complete parliamentary procedure showing how the school parliament model operates and is based on a 30 minute sitting time (Appendix 8). The second script can be used on a regular basis to help the students with correct parliamentary procedure for the sittings of the school parliament (Appendix 9).

APPENDIX 1: FRAMEWORK FOR A SCHOOL PARLIAMENT CONSTITUTION

A guide to for the format of a school parliament constitution.

1. Name of your school parliament.
2. Aims and functions of the school parliament.
3. Members—dictates the number of members, who is eligible to stand for election, behavioural code of conduct and what happens if someone leaves.
4. Electing members—sets out how to nominate to be a candidate, campaigning guidelines, election timelines and conducting the vote.
5. Parliament roles and responsibilities—Sets out the school parliament positions and the responsibilities of each role.
6. Support teacher—sets out the responsibilities of the support teacher.
7. Parliamentary chamber—setting up the chamber for a parliamentary sitting.
8. School parliament sittings—sets out the operation of sittings including meeting frequency, quorums, agenda and minutes.
9. Sitting procedures—rules for the sitting.
10. Committees—responsibilities.
11. Amending the constitution.

APPENDIX 2: SITTING AGENDA TEMPLATE

School parliament name

Agenda

Meeting place and time

Order of Business

1. Open sitting.
2. Attendance (to verify quorum) and apologies.
3. Previous sitting minutes and business arising.
4. Bill introduction and debate (list bills to be dealt with).
5. Questions time for ministers.
6. Reports.
7. Close sitting.

APPENDIX 3: MINUTES TEMPLATE

Clerk/Deputy Clerk: _____
 Date: _____
 Sitting opened at: _____

Apologies:	
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Business from last sitting

Business:	
-----------	--

Bills

Bill introduced:	
By:	
Key points raised:	
Voting outcome	
Bill introduced:	
By:	
Key points raised:	
Voting outcome:	

Questions for Ministers

Questions:	
------------	--

Reports and tasks undertaken

Communication:	
Facilities	
Health and Safety:	
Environment:	
Sport:	
Fundraising:	

Members named by Speaker during sitting (if applicable)

Members named:	
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Sitting closed at: _____

APPENDIX 4: BILL TEMPLATE

[Name of the School parliament]

The [*name of*] Bill

A Bill for an Act [*what will the bill do*]

Clause 1: Aim of the bill and why it is necessary.

Clause 2: What is the program for the Bill (how will it operate)

Clause 3: How will the implementation of the bill be monitored.

Clause 4: Benefits from the successful implementation of the bill.

APPENDIX 5: BILL EXAMPLE

[Name of the School parliament]

THE SCHOOL WALKATHON BILL

A Bill for an Act to fundraise for school resources through a walkathon.

Clause 1: The aim of the bill is to raise additional funds for the school so that new sporting equipment, library books and a shade cloth over the playground equipment can all be purchased.

Clause 2: The School Walkathon Bill sets the date of the walkathon for week 7 of term 1 and requires students to obtain sponsorship for completing the walks. Kindergarten to year 2 students walk a 2 km course and years 3 to 6 walk a 3 km course. Teachers will set the course and be on checkpoints during the walk to ensure students safely navigate the correct route.

Clause 3: The success of the walkathon will be determined by the number of students participating (aim is for 80% participation) and if enough money is raised to make the purchases as outlined in clause 1.

Clause 4: The benefits of this bill are that teachers and students will have additional sporting equipment available to them, more books for reading and a sun safe playground due to the installation of shade cloth.

APPENDIX 6: TEMPLATE LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Principal

Name of Primary School

Address/contact details

To [name of principal]

We, the school parliament, have voted on the [*name of bill*], and agreed that:

The school needs [*what is the proposal*]

We believe that the school requires this because:

a)

b)

Explanation of the benefits and how the program would work

We look forward to hearing your feedback on the proposal outlined above,

[member name]

Speaker

On behalf of the [name of the school parliament]

APPENDIX 7: PARLIAMENTARY STANDING ORDERS (RULES)

