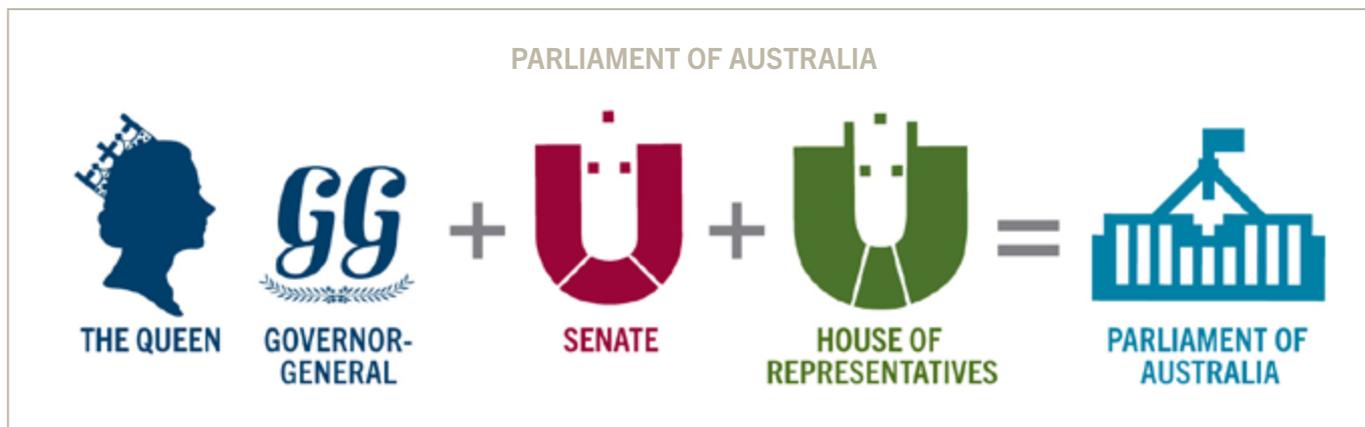


## SENATE



**The Australian Parliament consists of the Queen (represented by the Governor-General), the Senate and the House of Representatives.**

The Australian Parliament is bicameral, which means there are two houses. The Senate is also known as the upper house.

## Role

The Senate is made up of 76 senators. Twelve senators represent each state and two senators represent each territory.

Senators:

- represent the views of Australians and discuss matters of national and international importance
- make and change federal law, by debating and voting on bills (proposed laws). A bill must be agreed to in identical form in the Senate and the House of Representatives and given Royal Assent by the Governor-General. It then becomes a law
- scrutinise (closely examine) the work of the government, especially in Question Time and through parliamentary committees.

(See *Senators*).

## Appearance

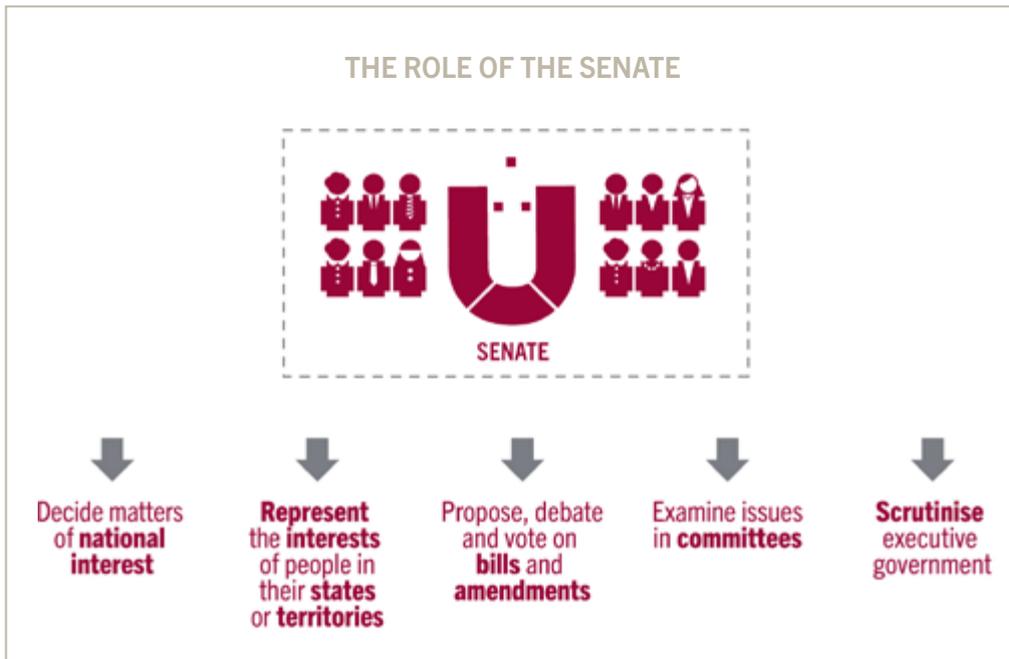
The furnishings and carpet in the Senate are red. This signifies our traditional link with the red decoration of the House of Lords in the British Parliament. The red ochre tones used in the Senate are soft shades, typical of the Australian eucalypt landscape.

The seats in the Senate are arranged in rows to form a U-shape. The President sits at the open end of the U-shape and is responsible for the orderly running of the chamber (see *President of the Senate*). Government senators sit to the right of the President and opposition senators sit to the left. The Leader of the Government in the Senate and the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate sit in front of their respective teams at a central table. Minor parties and Independents sit in the central curved part of the U-shape.

The Senate has three raised viewing galleries. One is directly above the President and is reserved for the press gallery (see *Press Gallery*). The other galleries on either side of the chamber are open to the public. Members of the press gallery and the public may visit the chamber at any time.



The Senate



## Reporting

Parliamentary proceedings are recorded and broadcast on ABC TV and radio, A-PAC (Australian Public Affairs Channel) and on the internet at [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au). Hansard reporters produce a daily record of all that is said in the Senate. This record is available on the internet.

## History

The physical appearance of the Senate and some of its practices are derived from the British Parliament. However, the drafters of the Australian Constitution also looked to the United States (US) Congress when deciding on the form of the Australian Parliament. For example, the names 'Senate' and 'House of Representatives' were borrowed from the US system. Although the Senate has links with both the British Parliament and the US Congress, it has developed its own unique style and procedures over the last century.

## LINKS

### APH website

Parliament House virtual tour  
[virtualltour.aph.gov.au](http://virtualltour.aph.gov.au)

Senate Brief: *The Origins of the Senate*  
[www.aph.gov.au/Senate/briefs/brief09](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/briefs/brief09)

Senate Brief: *The Role of the Senate*  
[www.aph.gov.au/Senate/briefs/brief10](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/briefs/brief10)