

Parliamentary Parlance – A Glossary of Terms

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| Absentee voting | Voters who cannot attend a polling place within their own electorate vote at another polling place in Western Australia on election day. |
| Absolute majority | In electoral terms, 50% plus one of the valid votes cast. In a house of parliament, a majority of the membership of the house, whether they are present or not e.g. an absolute majority in the Legislative Assembly is 30 (out of a membership of 59) (see also Simple majority). |
| Accountable | Able to be called on to explain one's actions. Ministers are accountable to parliament for actions they take while in office. |
| Act (of Parliament) | A law made by parliament. A bill which has passed all three readings in each house and has been assented to by the Governor. |
| Acting President | A member of the Legislative Council who chairs the debate in the absence of the President (see President). |
| Acting Speaker | A member of the Legislative Assembly who chairs the debate in the absence of the Speaker (see Speaker). |
| Address | A formal message to the Governor or to the Queen by a house of parliament stating the view of the house or making a request. The message is often in answer to the Governor's speech on the opening of a session of parliament (see Address-in-Reply), but may also be a message of congratulations, sympathy or farewell, or a request that the Governor, as a constituent part of the parliament, perform a particular action. |
| Address-in-Reply | The formal answer by each house to the Governor's speech made at the opening of each session of parliament. |
| Adjourn | To put off, postpone or defer. |
| Adjournment | The suspension of a sitting of a house to the following or some later day. The postponement of further debate on the subject immediately before the house. |
| Adjournment Debate | An opportunity at the end of each sitting day of the Legislative Council when members make speeches about any subject on the motion to end the sitting. |
| Administer | To run, look after or have charge of. |
| Administration | The running of public affairs or government. The people who run a business or government. |
| Adult Suffrage | The right of eligible adults to vote in elections. |
| Advice | Information or an opinion someone gives you to help you decide what to do. |
| Adviser | Someone who gives you advice to help you decide what to do. |
| Amendment | A change to a bill, an Act or a motion before the house. |
| Another Place | A term sometimes used in one chamber of a two-chamber parliament to refer to the other chamber. |
| Appropriation Bill | A bill which, when passed by parliament, will allow the government to spend money it has gathered from the community through taxes and charges. Also known as 'the Budget'. |
| Assent | To agree or to approve. The Governor assents to bills after they have been passed by the two houses of parliament (see Royal Assent). |
| Attorney General | The chief law officer of the government and the minister responsible for the management of legal affairs. |

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| Auditor-General | An officer appointed by the Governor, on the advice of the Executive Council, to inspect the accounts of departments and statutory authorities in terms of their parliamentary appropriations, and then report to the Parliament. |
| Australian Labor Party | The oldest political party in Australia, formed nationally in 1902, and given its present name in 1918. Along with the Liberal Party, one of the two major parties in Australia. |
| Ayes | The collective vote of members in a house of parliament who support a proposal. The word used for voting 'yes' in parliament. |

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| Backbench(er) | Those members of parliament who are not ministers, shadow ministers or Presiding Officers. The seats where such members sit. |
| Balance of Power | The ability of an independent or a minority party/group to decide an issue in a vote when no party or coalition or 'alliance' has a majority of members. |
| Ballot | The process by which a choice is made. How votes are gathered. The vote itself. |
| Ballot Box | The box into which voters put their ballot papers. |
| Ballot Paper | A piece of paper that lists the names of candidates wanting to be elected, on which the voter marks the name of the person or persons they want elected. |
| Bar (of the Legislative Council or of the Legislative Assembly) | A brass barrier inside the main entrance to each chamber and across the space between benches leading to the floor of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. Members can speak to their respective chambers only from within the area defined by the bar, and no one who is not a member of that house may enter that area during a sitting except by invitation. |
| Bells | Bells that ring to call members into the chambers at the beginning of a meeting; because a vote is about to be taken; or because there are not enough members in the chamber (see Quorum). |
| Bicameral | From the Latin <i>bi</i> , meaning 'two', and <i>camera</i> , meaning 'chambers' or 'rooms'. Having two houses or chambers, especially of a law-making body. Western Australia's Parliament is bicameral because it has an upper and a lower house. |
| Bill | A proposal for a new law (or statute) which has been introduced into parliament but has not yet been passed. If passed and granted Royal Assent, a bill becomes an Act. |
| Bipartisan | Representing or supported by two major parties. |
| Black Rod | The symbol of office of the Usher of the Black Rod. The staff of office which was carried before the Sovereign. The Black Rod has long been seen as a symbol of authority. It is placed on the Table of the Legislative Council, before the President, when the Legislative Council is in session. |
| Blue Copy | A version of an Act with proposed bill amendments incorporated. |
| Blue-Ribbon (electorate) | An electorate where a majority of voters usually vote for the same member or party, making it a safe seat for that member or party. |

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| Bound volume of statutes | A copy of each Act for the year bound into several volumes including an index. |
| Budget | From the French <i>bougette</i> , meaning a 'small pouch for money'. A budget is a plan placed before parliament every year, by the Treasurer, which shows what money the government expects to receive and how the government wants this money to be spent. |
| Budget Bills | Bills which allow the government to spend money. There are two main bills every year – the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent Bill and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital Bill (see also Appropriation Bill). |
| Business Program | In the Legislative Council, a list indicating the proposed items of business to be dealt with that day. |
| By-election | A special election held between general elections to fill the seat of a member of the Legislative Assembly who has died or resigned. |
| By-law | A rule or regulation. |
| By leave | With the permission of every member present in the chamber. |

