

# The Mace



**Above:** A picture of the type of Mace CEFA provides its participating schools

## **What is the symbolism and use of 'The Mace'?**

The Mace of the House of Representatives is the symbol of royal authority and also the authority of the House itself. It also symbolises the authority of the Speaker

Prior to the election of a Speaker, the Mace is placed on brackets under the Table of the House and as soon as the Speaker takes his or her seat after being elected by the House, it is placed on rests on the Table.

When the Speaker is in the Chair, the Mace lies on the Table, with the orb and cross pointing to the government side, that is, to the Speaker's right. The only time that the Mace is not removed from the Table when the Speaker leaves the Chair is when he or she has temporarily suspended a sitting of the House (perhaps for a meal break). The Mace remains on the Table during the whole of the suspension.

The Serjeant-at-Arms is custodian of the Mace. Bearing the Mace upon the right shoulder, the Serjeant-at-Arms precedes the Speaker when the Speaker enters and leaves the Chamber at the beginning and the end of a day's sitting.

The Mace also accompanies the Speaker on formal occasions such

as his or her presentation to the Governor-General after election, when the House goes to the Senate to hear the Governor-General's opening speech, and on the presentation to the Governor-General of the Address in Reply to the opening speech. On these occasions, the Mace is covered with a cloth or left in an antechamber before entering the Governor-General's presence. Being the symbol of the Royal authority, the Mace is unnecessary in the presence of the authority itself.

### **Where did the current Mace come from?**

The current Mace of the House of Representatives was presented by a delegation of the House of Commons in 1951 after King George VI had directed 'that a Mace, a symbol of the Royal authority, should be presented, on behalf of the Commons House of the Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia to mark the Jubilee year of the Commonwealth's foundation'.

It is made of silver gilt and weighs approximately 7.8 kg.

From the first sitting on 9 May 1901 until the presentation of the new Mace in 1951 the House used a Mace borrowed from the Victorian Legislative Assembly.

### **What is the history of the Mace?**

It is believed that during medieval times, the Royal Serjeants-at-Arms were distinguished by their power of arrest without a written warrant. Their Maces - originally ordinary weapons of war, not unlike a club - became their symbols of authority. They were marked with the Royal insignia; and in an era in which few people could read or write, the Serjeants effected their arrests by showing their Mace.