



What Happens in Parliament?

Teacher Support Documents

Helping Students Understand The Functions of Parliament

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Understanding and appreciating the role of Parliamentary Democracy
in Solomon Islands.





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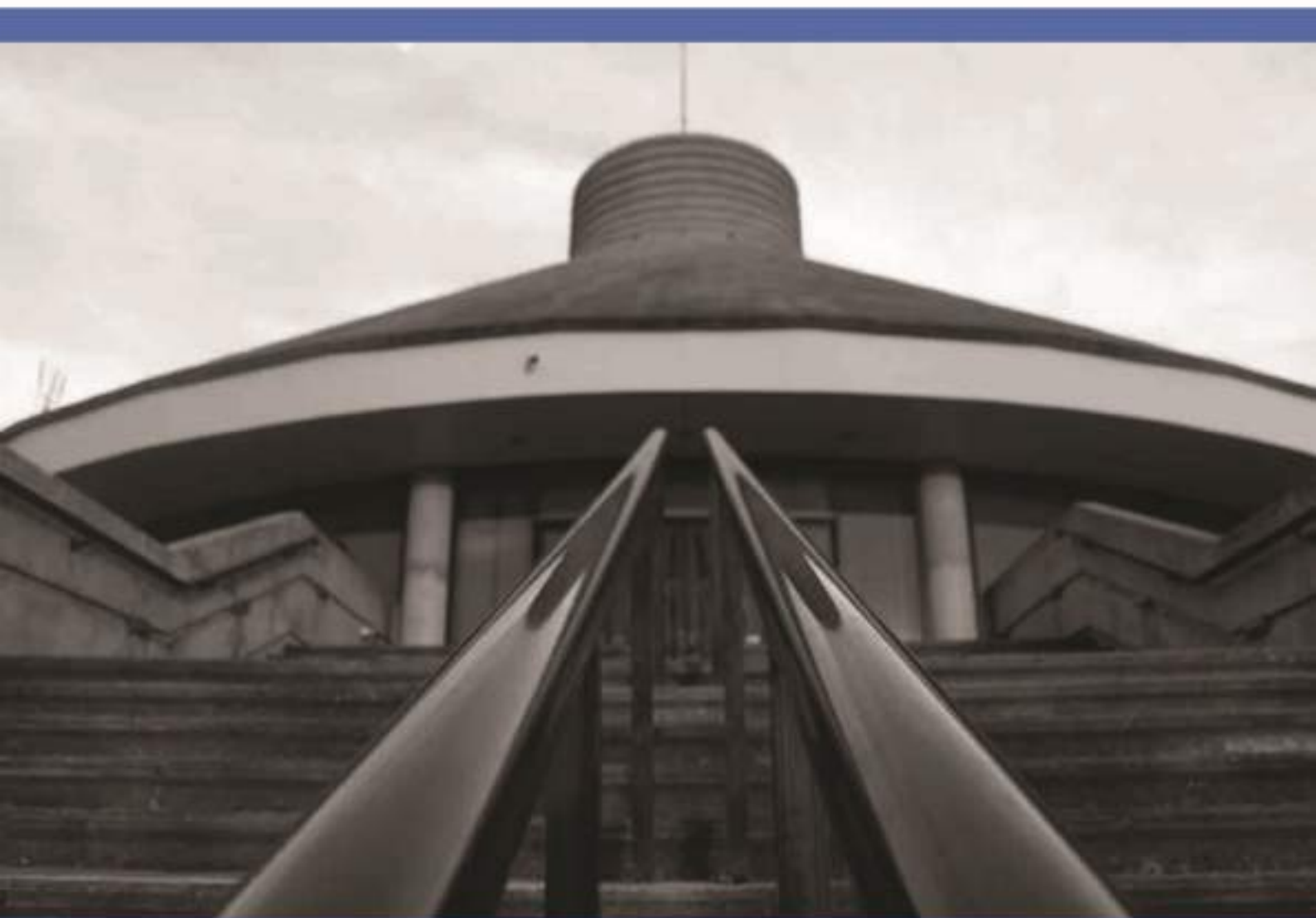
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Contents

Support document 1	The Separation of Powers	2
Support document 2	Solomon Islands National Parliament Seating Arrangement	3
Support document 2.1	Solomon Islands National Parliament Seating Arrangement	5
Support document 3	The Lawmaking Process	6
Support document 4	Further Classroom Activities and Classroom Tasks	7
Support document 5	Passing a Bill – A Role Play	9
Support document 6	Answers for Student Activity Worksheets	13





