Today’s Parliament is the 44th elected since federation in 1901. It was officially opened on 12 November 2013 following the federal election held on 7 September 2013.

The Parliament is made up of 226 parliamentarians – 150 members in the House of Representatives and 76 senators in the Senate.

The government is formed by the party or coalition of parties with the support of the majority (more than half) of the 150 members elected to the House of Representatives. The Coalition (the Liberal Party of Australia and the Nationals joined together) formed government after winning the majority of seats in the House.

According to section 28 of the Australian Constitution, elections for the House of Representatives must be held at least every three years. Half-Senate elections are usually held at the same time as House of Representatives elections. The last possible date on which the next federal election can be held is 14 January 2017.

For Parliament LATEST NEWS and HOT TOPICS please visit the PEO website: www.peo.gov.au/learning/parliament-now.html
GOVERNMENT
Liberal Party of Australia, The Nationals and the Country Liberal Party
90 members

OPPOSITION
Australian Labor Party
55 members

MINOR PARTIES
- Australian Greens
  1 member
- Katter’s Australian Party
  1 member
- Palmer United Party
  1 member

INDEPENDENTS
2 members
WHO’S WHO IN THE 44TH PARLIAMENT

AUSTRALIA’S HEAD OF STATE

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is Australia’s head of state. On the advice of the Australian Prime Minister, the Queen appoints the Governor-General to act on her behalf.

His Excellency General the Hon Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) was sworn in as Australia’s 26th Governor-General on 28 March 2014. The Governor-General acts as the Queen’s representative.

CHAMBER LEADERSHIP

The Speaker of the House of Representatives is the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP.

The President of the Senate is Senator the Hon Stephen Parry

GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP – HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Prime Minister of Australia is the Hon Tony Abbott MP. Mr Abbott is also the Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia.

The Leader of the Opposition is the Hon Bill Shorten MP. Mr Shorten is also the Leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP).

The Deputy Prime Minister is the Hon Warren Truss MP. Mr Truss is also the Leader of The Nationals.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP.

The Leader of the House is the Hon Christopher Pyne MP.

The Manager of Opposition Business in the House is the Hon Tony Burke MP.
GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP – SENATE

The Leader of the Government in the Senate is Senator the Hon Eric Abetz.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate is Senator the Hon Penny Wong.

The Leader of The Nationals in the Senate is Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion.

The Manager of Government Business in the Senate is Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield.

The Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate is Senator Claire Moore.

LEADERSHIP – OTHER PARTIES

The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia is the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

The Leader of the Australian Greens is Senator Christine Milne.

The Deputy Leader of The Nationals is the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP.
PARLIAMENTARY OFFICERS

Parliamentary officers are employees of parliamentary departments that advise and support the Senate and House of Representatives.

The Clerk of the House of Representatives is Mr David Elder.

The Serjeant-at-Arms is Ms Bronwyn Notzon.

The Clerk of the Senate is Dr Rosemary Laing.

The Usher of the Black Rod is Ms Rachael Callinan.

Find out more details about who’s who in Parliament:
WHAT’S ON

THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON TONY ABBOTT MP

BROADCASTS

The Senate and the House of Representatives are broadcast live over the Internet when Parliament is sitting. To watch a live video of Parliament see the Live broadcasting schedule

BILLS

A bill is a proposal for a new law or a change to an existing one. To find out what bills the Parliament is working on right now go to Parliament of Australia Bills and Legislation
www.aph.gov.au/bills

QUESTION TIME

Question Time is at 2.00pm every day when Parliament is sitting and lasts for about an hour. During Question Time in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, members of Parliament can ask questions to ministers about their actions and decisions. Watch a recent video of Question Time in the House of Representatives

2014 PARLIAMENTARY CALENDAR

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

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Public holidays
Representatives
Both houses
Senate Estimates
Budget
Senate
COMMITTEES
The Parliament establishes committees to examine bills or investigate issues in detail. Members of the public can make submissions to committees to express their views and opinions. To find out more about current committee inquiries go to Parliament of Australia Committees www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees

ESTIMATES
Senate estimates hearings are held three times a year. It is a chance for the Parliament to scrutinise how the government has spent the Budget and to question government ministers and senior public servants. Read more about Senate estimates www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_Estimates

THE BUDGET
The Treasurer presents the annual Budget every May. It outlines the government’s plan for collecting and spending money. Get informed about this year’s Australian Government Budget www.budget.gov.au

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS
The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is made up of the Prime Minister, state Premiers, territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. Visit COAG for more information www.coag.gov.au

EVENTS
Parliament House is a busy and vibrant place, hosting a variety of visitors and events every year. Go to This Week in Parliament to find out more www.aph.gov.au/news_and_events

Parliament House hosts events including the annual Australia Day Live concert, at which the Prime Minister announces the Australians of the Year. For more details go to Australia Day www.australiaday.gov.au
GET INVOLVED

Laws made by the federal Parliament affect your life. Decisions made by the government can be influenced by debate in the Parliament. Have your say in the process through:

COMMITTEES
You can help a committee to investigate a bill or issue by writing a submission or attending a public hearing. Find out more about how to contribute at:

CONTACTING YOUR MEMBER OR SENATOR
Write or contact your member or a senator from your state/territory or local electorate. Find them at:

Many parliamentarians also use social networking like Twitter and Facebook to stay in contact with the public.

PETITIONS
A petition is a document presented to Parliament by a group of people asking the Parliament to take action on a particular issue. By starting or signing a petition, you can influence decisions made by Parliament. Find out more about submitting a petition to Parliament at:

House:

Senate:
www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Petitions/Senate_Petitions

VOTING
Australian citizens aged 18 years or over are required to vote at federal elections. When you vote, you are expressing your views by choosing which people you want to represent you in Parliament. For more information about voting go the Australian Electoral Commission
www.aec.gov.au
FIND OUT MORE

OTHER LINKS

What’s new in the Parliament
www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events

Senate What’s On

About the House

House of Representatives Members
www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members

Senators

Australian Electoral Commission, Elections—frequently asked questions

PEO LINKS

Quick Answers

Fact Sheets
A comprehensive set of fact sheets on the federal Parliament.

Closer Look
A detailed exploration of Australia’s system of governance.

Videos
Watch an online video series about how Parliament works.