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Public administration & politics in NSW: A statistical profile

by

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SUMMARY

This paper, the fifth in the Social Indicators series published by the NSW Parliamentary Library, provides a snapshot of public administration and politics in NSW. While the focus is on NSW, relevant information is provided on the other States and Territories to assist in providing appropriate context and perspective for the NSW data.

Section one examines the public sector at a Local, State/Territory and Federal level. There are 1.9 million public sector employees throughout Australia, of whom 563,400 are in NSW. The NSW public sector employs 444,700 people, more than one in ten of all employed person in NSW. The Health and Education sectors account for 60% of employment. The NSW public sector is more feminised than NSW employment as whole, with the majority of its employees being women. Its workforce is also older, with more than half of all employees aged 45 years or over.

Section one also briefly considers the issues of how to define the public sector and whether public sector workers are overpaid. Whilst attitudes towards the public sector and its efficiency vary, much community support exists for the government provision of numerous services including: electricity, universities, transport, water, motorways, community services and prisons.

Section two of the paper is concerned with the parliaments and governments throughout Australia, with a focus on NSW. It compares the composition of Australian parliaments, by party, House and gender. The number of sitting days and passage of Acts throughout the year are noted. For each jurisdiction, information is also provided on the composition of Government Ministries.

Australian citizens may be called to serve on juries, they must vote in Australian elections, they have the right to stand for election to Parliament, and they may apply for an Australian passport which enables them to leave and re-enter Australia. **Section three** considers the notion of citizenship and provides a summary of the number and distribution of citizens within Australia. It also refers to the number of new citizens and where they are from. It notes the number of voters on the electoral roll, voter turnout in recent elections and the level of informal voting. It also highlights some of the ways Australians participate in the wider community, with almost 19% of people actively participating in civic and political groups in the previous year. The changing nature of political party and trade union membership is also discussed.

Sources are identified throughout the paper. However, much of the data on the NSW public sector has been sourced from the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet's 'Public Sector Workforce Snapshot Tables' which are available from http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/public_employment/workforce_profile.

1 PUBLIC SECTOR

1.1 Definitions

Whilst most people have a general idea of what is meant by the term 'public sector', the outer limits of its definition may be somewhat uncertain. Persons working in government departments are clearly public servants. But what about those persons working in organisations where traditional government responsibilities have been outsourced, yet the government still maintains a level of input into, and some control of, the activities of the organisation? Lienert in an IMF Working Paper asks:

With increasing use by governments of market mechanisms and private sector provision of public services, has the borderline between the public and private sectors become blurred?... is there now a third 'gray zone' which is 'semi-private' and 'semi-public', and whose activities belong neither to the traditional public sector, nor to the profit-driven private sector?¹

Lienert questions whether it is best to define the public sector by reference to its functions or, rather, to focus on the issue of control. However, as a number of functions, such as the provision of health and education services, are performed by both the public and private sectors, he determines that the concept of ownership is crucial to determining the distinction between public and private. He refers to the IMF's Government Financial Statistics Manual which states that the public sector is comprised of *public corporations* (those that produce goods and services for the market and are owned or controlled by government units) and *general government* (produces goods and services on a nonmarket basis).²

Some assistance in setting the boundaries of the public sector may be found in section 3 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002* (NSW) which defines 'public sector service' as any of the following:

- (a) the Government Service
- (b) the Teaching Service
- (c) the NSW Police Force
- (d) the NSW Health Service
- (d1) the Transport Service
- (e) the service of either House of Parliament, or the President or Speaker, or the President and Speaker jointly
- (f) any other service of the Crown (including the service of any NSW Government agency)
- (g) the service of any other person or body constituted by or under an Act or exercising public functions (such as a State owned corporation), being a person or body that is prescribed, or that is of a class prescribed, for the purposes of this definition.

¹ Ian Lienert, 'Where does the public sector end and the private sector begin?', IMF Working Paper 9/122, June 2009.

² Ian Lienert, 'Where does the public sector end and the private sector begin?', IMF Working Paper 9/122, June 2009.

Part 1.2 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002* (NSW) sets out the ethical framework that is to govern the actions and decisions of the public sector. In doing so, it:

(a) recognises the role of the public sector in preserving the public interest, defending public value and adding professional quality and value to the commitments of the Government of the day, and

(b) establishes an ethical framework for a merit-based, apolitical and professional public sector that implements the decisions of the Government of the day.³

The core values of the NSW public sector are set out in section 3B and include integrity, trust, service and accountability:

Integrity

- (a) Consider people equally without prejudice or favour.
- (b) Act professionally with honesty, consistency and impartiality.
- (c) Take responsibility for situations, showing leadership and courage.
- (d) Place the public interest over personal interest.

Trust

- (a) Appreciate difference and welcome learning from others.
- (b) Build relationships based on mutual respect.
- (c) Uphold the law, institutions of government and democratic principles.
- (d) Communicate intentions clearly and invite teamwork and collaboration.
- (e) Provide apolitical and non-partisan advice.

Service

- (a) Provide services fairly with a focus on customer needs.
- (b) Be flexible, innovative and reliable in service delivery.
- (c) Engage with the not-for-profit and business sectors to develop and implement service solutions.
- (d) Focus on quality while maximising service delivery.

Accountability

- (a) Recruit and promote staff on merit.
- (b) Take responsibility for decisions and actions.
- (c) Provide transparency to enable public scrutiny.
- (d) Observe standards for safety.
- (e) Be fiscally responsible and focus on efficient, effective and prudent use of resources.

Another helpful definition of 'public sector' is that offered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It defines the public sector as comprising:⁴

- financial corporations controlled by government;
- government agencies;
- government departments;

³ Section 3A.

⁴ ABS, *Standard Economic Sector Classifications of Australia*, Australia, 2008, 1218.0, June 2009.

- non-financial corporations controlled by government;
- notional institutional units controlled by government;
- public financial corporations; and
- public non-financial corporations.

Their emphasis on the notion of 'control' is noteworthy.

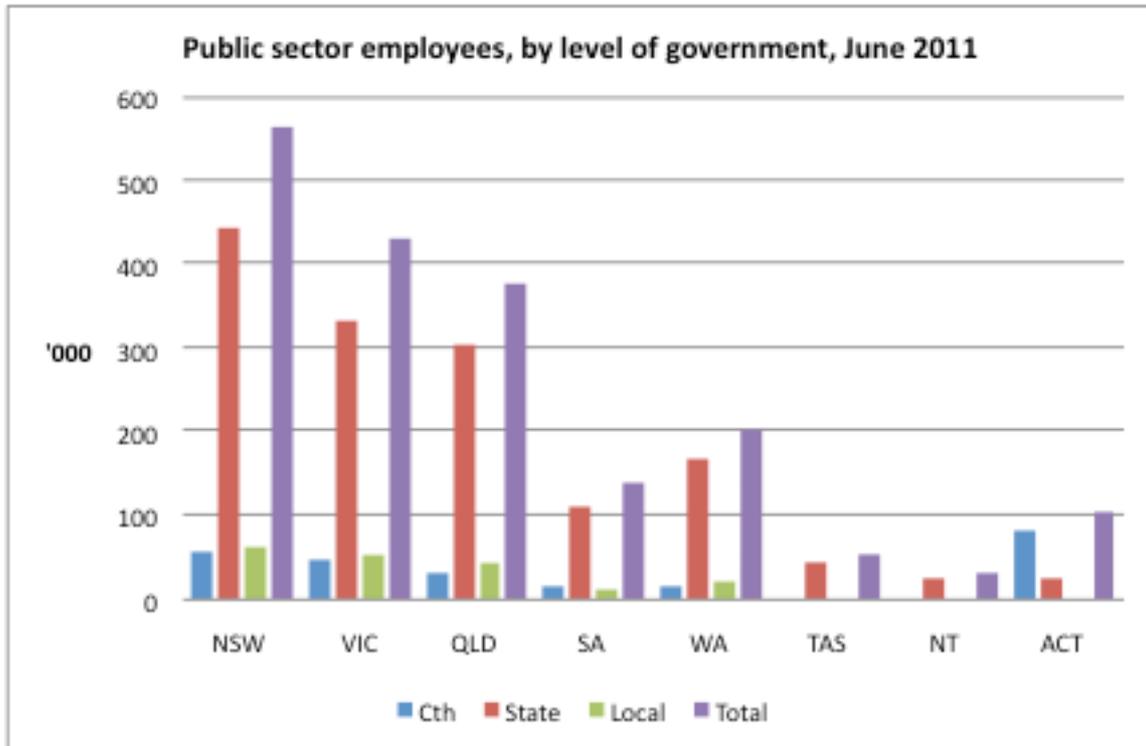
1.2 Size of public sector

There are three levels of government in Australia – Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local. The public sector is a significant employer in Australia, with almost 1.9 million employees nationwide, of whom 30% are in NSW. The following table shows how these employees are distributed between the various levels of government. The NSW public sector provided employment for 444,700 people in 2010, that is, almost one quarter of all public sector employees in Australia.

Public sector employees, by level of government, June 2011, '000

	Cth	State	Local	Total
NSW	56.5	444.7	62.1	563.4
VIC	45.1	333.6	53.1	431.7
QLD	30.6	303.4	42.0	376.0
SA	15.2	111.2	10.9	137.3
WA	13.7	166.6	20.9	201.2
TAS	5.6	41.8	4.0	51.4
NT	4.3	23.9	2.5	30.6
ACT	80.4	24.0	n/a	104.4
AUS	251.4	1 449.2	195.5	1 896.1

Source: ABS, *Employment and Earnings, Public Sector, Australia, 2009-10*, 6248.0.55.002, December 2011.