LEGISLATURE

(Parliament)

- This is Parliament
- The constitution stipulates the rules that need to be followed by the legislature and the Government
- The Speaker applies the constitution and facilitates Parliament
- Laws are debated and passed
- The roles in Parliament; such as the Speaker, Clerk, Sejeant-at-Arms, Prime Minister do not change but the people in them do
- Each person has a set role and duty in Parliament
- 50 Members of Parliament sit in Parliament and they represent their constituencies



EXECUTIVE

(Government)

- This is the Government
- The Prime Minister is the leader of the government
- The government of the day is made up of Ministers and back-benches, they form a Cabinet
- The Cabinet sets the policy agenda for the country and they introduce this vision to Parliament
- The agenda that the Cabinet sets should last for four years, after which a general election is held and a new government will form
- The Government has 24 Ministries Eg. Ministry of Health
- The Opposition and Independent members of Parliament scrutinize the government of the day



JUDICIARY

(Courts)

- This is the legal system
- Includes the High Court, Magistrate's Court and the Local Courts
- If people want to challenge a law that the Executive has passed in Parliament the Chief Justice, in the High Court, will hear this case and make a decision
- The Judges and Magistrates interpret and apply the laws (legislation) that the Executive have introduced to Parliament and that the Legislature has passed as law
- The Judiciary cannot change laws, they must interpret and enact them.

