



# GLOSSARY OF PARLIAMENTARY TERMS

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

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## Aa

<b>absolute majority</b>	a majority of all Members of the Assembly, irrespective of whether they are present in the Chamber at the time i.e. At least 9 Members
<b>Act</b>	a law made by parliament
<b>A.C.T. Legislation Register</b>	the website that contains all legislation that governs the ACT. The A.C.T. Legislation Register is maintained by Parliamentary Counsel (the office that drafts all legislation to go before the Assembly). The register is at - <a href="http://www.legislation.act.gov.au">www.legislation.act.gov.au</a>
<b>adjourn</b>	to postpone or suspend to another time: <i>Debate adjourned until a later hour or the next day of sitting</i>
<b>adjournment debate</b>	a debate at the end of each sitting when members may make speeches on any subject: <i>Six members spoke during the adjournment debate</i> ; 30 minutes (maximum) is set aside of an adjournment debate
<b>agreement in principle stage</b>	Stage 2 of debating a new piece of legislation (a Bill) that has been introduced into the Assembly. This is the stage where Members debate the merits of the Bill. The Member who introduced the Bill has the final right of reply; the Assembly then votes on the question "that this bill be agreed to in principle". If the Bill receives a majority vote it moves onto Stage 3 (Detail Stage), if not, the Bill is lost and not considered further.
<b>Agreement to the bill</b>	the final stage (Stage 4) of considering a bill; the Speaker puts the question "that the Bill (or the Bill as amended) be agreed to". To become an Act (a law) the Bill must receive majority agreement; if there is a tie the Bill is negated.
<b>amendment</b>	an alteration (to a bill, or motion): Amendments can be moved by any member.
<b>amending bill</b>	a bill which amends an Act.

<b>appropriation bill</b>	a bill which, if passed, will allow the Government to spend money it has gathered from the community through taxes and charges. The main appropriation bill each year implements the Budget of the Government: <i>The Appropriation Bill is usually introduced into the Assembly in May/June of each year.</i>
<b>assembly business</b>	business before the parliament which relates to the Assembly's committees or subordinate legislation.
<b>Ayes</b>	the votes of members who vote "yes"

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## **Bb**

<b>backbench</b>	those members who are not ministers or shadow ministers.
<b>balance of power</b>	1. an arrangement of individuals or political parties such that none of them will be strong enough to control all the others 2. the ability of one person or party to decide the issue by the way he/she/they votes.
<b>bar</b>	a barrier at the entrance to the floor of the chamber, beyond which only members are allowed.
<b>bells</b>	electronic bells, the ringing of which calls members into the chamber at the beginning of a sitting, because a vote is to be taken, or because there are not enough members present.
<b>bill</b>	a proposal for a new law.
<b>bring down the budget</b>	to place a plan before parliament each year showing what money the Government expects to receive and how the government wants to spend it.
<b>budget bill</b>	proposals to allow the Government to spend or raise money. The Appropriation Bill is placed before the parliament in May/June each year.
<b>business</b>	the matters with which members are concerned such as questions without notice, presentation of papers, notices and orders of the day
<b>Business of Committees</b>	a document, similar to the Notice Paper on Assembly Committees that includes details of membership, terms and current inquiries
<b>by leave</b>	with permission of every member present in the Chamber.

**Cc**

<b>censure motion</b>	a motion moved which is very critical of a minister, another member or the government.
<b>chamber</b>	the meeting room of a house of parliament
<b>Chief Minister</b>	is the head of the A.C.T. Government. The Chief Minister is elected by secret ballot on the first day that newly elected Members meet in the Chamber. The Chief Minister then appoints up to 4 Ministers and together they form the Executive who have responsibility for managing the day to day running of the A.C.T. through the A.C.T. Public Service
<b>clause</b>	each separate sentence, or main item or requirement of a bill (once a bill becomes an Act, a clause is known as a section).
<b>Clerk</b>	the most senior permanent official in the Assembly who is responsible for the administrative functions and provides procedural advice in the Chamber and announces the business before the Assembly.
<b>cognate debate</b>	relax relevancy rule to include debate on other related matters i.e. a debate in which two or more related matters are discussed at the same time, although questions are put separately.
<b>committee system</b>	the A.C.T. Legislative Assembly has a strong committee system; there are two types of committees – standing and select. Committees reflect the composition of the Assembly and are made up of non-executive Members. Committees have representation from the Government, the Opposition and the Crossbench. Committees inquire into matters of concern to the Assembly and the community.
<b>constituents</b>	members of the public who are enrolled to vote in a Member's electorate.
<b>crossbench</b>	one of a set of seats for Members who belong to neither the government nor the opposition parties; seats for minor parties and independents.