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| Cabinet | A group of senior members of the governing party known as ministers, who collectively are responsible for policy development and implementation, and individually head the various departments. They meet regularly to make important decisions. |
| Cabinet government | A system of government in which the most important decisions are made by cabinet ministers, who are members of parliament, who hold office subject to maintaining the confidence of the lower house. |
| Cabinet solidarity | A commitment by individual cabinet ministers to the position adopted by the majority of cabinet. |
| Campaign | The period before an election in which parliamentary candidates and parties seek to win voters' support. |
| Candidate | Someone who stands for election for parliament. |
| Cast a vote | On election day, the process of choosing a candidate or candidates by filling in a ballot paper. |
| Casting vote | A vote exercised by the Presiding Officer only when the votes for and against a proposal are equal. |
| Casual vacancy | A vacancy in the Legislative Council that is caused when a MLC dies or resigns before his or her term has expired. |
| Caucus | The meeting of the parliamentary members of a political party. The members of parliament belonging to a particular political party, usually used in relation to the Australian Labor Party. |
| Censure motion | A motion moved in either house which is very critical of, and which seeks to attach blame to, a minister, another member, or the government. |
| Chair | The seat in which the Presiding Officer sits in the chamber. The member presiding in the chamber or in a committee. |
| Chairman of Committees | An elected member who presides when the Legislative Council forms itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a bill in detail. The Chairman of Committees also holds the title of Deputy President. |
| Chamber | The meeting room of a house of parliament. A law-making body. |

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| Citizen | From the Anglo-Norman word <i>citezein</i> . This is based on the Latin <i>civitas</i> , meaning 'city'. A citizen is an inhabitant of a state or country who has certain rights and responsibilities. |
| City | From the Latin <i>civitas</i> , meaning 'city'. A city in Western Australia must have a population of more than 30,000 people for three years, more than half of whom must live in an urban area. If the district is not in the metropolitan area, a city needs more than 20,000 inhabitants, more than half of whom must be living in an urban area. |
| Clause | A numbered provision in a bill. Once a bill becomes an Act, a clause is known as a 'section'. |
| Clerk | The senior permanent official of each house of parliament who advises on parliamentary procedure and records the decisions of the house, and is the administrative head of the house's support services. |
| Clerk of the Parliaments | In Western Australia, this role is historically undertaken by the Clerk of the Legislative Council. The Clerk of the Parliaments has additional responsibilities to fulfil, including certifying bills for the Governor to give the Royal Assent. |
| Close of the Poll | The time at which voting ends on the day of an election. Currently in Western Australia the polls close at 6.00 p.m. |
| Closure | A way of ending debate and causing a vote to be taken straight away on the matter being discussed, even though some members may still wish to speak (see also Gag). |
| Coalition | The joining together of two or more groups or parties, usually to form a government or opposition. |
| Coalition Government | A government formed from more than one political party. |
| Coat of Arms | Official symbols used by families, cities and states. |
| Code of Conduct | A specific expression of required behaviour. On 28 August 2003 the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia adopted a code of conduct for its members. |
| Cognate debate | A debate in which two or more related bills are discussed at the same time. |
| Colony | A settlement in a new country politically connected with its parent state. |
| Committee | A group of members of parliament that considers matters referred to it, and reports its findings and recommendations to parliament. |
| Committee of the Whole | A stage in the passage of legislation in the Legislative Council. Occurs after the second reading stage, where members consider each clause of a bill, and have the opportunity to propose amendments. |
| Common law | Law based on custom or court decisions, as distinct from statute law. Law that has developed and continues to evolve in the courts. |
| Commonwealth | The people of a nation or state. A group of countries or peoples united by a common interest. The group of Australian states and territories that together make up the Commonwealth of Australia. |
| Compulsory Enrolment | The legislative requirement for eligible, Australian electors to enrol in order to vote in all federal and state elections. |
| Compulsory Voting | The legislative requirement for eligible, Australian electors to vote in all federal and state elections. |
| Concurrent Power (of the Australian Constitution) | A power which, under the Australian Constitution, may be exercised by both the Commonwealth and the States (see also Exclusive Power and Residual Power). |

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| Conference of Managers | A meeting of representatives of both houses of parliament to discuss an issue on which the houses do not agree. |
| Confidence | The support of more than half the members of the Legislative Assembly for the government, which may be shown by voting on a particular major issue. |
| Congress (USA) | The national law-making body of the United States of America, consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. |
| Conscience vote | A vote in parliament in which members are free to vote according to their own judgement or beliefs, and not necessarily according to the guidelines, policies or decisions of their political party. |
| Consideration in Detail | A stage in the passage of legislation in the Legislative Assembly. Occurs after the second reading stage. During consideration in detail members consider each clause of a bill, and have the opportunity to propose amendments. |
| Constituency | The electoral division or area, or the people in it, which a member of parliament represents. |
| Constituent | Someone who votes, or lives, in an electoral district or region which a member of parliament represents. |
| Constitution | From the Latin <i>constitutio</i> , meaning ‘arrangement’ or ‘order’. A constitution is a basic set of rules by which a country or state is governed. Australia’s Constitution is set out in the Commonwealth of Australia <i>Constitution Act</i> . There is no single document that contains the Western Australian Constitution; however, the main constitutional statutes include the <i>Constitution Act 1889</i> and the <i>Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899</i> . |
| Constitutional Convention | An unwritten rule or practice, or an established custom, relating to the operation of a constitution. A meeting called to consider or draw up a constitution. The last Constitutional Convention held in Australia was in 1998, to consider whether or not Australia should become a republic. |
| Constitutional Monarchy | A country which has a monarch, and whose powers are limited by a constitution. |
| Contempt | Disobedience to the authority or orders of a house, or interference with or obstruction of its work or the work of its members. |
| Crossbench | One of a set of seats for members of parliament who belong to neither the government nor the opposition parties i.e. seats for minor parties and independents. |
| Cross the Floor | To vote against the stated position of a party for which a member was elected. |
| Crown | The formal term for Her Majesty the Queen, used especially in the context of the Queen exercising Her legal powers. |
| Crown privilege | A special exemption claimed by ministers which may allow some important papers to be kept secret (now usually called ‘public interest immunity’). |
| Customs duties | Taxes or charges placed on imported goods. |