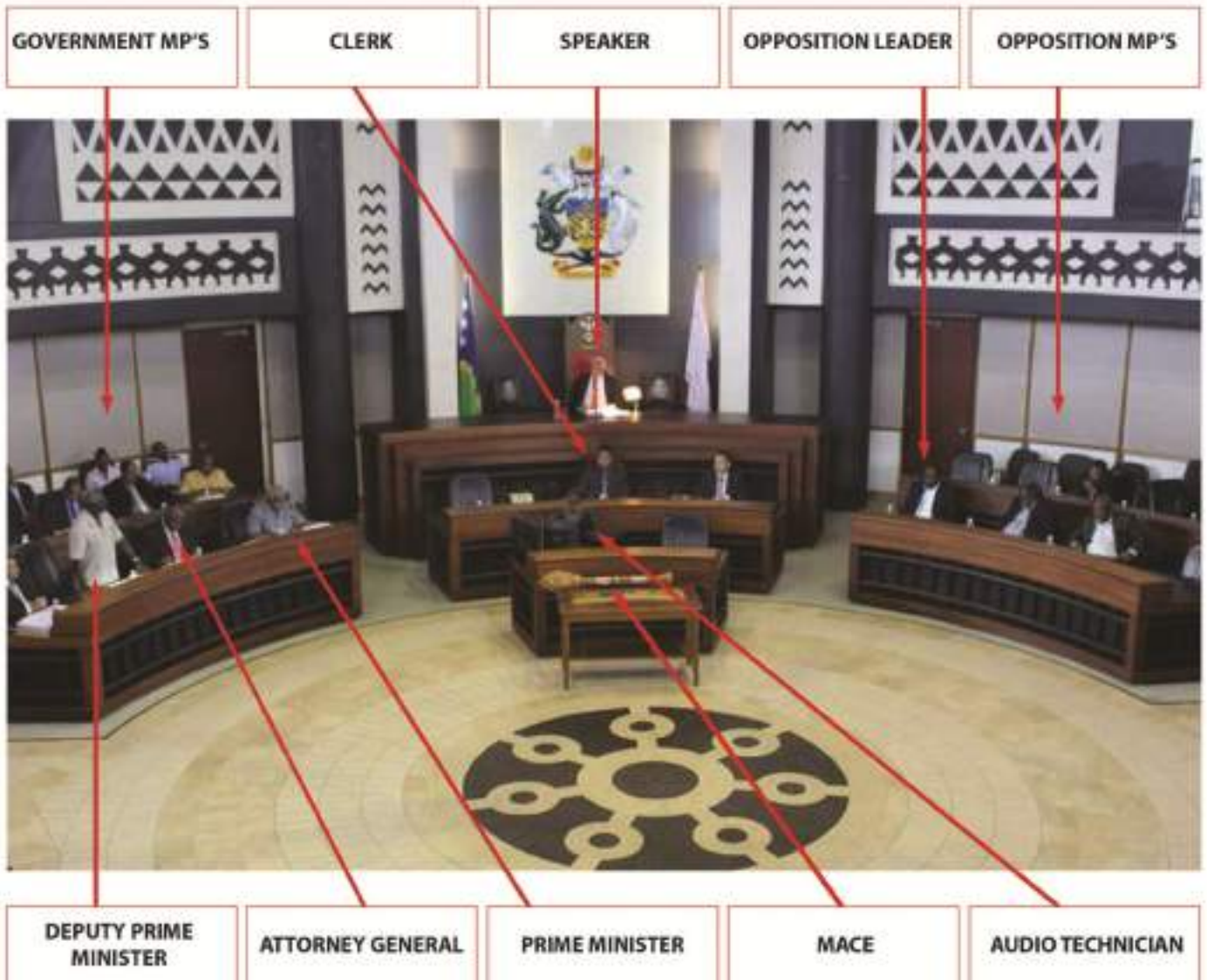


Each Arm of the State are independent and cannot interfere with each other. To avoid undue influence and possible corruption they act as separate entities.

Solomon Islands National Parliament Seating Arrangement

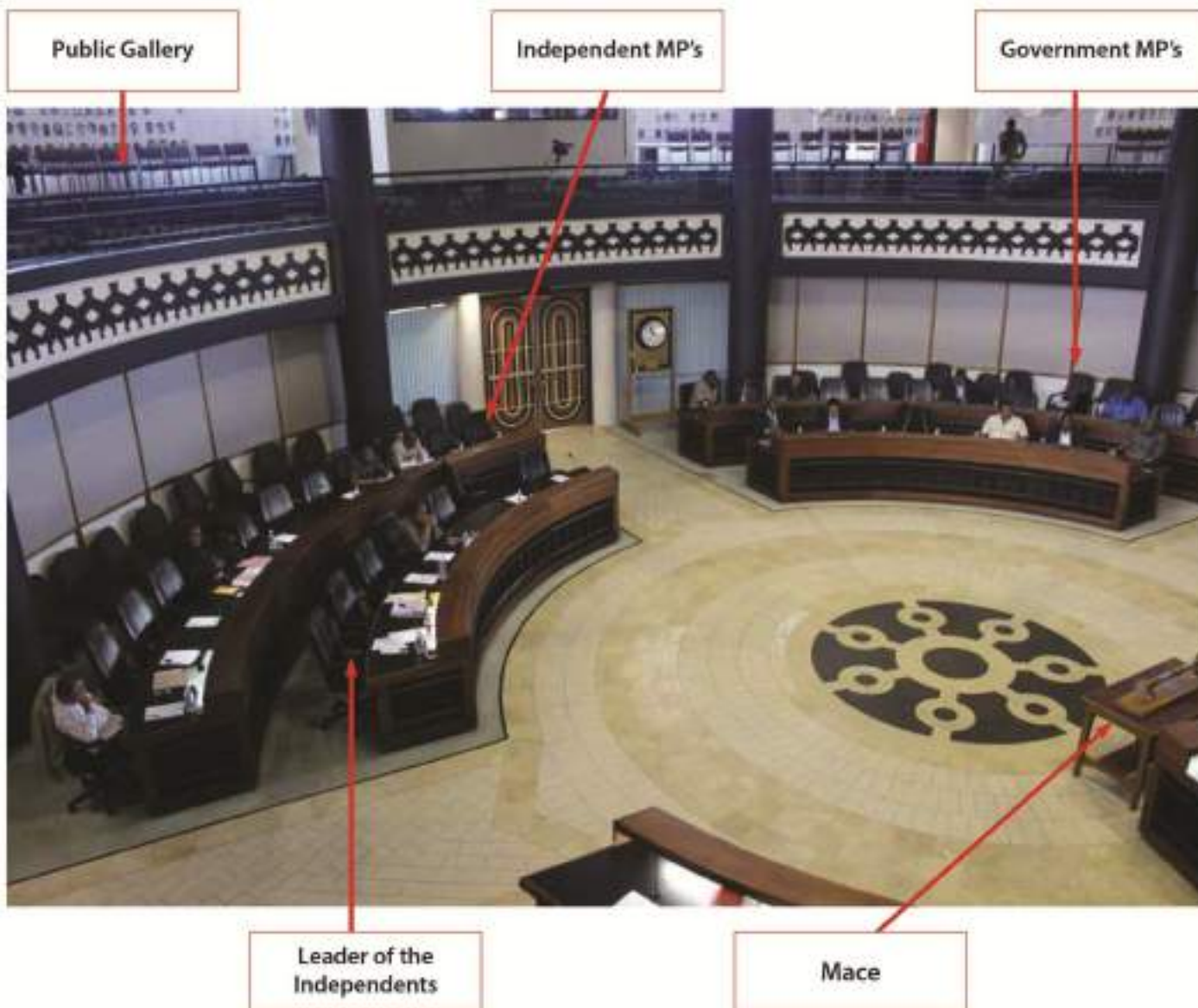
While the Members of Parliament might change, the seating arrangement in Parliament or the House does not. Government, Opposition and Independent MP's always occupy the same seats, as do Parliamentary officers.

