

Jurisdictional Report

Constitutional Centre of Western Australia



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **the Premier and Cabinet**
Constitutional Centre of Western Australia



About The Constitutional Centre

The Constitutional Centre of Western Australia was established to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to learn more about how our political system works and how to participate in it more fully.

The Centre is the only complex of its kind in Australia and provides information, a program of exhibitions, seminars and events. It gives Western Australians the opportunity to learn about our federal system of State and Commonwealth government and to explore current issues.

The Centre is housed in the beautifully restored heritage building that was once the old Hale School. It is set in spacious grounds, close to Parliament House, in West Perth. It has exhibition and seminar facilities, a theatrette, and a parliamentary-style debating chamber.

The Centre has permanent displays on the Constitution, aspects of citizenship and history relating to governance. Visitors are welcome to view these during business hours. Groups may arrange for guided programs with our education staff. There are also special programs to meet the needs of primary and secondary school groups.

A key component of the Centre's role is the provision of range of Civics Education programs for primary and secondary students in metropolitan Perth and regional Western Australia. Programs are conducted on site at the Centre and at schools, with the bulk being conducted at schools.

The Electoral Education Centre also operates programs from the Centre, and a joint program operates across both primary and secondary schools.

The Constitutional Centre administers a Civics Educator's Network known as the Education Reference Group. The group is made up of the Constitutional Centre, Parliamentary Education Office, WA Electoral Education Office and Francis Burt Law Education Program. Representatives from all education sectors, subject associations and SCSA (school curriculum and standards authority) are involved.

The Constitutional Centre runs a Seminar and Lecture Series throughout the year. These events are targeted at the academic/legal profession of Western Australia. Events are often conducted in conjunction with the Australian Association of Constitutional Lawyers. A public lecture series operates to provide Western Australians the opportunity to have debate and discussion on a wide range of topics.



Schools programs/events 2013

With budgetary and staffing constraints the 2013 school year has been one of business as usual, trying to maintain service and develop new programs within this environment.

In an average year we deliver programmes to about 38,000 students – visitors to the Centre, outreach in schools (the bulk of our work with schools) and regional visits, and programmes delivered by a number of regional presenters.

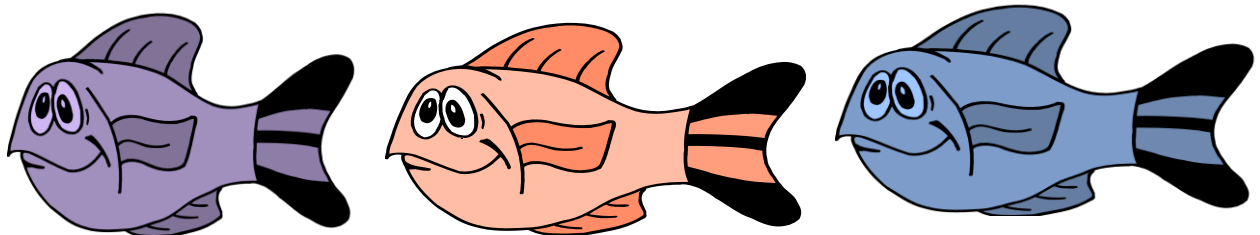
Primary in 2013

Our **Federation** program was slightly modified to bring it specifically in line with Australian Curriculum (History) , the result of which was a more that 100% increase in the up take in term one alone. This continued throughout the remainder of the year.

The “**Where I Live**” program was designed and introduced in early 2013 specifically for Year 3. Its aim is to introduce students to the role of local government and to establish the need for this third level of government. Three concepts are the focus:

- Being part of a community (school and local)
- Rules and laws and the reasons for them
- The roles and responsibilities of local government

The program is in line with current WA Curriculum and is a good stepping stone between our big book/puppet programs on democracy and rules for Year 1 and 2 and our programmes for middle and upper primary school. Students “fish” for local council responsibilities.



Each year the Centre modifies its Making Laws programme (done in conjunction with the WA Electoral Education Office) to incorporate a hypothetical bill to be debated in Parliament. This year it was compulsory morning fitness for primary school students.

We have a total of 10 programmes available to the primary years. The upper primary years is where most of our work is done.

Secondary in 2013

A new programme focussing on the three levels of government using a variety of quizzes including a jeopardy style quiz has been very popular with Year 9 students this year. Up take has been pleasing.

In September the Centre ran two one day Schools Constitutional Conventions for Year 11 students. The topic was Constitutional Change, and the focus was on the proposed recognition of Local Government. Students also looked in depth at the proposal for Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Students participated in two mock referenda and the WA Electoral Commission conducted an official count for us.

There are 11 programmes available to the secondary years, with five specifically targeted at the Year 11 & 12 politics and law course and one which overlaps with the Year 11 & 12 Modern History course.

Regional activities:

Our regional presenters in the south-west area of the state visited about 4000 students across that area of the state. The uptake is generally with primary schools, however a recent spike of interest has occurred in high schools.

Two presenters in conjunction with WA Electoral Education visited the Albany area for three days in August and presented to over 600 students in that time.

Special programmes

The Constitutional Centre in conjunction with Government House run a week of sessions for Year 5 – 7 students on the role of the Governor at Government House. Students have the opportunity to tour a number of the rooms – in particular the Executive Council room before participating in a programme run by Centre staff on the changing role of the Governor in WA.

Loan box programme

The Constitutional Centre administers a loan box programme for remote and regional schools on behalf of ourselves, Parliament WA, WA Electoral Education Office and Francis Burt Law Education Programme. Kits are available post free, this programme's usage fluctuates from year to year and has been quite low during 2013.

2013 Curriculum audit

All programmes currently offered have been audited against the draft Civics and Citizenship curriculum. Opportunities and challenges have been identified. Opportunities to work in conjunction with other agencies will continue to be explored as future directions become clearer – the discussions have begun already.

Public lecture programmes

Our Lecture Series continued to draw good numbers to our twilight events. 2013 saw the inaugural Sir John Forrest – State of the Federation lecture held on Constitution Day (July 9) the address was made by eminent West Australian historian Professor Geoffrey Bolton. This lecture will now be an annual event on the Constitutional Centre calendar.

Other lectures/events held throughout the year were:

- The US Ambassador - a comparison of High Court /Supreme Court appointments
- The fourth arm of government
- The story behind the land borders of the Australian States
- Implied freedom of political communication
- Parliamentary Privilege and the Bill of Rights 1689 (UK):
Its Application in Criminal Proceedings against Members of Parliament: England and Australia compared
- Voting for Upper Houses - Practical Problems and Sensible Reforms

Event planning for 2014 is well underway.

Community groups

Throughout the year sessions are conducted with a range of groups.

- ANU summer school programme / National Youth Science Forum
- Visiting delegations from other parliaments
- Election observer groups
- Probus, Rotary and Elderly Citizens groups
- Intensive language groups
- WA gov't dep't traineeship groups
- University of Western Australia, Curtin University international industry programmes

Community usage

A range of community groups whose role/ethos is in keeping with the Centre's use the Centre's room when available for training sessions, meetings and events.

Website

Website hits show some increase over time. Peak usage seems to match the start of the school year in particular and to a lesser degree the beginning of each term. This matches our electronic mail outs.

Most papers delivered at public lectures are made available on our website. Limited audio files are uploaded, but there are current limitations due to departmental restrictions. Under investigation – online conferencing options to access wider schools audience, social media possibilities

All Centre publications and exhibitions are now available on our website.