1. Members wishing to address the Parliament should stand and wait for the Speaker to invite them to speak. The member remains standing while speaking and only that person speaks.
2. Members should address all comments directly to the Speaker, who should be referred to as “Mr Speaker” or “Madam Speaker”, accordingly.
3. Members shall remain in their seat in silence while the Speaker is addressing the Assembly.
4. Members shall refer to all other members as “Mr/Miss [surname]”.
5. Members may only debate matters that are relevant to the question before the Speaker.
6. Members shall not use any language which is disorderly or disrespectful of another member. Coarse language is not acceptable.
7. Members shall not interrupt another member, and may not converse or make any noise or disturbance while another member is speaking.
8. If a member is persistently disorderly they may be “named” by the Speaker who says, “I name “Mr/Miss [surname]”. If a member of the School parliament is named, the Clerk will record their name. If a member is named three times the Speaker will call on the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove that Member from the chamber. If a member is removed they cannot return for the remainder of the sitting and are unable to vote on any matters being considered by the parliament during that sitting.
9. Decision making may require discussion with the principal/staff, such matters can be adjourned to the next sitting where a final decision can be reached.
10. When proposals are voted on, the Clerk has to write down exactly what the proposal is and whether it is won or lost.
11. After debate, voting is conducted using a simple method of choosing “Aye” or “No”. The Speaker decides on the voices who has won the vote by saying either “I think the Ayes have it” OR “I think the Noes have it”.
12. If the result is doubtful or a member disagrees with the Speaker’s ruling there is a division, the vote goes to a show of hands and the Clerk counts the votes and records the results. The Clerk gives the result to the Speaker to announce.

APPENDIX 8: PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR A SITTING DAY

PARLIAMENT DAILY PROGRAM

An agenda template is provided in Appendix 2.

Each sitting day requires an agenda (also known as a daily program) to set out what will happen. A suggested meeting template is provided which follows the agenda template for order of conducting business.

1. Parliament opens
2. Minutes and business arising from the last sitting
3. Bills for debate
4. Ministers report and questions for ministers (on progress of undertakings after each report)
5. Discussion of new business including any tasks to be undertaken (class representatives can contribute to this discussion)
6. Parliament closes

Business can be reorganised depending on priorities, the teacher supervising along with Speaker, Clerk, Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition can decide and agree on any changes to the order of business.

SCHOOL PARLIAMENT SCRIPT

COMMENCEMENT OF A SITTING DAY

Explanatory notes: There is one ceremonial activity that takes place before the sitting begins. Firstly, all members stand in front of their seats. At the same time, the Deputy Clerk/Serjeant-at-Arms and Speaker stand outside the Chamber. The Serjeant-at-Arms carries the mace (if the school has one) over their right shoulder and leads the Speaker into the chamber. The Serjeant-at-Arms announces the Speaker, then places the Mace on a stand in front of the Clerks desk with the larger end facing the government before moving to their seat (remain standing). The Speaker does an acknowledgement to country to show respect for the Indigenous people of the ACT and allows for a short silence so that members can either pray or reflect prior to the commencement of the sitting.

All members are in the chamber, except for the Speaker and Serjeant-at-Arms, all members stand. Serjeant-at-Arms, carrying mace, and Speaker enter the chamber.

Serjeant-at-Arms **Members—the Speaker**

Serjeant-at-Arms places the mace on a stand, moves to their seat and remains standing.

Speaker At the beginning of this session of the Assembly I acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Ngunnawal people, the traditional owners. I respect their continuing culture and the unique contribution they make to the life of this area. Members, I would ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of [*name of school*].

Members please sit.

Speaker sits. All members and clerks sit.

Speaker Members the rules of the House must be obeyed. Clerk, please read out the rules.

Clerk stands.

Clerk Always stand up to speak.

Begin your speech with the words “Thank you Mr (or) Madam Speaker”.

Members should not interrupt each other.

The Speaker keeps order.

Clerk sits.

Speaker Members are there any apologies for this sitting day.

In the absence of a member notify the parliament, this can be done by any member, stand to make the apology.

Member Mr/Miss [*surname*] is absent from the parliament today.

Member sits.

Speaker Would the Clerk read the minutes from the previous sitting.

Clerk stands.

Clerk [*Read the main points discussed at the previous sitting*].

Clerk sits.

Speaker Is there any business arising from these minutes? At this time, all Members are free to query the content or accuracy of the minutes.

Members wishing to speak on the minutes stand, the Speaker calls on members by their surname.

Speaker Mr/Miss [*surname*]

Selected member remains standing, all other members sit.

Member Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker [*insert speech*]

Member sits when finished speaking.