Below is a view of the Parliament Chamber facing the Speaker (this is the front of the Chamber).



Solomon Islands National Parliament Seating Arrangement (cont)

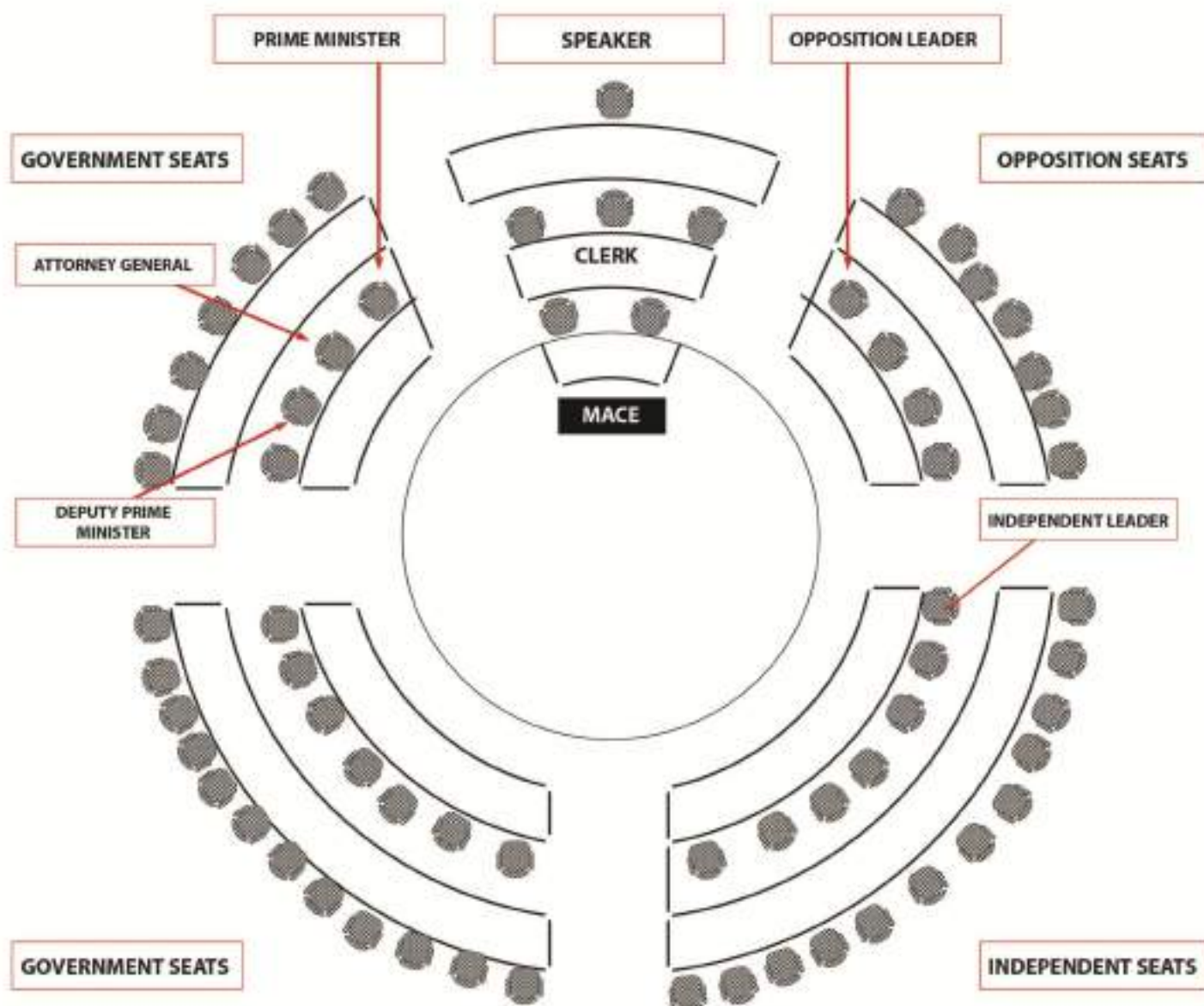
Below is a view of the Parliament Chamber facing away from the Speaker (this is the back of the Chamber).

