



THINKING
BIG

Australia 2020 Summit Governance

April 2008

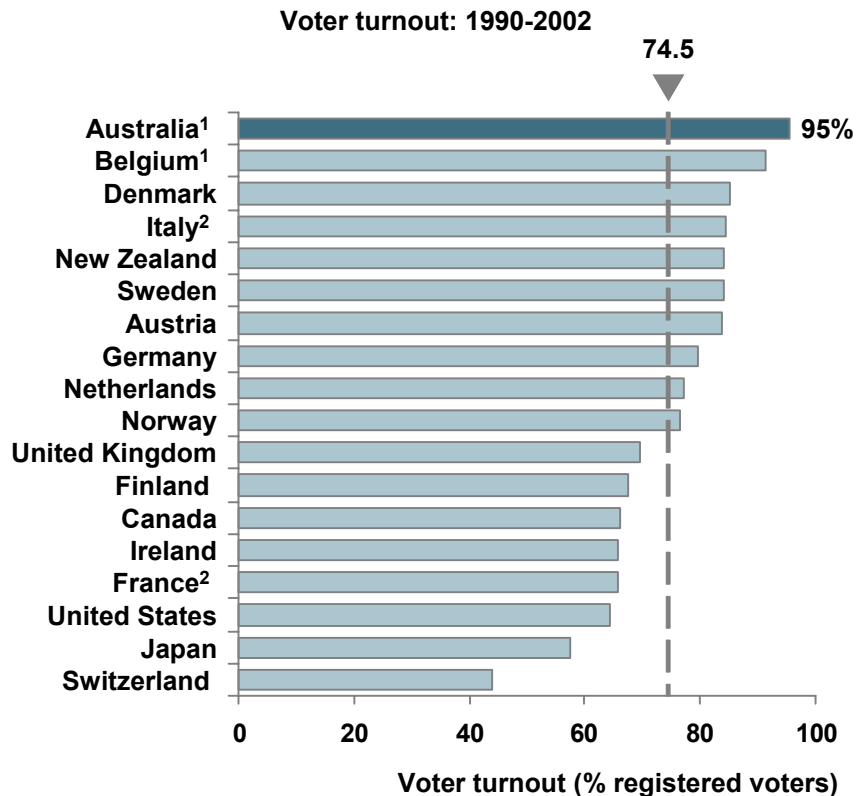
These background materials aim to tell an evidence-based story about how Australia is faring. They are not intended to be definitive or comprehensive, but were put together to stimulate discussion on the main challenges and opportunities facing the country and the choices to be made in addressing them. They do not represent government policy.

The materials end with a set of questions. We hope that these, along with many other questions, will be the subject of conversation both prior to and during the Summit.

Australians have high electoral participation, although it is lower in some groups

Australia is a world leader in registered voter turnout

93% of eligible Australians are enrolled to vote, although involvement is lower in some demographics



The young

81% of 18-25 year olds are enrolled to vote

New citizens

90% of new citizens enrol within 3 months of gaining citizenship

Permanent residents

Permanent residents are not entitled to vote, although may live in Australia and pay taxes for most of their lives

Non-eligibility and non-enrolment mean that true electoral turnout is closer to 72% of the resident adult population³

1. Countries where compulsory voting is enforced 2. Countries where voting is compulsory but not enforced 3. Refers to % resident adult population as counted at census – not limited to legal permanent residents only as census does not distinguish on this basis

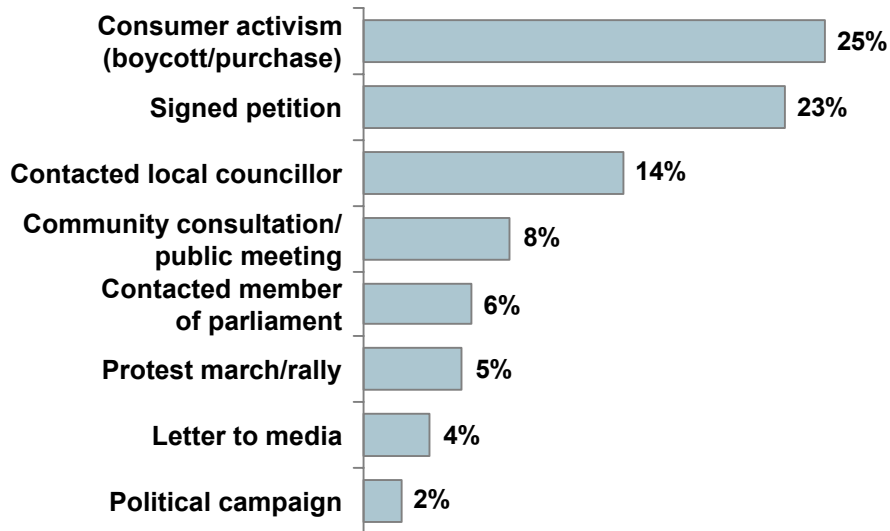
Source: Tiffen R & Gittens R, *How Australia Compares* (2004); Australian Electoral Commission, *Annual Reports, 2004-5, 2006-7*; ABS, 2068.0 *Census Data 2006*

