

Handout

*Workshop:
Engaging in civic worlds: practical ways to encourage student participation*

Suzie Luddon, Project Officer, Daryl Evans, Project Officer

Education and Community Engagement Unit, Department of Parliamentary Services



Four Units for students available online July 2012

www.parliament.vic.gov.au/education/learning-a-teaching-resources/adult-education

Four Units

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
<i>Working on an issue – but at which level of government?</i>	<i>Invite a State MP as guest speaker in the class room</i>	<i>A tour of Parliament House – and beyond</i>	<i>Developing a statute, a law, a rule, within and across Victoria</i>

(1) **Today’s workshop** will provide examples of student activity suggested by the program. For each Unit, there will be an example of

- A practical task for skill development and new knowledge
- Ways to apply this to issues of a more abstract nature

(2) **But don’t forget** the offer of free resources

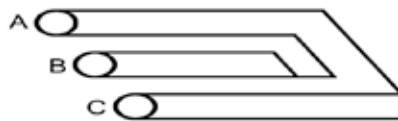
- Free resources are available, both hard copy and online
- Free Tours of Parliament House but book very early

www.parliament.vic.gov.au/visit

(3) **The four Units** consist of two sessions each (+ optional extras!)

- Session time extends from two hours to half a day per session
- The optional extras include basic literacy and numeracy work

Unit 1 = Working on an issue – but at which level of government?



Parliament in Victoria provides services at one level of government ... but it's a more complicated picture when you talk about the whole country.

Questions:

How many prongs in this fork? ... 1 prong 2 prongs 3 prongs

How many levels of government in Australia? 1 level 2 levels 3 levels

How could this affect you – the multiple levels of government, that is!

Unit 1 – an example of a practical activity

Background

Note: if this unit is used as some sort of basic level program, there will be much teacher direction as well as student initiative.

As part of the Unit, students plan and then visit places in the local community which are responsible for delivery of government services: for example, a Centrelink office, a public library, a railway station.

Students use interview-information, and photography (taken with permission) to report on the existence, and complications, of three levels of government. They prepare an online or wall display report which illustrates all this.

However, this unit involves more than understanding the basic structure of government in Australia. During session one, **the students decide on an (appropriate) issue to discuss with the local State MP when visiting the electorate office.** While some groups of students (during session two) interview staff at, and photograph, the various government offices, a student delegation interviews the MP as prelude to his/her visit as Guest Speaker (as described in Unit Two).

The logic of the sequence of units is: in Unit 1, students identify an issue and then, in Units 2, 3 and 4, begin to do something about it!

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: practical activity (Unit 1)

Use the map (CBD, for convenience) to identify and locate at least one office or organisation providing a service on behalf of each level of government.

Compare the ease or difficulty of locating such places in the CBD with your knowledge of the area where you work....and your confidence that your students will be able to obtain the resources needed to complete this planning task and conduct the interviews.

A number of questions arise about this Introductory Unit.

- Which maps should students use to plan the itinerary? After all, apart from online maps, students could approach local Council or Shire offices, pick up free maps from the Melbourne Visitor Centre at Federation Square

<http://www.fedsquare.com/experience/melbourne-visitor-centre>

Perhaps you can organise the purchase of a laminated metre-square Melbourne map which can be used again and again!

- How much direction do students need to observe due protocol?

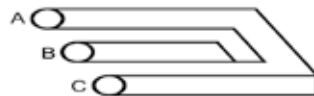
- Is a half-day excursion enough time for students to visit and photograph (with permission) these offices for the display, and to collect explanatory material? If not...
- Which places should students place on their itinerary? What about a railway station, a tram depot, public library, post office, Centrelink office, police and fire station, electorate offices of Federal and State Members of Parliament, VicRoads, offices within park lands, Council/Shire offices, maternal/child health centre, public swimming pool, public museum, and so on... whatever illustrates the diversity and the specialisations!
- Will students be aware beforehand of the overlap between the various levels of government in funding source and operation of some ‘departments or organisations’ they will decide to visit?
- In addition, will they know beforehand the confusion which can arise from knowing governments operate through a semi-government agency, or a private organisation?
- Will students appreciate the need to observe due process and protocol requirements – not only with respect to the places to be visited but also on behalf of the school or education centre where they study?

