

Law-making—*Playing Fair*

HSIE/SOSE outcome

Explains the structures, roles and responsibilities and decision-making processes and explains why Australians value fairness and socially just principles.

Subject matter focus

Using the *Playing Fair* interactive students will learn about the three arms of governance that control law in Australia.

Implications for learning

In this area of study, students have opportunities to:

- Identify the places and buildings associated with the three arms of governance in Australia.
- Identify the main power of each of the three arms of governance in Australia.
- Interpret visual depictions.
- Role-play their current understanding of the roles of each of the three separate arms of governance in Australia.
- Compare and contrast the different roles.
- Reflect on the need for limits to power.
- Reflect on how these powers protect civil liberties.

Take home message

Three separate powers (arms of governance) control laws in Australia.

***Playing Fair* outcome**

Name the arms of governance (the High Court, the Parliament of Australia and the Executive government) and understand that each power has a distinct role in contributing to law in Australia.

Using the *Playing Fair* interactive

This interactive uses a simple construct to explore the meaning and safeguards on power in Australian democracy:

- Break students into groups so that each group has access to the interactive.
- Give students 5 minutes to explore the interactive.
- Quiz students on content using the 'Key questions' list below.
- Repeat (several times or as necessary).

Key questions

- What is in each of the three spheres that appear on the screen?
- What do they have in common? (Each image is of a place or a building. Each image represents a specific role and contribution to controlling law in Australia.)
- Why do you think the pictures are in separate spheres, but are connected to form a triangle? (The spheres show the three arms of governance; the triangle shows their equal role in controlling laws in Australia.)
- Why are there people at the heart of the triangle? (Laws protect people living in Australia.)
- What happens when the spheres are pulled out of balance?
- What does this mean? (Disruption—if one power were to be stronger or weaker than the others, then the balance, or useful tension, would be disrupted and become un-useful tension).

- Why do the people disappear when this happens? (To show a negative effect on the Australian public).
- Why do the connecting strings change? (To imply an alteration to the power structure).

Class Activities

- Divide the class into three groups, with each group to represent one of the three arms of governance. Ask each group to prepare a short role-play demonstrating their primary responsibility. Deliver role-plays and ask for comment. Rotate roles another two times.
- Match each power to its special responsibility.
- Prepare an interview with a High Court judge, or a member of parliament or a minister. Ask each about the limits to their power. This activity can be done as a role-play activity or with the actual people who hold these positions.
- Construct your own 'Separation of Powers' model and invent a way to make sure that the balance is maintained.
- Compare the three roles of the powers. How are they alike and how are they different?
- Use a dictionary to find the definition of 'Commonwealth'. How many different usages can you find? Which usage is applied in the *Playing Fair* interactive?
- Locate a copy of the Australian Constitution (or see 'Links' below). What are the titles of the first three chapters? Can you match each chapter heading to each arm of governance?

Reflection

- What might happen to our community if the Commonwealth Parliament, the Cabinet or the High Court became more powerful than the other powers?
- What stops this from happening? (The limits to power are stated in the Australian Constitution).

Integration

- Science and Technology: Explore the concept of balance as in the 'balance of nature'.
- Arts: Explore the concept of balance as principle of design.
- History: research the development of the 'Westminster system' of government that incorporates the principle of the separation of powers.

Literacy notes

This unit provides opportunities for students to explore the topic using role-play and primary source materials such as the Australian Constitution.

Resources

- What is the separation of powers? <http://www.peo.gov.au/kidsview/lawmaking/sep.html>
- *Get Parliament*, magazine available from the Parliamentary Education Office. See http://www.peo.gov.au/publications/get_parliament.html

Links

- Australia's Constitution: <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/general/constitution/>
- The Parliament of Australia: infosheet-The Australian system of government <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/info/infosheets/is20.pdf>