1.3 Local government

Local government⁵ plays an important role in the provision of numerous services in the fulfilment of its various responsibilities. For example:

- infrastructure and property services – local roads, footpaths, drainage, waste collection and management;
- recreational facilities;
- noise control;
- community services; and
- planning and development approval.

There are about 560 local government bodies in Australia.

Local governments in Australia are responsible for a relatively small proportion of public sector expenditure when compared to elsewhere in the world – about 6% of public expenditure compared to 26% in the United States and 18% in Canada.⁶

⁵ Local government is not recognised in the Australian Constitution. The Commonwealth Government appointed an Independent Expert Panel on the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government in August 2011, chaired by the Hon James Spigelman. It published its final report in December 2011. See <http://www.localgovrecognition.gov.au/content/final-report> for more detail.

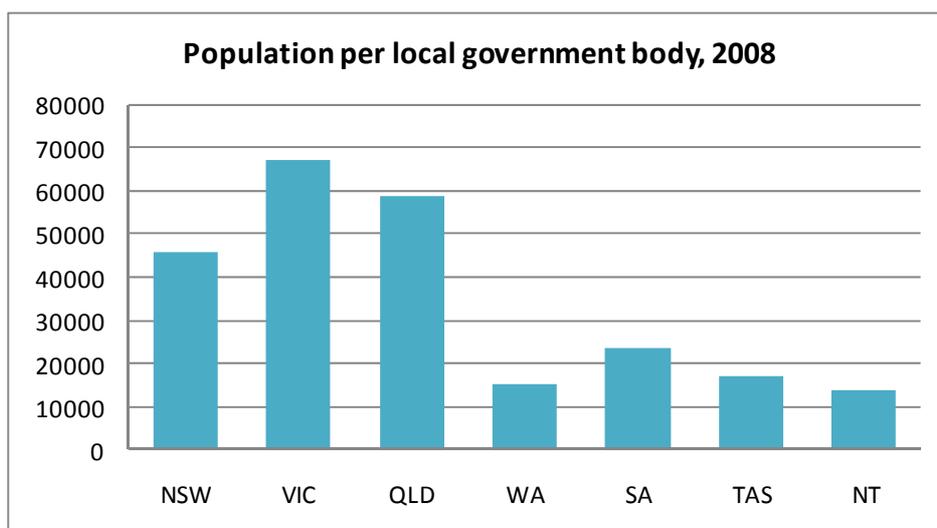
⁶ Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 262. In Canada, the provincial and territorial

The following table compares the number of local government bodies in each of the Australian States and Territories as at 2008. Victoria and Queensland had the greatest number of people per local government body, followed by NSW where there were 45,837 people per local government.

Number of local government bodies in Australia, 2008

Jurisdiction	Local government bodies	Population	Population per local government body
NSW	152	6,967,200	45,837
VIC	79	5,297,600	67,058
QLD	73	4,279,400	58,622
WA	141	2,163,200	15,342
SA	68	1,601,800	23,556
TAS	29	498,200	17,179
NT	16	219,900	13,744

Source: Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 263.



1.4 The structure of the NSW Public Sector in 2010

The NSW public sector employed 11.09% of all employed persons in NSW in 2010. 60% of those in the NSW public sector work in the areas of Health or Education. The median age of public sector employees is 45 years compared to 40 years for NSW employed persons as a whole; the largest age group in the public sector is employees aged between 45 and 54 years, representing 30% of employees. The median pay was \$69,429 and almost one-quarter of employees

governments are responsible for the greatest proportion of public expenditure. The breakdown of spending between the levels of government in Canada is generally: local (18%); provincial and territorial (45%); and federal (37%). In Australia, the Federal Government is responsible for the majority of expenditure (55%), with almost 40% attributable to the States and just over 6% to local government.

worked part-time. Women form the overwhelming majority of part-time employees (87.67%). The NSW public sector is also female-dominated with 61% of its employees being women compared to 45% of NSW employed persons. 2.48% of employees identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and 15.18% identify as being from a non-English speaking background. 3.71% of NSW public sector employees have a disability and 1.05% of employees have a disability that requires workplace adjustment.⁷

The following sections provide more detailed information on different aspects of the NSW public sector.

1.4.1 Budget sector

There were 322,452 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the NSW public sector in 2010, including Government Trading Enterprises and State Owned Corporations (eg Landcom and Sydney Water Corporation).

5.1 Size of Workforce: Full time Equivalent (FTE) During the Year and at Census Period 2010 by Budget Sector

Budget Sector	Public sector workforce		Non-casual public sector workforce	
	FTE During the Year	FTE at Census Period	FTE During the Year	FTE at Census Period
General Government Budget Dependent	265,876	271,091	248,833	250,806
Government Trading Enterprise	18,507	18,522	18,285	18,345
State Owned Corporation	21,475	21,293	21,236	21,089
General Government Non Budget Dependent	11,456	11,547	11,199	11,322
Total	317,314	322,452	299,553	301,563

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables', www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

1.4.2 Cluster and gender

The table below shows the number of NSW public sector employees, by cluster and gender. More than 60% of public servants are employed by the Health NSW and Education and Training sectors. Human Services, Health NSW and Education and Training have the most female dominated workforces, with over 70% of employees in these sectors being women. Industry and Investment and Transport have the smallest proportion of female employees at 20.74% and 20.23% respectively.

⁷ NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables'.

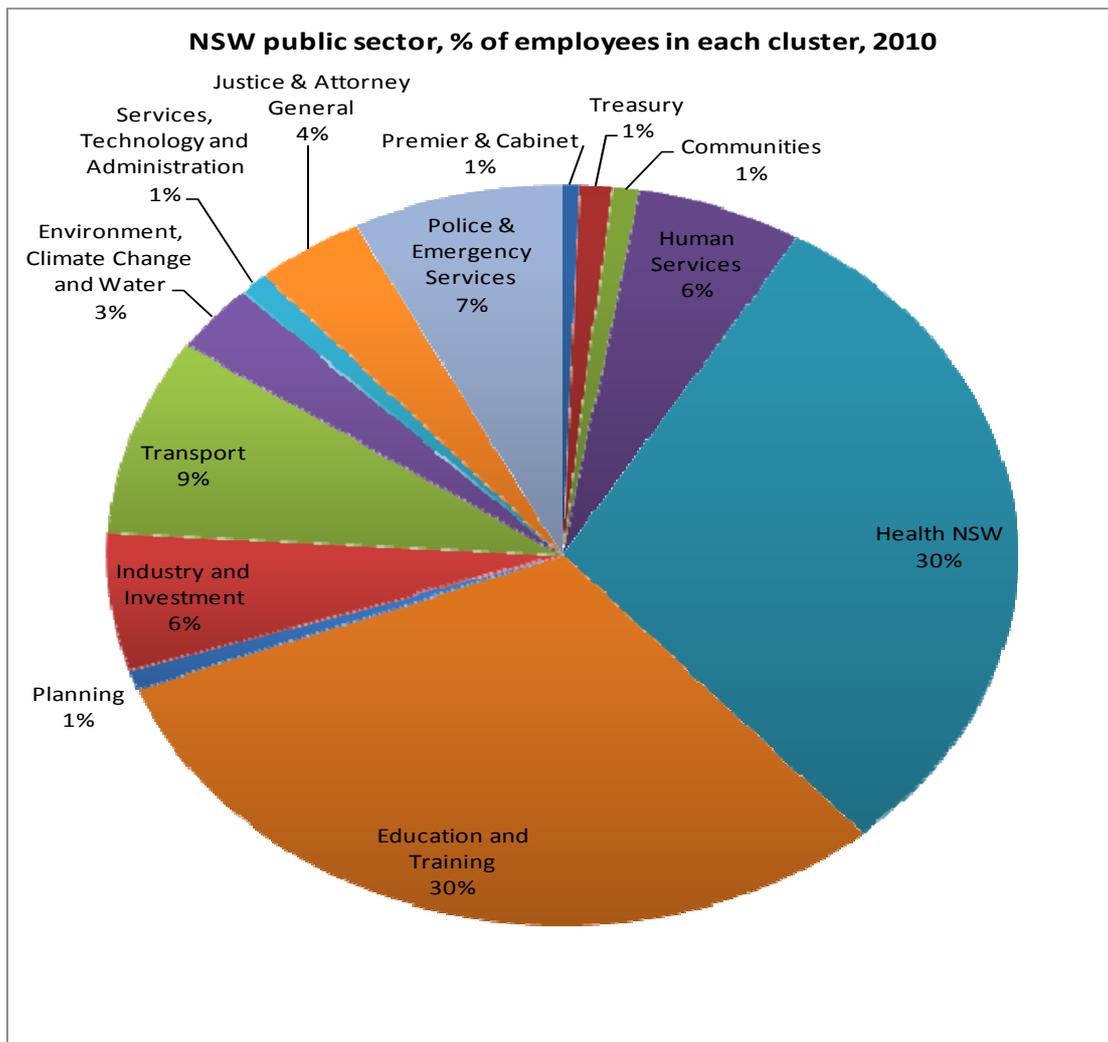
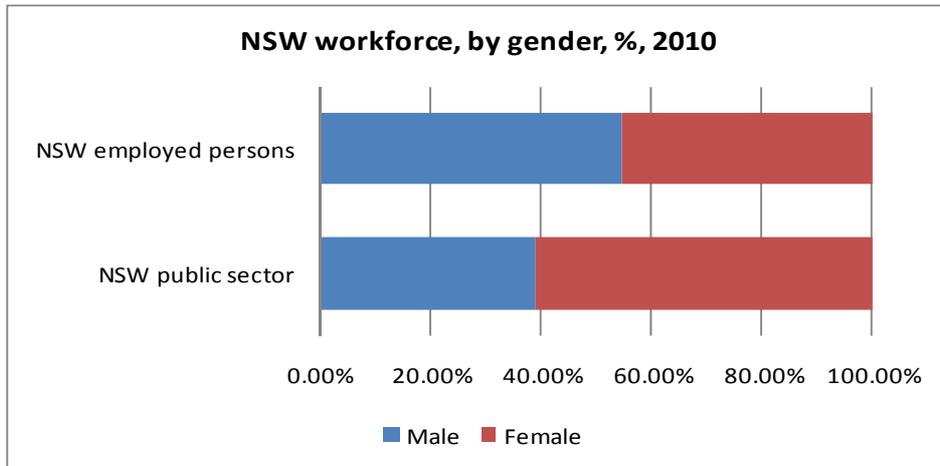
5.4 Size of Workforce: Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at Census Period 2010 by Cluster and Gender