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**Dd**

<b>Daily Program</b>	an unofficial program or agenda which shows the items of business with which the Assembly is expected to deal on a particular day: <i>the Daily Program is often called the 'Blue' because it is printed on blue paper.</i>
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<b>delegated legislation</b>	laws in the form of regulations, orders or rules which an Act of Parliament allows the Executive or a delegate to make. Most such legislation is disallowable by the Assembly.
<b>deliberative</b>	the ordinary vote of a member of parliament: <i>The Speaker of the Assembly has a deliberative vote, not a casting vote as is often the rule in other parliaments</i>
<b>detail stage</b>	Stage 3 of debating a Bill; during this stage Members discuss the Bill in detail – usually clause by clause and amendments may be proposed. Members can speak twice to each amendment. For an amendment to be included in the final bill it must be agreed to by a majority of the Members present.
<b>division (called vote)</b>	the separation of the members of a law-making body into two groups, for and against, so that their votes can be counted; the bells are rung for 4 minutes when a division is called – these bells call Members to the Chamber for the vote; Members who do not arrive in time are locked out
<b>Dorothy Dix question or a Dorothy Dixer</b>	a question asked in parliament by a member at a minister's request, to allow a minister to highlight positive developments in their portfolio
<b>draft bill</b>	an early version of a bill, before it is introduced into parliament

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**Ee**

<b>enact</b>	to place on the Statute books so that the law can operate: <i>the Environment Protection Bill (1998) was enacted on 25 May</i>
<b>estimates</b>	the amounts of money which the government thinks will be needed to run the government works and services for the year: <i>details of estimates can be found in the Appropriation Bill</i>
<b>executive</b>	the branch of government which carries out or administers the laws; the group of people from the governing party who make policy and control government departments, and who are answerable to parliament for the way they run the government. In the Legislative Assembly the executive and the cabinet is the same group: - the 5 ministers.
<b>executive business</b>	business which is sponsored by a minister: <i>if a minister presents a bill to the parliament it is listed in the 'executive business' section of the notice paper</i>

**explanatory statement** a paper which explains the purpose and details of bills, the proposed effect of each clause, usually in a simple and less technical way

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**Ff**

**floor of the parliament** the enclosed area containing members' seats in the chamber

**free vote/  
conscience vote** a vote in parliament in which members are free to vote according to their own judgement or beliefs, and not necessarily according to the guidelines, policies or decisions of their political party

**frontbench** 1. those members of parliament who are ministers or shadow ministers  
2. the seats where such members sit

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**Gg**

**Government** under the Westminster system, the party with the majority of votes on the floor of the house forms Government. The Chief Minister is the head of the Government. The Government consists of the Chief Minister, up to four Ministers and Members on the backbench.

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**Hh**

**Hansard** the official record of what is said in debates, in the Chamber and in Committee Public Hearings. The Assembly's Hansard is taped by audio, with the uncorrected proof copy sent to Members to be checked for errors. The Hansard office then tidies up the language and publishes it on the Assembly website. All Hansard records are kept in the Chamber.

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**li**

**Independent** an elected Member who has no alliance with a party.

**in order** in accord with the rules, in a correct form or style, as required by standing orders.

**interjection** a remark made to interrupt, or respond to a point during a speech or debate

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**Jj**

**judiciary** is the third arm of governance in the A.C.T. Constitutional framework. The judiciary consists of the A.C.T. Magistrates Court and the A.C.T. Supreme Court. The judiciary is totally independent of the Assembly and is responsible for the dispensing of justice in the A.C.T. and deals with civil, criminal or administrative actions.

