

# Debate rages over 'bid' for new Australian State



At the Education Centre in Parliament House, students participate in debates about real federal issues.  
Photo: AUSPIC

Parliament House is astir. Debate is *raging* over a bill to create a seventh Australian State.

Informed sources predict that the bill has no chance of passing. The people who have the final say aren't even old enough to vote!

The 'legislative debate' is all part of the Education Centre program run by the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO).

"You've heard of reality TV," says PEO Assistant Director Rick Williams. "This is reality Parliament."

"Rather than just having students come to Parliament House and watch Members and Senators at work, our education program lets them experience how Parliament actually works."



The Parliamentary Education Office conducts 'reality' Parliament for students.  
Photo: AUSPIC

Students debate a mock bill, assuming the role of the main players in the legislative process, including Ministers, Shadow Ministers and backbenchers. They sit in a special students' Chamber with all the trappings, including their own Mace.

In this the Centenary of Federation year, the subject under consideration is one of the fundamental issues surrounding Federation: how States came to join the Commonwealth of Australia.

"Our education program combines civics with history," says Rick Williams. "In this way students learn about parliamentary processes and find out how the work of Parliament brings about important changes in Australia."

Students and teachers alike enjoy the program because it gives them a real life experience debating real life issues.

"After one of our programs," said Rick Williams, "teachers from Pymble Ladies' College told us how delighted they were that we were using actual federal issues to educate students. They had participated in earlier programs that had used junk food and homework as the issues for debate, and felt that students now require more inspirational debates to learn about Parliament."

"They thought that our current program's emphasis on real federal issues provided teachers with a good basis to explore constitutional and parliamentary topics further with their students."

**For more information on the Education Centre program run by the Parliamentary Education Office at Parliament House**

Visit: [www.peo.gov.au](http://www.peo.gov.au)

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