

The SPEAKER

The Speaker runs the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory as the Presiding Officer (or chairperson). At the beginning of each new parliament, usually after a general election, the members' first task is to choose the new Speaker for that parliamentary term. Terms are generally four years.

The Speaker is typically a member of the government. However independent members have also been elected to the position of Speaker.

The Speaker must be seen as impartial and not take sides. If votes on a bill or debate are equal, the Speaker has the option of using a casting vote to break the deadlock. The Speaker also has the option of a deliberative vote, the same as other members, on bills and debates.

The Speaker also has responsibility for Parliament House and its precinct, and of the Department of the Legislative Assembly. As well as other functions, this department administers staff and resources given to all elected members of parliament.



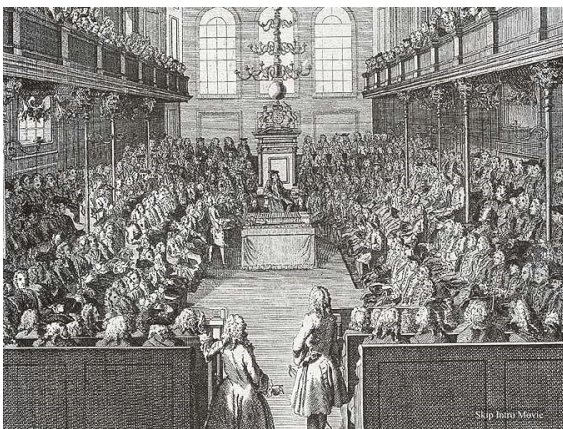
The Speaker's Chair in the Northern Territory Chamber.

Origins

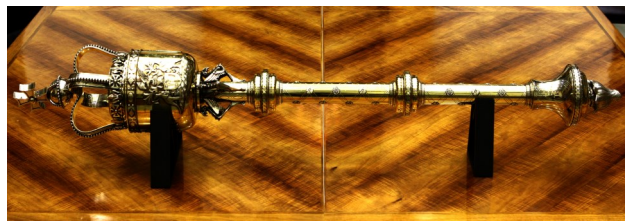
The Office of the Speaker is an ancient one dating back to 13th Century England. In early English Parliaments, the Speaker informed the Monarch about decisions of parliament.

Title

The Speaker should always be addressed as Mr Speaker or Madam Speaker while in the Chamber.



A scene from an old English Parliament with the Speaker at the centre of the Chamber.



The Mace

At the beginning of a parliamentary meeting day, the Serjeant-at-Arms carries the mace into the Chamber ahead of the Speaker, and places it on the table with the crown pointing toward the government.