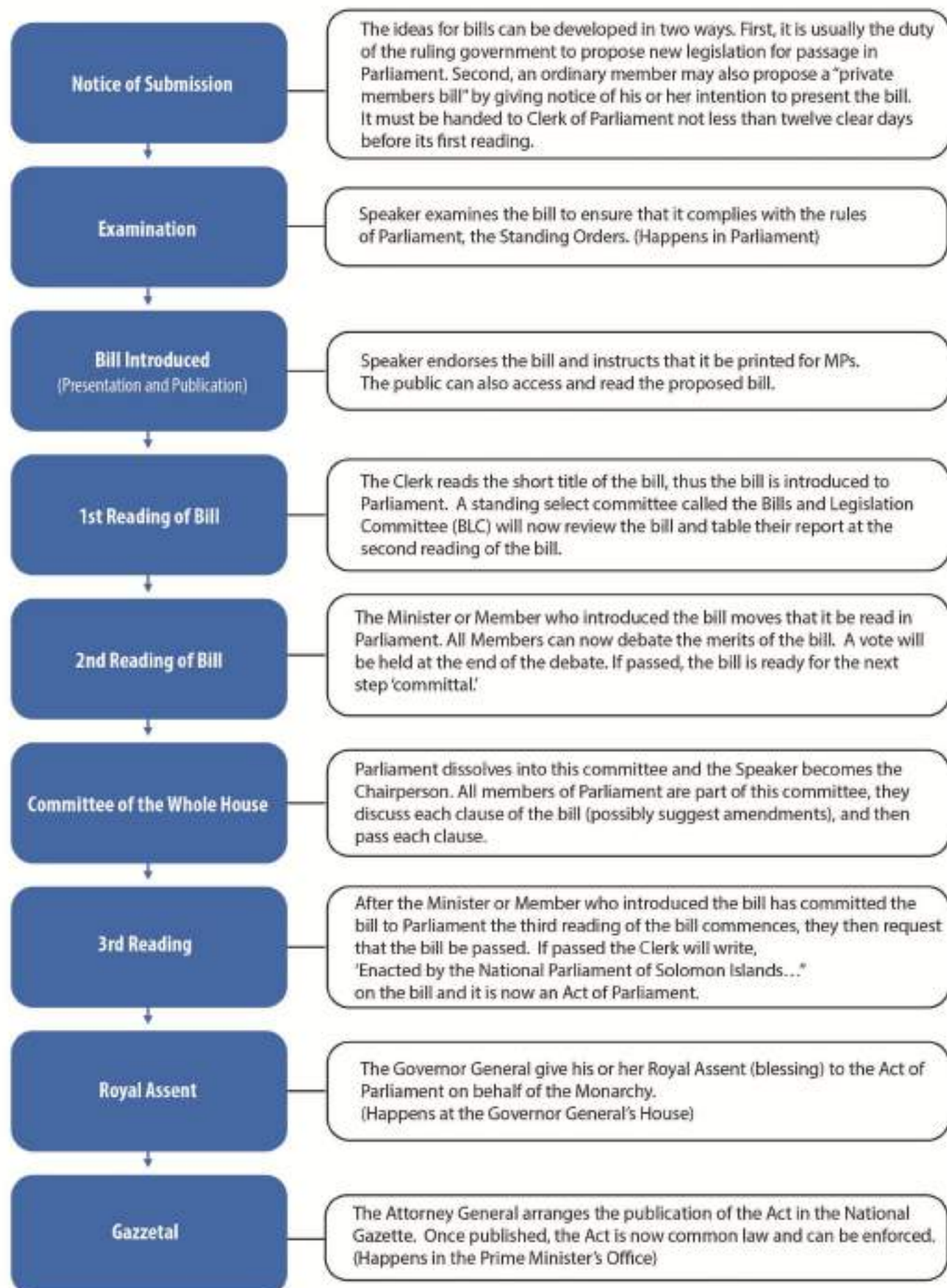


Solomon Islands National Parliament Seating Arrangement

While the Members of Parliament might change the seating arrangement in Parliament or the House does not. The Government, Opposition and Independent MP's always occupy the same seats, as do Parliamentary officers.

Below is a labelled birdseye view of the seating arrangement of the House of Parliament.





The following tasks are optional. They are designed to meet the varied learning abilities and interests that students possess. Each topic has Parliament at its center and they build on the ideas and concepts covered in the Teacher Reference Booklet. In the below tasks students are asked to consider the characteristics that a person should have to be a Member of Parliament, apply their knowledge about Parliamentary procedures, reflect on how they can effect change and finally have an opportunity to explore issues that are of importance to them.

