



Teacher Resource

# What is the Crossbench?

## Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. Describe the success of the minor parties and independents in the recent federal election.
2. A record number of independents have won seats in the House of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What issue did many successful independents and minor parties campaign on?
4. What is a crossbencher? Explain.
5. Which major party won enough seats to form government?

## Activity: Class Discussion

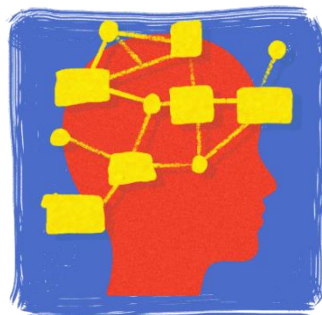
**Before** watching the What is the Crossbench story, hold a class discussion asking the following questions:

- Have you heard the term crossbench? Where have you heard it? What do you think it means?
- Can you name any Australian independents or minor parties?
- Where would you find the crossbench?



**After** watching the BTN story, discuss with students what they learnt about the crossbench. Use the following questions to guide discussion.

- Who are the “teals”?
- Why do we have minor parties?
- Who can be an independent?
- Are independents/minor parties important? Why or why not?
- How is a minor party different to a major party?



### EPISODE 15

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### KEY LEARNING

Students will explore the role of independents and minor parties in federal parliament.

### CURRICULUM

#### Civics and Citizenship – Year 5

The key features of the electoral process in Australia.

The roles and responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia’s democracy.

#### Civics and Citizenship – Year 6

The responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia’s democracy.

#### Civics and Citizenship – Year 7

Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australia’s democracy.

Develop a range of questions to investigate Australia’s political and legal systems.

## Activity: Glossary

Students will brainstorm a list of key words that relate to the BTN What is the Crossbench story. Here are some words to get them started.

MINOR PARTY	INDEPENDENT	CROSSBENCHER
FRONTBENCHER	CHAMBER	LOWER AND UPPER HOUSE

## Activity: Research inquiry

The KWLH organiser provides students with a framework to explore their knowledge on the topic of the crossbench in Australian parliament and consider what they would like to know and learn.

What do I <u>k</u> now?	What do I <u>w</u> ant to know?	What have I <u>l</u> earnt?	<u>H</u> ow will I find out?

### Questions to research

Students will develop their own question/s to research about the crossbench. Students will collect and record information from a wide variety of sources. Students may develop their own question for inquiry or select one of the questions below.

- What does the crossbench look like? Find a seating plan of the House of Representatives or the Senate and highlight where the crossbench sits.
- Who sits on the crossbench in parliament? Give some examples.
- What is an independent?
- What is a minor party?
- Why are some parties bigger than others?
- How many independents/minor party members sit in the House of Representatives?
- How many independents/minor party members sit in the Senate?
- Why is the crossbench important?
- What does it mean when an independent has the balance of power?
- How does a larger crossbench affect how the government makes decisions?

## Activity: Profile

The number of independent Members and Senators elected to Parliament has been increasing and the crossbench plays an important role in shaping the future of Australia.

Students will choose an independent or minor party representative that won a seat in the 2022 Federal Election. Students will explore their background in more detail and create a profile of them. Students will find out as much as they can about them using a range of primary and secondary sources. Examples of primary sources include interview transcripts, photographs, novels, paintings, films, historical documents, and official statistics. Examples of secondary sources include journal articles, political commentary, biographies, and newspaper editorial/opinion pieces.

Students will include the following in their profiles:

- Name
- What electorate or state do they represent?
- Have they won a seat in the House of Representatives or Senate?
- What is their background?
- What are their key policies?
- What other interesting information did you find?

## Activity: Create political parties

Investigate how the party system operates in Australia, and how government is formed in Parliament with this [classroom activity](#) made by the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO).



Explore the concepts of parliamentary majority, hung parliament, minority government and the balance of power in the Senate. This activity is aimed at students in years 5-12.

## Activity: Explainers

Election reporting can be full of words and phrases that we don't hear too often and can sound a little complicated. So, as part of BTN's election coverage, we've asked some of our rookie reporters to explain some election terms. Watch BTN's Election Lingo videos to learn more about electorates, political parties, political seats and the democracy sausage!



[Electorates](#)



[Political Parties](#)



[Safe and Marginal Seats](#)



[Democracy Sausage](#)

## Activity: Make your own explainer

Working in small groups, students will create their own short film to explain what a crossbench is and how it is formed. Before starting this project hold a class discussion using the following questions.

- Where is the crossbench in Australian parliament?
- What does the crossbench look like?
- Who sits in the crossbench?
- How many members are in the crossbench?
- What can members in the crossbench do?
- Why is the crossbench important?

After the discussion, watch this [BTN Explainer](#) as a class to learn more about filming tips, like how to frame your shots and what the rule of thirds is. Students may want to create a storyboard to help layout what they want to include in their film. Storyboards look like comic books and have a picture for every shot in the film. Explore the [ACMI website](#) to learn about what a storyboard is and how to create your own storyboard. Students can visit BTN's [Rookie Reporter webpage](#) for more training videos.



## Useful Websites

- [What is the crossbench and who sits there?](#) – PEO
- [Independents](#) – PEO
- [Who are the crossbenchers after the election?](#) – ABC News
- [Election Lingo: Political Parties](#) – BTN
- [Crossbenchers](#) – BTN