1

Situating Australian democracy

Patrick Dunleavy, Mark Evans, Harry Hobbs and Patrick Weller

This book undertakes a democratic audit (DA) of Australia using the well-developed ethos of the wider DA workstream, about which the British philosopher David Beetham argued: 'Popular control and political equality comprise our two key democratic principles and provide the litmus test for how far a country's political life can be regarded as democratic' (1999, p.570). Following his lead (and that of Stuart Weir, another DA co-founder), our preferred way of administering this litmus test has been to undertake a detailed qualitative, text-based analysis of each aspect of Australian political life in the 28 chapters that follow. We also draw on lessons from an earlier application of DA principles to Australian federal institutions (Sawer, Aljorenson and Larkin, 2009) and extend the DA criteria here to also cover state politics and governance. An audit approach differs significantly from conventional (normatively detached) political science, which describes how politics works empirically in neutral, amoral terms (albeit with some distant resonances).[1] Our empirical analysis places an equal value on accurate evidence-based analysis, but we centre attention on how a political system's performance explicitly matches up directly against criteria that are normatively derived from liberal democratic theory and that pay attention to the importance of micro-institutions in sustaining democratic politics (**Dunleavy, 2019**). Of course, the two lenses often overlap in what they cover, but the audit approach is a distinctive one, relevant not just for political scientists and their students but also for citizens, politicians, administrators and media practitioners.

At a high level, being a liberal democracy means meeting (and balancing) five key goals:

What it takes to be a liberal democracy

✦ There must be (large) majority control of government via free and fair elections, genuine party competition, a vivid interest group process, and multiple other forms of political participation, operating in a diverse and free media and social media environment.

✦ Human rights and civil liberties must be developed and maintained for all citizens, ensuring equal treatment for all (even for unpopular minorities or people espousing disliked causes).

✦ Greater political and social equality must be consciously developed and pursued.

✦ Widespread political legitimacy must be achieved for the polity, marked by both popular consent and multiple (plural) centres of power, information and influence within the society.

✦ The polity must operate as an effective state – one with stable, unitary and consistently operating governance institutions (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009; Dunleavy, 1993). It must be able to carry out the key functions of all states, such as maintaining a legitimate monopoly of the use of force within its own secured territory, controlling borders, and protecting and advancing the welfare of its citizens.

In addition, all of these demanding objectives must be satisfactorily met *simultaneously*. For instance, if goals (i) and (iv) are met for most citizens, but the rights of minorities are trampled on (violating goal (ii) and likely also (iv)), then liberal democratic arrangements may still exist, but only in a badly flawed shape. And if an effective state cannot also be sustained, then the quality of democracy is greatly impaired, however 'perfect' or well-designed its institutions may seem, and the polity may collapse.

These are demanding criteria, and specifying what they imply for the component institutions and practices of a working political system needs to be done in a detailed way for each area, as the following chapters do. We seek to give a thorough-going, evidence-based review of how well the Australian government has performed against the criteria above, especially in terms of meeting them simultaneously while running an effective state. Needless to say, this has been difficult to do and improvement has taken decades to achieve. Every one of today's most advanced modern liberal democracies evolved from earlier non-democratic regimes, always carrying with them undemocratic historical legacies that took time to be corrected. Most contemporary liberal democracies still have substantial defects or limitations to address, as the Economist Intelligence Unit's (**2022**) category of 'flawed democracy' attests (see Chapter 28).

Australia's newly minted national polity was among the most democratically advanced in the world when it was established on 1 January 1901. Building on the good start made at state level (where secret ballots had long been used) and moving to compulsory voting in the 1920s, it evolved with a very stable constitution and polity. Yet its chequered colonial and post-colonial history (both pre- and post-foundation) has also contributed many enduring historical issues and current tensions, especially in terms of the rights of minorities. These include:

✦ how government by the majority of (historically 'white') citizens has related to the continent's First Nations peoples

✦ the wider operation of racist 'white Australia' policies over many decades from the 1920s to the 1990s

✦ decades of legal ill-treatment of gay citizens

✦ serious infringements of many other minority groups' rights over decades, not just by government but also by important civil society institutions such as churches and NGOs.

The first two of these four legacies are distinctively Australian issues, albeit in the context of the inheritances of colonialism and racism shared with other democracies. Australia's treatment of homosexual people was not particularly severe, but equal rights for LGBTIQ+ people were slow to be granted. The final legacy has also been one shared by many countries built up via colonisation and mass immigration processes.

However, in recent decades, many social policy improvements have been enacted in all these areas, and others are still in train. Taken alongside the establishment of free and fair elections, the peaceful and legitimate transfer of power between political parties, high levels of public satisfaction with liberal democratic values, and smoothly operating political processes have all contributed to making Australia a highly salient liberal democratic exemplar. In recent years, significant attention has also been paid to the 'balanced' character of the federal Constitution (which partitions power among the state and the federal governments), the legal system's stability and overall fairness, and the country's enviable economic record of avoiding recessions for three decades before the COVID-19 pandemic. Australia is also the world's only integrated, pan-continental governance system, with the federal and state authorities of a single nation state acting as stewards for a remarkable array of environmental settings, albeit with controversially laggard ecological policies in many areas (see Chapter 27).

Enumerating these distinctive points of interest is not meant to suggest that Australia's democratic arrangements are perfect. As in every liberal democracy, some substantial problems remain unresolved or only partly addressed in Australia, and they are reviewed in detail in the first section of Chapter 28, our concluding essay. In addition, the second part of that chapter situates Australia against other mature democratic countries, concluding that it has remained a stable but not outstanding polity among its near neighbours. Nonetheless, Australia provides some strong examples of innovative practices that other countries, especially in Anglosphere nations, may benefit from copying.

In this chapter, we begin by introducing for international readers (and recapping for Australian readers) two of the most distinctive features of Australia's political tradition. The first of these was the establishment of its hybrid Constitution and the subsequent development of its strong executive and party-run government. That impetus has sustained the country's historical political path, mostly for good but also with some drawbacks. Second, Australia follows 'strong democracy' principles not matched by any other major country – namely that everyone should vote and that every vote should count in choosing a government. This underpins some hallmarks of its politics – voting is compulsory; lower house elections use a majoritarian voting system, the Alternative Vote (AV); and upper houses use the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Because these topics are discrete ones, we review each of these aspects in a separate section, each followed by a short strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

The historical development of Australian democracy

Australian government was the product of a convict and settler society, derived from British heritage, and imposed by colonial force on multiple First Nations communities who had lived on the continent and its neighbouring islands for over 60,000 years. Many excesses committed before democratisation and unification were nonetheless brushed over in the constitutional settlement and continued in more attenuated forms thereafter. And, as with any nation state, Australia has been a hostage of the traditions developed from its pre- and post-founding history and experiences. Some of its systems of government were adapted, with little questioning, from the British form of cabinet government and parliamentary conduct, with all its implicit presumptions about the nominal and actual distributions of power. But in the federal

Constitution of 1901, these arrangements were innovatively operationalised within an American federal structure of states (plus a Senate representing the states, superimposed on the parliamentary framework) and with a strong federal–state division of labour (see Chapter 3).