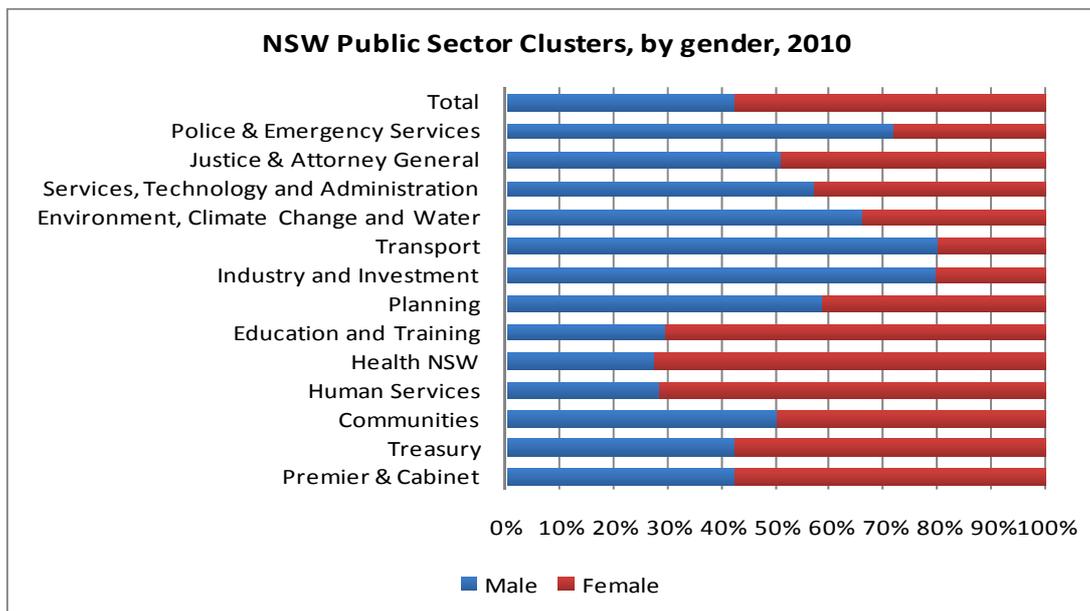
Cluster	Male			Female			Total	
	Sum	Sector %	Gender %	Sum	Sector %	Gender %	Sum	Sector %
Premier & Cabinet	829	0.61%	42.02%	1,143	0.61%	57.98%	1,972	0.61%
Treasury	1,526	1.13%	42.20%	2,091	1.12%	57.80%	3,618	1.13%
Communities	1,592	1.18%	50.02%	1,591	0.86%	49.98%	3,183	0.99%
Human Services	5,369	3.97%	28.45%	13,504	7.26%	71.55%	18,873	5.88%
Health NSW	26,291	19.44%	27.33%	69,908	37.59%	72.67%	96,199	29.95%
Education and Training	28,831	21.32%	29.36%	69,359	37.30%	70.64%	98,191	30.57%
Planning	1,515	1.12%	58.05%	1,094	0.59%	41.95%	2,609	0.81%
Industry and Investment	15,417	11.40%	79.26%	4,034	2.17%	20.74%	19,450	6.06%
Transport	22,113	16.35%	79.77%	5,609	3.02%	20.23%	27,722	8.63%
Environment, Climate Change & Water	6,400	4.73%	66.01%	3,296	1.77%	33.99%	9,696	3.02%
Services, Technology and Administration	1,896	1.40%	56.93%	1,435	0.77%	43.07%	3,331	1.04%
Justice and Attorney General	6,269	4.64%	50.75%	6,083	3.27%	49.25%	12,352	3.85%
Police & Emergency Services	17,172	12.70%	71.57%	6,821	3.67%	28.43%	23,993	7.47%
Total	135,220	100.00%	42.10%	185,968	100.00%	57.90%	321,188	100.00%

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables', www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

NSW: Size of workforce, 2010

	NSW public sector		NSW employed persons	
	Number	%	Number	%
Male	150489	39.12	1901600	54.63
Female	234185	60.88	1579100	45.37
Total	384674	100.00	3480700	100.00





1.4.3 Employment arrangement

Almost one-quarter of those employed in the NSW public sector work part-time. However, 88% of those working part-time are women. More than a third of all female employees in the public sector are employed on a part-time basis, compared to less than 8% of men.

5.13 Size of Workforce: Headcount (Non-casual) at Census Date 2010 by Employment Arrangement and Gender

Employment Arrangement	Male			Female			Total	
	Sum	Arrangement %	Gender %	Sum	Arrangement %	Gender %	Sum	Arrangement %
Part-Time	10,467	7.70%	12.33%	74,416	36.23%	87.67%	84,883	24.87%
Full-Time	125,422	92.30%	48.92%	130,958	63.77%	51.08%	256,380	75.13%
Total	135,889	100.00%	39.82%	205,374	100.00%	60.18%	341,263	100.00%

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables', www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

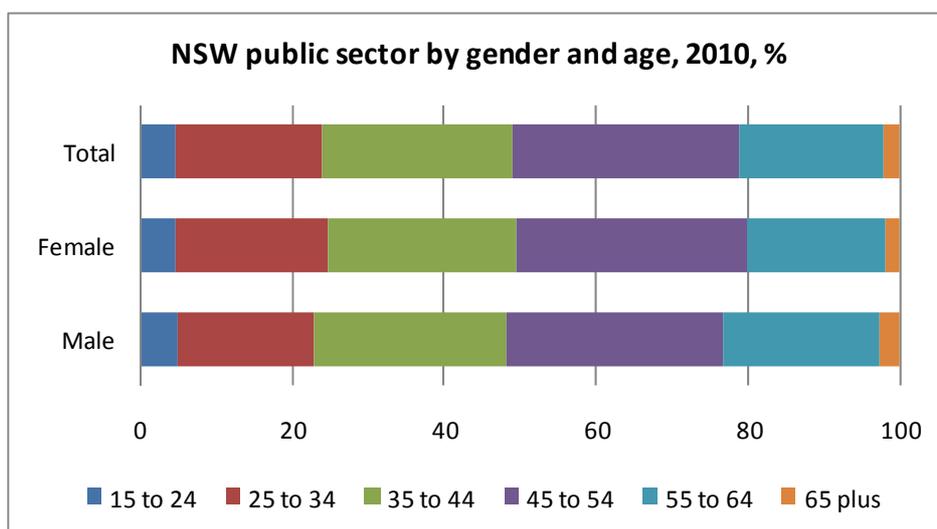
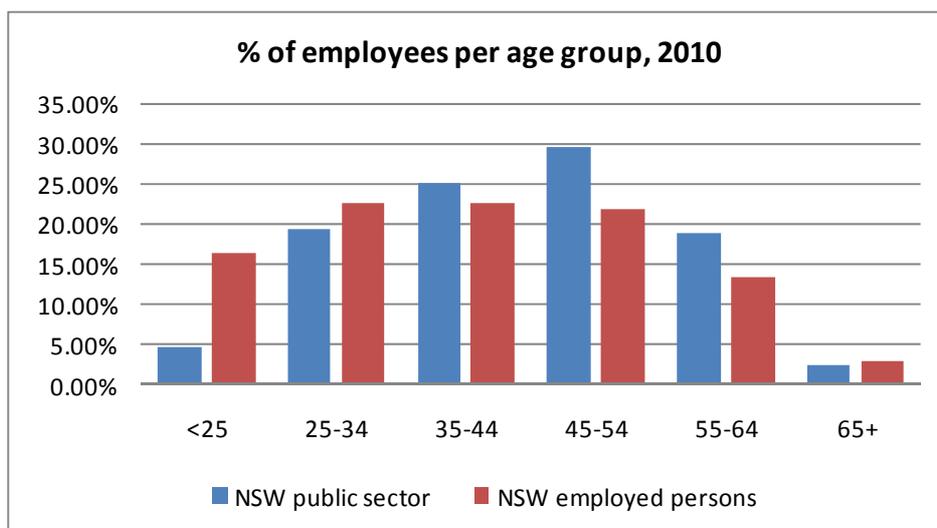
1.4.4 Age

The NSW public sector is older than the NSW workforce as a whole. Almost 30% of persons employed in the NSW public sector are between the ages of 45 and 54 years (compared to 22% in NSW generally). More than half of public sector employees are aged 45 years or older, compared to 38% of the NSW workforce.

