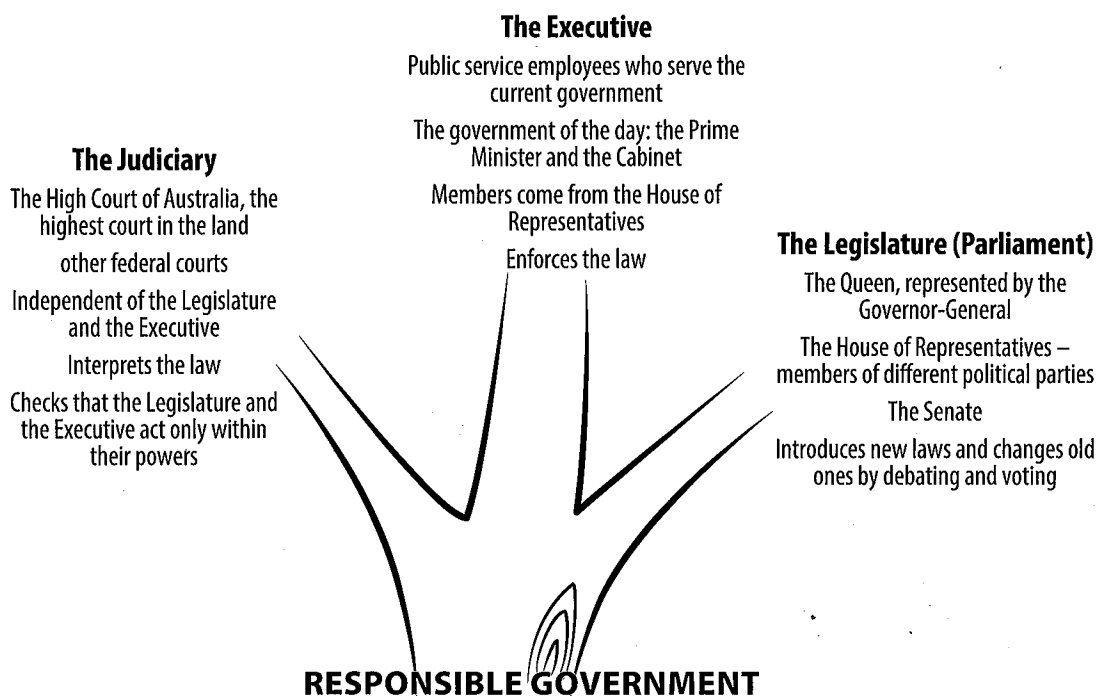


# A democratic system of government - 1

The aim of the Australian Constitution was to ensure that the new nation would always reflect the wishes of the people, with those in power accountable to the people. To achieve this, a democratic system of government based on the British Westminster system was chosen. The power to run the country is shared among three separate branches of government, each with its own role.



This type of political system is known as responsible government because anything the executive does has to be acceptable to the legislature which represents the people of Australia.

## The key features of the Westminster system are:

- an executive government taken from the democratically elected House of Representatives. To remain in office, the government must retain the support of a majority of MPs in the lower house.
- a cabinet of ministers, led by the prime minister, who are responsible for different ministries; e.g. Minister for Trade, Minister for Defence. All are accountable to parliament.
- a shadow cabinet, or opposition, led by the leader of the party with the second largest number of seats in the House of Representatives. The role of these ministers is to critically analyse what the government ministers are doing and offer better alternatives, keeping the government on its toes!
- a constitutional monarch who has no political power but carries out certain duties on the advice of the prime minister.
- a service of non-political employees who administer the laws of the current government.
- a non-political defence force that acts on the instructions of the current government.
- an independent judiciary that enforces the laws.