Over the 170 years since the six individual founding colonies gained forms of self-government, and in the 120 years since they federated, Australian political institutions have developed their own traditions, recognisably British or American in origin but decidedly different in practice. Many innovations – such as the secret ballot, compulsory voting, the central role of party caucus meetings, and the easy election and deselection of parliamentary party leaders – are distinctly Australian. Australian government is recognisably a parliamentary government, but one no longer identical to its Westminster predecessors. It bears a family resemblance, but is not in any way a clone.

The influence of the Constitution

In the middle and late 19th century, when the six separated British colonies spread across the vast Australian continent were given self-government of their domestic affairs, they copied British political institutions, with an elected lower house and an upper house either appointed or elected on a limited property franchise. The responsibility to develop the continent was the principal function of each colony's government, because only they had the ability to open up the vast territories. Governments were regarded as vast public utilities, providing roads, bridges and services, and (importantly) owning the mineral rights of all land below a depth of 10 metres.

Yet the political orientation focused solely on development was already changing. In 1891, following a long strike, the nascent trade unions formed the Labor Party as their political wing. Its organisational principles declared that Labor members were delegates, in contrast to the Burkean tradition of Members of Parliament (MPs) as representatives using their own judgement to further their constituents' (fundamental) interests. Labor MPs were responsible to the party and bound to vote in line with the decisions of the party conferences outside Parliament and the choices of the Labor parliamentary caucus party inside.

During the 1890s, delegates from the six colonies negotiated – in two constitutional conventions – the terms of a constitution that would create the Australian Commonwealth, operating in a remarkably democratic way for that period. In 1891, there were seven delegations, all nominated by their parliaments (including one from New Zealand). In 1897 to 1898, there were five state delegations (without Queensland or New Zealand), of which four were elected. Even if those elected (or appointed in Western Australia) were almost entirely colonial politicians, popular election facilitated considerable democratic engagement (Hirst, 2000, p.142). Of course, the franchise was still limited in important respects – to all white men, whether property owners or not. Yet this extension of those recognised as 'citizens' (all alike able to participate) was still noteworthy for its time. The process of enactment further burnished the Constitution's democratic credentials. In formal legal terms, the Constitution secured its force by an enactment of the imperial Parliament in Westminster. Yet in practice, the instrument was actually ratified in a referendum held in each colony. As Helen Irving has noted, its 'endorsement by the people and not the politicians' exemplified the 'democratic character' of the Constitution (1999, p.138).

Excluded from any participation in the constitutional conventions, however, and thereafter left unrecognised as full citizens and effectively unenfranchised, were the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Although they were only expressly denied the vote in Queensland and Western Australia, elsewhere First Nations peoples faced numerous administrative barriers and

many adverse micro-institutions (**Dunleavy, 2019**) that contributed to voter suppression and discouraged their individual or collective participation. Those events have haunted Australian politics for many decades. Without political participation rights, First Nations peoples were made subject to discriminatory and racist social policies enacted by majority rule and often partly carried out by white-dominated social institutions like churches, charities and so on. The abuses enacted at scale and targeted at First Nations peoples' communities included the compulsory sterilisation of women, the transfer of children into coercive institutions that systematically eliminated their ethnic identities, and the forced separation of children from parents. Policy towards First Nations peoples was often strongly influenced by overtly racist ideas and by aspects of the eugenics movement in the inter-war and early post-1945 periods. These oppressions endured until well into the 1960s.

Full political inclusion for First Nations peoples was only finally granted by a constitutional amendment approved by a national referendum in 1967. Two changes were made by this vote: the Commonwealth Parliament was empowered to pass laws for First Nations peoples, as it could for people of all other races; and section 127 of the Constitution, which did not count First Nations peoples for the purposes of electoral distribution and similar allocations, was repealed. But previous traditions of state 'tutelage' over Aboriginal bush communities remained in force, took years to liberalise, and have persisted in the face of severe social problems. Over time, a huge amount of damage was done to First Nations peoples, and the legacies of these protracted democratic failures have continued either unresolved or only partly addressed into modern-day politics.

By contrast, although women were at first allowed to vote and stand for election only in South Australia and in the Northern Territory (administered by the federal government from 1911 to 1978), they fared far better than First Nations peoples in quickly gaining the franchise and the right to stand for representative office. Long before almost all other (male-only) liberal democracies reluctantly followed suit, Australian women won these rights at the federal level in 1902 and in all the remaining Australian states in 1908. Some women's legal rights (for example, to own property and operate businesses) were well secured, but others took decades to be achieved – such as the right to be paid the same as men for equal work, gained only in 1969. Other key aspects of rights – such as effective protection for women against domestic violence or rape, or the actual realisation of equal representation in valued business and professional careers – remain works in progress (see Chapter 10).

Governance institutions

In many key aspects the Constitution document itself was an exercise in mythmaking about who does what, following UK practice. For instance, the prime minister (PM) and the Cabinet were not mentioned anywhere in its pages, and the executive power of the Commonwealth was and remains nominally vested in the Governor-General, the monarch's representative in Australia. Yet 'everyone always knew' that in practice the federal PM would be the head of the party or parties that could maintain a majority in the House of Representatives – the same thing had already applied at state level for four decades. Similarly, parties were not recognised in the Constitution (until 1977), yet from the outset Australian politics developed to give partisanship immense importance and a strong, at times almost vicious, character. Although the Constitution assigns power to MPs and senators (and state constitutions do likewise), it does not cover the operations of the political parties that in practice structure everything that happens within both chambers federally, and within state legislatures. Each party has set its own rulebook, subject to

minimal regulation. Every MP has been open to challenge from party members in their district before every election. When it comes to internal party battles, numbers are all that matter.

In terms of style, Australian parliamentary politics has always been brutal, and still is. Politeness has been taken as a sign of weakness. Abusing opposing party members in derogatory terms has passed for debate. Even recently, question time battles turned Parliament into a coliseum, where opposition members sought to embarrass ministers, and ministers in turn launched tirades against the questioner, boosted by jeers and asides from their supporters behind them. Politics in Australia has never pretended to be a genteel profession. Four PMs have been deposed by their own party in the past decade – two from each side of politics (Tiffin, 2017).

However, in other respects, the Constitution has had immense influence. In order to reflect its federal nature, a great many extra provisions were carefully written down and their details fixed. The states retained all powers except those that they had explicitly granted to the federal government. The Australian Constitution and the state constitutions also followed the US template by more clearly dividing the government into three independent branches – the legislature (see Chapters 11 and 12), the executive (see Chapters 13 and 14) and the judiciary – who are clearly more separate than in some Westminster systems (see Chapter 3). In a 'pure' separation of powers, each branch has the authority to check or limit the other two, to prevent one arm of government from becoming supreme, so ensuring that the people remain free from government abuses. Because of the influence of 'responsible party government' ideas, however, Australia has not in fact operated under a strict separation of powers. For instance, the core executive of ministers and the premier must be drawn only from elected MPs and senators, and so government members have formed a substantial part of the relatively small legislatures at federal and state levels. In addition, critics argue that the Australian PM has had huge powers of patronage that can also undermine the independence of the three powers (see Chapter 13).