Proportion of employees per age group, 2010

	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
NSW public sector	4.69%	19.28%	25.06%	29.69%	18.98%	2.30%
NSW employed persons	16.44%	22.66%	22.68%	21.98%	13.44%	2.80%

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables'.



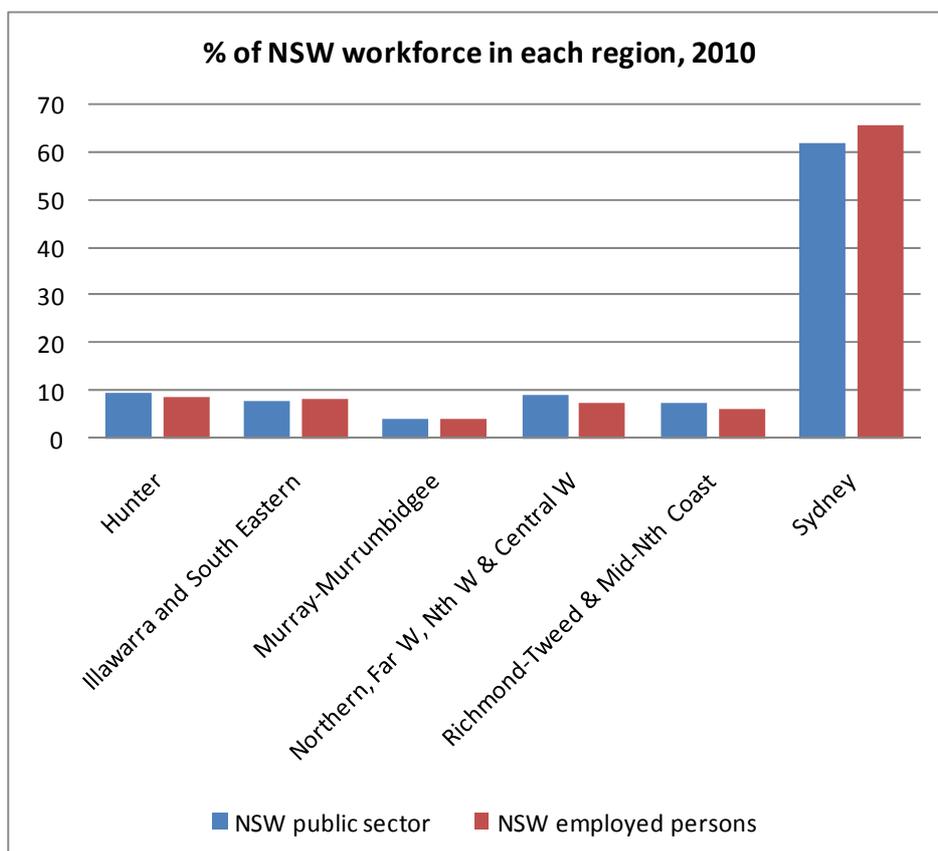
1.4.5 The regions

Whilst almost 62% of the NSW public sector workforce is located in Sydney, the public sector also employs a substantial number of people in the regions, as shown by the table below.

5.18 Size of Workforce: Headcount – NSW public sector employees, NSW labour force and Population at Census Date 2010 by Region

Region	NSW public sector		NSW employed persons		NSW labour force		NSW population aged 15 years and over	
	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%	Sum	%
Hunter	36,328	9.51%	306,300	8.80%	322,300	8.73%	526,700	9.04%
Illawarra and South Eastern	30,264	7.92%	290,700	8.35%	309,900	8.40%	530,800	9.11%
Murray-Murrumbidgee	15,400	4.03%	135,000	3.88%	142,400	3.86%	224,300	3.85%
Northern, Far West, North Western and Central West	35,231	9.22%	252,300	7.25%	268,200	7.27%	415,700	7.13%
Richmond-Tweed and Mid-North Coast	28,354	7.42%	215,100	6.18%	230,100	6.23%	453,100	7.78%
Sydney	236,331	61.88%	2,281,300	65.54%	2,417,700	65.51%	3,675,900	63.09%
Total	381,907	100.00%	3,480,700	100.00%	3,690,600	100.00%	5,826,500	100.00%

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables', www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

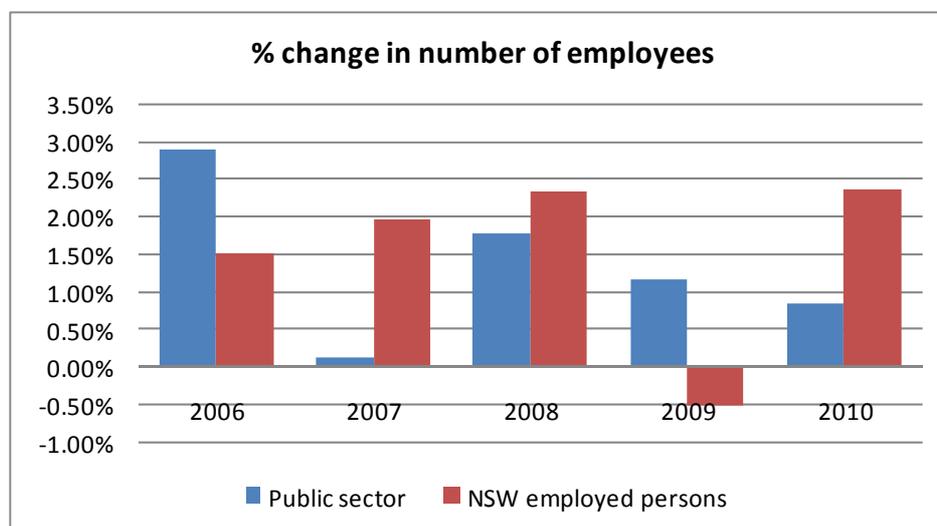


1.4.6 Growth

The following table traces the growth in the number of public sector employees between 2006 and 2010, when the number of employees increased by almost 4%. However, this is less than general employment growth; the number of employed persons in NSW as a whole increased by more than 6% in the same period.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
NSW Public Sector Headcount at June	371,632	372,033	378,645	383,014	386,185
NSW Public Sector Headcount at June % Growth	2.90%	0.11%	1.78%	1.15%	0.83%
NSW Employed Persons (ABS) at June	3,276,019	3,339,902	3,418,057	3,400,140	3,480,700
NSW Employed Persons (ABS) at June % Growth	1.50%	1.95%	2.34%	-0.52%	2.37%

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables', www.dpc.nsw.gov.au



1.5 The Commonwealth public sector

There were 166,495 staff in the Australian Public Service (APS) as at June 2011 (an increase of 1.2% from the previous year). Centrelink employed the largest share of APS workers at 15.2%, followed by the Australian Taxation Office at 15% and the Department of Defence at 13.5%. Women formed 57.4% of the APS. 13.8% of ongoing employees worked part-time. As in NSW, women are more likely than men to work part-time – 21.2% of women compared to 4% of men. Women constituted 38.3% of the Senior Executive Service. The median age of employees was 42 years. The greatest proportion of APS employees are based in the ACT (39%) but NSW is the second most common location, with

18.3% of all APS employees based in NSW. 57.4% of APS employees have a Bachelor degree or higher.⁸

1.6 Public sector wages and salaries

The 1.9 million public sector employees throughout Australia earned a combined \$123 billion in 2010-11, as shown in the table below. 30% of total wages and salaries can be attributed to those who live in NSW. 77% of all public sector cash wages and salaries were earned by employees of the various State Governments.

	Employees	Cash wages and salaries
	2010-11	2010-11
	'000	\$m
Commonwealth Government	251.4	18 220.8
State Government	1 449.2	94 748.5
Local Government	195.5	10 112.4
Total Public Sector	1 896.1	123 081.8

Source: ABS, Employment and Earnings, *Public Sector, Australia, 2009-10*, 6248.0.55.002, December 2011.

Public sector cash wages and salaries, by level of government, 2010-11, \$m.

	Cth	State	Local	Total
NSW	3 799.3	29 887.5	3 267.9	36 954.7
VIC	3 160.2	18 848.9	2 307.2	24 316.2
QLD	2 008.0	21 318.5	2 617.5	25 944.1
SA	1 053.1	6 805.6	615.8	8 474.5
WA	879.7	11 629.3	1 017.1	13 526.1
TAS	352.7	2 890.0	178.6	3 421.2
NT	304.6	1 749.8	108.4	2 162.8
ACT	6 663.3	1 619.0	n/a	8 282.3
AUS	18 220.8	94 748.5	10 112.4	123 081.8

Source: ABS, *Employment and Earnings, Public Sector, Australia, 2009-10*, 6248.0.55.002, December 2011.

The table below breaks down the NSW public sector by salary band. More than 21% of men in the NSW public sector earn more than \$91,653 compared to 13% of women. This is despite women constituting 58% of the NSW public sector.

