

AUSTRALIA

Date of Elections: November 25, 1967

Characteristics of Parliament:

The Australian Federal Parliament is bicameral.

The House of Representatives, comprising 124 members elected for 3 years, represents the entire nation.

The Senate, with 60 members elected for 6 years and renewed by halves every 3 years, represents each of the 6 States of the Australian Commonwealth on an equal basis.

On November 25, voters went to the polls in order to fill 30 senatorial seats—5 for each State.

Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory electors, who are represented in the Lower House by two deputies *, do not vote in Senate elections.

Electoral System:

All British subjects of both sexes, who have been resident in Australia for at least 6 months, are aged 21 and over, are mentally sane, enjoy their civil and political rights and appear on the electoral registers, are entitled to vote in elections to both Houses. Since 1966, moreover, soldiers and former soldiers who have not yet reached the age of 21 are also allowed to vote.

* The voting rights of the representative of the Federal capital is restricted to matters concerning its territory. Formerly, the same applied to Northern Territory representatives but an act, which was assented to on May 15, 1968, has now conferred powers and voting rights identical to those of other deputies.

Voting is a duty and unwarranted abstention is punishable by law. Voting by correspondence is permitted.

All persons fulfilling the conditions required to vote and who have resided in Australia for at least three consecutive years can be elected to the House of Representatives or Senate. The law also establishes certain cases of ineligibility: for example, members of a State Parliament are not allowed to be candidates for federal elections.

Senators are elected in each State, which forms a single electoral college, by plurinomial vote with preferential ballot and proportional distribution of seats.

Each elector receives a ballot paper bearing the names of all the candidates for his State, grouped together according to political affiliation or cited as independent candidates. He then indicates his order of preference by marking the numbers 1, 2, 3 etc. in squares placed opposite each name.

When the votes are counted, the number of first preferential votes obtained by each candidate, excluding void ballot papers, is recorded.

A quota is then determined by dividing the total number of first preference votes by one more than the number of candidates required to be elected and by increasing the quotient so obtained by one. Any candidate who has received a number of first preferential votes equal to or greater than the quota so determined is declared elected.

Should there remain any seats to be filled, a second distribution is carried out on the same basis, using the second preferential vote after the surplus votes (i.e. the number in excess of the quota) of the elected candidates have been transferred to the continuing candidates.

The electoral system governing elections to the House of Representatives is also somewhat complicated and can be summarized as follows. Although there is only a single ballot, deputies—one for each constituency—are elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast. Thus, voters are required to indicate, opposite each name appearing on their ballot paper, an order of preference among all the candidates contesting the same seat. If none of the candidates in a

given constituency obtains an absolute majority of the first preferential votes, a second count is held. At this point, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated and the ballot papers which he had polled in the first count are redistributed among his opponents on the basis of the second choice indicated by the electors. This procedure is repeated until such time as one of the candidates obtains an absolute majority.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections:

Although the fate of the Government did not depend on the outcome of these senatorial elections, their results could have influenced the reception that Government bills might be given when they came up for debate in the Upper House.

A year earlier, at the time of the elections to the House of Representatives, problems of foreign policy, and particularly that of Australia's participation in the Vietnam conflict, had dominated the electoral campaign.

These issues, which are the major cause of friction between the main Australian parties, were not altogether absent from the debates which preceded the November 1967 senatorial elections. However, controversy centred essentially on the role of the Senate and on various problems of domestic policy.

By and large, the Government coalition of the Liberal and Country Parties asked the electorate to continue their majority in the Upper House so as to enable the Cabinet to pursue its work.

On the other hand, the candidates of the Australian Labour Party and Democratic Labour Party considered that an increase in the number of their representatives in the Senate would enable them better to control governmental action in the interests of the people.

The results of the poll gave two additional seats to the Democratic Labour Party, which had laid particular stress on the Senate's role as a House of review, while the Australian Labour Party and the Government coalition each lost a seat.

This represents a success for the Democratic Labour Party, whose 4 senators will have a determining influence whenever the Upper House is required to vote on a matter on which the opinion of the two other groups diverge.

Statistics:

Number of registered voters.	6,191,921
Voters.	5,889,129
Blank or void ballot papers.	359,241
Valid votes.	5,529,888

Political Group		\otes obtained (1st preference)	∞ %	Members elected on 25.XI.67	Number of Seats in the Senate
Liberal Party	Government	2,365,373	42.77	14	21 (- 1)
Country Party	Coalition				17(=)
Australian Labour Party		2,489,990	45.03	13	27(=)
Democratic Labour Party		540,006	9.77	2	4 (+ 2)
Australian Reform Move-		58,679	1.06	—	- (=)
		55,192	1.00	1	M=)
Communist Party . . .		20,648	0.37		21<-)
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