

MLA roles and responsibilities

This topic explainer explores the three main responsibilities of a Member of the Legislative Assembly and includes two classroom activities.

🎯 Learning goals

- Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are elected by the voters of the ACT
- MLAs have three core responsibilities: making, changing, and repealing laws; holding government accountable; and representing Canberrans

≡ Curriculum links

Year 4	AC9HS4K08
Year 5	AC9HS5K06
Year 6	AC9HS6K06

What is an MLA?

A Member of the Legislative Assembly (or MLA) is a person who has been elected to represent ACT residents about the key issues affecting their day-to-day lives like health, education, roads and the environment.

The ACT is divided up into 5 areas, called electorates, which are made up of roughly the same number of voters. Each electorate is represented by 5 MLAs, giving the ACT a total of 25 MLAs.

Every 4 years, people over the age of 18 in the ACT will vote for candidates to represent them. The 25 candidates that get the most votes become MLAs. Once elected, they join the Assembly and start their work.

What do MLAs do?

Members of the Legislative Assembly have three main responsibilities.

To make, change, and remove laws

One responsibility is to make new laws, change existing laws, or remove old laws. MLAs talk about and vote on bills – draft laws – for the ACT. Ideas for bills can come from lots of places such as from the MLAs, the community, groups that are interested in a topic, or from other states and territories.

To hold government accountable

Another responsibility is to hold the government accountable for what it does and how it spends public money. MLAs closely examine the work of the government by asking questions about the decisions that the government makes and how public money is spent.



While ministers are also members of the Legislative Assembly, they don't ask questions or investigate issues – instead, they are the ones answering the questions and taking responsibility for the government's actions.

To represent Canberrans

The final core responsibility is to represent the views and concerns of Canberrans. MLAs do this by talking with people across the ACT and listen to their concerns and ideas, raise important issues in the Assembly on behalf of the people of the ACT, and may support community initiatives such as petitions.

Classroom activities

There are two print-out worksheets associated with this topic available on our website:

- [Worksheet: **Who are my local members?** \(PDF 128KB\)](#)
- [Activity: **Get involved in your local parliament** \(PDF 164KB\)](#)

Other resources

There are a range of other helpful resources available on this topic, the best of which we have compiled below:

- [\[ACT\] Factsheet: **Members' roles and responsibilities** \(parliament.act.gov.au\)](#)
- [\[ACT\] Webpage: **Petitions open for signature** \(parliament.act.gov.au\)](#)
- [\[ACT\] Game: **MLA Dash** \(PDF 2.1MB\)](#)
- [\[ACT\] Webpage: **Committee inquiries open for comment** \(parliament.act.gov.au\)](#)
- [\[Federal\] Activity: **Start a petition** \(peo.gov.au\)](#)