Unit 1 – application to abstract issues (examples)

Optical illusion (1) about ‘are we over-governed’?

Can we use an optical illusion like this one to lead into discussion of an issue, or would some students consider this to be an irrelevant approach?

- How many levels of government do we have?
- Do we have too many levels of government?



Optical illusion (2) about ‘women in politics, women in parliament...’

Could you combine this optical illusion with the Posters to count the number of men and women in Victoria’s parliament...and then extend the discussion further? And what is meant by true Universal Suffrage?

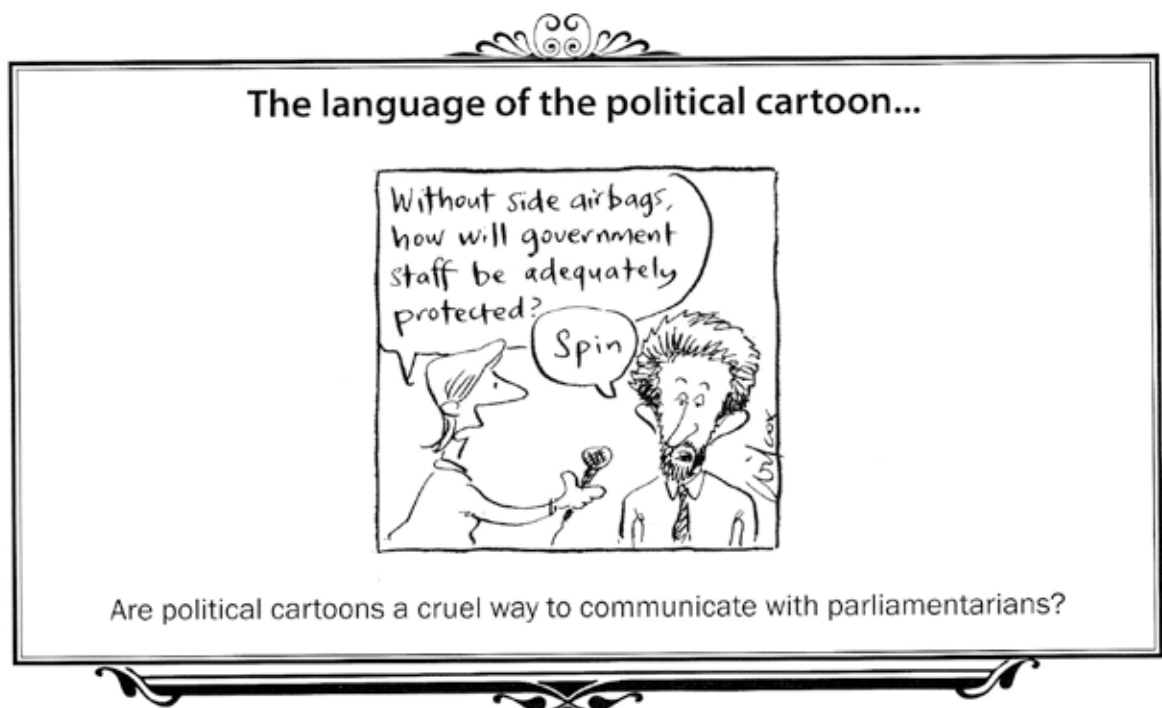


Political cartoons – potential usage, potential caveats

How might you use political cartoons?