REPEAT THIS PROCESS—until time expires or all members who wish to speak have spoken.

PASSING A BILL

Explanatory notes: The bill is presented on a sitting day and is called on by the Clerk. The Speaker calls on the minister/member to present their bill to the Assembly. Any member of the school parliament can present a bill, however it is most often done by the Chief Minister or a Minister.

Speaker: Clerk

Clerk stands and reads title of bill, sits again when finished.

Clerk: The [name of the] Bill—A Bill for an Act to [what does the bill do].

Clerk sits.

Speaker: Chief Minister

Chief Minister stands.

Chief Minister: Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker.

I present the [name of the] Bill which will [what does the bill do].

[insert any further speech notes as required]

I commend the bill to the Assembly and I move—That this bill be agreed to.

Chief Minister sits.

Speaker: The question is—That this bill be agreed, members must stand if they wish to contribute to the debate.

Members—Stand if you wish to speak to this debate, wait for the Speaker to call your name.

Speaker: Mr/Miss [surname]

All members sit, except for member called on by the Speaker.

Member: Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

[insert any further speech notes as required]

Member sits when finished speaking.

REPEAT THE PROCESS—until time expires or all members who wish to speak have spoken.

Speaker: The question is—That this bill be agreed to
Those of that opinion say “AYE” (*wait for members to say AYE*)
of the contrary “NO” (*wait for members to say NO*).

Speaker declares the result (*decide this on the voices*).

I think the AYES have it, the bill is passed

OR

I think the NOES have it, the bill is not passed.

Members can challenge the Speakers ruling on a vote. This is done by the member saying the following.

Member The Noes have it (*if the Speaker has said the Ayes have it*)

OR

The Ayes have it (*if the Speaker has said the Noes have it*).

DIVISION

In the Assembly bells would be rung, members not already in the chamber have a time limit to get there before the doors are locked, if they do not arrive before the doors are locked they are unable to participate in the vote.

Speaker: Division called for—The question is—That this bill be agreed—Those in favour of the bill raise your hands (*Clerk and Deputy Clerk to count and record Ayes*).

Speaker: Those against the bill raise your hands (*Clerk and Deputy Clerk to count and record Noes*).

Clerk and Deputy Clerk check they have counted the same number of votes for each, give results to Speaker.

Speaker: The result of the vote is AYES [number of yes votes],
NOES [number of no votes] so the bill is [passed/not passed].

Speaker

Clerk, are there other bills to be read? Please read the title of the next bill being presented.

REPEAT THE PROCESS—as above for all further bills to be considered.

QUESTION TIME

Explanatory notes: Members can ask questions of ministers—Stand if you wish to speak to ask a question, wait for the Speaker to call your name, remain standing and ask question. Members not selected sit again.

Members—Stand if you wish to speak to this debate, wait for the Speaker to call your name.

Speaker: Mr/Miss [*surname*]

All members sit, except for member called on by the Speaker.

Member: Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker
I would like to ask the Minister for [*insert minister's title followed by the question*]

Member sits when finished speaking.

Minister stands.

Minister: Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker
[*answer the question*]

Minister sits.

REPEAT THE PROCESS—as above for all questions.

REPORTS

Explanatory notes: Ministers are required to report to the parliament, the Speaker will call on each minister to present their report and indicate which task they will be completing before the next sitting. If required, to ensure meetings do not run too long, Ministers could be rostered to report every second or third meeting.

Speaker It is now time for reporting on tasks to be undertaken, I call on the Minister for [*area of responsibility*]

Minister stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking before the next sitting.

Minister for [*responsibility*] Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker [*insert speech*]

The task I will be completing before the next sitting is [the task to be completed].

Minister sits.

REPEAT THE PROCESS—as above for all ministers reporting.

Speaker I call on the Leader of the Opposition

Leader of the Opposition stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking before the next sitting.

Leader of the Opposition Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker [*insert speech*]

The task I will be completing before the next sitting is [the task to be completed].

Leader of the Opposition sits.

THE END OF A SITTING DAY

Speaker Members the parliament is now adjourned until (*date of next sitting if known*).

Clerk stands

Clerk Members please stand

Serjeant-at-Arms, carrying mace, and Speaker stand and leave the Chamber. Once they have left the room all other members are free to leave.