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| Deadlock | When a complete impasse is reached in a parliamentary debate, or when both houses fail to agree on an issue. |
| Debate | A formal discussion in a house on a bill or other topic in which different views are put forward. |

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| Declaration of Poll | An announcement of the results of voting at an election. The end of the electoral process. |
| Delegated Legislation | Subordinate or secondary law made under the authority of an Act of Parliament. As parliament delegates limited power to other bodies and persons to make delegated legislation, such as regulations, orders, determinations and rules, it does not have to go through the same stages in both houses as other legislation (see also Disallowance). |
| Deliberative vote | The normal vote of members when a question is put, as opposed to the Speaker and President who only cast a vote when the votes are equal. |
| Democracy | From two Greek words, <i>demos</i> - the people, and <i>kratein</i> -to rule. Democracy is a way of governing a country in which the people elect representatives to form a government on their behalf. A country with such a government. An idea that everyone in a country has equal rights, regardless of wealth, education, gender, race, or ethnicity. In a modern sense, a system of government where the power of the people resides in representative structures. |
| Department / Ministry | A section of the public service that is headed by a minister, and is responsible for administering a particular area of government. For example, the Department of Health is responsible for all the health agencies in Western Australia. |
| Deposit | Candidates must pay a deposit to the Electoral Commission when they nominate for a seat. Their deposit is refunded if they receive 4% or more of the valid first preference votes. |
| Determination | Authoritative decision, rule or arrangement. |
| Disallowance | The vetoing of delegated legislation by either house of parliament, which has the effect of repealing it. |
| Dissolution | To bring to an end the life of the Legislative Assembly and to make a new election necessary. |
| Division | A formal vote in the parliament, heralded by the ringing of bells, whereby members separate into the 'ayes' on the right of the Chair, or 'noes' on the left, to have their votes recorded. |
| Division of Powers | The constitutional allocation of powers and functions between a national parliament and government and state parliaments and governments, which forms the basis of a federal system of government. |
| Donkey Vote | A vote where a voter appears to make no choice among the candidates, but numbers preferences for candidates in the order in which they are listed on the ballot paper (see Preferential Voting). |
| Dorothy Dix Question | A pre-arranged question asked of a minister in parliament, usually by a member of the minister's own party, which allows the minister to give a prepared reply. Dorothy Dix questions usually allow the minister to portray his/her actions or the actions of a department in a favourable way. Dorothy Dix was a columnist in America whose advice on love and marriage was given in response to pre-planned questions and was supplied simultaneously to magazines and newspapers around the world. |

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| Election | The method by which citizens select their representatives for the parliament. |
| Elector | A person entitled to vote in an election or referendum. |

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| Electoral District | The name given to the geographical area that comprises a Legislative Assembly electorate. There are 59 electoral districts in Western Australia, each represented by one member of the Legislative Assembly. |
| Electoral Region | The name given to the geographical area that comprises a Legislative Council electorate. From May 2009 there are six electoral regions in Western Australia, each represented by six members of the Legislative Council. |
| Electoral Roll | The official list of eligible persons who may vote in a state election, which is updated on a regular basis. |
| Electoral system | The structures and processes necessary to hold an election including the electoral laws, system of appointment, redistribution and voting. |
| Electorate | The area that a member of parliament represents. All of the people who live in an area represented by a member of parliament. |
| Enabling (of an Act or Bill) | Allowing something to be done which would otherwise not be permissible. |
| Enactment | The point at which an Act of Parliament becomes law. |
| Endorsement | A person who, in the pre-selection process, is chosen (endorsed) by a political party/group to stand as a candidate in an election. |
| Enfranchisement | Giving to an individual or class of persons the right to vote in elections. |
| Entrenched clause | A section of a constitution or legislation which cannot be repealed or amended, unless by a special process, such as approval by an absolute majority of the members of each house of the parliament and a referendum. |
| Estimates | The sums of money which the government proposes it will need to provide works and services during a financial year. |
| Estimates Committee | Parliamentary committees which meet to examine government spending proposals. |
| Exclusive Power (of the Australian Constitution) | The sole right, given by the Constitution, of the Federal Parliament, as opposed to state parliaments, to legislate on certain subjects; for example, the power to make laws for the whole country on customs and excise duties (see also Concurrent Power and Residual Power). |
| Executive | The group of people from the governing party (ministers) who make policy and control government departments, and who are answerable to the parliament for the way they run government (see also Executive Council). |
| Executive Council | The chief executive authority of the government, comprising the ministry with the Governor presiding, which formalises the decisions of cabinet. |
| Executive Power | One of the three powers, along with the legislative power (parliament) and judicial power (courts). The branch of government which carries out or administers the laws. |
| Explanatory Memorandum | A paper which explains the purpose and details of bills, usually in a simple and non-technical way. |

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| Federal | From the Latin <i>foedus</i> , meaning a 'treaty', 'agreement', 'alliance', or 'league'. Having to do with the national parliament or government rather than state parliaments or governments. |
| Federalism | A system of government in which a written constitution distributes formal authority between a central government and regional (states, provinces, cantons) governments, as well as the process of this system. |