Topic One | Using SIBC Radio Or The Island Sun Or Solomon Star.

Listen to SIBC Radio or read articles from The Island Sun or the Solomon Star to demonstrate to students Parliament in action or as a way to introduce current issues to the classroom. Below are some possible questions that you could ask students to complete or reflect on if you choose to use either of these two resources.

- 1• Write down the date, the article's headline and the author of the article.
- 2• Describe the law that is being explored.
- 3• Describe the issues that this law is meant to address or has been addressing.
- 4• Which members of Parliament are mentioned and what are their roles?
- 5• Reflect on the stages in the law making process and write down the stage that the law being discussed or reported on is at, provide evidence to support your argument.
- 6• Do you agree with the law? Explain why or why not.

Topic Two | What is a Leader?

Get students to interview an elder, community leader or another respected member of their community. You might like them to explore the below ideas.

- What are the qualities that a leader must possess?
- If society need leaders
- Brainstorm other questions to ask
- The pressures that leaders face
- What leaders should do?

Topic Three | Debates

Organize students into two opposing groups and conduct a debate on an issue. You might like to use one of the issues included in Topic Ten.

Students should:

- Research their topic
- Think about the opposing side's arguments
- Create a strong contention with supporting arguments

Topic Four | What is Parliament?

Ask students to create an 'Introduction to Parliament' booklet for primary aged children. You could ask them to include information on the below topics:

- Roles of people in Parliament
- Introducing a bill to Parliament
- The law making process
- Why Parliament is important and the separation of powers
- Include pictures, diagrams and other images

Topic Five | Political Party

Ask students to create their own political party.

- Create a name
- Create a slogan and symbol
- Write your political manifesto

Topic Six | Members of Parliament

- Research a current or past Member of Parliament and create a profile on them
- Create a 'position vacant' poster describing the criteria and characteristics required to be a Member of Parliament

Further Classroom Activities and Student Tasks (cont)

Topic Seven | Active Citizenship

Get students to choose a local, national or international issue that they're passionate about and ask them to try to raise awareness and create change by doing any of the following things:

- Organize a public rally or meeting to discuss the issue and raise awareness
- Organize and create a petition and send it to their local Member of Parliament
- Complete one of the tasks in Topic Eight, 'Representation'. This is where their MP can represent the student

Topic Eight | Representation

(Build on Topic Seven, 'Active Citizenship' and complete one of the tasks below)

- Write a letter to their Member of Parliament about the issue
- Write a letter to the Parliamentary Committee that is linked to their issue
- Try to arrange a meeting with their Member of Parliament to discuss the issue

Topic Nine | Writing Tasks

- Write a newspaper article reporting on a current issue being discussed in Parliament or about an issue in your community
- Write a speech that a Minister gives to Cabinet to convince their party members that they should support their proposed bill
- Write a speech that a Minister would give to Parliament when they are commending a bill to Parliament
- Write a persuasive speech or argumentative essay on any of the topics mentioned in the Topic Ten

Topic Ten | Possible Issues to Explore

The following issues could be explored, reflected on and presented in numerous forms.

The below ideas are suggestions only, you will need to work with students to explore some of the concerns that are linked with each topic. You should add your own ideas based on your school and community's circumstances and needs.

Issues at school

- Play area / the playground
- Classrooms
- Disciplinary Issues
- Bullying
- Homework
- Class materials
- Bathrooms
- Infrastructure
- Teacher absenteeism
- Boarding School Life
- Subjects offered

Issues in the community

- Access to public transport
- Access to the internet
- Access to water / electricity
- Access to quality education and schools
- Access to clinics
- Sanitation
- Providing more things for young people to do
- Improving roads and transport

Issues for the nation

- Reducing the entitlements of Members of Parliament
- Making voting compulsory
- Having quotas to include more women or young people in Parliament
- Free education for all
- Climate Change

Ask the class to brainstorm their own issues.

This play is designed to give students an insight into Parliament and the types of debate and language used by MPs and Parliamentary officers when a bill is being read for the second time (the debating stage of the law making process).

Assign the below roles to students and get them to read it aloud to the class. To give your students a more authentic experience and if possible, arrange your classroom like Parliament (see Teacher Support Document number 2).

At the end of the script you will see one task that your students could complete, look to Activity 9, 9.1 and 9.2 in the Student Activity Booklet for more tasks linked to this role play.