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**LI**

<b>Law</b>	a bill that has received a majority vote in the Assembly becomes a law – a rule - that all A.C.T. residents must abide by.
<b>legislature</b>	law making body of a country or state/territory
<b>long title</b>	the full title of a bill which sets out briefly the purpose or scope of the bill: <i>the Clerk reads the long title of a bill when the bill is first introduced</i>

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**Mm**

<b>matter of public importance</b>	a topical issue of concern to the community which is suggested for discussion by a member. Members explain their view on the matter but no vote is taken. Written notice of a proposed MPI must be given to the Speaker two hours before the Assembly meets (prior to 8.30am). The Speaker determines if the matter is in order then submits it to the Assembly – if more than one matter is submitted for the day, the MPI is selected by lot. MPIs may be discussed for a period of up to one hour
<b>MLA</b>	Member of the Legislative Assembly
<b>ministerial statement</b>	a statement made by a minister, often used to announce the government's policies and decisions. Ministerial Statement's occur after Question Time
<b>minority government</b>	a government formed by a party or coalition of parties which does not have a majority of the Assembly in its own right
<b>minutes of proceedings</b>	is the official record of what actually happened in the Chamber on a sitting day and includes details of amendments moved or circulated. The proof of the minutes of proceedings is usually available on the website within 2 hours of the Assembly adjourning except on a Thursday evening.
<b>motion</b>	an idea or proposal put forward at a meeting for consideration, debate and decision: <i>he moved a motion that the member be suspended</i>

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**Nn**

<b>no confidence</b>	a means by which members express dissatisfaction with the performance of a government or a minister: <i>a successful no confidence motion may lead to the resignation of the government or minister</i>
<b>noes</b>	the votes of members who vote no
<b>non-Executive Member</b>	Members who are not Ministers – they consist of the Shadow Ministers of the Opposition, the Back Bench Members of the Government and the Crossbench Members
<b>notice of motion</b>	an announcement of intention to put forward a motion or present a bill for consideration. Notices are published on the Notice Paper.
<b>Notice Paper</b>	the formal agenda document issued each sitting day which lists all business outstanding before the Assembly and questions on notice
<b>Notification</b>	the formal notification of an Act on the ACT Legislation Register. A bill does not become law unless it is notified.

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**Oo**

<b>Opposition</b>	under the Westminster system the party that is the second largest party on the floor of the house forms Opposition. The role of the Opposition is to scrutinise the actions and decisions taken by Ministers
<b>order</b>	call for Members to adhere to the rules of debate laid down by standing orders
<b>order of the day</b>	an item of business which the Assembly has ordered to be set down for discussion on a particular day, usually the next day of sitting
<b>out of order</b>	not in accordance with the standing orders

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**Pp**

<b>pair</b>	an arrangement between parties whereby two members from opposing sides do not vote on a particular occasion, so that one or both can be absent without affecting the result of the vote.
<b>Parliamentary Counsel</b>	the office that drafts all legislation for the Assembly
<b>parliamentary procedure</b>	rules for and methods of carrying out the business of a parliament

<b>personal explanation</b>	a short statement made by a member concerning a matter with which he or she is personally connected, or by a member who feels he or she has been misrepresented and who wishes to state the correct facts or situation
<b>petition</b>	a document presented to a parliament by a person or group of people asking for action on a matter
<b>point of order</b>	a question as to whether proceedings in a meeting are in accord with the standing orders or in the correct form
<b>presentation stage</b>	Stage 1 of introducing proposed legislation into the Assembly for consideration by Members. The Member introducing the proposed legislation makes a presentation speech on the Bill outlining its purpose. At the conclusion of the speech another Member rises and asks for debate to be adjourned on the matter. This allows Members time to consider the bill and to conduct research and to discuss issues with constituents and community groups
<b>presiding officer</b>	a member of parliament elected to preside over, or be in charge of, the business, proceedings and administration of a house of parliament. In the Legislative Assembly the presiding officer is called the Speaker
<b>private member</b>	a member of parliament who is not a minister
<b>proceedings</b>	the formal actions and decisions of a parliament
<b>public hearings</b>	committees may hold a public hearing as part of their inquiry into a matter of concern to the Assembly. Government Ministers and officials, as well as individuals and community groups are invited to attend a public hearing to discuss certain aspects of their submission to an inquiry in more detail. Members of the public are welcome to attend any public hearing
<b>put the question</b>	ask for a decision on a motion