Australians seek civic involvement, but participation rates in traditional modes of political activity are relatively low

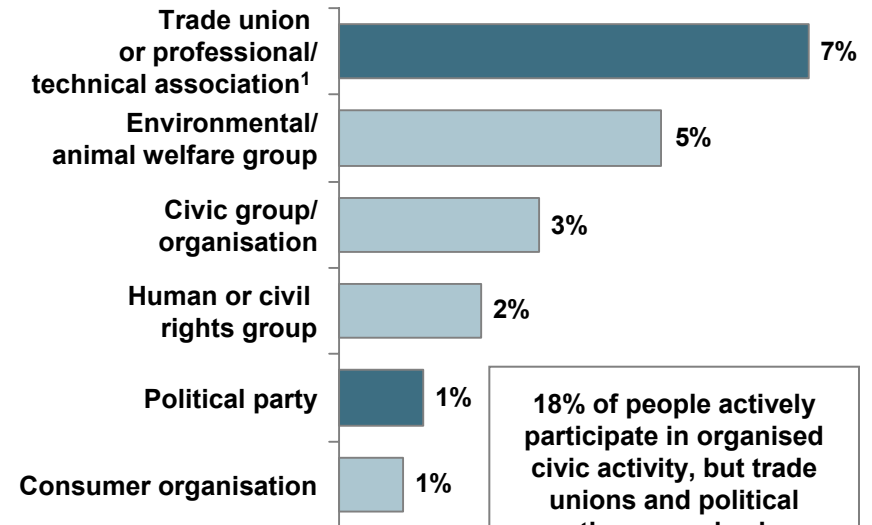
Many Australians participate in decentralised, issue-specific grassroots civic activity

However much fewer people are involved in "traditional" political groups

% population engaging in civic activity in last 12 months: 2006



% population actively participating in groups in last 12 months: 2006



18% of people actively participate in organised civic activity, but trade unions and political parties comprise less than half

1. This refers to active participation in trade union/professional technical association. Membership (active and inactive) of such organisations is estimated to be closer to 20% of relevant employed persons – ABS, 6310.0 *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Australia* (2007)
 Source: ABS, 4441.0 *Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006* (2007); ABS, 4159.0 *General Social Survey 2006* (2007)

The media are pivotal to how people view government and events, though the Australian media landscape is challenging

Mass media is an important source of information about news and political commentary

It is common sense that media representations affect how we view the events portrayed – with broader implications for how we see the world

- 88% people agree that "News from around the world is changing the way we think"¹

"The media is not just a form of entertainment, it is the primary means by which the major issues of the day are discussed and debated. It is simply not possible to have a healthy democratic system without a vibrant, diverse and competitive media sector"²

Mass media do not only relay information to the population. Opinion polls are one way in which they close the feedback loop in providing information about popular opinion back to governments

The Australian media landscape is challenging

The Australian regulatory environment is tough

- In Australia, there is no express constitutional right to freedom of speech. However, the High Court has found that there is an implied right to freedom of speech on matters concerning politics and government
- On the other hand, there are a range of laws which limit free speech in particular circumstances (including defamation law, censorship law and anti-vilification laws in some states)

Our mainstream media is highly concentrated

- Two major media houses hold an overwhelming share of newspaper circulation: 89% of capital city/national papers; 79% of suburban papers; and 34% of regional papers
- There are 56 commercial TV licenses. However, the top 3 networks reach 73%, 66% and 52% of the population respectively
- Radio is highly fragmented with 274 commercial stations plus government-owned and community stations

Changes to cross-media ownership laws are likely to lead to further consolidation of both print and broadcast media

There is a broad perception that the Australian press is relatively constrained

- Australia only ranked 35th in the world in the Reporters Without Borders' *Press Freedom Index* in 2007

Public trust in the media is also an ongoing challenge

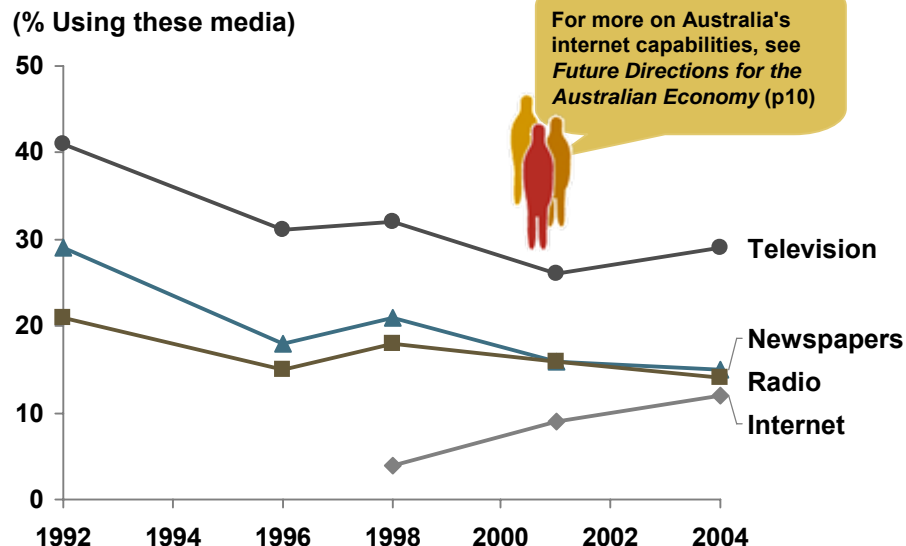
- 71 % of people agree with the statement "Media organisations are more interested in making money than informing society"¹
- 67% of people feel that "The media isn't objective enough"¹
- In a 2007 survey, trust in the media ranked behind trust in NGOs and Government "to do what is right"³