Roles to assign:

- Sergeant at Arms
- Speaker of Parliament
- Clerk
- Minister of Education
- Member for South Choiseul
- Member for Central Honiara
- Member for Shortlands
- Member for West Guadalcanal
- Opposition Leader

Beginning:

Directions:

- Sergeant at Arms announces the Speaker's entry to Parliament.

Sergeant at Arms: "Honourable Members, the Speaker".

Directions:

- Sergeant at Arms leads the Speaker into the Chamber, they place the Mace on the stand while the speaker goes up to his/her seat and they wait.
- Everybody stands.
- The Speaker bows to the members on the right side (members bow), then bows to the members on the left side (members bow), and everybody sits down.
- Clerk announces the bill.

The Clerk: "Bills, Second Reading, The Extension of School Hours Bill 2018."

The Speaker: "I call on the Minister of Education who is in charge of the bill to give his/her opening remarks on the 'Extension of School Hours Bill 2018'."

(Mover of the bill)

Passing A Bill - A Role Play (cont)

Minister of Education: "Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker, first of all I want to thank the Government for allowing this bill to be tabled in Parliament. Also, I would like to thank all my staff at the Ministry of Education for their hard work in putting this bill together."

Honourable members, this bill will extend the school hours for forms 5-6 from 5 hours of school each day to 8 hours. This means that official school programs will start at 8:00am and finish at 4:00pm.

This Government sees the need to improve the academic level of our children. This country has a high percentage of illiteracy and the aim of this bill is to improve our children's skills in reading and mathematics. This government cares for our children and wants this nation to be the smartest in the Pacific. Mr/Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House."

The Speaker: "Members, the floor is now open for debate. I call on the Leader of Opposition."

Directions:

- Leader of Opposition rises from his/her chair

Leader of Opposition: "Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker. I agree with the aim of the bill, however, we should not extend school to 8 hours per day, this is too long and it will exhaust our children who will have to endure sitting in class for 8 hours! I suggest we increase the school hours to 6 hours. Students will not fully concentrate if they are tired and even hungry from long hours of schooling. The concentration span for young students is quite short and keeping them in school longer will only decrease their chances to learn. Mr/Madam Speaker, I urge the government to reconsider this and take our recommendation. Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker."

Directions:

- Leader of the Opposition sits
- Member for South Choiseul rises from his/her chair

The Speaker: "I call on the member for South Choiseul."

Member for South Choiseul: "Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Minister of Education for bringing this bill to Parliament. Our students need maximum attention when it comes to education. To fix the problem of illiteracy I think this action by the government will be welcomed by my people in my constituency. Thank you Mr/ Madam Speaker."

Directions:

- Member for South Choiseul sits
- Member for Central Honiara rises from his/her chair

The Speaker: "I call on the member for Central Honiara."

Member for Central Honiara: "Mr/ Madam Speaker I fully support this bill. If you look around town you will notice that students roam the streets after school and into the late hours of the evening. Keeping them in school until 4:00pm will encourage them to engage in more academic pursuits rather than involving themselves in other social activities that will only hinder their education. As a member for Central Honiara City, I fully support this bill."

Directions:

- Member for Central Honiara sits
- Member for Shortlands rises from his/her chair

The Speaker: "I call on the member for Shortlands."

Member for Shortlands: "Mr/ Madam Speaker my constituents and I do not support this bill. As the law currently stands students finish their day at 2pm, this allows them time to go home to help and support their family. Many of my constituents work hard for a living and they rely on their children to contribute to the household chores in the afternoon, they do this so their parents can continue to work and provide for the family. The school hours that Solomon Islands children currently attend are enough for them to receive a good education. Our current system allows students to become future contributing members of society, while also enabling them to contribute to their family's wellbeing and success now."

Directions:

- Member for Shortlands sits
- Member for West Guadalcanal rises from his/her chair

Member for West Guadalcanal: "Mr/ Madam Speaker extending the school hours to 8 hours a day should be seen as a great opportunity for our nation and for our students. Our curriculum is already crowded and there are not enough hours in the day to teach all the required skills to our students. Extending the hours of teaching will allow teachers to take their time in teaching their students the skills that they need for their future, this surely is better than rushing through the curriculum which is what happens now. I support the Extension of School Hours Bill."

Directions:

- Member for Shortlands sits

[Students now vote for the bill]

The Speaker: "Honourable members, I will now put the question. The question is that the "Extension of School Hours Bill 2018" be now read a second time."

The Speaker: All those in favour say, "Aye".

Directions

- All Government members who agree say "Aye" aloud

The Speaker: "All those against say, "No".