⁸ Statistics in this section are sourced from: Australian Public Service Commission, *Statistical Bulletin 2010-11*, www.apsc.gov.au

5.7 Size of Workforce: Full Time Equivalent (FTE) (Non-casual) at Census Period 2010 by Salary Band and Gender

Salary Band	Male		Female		Total	
	FTE	%	FTE	%	FTE	%
\$8,000 - < \$38,144	1,528	1.19%	4,069	2.38%	5,597	1.87%
\$38,144 - < \$56,009	33,782	26.22%	52,983	30.96%	86,764	28.92%
\$56,009 - < \$70,874	30,528	23.70%	42,829	25.08%	73,456	24.49%
\$70,874 - < \$91,653	34,789	27.00%	48,827	28.53%	83,616	27.87%
\$91,653 - < \$114,566	17,193	13.35%	17,422	10.18%	34,616	11.54%
\$114,566 - < \$155,402	7,883	6.12%	3,819	2.23%	11,702	3.90%
\$155,402 - < = \$600,000	3,133	2.43%	1,103	0.64%	4,236	1.41%
Total	128,836	100.00%	171,152	100.00%	299,988	100.00%

Source: NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'The NSW Public Sector Workforce: A 2010 snapshot and snapshot tables', www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

1.6.1 Are NSW public sector workers overpaid?

The University of Sydney Workplace Research Centre recently conducted research into whether NSW public sector workers are overpaid.⁹ They compared the wage rate for public sector teachers, senior constables and registered nurses and assistants in nursing at the top of their pay scales in each of the Australian States and Territories. It found that in NSW these workers are paid close to average weekly earnings. Average pay is higher in NSW than most other places with the result that public sector workers are generally among the top two States for rates of pay in this sector. However, this is only marginally better than average. The Research Centre evaluated the then proposed changes to the public sector pay arrangements made by the NSW Liberal Government and noted:

On the basis of comparing rates of iconic job classifications across States and Territories NSW public sector workers are paid pretty close to the Australian going rate of pay. Had the proposed changes been in place since the year 2000, all things being equal, NSW teachers, police and nurses would be the worst paid in the country by a significant margin.¹⁰

The University of Sydney Workplace Research Centre later noted that when controlled for relevant factors, such as workers with similar levels of education

⁹ University of Sydney Workplace Research Centre, 'Are NSW public sector workers overpaid?', Research note No 1, 2011, <http://sydney.edu.au/business/workplaceresearch>

¹⁰ University of Sydney Workplace Research Centre, 'Are NSW public sector workers overpaid?', Research note No 1, 2011, <http://sydney.edu.au/business/workplaceresearch>

and work experiences, similarly qualified and experienced workers earn similar wages whether they are in the NSW public sector or private sector.¹¹ In particular, the average gap in real wages between public and private sector workers between 2007 and 2011 has been about 8%; but over 93% of this gap is explained by differences in qualifications, experience and occupation between the sectors.

1.7 International comparisons

Whilst it is of interest to compare the size and efficiency of the various public sectors in Australia with those of other nations, it is a task replete with difficulty. Van de Walle has identified some of the difficulties involved when comparing the public sector of different countries, noting that it requires agreement on the definition of the public sector and the objectives of government.¹² He highlights that solid international comparative empirical evidence is generally not available and the indicators that do exist are often not reliable or are conceptually flawed. Further, he argues that defining where a public service ends can be difficult as, for example, a patient could be sent home from hospital early which thus shifts the cost of recovery from hospitals to families.

The following table dates from 2002. It ranks members of the European Union, the United States and Japan by the share of employment in the public sector.

	Country	Public employment share in 2002
1	Sweden	30.0
2	Denmark	29.0
3	Finland	22.4
4	France	21.2
5	United Kingdom	17.8
6	Portugal	17.0
7	Belgium	16.8
8	Luxembourg	14.9
9	Czech Republic	14.8
10	US	14.7
11	Italy	14.4
12	Spain	13.0
13	Austria	12.2
14	Poland	12.1
15	Greece	11.4
16	Ireland	11.0
17	Netherlands	10.7
18	Germany	10.2
19	Japan	8.1

Source: H Handler et al, 'The size and performance of public sector activities in Europe'

¹¹ University of Sydney Workplace Research Centre, 'Are NSW public sector workers paid excessively?', Research note No 2, 2011, <http://sydney.edu.au/business/workplacerearch>

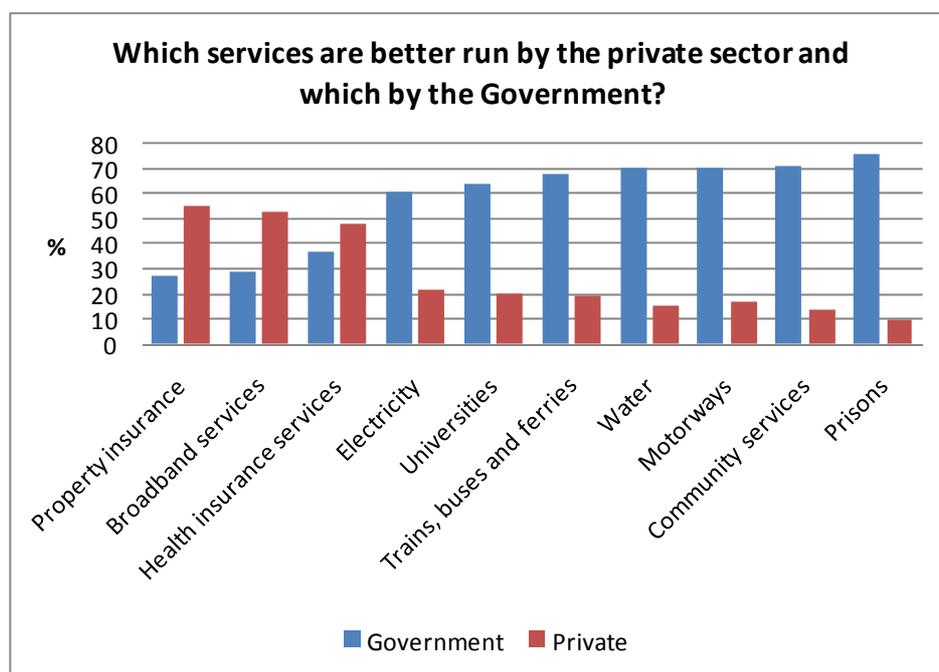
¹² Steven Van de Walle, 'International comparisons of public sector performance: how to move ahead?', *Public Management Review*, 10(6), 2008, pp 39-56.

Public sector employment in Australia in June 2011 was about 17% of total employment.

1.8 Attitudes towards public sector

There are widely varying views on the optimal size of the public sector and commentators differ on whether or not they believe it is performing well. Nonetheless, Whelan has highlighted the existence of strong community support for the public sector, especially in relation to the public rather than private provision of such services as transport, policing, health and education. He notes that Australians are generally supportive of increased funding of public services, irrespective of whether or not this requires an increase in taxation. The general public also have more confidence in public service agencies than in major companies. According to Whelan, this is despite the mainstream media and others communicating a largely negative stereotype of public servants.¹³

Essential Media Communications conducted a survey in early 2011 asking respondents which services are better run by the government and which are better being run by the private sector. The graph below shows the results, with preferences shown for government run services in the areas of electricity, universities, transport, water, motorways, community services and prisons.



Source: Essential Media Communications, *Essential Report*, 31 January 2011.

Perceived levels of corruption in the Australian public services are low. Briggs reported findings by the Transparency International Corruptions Perceptions

¹³ James Whelan, Attitudes toward the public service, Centre for Policy Development, July 2011.

Index which measures the perceived levels of corruption in various countries. Australia scored 8.7 in its assessment of the Commonwealth, State and Territory public sector, placing it equal ninth in the world with Canada in terms of the least corrupt out of 178 countries.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the possibility of improving public sector efficiency is often discussed.¹⁵ The Commonwealth Government, in its *Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Statement*, decided to reduce the cost of Government administration by applying an additional one-off efficiency dividend of 2.5% in 2012/13 so as to reduce cash payments by \$1.5 billion between 2012/13 and 2014/15. The efficiency dividend is to apply to most Commonwealth agencies and it is thought that these savings will be achieved by:

- reduced use of consultants and contractors;
- reduced spending on hospitality and entertainment;
- reduced legal expenses;
- replacing international and domestic travel with use of the Government's telepresence facilities and other communication tools;
- reducing media buy;
- reducing recruitment advertising expenditure;
- reducing printing and publication expenditure; and
- delivering more efficient training.¹⁶

¹⁴ Lynelle Briggs, 'Public sector ethics in the 21st century: The new vulnerabilities', *Public Administration Today*, July-September 2008, p 23ff.

¹⁵ See, for example, Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for the Reform of Australian Government Administration*, March 2010, http://www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/aga_reform/aga_reform_blueprint/index.cfm

¹⁶ The Hon Wayne Swan MP and the Hon Penny Wong, *Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2011-12*, p 216.

2 PARLIAMENT

2.1 Composition

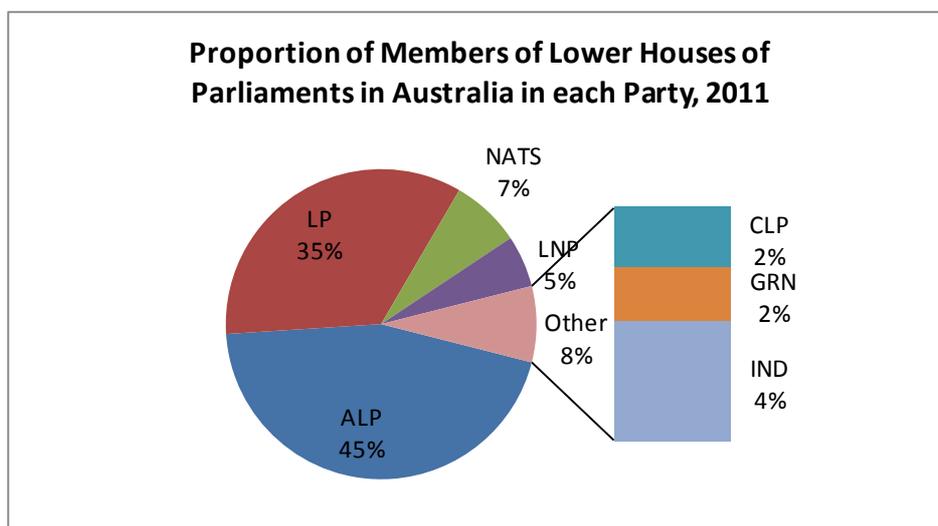
A parliamentary system of government is the norm in Australia. Most Australian parliaments are bicameral, with the exception of those in Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory. The following table compares the membership of the various Parliaments by Party and House. 45% of Members of the Lower Houses of Parliament throughout Australia represent the Australian Labor Party (ALP), 35% the Liberal Party and 7% The Nationals. However, 36% of Upper House members represent the ALP and another 36% the Liberal Party; 10% represent The Greens and 9% The Nationals.