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| Federation | The forming of a nation by the joining of a number of states (colonies) which give up some of their powers and responsibilities to a national government. In Australia, the creation of a single nation in 1901 by the joining together of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania. |
| Filibuster | The use of long speeches or other tactics in parliament to delay deliberately a vote or decision. |
| Financial Initiative (of the Crown) | The rule that only the government can begin the process of setting or increasing taxes or of making an appropriation that draws on public funds. |
| Financial Interest | See Pecuniary Interest. |
| Financial Power (of the Parliament) | The power of parliament to approve all expenditure proposals by the government. |
| Financial year | A 12-month period, usually 1 July to 30 June, at the end of which a government or company balances its accounts and reports on them. |
| First-past-the-post | A way of voting where the candidate who gets the largest number of votes wins, even if it is less than half the votes cast. |
| First reading | The first of the stages that a bill must go through in order to become an Act. Also known as the initiation of the bill. The Clerk reads the full title of the bill out loud, usually straight after it is introduced into the house. |
| Fixed term | A term of office with a defined beginning and end. |
| Floor (of the Chamber) | The area containing MLAs' or MLCs' seats and the area in between, in the chambers of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. |
| Franchise | A word of French origin, meaning 'free'. Today it means a citizen's right to vote. |
| Freedom of Information | The principle that citizens should have a right to see most government papers and reports, particularly those which relate to their personal affairs. |
| Frontbench(er) | A member of the ministry or opposition shadow cabinet who occupies the front seats of the chamber, on the right and left of the Presiding Officer's chair respectively. The seats where such members sit. |

Gg

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| Gag | Technically known as the 'closure', the procedure for closing discussion in a house when some members still wish to speak. |
| General Election | The required, periodic election held for all of the state's electorates after the Legislative Assembly has been dissolved by the Governor. |
| Gerrymander | The drawing of the boundaries of electorates in a way which gives one political group an unfair advantage in elections by maximising its potential vote. |
| Government | Based on the Latin word <i>gubernare</i> , 'to steer'. The term 'government' is a general one, which is used to describe both the group and body that has power and the system for making and enforcing decisions. In other words, it means the whole system for ruling part or all of a country. The majority political party or coalition / alliance of parties enjoying the support of the Legislative Assembly. |
| Government backbencher | A member of parliament who belongs to the governing party or parties, but who is not a minister. |

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| <i>Government Gazette</i> | An official government publication which gives information about government matters and makes government announcements including proclamations. |
| Governor | From the Latin <i>gubernare</i> , 'to steer'. The representative of the Monarch who has wide formal powers under the Western Australian Constitution as head of the Executive Council. |
| Governor-General | The representative of the Queen in Australia at the federal level. The federal equivalent of the Western Australian Governor. |
| Green Paper | A preliminary discussion document, issued in advance of the formation of government policy (see also White Paper). |
| Greens WA | Formed on 1 January 1990, a merger of the WA Green party and the Green Earth Alliance. |
| Grievance | A matter of concern. In the Legislative Assembly, grievances are heard once a week, where four members raise matters of concern and a minister replies to each. |
| Guillotine | A procedure which sets time limits on the passage of a bill or motion. |

Hh

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| Hansard | The printed record of members' speeches in parliament. The section and its staff who record, edit, and produce the written record. |
| Hearing (of a Committee) | A meeting of a parliamentary committee for the purpose of taking oral evidence. |
| High Court (of Australia) | The court set up under the Australian Constitution to decide matters arising under the Constitution, and to hear appeals from the supreme courts of the states and other federal courts. |
| Honourable | The title given to the Speaker and President, Premier, ministers and all incumbent upper house members. |
| House of Assembly | The name of the lower house of the Tasmanian and South Australian Parliaments. |
| House of Commons | The lower house of the British Parliament, located at the Palace of Westminster. The House of Commons is the House in which the government is formed. |
| House of Lords | One of two Houses of Parliament in the United Kingdom, comprising hereditary, appointed and elected members. The House of Lords has very limited power compared to the lower house, the House of Commons. |
| House of Representatives | The name of the lower house of the Australian Federal Parliament. |
| House of Review | A name often used to refer to an upper house of a bicameral parliament, meaning a house which provides a second look or a close re-examination of matters considered in the other house. The Legislative Council is often described as the house of review for the Western Australian Parliament. |
| How-to-Vote Card | A card or piece of paper distributed at an election by a political party or candidate showing a voter how the party or candidate would prefer the voter to vote. |

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| Immunity | The protection of members of parliament and others from civil or criminal action in relation to their participation in parliamentary proceedings, and the protection of parliamentary proceedings from impeachment or question in the courts (see also Parliamentary Privilege). |
| In camera | In private or in secret. |
| Independent | A member of parliament who does not belong to a political party. |
| Informal vote | In an election, a voting paper which has not been marked in accordance with the instructions on the ballot paper and is deemed invalid. |
| Initiate (a Bill) | To originate a bill in either house of parliament. |
| In order | In accordance with the rules, in a correct form or style, as required by parliamentary procedure. |
| Inquiry | An investigation by a parliamentary committee. |
| Interjection | A remark made to interrupt, or respond to, a point during a speech. |
| Interpretation Act | An Act of Parliament which gives guidance as to the meaning of expressions used in other Acts and which gives details of procedures to be followed under other Acts. |
| Introduce (a Bill) | To bring in and formally present a bill to a house for future consideration. |

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| Joint Committee | A committee made up of members of both houses of parliament |
| Joint Sitting | Both houses of parliament sitting together to make a decision. For example, a joint sitting is held when the parliament needs to elect a new Senator (see Senate). In Western Australia, a joint sitting takes place in the Legislative Council Chamber. |
| Judicial Power | The power to interpret or apply the law in particular cases; one of the three powers under the constitution, the others being legislative power (parliament) and executive power (executive). |
| Judiciary | The branch of government concerned with the administration of justice. |