- For student to enjoy?
- To use as a trigger to discuss a political event?
- For students to think about countries without freedom to satirize?
- To develop a habit of looking for detail and interpreting nuance?
- To think about the role of ‘caricature’ in communication?
- What is good (if anything) or bad (if anything) about the following cartoon if you tried to use it ...a cartoon which talks about car safety ... or does it really refer to car safety?

PICTURE 4



TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: abstract issues (Unit 1)

Political cartoons on screen – leading into ‘abstract matters’

(a) Select one of the political cartoons **shown on the screen and wall displays** in today’s workshop?

Why did you choose this cartoon?

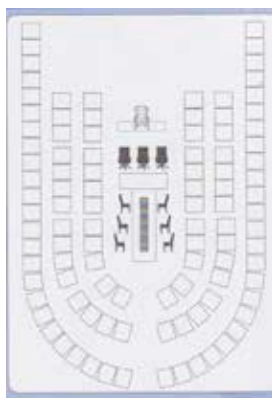
Discuss how you would use it.

(b) How necessary is a background program for students through which they learn the difference between ‘Hollywood’ cartoons and political (or social comment) cartoons?

(c) If teachers and students collected political cartoons from newspapers over several weeks, could students classify them according to the level of government lampooned? And if it turns out that most cartoons focus on Federal matters, what reasons would you give to explain that priority?

Useful link: http://www.nma.gov.au/education-kids/classroom_learning/units_of_work/reading_between

Unit 2 = Invite a State MP as guest speaker in your classroom



Who are your State Members of Parliament?

How would you organise for one of them to visit your classroom group as Guest Speaker?

Would you seat the audience in your classroom in the same pattern as MPs sit in the Lower House in Parliament?

How would you manage Question Time for your visitor?

Unit 2 – an example of a practical activity

Background

Note: this unit might be implemented with less teacher direction than probably took place during the Introductory Unit, even though the core activity of Unit 1 concerns **events management**, a complicated process.

During Unit 1, students identified an issue of importance to their community; from Unit One onwards, they become involved in *doing something about it!* That *something* involves a formal arrangement for a local MP to be guest speaker at their school or education centre.

This Unit 2 program can also be followed even if students decide to skip the introductory Unit 1; the program can deal with both entry situations.

In fact, the checklist of student responsibilities – before, during and after The Event – makes it easier for students to assume major responsibility for making decisions and for ‘doing the paperwork’. However, there are several requirements which at first they might find a bit challenging:

- The Unit suggests that one outcome should be a ‘Help Menu’ for students to use in the same Unit during the following year
- Students should plan for several classroom groups to attend the talk given by the visiting MP
- There are necessary requirements of due process and protocol that students should follow

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: practical activity (for Unit 2)

An interactive display for the room where the MP will speak

Students can construct a wall display which provides information about the electorate area in which they live and the MP represents. The display shows to the visitor that the students are serious about their studies.

The program provides practical advice about ways to make a display both useful and interesting. The free Posters would probably become a core part of any display.

- Look at the Posters: identify your local electorates and your MPs

- Make a list of places (visited or online) where students would find relevant demographic information to put into charts and diagrams to make the display easy to read, informative, and interesting to look at

Unit 2: application to abstract issues

Workshop notes: VALBEC Conference, 25/05/12 “Engaging in civic worlds: practical ways to encourage student participation” - Daryl Evans, Suzie Luddon

A major approach in these units asks students to construct projects which are interactive in some way. For example, the results obtained during the project can change from time to time depending on student input.

As part of preparation for the visit by the MP, students might develop their own ‘referendum’ with topics which, at least now and again, ask questions to do with politics and government! The questions relevant to the visit of the MP and the voting results can be part of the display. Of course, it’s difficult to think up good questions which can be answered **yes** or **no**! And can the students handle the maths calculations?