Nonetheless, the text and structure of the Constitution has underpinned a strict separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive/legislature. Reflecting this separation, and the need for federalism to be impartially regulated, the High Court of Australia has the power to review all legislative and executive acts. The High Court acts as the court of appeal for the Constitution and federal government actions and since the Constitution is a written one, it is justiciable. The court must decide whether a proposed act of the government or Parliament can be justified in terms of the powers enumerated within the Constitution. Australian judges have generally followed the common law tradition of mostly deferring to the practical needs of executive government. Yet the High Court can strike down laws as being inconsistent with the Constitution. Insulating judicial power from the political arms of government helps to safeguard the rule of law and ensures that cases are decided in a fair and impartial manner.

The written Constitution says little explicitly about citizen rights beyond the sphere of economics and trade. It spells out powers that are binding far more authoritatively than any convention or traditional practice. However, the Constitution was narrowly designed to describe the working of government and the enumeration of powers. Reflecting the time and the context when it was defined and entrenched, it does not incorporate any bill of rights (as the American template does, see Chapter 2), nor (as we have seen) does it give many details about how effective government should actually be run. Over time, the High Court has swung between a literal, 'black-letter' interpretation of the Constitution (which mostly implies 'nothing to be done' on civil liberties) and a position where it has found implied democratic rights and obligations within the document's wording.

The state delegates to the founding conventions also negotiated a permanent political defence of states' rights in the form of a Senate, based on the USA's upper house model, with an equal number of members (originally 6, now 12) from each state, regardless of their population sizes. The upper house members served for longer terms, and it was set up having equal powers with the lower house, with the exception that it could not initiate money bills. It can also reject any legislation, including the budget. From the outset, however, Australia's Senate was directly elected (before the USA, which only introduced votes in 1914). Since 1951, senators have been elected by proportional representation (PR). In the modern period, closer competition between the top two parties dominating the House of Representatives (the Liberal-National Coalition and Labor) plus increased public support for other parties in Senate elections, have meant that recent Australian governments have rarely had the numbers for an overall majority in the Senate (**Browne and Oquist, 2021**). Consequently, ministers have mostly needed to negotiate their legislative programmes through the upper house item by item, bill by bill, when they wished to pass new controversial laws. In 1975, in an incident that still casts a long shadow, a Senate majority hostile to the then Gough Whitlam Labor government, prevented approval of the federal budget, leading to the suddenly announced dismissal of the government by the Governor-General – perhaps acting legally but nevertheless improperly, as he did so without warning to the then PM. Since then, Senate politics has been more much consensual in its operations, and governor-generals have reverted to their proper (mostly honorary and non-political) functions.

Federalism has had another long-lasting implication. The Australian Parliament has sat for far fewer days than many of its Westminster counterparts. Since 2010, the fewest number of days the House of Representatives has sat in a year was 37 (in 2013, an election year); the most was 63 days (in 2014). (By contrast, the lower house in Canada sits for around 130 days a year and the UK's House of Commons for 140–160 days.) When Parliament is not sitting, there are fewer institutional mechanisms of federal government accountability operating in Canberra. With Parliament not being in session, the opposition has nowhere to grandstand in, and there are no regular meetings on which the media can report. And (as we will discuss) the Cabinet process has formally regarded secrecy as an essential component of governing.

The heart of federal government: the Cabinet and prime minister

The Australian Cabinet consists of around 20–23 ministers and constitutes the heart of government (Weller, 2007; **Weller, 2009**; **Weller, 2021**). In right-of-centre coalition governments, they have been members of the Liberal and rural National Parties, but the Labor Party has governed on its own (even in periods when it depended on support from the Greens or other MPs). One or the other of these top two parties has always been in power since 1910, albeit under different names. Cabinet ministers must be MPs; the majority sit in the House of Representatives, and around six are senators.

Cabinet is chaired by PMs and during much of the year it meets weekly. Each minister has their own sphere of functional responsibility, usually heading a government department. Outside Cabinet, there are another 8–10 junior ministers, appointed by the PM to assist Cabinet ministers. Attendance at Cabinet has been limited to Cabinet ministers, junior ministers with an item for discussion, the Cabinet secretary, the secretary of the prime minister and cabinet (PM and C) department, and two officials as note-takers. Although advisers and outsiders have played increasingly prominent roles in national politics and policy-making, it has been rare for any to attend Cabinet, and even rarer for them to speak.

Cabinet ministers are bound by collective responsibility to defend Cabinet decisions and those of its committees, whether or not they were in the room when the decision was made and whether they have argued for or against the eventual outcome. Discussions within the Cabinet room are meant to be confidential. The core proposition remains that ministers have their opportunity to put their case in Cabinet; if they are unsuccessful there, they accept their colleagues' decisions and support them in public and in the party room. In practice, dissatisfied ministers often engineer leaks in some deniable way, often designed to embarrass the PM or the winning Cabinet majority.

The Cabinet room is the PM's world and the working of Cabinet has remained their prerogative. It is the PM who decides what items will be on the agenda, in what terms they will be discussed, who will speak and in what order, when the discussion has gone on long enough to be closed down, and what the decision of Cabinet has been. Votes are not taken; rather, opinions are 'weighed'. Strategies can be used by PMs to delay proposals; sometimes they may sum up against the majority. Ministers have normally given PMs a degree of freedom. Whether or not they are calculating their leadership prospects all of the time, PMs are also aware of the potential tensions in their ministerial team, and they know that their likely successor is sitting around the table.

Ministers must be either MPs or senators, so the PM's choices are limited to parliamentarians. There has been no tradition of drawing in 'technical expertise' by appointing those who have skills but are not politicians. All Australian ministers have been political, not technical. The Attorney-General will usually be a lawyer, though not necessarily a distinguished one. There are no qualifications required for ministers. The route to office has been exclusively through the party and the backbench. The criteria for selection are more about having good political antennae than about any subject expertise.

In theory terms, all Westminster system PMs have the same key powers in managing Cabinet (the so-called three As): appointing people to Cabinet; allocating specific ministerial roles to each; and adjusting departmental missions, briefs and policy turfs (on occasion) (Dewan and Hortala-Vallve, 2009). On appointments, Liberal PMs normally choose their own party's ministers with a free hand. However, they are constrained by the key need to represent all states in the federal Cabinet, to include members from both the House of Representatives and Senate, to achieve a balance across party factions and, more recently, to improve the gender diversity of ministers. In coalition governments, a Liberal PM will generally negotiate with the National Party leader about how many ministers the party gets and what positions they hold. At federal level, the National Party leader has normally also been deputy PM in Liberal-National governments, although the salience of this role can vary with the incumbent PM.

From 1906 to 1993 the Australian Labor Party's parliamentary caucus elected the ministers, with internal party factions playing a key role. At times, ministers were imposed on a PM. In 2006, the leader of the opposition (Kevin Rudd) persuaded the caucus to allow him to select the ministers himself. In practice, when he became PM, he still negotiated with the faction and parliamentary leaders and the resulting Cabinet was probably little different from the one that the caucus might have elected.