1. Roy Morgan Media Survey (2005) 2. Minority Report of the Labor Members of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Report of the Inquiry into the Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Bill 2006 (Cth)* at 89; Edelman 2007 survey – respondents asked to rank NGOs, government, media and business in terms of "Trust in institutions to do what is right"
Source: Roy Morgan, *Special Poll Finding No. 3952* (2005); Reporters without Borders, *Press Freedom Index 2007*; Jackson K, "Media Ownership Regulation in Australia" (Analysis and Policy, Social Policy Group) www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/media_regulations.htm; Edelman, *Stakeholder Study: Trust at the Crossroads in Australia* (2007)

Interactive technology is also changing the nature of political engagement

Multi-channel political engagement is increasing...

"How much attention did you pay to reports about the election campaign in the television/radio/newspapers?
Did you make use of the internet?"
(% responding "a good deal" or "yes")



...with a range of implications on both sides of the communication channel

The role of bloggers in political commentary is a new phenomenon which challenges traditional "authorship" of news and current affairs and "authority" of published opinion

- Over 380 Australian political blogs¹
- Over 370 Facebook groups dedicated to Australian politics

This offers enormous opportunity for ordinary Australians to "have a say", and a communication channel for groups underrepresented in mainstream press

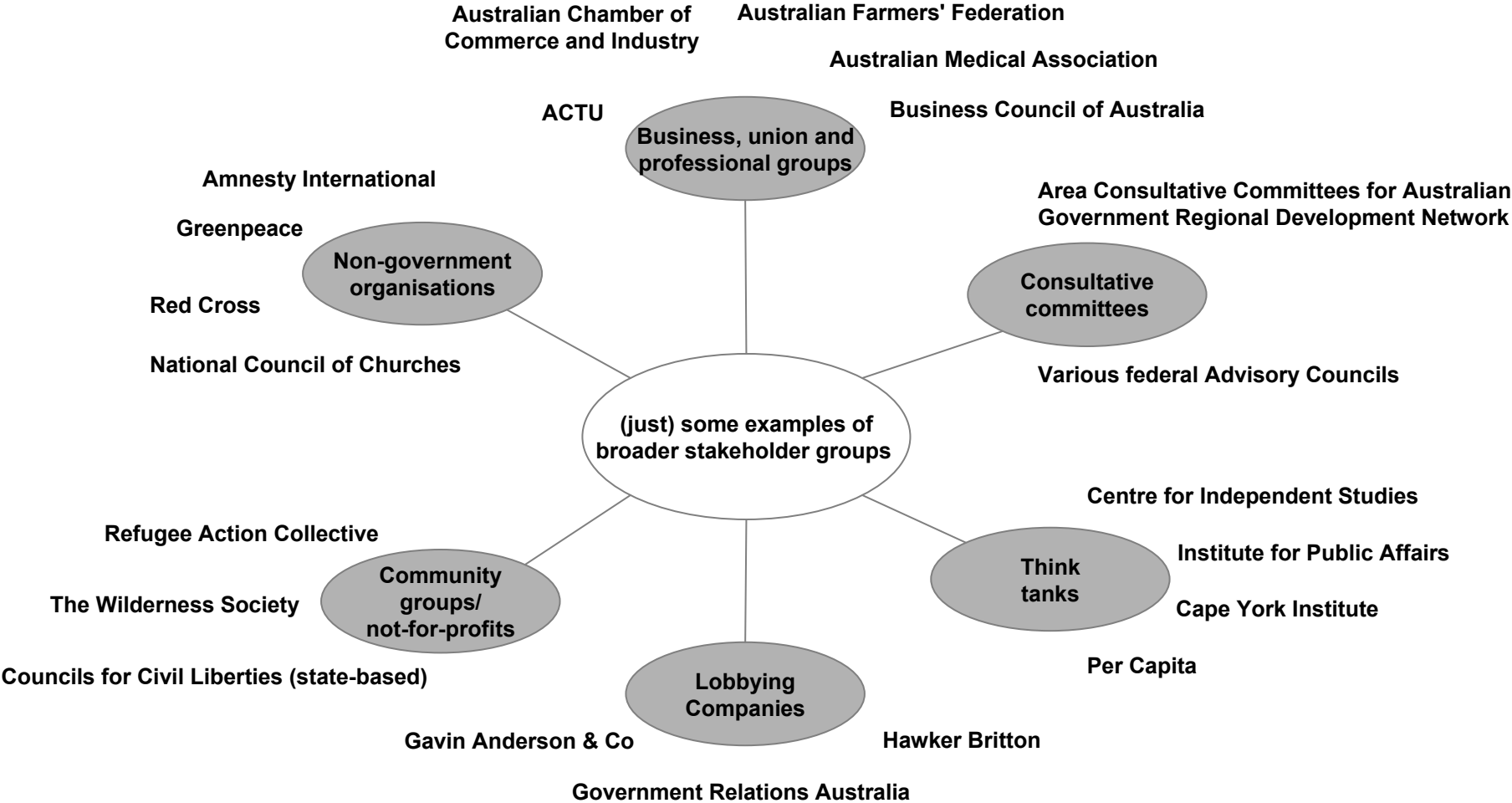
New technologies can also facilitate a civic-government interaction which is tailored (e.g. web portals) and immediate (e.g. online forums). This enables governments to communicate with new demographics, e.g.