DIVISION RESULTS SHEET TEMPLATE

The question is—That this bill be agreed to

(Clerk and Deputy Clerk to complete by counting of raised hands when Speaker puts the question)

Ayes	Number in favour:
Noes	Number against:

The question is—That this bill be agreed to

(Clerk and Deputy Clerk to complete by counting of raised hands when Speaker puts the question)

Ayes	Number in favour:
Noes	Number against:

The question is—That this bill be agreed to

(Clerk and Deputy Clerk to complete by counting of raised hands when Speaker puts the question)

Ayes	Number in favour:
Noes	Number against:

The question is—That [insert what vote is for if not a bill]

(Clerk and Deputy Clerk to complete by counting of raised hands when Speaker puts the question)

Ayes	Number in favour:
Noes	Number against:

APPENDIX 9—TRAINING SCRIPT—SITTING DAY PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

COMMENCEMENT OF A SITTING DAY

All members are in the chamber, except for the Speaker and Serjeant-at-Arms, all members stand.

Serjeant-at-Arms, carrying mace (if school has one), and Speaker enter the chamber.

Serjeant-at-Arms Members—the Speaker

Serjeant-at-Arms places the mace on a stand, moves to their seat and remains standing.

Speaker At the beginning of this session of the Assembly I acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Ngunnawal people, the traditional owners. I respect their continuing culture and the unique contribution they make to the life of this area. Members, I would ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of [*name of school*].

Members please sit.

Speaker sits. All members and clerks sit.

Speaker Members the rules of the House must be obeyed. Clerk, please read out the rules.

Clerk stands.

Clerk Always stand up to speak.

Begin your speech with the words “Thank you Mr (or) Madam Speaker”.

Members should not interrupt each other.

The Speaker keeps order.

Clerk sits.

Speaker Members are there any apologies for this sitting day.

Absence of a member, stand to make the apology.

Member Miss Smith is absent from the parliament today.

Member sits.

Speaker Would the Clerk read the minutes from the previous sitting.

Clerk stands.

Clerk The Free Choice of Clothing Day Bill was introduced by the Minister for Fundraising and was passed by the parliament.

The Minister for Sport answered a question about the allocation of equipment at lunch break.

Task undertaken was to advertise the Free Choice of Clothing Day Bill to students which outlined voluntary participation through a gold coin donation. Money collected going to charity chosen by the school.

Clerk sits.

Speaker Is there any business arising from these minutes? At this time, all Members are free to query the content or accuracy of the minutes.

Members wishing to speak on the minutes stand, the Speaker calls on the member.

Speaker Minister for Fundraising

Minister stands.

Minister for Fundraising Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker. I would like to inform the parliament that the Free Choice of Clothing Day has been advertised though the school newsletter which has been given to all students.

Minister sits when finished speaking.

REPEAT THIS PROCESS—until time expires or all members who wish to speak have spoken.

PASSING OF A BILL

Speaker

Clerk

Clerk stands and reads title of bill, sits again when finished.

Clerk

The School Walkathon Bill—A Bill for an Act to fundraise for school resources through a walkathon.

Speaker

Chief Minister

Chief Minister stands.

Chief Minister

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker.

I present the School Walkathon Bill which will raise additional funds to be used to purchase new sporting equipment for use during sport classes, more books for the library and a new shade cloth over the junior playground to make it a sun safe area to play.

[insert any further speech notes as required]

I commend the bill to the Assembly and I move—That this bill be agreed to.

Chief Minister sits.

Speaker

The question is—That this bill be agreed, members must stand if they wish to contribute to the debate.

Members—Stand if you wish to speak to this debate, wait for the Speakers call your name.

Speaker

Mr/Miss [surname]

All member sit, except for member called on by the Speaker.

Member

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

[insert any further speech notes as required]

REPEAT THE PROCESS—until time expires or all members who wish to speak have spoken.

Speaker The question is—That this bill be agreed to
Those of that opinion say “*AYE*” [*wait for members to say AYE*]
of the contrary “*NO*” [*wait for members to say NO*].

Speaker declares result (for training purposes the Ayes are declared winners so a division can be demonstrated).

Speaker I think the AYES have it

Leader of the Opposition challenges the Speakers ruling. This is done by saying the following.

Leader of the Opposition The NOES have it

DIVISION

Speaker Division called for
The question is—That this bill be agreed—
Those in favour of the bill raise your hands
(*Clerk and Deputy Clerk to count and record Ayes*).

