

PARTY MEETINGS

During weeks when Parliament sits or meets, each parliamentary party has a party meeting. The leader of the party chairs the meeting and holds it in the party room reserved for this purpose. The meetings are usually secret and only members and senators can attend.

Special rooms are reserved in Parliament House for each party. Often, traditional furniture such as tables and chairs from Old Parliament House and photographs of past party leaders give the room a special atmosphere.

In the Liberal-National coalition, the party room refers to the room that members and senators meet in, as well as the coalition itself. In the Australian Labor Party, caucus refers to the entire parliamentary party made up of all of its members and senators.

In party meetings, members and senators:

- elect office bearers such as the party leader, ministers, party spokespersons and the Whip (not all parties do all of these)
- debate party policy and decide how party members will vote on the issues before the Parliament
- plan parliamentary tactics or the way members of the party will organise the debate in Parliament on a particular bill, so the party can publicise its arguments to win the vote, and
- solve problems such as differences of opinion within the party on policies and legislation.

These decisions are usually decided by a democratic vote.

The main purpose of the party meeting is to decide how the party will work as a united team to make an impact on the floor of the Parliament. The party meeting attempts to solve conflicts and divisions in private. Therefore the proceedings of party meetings are confidential.