		ISSUE TO VOTE ON (February, 2012) From <i>Herald-Sun, The Age</i>	RESULTS IN NEWSPAPER			COMMENT
			Total Votes	% Yes	% No	
H-S	Mon 6	Should Kevin Rudd challenge Julia Gillard for Australia’s top job?	13,497	58.7 (7935)	41.3 (5562)	
A	Mon 6	Would a change in leadership make you more likely to vote for the Labour Party at the next federal election?	20	35%	65%	The question could be asked: why only 20 votes?
H-S	Tue 7	Should the banks pass on any interest rate cut by the RBA?	3,641	85.3 (3109)	14.7 (532)	An example of a ‘leading question’? (What is meant by “leading question”?)
A	Tue 7	Should the rate of the dole be increased?	4,831	57%	43%	
A	Thur 9	Is there too much development on Melbourne’s fringes?	2,382	83%	17%	An opportunity to link sociological factors with anticipated response?
A	Fri 10	Should other parties support Greens’ bid for more flexible working hours?	1,600	73%	27%	
H-S	Sun 12	[In Victoria] should a new Parliament House be built? Should \$62million be spent renovating Parliament House?	1,758	16%	84%	Is this an example of a question which you use to explain the term ‘skewed’?

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: abstract issues (Unit 2)

Rights and responsibilities

- Construct two questions about voting which the students might use in their wall display referendum
- One question should involve the issue of ‘compulsory voting’ and the other question should invoke the idea of “When I turn x years of age, I am old enough to vote because of...”
- Construct one question which you think your students might want to put to the visiting MP

Unit 3 = A tour of Parliament House – and beyond



In 1854, after lots of argument about the best site in Melbourne for an important new building (see the winning design in the picture above), a place at Eastern Hill was selected.

These days, that same place is referred to as “Spring Street”.

Check out the building during your next Tour!

Question

- What makes the building look different today?

Unit 3 – an example of a practical activity

Background

Unit 3 is concerned with a tour of Parliament House. Students organise and prepare for the tour, ask informed questions once they are on the tour...and prepare a report after the visit.

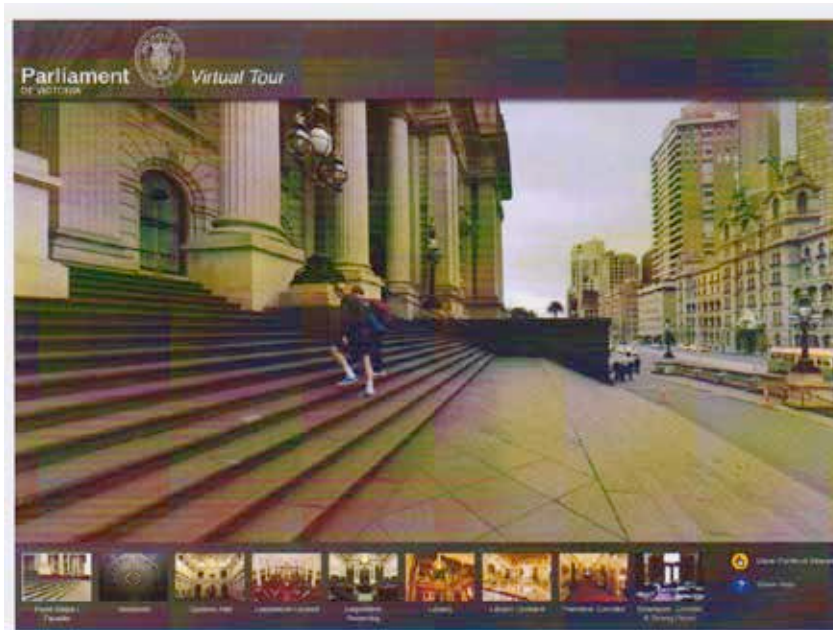
However, in response to teacher requests, this Unit will expand to include visits to other (no cost/low cost) CBD places. At present, four other places are part of the program, with ten more added by 2013.

