

AUSTRALIA

Date of Elections: 11 July 1987

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament following its premature "double" dissolution on 5 June 1987. General elections had previously been held in March 1983 and December 1984.

Characteristics of Parliament

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

The Senate comprises 76 Senators. Of this total, 12 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 148 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

Australian citizens who are 18 years of age and over, and British subjects who were on the electoral roll on 25 January 1984, are entitled to vote in parliamentary elections. Persons of unsound mind, attainted of treason, under sentence for any offence punishable by imprisonment for five years or more, or persons who are holders of temporary entry permits under the Migration Act, or are prohibited immigrants under that Act, are not entitled to vote.

Voting is compulsory and unwarranted abstention is punishable by a fine of up to A\$50.

All Australian citizens fulfilling the conditions required for electors except members of state and territory legislatures 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 A\$500 (Senate) or A\$250 (House). This monetary deposit is reimbursed if the candidate polls at least 4% of first preference votes polled 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 either his order of preference among all the candidates in his constituency or indicates support for the registered order of preference of a party or group of candidates. 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.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

The election date was set on 27 May 1987 and Parliament was prematurely dissolved on 5 June. The House of Representatives' term was not normally due to expire until 21 February 1988. The reason given for dissolution was the Senate's action in rejecting the Australian Card Bill, which was an integral part of the Government's tax reform package.

Throughout the election campaign, Prime Minister Bob Hawke (Australian Labor Party) affirmed that tough economic policies (introduced especially because of the disastrous drop in prices of exports) would need to continue if his Government were re-elected. The austerity measures envisioned were capsulated in his party's slogan "Let's see it through". The Prime

Minister furthermore emphasized the competence, unity and stability of his Government, and its record in reconciling disparate elements in Australian society and politics through his policy of consensus. Mr. John Howard, leader of the main opposition Liberal Party, based his campaign largely on a promise of substantial income tax cuts. But the conservative Liberals were also disadvantaged by dissident elements in their ranks and were divided on policy issues, Mr. Howard being opposed by Mr. Andrew Peacock, former leader of the party. Altogether 868 candidates (613 for the House of Representatives, 255 for the Senate) were in the running.

On polling day. Labor's overall triumph was attributed to this disruption in the opposition as well as to the Government's positive record in office, despite disillusionment on the part of traditional Labor voters over the party's move to the right, closer to Liberal policies. Mr. Hawke became the first Labor Prime Minister to win on three successive occasions. On 22 July, the composition of his new, reduced Cabinet was announced.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	10,353,213
Voters.	9,712,182 (93.8%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	479,993
Valid votes.	9,232,189

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Australian Labor Party.	148	4,231,183	45.83	86	X2	K2
Liberal Party	135	3,169,436	34.33	43	45	45
National Party	to	1,063,788	11.52	19	21	21
Australian Democrats	126	557,259	6.04	—	—	—
Country Liberal Party	1	20,551	0.22	—	—	—
Unite Australia Party	21	14,591	0.16	—	—	—
Others (including independents)	97	175,381	1.90			
				748	748	748

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

Number of registered electors.	10,353,213	
Voters.	9,766,571	(94.3%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	394,891	
Valid votes.	9,371,680	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution
Australian Labor Party	46	4,013,860	42.83	32	34
<u>Liberal Party</u>	44	1,965,180	20.97	27	28
National Party	24	664,394	7.09	6	5
Australian Democrats	25	794,107	8.47	7	7
<u>Nuclear Disarmament Party.</u>	8	102,480	1.09	1	1
Senator Harradine Group	2	37,037	0.40	1	1
<u>Vallentine Peace Group</u>	2	40,048	0.43	1	—
Liberal/National Party	—	1,289,888	13.76	—	—
Country Liberal Party	2	19,970	0.21	1	—
Unite Australia Party	13	24,704	0.26	—	—
Others (including in-dependents)	88	420,012	4.48		
				76	76

Australia

3. Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Profession

	House of Representatives	
Members of the teaching profession	28	26
Members of the legal profession . . .	25	14
Primary producers	25	X
Company directors or managers . . .	13	II
Trade union officials	12	8
Members of State Parliaments . . .	13	4
Public servants	13	4
Tradesmen, labourers	10	6
Small business, retailers, wholesalers	11	5
Political/economic advisers	8	6
Research officers or assistants	8	5
Medical profession	6	7
Accountants, secretaries, clerks . . .	7	5
Consultants	4	5
Party officials	4	5
Training, personnel or education officers	4	:
University administration	4	i
Association officials	3	2
Engineers	4	—
Mass media	3	1
Journalists	1	2
Armed services	3	—
Diplomats	3	—
Pharmacists	2	—
Computer/electronics technicians	2	—
Policemen	2	—
Social workers	1	1
	219*	128*

* Because some MPs have more than one occupation, totals are higher than total membership.

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

	House of Representatives	Senate
Men	139	59
Women	9	17
	148	76

5. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Age*

	House of Representatives	Senate
Under 30 years.	1	
30-34 years.	8	2
35-39 »	23	8
40-44 »	25	21
45-49 »	29	11
50-54 »	32	18
55-59 »	17	10
60-64 »	11	4
65-69 »	2	1
	148	76