

SADA

South Australian Debating Association Inc

SENIOR B, ROUND ONE

“That Australian politics would be better served if the major parties split along factional lines.”

1. Type of Topic

This is an empirical debate. This means that neither team needs to propose a model, or any kind of policy change within the world; instead, you are debating a statement about the world as it currently exists. The affirmative team needs to argue that the Australian politics would function better in the case that major parties split along factional lines, and the negative team needs to argue the opposite. This will require you to consider what it is that makes Australian politics better or worse in order to debate about whether the statement can be true against this definition. Neither side has fiat, and any assertion made by a side should be a product of their analysis.

2. Background/context

Major parties have long had factions within them. For example, the Liberal Party has had long factional division based on differing views over social policy, such as the division between the more socially progressive Wets and the more conservative Dries. The major parties have most often been divided by political “Left” and “Right”, relative to the parties’ overall policy line.

Factions maintain influence over parties for several reasons. One of these include the fact that factions act as voting blocs in parliament. Whether the factions of a party can agree on policy dictates whether the party will need to engage in deals with crossbenchers or opposition members, or whether the party may be forced to compromise on their policy in order to gain the votes of a faction. Because of this, the existence of factions has made it so that an individual’s power within parliament may be dictated by their position within a faction more so than their overall position in the party. The only real forum for discussion between factions takes place in party meetings, which give backbenchers an opportunity to express their views to faction and party leaders, as well as an opportunity for senators and members to meet.

It should also be noted that the Coalition has a history of leniency concerning its members exercising a conscience vote or free vote(the act of a member voting against their party’s proposal out of their own personal beliefs) more so than the Labor Party, which in most cases does not allow its members to have this same individual voting freedom.

3. Specific Questions for consideration

- What does an optimal Australian political landscape look like?
- What part do factions play in the representative aspect of our democracy? Do they act representatively or in self-interested ways?
- How do factions affect power dynamics in the party room? How about in the house and the senate?
- What are the relevant factors which divide parties?
- How would voters respond to these changes?
- In what ways does the current Australian political system rely on two major parties, and how will this change if they were to be split?
- What are examples of times factions have impacted the outcome of a bill?

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