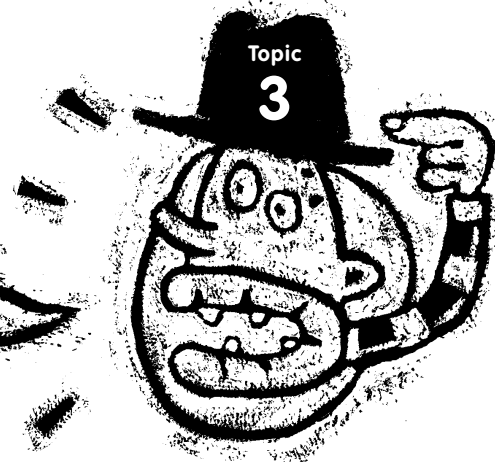


# HISTORY OF VICTORIA'S PARLIAMENT

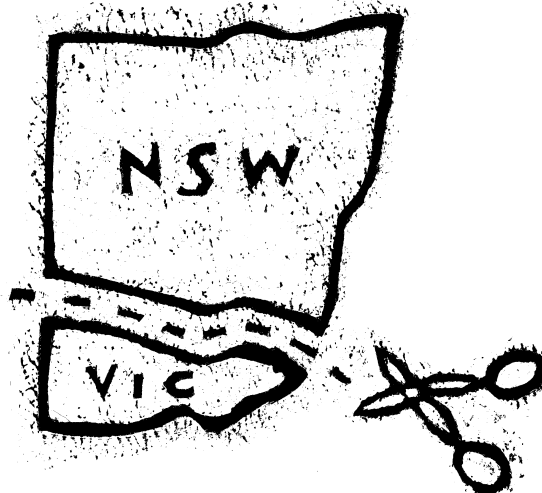


The area that we know as Victoria formally separated from New South Wales on July 1st 1851, making it an independent colony with limited self-government. The Act of Separation established a Legislative Council consisting of thirty members. Twenty of these were elected and only significant property owners were eligible to vote and the other ten members were appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor.

Victoria's first Legislative Council met in 1851 at Saint Patrick's Hall in Melbourne. The Council operated for five years and during that time began the building of Parliament House, introduced the secret ballot and drafted a Constitution for Victoria. The new Constitution introduced a Westminster style of government that still operates today. Its main features include a Governor to act as the Queen's representative and two houses of Parliament, the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.

Victoria's first parliamentary elections were held in 1856. The new Legislative Council had thirty members, five from each of the six provinces, and the newly created Legislative Assembly had sixty seats. From the beginning the

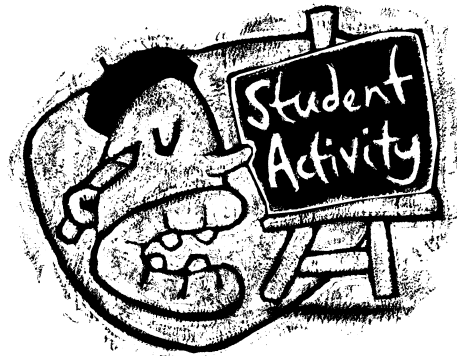
Legislative Council was more elitist and conservative. To stand for election a candidate had to be male, at least 30 years old and own freehold property worth at least 5000 pounds. To vote at a Legislative Council election, only males aged over 21 with freehold property worth over 100 pounds or more, or those with suitable academic qualifications, had the right to vote. These restrictions were gradually worn down over time, but not fully abolished until 1950. In contrast, the Legislative Assembly was seen to be more progressive; its property and voter restrictions were lifted in 1857.



From November 2006, the Legislative Council will have 40 members. There will be eight regions across the State with each region represented by five members. Each member will hold office for four years. This is the same term as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

The Legislative Assembly has 88 members and is the house from which government is

formed in Victoria. Each member represents one electoral district. Every four years, a State election is held for both Houses on the last Saturday in November. All eligible voters are required to vote and the party or coalition that wins the majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly wins the right to form government for the next four years.



### Internet activity

Who are the people that represent you in the Victorian Parliament?

Go to the Victorian Parliament website at [www.parliament.vic.gov.au](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au) and select 'members of parliament'. Look for the members of parliament that represent you in both houses and find out the following information (some members of parliament have their own webpages that you can access from this site):

1. Member's name and background.
2. Which chamber do they sit in?
3. Which political party do they belong to?
4. Do they have a portfolio? If so what is it? (This means, are they a minister with an area of responsibility?)
5. Do they hold any other position in the parliament? e.g. member of a committee.