Directions

- All members who do not agree say "No" aloud

The Speaker: "I think the "Ayes" have it. [Pause] The "Ayes" have it."

The "Extension of School Hours Bill 2018" has therefore been read a second time and stands committed to the Committee of the Whole House."

Directions:

- All stand.
- The Speaker bows to members on the right side (members bow) and then bows to members on the left (members bow) and the Speaker leaves.

Meeting ends

FINISH

Student Activity 1 | 'What Happens in Parliament after a National General Election?'
Pages 4 and 5 provides the specific details that are linked to this worksheet.

The correct order is:

1. *Members elect the Prime Minister*
2. *The election is by secret ballot and conducted by the Governor General*
3. *Appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers, this is known as the Cabinet*
4. *First meeting of Parliament*
5. *Members elect a Speaker, the Speaker is not a Member of Parliament*
6. *Members elect a Deputy Speaker*
7. *Parliament is now ready to function*

Student Activity 2 and 2.1 | 'Solomon Islands National Parliament Seating Arrangement'
Page 5 of the Teacher Support Documents Booklet provides the correct details for these activities.

Student Activity 4 | 'Standing Select Committees'
Page 7 provides the specific details that are linked to this worksheet.

The correct answers to the questions are:

1. *10*
2. *Standing Select Committees are permanent*
3. *Committees inquire and produce reports to Parliament on matters that are assigned to them. Their work includes scrutinizing bills and providing oversight to ensure that the Government is held to account.*
4. *Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Expenditure Committee (PEC)*
5. *Parliamentary House Committee (PHC)*
6. *Constitution Review Committee (CRC)*
7. *Health and Medical Services Committee (HMSC)*
8. *Share and listen to student responses*
9. *Police, National Security and Correctional Services Committee (PNSCSC)*
10. *Bills and Legislation Committee (BLC) and Foreign Relations Committee (FRC)*

Student Activity 5, 5.1 and 5.2 | 'The Law Making Process'
Page 12 of the Teacher Reference Booklet provides the correct order and details for this.

Student Activity 8 | 'Structure of a Bill'

Preamble - A statement at the beginning of the bill setting out the vision and background to it.

Long Title - States the basic purpose of the bill.

Short Title - An easy way for people to reference the bill.

Enactment Formula - A formal statement declaring that Parliament has considered and passed the bill.

Clauses - Make up the substance of the bill and set out the actual rules to be enacted.

Schedule - Appears at the end of a bill. It is only needed if the bill has many technical rules and requires extra information to be explained.

Explanatory Memorandum - A statement explaining the objectives, reasons and purpose of the bill.

Answers for Student Activity Worksheets

Student Activity 9 | 'Passing a Bill – Role Play, Comprehension Questions'

The correct answers to the questions are:

1. *The Extension of School Hours Bill 2018.*
2. *The Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education.*
3. *To extend the hours of school from 5 hours per day to 8 hours.*
4. *Commend means to present something that is suitable for approval.*
5. *The Leader of the Opposition.*
6. *"Honourable members, I will now put the question. The question is that the "Extension of School Hours Bill 2018" be now read a second time."*
7. *The people who spoke, their point of view and reasons for their point of view are as follows:*

Person who Spoke	Their point of view (opinion)	Reasons given for their opinion
Minister of Education	The school day should be extended to 8 hours a day.	To increase the level of literacy and numeracy in Solomon Islands. They want the nation to be the smartest in the Pacific.
Leader of the Opposition	That the school day should be increased to 6 hours and not 8.	Students will not be able to concentrate for 8 hours and they will be tired and hungry after a long day at school.
Member for South Choiseul	The school day should be extended to 8 hours a day.	To fix the problem of illiteracy in Solomon Islands.
Member for Central Honiara	The school day should be extended to 8 hours a day.	It will keep students engaged in their education and also decrease the number of youths roaming the streets at night.
Member for Shortlands	That the school day should stay as it is, 5-6 hours per day.	Families rely on students to complete chores around the home and help their family in the afternoon. They also believe that the education that students receive now is enough.
Member for West Guadalcanal	The school day should be extended to 8 hours a day.	The extension of time will allow teachers to teach more content as well as being able to teach things in more depth and detail.

8. The bill has passed the second reading, it will now go to the Committee stage where it will be discussed clause by clause.
9. The next step for the bill is the Committee of the Whole House.

Extension Questions

10. The Speaker would have seen the bill before this second reading, they would have seen it at the examination stage.
11. When the bill is introduced (the third step in the law making process) is when Members of Parliament get a copy of the bill.

NOTE

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