They are:

Old Treasury Building
Federation Square
Melbourne Town Hall
State Library of Victoria

As well as enjoying what these places offer in their own right, the Unit also includes things to do which are linked to parliamentary government in Victoria.

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: practical activity (Unit 3)



Manipulating an online tour

Investigate the online Virtual Tour yourself (**at home or workplace**)

www.parliament.vic.gov.au/virtualtour

- How well would students manipulate this tour?
- Are they too impatient?
- What is the teacher's role during a virtual tour by students?

Unit 3: application to abstract issues



How might your students perceive what they look at during a tour?

Over the years, many students have talked about the ‘grand building’, the ‘expensive-looking wood grain furniture’, the colours of the carpet, the size of the overhead lights, and so on. They reckon that a place which looks like this building is going to be a place where people are involved in some rather serious business. Of course, other students have expressed opinions which are a bit more cynical!

The main hope is that student observational skills are on high alert all the time and that, ultimately, the tours provide a chance for students to discuss how their perception of something might be linked to the value judgements which they bring with them on the tour...and can influence how they interpret what they see!

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: abstract issues (Unit 3)

Think of the Virtual Tour of Queen’s Hall – and the portraits

What comes to mind for you, the teacher, when you see the portraits of former Premiers hanging on the wall of Queen’s Hall?

Perhaps an issue arises about gender balance. If so, could you use this cartoon to help students to discuss this issue later on?

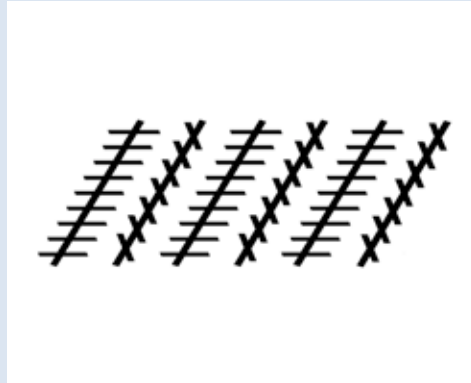


WOMAN'S RIGHTS: *WHAT WE ARE COMING TO*

Some foolish people imagine our ladies will neglect their family duties. Quite a mistake...

3 am. That dear good old creature, Mr Speaker, is kind enough to take the blessed infant while the Hon. Member addresses the house

Unit 4 = Developing a law, a statute, within and across Victoria



How does a government make laws about ‘hoon driving’?

How and why did the government develop laws to make workplace bullying illegal?

Questions

- Are these lines parallel?

- How do governments work in parallel with people in the community when they want to make a new law?

Unit 4: an example of a practical activity

This Unit is more complicated, even though it asks students to do several things at a minimal level of sophistication.

It begins by considering the process of ‘checking your participation if you want to join a pressure group seeking a change in the law. It continues into a simplified version of the stages of “Passing a Law”, asking students to relate the experience of attempting this process at their school or education centre to the sequence of such process in parliament.

As part of this Unit, students:

- Participate in small experiments
- Find out something about people’s knowledge to do with OH&S, their driving skills, and their resistance to change
- Discuss what makes data collected from an experiment into a reputable investigation
- Explore the assumption that ‘if A occurs at the same time as B, then one must necessarily cause the other’!
- Lobby about a safety issue at the place of work (study)

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: practical activity (in Unit 4)

Perhaps towards an OH&S issue

- **Sketch your workplace** on a sheet of paper
- Assume there is smoke from a small fire in rooms and corridors
- On your sketch, **show the location of fire extinguishers** close to the area where you work
- Decide how well your students would perform in this exercise
- If emergency evacuation were necessary, would students remember to consider the implications of disability or wheelchairs or...?

Unit 4: application to abstract issues

TASK FOR THIS WORKSHOP: abstract issues (Unit 4)

The First Reading (of the proposed Bill), etc

- Historically, what was the origin of the First Reading of a proposed Bill, the Second Reading, and the Third Reading?
- Why is the Speaker of the Lower House called The Speaker?