

A Grade Round 2

That we prefer a hung parliament to a majority government

Background:

For Victorians, 2022 is a double election year, with the Federal and State elections happening. One part of elections is that voters choose who they want to represent their local area as a Member of Parliament (MP). MPs sit in the lower house of Parliament, either the House of Representatives (national parliament) or the Legislative Assembly (Victorian Parliament).

MPs determine who the government is by 'showing confidence', done through voting through important bills. For example, the budget is considered a matter of confidence as it determines the spending for the next year, and so is a big deal.

A hung parliament is one where no party or coalition of parties has a majority in the lower house, and so the minority government must negotiate with other MPs and parties to pass laws. A majority government is where the government does have the ability to pass any of its laws through the lower house. The upper houses (the Senate or Legislative Council) do not impact whether it is considered a majority government or hung parliament.

Federally, our most recent hung parliament was 2018-2019, when the Coalition government lost its majority when Dr Kerryn Phelps was elected. In Victoria, 2013-2014 saw the Coalition Napthine government lose its majority after Geoff Shaw quit to be an independent (also called a cross bencher).

Hung parliaments are not uncommon in our history or the modern day. New Zealand and Germany are more frequently in hung parliaments than not, whilst the UK and US predominantly see majorities.

Questions for consideration:

- What should the role of non-government MPs be in law-making?
- What is a 'good government'? How does a 'good government' act?

- What are the big differences between minority governments and majority governments?
- Under which circumstances does the government best reflect the will of the people?
- What can we learn from other parliaments? How can we apply that to a local context?
- Which groups get the most influence in a hung parliament?

Resources:

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-now-have-a-minority-government-what-does-that-mean-20181022-p50b62.html>

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook43p/hungparliament#:~:text=After%20a%20general%20election%20the,of%20Representatives%20normally%20forms%20government.&text=The%202010%20election%20is%20remarkable,known%20as%20a%20hung%20parliament.

<https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/minority-government/>

<https://theconversation.com/looking-back-on-the-hung-parliament-16175>

<https://theconversation.com/hung-parliament-for-queensland-expect-more-nuance-than-chaos-37038>

<https://theconversation.com/the-voter-paradox-we-say-we-dont-want-a-minority-government-but-were-happy-to-vote-for-one-61646>