Composition of Australian parliaments by party, by State and Territory, as at 13 October 2011

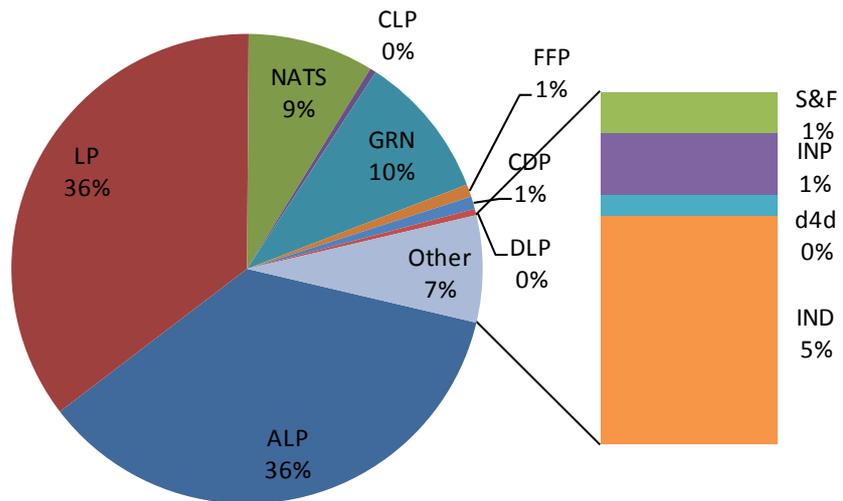
	CTH	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Total
Lower House										
Australian Labor Party (ALP)	72	20	43	51	26	26	10	7	12	267
Liberal Party (LP)	60	51	35	0	24	18	10	6	0	204
The Nationals (NATS)	11	18	10	0	4	0	0	0	0	43
Liberal National Party (Qld) (LNP)	0	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	32
Country Liberal Party (CLP)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	12
Greens (various) (GRN)	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	11
Independent (IND)	5	3	0	6	5	3	0	0	2	24
Total	150	93	88	89	59	47	25	17	25	593
Upper House										
Australian Labor Party (ALP)	31	14	16	-	11	8	3	-	-	83
Liberal Party (LP)	28	12	18	-	16	7	1	-	-	82
The Nationals (NATS)	5	7	3	-	5	0	0	-	-	20
Country Liberal Party (CLP)	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	1
Greens (various) (GRN)	9	5	3	-	4	2	0	-	-	23
Family First Party (FFP)	0	0	0	-	0	2	0	-	-	2
Christian Democratic Party (CDP)	0	2	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	2
Democratic Labor Party (DLP)	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	1
Shooters and Fishers (S&F)	0	2	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	2
Independent – No Pokies (INP)	1	0	0	-	0	2	0	-	-	3
Dignity for	0	0	0	-	0	1	0	-	-	1

Disability (d4d)										
Independent (IND)	0	0	0	-	0	0	11	-	-	11
Total	76	42	40	-	36	22	15	-	-	231
Total Parliament										
Australian Labor Party (ALP)	103	34	59	51	37	34	13	7	12	350
Liberal Party (LP)	88	63	53	0	40	25	11	6	0	286
The Nationals (NATS)	16	25	13	0	9	0	0	0	0	63
Liberal National Party (Qld) (LNP)	0	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	32
Country Liberal Party (CLP)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	13
Greens (various) (GRN)	10	6	3	0	4	2	5	4	0	34
Family First Party (FFP)	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Christian Democratic Party (CDP)	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Democratic Labor Party (DLP)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Shooters and Fishers (S&F)	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Independent – No Pokies (INP)	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Dignity for Disability (d4d)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Independent (IND)	5	3	0	6	5	3	11	0	2	35
Total	226	135	128	89	95	69	40	17	25	824

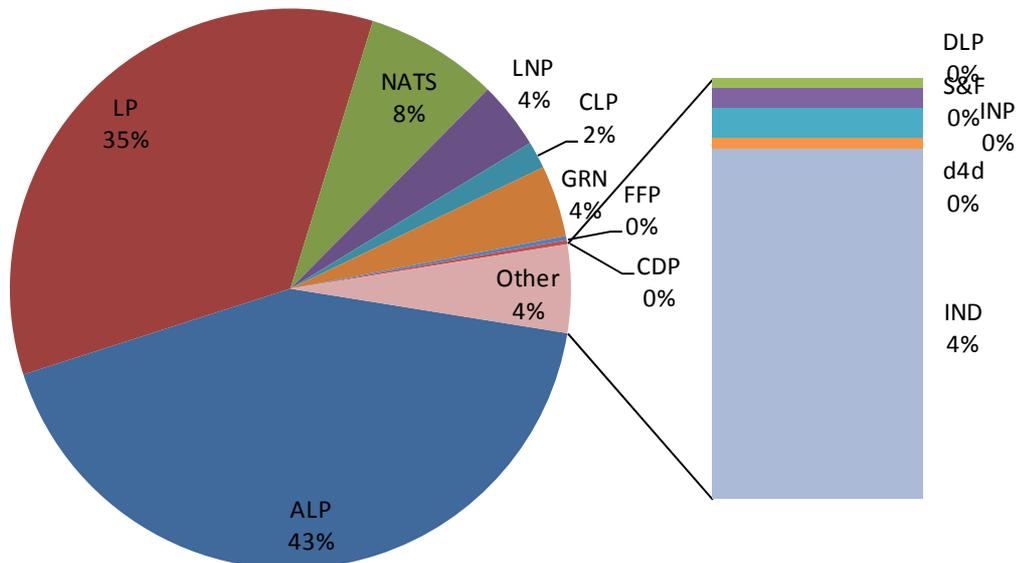
Source: Janet Wilson, *Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party and Gender, as at 13 October 2011*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/pol/currentwomen.pdf>



Proportion of Members of Upper Houses of Australian Parliaments, by Party, 2011



Members of Australian Parliaments, by Party, 2011

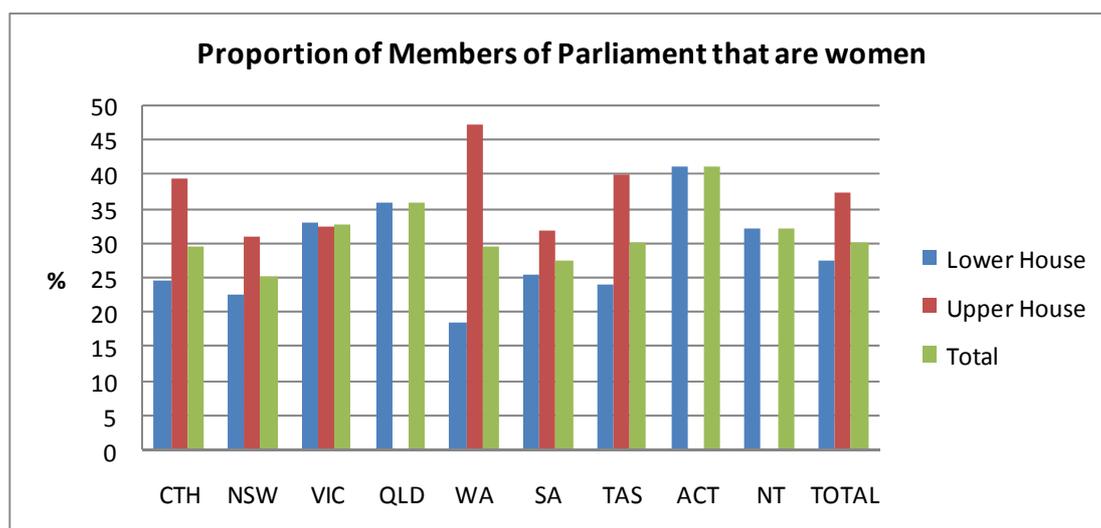


The table below compares the proportion of female Members in each Parliament. More than one-quarter of all NSW Members of Parliament are women, the lowest of all the Parliaments. The ACT has the greatest proportion of female Members at 41.2%.