- People with typically low civic engagement (the young)
- People with limited access to regular community engagement (the remote and the infirm)

The rise of user-generated content raises new questions about how people can access reliable information

1. According to one index provided by The Australian
Source: *Australian Electoral Survey 1993-2004*; The Australian, *Index of political blogs* (2007) <http://theaustralianindex.com/politics>

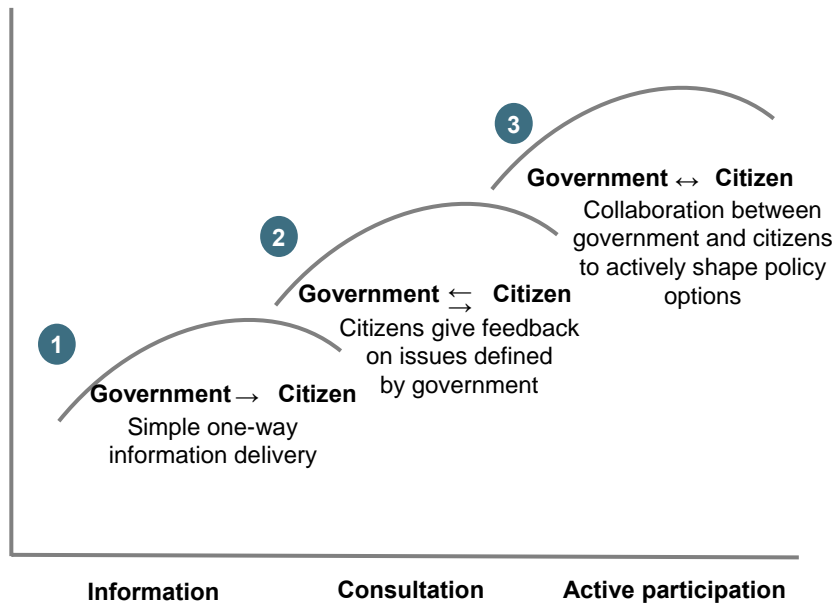
Another important feature of modern governance is the role of non-government stakeholder groups



Note: Examples are illustrative only. Non-government organisations have been shown separately from community groups/not-for-profits because of the significant differences in their membership base, goals, and relationship to governments

Governments, internationally and in Australia, are connecting with citizens in innovative ways

The OECD has a 3-stage maturity model for government-citizen engagement



Australian and other governments are already employing a range of community engagement models

Some examples include

- "Community cabinets" – State and Commonwealth Cabinets sit in community locations around Australia, meeting and taking questions from local people
- "Get Involved" – a portal for Queenslanders to directly participate in government decision-making (www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au)
- "Communitybuilders" – this site provides resources for people to create and manage community-level civic organisations (www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au)
- "Windale Regeneration" – NSW Government departments partnered with NGOs and the local community to regenerate Windale, which had been rated the most disadvantaged community in NSW
- "Citizens' Juries" – consultation method whereby 15 lay-people (citizens) are selected to "cross-examine" experts on an issue-based topic. Announced as a 2007 initiative for the UK government
- Danish government-citizen connection framework for health – includes "consensus conferences" (non-expert panels who hear expert and policy officials' views on issues); "user surveys" on government healthcare; "user boards" for posting feedback on institutions (e.g. hospitals) or services; "patient's choice" utilising user preferences to give feedback on overall quality of public health system

