



**Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Victoria**

Fact Sheet A2

Terminology used in Parliament

Parliamentary terminology can be complicated, with terms unique to Parliament, and some common words given different meanings. This fact sheet defines and explains some common parliamentary terms.

Address-in-reply
Chamber
Consideration in detail
Dissolution
Division
Expiration
Hansard
House
Inaugural speech
May's Parliamentary Practice
Notice paper
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Address-in-reply

The Governor makes a speech outlining the government's plans at the opening of each parliamentary session. The address-in-reply is a formal response to that speech, usually debated over a few weeks.

Find out more:

Fact Sheet B1: Types of Debate

Fact Sheet I2: Opening of Parliament

Chamber

The Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council each have their own room, or Chamber, where they meet for parliamentary business and debate. Each Chamber has public galleries where people may watch proceedings. Only members of that House, and authorised parliamentary officers, may enter the debating area during a sitting.

 View the Virtual Tour under the Visit Parliament section of Parliament's website

Find out more: *Fact Sheet I3: Why is the Assembly Green?*

Consideration in detail

This is an optional stage in the Legislative Assembly's consideration of a bill. The Assembly examines the bill clause by clause and members can move amendments. The Deputy Speaker chairs the debate.

Find out more:

Fact Sheet C4: Amendments to Bills — A Practical Guide

Information Sheet: *How a Law is Made in Victoria*

Dissolution

The Governor can dissolve the Legislative Assembly by issuing a proclamation. This is called dissolution. It ends the Parliament and prompts a general election.

There are two reasons for dissolution. Firstly, it happens if the Assembly passes a motion of no confidence in the Premier and other ministers. Secondly, it may occur if the Assembly and Legislative Council do not agree to a bill and it becomes deadlocked.

Division

In the Legislative Assembly all questions are decided by members voting in the Chamber. This may be without counting each vote (known as 'on the voices') or, if a member disputes the result, by a division. If a member calls for a division, the Clerk rings the bells to summon members to the Chamber.

Traditionally, members moved to opposite sides of the Chamber to vote for or against a question. However, under current procedures, party votes are normally held.

The independent members each vote first. Then the whip of each party casts votes on behalf of all their party members present. The Clerk tallies the votes and the Chair announces the result. The members voting for and against the question are recorded in the Votes and Proceedings (minutes).

Find out more:

Fact Sheet D1: Divisions

Fact Sheet F3: Votes and Proceedings

Expiration

The Parliament of Victoria has fixed four year terms. That means that every four years the Legislative Assembly ‘expires’, prompting a general election. This is known as expiration.

The election is held on the last Saturday in November and the Assembly expires on the Tuesday 25 days before then.

The expiration of the Assembly means:

- there are no longer any members, although ministers continue in office for up to three months
- all the Assembly’s business ends — meaning all bills, motions and questions on notice that have not been dealt with lapse
- all sessional orders (see ‘Sessional orders’ below) are abolished
- all committees cease to exist.

Hansard

Hansard is the official printed reports of the debates and proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

 ‘About Hansard’ under the Hansard section of Parliament’s website

House

There are two Houses of Parliament, the Legislative Assembly (lower house) and the Legislative Council (upper house). The term House is often used interchangeably with Chamber.

It is also used to refer to decisions and actions, for example ‘the House agreed to the motion’ or ‘the House considered the amendments’.

Inaugural speech

An inaugural speech is the first speech a new member makes in Parliament. It is normally non-political and about the member’s background and areas of interest. A member usually makes it during the address-in-reply debate. Other members do not interject during an inaugural speech.

May’s Parliamentary Practice

Also known as Erskine May, it is the procedural reference book produced by the House of Commons, first written over 150 years ago. Parliaments following the Westminster system use May as a procedural guide.

If a procedure is not covered by standing orders, the Legislative Assembly can follow the rules and practice of other Westminster parliaments.

Notice paper

The notice paper is the Legislative Assembly's agenda. It shows items for discussion including bills and motions. The Assembly and the Legislative Council have their own notice papers.

- i** View notice papers under the Legislative Assembly, Notice Papers section of Parliament's website

Proclamations

Proclamations are official announcements by the Governor. They usually announce the date an Act commences, the beginning or end of a Parliament, or the appointment of ministers.

- i** The Victorian Government publishes all proclamations, visit www.gazette.vic.gov.au.

Prorogation

Prorogation is the Governor issuing a proclamation ending the current session of the Parliament. This also ends all business before the Legislative Assembly. It does not lead to a general election, a new session of Parliament simply begins. The new session opens with a formal ceremony, which the Governor attends.

Royal assent

When a bill is given royal assent it becomes an Act. The Governor, on behalf of the Queen, gives royal assent to a bill which has been passed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.

Even though an Act is law at the date of royal assent, that does not mean that all its provisions will begin at that time. Normally they will begin at a later date. Section 2 of the Act usually gives commencement details.

Find out more:

Fact Sheet C1: How a Bill becomes Law

Information Sheet: *How a Law is Made in Victoria*

Second reading of a bill

This stage begins when the minister responsible for the bill moves that it 'be now read a second time'. At this point the bill is made publicly available.

The minister then describes the bill and its purpose in detail. This is known as the 'second reading speech.' The second reading debate is usually the longest debate on the bill.

Find out more:

Fact Sheet C1: How a Bill becomes Law

Information Sheet: *How a Law is Made in Victoria*

Session of Parliament

A new Parliament starts after each general election. In each Parliament there is at least one session. Recent Parliaments have only had one session. However, if the Governor prorogues Parliament (see 'Prorogation' above), a new session starts when it next meets. These are known as the first and second sessions, both of the same Parliament.

Sessional orders

Sessional orders are temporary rules of the Legislative Assembly. They apply only in the current session. They may change the operation of the standing orders.

- i** View Standing and Sessional Orders under the Legislative Assembly section of Parliament's website

Sitting of Parliament

A sitting refers to the period or periods each year when Parliament 'sits' or meets. Currently, a sitting period lasts for the whole year, with a break over the Christmas period.

Parliament does not sit every day, or even every week during a sitting period. Members attend Parliament for 14 to 16 'sitting weeks' spread throughout the year. During sitting weeks the Legislative Assembly normally sits on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, although it can sit on a Friday too.

Standing orders

Standing orders are the comprehensive, permanent set of rules dealing with procedure, debate and the members' behaviour.

- i** View Standing and Sessional Orders under the Legislative Assembly section of Parliament's website

Tabling documents

Documents such as government reports, petitions and summaries of planning scheme amendments must be presented (or 'tabled') in Parliament. When a document is tabled, it is made publicly available.

Find out more: *Fact Sheet F1: Documents tabled in the Assembly*

Votes and Proceedings

The Votes and Proceedings are the official minutes of the Legislative Assembly. Unlike Hansard, which is an almost verbatim account of debates, the Votes are a summary of all the Assembly's formal actions and decisions.

- i** View Votes and Proceedings under the Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings section of Parliament's website

Find out more: *Fact Sheet F3: Votes and Proceedings*

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Fact Sheets

The Legislative Assembly Procedure Office has produced a series of Fact Sheets that explain parliamentary procedure and terminology. All Fact Sheets are available on Parliament's website www.parliament.vic.gov.au or through the Procedure Office.

Contact Details

Procedure Office, Legislative Assembly, Parliament House, Spring Street, East Melbourne, Vic 3002

Phone No: 03 9651 8563 Fax No: 03 9650 7245 Email: assembly@parliament.vic.gov.au