

AUSTRALIA

Date of Elections: December 2, 1972

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the House of Representatives on the normal expiry of their terms of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Australian Federal Parliament is bicameral, consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The House of Representatives, according to the Constitution, must as nearly as practicable be twice the size of the Senate. The number of Representatives in each State of the Australian Commonwealth is in proportion to the population, but must be at least 5. At present, the membership of the House is 125 Representatives, all elected for 3 years.

The Senate, with 60 members elected for 6 years and renewed by halves every 3 years, represents each of the 6 States on an equal basis. However, inhabitants of Australia's 2 internal territories — the Federal Capital Territory and the Northern Territory — who are represented in Parliament by 2 Representatives, do not vote in Senate elections.

Electoral System

All British subjects of either sex who have been resident in Australia for 6 consecutive months, are aged 21 and over *, and appear on the continuously revised electoral rolls, are entitled to vote in elections to both Houses. Persons of unsound mind, attained of treason, convicted and under sentence for any offense punishable by imprisonment for 1 year or more, or persons who are holders of temporary entry permits under the Migration Act 1958-1966, or are prohibited immigrants under that Act, are excluded from the franchise.

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

All persons fulfilling the conditions required for electors who have resided in Australia for at least 3 years can be elected to the House of Representatives

* Since the elections, the minimum age for electors and candidates to Parliament has been lowered to 18. See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 17.

or Senate. No member of either House may be chosen or sit as a member of the other House. Furthermore, no undischarged bankrupt or person who is under allegiance to a foreign State or who derives any profit or has any pecuniary interest through the holding of public office, a pension, or certain agreement with the Government, may be elected for or sit in Parliament.

Candidatures to Parliament must be signed by 6 qualified electors and accompanied by a payment of \$A 200 (for the Senate) or \$A 100 (for the House). This deposit is reimbursed if the candidate polls at least one-tenth (Senate) or one-fifth (House) of the total or average number, respectively, of first preference votes polled by the successful candidates in the election.

Representatives are elected according to a system of preferential, or alternative, vote which can be summarized as follows:

Although there is only a single ballot, Representatives — one for each constituency — are elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast. Thus voters are required to indicate, on their ballot paper, an order of preference among all the candidates contesting the same seat, by marking the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. in squares placed opposite each name. 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.

Senators are elected in each State, which forms a single electoral college, according to the single-transferable vote form of proportional representation.

Pursuant to this system, 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 among all the candidates.

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

The electoral quota is then determined by dividing the total number of first preferential votes by the number of seats to be filled and increasing the quotient so obtained by one. Any candidate who has received a number of votes equal to or greater than the quota 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 (that is, 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 becoming vacant in the House of Representatives between general elections. Vacancies in the Senate are filled

either by choice of the Houses of Parliament of the particular State or through appointment by that State's Governor.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

As the election campaign opened on November 12, 1972, 533 candidates vied for the 125 seats in the House of Representatives.

The ruling Liberal Party-Country Party coalition, in power since 1949, was opposed mainly by the Australian Labor Party (ALP), Australia's oldest party headed by Mr. Gough Whitlam. The latter launched his party's campaign with a speech on November 13 in Sydney. Concerning foreign affairs, he pledged that a Labor Government would recognize the People's Republic of China, take the question of French nuclear testing in the Pacific to the International Court of Justice, and support a policy for a neutralized South-East Asia which, in turn, would mean an effective end of SEATO. On domestic issues, Mr. Whitlam, taking up many liberal causes, promised greatly increased State financial aid to education, more employment, a nationwide health scheme, tax concessions to home-buyers on low incomes, a progressive increase in pensions to the level of one-quarter of the average male wage, and abolition of conscription for military service. He moreover proposed to reorganize the immigration system, emphasizing family reunion rather than further recruitment from overseas.

While also opposing French nuclear testing in the Pacific, Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party William MacMahon, speaking the following day, advocated, *inter alia*, the strengthening of relations with Britain, the United States and New Zealand. Domestically, he promised increased funds for education, pensions and improved transport systems in the different States.

Besides their varying platforms, the 2 leaders proposed differing ways of implementing them, Mr. MacMahon favouring continued reliance on local governments and Mr. Whitlam calling for a strong central Government that would establish direct links with the municipalities.

Among minor parties fielding candidates was the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) — a rightist wing of the conservative Government with an important voice in Government due to its pivotal role in the Senate — which proposed a prices, incomes and wages policy. The Australia Party advocated an upward revaluation of the Australian dollar, and, as before, an independent foreign policy.

The Labor Party's victory on election day was no doubt grounded a great deal on Mr. Whitlam's reunification of his party, and reflected the acceptance of its slogan: " It's time " (for a change) and Mr. Whitlam himself, whose personality played a key role during the campaign. The voting evidenced that Labor attracted a portion of the middle classes traditionally oriented to the

right: the party fared better in Sydney and Melbourne than in the less populated States of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

Mr. Whitlam, sworn in as Prime Minister on December 5, also assumed the title of Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Statistics

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

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of registered voters | 7,073,930 |
| Voters | 6,747,244 (95.4%) |
| Blank or void ballot papers | 146,194 |
| Valid votes | 6,601,050 |

| Political Group | Number of Candidates | Votes obtained | % | Number of Seats in the House of Representatives |
|--|----------------------|----------------|-------|---|
| Australian Labor Party (ALP) | .125 | 3,273,549 | 49.59 | 67 (+8) |
| Liberal Party | .107 | 2,115,085 | 32.04 | 38 (-8) |
| Country Party | .36 | 622,826 | 9.44 | 20 (=) |
| Democratic Labor Party (DLP) | .121 | 346,415 | 5.25 | — |
| Australia Party | .60 | 159,916 | 2.42 | — |
| Communist Party | .8 | 8,105 | 0.12 | — |
| Others | .76 | 75,154 | 1.14 | — |
| | | | | 125 |

2. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Professional Category*

| | | Senate |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Agriculturists. | 21 | 13 |
| Lawyers. | 13 | 11 |
| Trade union officials. | 12 | 7 |
| Tradesmen. | 12 | 2 |
| Teachers. | 12 | 1 |
| Company directors and executives. | 10 | 1 |
| Public servants. | 9 | 4 |
| Accountants, secretaries. | 7 | — |
| Physicians. | 5 | 1 |
| Management consultants. | 3 | — |
| Clerks. | 3 | 3 |
| Political party officials. | 3 | 5 |
| Pharmacists. | 2 | 2 |
| Policemen. | 2 | — |
| Ministers of religion. | 2 | — |
| Others. | 9 | 10 |
| | 125 | 60 |

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

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----|
| Men. | 125 | 58 |
| Women. | — | 2 |
| | 125 | CO |

4. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Age Group*

| | House of Representatives | Senate |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Under 30 | 2 | — |
| 30-39 | 15 | 1 |
| 40-49 | 51 | 12 |
| 50-59 | 36 | 24 |
| 60-69 | 19 | 21 |
| 70 and over | 2 | 2 |
| | 125 | <hr/> 60 |