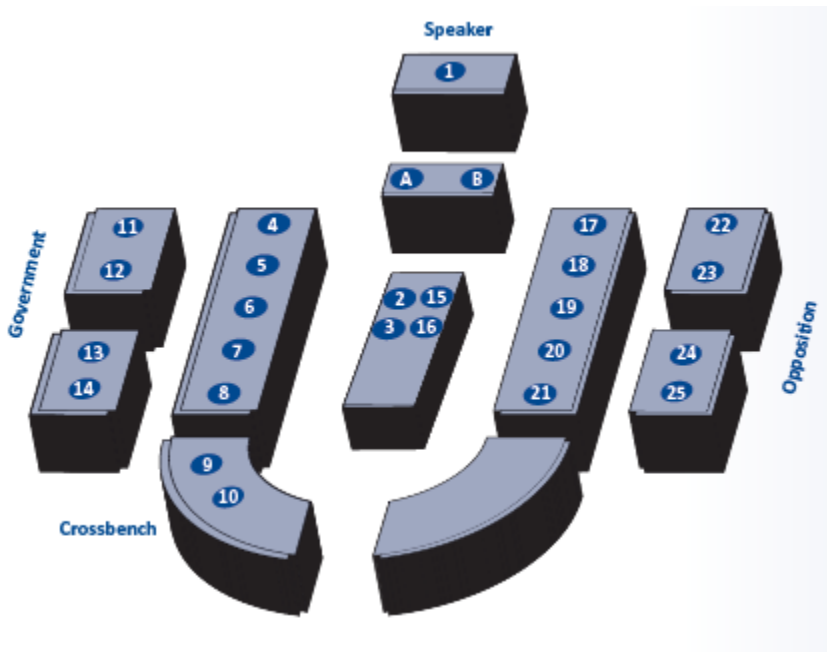


# Resource 2—MPI teacher notes

## Legislative Assembly for the ACT

### Chamber setup



### Key

1. Speaker

A-B. Clerk, Deputy Clerk/Serjeant-at-Arms

2-3. Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister

4-8. Ministers

9-10. Crossbench

11-14. Government backbenchers

15-16. Opposition Leader, Deputy Opposition Leader

17-25. Opposition members

The Legislative Assembly for the ACT has 25 members. There are five multi-member electorates in the ACT, each electorate is represented by five Members. Party representation in the Ninth Assembly is:

- 12 Australian Labor— Party Members
- 11 Canberra Liberal Members
- 2 ACT Greens Members

For the purposes of this role play to reflect the minority Government of the Ninth Assembly students should be divided so that there is 1 Speaker (who is also a member of the Government), 2 Clerks (who are not members), the Government has one Member less than a majority, the Cross Bench should have a minimum 2 members with the Opposition being formed from the remaining students. As an example for a class of 29 students they could be split as follows:

- 1 Speaker (also a government member)
- 1 Clerk and 1 Deputy Clerk (parliamentary roles, not members)
- 12 government members (includes Speaker), 11 opposition members and 4 cross bench members

This represents a 27 Member Assembly (Clerk positions are not members) and allows the Cross bench to hold the balance of power so they can vote with either side (depending on their decision) to pass a bill with a majority vote which in this example is 14 Members.

## Roles

### The Speaker

The Speaker is an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). They are elected to the position of Speaker on the first sitting day of a new Assembly. The Speaker controls the proceedings in the Assembly and is responsible for ensuring that members follow the 280 standing orders (rules) that govern the operation of the Assembly.

Any members wanting to speak during debate must stand up and say “Mr/Madam Speaker” and the Speaker will call on them. Members who are speaking must address the Speaker, not other members. To maintain order, if more than one member is talking at the same time, the Speaker will often say “order members”.

### Clerks

There is a Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Clerk Assistant in the Legislative Assembly, they work for the Assembly and are not elected. They know all the standing orders and provide advice to the Speaker on sitting days to help them enforce the standing orders. They also provide independent and impartial parliamentary advice to the Speaker and Members of the Assembly.

The clerks are experts on procedure and keep the official record of sitting days, announce each order of business, time debates, ring division bells and count the votes.

### Serjeant-At-Arms

The Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is also the Serjeant-at-Arms.

The Serjeant-at-Arms announces the Speaker, carries the mace in at the start of a sitting day and places it on the stand. Under the Speaker’s direction they are sometimes required to escort members from the chamber who have been acting in a disorderly manner.

## Chief Minister

The Chief Minister is the head of the government, the party with the largest number of members in the Assembly usually forms government.

The Chief Minister can appoint up to eight members to be ministers (they are known as the executive).

For the purposes of this role play the government is in favour of the bill. Government ministers and back bench members wishing to speak need to think of reasons for supporting this bill.

## Leader of the Opposition

The Leader of the Opposition is the head of the party that forms opposition, this is usually the party with the second largest number of members in the Assembly.

The role of the opposition is to scrutinize the government and opposition members are shadow ministers as they reflect (shadow) the portfolios of the government ministers.

The opposition party does not always oppose government bills, sometimes it agrees with the government to help pass legislation in the Assembly.

For the purposes of this role play the opposition is against the bill, members of the opposition need to think of reasons against the bill.

## Cross Bench

The members on the crossbench are made up of minor party members and independents who do not belong to the major parties that formed the government and the opposition.

Cross bench members hold the balance of power when there is a minority government. The ACT has only had one majority Government since self-government began in 1989.

For the purposes of this role play the cross-bench members need to decide their position and think of reasons either for or against the bill depending on their decision, as they will hold the balance of power on this bill.

## Chamber

Members usually show support for speeches that they agree with by saying "Hear Hear"

Members often show their opposition to speeches by saying such things as "No", or "Rubbish".

## Matter of Public Importance—Topic examples

Note: Only 3 topics are needed for the role play. Below are some suggestions you can choose, or you can design your own MPI's to discuss based on class/school interest:

The importance of recycling single use plastic in the ACT.

Submitted by:.....

The importance of banning all single use plastic bags in the ACT.

Submitted by:.....

The importance of reducing plastic straw use in the ACT.

Submitted by:.....