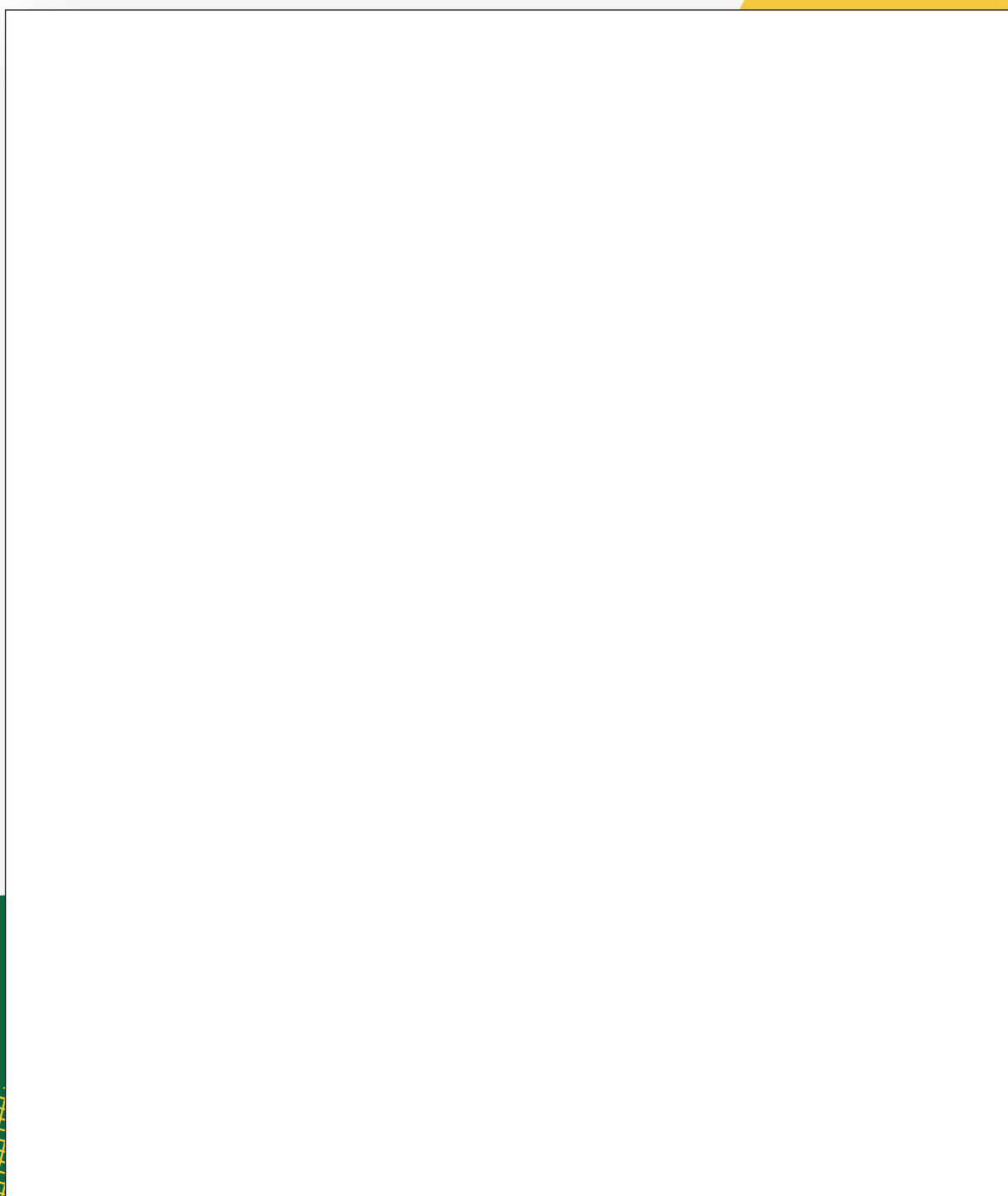


Name: _____

Date: _____

Your task:

Sketch a map of the Chamber



Question Time in the House of Assembly

What does the Parliament of Tasmania do?

The Parliament of Tasmania has four main roles.

1. Represent the people of Tasmania
2. Make and change Tasmanian laws
3. Form the Tasmanian Government
4. Closely examine (scrutinise) the work of the Tasmanian Government

What is Question Time?

Question Time is an opportunity for the House of Assembly to scrutinise the Tasmanian Government's decisions and actions. Each Minister, including the Premier, is in charge of several areas of government work (portfolios) and answers questions about their portfolios. The questions are usually about issues that are very important to the people of Tasmania.

Who asks the questions?

Most questions come from non-government Members, particularly the Opposition. Ministers do not know what the questions will be, so they study beforehand and come prepared with notes to answer questions accurately. The Opposition questions are intended to be difficult. They aim to find out important information, whilst trying to test the Government's effectiveness. Government backbenchers ask the Ministers' questions too but their questions are usually easy and the questions promote government work. These questions are most often planned with the Minister and have the nickname 'Dorothy Dixers'.

Are there rules to follow in Question Time?

The House of Assembly has a set of written rules, called the Standing Orders, which determine how Question Time operates. It is the Speaker's responsibility to ensure the Standing Orders are followed. If a Member believes a Standing Order has been broken, they draw the Speaker's attention to it by calling a 'Point of Order' and the Speaker makes a ruling. Members are very passionate about Tasmanian issues, so sometimes, the Chamber can become unsettled or rowdy. If this happens, the Speaker will remind the Members to behave appropriately.



Your task: Watch Question Time and answer the following questions.

Examine

Which political party is asking the majority of questions?

What does that tell you about the purpose of Question Time?

The Members of Parliament are very aware of their body language. Watch them closely. What non-verbal messages can you 'read'?

Apply

It is the Opposition's role to hold the Government to account and ask difficult questions, while it is the Minister's role to promote government work, answering questions confidently.

Imagine you are the Leader of the Opposition. Write a tricky question that you would put to the Premier of Tasmania.

Now imagine you are the Premier and answer the question.



Evaluate

The goal of Question Time is to scrutinise government decisions and actions. Do you think this was achieved in today's Question Time?

Justify your answer.

A key principle of democracy is that elected representatives (Members) act on behalf of the people they represent. Therefore, Members explain their decisions to the public.

What might happen if traditions, such as Question Time, disappeared and governments never had to explain their actions to the people they represent?

Like to draw? Turn to the back page of this booklet.