Proportion of Members of Parliament that are women, by State and Territory, as at 13 October 2011, %

	CTH	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	TOTAL
Lower House	24.7	22.6	33	36	18.6	25.5	24	41.2	32	27.5
Upper House	38.2	31	32.5	n/a	47.2	31.8	40	n/a	n/a	37.2
Total	29.2	25.2	32.8	36	29.5	27.5	30	41.2	32	30.2

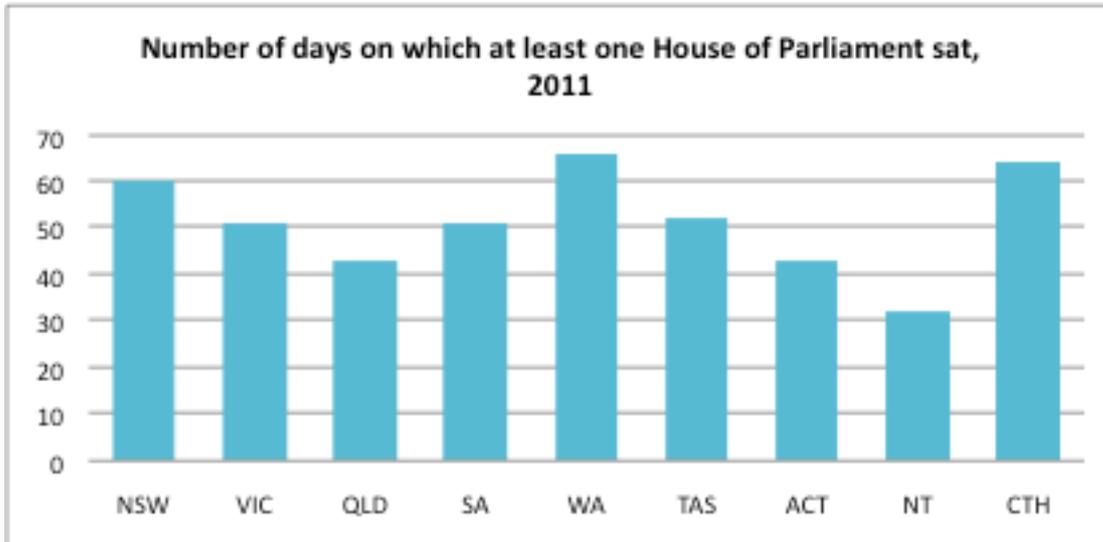
Source: Janet Wilson, *Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party and Gender, as at 13 October 2011*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/pol/currentwomen.pdf>



2.2 Parliamentary business

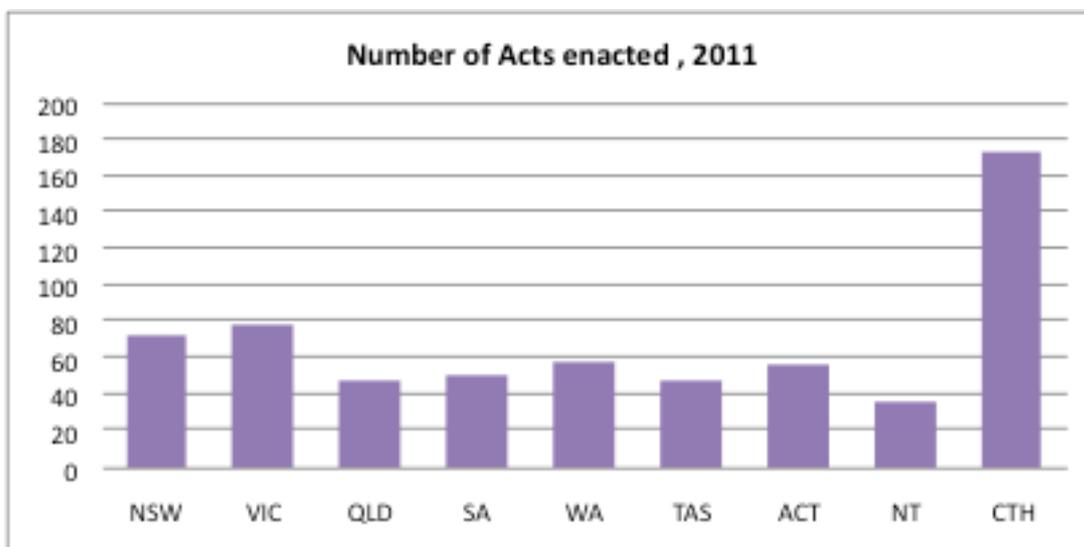
2.2.1 Number of sitting days

NSW was the only jurisdiction in which an election was held in 2011. Yet it had the third greatest number of sitting days, after the Commonwealth and Western Australian Parliaments.



2.2.2 Number of Acts enacted

The graph below shows the number of Acts enacted in each jurisdiction in 2011. 73 bills were passed by the NSW Parliament and enacted in 2011.



2.3 Government

2.3.1 Government leaders

There are currently four female Government Leaders in Australia and three female Governors, including the Governor-General. The ALP holds office in six jurisdictions and the Liberal Party forms the Government in three. Elections are due to be held in Queensland, the ACT and Northern Territory in 2012. An

election is due in Western Australia in late 2012 or early 2013.

Jurisdiction	Leader	Party	Leader since	Governor/Administrator
NSW	Barry O'Farrell	Liberal	2011	Marie Bashir
Victoria	Ted Baillieu	Liberal	2010	Alex Chernov
Queensland	Anna Bligh	ALP	2007	Penelope Wensley
Western Australia	Colin Barnett	Liberal	2008	Malcolm McCusker
South Australia	Jay Weatherill	ALP	2011	Kevin Scarce
Tasmania	Lara Giddings	ALP	2011	Peter Underwood
ACT	Katy Gallagher	ALP	2011	Quentin Bryce
Northern Territory	Paul Henderson	ALP	2007	Thomas Pauling (Administrator)
Commonwealth	Julia Gillard	ALP	2010	Quentin Bryce

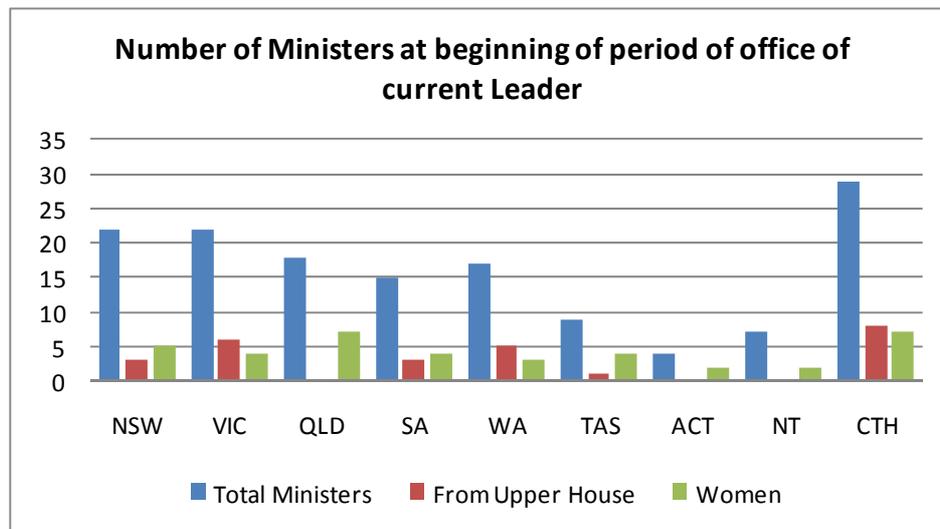
2.3.2 Ministers

The following table compares the number of Ministers in each Australian jurisdiction. The Commonwealth Government has the greatest number of Ministers at 29, followed by NSW and Victoria at 22 each. The Commonwealth and Queensland Governments have the most female Ministers, with seven each, but the ACT is the jurisdiction with the highest proportion of female Ministers at 50%.

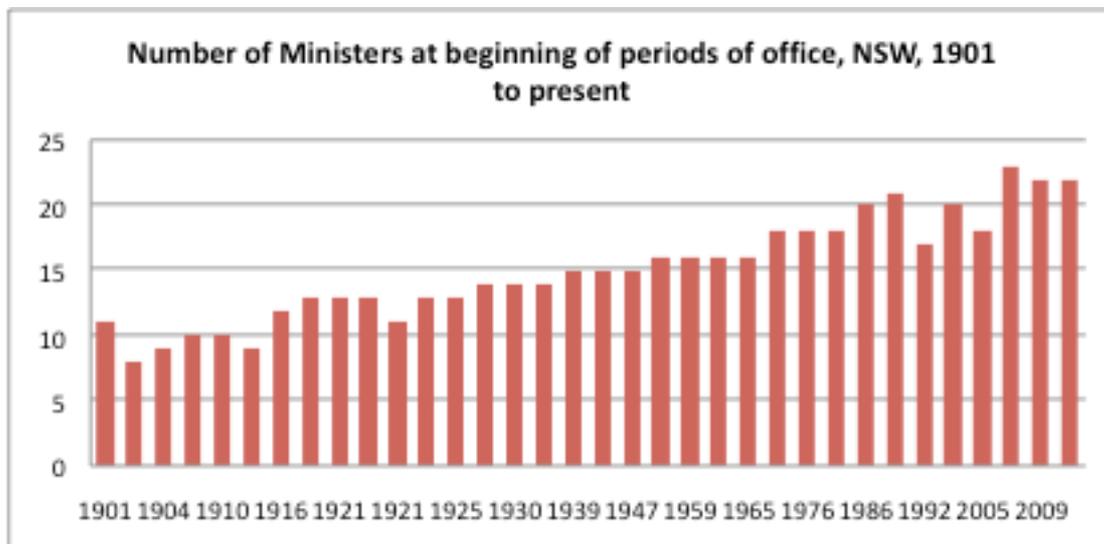
Number of Ministers at beginning of period of office of the current Leader as at January 2012

	Total Ministers	As a % of all MPs	Number of Ministers from Upper House	Number of Ministers who are women	% of Ministers who are women
NSW	22	16.3%	3	5	22.7
VIC	22	17.2%	6	4	18.2
QLD	18	20.2%	n/a	7	38.9
SA	15	21.7%	3	4	26.7
WA	17	17.9%	5	3	17.6
TAS	9	22.5%	1	4	44.4
ACT	4	23.5%	n/a	2	50.0
NT	7	28.0%	n/a	2	28.6
CTH	29	12.8%	8	7	24.1

Source: University of Western Australia, Australian Politics and Elections Database, 'Summary tables – Government', <http://elections.uwa.edu.au>



The following table traces the number of Ministers in NSW at the beginning of each period of office since 1901, and illustrates the doubling of the number of Ministers.



