

## AUSTRALIA

**Date of Elections:** 18 October 1980

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives and half (34) of the Senate following premature dissolution of the House on 18 September 1980. Previous general elections had been held in December 1977.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia is bicameral, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Senate comprises 64 members. Of this total, 10 Senators represent each of Australia's six States, being elected for 6 years and renewed by halves every 3 years, while residents of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory are each represented by two Senators, elected at each House of Representatives election.

The House of Representatives, according to the Constitution, must be, as nearly as practicable, twice the size of the Senate. The number of Representatives in each of the country's six States is in proportion to the population, but must be at least five. At present, the membership of the House is 125 members, which includes two members from the Australian Capital Territory and one from the Northern Territory. All Representatives are elected for 3 years.

### **Electoral System**

All British subjects who have been resident in Australia for six consecutive months, are aged 18 and over, and appear on the continuously revised electoral registers are entitled to vote for members of Parliament. Persons of unsound mind, attainted of treason, under sentence for any offence punishable by imprisonment for one year or more, or persons who are holders of temporary entry permits under the Migration Act, or are prohibited immigrants under that Act, are barred from registering as electors.

Voting is a duty and unwarranted abstention is punishable by fine of up to A\$10.

All persons fulfilling the conditions required for electors who have resided in Australia for at least three years can be elected to the House of Representatives or Senate. Undischarged bankrupts, persons under allegiance to a foreign State, holders of an office of profit or pension payable by the State, as well as certain persons having a pecuniary interest through an agreement with the Government, cannot be members of Parliament.

Candidates to Parliament must be nominated by six qualified electors and make a payment of AS200 (Senate) or AS100 (House). This monetary deposit is reimbursed if the candidate polls more than 10% (Senate) or 20% (House) of the average or total number, respectively, of first preference votes polled by the successful candidates in the election.

Members of the House of Representatives are elected in single-member constituencies according to a system of preferential, or alternative, vote. Under this system, members of the House - one for each electoral division—are elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast. Voters are required to indicate, on their ballot paper, an order of preference among all the candidates contesting the same seat. If none of the candidates in a division obtains an absolute majority of the first preference votes, a second count is held. At this point, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated and the votes which he had obtained in the first count are redistributed among the remaining candidates 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.

Senators are elected according to the single-transferable-vote form of proportional representation. Under this system, each elector indicates his order of preference among all the candidates in his constituency. Once the number of first preference votes obtained by each candidate has been recorded, an electoral quota is determined by dividing the total number of first preference votes by the number of seats to be filled and increasing by one the result so arrived at. Any candidate who has received a number of votes equal to or greater than the established quota is declared elected. Should there remain any seats to be filled, a second distribution is carried out on the same basis as the House of Representatives, using the second preference votes, after the surplus votes (i.e., the number in excess of the quota) of the elected candidates have been transferred to the continuing candidates.

A by-election is held to fill any seat which becomes vacant in the House of Representatives between general elections. Vacancies in the Senate are filled by choice of the Houses of Parliament of the particular State or, if the Parliament is not in session, through appointment by that State's Governor, and the person so chosen, if replacing a person publicly recognized as an endorsed member of a political party, must be from the same political party. A joint sitting of both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament is required to choose a Senator if the place of a Senator representing the Australian Capital Territory becomes vacant; if the Parliament is not sitting, the Governor-General may appoint a person to fill the vacancy for a period up to 14 days from the meeting of the Parliament. In the Northern Territory, the vacancy is filled by the Legislative Assembly or, if the Assembly is not sitting, by the Administrator, with the same 14-day limitation. In each of the Territories, the person chosen must be of the same political party as the person replaced, if the person to be replaced was publicly recognized as an endorsed member of a political party.

#### General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On 11 September 1980, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (Liberal Party) informed the Parliament that the Governor-General had acceded to the Government's request for a dissolution of the House of Representatives on 18 September, so that general elections for the House and for half the Senate might be held. Mr. Fraser stated that his Government would stand on its record of economic management in the ensuing elections. Mr. Hayden (Australian Labor Party), Leader of the Opposition, stated that the key election issue would be the falling standard of living of the average Australian family.

The Australian Democrats, headed by Senator D. Chipp, entered the 1980 campaign hopeful of winning more Senate seats and holding the balance of power after 1 July 1981;

Senator Chipp stated that, if successful in their aim of achieving the balance of power, the Democrats would use their position to ensure honest government.

On polling day, the Government was returned to power with a reduced majority in the House, but lost its majority in the Senate as from 1 July 1981. From this date on, the Democrats' representation in the Senate will be increased from two to five, the one Independent Senator will remain and the Australian Labor Party will have one additional seat.

Mr. Fraser announced a new Ministry on 3 November, with an overall decrease in the number of Ministers from 27 to 26.

## Statistics

### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives

Number of registered electors	9,014,920
Voters . . . . .	8,513,992 (94.4%)
Blank or void ballot papers . . . . .	208,359
Valid votes . . . . .	8,305,633

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution
Liberal Party . . . . .	110	3,108,517	37.4	54	67
National Country Party . . . . .	29	736,153	8.9	20	19
Australian Labor Party . . . . .	125	3,749,605	45.1	51	38
Australian Democrats . . . . .	121	546,033	6.6	1	—
Others . . . . .	117	165,325	2.0	—	—
				125*	124

\* Total number of seats increased following redistribution in Western Australia.

*2. Results of the Elections and Distribution  
of Seats in the Senate*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	9,014,920
Voters. . . . .	8,513,992 (94.4%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	821,628
Valid votes. . . . .	7,692,364

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats won at 1980 Elections	Total Number of Seats
Liberal Party. . . . .	} >>	3,344,924	43.48	17	31**
National Country Party . . . . .				13	
Australian Labor Party . . . . .	22	3,250,187	42.25	3	27
Australian Democrats. . . . .	22	711,805	9.25	1	5
Others . . . . .	107	385,448	5.02	34*	64

\* Includes elections for all four Territory Senators.

\*\* Liberal Party 28, National Country Party 3.

*3. Distribution of Members of Parliament  
According to Professional Category*

	House of Representatives
Solicitors and barristers. . . . .	20
Union or party officials. . . . .	8
University and teaching. . . . .	13
Company directors. . . . .	7
Farmers and graziers. . . . .	19
Medical practitioners. . . . .	4
Accountants . . . . .	5
Others. . . . .	49
	<b>64</b>

*4. Distribution of Members of Parliament  
According to Sex*

	Senate	House of Representatives
Men. . . . .	55	122
Women . . . . .	9	3
	64	125

5. Average Age of Members of Parliament

Senate . . . . .	48 years
House of Representatives. . . . .	47 years

*Note:* The above statistics were based on the composition of the House of Representatives and a projection of the composition of the Senate at 1 July 1981. following the elections of 18 October 1980. Since that time, however, one Member of the House of Representatives has died, three Members have resigned to take up judicial and diplomatic posts, one Senator has died and two Senators have resigned to contest House of Representatives by-elections.