

AUSTRALIA

Date of Elections: 1 December 1984

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all seats in the House of Representatives and half of those in the Senate (46) following premature dissolution of Parliament on 26 October 1984. Previous general elections had been held on 5 March 1983.

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 AS500 (Senate) or AS250 (House). This monetary deposit is reimbursed if the candidate polls at least 4% of first preference votes polled in the election.

•See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 8.

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.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The election date was announced on 8 October 1984. Prime Minister Bob Hawke (Labor Party) said that he was calling an early poll to allow the electorate to pass judgment on the Government and renew its mandate. The need to synchronize House of Representatives and Senate elections was also cited as a factor contributing to this decision.

During the seven-week campaign, the outgoing Prime Minister emphasized the Government's achievements in the economic and social fields (lower inflation and unemployment rates, banking and financial reforms, growth in gross national product) and in the area of

Australia

international relations. The primary opposition to Labor was provided by the conservative coalition of the Liberal and National parties. Liberal leader Andrew Peacock claimed that the Government could not sustain the country's economic recovery and that wide-ranging reforms, especially in taxation, were needed. Organized crime was another issue raised.

Altogether 830 candidates (628 for the House of Representatives, 202 for the Senate) and 16 political parties were in contention for the expanded House's 148 seats and the Senate's 46 seats (including 12 extra). The December poll was the first federal vote to be publicly funded.

On polling day, the Labor Party retained power, as expected, but with a reduced House majority, in spite of the personal popularity of Prime Minister Hawke. In the Senate the balance of power continued to be held by the Australian Democrats. On 12 December, Mr. Hawke announced the membership of a reorganized Cabinet.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	9,866,266	
Voters.	9,291,365	(94.17%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	626,125	
Valid votes.	8,665,240	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	Percentage	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
Australian Labor Party	148	4,120,304	47.5	82	75	75
Liberal Party.	140	2,979,007	34.4	45	33	33
National Party.	73	921,150	10.6	21	17	17
Australian Democrats	138	472,247	5.4			
Democratic Labor Party	39	49,120	0.6			
Nuclear Disarmament Party	6	17,977	0.2			
Socialist Workers Party	9	9,460	0.1			
Others.	75	95,975	1.1			
				148*	125	125

*23 seats added since last elections.

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

Number of registered electors.	9,866,266
Voters.	9,325,349 (94.51%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	439,843
Valid votes.	8,885,506

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats won at 1984 Elections	Total Number of Seats
Australian Labor Party	28	3,748,776	42.2	20	34
Liberal Party.	31	2,987,789	33.6	17	28
National Party	20	525,185	5.9	3	5
Australian Democrats	26	676,160	7.6	5	7
Nuclear Disarmament Party	17	642,435	7.2	1	1
Call to Australia Group	14	162,272	1.8	—	—
Democratic Labor Party	4	32,472	0.4	—	—
Senator Harradine Group	2	22,992	0.3	—	—
Pensioner Party of Australia	4	23,974	0.3	—	—
Others.	56	63,451	0.7		—
(including independents)				46	76»

* 12 seats added since last elections.

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

Members of the legal profession.	30
Members of the teaching profession.	29
Company directors or managers.	19
Primary producers.	16
Party officials.	14
Consultants.	13
Medical practitioners.	13
Trade union officials.	12
Members of State Parliaments.	12
Accountants, auditors, secretaries.	12
Public servants.	11
Retailers or wholesalers.	7
Tradesmen.	5
Pharmacists.	4
Journalists.	3
Engineers.	2
Armed services.	2
Mass media.	2
Association officials.	2
Others.	6

224

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

	<i>House of Representatives</i>	<i>Senate</i>
Men	140	62
Women	8	<u>14</u>
	148	76

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

	<i>House of Representatives</i>	<i>Senate</i>
Under 30 years	3	
30-34 years	10	3
35-39 »	22	7
40-44 »	19	14
45-49 »	38	12
50-54 »	29	16
55-59 »	21	12
60-64 »	5	8
65-69 »	1	4
	148	76