Speaker Those against the bill raise your hands (*Clerk and Deputy Clerk to count and record Noes*).

Clerk and Deputy Clerk check they have counted the same number of votes recorded on division result sheet, give results to Speaker (example provided).

Speaker The result of the vote is AYES 13, NOES 12 so the bill is passed.

Speaker Clerk, are there other bills to be read? Please read the title of the next bill being presented.

REPEAT THE PROCESS—as above for all further bills to be considered.

QUESTION TIME

Speaker

Mr/Miss [*surname*]

Leader of the Opposition stands to ask their question.

Leader of the Opposition

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

I would like to ask the Minister for the Environment about the school's involvement in the recent Clean Up Australia Day.

Leader of the Opposition sits.

Minister stands.

Minister for Environment

I thank the Member for the question. The school had 20 volunteers, a mixture of staff and students that participated in the event.

Minister sits.

REPEAT THE PROCESS—as above for all questions.

REPORTING

Speaker

It is now time for reporting and tasks to be undertaken, I call on the Minister for Communication

Minister for Communication and Media stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Minister for Communication

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker.

I have been maintaining the SRC display board and keeping classes informed about meeting times for parliament. I have one new matter to mention—the School Fun Day.

The task I will be completing before the next sitting is to assist the Minister for Fundraising to come up with ideas for materials (such as flyers) to help advertise the Fun Day. I will keep the parliament updated on this. Thank you.

Minister sits.

Speaker

I call on the Minister for Facilities

Minister for Facilities stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Minister for Facilities

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

I have been in the library and students have reported that there is not enough seats for students. The task I will be completing before the next sitting to organise a team of students to monitor use of seating in the library over a two week period. I will report back to parliament in our next session on this subject. Thank you.

Minister sits.

Speaker

I call on the Minister for Health and Safety

Minister for Health and Safety stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Minister for Health and Safety

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

I have been supervising the bubblers at the end of both recess and lunch breaks. I would like to confirm that all bubblers are working well and students are reporting any breakages or blockages. The task I will be completing before the next sitting to have a meeting in the coming week with the OH&S Committee. I will report back to Parliament in our next session on this subject. Thank you.

Minister sits.

Speaker

I call on the Minister for the Environment

Minister for the Environment stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Minister for the Environment Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

Clean Up Australia Day took place this past weekend on 5 March. We had 20 volunteers from the school contribute to this worthwhile event. Schools Tree Day will take place on 28 July.

The task I will complete before the next sitting is I will meet with the Schools Environment Committee this week to discuss planning for this event. I will report back to parliament in our next session on this subject. Thank you.

Minister sits.

Speaker

I call on the Minister for Sport

Minister for Sport stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Minister for Sport Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

I have been overseeing the sport store and report that it has been kept tidy with all gear returned to the correct place. The school require some replacement equipment - the replacement of one volleyball, 6 tennis balls and the purchase of a new cricket bat, since the other one has deteriorated.

The task I will be completing before the next sitting is to meet with the School Walkathon Committee to discuss funding for these items. Thank you.

Minister sits.

Speaker

I call on the Minister for Fundraising

Minister for Fundraising stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Minister for Fundraising

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker

The newly formed Fundraising Committee met last week to discuss the School Walkathon. Sponsorship forms need to be created after the bill has been approved by the school principal. These will need to be given to all students and we will ask the sport teachers to design a suitable course for students to complete.

The task I will assist with is the design of a sponsorship sheet for students.

With the Minister for Communication we plan to advertise the walkathon through the school's social media account. Thank you.

Minister sits.

Speaker

I call on the Leader of the Opposition

Leader of the Opposition stands to give their report and state which task they will be undertaking for the next parliamentary period (until the next sitting).

Leader of the Opposition

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker. Further to the Minister for Health and Safety's mention of the school bubblers—there have been reports of some uneven pavers around the bubblers due to root growth from nearby trees.

The task I will be completing before the next sitting is to liaise with the Parents and Citizens Committee representative to suggest removal and replacement of the uneven pavers to assure student safety. Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition sits.

THE END OF A SITTING DAY

Speaker

Members the parliament is now adjourned until 6 April.

Clerk stands.

Clerk

Members please stand.

Serjeant-at-Arms, carrying mace (if school has one), and Speaker stand and leave the Chamber. Once they have left the room all other Members are free to leave.