Question 2b)

*Outline three sections of the Commonwealth Constitution (Australia) that establish the House of Representatives as the house of government. (3 marks)*

The House of Representatives has much power, and this is established in Sections 24, 53, and 57.

Firstly, Section 24 states that the ministers of the House of Representatives must be “directly chosen by the people” and that members are in proportion to the “respective numbers of their people”. This provides a democratic link to forming government.

Secondly, Section 53 states that supply bills must not originate in the Senate, and therefore must be initiated in the House of Representatives. This demonstrates the more significant power of the lower house, making them house of government.

Finally, Section 57 states that in the event of disagreement between the houses, a “joint sitting” may be convened to reach a final agreement. However, as the House of Representatives has “twice the number of the senators” (Section 24), they have much greater sway and power in numbers for passing legislation. As the House of Representatives is over half government seats, this creates more power towards the government and establishes the lower house as the house of government.

Question 4b)

*Differentiate between “cabinet secrecy” and “cabinet solidarity”. (3 marks)*

Cabinet is the group of senior ministers from the governing party, led and chosen by the Prime Minister.

Cabinet secrecy is the privacy and confidentiality of what is discussed in Cabinet meetings. This information is not publicly available or disclosed. Here, ministers can safely express and communicate their viewpoints.

Cabinet solidarity is the unified party opinion that Cabinet ministers must present to the public, even if they disagree.

The difference is that in cabinet secrecy, ministers’ individual views may be expressed while in cabinet solidarity, ministers must all present a unified party view.

Question 4c)
*Discuss, with examples, the methods that an individual might use to successfully influence lawmaking. (5 marks)*

Individuals with power or public respect may successfully influence lawmaking. Antony Green, an esteemed psephologist, suggested reforms to below the line voting after issues following the 2013 election. Following these suggestions, the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016 was proposed and passed. Due to Antony Green’s success as an election analyst and the respect for his profession that he has garnered, his opinion had a platform and successfully influenced the creation of new laws.

Individuals in the Senate may also successfully influence lawmaking. Often, the government does not hold a large or any majority of seats in the upper house, causing them to rely on minor and micro parties and independents to pass their legislation. However, in order to gain this support, the government must account for the wants and needs of other Senators. This power allowed WA Senator Rod Culleton to propose a change to the 2016 Australian Building and Construction Commission Bill which would create 200 new apprenticeships in Western Australia. The Coalition government agreed in order to gain his support, and the bill was amended. This demonstrates the power of crossbenchers in the Senate in influencing lawmaking.