LEADERSHIP IN THE PARLIAMENT

Some parliamentarians have important leadership roles within their parties and in the chamber, in addition to their duties as elected members of parliament.

Leadership roles in the House of Representatives

The Speaker
The Speaker sits at the head of the House of Representatives and is responsible for the orderly running of the chamber. The Speaker is elected by the House from its 151 members and is typically an experienced member of parliament (see Speaker of the House of Representatives). Usually, the Speaker is a government member.

The Prime Minister
After a federal election, the parliamentary party or coalition of parties with the support of the majority of members elected to the House of Representatives forms the government. The Prime Minister is chosen by government members to be the leader of the government. The Prime Minister has many roles, including leading discussion on government policy, selecting ministers, representing Australia overseas and advising the Governor-General about important government matters (see Prime Minister).

The Leader of the Opposition
The Leader of the Opposition is chosen by the largest parliamentary party or coalition of parties that is not in government. The Leader of the Opposition leads their team in holding the government to account, and developing and presenting alternative policies to those of the government (see Leader of the Opposition).

Minor parties
Each minor party in the House of Representatives also has a leader, who acts as a spokesperson for the party and leads the party in deciding policy.

The Leader of the House and The Manager of Opposition Business in the House
The Leader of the House is a minister appointed to make sure that the government’s business, especially bills and other matters, proceeds through the House of Representatives smoothly and efficiently. Their duties include timetabling debates, dealing with urgent business and planning government tactics. The Leader of the House works closely with the Prime Minister, Whips and the Clerks as well as their equivalent in the opposition, known as the Manager of Opposition Business in the House, to arrange and manage the chamber’s daily program. Normally, there is cooperation between the government and the opposition in this process.

Whips
The Chief Government Whip and the Chief Opposition Whip act as team managers who organise the activities of their party members in the chamber. Each Chief Whip has two Deputy Whips who assist them in their duties, including organising speakers in debates, ensuring that party members attend divisions and counting votes in the chamber (see Party Whip).
Leadership roles in the Senate

The President
The President sits at the head of the Senate and is responsible for the orderly running of the chamber. The President is elected by the Senate from the 76 senators and is typically an experienced member of parliament (see President of the Senate).

The Leader of the Government in the Senate and The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
The Leader of the Government in the Senate and the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate are each chosen by their party or parties to lead them in the chamber. While the Leaders sit at the main table of the Senate, they do not have the same powers as the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition. However, they do act as their main party spokesperson in the Senate.

Minor parties
As in the House of Representatives, each minor party in the Senate also has a leader, who acts as a spokesperson for the party and leads the party in deciding policy.

The Manager of Government Business in the Senate and The Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate
In the Senate, the government and the opposition also appoint members of their team to arrange and manage their business. The Manager of Government Business in the Senate and the Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate liaise with each other, their party leaders and other colleagues to ensure the smooth flow of business through the Senate.

Whips
Each party in the Senate also chooses members of its team to be Whips, with similar roles to the Whips in the House of Representatives (see Party Whip).

LINKS
PEO website
Fact Sheet: Political Parties

APH website
House of Representatives Infosheet: The House, Government and Opposition
www.tinyurl.com/Infosheet19