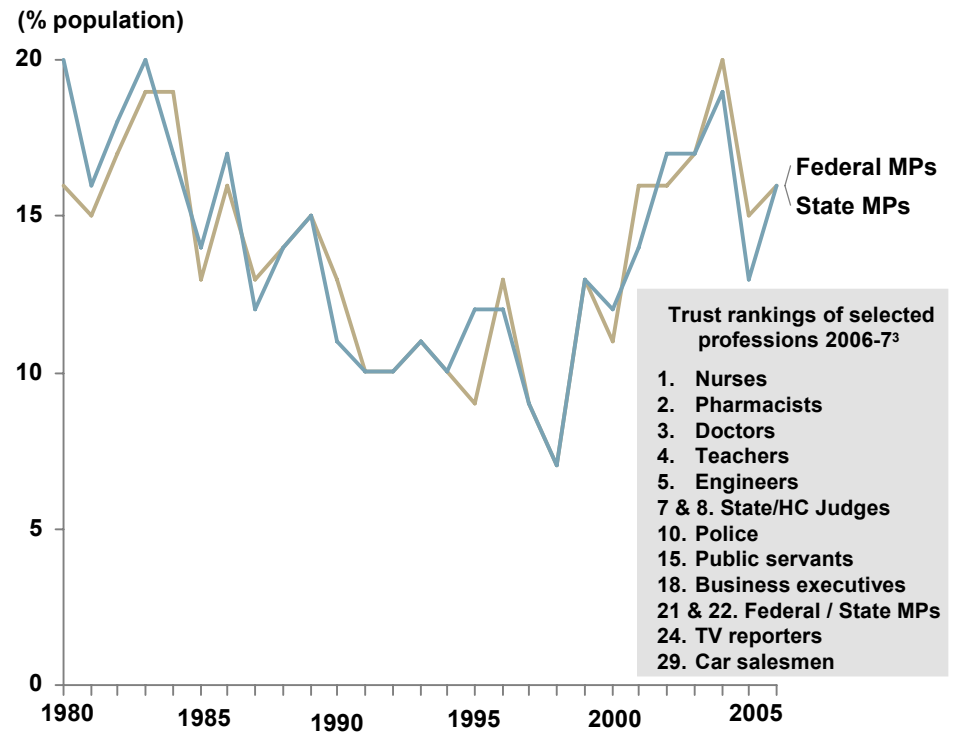
Australia's institutions fare well internationally; but maintaining public trust and confidence is a challenge

Trust in Australian public institutions compares fairly to global peers

Corruption Perceptions Index ¹	Judicial Independence ²	Transparency of gov't policy-making ²
1. New Zealand	Germany	Singapore
2. Denmark	New Zealand	Denmark
3. Finland	Denmark	Finland
4. Singapore	Finland	Switzerland
5. Sweden	Netherlands	Hong Kong
6. Iceland	Australia	Iceland
7. Netherlands	Switzerland	Sweden
8. Switzerland	Sweden	New Zealand
9. Norway	Norway	Germany
10. Canada	Austria	Netherlands
11. Australia	Iceland	Norway
12. Luxembourg	United Kingdom	Australia
13. United Kingdom	Israel	Tunisia
14. Hong Kong	Canada	Japan
15. Austria	Ireland	Austria
16. Germany	Hong Kong	Malaysia
17. Japan	Barbados	Luxembourg
18. Ireland	Portugal	Barbados
19. France	Singapore	Chile
20. USA	Luxembourg	UAE

But local popular discourse highlights the continuing challenge of maintaining public confidence

"How do you rate the following professions in terms of ethics and honesty?"
(% population rating profession as "high" or "very high")

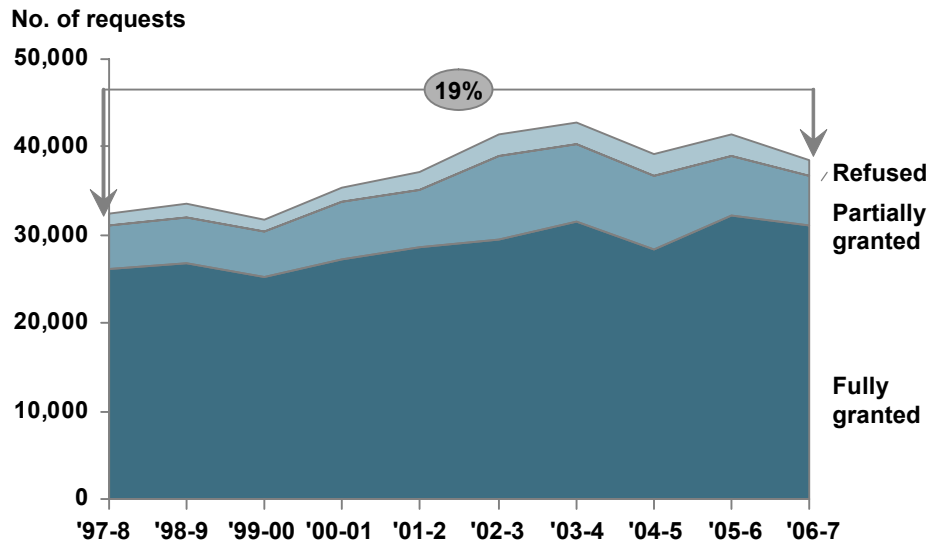


1. Transparency International – an index of perceived government corruption, derived from 12 independent institutions surveyed about the use of public office for private gain (e.g. bribery, kickbacks, embezzlement, strength of anti-corruption measures) 2. Global Competitiveness Report – World Economic Forum indices based on survey of 11,000 business leaders 3. Roy Morgan Survey
Source: World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2007-8* (2008); Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2007*; Roy Morgan, *Opinion Polls, 1980-2007*

The role and limits of FOI remain the subject of debate

We access an increasing amount of information through the FOI framework...