Source: University of Western Australia, Australian Politics and Elections Database, 'Summary information on ministries at the start of periods in office of New South Wales premiers', <http://elections.uwa.edu.au>

3 CITIZENSHIP

Australian citizenship is sometimes described as consisting of a number of responsibilities and privileges, including: jury service; voting in Federal and State/Territory elections and referendums; the right to stand for election to Parliament; and the right to apply for an Australian passport.¹⁷

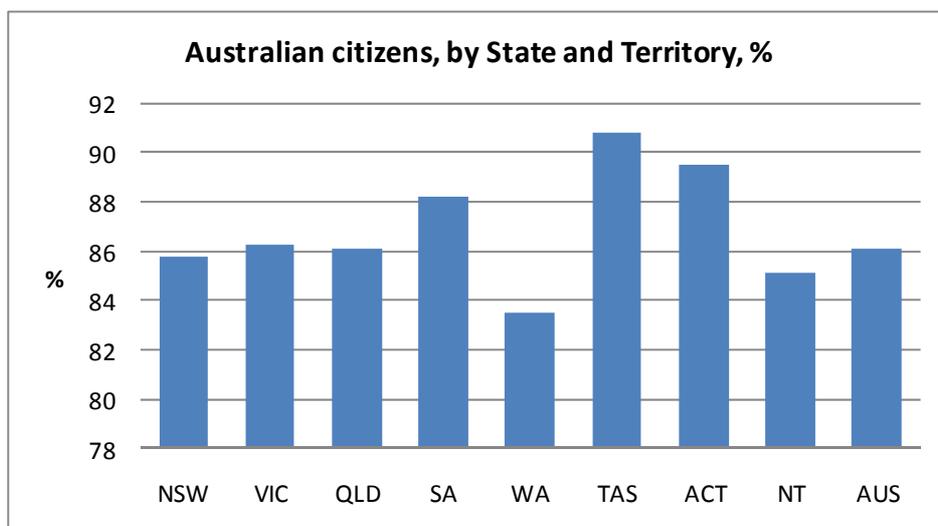
3.1 Number and geographical distribution of citizens

In 2006, 86.1% of Australia's population were Australian citizens. The following table compares the number and proportion of Australian citizens in each of the States and Territories. Tasmania had the greatest proportion of Australian citizens at 90.8% and Western Australia the lowest at 83.5%. NSW at 85.8% is just under the Australian average. The proportion of Australian citizens has fallen in each jurisdiction since the 2001 Census.

Australian citizens, 2006

	Number	%	% in 2001
NSW	5,615,961	85.8	87.3
VIC	4,257,742	86.3	88.3
QLD	3,362,046	86.1	89.1
SA	1,336,357	88.2	90.5
WA	1,634,903	83.5	86.4
TAS	432,455	90.8	92.6
ACT	290,142	89.5	90.9
NT	164,136	85.1	88.1
AUS	17,095,569	86.1	88.2

Source: ABS, 2006 Census QuickStats



¹⁷

See, for example, Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'Why should I become a citizen?', www.citizenship.gov.au

Australian citizenship was conferred on 92,284 people in 2010-11. One in five new citizens were from the UK, 13.6% were from India and 9.3% were from China.

Previous country of nationality or citizenship of people who were conferred Australian citizens in 2010-11, top six

1	United Kingdom	19101	20.0%
2	India	12948	13.6%
3	China	8898	9.3%
4	South Africa	4389	4.6%
5	New Zealand	4304	4.5%
6	Philippines	4051	4.3%
	Total new citizens	95284	100.0%

Source: Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Annual Report 2010-11*, Appendix 5.

3.2 Voting

3.2.1 Compulsory voting

Voting in Australian elections is compulsory. Federally, section 245(1) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth) specifies that it is the duty of every elector to vote at each election. Similar laws apply in NSW: an elector who fails to record his or her vote at an election when required is deemed guilty of an offence (s 120F *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW)). An elector is generally a person who appears on the electoral roll and who is at least 18 years old and an Australian citizen.¹⁸ Under Commonwealth law, those who are serving a sentence of imprisonment of three years or longer are not entitled to vote.¹⁹ In NSW, a person who has been convicted of a crime and is in prison serving a sentence of 12 months or more for that crime is disqualified from voting.²⁰

Not everyone is in favour of compulsory voting. A survey conducted by Essential Media Communications in July 2011 found that 82% of people would definitely or probably vote in a Federal Election if voting was not compulsory and 14% would probably not, including 4% who definitely would not (see table below). The study found that the proportion of people who would exercise their vote increased with age, with 91% of people over the age of 55 years indicating that they would vote compared to 73% of those under the age of 35 years.

¹⁸ Section 93 *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth); sections 22 and 23 *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW).

¹⁹ Section 93(8AA) *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth)

²⁰ Section 25 *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW).

Survey question: If voting at elections was voluntary (i.e. not compulsory) – how likely would you be to vote in the next Federal election?

	Total	Vote Labor	Vote Lib/Nat	Vote Greens
Total definitely/probably vote	82%	85%	89%	78%
Total definitely/probably not vote	14%	12%	9%	19%
Would definitely vote	59%	62%	65%	61%
Would probably vote	23%	23%	24%	17%
Probably wouldn't vote	10%	8%	7%	18%
Definitely wouldn't vote	4%	4%	2%	1%
Don't know	4%	3%	1%	3%

Source: Essential Media Communications, *Essential Report*, 11 July 2011, www.essentialmedia.com.au

3.2.2 Above the line voting

In elections for the NSW Legislative Council, voters have the choice of marking the ballot paper either 'above the line' or 'below the line'. Voting above the line simply requires a '1' to be placed next to the group of the voter's choice. This records a first preference vote for the first candidate in the group, with preferences distributed to the other candidates in order of appearance. Voting 'below the line' allows voters to record their preference for every individual candidate in order of choice.²¹ The overwhelming majority of electors choose the 'above the line' method of marking the ballot paper – 97.76% in the 2011 NSW election and 98.28% of voters in the 2007 NSW election.²²

3.2.1 Number enrolled and turnout

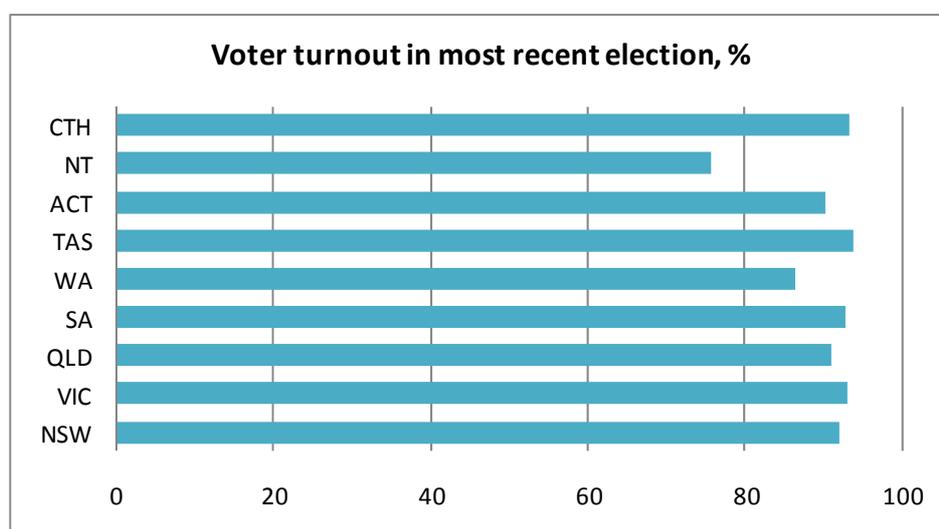
The following table notes: the number of voters on the electoral roll for each State and Territory; the turnout in the most recent election; and the level of informal voting at that election. Voter turnout is lowest in the Northern Territory. The highest level of informal voting in recent elections was 5.55% at the August 2010 Federal election.

²¹ Electoral Commission NSW, 'Proportional Representation', http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/about_elections/voting_and_counting_systems/proportional_representation_systems

²² Antony Green, *2011 NSW Election: Analysis of Results*, NSW Parliamentary Library Background Paper No 3/2011, p 45 and Antony Green, *2007 NSW Election: Final Analysis*, NSW Parliamentary Library Background Paper No 1/2008, p 53. The proportion of 'above the line' votes in the 2003 NSW Legislative Council election was 98.12%: Electoral Commission NSW, 'Summary of first preference votes', http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/past_results/state_elections/2003_legislative_council_results

	Date of most recent election	Number of voters on roll	Turnout %	Informal vote %
NSW	26 March 2011	4,663,787.00	92.00	3.2
VIC	27 November 2010	3,582,232.00	92.96	4.96
QLD	21 March 2009	2,660,940.00	90.93	1.94
SA	20 March 2010	1,093,316.00	92.78	3.33
WA	6 September 2008	1,330,399.00	86.48	5.32
TAS	20 March 2010	357,315.00	93.85	4.45
ACT	18 October 2008	243,471.00	90.32	3.65
NT	9 August 2008	119,814.00	75.65	4.08
CTH	21 August 2010	14,088,260.00	93.21	5.55

Source: University of Western Australia, Australian Politics and Elections Database, 'