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Using your book

We want you to be able to explore extra details about Government in Australia, to write about each section and to know the work so that you can share with the Lord the wonderful things He has revealed to you.

There are three ways in this course that you will be able to share your new-found knowledge.



ENLARGE THE PLACE

ENLARGE THE PLACE — ISAIAH 54:2

Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes.

This symbol shows where you can seek out extra information that you can write about and tell your teacher and friends. You may not have time to do all the 'Enlarge the Place' exercises so ask your teacher or parent to guide you in which ones to do and how much time to spend on them.



WRITE THE VISION

WRITE THE VISION — HABAKKUK 2:2

Then the Lord answered me and said, 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it'.

Habbakkuk was told to write what he had been shown and make it clear. You will be able to write your answers to these exercises in your exercise books. All your written answers should be in clear sentences, and use diagrams if needed to make your answer clearer.



DEVELOP A THESIS

DEVELOP A THESIS — I PETER 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

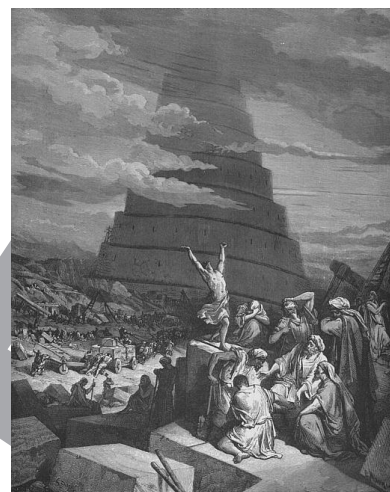
God is central in every aspect of life and Peter encourages us to not only have a pure heart before God, but also to be able to think from biblical premises. These exercises present you an opportunity to think through some of the issues of civil government from a biblical perspective.

These exercises for competent senior students are designed as minor theses to help further develop essay writing skills.

Things you will need

- binder or exercise book
- encyclopedia, internet or government resources and materials

God has given us instruction, in the Bible, of the nature of His civil government and how it should work in a society. God's model for civil government is obviously going to be the only one that will work properly as He is the one who made and sustains everything. Fallen man's model for civil government differs quite dramatically from the biblical model. Such men gather together to show off their autonomy and independence from God. The biblical account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 is the classic example of man's rebellion against God and their desire to govern themselves apart from Him.



God warns of the folly of such self-will in Psalm 2:1-2:

Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against his Anointed...

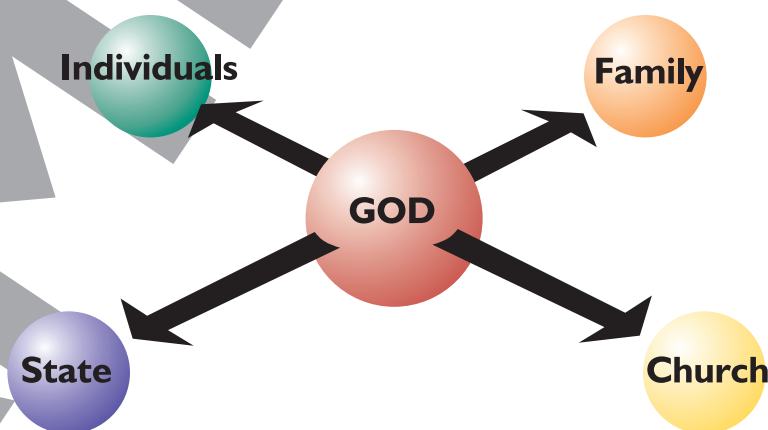
When men seek to take power to themselves and exclude God we find power being centralised in government and the civil government becoming increasingly tyrannical and godless. As with all human actions that are contrary to God's express commands, the taking of power and authority by men in defiance of God's revealed will in the scripture leads the community into greater sin. The British Lord Acton said in 1887,

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The Bible teaches us that God delegates His authority to men, who are to remain under His authority and subject to the teaching of His word, the Bible. This authority is not given to one man or even one group of men, but is divided into areas. The theologian of the Reformation, John Calvin, called these areas *spheres of authority*.

To help in understanding the place of civil government under God's authority, as revealed in the Scriptures, we have listed the four basic spheres of authority to which God's authority flows. Each of these has its own biblically-defined authority.

Fundamentally, authority flows from God to the individual, the family, the church and the state (civil government).



INDIVIDUAL — SELF-GOVERNMENT

Each person is created in God's image:

God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness' (Genesis 1:26).

God has made man to be a governor, and he has been instructed to take dominion over God's creation; that is, man is to govern God's creation and to be responsible before God for his own life. Jesus instructed His followers to be His disciples, so that they could *govern* their lives according to God's will.

Disciple: A follower; an adherent to the doctrines of another. Hence the constant attendants of Christ were called his disciples; and hence all Christians are called his disciples as they profess to learn and receive his doctrines and precepts.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary

Christianity is fundamentally a *political* faith in that it instructs us in *government*, that is, how we are to live in every aspect of our lives.

SOCIETY — CIVIL GOVERNMENT

The fourth form of government to explore, the fourth ‘sphere of authority’, is civil government. It operates at the same level as the government of the church, but should not overlap or conflict with it. Civil government has been listed after the other forms of government because it should be furthest from the individual. The Bible teaches in Romans that the civil government, or the state, has been charged by God with the sphere of authority that encompasses the administration of justice. This could be further defined as the protection of life, liberty and property.

For he [the civil authority] is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

Romans 13:4

The civil government has been delegated authority by God to establish God’s law in the land and to punish those who break the law of God. The Bible limits the role and responsibility of civil government to the area of justice so that governance can be properly spread over the four spheres of authority.

In the world today civil governments have become the dominant form of government so much so that the word *government* has become almost synonymous with civil government. The lines of demarcation between the four forms of government defined in the Bible have been redrawn with the power civil government has afforded itself. Unfortunately, Christians have neglected the teaching of scripture and allowed civil government to extend its tentacles of authority into almost every area of life. Rather than being content to be one form of government among the many, civil governments have increasingly seen themselves as ‘The’ Government. Areas of responsibility that God has given to the family and the church (such as education, health and welfare) have become major areas of involvement and expenditure for civil governments, resulting in onerous taxation.

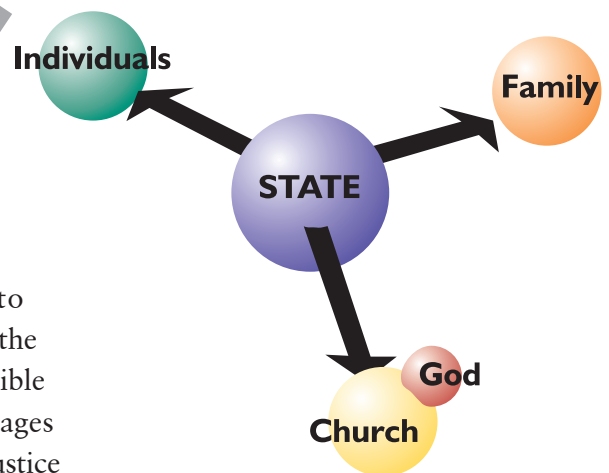
As God’s people we need to understand that this move to excessive power in the hands of civil government is the result of the proliferation of sin. Sin results in the people becoming irresponsible and less self-governed, and the lawlessness that ensues encourages civil governments to increase their power in order to maintain justice (law and order). In turning away from the true God the people turn to false gods (idols). As God is replaced as the authority in any nation His plan for delegation of authority according to the spheres of authority is also set aside. If nations allow sin to increase the civil government will also increase its authority, until it becomes *king* over the people in place of God with a loss of personal freedoms for the people. The role of civil government then changes from being the protector of the people and their freedoms, to becoming a tyrant.

Israel, in the time of the Judges, was guilty of this sin. As the people moved away from dependence on the Lord they began to look to other nations to copy their models of civil government. They then began to pester God to give them a human king like the other nations around them. In doing so they deliberately rejected God as their King. The writer of Judges concludes in Judges 21:25:

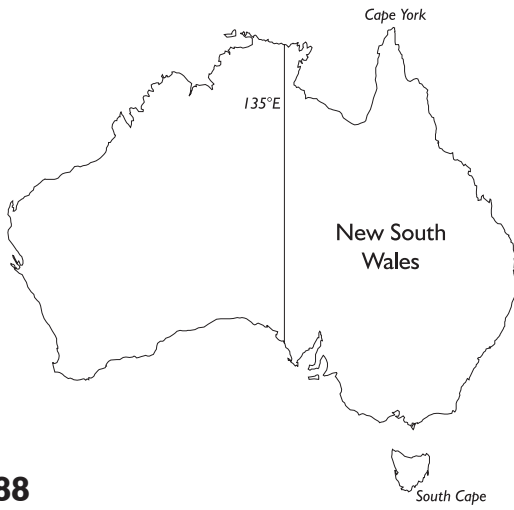
In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.



British Houses of Parliament

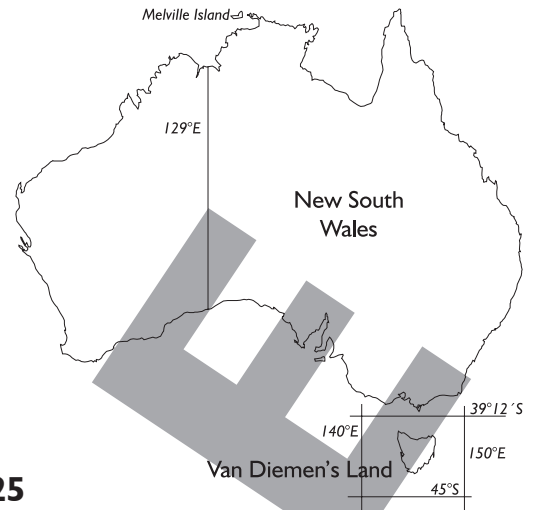


Governmental model in most modern nations



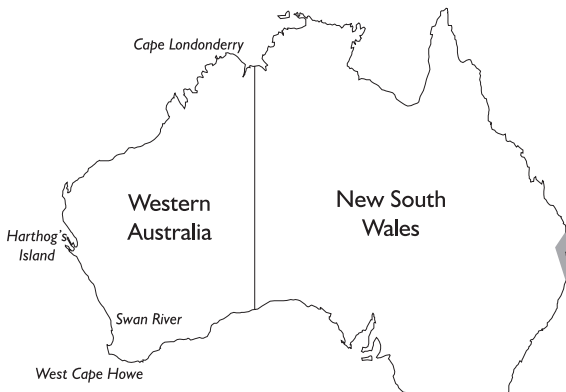
1788

New South Wales was defined in Governor Phillip's commissions from the Crown dated 12 October 1786 and 2 April 1787. The northern and southern limits were set at Cape York in latitude $10^{\circ}37'$ south and South Cape in latitude $43^{\circ}39'$ south. To the east, the colony also included adjacent islands in the Pacific Ocean between these latitudes. The western limit was set at the meridian 135° east.



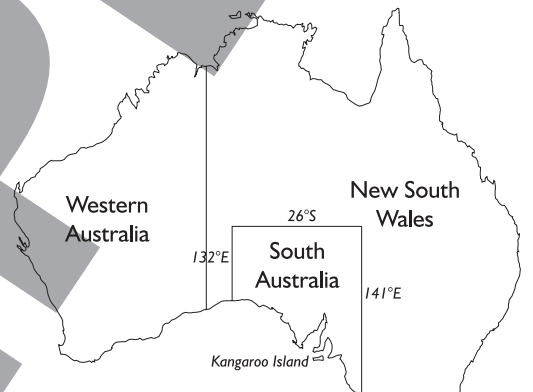
1825

Van Diemen's Land, defined on 16 July by a frame of meridians and parallels (apart from Macquarie Island which was specifically named), came into existence on 3 December. The western boundary of New South Wales was moved to the meridian 129° east to include the new settlement on Melville Island.



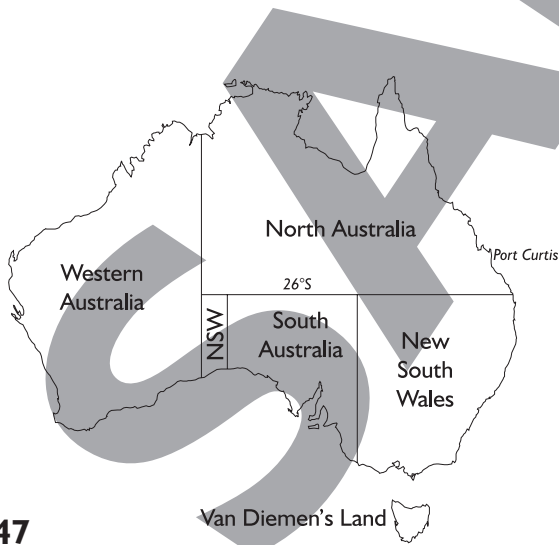
1831

The settlement on Swan River was established by James Stirling in June 1829 and Western Australia was defined in letters patent on 4 March 1831. The limits on the south, west and north were set at West Cape Howe, Hartog's Island and Cape Londonderry respectively. The eastern limit coincided with the meridian 129° east. 'Adjacent islands' were also included.



1836

The province of South Australia was first defined on 19 February 1836. The rectangular colony was bounded by meridians 132° and 141° east, parallel 26° south and the coast. Kangaroo Island and other islands adjacent to the coast were included, together with all 'bays and gulfs'. The colony was proclaimed on 28 December 1836.



1847

The colony of North Australia was defined in letters patent dated 17 February 1846. It comprised that part of New South Wales north of parallel 26° south. The new colony was proclaimed at Port Curtis on 30 January 1847. The settlement at Port Curtis lasted only six months and the colony was officially reincorporated into New South Wales on 16 January 1849.



1851

The colony of Victoria was defined in an act 'for the better government of the Australian colonies' dated 5 August 1850. It comprised that part of New South Wales south of a line linking Cape Howe to the nearest source of the Murray River and by that river to the South Australian boundary. The act became effective on 1 July 1851.

The development of Australia's State and Territorial boundaries, 1788–1851

COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES

Councillors have regular meetings every two to four weeks, which are open to the public. Special meetings may be called by the mayor, or at the request of three of more members of the council.

At these council meetings the general business of the council is carried out.

GENERAL MANAGER

The General Manager of the Council is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the leader of the Council staff. Although he does not participate in decision making, he attends Council meetings as he needs to bring reports, updates and information on the Council’s operations. He also records the proceedings (minutes) of the meeting.

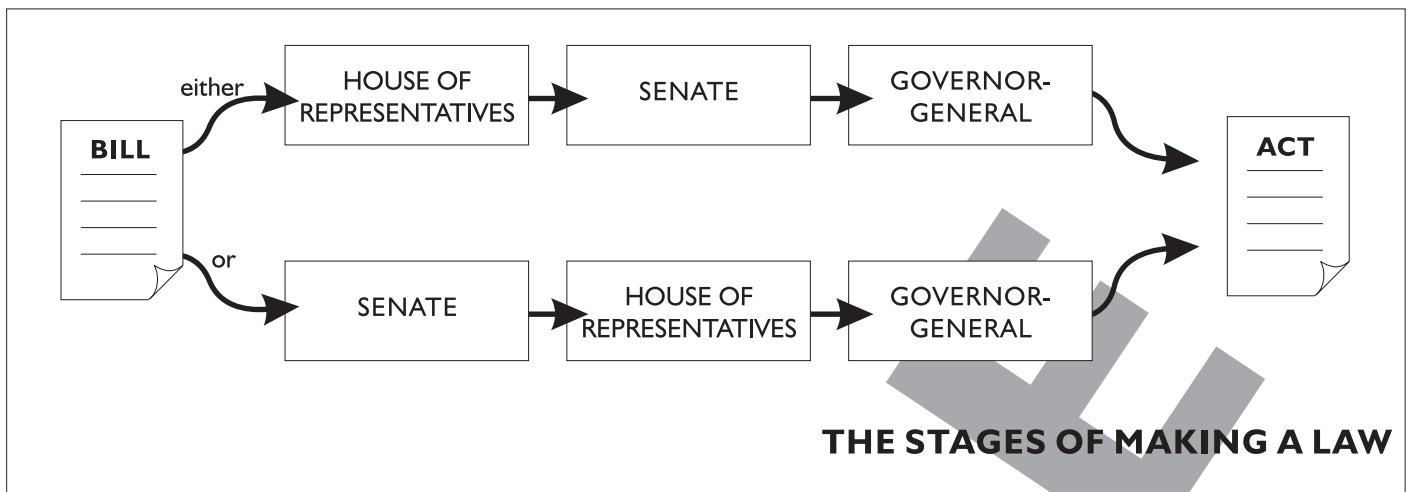
Other significant members of council staff include the Director of Engineering and the Director of Environmental Services. These officers may also attend council meetings to answer questions and explain reports.

COMMITTEES

Much council business is set aside for committees, to allow detailed consideration of matters that would take too long to consider in the normal council meeting. Most committees are *standing committees* which means they are appointed for the life of the council to be responsible for a particular area. There are finance committees, works committees, town planning committees, health committees, plus others. These committees bring reports of their findings to the council meeting for final decision. Using this system a much greater volume of work is achievable.

Often special committees are formed to deal with a particular issue, for example, the planning and construction of a new council facility. Because of the nature of the discussion and subject matter, the public is not able to attend committee meetings.





When a Bill passes all stages in the House of Representatives it then goes to the Senate, where it goes through the same procedure. If it is amended by the Senate it must return to the House of Representatives where the amendment must be approved, the bill modified or withdrawn. When both Houses have agreed to the Bill it is presented to the Governor-General for Royal Assent. The Bill then becomes an Act of Parliament, becomes law and comes into operation on its day of proclamation.



WRITE THE VISION — SET G

All written answers should be in sentence form.

1. Why was Canberra located where it is, and why was it necessary to build a new city to be the Capital of Australia?
2. From your research in the Constitution and other sources, list the powers of the Governor-General as Australia's *Head of State*.
3.
 - a. Why is the Senate sometimes called the *States' House*?
 - b. What is meant by the term used of the Senate as a *house of review*?
4. There is currently a maximum three-year term for the House of Representatives. There is debate, usually sponsored by politicians, to increase the length of the term to four years. What do you think would be the pros and cons of this debate?
5. Tell the story of the passage of a typical Bill through the houses of parliament and how the Bill becomes an Act and thus part of the law of the nation.

Extra Credit Questions (for senior or more capable students)

1. Why do you think the states limited the power of the Federal Government in the drawing up of the Australian Constitution?
2. Explore the Constitutional provision for the Governor-General to be able to dismiss the government and call an election.