FOI request volumes and outcomes: 1997-2007
(# requests)



Granting rates remain fairly steady at ~95% for personal information. However, the granting rate for other information is slightly lower at ~89%

...but debate continues as to its appropriate scope and boundaries

"Elected representatives have a responsibility...to explain and account for their decisions and actions in government and to inform the people so that they may make informed decisions on matters."

– Mason CJ in *ACTV v Cth*¹

"Official secrecy has a necessary and proper province in our system of government. A surfeit of secrecy does not."

– Finn J in *Bennett v President of HREOC*²

Public approval of the FOI application process appears to be mixed. Data indicate that in 2006-7, ~70% of Queensland applicants were satisfied with the process

1. *ACTV v Cth* (1992) 177 CLR 106 at 138 2. *Bennett v President of HREOC* (2003) 204 ALR 119 at 141 2. Despite steady overall granting rates, there is some fluctuation in partial versus full grants from year to year. In 2005-6 the rate was 81% full, 14% partial for personal requests; 54% full, 35% partial for other requests.

Note: Due to a significant decrease in claim volumes in the 2006/7 year, growth rates have been calculated from 2000-2006 to show the broader growth trend which can be observed from the mid-90s onwards

Source: Reporters without Borders, *Press Freedom Index 2006*; Attorney-General's Department, *Freedom of Information Annual Reports 1998-2007*

Increasing public expectations of government will require a skilled and flexible public service

Our federal public service is increasingly senior and highly educated...

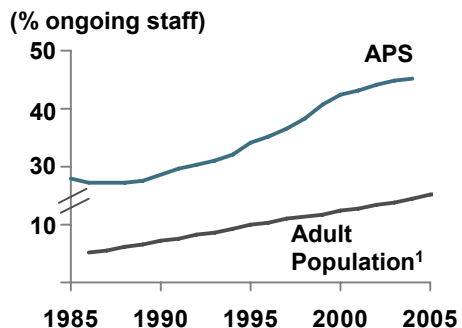
There has been significant growth in APS staff at senior levels, and decreases at junior levels

Women are strongly represented at SES level (36% in 2007), targeting equal representation in the SES within a decade

Change in staff numbers at selected seniority levels: 1993-2007

Seniority Level	Change (1993-2007)
APS 1	-93.4%
APS 2	-70.3%
Exec. Level 1	+81.7%
Exec. Level 2	+28.3%
Senior Exec (SES)	+33.5%

Ongoing APS staff with bachelor's degree or higher: 1984-2004



APS staff are also increasingly qualified. In 2004, ~1/2 of ongoing staff held a bachelors' degree or higher (and ~2/3 of new recruits)

...but a range of issues may affect participation and recruitment

The workforce is ageing

- Average age has risen from 32-42 since the 1980s
- Driven by ageing baby boomers² (~50% of APS workforce); increased "lateral hires" from other sectors; reduced numbers of junior positions for graduates/school leavers
- This introduces the risk of an attrition spike when existing staff reach retirement age, and the need for succession planning. It also raises concerns about the general vibrancy, creativity and innovation of the workforce

Despite recent increases, mobility within the public sector is low

- Award restructuring in the late 1980s has reduced staff incentives for seeking inter-agency promotion
- This may reduce the perceived diversity and desirability of the public sector career path to new recruits

However, flexible work models are increasing

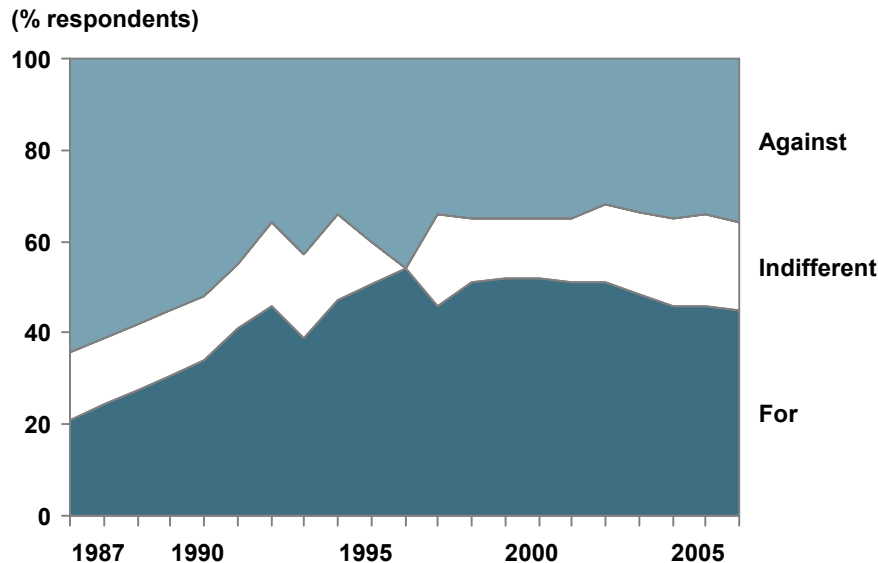
- Flexible public sector workforce participation (particularly ongoing part-time employees) has increased from ~4% to ~10% since the 1980s
- This may improve the attractiveness of a public sector career

