

Why have a job description for a parliamentary representative?

2 minute read

Our elected representatives have a very important job. They are governing the nation, in theory for the public good.

In almost all walks of life, important roles have a job description that provides clear expectations of the role and scope of work. A job description permits matching the skills and attributes of the candidates for the job with those required, permits the employers to review and manage the performance of people and in some cases provides a legal framework around the employment contract.

Yet in Australia, our elected representatives have no formal job description. This makes it hard for the people, the represented, to know whether our MPs are doing their job well, that is governing for the public good. It makes it hard for the MPs to know if they are doing their job well.

A job description describes the purpose of the position, what the job outputs and deliverables or the outcomes are, some description of the processes to be used to achieve those, a set of standards and behaviours that are expected of the person, as a minimum. In this context, that would give MPs and community members a clear, shared understanding of the MP's role.

While "job description" may not be the most accurate term, it is widely enough used that people will understand what it means.

As a side issue, it is also not clear who the actual employer of the MP is. However, what is clear is that they are elected to the job of governing Australia, one of its states or territories or at the local government level. While the exact nature of the role differs across the different levels of government, there would be common elements.

So, we pose the question: What makes up the job on an MP?

Several interconnected roles exist:

- Constituent role: advocacy, hearing from constituents and keeping constituents informed.
- Facilitating participation: how does facilitating community input to governing and parliamentary processes fit in? When are they a delegate and when a trustee?
- Parliamentary role in committees and inquiries; policy development; development of legislation; in debate and voting; in holding the executive government to account.
- Party Roles.

We will discuss these in more detail in the next article.

Remember that this leads to candidate forums for the upcoming federal election candidates and the job description will be the foundation we build question for candidates on.