

THE LOWER HOUSE

- The **Parliament of New South Wales**, the law-making body for the State of New South Wales, is Australia's first and oldest parliament. It consists of two democratically elected Houses.
- The **Lower House** of the Parliament of New South Wales, the **Legislative Assembly**, is the seat of Government which is formed by the party supported by the majority of the House's 93 Members.
- Elections take place every four years using an optional preferential voting system. Members each represent a single electorate.
- The Premier and most Ministers are Members of the Legislative Assembly so most bills and government business are introduced here.
- The colours of the Chambers follow the British tradition of green for the Lower House and red for the Upper House.

FROM A HOSPITAL BUILT ON RUM...



Today, only the two outer buildings of the 1816 "Rum Hospital" remain on Macquarie Street. The northern wing, shown above - once the Chief Surgeon's Quarters - became the nucleus of Parliament House in 1829.

- Sydney's first permanent hospital was completed in 1816. To fund it, the Governor, Lachlan Macquarie, let the building contractors import and sell 60,000 gallons of rum. Two of the "Rum Hospital's" original three buildings survive, one as part of Parliament House.
- Sydney was founded as a British convict colony in 1788, but by 1824, with many free settlers in the colony, a small Legislative Council was established to assist the Governor in a first step towards democratic government in Australia.

- In 1829 the enlarged Legislative Council began to meet in the Chief Surgeon's Quarters and from that time this site has remained the centre of the New South Wales Legislature.

- In 1843 and again in 1856 legislative chambers were added to meet the needs of the increasingly democratic colony. So, at other times, were facilities such as offices, dining rooms and a library. Plans for a completely new building were always abandoned because of cost.

- Finally in 1974, rebuilding began. A jumble of buildings was replaced with a 12-storey block linked by the Fountain Court to the preserved Macquarie Street buildings. The historic Chambers, Library, Foyers and former Surgeon's Quarters were meticulously restored, and remain today as the heart and public face of New South Wales' Parliament House.

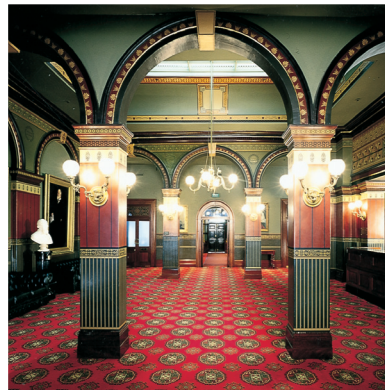
Parliament House today is a complex of several buildings - as evident from this architectural model. Newer major office and services accommodation completed by 1980 is set back to avoid overshadowing the historic Macquarie Street streetscape.

Old and new parts of Parliament House are both separated and linked by the Fountain Court area with its roof top garden.

... TO A CONTEMPORARY CORNERSTONE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

- The Parliament of New South Wales is directly elected by the people to make state laws, control state finances, and discuss matters of importance to the people of New South Wales. Parliamentary elections determine the **State Government** formed by the party with majority support in the Lower House.
- Parliament is the **legislative** arm of the three elements in the system of government. The other two are the **executive** (the Cabinet) and the **judiciary** (judges and courts). Each has separate functions and acts to balance the power of the others.
- The State Premier and Ministers (the Cabinet) develop policy and carry out the laws through government departments. They remain members of Parliament and are **responsible** to it.

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



▲ LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOYER

The Legislative Assembly Chamber is Australia's oldest legislative chamber. Originally built for Legislative Council in 1843, it has been used continuously by the Legislative Assembly since it was created in 1856 when the bicameral (two-house) Parliamentary system was instituted. In the early 1980's the Chamber was restored to its 1908 appearance.



▲ LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER



THE FOUNTAIN COURT

The Fountain Court features a central water sculpture by Robert Woodward. In the surrounding area temporary displays of artworks and items of historical and cultural interest are always on public view.

As part of the reconciliation process, and in recognition of the prior occupation of New South Wales by its indigenous people, the west wall of the Fountain Court is dedicated as a permanent area for the display of works by NSW Aboriginal artists.



- Of Australia's **three levels of government** - Federal, State and Local - the States are responsible for most day-to-day matters like education, health, police, roads and transport. The Federal Government deals with national matters like defence, foreign affairs, trade, communications and economic policy.



THE UPPER HOUSE

- The **Upper House** of the Parliament of New South Wales, the **Legislative Council**, has 42 Members, each serving eight-year terms. Half stand for re-election every four years.
- Members are elected on a state-wide basis in proportion to the total vote their party receives. Consequently, no major party has held a majority since 1988 and the House has a broad and diverse representation of minor parties and groups.

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The Legislative Council Chamber is a prefabricated cast-iron building manufactured in Scotland and originally shipped to Victoria. It was erected at Parliament House in 1856 to accommodate the Council when the bicameral parliamentary system was created. In the early 1980s the chamber was restored to its 1852 appearance.

- Most bills commence in the Lower House and the Council is primarily a **house of review**, taking a second look at, and often amending, bills. However, bills can originate in either House.



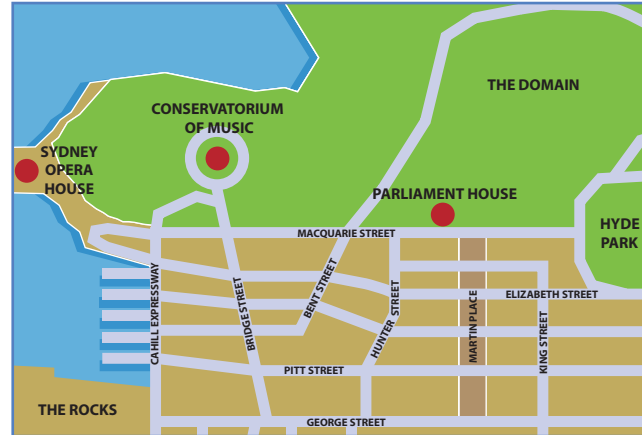
▲ LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOYER



▲ LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER

- The powers and procedures of both Houses of Parliament are broadly similar although the Council cannot block money bills such as the Budget. After their passage through both Houses, bills go to the Governor of New South Wales for assent to become law.

The Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges the traditional owners of this land, the Cadigal people of the Eora nation



VISITING PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Parliament House is in Macquarie Street, Sydney, almost opposite Martin Place.

Parliament House, including displays and information, is open weekdays from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

On non-sitting days, regular legislative chambers tours are conducted. **Group tours** should be booked by phoning **02 9230 3444**.

On sitting days, visitors are welcome to view proceedings from the public galleries.

Visits are free.

FINDING OUT MORE

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PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PARLIAMENT