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| Laid on the Table | A term used to denote the presentation of papers or items which are physically laid on the Table of the House. |
| Landslide | An easy win in an election. |
| Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council | The leader in the Legislative Council of the party or coalition/alliance of parties which has formed government in the Legislative Assembly. |
| Leader of the House | The minister who arranges and manages government business in the Legislative Assembly. |
| Leader of the Opposition | The leader of the party or coalition/alliance of parties which is the next largest after the government party in the Legislative Assembly, and which is comprised of members who do not support the government. |

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| Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council | The leader of the party which is the next largest after the government party in the Legislative Council, and which is made up of MLCs who do not support the government. |
| Leave (of the House) | The permission of all members present in the chamber at the time to do something which otherwise could not be done at that time or in that way (see also By leave). |
| Legislation | A law or set of laws. |
| Legislative Assembly | The lower house of the Western Australian Parliament. The house where the government is formed. Also known as the 'house of government'. |
| Legislative Council | The upper house of the Western Australian Parliament. Also known as the 'house of review'. |
| Legislative power | The power to make and change laws; one of three powers under the constitution, the others being judicial power (courts) and executive power (executive). |
| Legislative process | The activity of parliament in debating, scrutinising and enacting statutes. |
| Legislature | The law-making body of a country or a state, invested with the power of making, amending and repealing laws. |
| Letters Patent (of the Governor) | An official royal document giving the Governor authority to perform certain acts or duties. |
| Liberal Party of Australia | A party founded in 1944 by Sir Robert Menzies and others, which developed from the Liberal Party of 1909, the Nationalist Party of 1917 and the United Australia Party of 1931. The Liberal Party is one of the two major parties in Australia. |
| Lieutenant-Governor | The acting or deputy Governor of a state. |
| Life (of a Parliament) | The period of time from the first meeting of a Legislative Assembly to its dissolution or expiry. |
| Lobby | Attempting to get support for a particular cause. |
| Local Government | The management of the affairs of a shire, municipality or town, by people who are elected by residents of that area. The people who make up such a management group, called a council. |
| Long title (or title of a bill) | The full title of a bill which sets out briefly its purpose or scope. |
| Lower House | A house of a bicameral parliament, usually having more members than the upper house, and whose members usually represent electorates with similar numbers of voters. The lower house is the house in which the government of the day is formed. The lower house of the Western Australian Parliament is the Legislative Assembly. |

Mm

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| Mace | The symbol of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia and its Speaker. Once a weapon of war shaped like a club, and the symbol of Royal authority. The Mace is carried into and from the chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms. |
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| Magna Carta | Latin words meaning ‘Great Charter’. In the Magna Carta, King John was forced to grant many rights to the nobles in England in 1215. |
| Maiden Speech | The first speech in parliament by a newly-elected member. Nowadays often known as an ‘Inaugural Speech’. |
| Malapportionment | The term used in an electoral system which incorporates a weighting or bias usually on the basis of large differences in the number of eligible voters in electorates. |
| Mandate | The authority assumed by a party winning government, to implement policies which were the subject of an election campaign; a commission to act for another. |
| Marginal seat | A seat that is not considered ‘safe’ because the party or person who holds the seat only does so by a small margin. Often judged at less than 56% of the two-party preferred vote. |
| Matter of Public Interest (MPI) | A short, sharp debate on an issue of public importance in the Legislative Assembly. MPIs are generally introduced by the opposition and run for a total of 1 hour and 5 minutes. |
| Message | The most common form of official written communication between the houses, usually delivered by the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. |
| Minister | A member of parliament who is a member of the executive (government), and who is in charge of a government department. A member of the cabinet. |
| Ministerial Responsibility | A minister's collective responsibility, as a member of the cabinet, and individual responsibility, as the head of a department, to the parliament and through it, the people. |
| Minority government | Government by a party or coalition of parties that does not have a majority of members in the Legislative Assembly in its own right and therefore has to rely on the support of independents and members of other parties to retain or form government. |
| Minor party | Political parties which attract only limited electoral support and gain relatively few seats. |
| Minutes of Proceedings | The official daily record of the Legislative Council's proceedings. |
| MLA | A member of the Legislative Assembly. |
| MLC | A member of the Legislative Council. |
| Monarch | A king, queen, emperor, or ruler. Sometimes, too, a monarch is called a sovereign. Monarchy originally meant ‘the rule of one’, though the word has now become attached to a constitution with a hereditary head of state with the title of King, Queen, or Emperor. |
| Money Bill | A bill which appropriates revenue or moneys or imposes any form of taxation. |
| Motion | An idea or proposal put forward for consideration, debate and decision. |
| MP | A member of either house of parliament. |
| Multi-Member Electorate | An electorate that is represented in parliament by more than one member; for example, a Legislative Council region represented by six members. |

Nn

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| Naming a Member | A declaration by the Presiding Officer whereby a member who obstructs the house business, or disobeys a ruling, can be named, and subsequently suspended from the proceedings for a period of time. |
| Nation | A body of people with a common territory, similar beliefs and ways of living. |