On allocations, all PMs have retained the power to decide each Cabinet member's particular ministerial position, although they may negotiate with powerful players about accepting one of two alternatives. In general, PMs have tried to appoint ministers to ministerial briefs where their ideas about their department's issues agreed with those of the premier. And they have steered colleagues away from holding important roles in policy fields where the PM and minister had conflicting views. Since PMs know their colleagues' views in depth, this allocation problem has been much easier for them to handle than it might look at first sight (Dewan and Hortala-Vallve,

2009). Ministers in Australia also get a mandate letter, on appointment, telling them what the PM's priorities are. So, in Australia, whether ministers agree with the PM may not matter as much for policy outcomes as it does in the UK or other Westminster systems. The daily influence of the PM is more important than the initial appointment.

In terms of adjusting ministerial portfolios and roles, the PM has also retained quite a lot of freedom. Australian executive government departments have rarely been reorganised in wholesale ways. When needed, the federal PM can create a new department or agency in Canberra, or merge existing ones. However, portfolio boundaries have mattered a lot in the federal budgeting system, and they can be tweaked more often. Newly arising issues can be assigned across departments as the PM wishes, while issues that have increased in salience can be given to the departments of the PM's most trusted colleagues.

What are effectively 'inner cabinets' (that is, sub-groups of key Cabinet ministers deciding for the whole) can sometimes exist and they may masquerade as Cabinet committees. In 2008, Rudd, as PM, created a Strategic Priorities and Budget Committee to manage the impact of the global financial crisis (GFC) on Australia. It consisted of the four most senior ministers, who found the process useful and congenial, so that their agenda was extended to cover a whole range of items that were, in effect, pre-digested before they were presented to full Cabinet. The long-lasting Liberal-National ('Coalition') governments under John Howard (1996 to 2007) also held regular meetings of the parliamentary leaders of the two governing parties to pre-resolve issues. However, a closed process of decision-making can have severe consequences when Cabinet ministers object that they are being excluded from the key moments of debate.

Extensive advice has been available to all prime ministers in fulfilling their core role. The modern PM's Office (PMO) has had around 50 staff members, including several policy advisers, a powerful media office and advance planning teams. They are all partisan appointments in the sense that they serve the PM personally, not the government. The PM's chiefs of staff are likely to be key advisers, powerful players in government processes, sometimes acting as the PM's proxy. However, their power has not been personal but rather delegated. They have been influential only if they have the PM's confidence. The larger PM and C department is a civil service unit that provides the PM with not only the support required for the cabinet system but also a policy capacity to oversee and, if necessary, become deeply involved with proposals. It has never shrunk from providing alternative advice to that of departments, as one of its secretaries (the top official) noted. With a staff numbering in several hundreds, it serves the PM first and foremost, and thereafter the Cabinet through the PM.

When Parliament is sitting, weekly party caucus meetings provide a regular opportunity for objections and dissent to surface. Ministers and PMs attend party meetings and answer questions. House MPs and senators gain private 'voice' in exchange for their public support. If a government gets into difficulties then the caucus meetings play a critical role in deciding whether to call a leadership 'spill' (essentially a vote of no confidence) in the PM (or party leader in opposition). If that mechanism is triggered, then senators and MPs alone have always decided so far who the next leader should be. (Labor has a new leadership selection process that could also give party members votes, but it has never been activated yet – see Chapter 6.) As a result, the PM and leader of the opposition alike pay close and continuous attention to caucus sentiment, especially if their position in the opinion polls looks troubling.

Australian ministers have become used to working in their parliamentary offices, far removed from the heads of their departments housed elsewhere in Canberra. Ministers have operated

at a distance from the public service officials, but supported by their partisan assistants and advisers, who have also been located in their parliamentary offices. Advisers have provided political and policy information, suggestions and strategies. They have often been seen as rivals to career public servants in steering ministers. The concentration of ministers, MPs, staff advisers, the press corps and the Cabinet room all within Parliament House has created a 'parliamentary bubble' that is physically cut off from the civil service departments placed around the city, and from the public beyond. Canberra is a government town; business works in Sydney and Melbourne. MPs interact all day in and out of the parliamentary chambers. That is, of course, while they are there (Chapter 13).

Putting the bits together

These features show how, while Australian federal government can in broad terms still be described as a Westminster system of parliamentary government, it has inevitably mutated into a unique form over the last century and more. Canberra governance remains Westminster in genus maybe – the DNA is clear – but Australia has many distinct practices.

Members in both houses of Parliament are elected by voting systems where voters indicate multiple preferences (see the next section). This means that most of the time, for the House of Representatives, voters are at some point required to choose between the top two major parties (the Liberal-National Coalition or Labor). The importance of the party label has helped Australian parties require absolute party discipline inside the federal legislature. Both have been key factors in ensuring that members of the House of Representatives have rarely exerted any independent or individual influence. It has been almost unknown for any of the top two parties' legislators to vote against their own government in either the House or the Senate. Yet, because party leaders, and thus PMs, are elected by their parliamentary party, they can be ejected by a sudden party room vote. A revolving door can create the impression of insecure premiers, constantly looking over their shoulders to ensure their support remains solid, but this has by no means always been true.

The government rarely has a majority in the Senate (elected by PR voting). Consequently, recent governments have had to negotiate almost everything through Parliament with the smaller parties and independents who hold the balance of power there. Hung parliaments can also occur in the House of Representatives. The Labor government depended on independent MPs from 2010 to 2013 for confidence issues.

For more traditional observers, Australia's long-established constitutional traditions – such as strong, single-party majority governments, a predominant focus on two-party politics, a reliance on 'common law' in the legal system, and links back to the UK (via the monarchy and common cultural assumptions and processes) – have been unquestionable sources of institutional strength. In this view, these institutions have helped create sustained success in handling the country's increased economic scale, major population growth and changing ethnic make-up over many recent decades.

Yet for other critics these and other features appear to be signs instead of Australia's only partial or stalled constitutional and political development, sitting uneasily alongside a still-delayed full transition to modernity in economic and cultural terms (see Chapters 3 and 28). In this view, much of Australia's political process has been too shallowly based, with equal citizenship rights still to be achieved in many dimensions. Some key constitutional elements (like the monarchy/Governor-General role as head of state and even the country's flag) have not been fully

domesticated. And some central political processes in a liberal democracy (such as maintaining administrative impartiality or citizens' rights) remain vulnerable to failure under partisan pressure from electorally successful governing parties with significant power at their disposal.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis 1: governance