6

A Guide to the Australian Constitution

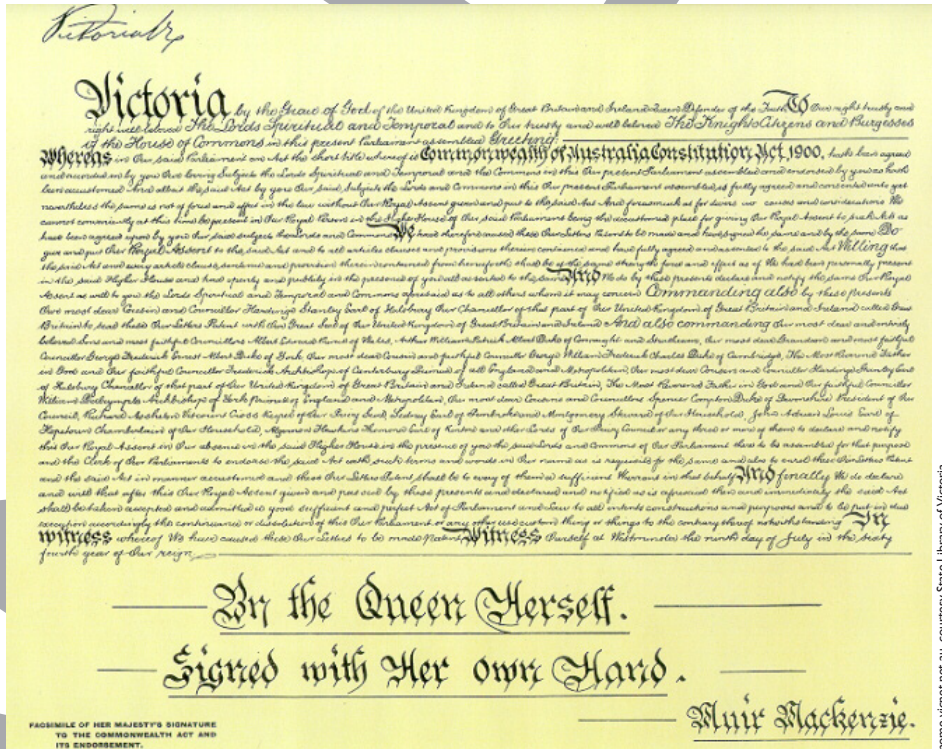
NATURE

The Australian Constitution is an expression by the Australian colonies as to the nature of their agreement to federate. The six colonies had already been functioning effectively for many years with their own constitutions and government modelled on the British parliament. The Australian Constitution was simply a treaty among those colonies. Unlike France, and to a degree the United States of America, it does not set out to be the fountainhead from which the nation's laws and freedoms flow. It simply outlines the nature and function of the Commonwealth Government of Australia. It could be seen as a set of laws to establish the limitations under which politicians were to operate in their service to the nation. Perhaps that is one reason why some politicians would like to change the Constitution and why others would like to see Australia become a Republic.

STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER

As each of the six Australian colonies was overseen in its government by the British Parliament it was necessary for the legal documentation for the formation of an Australian nation to be carried out through that Parliament. Representatives of the Australian colonies travelled to Great Britain with results of referendums from five colonies in favour of forming a Commonwealth Government in Australia, as well as a proposed Australian Constitution. As a result legislation was introduced into the British Parliament on behalf of the Australian colonies.

The *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* is a statute of the British Parliament, containing nine clauses. The first eight clauses are commonly called the *covering clauses* which contain introductory, explanatory and consequential provisions. The ninth clause contains the Australian Constitution. The covering clauses cannot be amended in Australia as they are part of an Act of the British Parliament and amendment would require a British statute, which may not be available unless requested by all the Australian parliaments and governments. The Australian Constitution contains provision within itself to allow changes to be made if desired by the people of Australia.



The Commission signed by Queen Victoria declaring her assent to the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Bill

Part 3 — The House of Representatives

Part three provides for the composition and election of the House of Representatives.

Section 24 details the method of determining how many Members will be in the House. The number is tied to the number of Senators, with the House of Representatives having twice the number of Members as Senators.

Section 28 provides the duration of the House of Representatives, with the proviso that it may be dissolved by the Governor-General.

Section 30 defines who is able to vote and prescribes one vote for each voter.

Section 32 describes the role of the Governor-General in issuing writs for the election of Members. This is another important role of the Governor-General in overseeing the Parliament.

Section 34 lists the qualifications for Members as being twenty-one years old, being a resident of Australia for at least three years and being a citizen of Australia.

Section 35 explains the election of the chairman of the House, who is known as the Speaker.

Section 40 sets out voting procedures in the House.

Part 4 — Both Houses of the Parliament

This part of the Constitution lists various provisions applicable to both houses of parliament. Points relate to members, electors' rights, allowances, house rules, etc. *Section 49* is important in that it confers upon each House and its members and committees the powers, privileges and immunities of the British House of Commons, until such time as they are altered by the Parliament.

Part 5 — The Powers of Parliament

This part details the powers of the Parliament, particularly the matters over which the Parliament has power to make laws.

Section 51 provides Parliament the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth. The section goes on to enumerate the actual areas over which the Commonwealth may provide good government. There are forty powers listed in the Constitution.

Section 52 outlines the exclusive powers of the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws.

Section 53 gives details of the restrictions imposed on the Senate with reference to originating and amending legislation, which deals with appropriation or taxation.

Section 57 details the procedures to take place if there is a deadlock over legislation between the two houses of Parliament.

Section 58 presents the power of the Governor-General to assent to or disallow legislation.

Section 59 details the power the Queen has to disallow any law within one year of the Governor-General's proclamation of the law.

Section 60 deals with the procedure when a Bill is reserved for the Queen's pleasure.



Sir Frederick William Holder, Speaker of the House of Representatives 1901–1909

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