Parliamentary Parlance – A Glossary of Terms

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| National Party (Nationals) | Originally known as the Country Party. First had members elected to the WA Parliament at the 1914 State Election. Renamed the National Party in 1975; and the Nationals in 2004. The National Party often forms coalitions or alliances with the Liberal Party in order to be a part of the government or opposition. |
| No confidence | A means by which a house expresses dissatisfaction with the performance of a government or a minister. |
| Noes | The votes of members in a house who vote 'no'. |
| Notice of Motion | A declaration of intent to the house by a member to either move a motion or introduce a bill on a specified day. Notices are printed in the notice paper and circulated before each sitting of the house. |
| Notice Paper | An official house document detailing all the business before the house, and includes notices and orders of the day. |

Oo

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| Oath (or Affirmation) | A declaration made by members of parliament using God's name, a religious deity, or which may be religiously neutral, stating that they will be loyal to the Queen and / or faithfully serve the people of Western Australia. Members may make an affirmation instead of an oath. No member may sit or vote in the parliament nor a minister or parliamentary secretary assume their post until that member has taken either the oath or affirmation of allegiance. |
| Ombudsman | Officially known as the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations. The Ombudsman's main task is to carry out independent and impartial investigations of complaints relating to 'matters of administration'. |
| Opening Speech | A speech by the Queen, or her representative, the Governor, in which the reasons for the calling together of parliament are given, the affairs of the state are reviewed and the government's plans for new laws are outlined. |
| Opposition | The second largest party or coalition of parties after the government majority party, which shadows the ministry and can provide an alternative government. |
| Opposition Backbencher | A member of parliament who belongs to the opposition party, but who is not a shadow minister. |
| Order | Behaviour in the chamber in accordance with standing and sessional orders, which is maintained by the Presiding Officer. |
| Order of the Day | An item of business which the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council has ordered to be set down for discussion on a future sitting day. |

Pp

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| Pair | An informal arrangement between parties whereby two members from opposing sides of a house do not vote on a particular occasion, so that both can be absent without affecting the result of the vote. Pairs granted are recorded in Hansard if a formal vote is required. |
| Papers | The various reports and documents tabled during a parliamentary sitting. |
| Parliament | An assembly of elected representatives, usually having an upper and lower house which, with the Head of State (the Governor or Governor General), makes laws for the state or nation. |

Parliamentary Parlance – A Glossary of Terms

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| Parliamentary Committee | A group of parliamentarians usually from all parties, who are responsible for certain functions, or who investigate and report back to the parliament on particular issues, in most cases with findings and recommendations. |
| Parliamentary Counsel | The government department responsible for drafting bills. |
| Parliamentary Librarian | A permanent officer responsible for the Parliamentary Library, which provides information and research requirements for members and the various committees. |
| Parliamentary Privilege | The protection accorded to the parliament, its members, non-members participating in parliamentary proceedings and its publications in order to assure the right of freedom of speech and to allow members to carry out their parliamentary duties effectively. |
| Parliamentary procedure | The body of rules by which the parliament functions, that have evolved from traditional practice, the standing orders and the precedents of Presiding Officers' rulings. |
| Parliamentary Secretary | A member of parliament who assists a more senior minister with their duties. |
| Parliament House | The building, located on Harvest Terrace, Perth, where the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly meet. |
| Pecuniary Interest | Under the standing orders, a member cannot vote in a house on a matter involving a direct pecuniary interest. All members are required to detail their financial interests in a register. |
| Personal Explanation | A procedure which allows members to explain a matter of a personal nature. A personal explanation cannot be debated in the house. |
| Petition | A document presented to a house of parliament by a person or group of people asking for action on a matter; a formal request. An ancient right by which citizens can have their grievances brought to the notice of the parliament by a member on their behalf. |
| Platform | Policies or plans of a political party or candidate or a collection of such policies or plans. |
| Pledge | A document signed by all Labor Party candidates which binds them to a vote in the parliament as a majority of caucus determines, to refrain from contesting a seat against an endorsed Labor candidate, and to carry out the platform of the party. |
| Point of Order | A query raised by a member with the Presiding Officer during another member's speech as to whether a breach of the standing orders or rules of debate has occurred. |
| Policy | A plan of action. Sometimes the term 'public policy' is used to indicate the proposals and programs of a government. |
| Political Party | An organised group of people seeking political power through endorsed candidates at elections. |
| Politics | From the Greek word <i>polis</i> , meaning 'city-state'. It is a human activity concerned with making rules or decisions which will reduce the conflicts that arise from the differences in people's interests and beliefs. |
| Polity | The whole political system or political fabric. |
| Polling Place | A location where people go to vote on the day of an election; often a school or town hall. |
| Portfolio | A minister's area of responsibility as a member of cabinet. |
| Postal Voting | A procedure by which a ballot paper is sent to a voter who cannot go to a polling place on polling day, in order that he or she can post it back to the electoral office before the close of the poll, thereby registering a vote. |
| Practice | The usual way of something, a habit or custom. |
| Prayers | The traditional beginning to the sitting day, usually recited by a Presiding Officer. |