1. Includes bachelor's degree or higher; does not include instances where tertiary education is stated but inadequately described 2. Born between 1950 and 1964
Source: Management Advisory Committee, *Managing And Sustaining The APS Workforce* (2005); ABS, *Census Data 1981-2006*, Highest Level Of Qualification By Sex

Public debate continues around the Australian head of state, the structure of federalism, and parliamentary reform

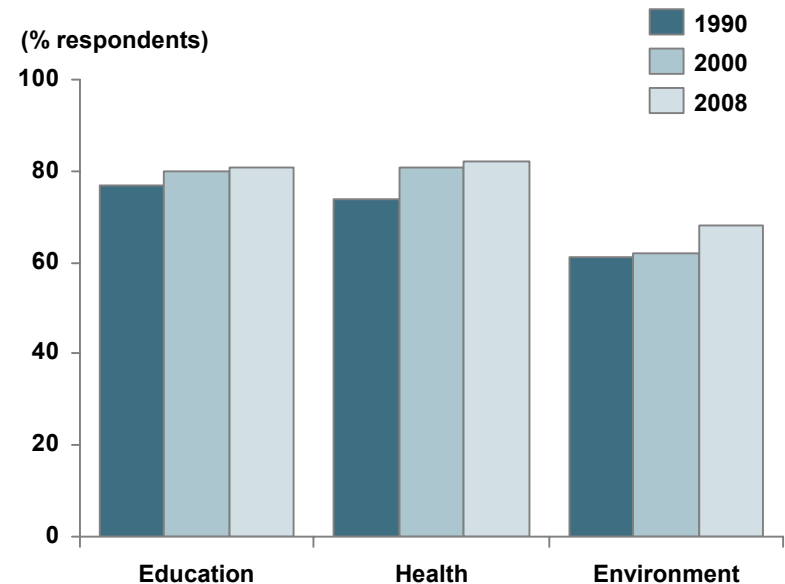
The republic issue dominated the 1990s – though ratings have stabilised, most Australians have an opinion

"Thinking about whether Australia should become a republic, are you personally in favour or against Australia becoming a republic?"
(% in favour, against and indifferent)



Australians are increasingly concerned with issues which fall at the intersection of federal/state relations

"Thinking about federal politics, how important would you say each of the following issues is to how you would vote in a federal election?"
(% responding very important or fairly important)

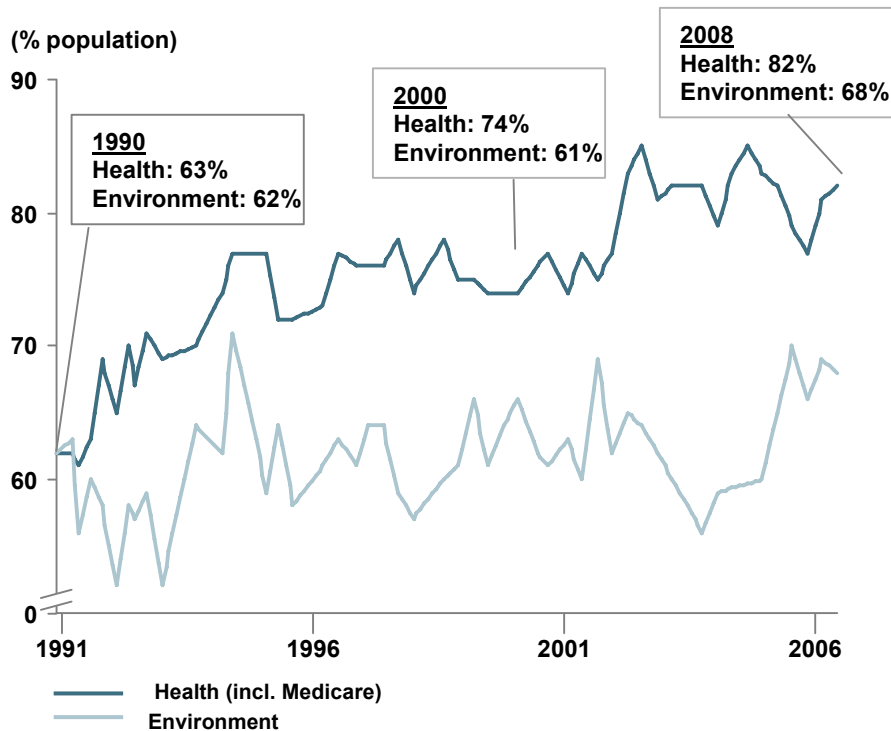


Parliamentary reform options include fixed
Federal terms and revitalised ministerial responsibility

There is renewed debate about the relative responsibilities of individuals and the state for shared community problems

People think that health and the environment are increasingly important political issues...

