Unit 1 – Student Program

You - and your local Members of Parliament
Part One .................................................................................................................................

1

Why have governments?
Now start writing a list of what governments do
Second, imagine life without government?

Part Two

Government....and more government
Getting the levels right: is it that easy?
Are we ‘over-governed’?
A visit to government services & offices
Your Task
Where to go
Contact the organisations you will visit
A short cut
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Back in the classroom

Part Three

What State Government issues are important to me, and to my student colleagues?
Get some ideas

Looking back at Unit 1 ..............................................................................................................

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Finally
Word Search 1
Word Search 2
This VCAL/CGEA program invites you to investigate the structure and operation of parliamentary government. During the four Units of this program, you can become engaged in activities such as:

- Invite a local Member of Parliament to visit your classroom
- Go on a tour of Parliament House
- Create a ‘new piece of legislation’

Although the total program consists of four Units, you decide whether to complete some, or all, of these Units.
Unit 1
You - and your local Members of Parliament

Part One
Why have governments?

Part Two
Government....and more government

Part Three
What State Government issues are important to me, and to my student colleagues?

When you work on this Unit, you combine classroom discussion with research in your local community. You then prepare individual and group reports on these research activities but you also answer a number of questions which appear on the following pages.

You will seek out factual information, you will offer your opinion (backed up with evidence).
**Part One**

Why have governments?

**First, what does a government do?**

As a group, brainstorm at least ten things which you think a government does. For example: public transport.

Then, working as individuals or in small groups, choose one (or two) things from your class list and find out what organisations are responsible for doing them.

Your investigation must cover the questions listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will you investigate?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What organisations do this, or provide this?</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are they part of government or do they get government funding?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○ Part of government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Get government funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you know that they are a part of government or get government funding?</th>
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</table>

If you are having trouble finding the answers to these questions, ask your teacher how you might find the information.

When you have found the information, share it with the classroom group. Now start writing a list of what governments do.

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**Government**

a group of people who rule a state, a country or a region.

There are different types of governments -

- ○ a democracy,
- ○ a monarchy or
- ○ a dictatorship

these are just a few types.
Now start writing a list of what governments do

Make your own list of the services and things provided by government and the name of the organisations that provide them OR make a list as a class – one that everyone can see.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Are you surprised how much government does?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Why are you [not] surprised?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Second, imagine life without government?

Imagine what it would be like if there was no government in Australia. How different would your life be? Would you get your education? Would there be roads or railways? What would happen if someone seriously injured another person or robbed them? Would mobile phones exist? Would you be able to use them?

Discuss what it would be like not to have government.

Find two definitions of anarchy (perhaps try Wikipedia and an online dictionary?) Write them here:

________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

What do you think of anarchy? Write a couple of sentences explaining your opinion of the different meanings of anarchy.

________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Discuss in class what life today might be like for you if there wasn’t any government.
PART TWO

Government...and more government

In the first activity you found out some services and things provided by governments - either directly, or through other organisations. You may have also found that there were different types of government.

In Australia we have 3 levels of government:

For more detail about these three levels, go to the Education Zone on the Parliament of Victoria’s website and find page 12 in a booklet called Inside Parliament


In the booklet you will find information about the different levels of government and what they have responsibility for. Read the information about the three levels of government and fill in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Government</th>
<th>Two or more examples of what each level is responsible for?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different levels of government provide different services and have responsibility for different laws. It can be confusing to know who does what but that understanding would help if you want information about a particular problem or an issue. For example, a Federal Member of Parliament would have to refer you to a State MP if you ask questions about an issue that is a state responsibility. Getting the levels right: is it that easy?
Getting the levels right: is it that easy?

Are there any stories in the news which report tension and argument between two (or three) levels of government? What are they? What negotiations are going on now or took place recently? Can you also think of examples of successful negotiations and agreements?

Suggestions from you (and from your teacher)

________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

How could these arguments and tensions affect you now or in the future?

Now: ___________________________________________

________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

In the Future: _____________________________________

________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Some examples of things that state and federal governments have argued about recently:

- School education - who funds education in schools? Who manages education in schools?
- Public hospitals - how many governments were recently negotiating who should fund and manage public hospitals?
- Murray-Darling River Basin - how many governments debate the funding and management of the Murray-Darling River Basin?
Are we ‘over-governed’?

Some people argue that we should have two levels of government, not three. Perhaps the people who want to keep three levels would also have difficulty with this optical illusion – they might ‘refuse’ to accept a suggestion that some people might argue for two prongs!

- Are you open-minded?
- Can you see two prongs AND three prongs?
- Do you accept that some people think that three levels of government is one level too many?

Discuss these opinions in your group...but be careful to avoid arguments which you can’t support!
A visit to government services & offices

Look back at the list of services provided by government that you developed in this earlier activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Government</th>
<th>Two examples of what each level is responsible for?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal (Commonwealth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Task

Members of the class divide into three groups and visit three government offices or departments to find out more about what they do.

EACH GROUP WILL VISIT ‘ONE LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT’

Names of Students to visit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Local government office or service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A State government office or service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Federal government office or service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the office, you will collect information (in words and pictures) to illustrate the job done through that office or service. Each small group should therefore include someone who has a mobile phone with a camera.
In another Unit in this program (Unit 2) you will use this information and photography as part of a background display in the classroom (a display about levels of government) on the day when a local State MP visits you.

Where to go

To plan your office visits, use at least two resources to decide what offices to visit and how to find their location:

- Your own local knowledge
- A telephone book
- A local community directory
- Online white pages
- Google

And possibly

- The State parliamentary MP website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members (although this link will be more relevant to Unit 2 of the program)

Use this table to write down where to go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of government</th>
<th>Service or office you will visit</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the office, you will collect information (in words and pictures) to illustrate the job done through that office or service. Each small group should therefore include someone who has a mobile phone with a camera. First seek permission to take photos.
Find a local community map to mark the places you intend to visit. Perhaps laminate that community map so you can use it again and again.

Plan the route you will travel to get to each place. You can use Google maps to help you with this. You may like to mark the route on your map or to print off a copy of Google maps showing the route and directions.

Work out:
How far you will travel? _____________________________

________________________________________________

How long will it take _______________________________

________________________________________________

Contact the organisations you will visit

Phone, email or write a letter to the places you will visit. You should:

- Explain the purpose of your visit
- Ask permission to take photos which show services they provide
- Ask if you could collect information or leaflets describing what they do
A short cut

Check the following specimen letter which asks permission to visit the office, collect material and take photographs. You might like to write a letter or email using this information and/or format.

Of course, you might write something which is very different!

Dear ________,

Student visit

We are students at ______. Our program includes a study of the system of government in Australia and we are preparing a report which shows the three levels of government in this country. Your office/department/place would be a good example to use which illustrates the ____ level of government.

Therefore, we would like to visit you on [time and date] in order to collect a brochure which explains what you do and to take photographs for our display.

Could you email our teacher [name: ____] on ________ or telephone on _____ if you are able to help us with this arrangement.

Yours sincerely,
The Visit

Visit the places and take photographs and/or collect leaflets (as arranged). Remember - you need photos or pamphlets which show how each place provides a service for one particular level of government.

Time how long you take to get from place to place and add these up. Don’t add in the time you spent at the different offices or services.

How long did it take you? __________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Did you take more or less time than you had estimated?

Why? __________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Back in the classroom

Discuss the visits and the material you have brought back with you. Also discuss how would improve the organisation of what you did.

Then, decide how to store the material so that you can use it in Unit 2 as part of a classroom display when you invite a State MP as guest speaker in your classroom.
PART THREE

What State Government issues are important to me, and to my student colleagues?

Perhaps the visits to government offices helped you identify issues which you think are important ... and also helped you focus on issues which are connected to the responsibilities and powers of a state government.

In the next activity you are going to identify issues that you would like to discuss with a State MP who comes as a guest speaker in your classroom (a Unit 2 project).

As a class, use the next page to brainstorm relevant problems and issues. Also agree on:

- Who takes notes
- What happens with those notes
- How you will produce a document good enough to give to a visiting MP

There are six State MPs that represent you and so you could divide into six different groups. Each group should choose one problem or issue relevant to State Government (it can be the same issue).

Discuss and make notes about:

- Reasons for the problems / issues
- Why they are important to you and / or your community
- Possible solutions (be realistic).

Find out if there are any other groups in the community interested in the problem or issue and check if they have already gathered information that you could use.
Finally, decide which problems / issues are most important to the classroom group as a whole and prepare a summary for use in Unit 2.
Get some ideas

Brainstorm what an MP could talk to your group about.
Write your ideas in the shapes. Add more shapes and ideas if you want. Circle the top three things you would like the MP to talk about.
Looking back at Unit 1

There are reports in the media that some people in Australia are not interested in politics and government. And yet they can be quick to offer an opinion....and people can become a bit heated. Listen to what people are saying – and decide if they understand some of the things that you have studied in Unit 1, for example:

- It is important to know which level of government is responsible for dealing with a particular issue or problem
- People can approach government departments and offices with questions – feeling confident that they have investigated the ‘what, the who and the why’ of those questions

Be alert! Identify when someone blames one level of government for a problem which is actually the responsibility of another level.

And, of course, this mistake can lead to all sorts of delays and frustrations!

Check it out. In the next month, count how many times you hear someone having a go at Level X when they should be directing their arguments against Level Y.
Finally

If you have spare time you might like to complete the following two Word-search puzzles (although some new words will be introduced in the puzzles ... sometimes with helpful sentences)

Fill the missing words in the following clues and then find them in the word search.

1. The three levels of government in Australia are federal, _ _ _ _ _ and local government
2. The major public building in Spring Street is _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ House
3. When a government works towards new legislation, it will introduce a new b _ _ _
4. There are two chambers, one for the Upper House and one for the _ _ _ _ _ _ _House
5. The carpet colour in the Legislative Assembly is _ _ _ _ _
6. There are two chambers in Parliament therefore it is a b _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ system
7. Who got permission to vote in 1908 in Victoria?
8. The letters MP are abbreviations for the words _ _ _ _ _ _ of Parliament
9. The head of the government in State Parliament is called the _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Word Search 1

A B B I C A M E R A L
C D I F G H I J K L O
M N L P R E M I E R W
O S L P Q R S G T U E
V T W X Y Z A R B C R
P A R L I A M E N T D
E T F M E M B E R G H
I E J W O M E N K L M
Word Search 2

Find the words listed below. (They run left to right or top to bottom.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Democracy</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Assembly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td>Territory</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A L A V T F K D I I J G F W M
P A R L I A M E N T N O H X R
L S W B C H A M B E R V O T E
E Y T V I C T O R I A A E X P Z
G A S L D J A C G H O R I D I
I S T A T E E M R C O U N C I L L
S M I V R N R A E U T M O N D
L I N F G Q C C X S L E F B Y
A S S E M B L Y I E P N Q V Z
T L O E C I T E R R I T O R Y R
I W R C K H Y N O G T Y U C G
O U S R T G J A H O M E Y D R
N D T Y O P M G H W Q T B H J