Parliamentary Lesson Plan
Legislation: Passing a bill in the House of Representatives

This lesson explores how legislation is introduced to the House of Representatives with special emphasis on how issues of national importance arise and how bills move through the chamber. Students debate an urgent bill and direct chamber proceedings. The function of the House of Representatives as a forum for new ideas and issues is examined. See DIY Role-play in the Classroom: Law-making (see link in Useful tools) for instructions and resources to assist this lesson.

(Note: This lesson is paired with Lesson 11 Legislation: Passing a Bill in the Senate. The script supplied with this lesson is an abridged version of what normally takes place in the chamber. It is designed to demonstrate decision making under severe time constraints.)

Outcomes
Students will:
- recognise why and how bills are introduced to the House of Representatives
- identify how decisions are made in the chamber
- understand why compromise is a part of drafting a bill and frequently a part of its passage through a chamber
- identify how a bill is scrutinised in the House of Representatives.

Focus questions
- How is government formed? (the party which wins the majority of seats in the House of Representatives becomes government)
- What are the characteristics of the House of Representatives?
- Why are there two chambers in federal Parliament?
- How do urgent issues enter the House? (Question Time, Matters of Public Importance, committee reports, media stories etc.)

Concept words
Legislation • Compromise • Forum • Bicameral • Bill • Clause • Act of Parliament
Executive government • Consideration in detail • First reading • Second reading
Third reading • Division • Vote on the voices • Private member’s bill

USEFUL TOOLS
ABC... Definitions
Bill: a proposal for a new law or to modify an existing law that has been presented to a parliament.
Act of Parliament: a law made by the federal Parliament or state parliaments.
Second reading stage: the second stage that a bill must go through in order to become an Act of Parliament. This is the stage in either house when debate on the principle or purpose of the bill takes place.

Documents and resources
Parliamentary Lesson Plan
Passing a bill in the House of Representatives

Getting started

1. To initiate discussion, ask students to name the two chambers in federal Parliament.
2. Ask the students why they think the framers of the Australian Constitution included two chambers? *(to provide local and state representation, to encourage all states—especially small ones—to join the federation, to protect state sovereignty and constitutions and to provide a sober second view of legislation)*
3. Brainstorm characteristics of the House of Representatives *(where government is formed, the Prime Minister tends to sit, 150 members represent 150 electorates, more issue-based committees occur and more legislation originates)*

Main activity

Choosing a bill

1. Tell the class they are elected members of the House of Representatives about to frame and debate an urgent and contentious bill that the opposition has agreed to pass in the House, but has foreshadowed amendments to in the Senate. *(see Lesson 11 Legislation: The Senate)*
2. Tell students that the event that has precipitated this urgent action is outbreaks of bird flu in parts of Australia. *(or other similar disaster)* The Australian Parliament must act swiftly and legally to contain the potential disaster.
3. Write the problem on the board as a bill in its short title e.g. The Asian Bird Flu Bill, 2006 and in its long title e.g. A Bill for an Act to protect Australia from Asian Bird Flu.
4. Write the details of the bill which should outline how the bill will achieve its goal e.g.
   - Increase Commonwealth Serum Laboratory spending by 100%.
   - Double personnel numbers in Health Department infectious disease divisions.
   - Triple humanitarian medical aid to regional neighbours combating Asian Bird Flu.

Preparing for debate

1. Select a Speaker and two clerks to direct proceedings and ask them to study the Path of a Bill diagram *(over the page)* and the law-making scripts. *(attached)*
2. Break the remainder into a government and opposition of roughly equal size but with a slight government majority, plus 2 or 3 Independents.
3. The government selects a minister to introduce the bill.
4. Party groupings discuss the bill separately and determine their position. *(the government will argue for the bill; the opposition and Independents will make some critical comments but choose to vote for the bill given its urgency)*

Debate

1. A bell is rung to start the proceedings and the Speaker and clerks direct the debate.
2. When the debate is exhausted the chamber votes on the bill. *(see script)*

Debrief

- Did the idea to solve the problem (the bill) change much from its inception to entry to the chamber?
- Why do you think the passage of a bill is divided into definite stages?
- Why are the Speaker and clerks so important in chamber proceedings?
Parliamentary context

- Where do bills come from? (government departments, interest groups, committees of inquiry, private members, petitions, the prime minister, ministers, treaties, responses to major issues and events, the states, private citizens etc.)
- Name a number of recent bills passed by the government and explain why the bill was introduced and where it came from.
- How are decisions made? (compare the vote on the voices to a division—a counted and recorded vote)

Extension activities

- Identify 2 or 3 controversial bills currently being debated in the House of Representatives. Why and how were the bills introduced? What is their current status? (see Daily Bills List, link in Useful tools)
## AN URGENT BILL IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serjeant-at-Arms</strong> escorts the <strong>Speaker</strong> into the chamber and says:</td>
<td>Honourable members, the Speaker of the House (all stand and resume seat after the Speaker sits down).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| When the **Sergeant-at-Arms** has introduced the **Speaker** and put the Mace on the table, the **Speaker** says: | Members, please sit down.  
The House is now in session.  
I call the Clerk. |
| **Clerk** reads next item of business: | Notice No. 1: Avian Bird Flu Bill 200_. |
| **Minister for Health** reads the short title and hands copy to **Clerk**: | I present the Avian Bird Flu Bill 200_ and move that the Bill be read a first time. |
| **Clerk** reads long title: | First reading: A Bill for an Act to protect Australia from Asian Bird Flu. |
| **Minister for Health** | I move that the Bill be read a second time. |
| **Speaker** | Is leave granted for the second reading debate to continue immediately? (Members remain silent to signify agreement)  
Leave is granted for the debate to continue immediately.  
I call the Member for ____________________________ (first name) to speak. (Members speak in turn, until the debate is exhausted.)  
Order! The question is that the Bill be read a second time.  
Those of that opinion say Aye, to the contrary No.  
I think the Ayes have it. |
| **Clerk** | Second reading: A Bill for an Act to protect Australia from Avian Bird Flu. |
| **Minister for Health** | I ask leave to move the third reading forthwith. (Members agree given the urgent nature of the bill. In other circumstances consideration in detail may be requested). |
| **Speaker** | Is leave given for the third reading to be moved forthwith? (Members say nothing signifying agreement for the bill to move to the third reading.)  
Leave is granted. I call the Minister for Health. |
| **Minister for Health** | I move that the Bill be read a third time. |
| **Speaker** | (This script assumes no division.)  
The question is that the Bill be read a third time.  
Those of that opinion say Aye, to the contrary say No.  
The ayes have it. |
| **Clerk** | Third reading: A Bill for an Act to protect Australia from Avian Bird Flu. |
| **Speaker** | I call the Minister for Health. |
| **Minister for Health** | I move that the House do now adjourn. |
| **Speaker** | Those of that opinion please say Aye, to the contrary say No.  
I think the Ayes have it. Order! The House is now adjourned. |