"Thinking about federal politics, would you say each of the following issues is very important, fairly important, or not important to how you personally would vote in a federal election?"
(% population selecting fairly or very important)



...and also demonstrate a new willingness to assume individual responsibility for these problems

People are environmentally conscious in the home

- In 2006, most households reported recycling (97%) and/or re-use (85%) of waste. This is up from 89% and 35% respectively in 1996
- Nearly 20% of households reported use of a rainwater tank, as against 15% in 1994

People seek to manage their own health risk factors

- 56% of target women participated in *BreastScreen* cancer screening in 2003-4 (up from 51% in 1996-7)
- In 2004, 32% of smokers/recent quitters had read "how to quit" literature, 5% had called the Quitline and 5% had accessed "quit" information from a website in the past year²

People exercise consumer choice

- In 2006, 25% of Australians reported either boycotting or purchasing a product for political, ethical or environmental reasons
- In 2007, nearly 10% of households opted for accredited green electricity providers¹

People participate in community actions

- An estimated 800,000 Australians participated in Clean Up Australia Day 2008
- Approximately 45,000 Australian men grew a moustache for "Movember" 2007 to raise prostate cancer awareness

For more on attitudes to the environment, see *Population, Sustainability...* (p12)

For more on health risk factors, see *Long-term Health Strategy* (p6)

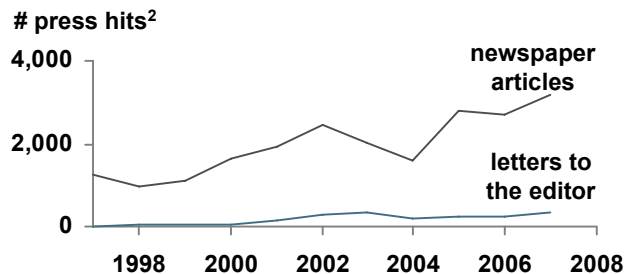
1. 724,000 households as at December 2007 (www.greenpower.gov.au) 2. Survey undertaken in November 2004
Source: Newspoll, *Importance of Federal Issues* (http://www.newspoll.com.au/index.pl?action=adv_search); ABS, 4602.0 *Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices* (2007); GreenPower Australia, *Quarterly e-bulletin* (Feb 2008); ABS, 4159.0 *General Social Survey: Summary Results* (2006); AIHW, *BreastScreen Australia Monitoring Report 2003-4* (2007); Clean Up Australia Day, *2008 Results*; Department of Health and Ageing, *2004 National Tobacco Campaign Evaluation* (2005)

Discussion also continues around human rights and civic responsibilities in contemporary Australia

Civic rights and responsibilities are an increasing part of contemporary Australian discourse

In the media

Press mentions of "civic rights" and "citizenship" in mainstream print media, 1998-2008²



In our schools

A 1999 study found Australian children to be achieving mixed results in civic education¹

- Civic knowledge – at or above global average
- Civic engagement – below global average
- Civic attitudes and concepts – above average

Relatively low levels of civic understanding have prompted a renewed focus on civic education in schools, including the National Assessment Program (2004) to measure civics and citizenship proficiency levels of year 6 and 10 students at 3 year intervals

Recent changes have revived the question of whether Australia should have some form of "Bill of Rights"

Australia is the only common law country not to have a constitutional or statutory charter of human rights, although the issue has been in debate since the Constitutional Conventions of the 1890s

- 1944: failed constitutional referendum guaranteeing freedom of speech and religion
- 1973: Human Rights Bill to introduce the ICCPR² (to which Australia was a signatory) failed with the dissolution of the Whitlam government in 1975
- 1985: Australian Human Rights Bill introduced but subsequently withdrawn
- 1988: failed referendum on a range of federal reforms including right to trial by jury, freedom of religion, fair terms of compulsory acquisition of property by government
- 2000-1: failed draft Australian Bill of Rights Bills again implementing international treaties including the ICCPR

Victoria and the ACT have recently introduced state-based charters; WA has developed a draft

- In the first year of operation in the ACT, nearly one hundred bills were assessed for compatibility under the Human Rights Act

These issues tie into a broader discourse about "global citizenship"

1. Based on ACER scores 2. "Hit counts" of selected search terms ("civic rights", "citizenship") in The Age, The Australian, The Australian Financial Review, The Daily Telegraph, The Sydney Morning Herald 2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Source: IEA *Civic Education Study, Standard Population of 14-Year-Olds* (1999); ACT Dept of Justice & Community Safety, *Human Rights Act 2004 – Twelve month Review and Report* (2006); Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au; MCEETYA, *National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10* (2004)

Questions

How can we increase the participation of citizens in policy debate and decision-making?

How could public trust and confidence in politicians be improved?

Is parliament sufficiently accountable to the public? If not, what reforms are needed?

What is the appropriate role of the judiciary in the Australian democracy? Is the current procedure for judicial appointments appropriate?

What does the public have a right to know and what sort of information does the government have a right to keep secret? What accountabilities should bind both government and the media?

What does it mean to be an Australian citizen, particularly in a multicultural context?

What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens in our democracy? How should our rights be protected?

How should individuals and the state share responsibility for community problems like climate change, lifestyle-related diseases etc?

How could modern communications technology be used to improve access to information, citizen engagement and community awareness?

What can be done to increase the quality and number of people wanting to enter the public service? What about politics?

How can the current system of federal and state responsibilities be improved to achieve (a) better delivery of services and industry; (b) better outcomes for the economy; (c) more cost effective use of public funds?

Is there a need for constitutional reform?