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| Preamble | An opening introductory statement or series of statements to a constitution or to an Act of Parliament. It may include: certain facts necessary to bring the constitution into effect; sources of authority for the constitution; or a mission statement. |
| Preferential Voting | A voting system whereby voters are required to cast votes in a preferential order for all candidates. The successful candidate requires an absolute majority, or 50% plus 1 of the total valid votes. The voting system currently used to elect members of the Legislative Assembly. |
| Premier | The leader of the parliamentary party that holds a majority in the Legislative Assembly. The chief minister in the government of an Australian state. |
| Prerogative Powers (of the Crown) | The rights and powers, apart from those conferred by statute, which are recognised as belonging to the Crown. |
| President (of the Legislative Council) | The member who is elected by the Legislative Council as its Presiding Officer. |
| Presiding Officer | A member of parliament elected to preside over, or be in charge of, the business proceedings and administration of a house of parliament. In the Legislative Council the Presiding Officer is called the President and in the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker. |
| Press Gallery | The journalists who report the parliamentary proceedings for the media. The gallery above the chamber set aside for their use. |
| Pressure Group | A group of people with a common interest or issue, who seek to influence government without themselves aspiring to direct political representation. |
| Prime Minister | The head of the federal government. |
| Private Member's Bill | A bill introduced by any member as an individual and who is not a government minister. |
| Proclamation | An official public announcement made by the Governor and published in the <i>Government Gazette</i> . |
| Proportional Representation | A system of voting designed to allocate seats in a multi-member electorate in proportion to the number of votes cast for each candidate or party. The voting system currently used to elect members of the Legislative Council. |
| Prorogue (the Parliament) | To end a session of parliament and so discontinue meetings of the houses until the next session. |
| Public Gallery | The seated area above the chamber from which the public can watch the parliamentary proceedings. |
| Public service | Government departments and the staff employed in them, who are responsible for putting into effect government policy and decisions and legislation passed by parliament. |

Qq

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| Queen | The Monarch of the United Kingdom. Australia's Head of State. |
| Question on Notice | A written question asked of a minister which is answered in writing. |
| Question Time | A set, daily period of time in the parliament providing an opportunity for members to ask questions of ministers without notice, concerning their portfolios. |

Parliamentary Parlance – A Glossary of Terms

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| Question without Notice | Question asked orally of a minister at Question Time where the minister usually has no warning of the content of the question. |
| Quorum | The minimum necessary number of members needed to be present in the chamber for the conduct of parliamentary business. |
| Quota | The number of votes required by an individual candidate under the proportional representation system used in Legislative Council elections. |

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| Readings (of a Bill) | <p>A bill has to be agreed to at each of its three formal stages to progress through each house:</p> <p>First Reading - on the introduction of the bill;</p> <p>Second Reading - debate on the bill's underlying principles; and</p> <p>Third Reading - consideration of the bill after committee or consideration in detail, and the final stage prior to the bill being passed in that house.</p> <p>In the House of Commons, before the invention of printing, the only practicable means of informing members of the contents of a bill was for the Clerk to read it aloud from beginning to end, and this was done three times.</p> <p>Nowadays, the Clerk in each case merely reads the long title of the bills.</p> |
| Recess | The period between prorogation and the commencement of a new session. |
| Redistribution | A new division of an area into electorates with the result that boundaries of some existing electorates are moved. |
| Referendum | From the Latin <i>referre</i> , meaning to 'carry back', 'report', or 'refer for consideration'. A referendum is a method of referring a question or set of questions to the people. In Australia, a referendum is usually a public vote on a proposed plan to change Australia's Constitution. |
| Regulations | The main form of delegated legislation and which are subsidiary laws made by ministers under the authority of Acts of Parliament and approved by the Governor in Executive Council. |
| Repeal | To revoke or withdraw formally. |
| Representative democracy | A system of government in which elected representatives represent members of the wider community and participate in the decision-making process on their behalf. |
| Reserve Power | A power that may be exercised under certain circumstances by the Governor to restrict, refuse or override the authority of the elected government. |
| Residual Power (of the Australian Constitution) | Areas of law-making that are not mentioned in the Australian Constitution, which are therefore assumed to be the sole jurisdiction of the states (see also Exclusive Power and Concurrent Power). |
| Resolution | An expression of the opinion of the house or of its intention to take a certain course of action. |
| Responsible Government | A political system in which ministers are drawn from the parliament, have the 'confidence' or support of the lower house and are responsible to the parliament for the administration of their portfolios. Moreover, the Governor by convention accepts the advice of the Premier of the day. |
| Royal Assent | The final stage by which a bill becomes an Act when the Governor, as the Queen's representative, accords it formal approval. |
| Royal Commission | A person or persons appointed by the executive (under the authority of the Governor) to inquire into and report on a matter of public concern. |

Parliamentary Parlance – A Glossary of Terms

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| Rulings | A ruling is a decision or determination made by the Presiding Officer on a matter to do with the business or operation of the house. |
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Ss

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| Safe seat | An electorate in which the support for a member or party is such that the member or representative of that party is very likely to be elected (see Blue Ribbon (electorate)). |
| Seat | A member's electorate; or a member's position in the legislative chambers. |
| Secede | To withdraw or break away from a federation. Sometimes the word 'secession' is used. |
| Second reading | The stage in parliament at which the underlying principles of a bill are debated. |
| Secret ballot | First introduced in Australia in 1856, a system by which electors are entitled to privacy when casting their votes. A system where votes are cast privately and without the possibility of knowing for whom individual people voted. It is known in the United States and Canada as the 'Australian ballot' because it was first introduced in Victoria and South Australia in 1856. |
| Select Committee | A group of members from either house or both houses, appointed to inquire into and report on a particular subject. A select committee ceases to exist when it has made its final report to the house or houses of parliament. |
| Self-government | A form of government under which all members of parliament are elected. |
| Senate | The upper house of the Federal Parliament of Australia. |
| Senator | A member of the upper house of the Australian Federal Parliament. |
| Sergeant-at-Arms | An officer of the Legislative Assembly who is responsible for keeping order in the House and its precincts, as directed by the Speaker. The Sergeant-at-Arms escorts the Speaker into the House carrying the Mace. |
| Session | A parliamentary period which starts on the first day of sitting after an election or prorogation and ends at a prorogation or dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. |
| Sessional Orders | Temporary orders governing the conduct of proceedings for a session, e.g. sitting days and times. |
| Shadow Minister | An opposition frontbencher who is the party spokesperson for an area of responsibility that matches a minister's portfolio. Together, shadow ministers are known as the 'shadow ministry'. The Member is said to 'shadow' the appropriate Minister. |
| Shire (in WA) | A district requires at least 20 persons who are ratepayers before it can apply to be called a shire. |
| Simple majority | In parliament, a simple majority is more than half of the total votes of the members present and voting. |
| Sitting | A meeting of a house of parliament. Also a period of meeting e.g. the two periods in the year when the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council meet, usually between February and June (the autumn sitting) and between August and December (the spring sitting). |
| Speaker (of the Legislative Assembly) | The member who is elected by the Legislative Assembly as its Presiding Officer. |