Current strengths	Current weaknesses
The 1901 Constitution was a forward-looking and remarkably democratic document in its day, for citizens. This ethos continued with the early emancipation of women.	The written Constitution was a colonial-era document and correcting for its omissions (such as civil rights for First Nations peoples) took decades, creating serious legacy issues that still resonated and remained unresolved at the time of writing. However, since 1924, compulsory voting has solved the problems of low turnouts that have sometimes affected other liberal democracies.
The 1901 written Constitution describes the form of government. The High Court can rule whether an act is within the Commonwealth's powers. The High Court has held that the Constitution assumes there will be collective Cabinet government.	The Constitution gives none of the details of how governing should operate and the document itself never actually mentions the Cabinet or the PM. That way executive government's work has been left to convention, tradition and convenience.
Weekly Cabinet meetings have retained their position within the core executive and federal government. Generally, PMs work through and with Cabinet and its committees. Maintaining Cabinet and party consensus has thus been a condition, not always achieved, for prime ministerial and governmental survival.	The PM may dominate Cabinet and will rarely be overruled, but they have to be careful not to make too many 'captain's choices' by announcing decisions without consulting Cabinet colleagues.
It was not until 1962 that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples became Australian citizens, and not until the 1967 referendum that they were granted the right to vote at the Commonwealth level. Election and parliamentary institutions have long been struggling to counteract this adverse legacy, most recently with renewed vigour since around 2015. At the time of writing, representation of First Nations peoples in the lower house had come into line with their presence in the population.	Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been badly under-represented as legislators in Australia's political institutions. However, in 2022 their numbers had grown to 11 (out of 227, just under 5 per cent) (**Parliamentary Education Office, 2022**). Other Australians of non-British and non-European origins and women have become better represented in the Senate, but they have remained under-represented in the House of Representatives (see Chapters 11 and 12).
The PM and cabinet system, allied with strong party discipline in the top two parties and their predominance in electoral politics and the legislature, is conducive to strong and effective government.	Without a human rights charter, executive government in Australia can appear dangerously unconstrained at times. Sometimes quite vicious partisanship on display in the House of Representatives has accentuated such misgivings.

Future opportunities	Future threats
The Voice for First Nations peoples was well worked out (**Hobbs, 2018**). The 2023 referendum proposal to establish a Voice to Parliament was backed by Labor, the Greens, some Liberal Party politicians and members and some other smaller parties. However, it was robustly opposed by the Liberal leader and his key colleagues and defeated resoundingly in the popular vote in October 2023 (see Chapter 4).	The 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, calling for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution, was rejected by the Liberal-National federal government (**ABC News, 2017**). The Albanese Labor government's proposed Voice for First Nations peoples to advise Parliament was a risky constitutional change. After it was decisively defeated in the referendum, the possibility of further advances on this issue remains unclear (see Chapter 4).
The failure of the 2023 Voice to Parliament referendum has not obviated the need for reform. Instead, it has pushed focus back on to informal constitutional and governance change. At the time of writing, relationships between the federal and state and territory governments appeared to provide the most likely source of change.	In Australia, surviving Westminster principles have come under challenge with mounting demands for better integrity safeguards, the increasing politicisation of the public service and gridlock between the political class and the bureaucratic class on the way forward (see Chapters 13 and 14).

Australia's distinctive voting arrangements

The heart of democracy is political equality – every vote (and voice) should count, and none should count for more than one. In all liberal democracies, the process of translating the votes cast by citizens into seats within the legislature has never been a straightforward one. Many countries have just one voting system that is used across almost all elections. The pioneers of democracy in Australia took political equality (for enfranchised citizens) perhaps more seriously than anywhere else in the world. They asked: 'If some citizens vote but others do not, how genuinely representative of their constituency majority can winning MPs be?' This logic underpinned the introduction of compulsory voting for both houses of the federal legislature in 1924.

Making every vote count also motivated the adoption of a voting system that is used almost nowhere else in the world – the Alternative Vote for lower house elections. (In Australia, this system is often called 'preferential voting', but for political scientists in general preferential voting is a larger category meaning voting by numbering multiple preferences in order, which includes other systems (such as STV) or rank order preferences for single office holders. Accordingly, to avoid confusion, we have used the unambiguous AV label here, which refers specifically and only to Australia's lower house system.) In AV, votes transfer between candidates, so that in the final run-off stage the person elected will be the one that has the most primary and transferred-in votes. In addition, some states introduced PR systems for their upper houses early on. In 1948, a PR system, STV, was adopted for future federal Senate elections, and it is now used to choose all state senators also (in the five states with upper houses – Queensland has no upper house).
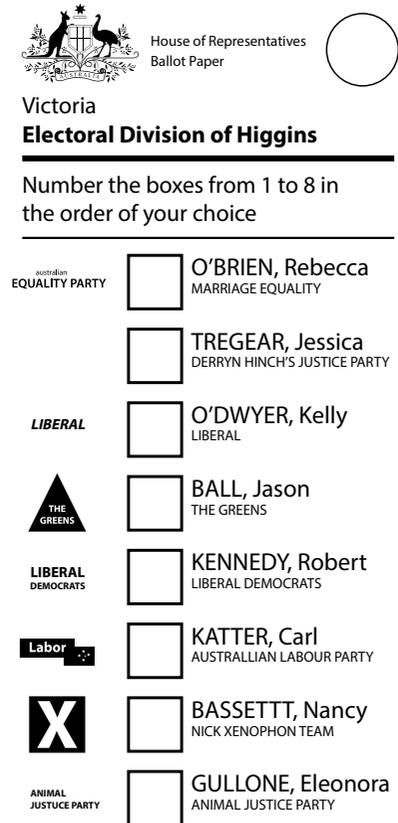
Of course, these two systems were probably introduced originally for partisan self-interest reasons. AV was first used in 1918 when the incumbent government risked losing a key seat in a three-sided contest. And in 1948 some Labor senators thought they might lose all their upper house seats under the system then in use (called 'block voting'), so they looked to a proportional STV system to protect them against that. However, both AV and STV are now 'sanctified' by long use, and they have been retained because they aim to do different things. AV is a majoritarian system intended to ensure that the party with majority support in the most local electorates nationwide forms the government. Its rationale is that citizens as a whole can clearly signal either that they want the incumbent party of government to continue in office, or that it should be replaced by the opposition. By contrast, STV has been intended to match parties' votes with their Senate seats as closely as possible, but only within each of the country's six states and two territories. In modern times, the Senate has been seen as more of an amending chamber, acting as a check and balance on the House majority by representing the diversity of regional interests. In practice, it has also reflected partisan voting patterns nationwide fairly accurately, but this has been strictly a favourable by-product and not its rationale (**Browne and Oquist, 2021**; also see Chapter 12).

Lower house elections: the AV system

Elections to the lower House of Representatives take place in small single-member districts called 'electorates', averaging 110,000 adult citizens in each. The AV system demands a bit more of citizens than 'first-past-the-post' elections (still used in the USA, Canada, India and the UK). Voters mark the candidates for each local seat numerically (1, 2, 3, etc.). In federal elections, they must fill out all the available spaces, for instance marking 10 preferences if there are 10 candidates (although there are some variations from this requirement in the different states' lower house elections) – see Figure 1.1.

First-preference votes are then counted and if one candidate has over 50 per cent support already, they are elected straightaway. However, if no candidate has yet passed this level, a process of eliminating the remaining candidate with the least votes starts, and the counters look at who voters backing this candidate put as their next (second) preference vote. These votes are then allocated to the respective candidates still in the race. This elimination of the bottom candidates goes on until either the leading candidate has majority support or only two candidates remain, when the one with most preferences by definition wins.