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**Qq**

<b>question on Notice</b>	a written question asked of a minister which is answered in writing. Questions on notice appear on the Notice Paper.
<b>Question Time</b>	a daily period of time in which ministers are asked questions concerning their responsibilities by non-executive members. Question Time occurs every sitting day at 2.30pm and usually lasts about an hour. Question Time begins with the Leader of the Opposition asking the first question and concludes when the Chief Minister asks that all further questions be placed on the Notice Paper. All Members get a chance to ask a question.
<b>question without notice</b>	a question asked orally of a minister where the minister in theory has no warning of the content of the question
<b>quorum</b>	a minimum number of people that have to be present for the Assembly to be able to conduct business and make decisions. In the Assembly, a quorum is 9 Members.

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**Rr**

<b>regulation</b>	a law made under the authority of an Act of parliament
<b>resolution</b>	1. a formal expression of opinion by a legislative body 2.a decision
<b>Royal Assent</b>	the Governor-General (as in the Federal parliament) or Governor (States) or Administrator (Northern Territory) – who are the Queen’s representatives - sign a bill into law. In the ACT Legislative Assembly Bills do not receive Royal Assent – the Clerk of the Assembly certifies a copy of the Bill as a true copy of the Bill as passed in the Chamber. The Speaker then presents the Bill to Parliamentary Counsel for notification on the A.C.T. Legislation Register <a href="http://www.legislation.act.gov.au">www.legislation.act.gov.au</a>
<b>ruling</b>	a formal decision made by the Speaker usually on a matter of procedure in the Assembly

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**Ss**

<b>schedule (to a bill or Act)</b>	a list at the end of a bill or Act which contains matters of detail
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<b>select committees</b>	are formed to look at one specific issue and usually have a set reporting date. The Estimates Select Committee is a Select Committee used to look into the proposed ACT budget for a financial year. Once it has reported, a select committee is dissolved.
<b>Shadow Ministers</b>	Opposition Members who have specific responsibilities to scrutinise the actions and decisions taken by the Minister e.g. the Shadow Minister for Education scrutinises the actions and decisions taken by the Minister for Education and may question the Minister on these matters during Question Time
<b>short title (of a bill or Act)</b>	the name of a bill by which it is commonly known and indexed
<b>simple majority</b>	refers to the voting process; a majority of those Members who are present in the Chamber at the time
<b>sittings</b>	meetings of a parliament;
<b>Sitting Pattern</b>	the Sitting pattern are the dates the Assembly meets in a calendar year. The Assembly sits for approximately 14 weeks each year. The Assembly meets on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday every sitting week from 10.30am until 12.30pm then again between 2.30pm until 5.30pm; however, the Assembly often does not at 5.30pm, but may debate matters well into the evening (copies of the Sitting Pattern are available on the Assembly website – <a href="http://www.parliament.act.gov.au">www.parliament.act.gov.au</a> ). In the Assembly sittings are usually for two weeks with a three week recess
<b>Speaker</b>	the member who is elected as its presiding officer
<b>standing orders</b>	the rules which govern the conduct of business in a parliament
<b>standing committees</b>	are committees formed at the beginning of an Assembly's term and exist until the next election. The Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure investigates matters relating to the operation of the Assembly. Other committees tend to relate to major areas such as health, education, legal issues, planning and community services
<b>statement</b>	a declaration, for example, in a parliament; <i>He made a statement to the house describing the damage caused by the accident.</i>

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**Tt**

**table** to present a document etc. to a parliament. The paper then becomes part of the parliamentary records

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**Uu**

**unicameral** consisting of one chamber or house, especially of a law-making body

**unparliamentary language** words used in a house which the Speaker judges to be offensive or disorderly, and which are usually required to be withdrawn

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**Vv**

**vote** a formal expression of preference against or in favour of a question put by the Speaker “ *The question is that the motion be agreed to. Those in favour say ‘aye’. Those against ‘no’.*”

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**Ww**

**whip** a party manager in parliament who is responsible for organising members of his or her party to take part in debates and votes, and who assists in arranging the business of a house of parliament

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