



# Parliamentary Education Office

## goes on-line and on-air

Thanks to some state-of-the-art computer software, you can now 'visit' Parliament House any time of the day or night. Simply log on to the Parliamentary Education Office web site at [www.peo.gov.au](http://www.peo.gov.au) and you can take a virtual tour of the parliamentary chambers, wander around the outside of the building, and even take a close look inside the Cabinet Room. This is just one of the many ways in which technology is helping the Parliamentary Education Office to do its job of informing people about parliamentary processes and structures.

Nearly 70,000 students visit Parliament House each year and learn about parliament by taking part in an innovative role play in our Education Centre. But because many students cannot come to Canberra, the Office runs an extensive Outreach program, visiting schools and other institutions throughout Australia and preparing a range of educational materials for teachers and students to use regardless of where they are.

In the past, education materials have been distributed in print form. Although this still happens, the Parliamentary Education Office has developed a sophisticated web site to publish and distribute information and curriculum resources. The web site includes information and project materials for students, such as photographs, diagrams and other graphic information including pictures of both chambers showing the party composition of the chambers and where the parties sit. There are resources for teachers, up-to-date information about the parliament, and a comprehensive list of all the PEO's activities.

*'a sophisticated web site to publish and develop curriculum resources'*

However, it is not enough to publish information on the web, and then sit back and hope someone finds it and uses it. Many teachers are still unsure about using the web and do not have time to find out how it works, let alone what is on the PEO and Parliament House ([www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)) web sites. The PEO has developed a training program to show teachers how to use the classroom resources on these sites. The program includes a

series of questions about information on the sites, and shows teachers how to find the answers. Teachers can be left alone to explore the site and make their own discoveries and mistakes.

Training programs can happen wherever there are CD ROM players and computers. Sometimes, the Office sets up a room in a conference with 10 or 20 computers. The Office has prepared a series of activities accompanied by tailor-made CDs which contain selected elements of both the PEO and Parliament House sites. In the training session, teachers use the CD ROM program to find things out for themselves at their own pace. Parliamentary Education Office staff help them with specific problems and explain to them how to use the technology, the web site and the processes in primary and secondary classrooms. Teachers are given the CD ROM to take home and explore. In this way, they can develop their computer skills and discover some useful resources for their students.

Another venture for the PEO is a partnership with ABC Radio called TalkBack Classroom. Small teams of senior secondary students are trained in basic radio production, interviewing skills and research techniques. They then identify issues of interest to their region, and in collaboration with their local ABC radio station, put together radio documentaries, panel shows or talkback sessions. At a national level, students have been interviewing senior politicians for broadcast on Triple J's Breakfast Show.

Radio is an ideal medium for young people who want to get involved in debates on current affairs. During 2000, the PEO is planning to work with the ABC to develop a 'virtual studio' for students to use in their classrooms. By downloading news items and other bits and pieces from ABC Online and the PEO web site, students can assemble their own in-house radio programs, for distribution within their school or community.

In March 2000, staff from the PEO will be travelling to Western Australia to deliver student programs and teacher professional development using the Westlink satellite network. Teachers and students in remote communities will be able to interact with the presenters via phone, computer and video to participate in various civics education activities.

## *'improving the access of all Australians to parliamentary and civics education'*

The PEO is keen to exploit technology to the full in improving the access of all Australians to parliamentary and civics education. But the PEO takes great care to ensure that the people who will be using its materials and programs receive them in a format that is easy for them to reproduce and modify to suit their own purposes. The PEO web site will become an increasingly important means of distributing parliamentary education to Australia's schools, and to the community generally. Log on and tell us how we are doing ! [www.peo.gov.au](http://www.peo.gov.au)

Contact the Parliamentary Education Office:

Email: [info@peo.gov.au](mailto:info@peo.gov.au)

Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 3508

Fax: (02) 6277 5775