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| Special Government Gazette | Large notices or items of a specialised nature are normally published in a <i>Government Gazette</i> of their own. |
| Stages of a Bill | There are four formal stages of a Bill's passage through each house: First reading - the introduction of the Bill; Second reading - debate on the Bill's underlying principles; Committee stage (Legislative Council) or consideration in detail (Legislative Assembly) - scrutiny of the bill in detail, and the proposal of amendments; Third reading - consideration of the bill as it comes from the committee/consideration in detail stage for its final approval. |
| Standing Committee | A group of members appointed by either house or both houses to inquire into and report on certain matters. A standing committee usually exists for the life of the parliament and is usually reappointed in succeeding parliaments. |
| Standing Orders | The printed rules, adopted by the house which regulate procedure, debate and the conduct of business in the chamber. |
| State | This term is sometimes used as a short way of referring to a 'nation-state', which is a group of people, living in a defined territory, with a system of government. This term can also be used to refer to one of the regions of a nation with a government for its own affairs. A state may have started out as a colony of another country, as did the State of Western Australia. |
| Statute | A formal written law, also known as an Act of Parliament which has been proclaimed. |
| Statutory Authority | A government agency set up by an Act of Parliament, more or less independent of day-to-day ministerial control, usually not bound by public service procedures to the same extent as ordinary departments, and which is responsible finally to parliament. |
| Sub Judice | A convention by which a House voluntarily excludes debate, motions or questions on a matter awaiting or under adjudication in a court of law. |
| Suffrage | From the Latin <i>suffragium</i> , which means the 'vote' or the 'right to vote' (see Franchise). |

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| Table | To table something in parliament is to present a document or article to a house of parliament. |
| Tellers | The two members (one from each side) appointed to count the votes during a division in the house. |
| Terms of reference | The description or outline of a matter referred to or self-initiated by a committee for consideration and report. |
| Third reading | The final stage of a bill's progress in a house of parliament before it is passed. |
| Treasurer | A senior government minister, heading the Treasury Department, who is responsible for the state's economic and financial matters plus the preparation, presentation, and supervision of the state's budget. |

Uu

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| Unicameral | A parliament with only one house, like the Queensland Parliament, which consists of only a Legislative Assembly (see also Bicameral). |
| Universal Adult Suffrage | See Adult Suffrage. |

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| Universal Manhood Suffrage | An exclusive, electoral privilege which only allowed qualified males the right to vote in elections. |
| Unparliamentary language | Words used in a house which the Presiding Officer judges to be offensive or disorderly, and which are usually required to be withdrawn. |
| Upper House | One of the two houses in a bicameral parliament; in Western Australia the Legislative Council and in Australia the Senate. Upper houses have similar powers to lower houses, except that they cannot initiate or amend money bills and the government is formed from the party that enjoys the support of a majority of the lower house. |
| Urgency Motion | A motion moved in the Legislative Council which enables discussion of a matter of concern. |
| Usher of the Black Rod | An officer of the Legislative Council (named after the Black Rod he or she carries) who has special duties on ceremonial occasions, including the Opening of Parliament and escorting the Governor. By direction of the President, the Usher of the Black Rod maintains order and decorum within the chamber and its precincts. |

Vv

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| Vacancy | An unoccupied position or office. |
| Vice-Regal | A person acting in place of, or representing, a King or Queen, such as the Governor. |
| Voices, on the | The initial method of voting by members in the parliament for or against a motion by exclaiming 'Aye' or 'No'. If the vote is contested a division is called. |
| Vote | A formal expression of choice, such as putting one's hand up or marking a piece of paper. The total number of votes. The method by which the house makes a decision, either on the voices or by the calling of a division. The method by which the state's electors choose their parliamentary representatives. |
| Vote of Confidence | An important motion, usually moved by the Leader of the Opposition, which requires the government to prove it has the confidence of the Legislative Assembly in terms of numbers. By convention, a government which loses a vote of confidence is expected to resign. |
| Voter | Someone who votes; someone who has a right to vote. |
| Votes and Proceedings | The official daily record of the Legislative Assembly's proceedings. |

Ww

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| Want of Confidence | See No confidence. |
| Westminster | The Houses of Parliament in London. The City of Westminster in London where the Houses of Parliament (the Palace of Westminster) are located. |
| Westminster system | The system of government of laws, practices and procedures developed in Britain which provides the basic model for the parliamentary governments of Australia and its states. So called because the House of Commons and House of Lords are located on the site of the Palace of Westminster. |

Parliamentary Parlance – A Glossary of Terms

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| Whip | A member of parliament who is responsible for organising members of his or her party to take part in debates, votes and divisions, and who assists in arranging the business of a house of parliament. |
| White Paper | A government document which details a course of action after reviewing and acting upon the submissions sought from a previously distributed Green Paper. |
| Witness | Person who has been summoned to attend a meeting of the house or its committees to be either examined or to produce documents. |
| Writ | The document issued by the Governor (and on occasions the Speaker) authorising the conduct of an election or referendum, and providing the dates by which various electoral procedures must be completed. |