

The following clues will help you complete your government diagram.

- a Underline the most important items of information that tell you about how the federal government works. They will form the structure of your diagram.
- b Circle the additional information that will provide important details. These details will be the extra information you add to make your diagram interesting.

Clues

- 1 The people of Australia elect politicians to represent them in parliament.
- 2 The Commonwealth Parliament has two Houses: the House of Representatives (the People's or Lower House) and the Senate (the States' or Upper House).
- 3 Voters elect 12 representatives from each state and two from each territory for the Senate. Voters in electorates elect one representative each to represent them in the House of Representatives. States with bigger populations have more representatives in this House.

New South Wales	50
Victoria	37
Queensland	26
Western Australia	14
South Australia	12
Tasmania	5
Australian Capital Territory	3
Northern Territory	1
Total	148*

* The number of electorates are decided according to the population. From time to time the Australian Electoral Commission redistributes (changes) the electorates so the number of representatives from a state or territory can change.

Did you know?

The number of representatives in the States' House is roughly half the number in the People's House.

- 4 The political party (or group of parties) with the most members (representatives) elected to the House of Representatives forms the Government.
- 5 The political party (or group of parties) that has the second highest number in the House of Representatives forms the Opposition. The Opposition puts forward different ideas about how to run the nation, and questions and checks the laws being proposed.
- 6 The Government is made up of the Prime Minister (the leader of the party or parties in government) and Ministers who are chosen from both Houses and who are responsible for important parts of the system, such as the Treasury (the money), employment and immigration. Members of the government party who are not Ministers are called Backbenchers.

The federal system

- 7 The Prime Minister and the Senior Ministers (the ones with the most important jobs) make up the Cabinet, which is the most powerful part of the Government. The Cabinet plans how the nation will be governed.
- 8 The main job of the Commonwealth Parliament is to make laws to govern the nation. Proposals for new laws are called 'Bills' and most can be introduced by members (representatives) in both Houses. No matter where the Bill begins, it must be discussed in both Houses, and can be changed (or amended) by both Houses. Any changes must be agreed to by both Houses. Only Bills to do with money are not allowed to be changed by the Senate. Once a Bill is passed (approved) by both Houses, it is signed by the Governor-General (the Queen's representative) and it becomes law.
- 9 Elections for the House of Representatives are held at least every three years. Senators are elected for six-year terms. Half-Senate elections are held every three years, that is, half the Senators must stand for election every three years. Senators representing the territories are elected at every general election.