Figure 1.1: A sample AV ballot paper for electing an MP to the House of Representatives

House of Representatives Ballot Paper

Victoria
Electoral Division of Higgins

Number the boxes from 1 to 8 in the order of your choice

australian EQUALITY PARTY	☐	O'BRIEN, Rebecca MARRIAGE EQUALITY
	☐	TREGEAR, Jessica DERRYN HINCH'S JUSTICE PARTY
LIBERAL	☐	O'DWYER, Kelly LIBERAL
THE GREENS	☐	BALL, Jason THE GREENS
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	☐	KENNEDY, Robert LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
Labor	☐	KATTER, Carl AUSTRALLIAN LABOUR PARTY
X	☐	BASSETTT, Nancy NICK XENOPHON TEAM
ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY	☐	GULLONE, Eleonora ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY

Remember…number **every** box to make your vote count

Source: **Wikipedia (2024).**

Upper house elections: the STV system

In the federal Senate, seats are assigned through PR at the level of whole states and territories. Whatever their population, each of the six states has 12 Senate seats and normally half of these are elected at each federal election, so that there are six seats up for election in each state. Because the constitutional purpose of the Senate is to represent every region of the country equally, from a national perspective its seats are technically malapportioned (when set against the number of citizens in each state). Tasmania has nearly 46,500 electors per senator, but for New South Wales this number is 675,000 people, over 14 times larger. For this reason, it makes little sense to compute the national proportionality score for Senate elections (but see Chapter 5).

Within each state, parties put up multiple candidates (up to six). Voters mark either their preferences for one party's whole list 'above the line' (from 1–6) or their preference order across twice as many individual candidates, spanning across different parties if they wish, 'below the line' (but 1–12). Figure 1.2 shows the two ways that a voter could complete their votes for a simplified STV ballot paper – the actual ones are bigger and more complex.

A complex counting process then allocates seats in order to the candidates that have the most votes, to achieve the best overall fit possible between party vote shares and their number of legislators. The total number of votes cast is divided by the number of seats being contested plus one. This gives a quota, or a vote share that guarantees a party one seat. In a six-seat state election, this is: 100 per cent of votes/(6 + 1) = 14 per cent. Any candidate with more than a quota

Figure 1.2: A simplified view of above-the-line voting (for six parties) or below-the-line voting for 12 candidates in Senate STV elections

	A	B	C	D	E	F	
	4	**3**	**5**	**1**	**6**	**2**	**Voter's Vote**
	Party 1	**Party 2**	**Party 3**	**Party 4**	**Party 5**	**Party 6**	
	Candidate Party 1	**6** Candidate Party 2	Candidate Party 3	**1** Candidate Party 4	Candidate Party 5	**4** Candidate Party 6	
	Candidate Party 1	**10** Candidate Party 2	Candidate Party 3	**2** Candidate Party 4	Candidate Party 5	**7** Candidate Party 6	
	Candidate Party 1	**11** Candidate Party 2	Candidate Party 3	**3** Candidate Party 4	Candidate Party 5	**9** Candidate Party 6	
	Candidate Party 1	**12** Candidate Party 2		**5** Candidate Party 4	Candidate Party 5	**8** Candidate Party 6	
	Candidate Party 1	Candidate Party 2			Candidate Party 5	**Preferences as Counted**	

*Source: Author's construction, drawing on Australian Electoral Commission (**AEC, n.d.**).*

Note: In this example, either the voter must number at least six parties above the line (shown in blue), in which case candidates are allocated their vote during counting in the order each party has set (from the top of each party list to the bottom), or the voter could choose to mark their preferences across at least 12 individual candidates below the line (shown in red). For the latter the voter can decide to stick with a party's official ranking of its candidates, as with the top three red preferences within Party 4 in this example, or pick other candidates to prioritise – here the voter has up-rated the lower-placed candidates of Party 6 and Party 2.

gets a seat straightaway. Every time a seat is allocated to a party, one quota share of votes is deducted from its total remaining votes. Any surplus votes of an elected candidate are redistributed to their voters' second or next choices. Once this process has been done, there are usually one or two seats that are still unallocated. At this point, as in AV elections, STV switches over to knocking out the bottom candidate still in the race and redistributing their voters' preferences.

Compulsory voting and marking preferences

Around 21 liberal democracies across the world in theory require all citizens to vote, but the enforcement of this requirement (and hence the consequences of not voting) vary a great deal. Since 1924, Australia has taken a different, more committed stance at federal level, a lead that was copied at state level with some lags (up to the early 1940s). So not voting (without a legitimate excuse, such as illness) has incurred a noticeable fine. Alongside tiny Luxembourg, Australia has now become one of only two countries in the world where compulsory voting is enforced (**International IDEA, 2023**; **Wikipedia, 2023**). As a result, it has consistently had one of the highest validated voting rates of any liberal democracy (see Figure 1.3). Opinion poll evidence has also suggested that the proportion of people in favour of maintaining compulsory voting has been above 70 per cent (**Bennett, 2005**).

Preferential voting systems (like both AV and STV) are designed to make sure each vote counts. But what do people actually have to do in order to cast a ballot? Turning up to the polling station and then handing in a blank or defaced ballot paper has been accepted as voting (one type of informal voting), so does not attract a fine. But for the ballot paper to count as a formal vote it has to be filled in exactly as the rules say. Historically, in Australian elections, formal voting meant numbering *all* the candidates listed on the ballot paper in a single numerical sequence (1, 2, 3, etc.), increasing the risk of voters inadvertently casting invalid ballots (Hill and Young, 2007). Ballot papers for each AV election for the House list candidates by name, now arranged in a random sequence. Since the number of candidates used to be fairly small (for example three, four or

Figure 1.3: Voter turnout at federal elections, 1901 to 1928, 2001 to 2023
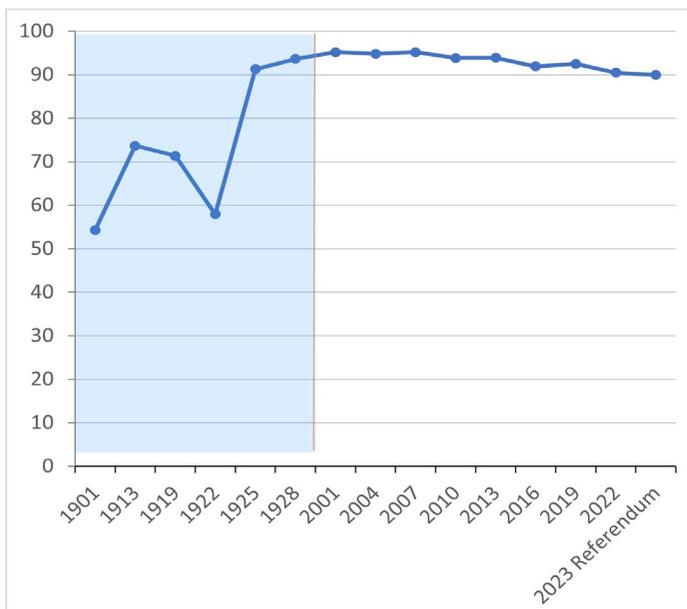
*Source: Adapted from AEC, **2023**.*

Note: The figure shows voter turnout for the House of Representatives for elections from 1901 to 1928 (blue shaded area) and 2001 to 2023 (white area). Voter turnout is calculated as the number of votes cast divided by the number of enrolled voters.

five), numbering them in one strict sequence, with no duplicated or missed out numbers, was not too onerous a task. However, candidate numbers have increased over time so that in 2022 many districts had 10 or more candidates, and one even saw 16 candidates on the ballot paper (see Chapter 5). Where voters have clearly tried to meet the requirements, but have not in fact accurately done so, this too counts as informal voting (alongside blank or defaced ballots). The person has sincerely tried to discharge their duty to vote, but their ballot paper still cannot go into the count, even though officials make every effort to determine their intent (see Chapter 5). Across the three federal elections in 2016, 2019 and 2022, informal votes averaged 5.2 per cent of all ballots cast for the House and 3.7 per cent of those cast for the Senate (**AEC, 2022**).

In Senate STV elections, the number of candidates grew much larger much earlier on, and the design of the paper (with candidates arranged in party lists) meant that numbering everyone standing in a single order became more difficult. As a result, the rules were changed to allow voters to either cast a vote above the line, to endorse a party's whole list of candidates, or number all the candidates below the line on the ballot paper in sequence (which soon became a truly demanding task). In 2016, the below-the-line requirement was reduced so that voters choosing this option need only number 12 individual people (see Figure 1.2). In addition, an STV rule once allowed the leaders of small parties eliminated from the bottom during the STV counting process to specify how their bloc of above-the-line votes should be transferred to other parties. This created anomalies in the 2013 Senate election, where small-party candidates with very low levels of initial support could sometimes get elected with a coalition of other minor parties backing them; the rule was abolished in 2016.

Numbering a full slate of preferences (rather than casting a single ballot) allows voters to express their whole preference ordering and to know in a very reliable way that their view will at some stage determine the result if no candidate wins an outright majority on first preferences, which at the time of writing has only happened in a minority of seats (see Chapter 5). By contrast, the 'two party preferred' vote at the final AV run-off count stage ensures that every MP enjoys some form of majority endorsement (over all alternatives) in their area. As modern politics has become far more multidimensional and issue-based over time, and the Labor versus Liberal/National divide has no longer been as dominant as it once was, preference voting has also been a better fit, with most Australians having multiple parties that they could vote for and several others that they dislike. In first-past-the-post countries like the USA, Canada and the UK, the development of new or smaller parties has been inhibited because their supporters must choose between 'wasting their vote' (possibly year after year) or voting tactically for whichever of the larger parties in their area is their 'least bad' preference. By contrast, in Australia a Greens supporter, for example, can back their first preference but if the local winner will likely be either Labor or the Coalition the voter can still cast a second or later stage preference to effectively shape the outcome. This creates a far fairer playing field for new parties to enter competition (**Farrell and McAllister, 2006**). Cross-national evidence also suggests that multi-seat systems (which require preferential voting) help to achieve somewhat greater gender equality in legislatures, as has been true of the Senate versus the House (**Hough, 2022**).

Does preferential voting have any drawbacks? Critics argue that both AV and STV (if voting below the line) require that voters have a higher level of political knowledge in order to cast a vote. Some parties have handed out 'How to Vote' cards at polling places, which suggest that voters order the candidates on the ballot in a favourable order. In Queensland state elections, where it is acceptable to express only a single preference, some parties' cards have suggested that voters mark their local candidate and no others – which is ethically dubious as it potentially undermines the 'every vote counts' ethos. In the early 2000s, over half of voters told survey

interviewers that they followed what the advice cards suggested, but the practice has declined and by 2019 less than 30 per cent of election survey respondents said they had done this (**Cameron and McAllister, 2019**, p.23).

Critics have also argued that by outlawing non-voting, the state and major parties have tried to compel engagement by citizens within their sphere. Parties and politicians have fewer incentives to go out and motivate voters or increase their interest in politics because voters have to show up at the polls anyway, however boring or remote politics has become for them. And parties have less need to recruit and engage party members, who are not needed to 'get out the vote' as much as if voting was voluntary. Others have argued, on freedom grounds, that citizens should have the right not to vote. And they see discarding informal votes before counting as devaluing the legitimate views of people who may want to register a protest vote (**Sheppard, 2015**). In more or less every decade, some of these arguments have resonated with Liberal-National politicians who saw a potential partisan advantage in voluntary voting, because they expected Labor voters to be less likely to turn out than Coalition supporters. But since other figures on the political right strongly dissented from changing the status quo, nothing has come of successive intra-party review initiatives.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) 2: analysis – key election arrangements

Current strengths	Current weaknesses
Compulsory voting has meant that turnout in Australian federal elections has always been high (**AEC, 2011**). It has ensured that almost all Australians have had a say in elections and in policy-making (Evans, 2006). A majority of citizens support compulsory voting. In combination with preferential voting, it has also ensured that every vote counts and that (almost) every citizen votes (**AEC, 2023**).	Critics have argued that compulsory voting may tend to worsen a disconnect between parties and voters, because parties have fewer incentives to motivate voters or recruit and engage party members than they would in a voluntary voting system. Others have argued that citizens should have the right not to vote.
Preferential voting (numbering choices in order 1, 2, 3, etc.) reduces strategic voting. It provides a means for voters to sincerely express their full preference order, starting with their first choice of candidate or party, while also providing information on later preferences (especially as between the top two major parties) so that no votes are wasted.	Some critics have argued that the Australian electoral systems are made more complicated by preferential voting, which voters understand only imperfectly. This may increase the proportion of invalid votes.

Future opportunities	Future threats
Both AV and STV systems have now been pretty stable for many years and new generations of voters (including immigrants from elsewhere) have adapted easily to using them. This has boded well for their future stability.	Democratic backsliding by parties or self-interested strategies (like advising voters not to use their preferences beyond the top one) may undermine the efficacy of preferential voting.

Conclusion

Every political system in the world is *sui generis* in some ways. Just as with its flora and fauna, the Australian political system includes elements and mixes of elements found nowhere else in the world. Yet as a pioneer liberal democracy that has matured in a generally successful way, its unique system also holds out many potent lessons for other states and countries on how to balance different institutions – for example, combining a fixed constitution with evolving federal and state tiers of government, and using complementary types of voting system. We explore these lessons in detail in the remainder of this book and sum them up at the end (see Chapter 28).

Notes

1. Previously conducted 'democratic audit' applications in the UK and Australia in reverse chronological order include Dunleavy, Park and Taylor (**2018**); Wilks-Heeg, Blick and Crone (**2012**); Sawer, Aljorenson and Larkin (**2009**); Beetham, Ngan and Weir (**2002**); and Beetham and Weir (**1999a**). In addition, some DA methods issues are usefully addressed in Beetham (**1999**); Beetham and Weir (**1999b**); Beetham (**1995**); Jaensch, Brent and Bowden (**2004**); Uhr (**2005**); Maddox (**2002**; **2003**); and Dunleavy and Margetts (**1995**).

References

ABC News (2017) 'Indigenous advisory body rejected by PM in 'kick in the guts' for advocates', *ABC News*, 26 October. **https://perma.cc/V2YH-GJR5**

AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) (2011) 'Compulsory voting in Australia'. **https://www.aec.gov.au/about_aec/publications/voting/**

AEC (2022) 'Informality (%) House of Representatives and Senate', 24 August. **https://perma.cc/J5FL-2ADV**

AEC (2023) 'Voter turnout – previous events'. 7 November. **https://perma.cc/2UFC-8VBM**

AEC (n.d.) 'Voting in the Senate'. **https://perma.cc/Y3CM-RBQA**

Beetham, David (ed) (1995) *Defining and Measuring Democracy*, London: Sage.

Beetham, David (1999) 'The idea of democratic audit in comparative perspective', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp.567–81. $ **https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/52.4.567**

Beetham, David and Weir, Stuart (1999a) *Political Power and Democratic Control in Britain*, London: Routledge. $ **https://www.routledge.com/Political-Power-and-Democratic-Control-in-Britain/Beetham-Weir/p/book/9780415096447**

Beetham, David and Weir, Stuart (1999b) 'Auditing democracy in Britain: Introducing the democratic criteria', *Political Power and Democratic Control in Britain*, London: Routledge. Ch.1, pp.3–21. $ **https://perma.cc/FPR6-9NXG**

Beetham, David; Ngan, Pauline; and Weir, Stuart (2002) *Democracy Under Blair: A Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom*, London: Politico's. $

Bennett, Scott (2005) 'Compulsory voting in Australian national elections', Australian Parliament, Department of Parliamentary Services. *Research Brief*. No. 6, 31 October. **https://perma.cc/94DH-UKXA**

Browne, Bill and Oquist, Ben (2021) *Representative, Still – The Role of the Senate in our Democracy*, Canberra: Australia Institute, Research Report. **https://perma.cc/EE8D-B6MP**

Cameron, Sarah and McAllister, Ian (2019) *Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study 1987–2019*, Canberra: The Australian National University. **https://perma.cc/YP5F-S82A**

Dewan, Torun and Hortala-Vallve, Rafael (2009) 'The three A's of government formation: Appointment, allocation, and assignment', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 55, no. 3, pp.610–27. $ **https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00519.x.** OA at **https://perma.cc/PLX3-KEYV**

Dryzek, John and Dunleavy, Patrick (2009) *Theories of the Democratic State*, London: Palgrave. Now Bloomsbury Press. $ **https://perma.cc/XP65-DUFP**

Dunleavy, Patrick (1993) 'The state', in Goodin, Robert (ed) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy: Volume II*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 611–21. $ **https://perma.cc/X45Y-4D3A**

Dunleavy, Patrick (2019) 'Micro institutions and liberal democracy', *Political Insight*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp.35–39. **https://doi.org/10.1177/2041905819838154**

Dunleavy, Patrick; Park, Alice; and Taylor, Ros (eds) (2018) *The UK's Changing Democracy: The 2018 Democratic Audit,* London: LSE Press. OA at: **https://doi.org/10.31389/book1**

Dunleavy, Patrick and Margetts, Helen (1995) 'The experiential approach to auditing democracy'in Beetham, David, *Defining and Measuring Democracy*, London: Sage, pp. 155–72. $ **https://perma.cc/V8KX-BMX8**

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2022) *EUI Democracy Rankings, 2022.* **https://perma.cc/F9WE-CE24**

Evans, Tim (2006) 'Compulsory voting in Australia', Report on Australian Electoral Commission website, 16 January. **https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/voting/files/compulsory-voting.pdf**

Farrell, David M and McAllister, Ian (2006) 'Voter satisfaction and electoral systems: Does preferential voting in candidate-centred systems make a difference?' *European Journal of Political Research,* vol. 45, no. 5, pp.723–49. $ **https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00633.x.** OA at: **https://perma.cc/4LQE-VJ43**

Hill, Lisa and Young, Sally (2007) 'Protest or error? Informal voting and compulsory voting', *Australian Journal of Political Science,* vol. 42, no. 3, pp.515–21. $ **https://doi.org/10.1080/10361140701513646**

Hirst, John (2000) *The Sentimental Nation*, Sydney: Oxford University Press.

Hobbs, Harry (2018) 'Constitutional recognition and reform: Developing an inclusive Australian citizenship through treaty', *Australian Journal of Political Science,* vol. 53, no. 2, pp.176–94. OA at: **https://perma.cc/T8KY-VWBA**

Hough, Anna (2022) 'Trends in the gender composition of the Australian parliament', Parliament of Australia, Research Paper. **https://perma.cc/S89C-9VYM**

International IDEA (2023) 'Compulsory voting'. **https://perma.cc/4NVK-2HKC**

Irving, Helen (1999) *To Constitute a Nation,* Sydney: Cambridge University Press.

Jaensch, Dean; Brent, Peter; and Bowden, Brett (2004) *Australian Political Parties in the Spotlight, Report* (Research School of the Social Sciences, ANU), Report No.4, prepared for the Democratic Audit of Australia. OA at: **https://perma.cc/5EY2-7GHF**

Maddox, Graham (2002) *Federalism and Democracy,* Democratic Audit of Australia. Analysis and Policy Observatory, 1 September 2002, **https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2002-08/apo-nid8727.rtf**

Maddox, Graham (2003) 'Federalism and democracy – a reply to Parkin', Online paper, University of New England. *ResearchGate.* **https://perma.cc/YK3X-GGD4**

Parliamentary Education Office (2022) 'How many Aboriginal or Torres Straits Islander MPs or senators are there and what are their names?', Response to a question, July. **https://perma.cc/H5VQ-B75A**

Sawer, Marian; Aljorenson, Norman; and Larkin, Phil (eds) (2009) *Australia – The State of Democracy*, Canberra: Federation Press.

Sheppard, Jill (2015) 'Compulsory voting and political knowledge: Testing a "compelled engagement" hypothesis'. *Electoral Studies,* vol. 40, pp. 300–07. OA at: **https://perma.cc/FDK3-Z9PQ**

Tiffin, Rodney (2017) *Disposable Leaders: Media and Leadership Coups from Menzies to Abbott*, Sydney: New South South Books.

Uhr, John (2005) 'How democratic is parliament? A case study in auditing the performance of Parliaments', Democratic Audit of Australia Discussion Paper, July. OA at: **https://perma.cc/F8ZA-LCHF**

Weller, Patrick (2007) *Cabinet Government in Australia, 1901–2006: Practice, Principles Performance,* Sydney: UNSW Press.

Weller, Patrick (2009) 'Cabinet government: Australian style', in John Wanna (ed) *Critical Reflections on Australian Public Policy: Selected Essays,* Canberra: ANU Press, pp. 73–84. **https://perma.cc/B2UT-8F3W**

Weller, Patrick (2021) 'Cabinet government: The least bad system of government?', in Podger, Andrew; de Percy, Michael; and Vincent, Sam (eds), *Politics, Policy and Public Administration In Theory And Practice,* Canberra: ANU Press, Ch.6, pp.139–54. **http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n8214/pdf/ch06.pdf**

Wikipedia (2023) 'Compulsory voting'. **https://perma.cc/8GR7-MHSY**

Wikipedia (2024) 'Electoral system of Australia'. **https://perma.cc/BAW2-BDDW**

Wilks-Heeg, Stuart; Blick, Andrew; and Crone, Stephen (2012) *How Democratic Is the UK? The 2012 Audit*, Liverpool: Democratic Audit. OA at: **https://perma.cc/TQX2-B2XW**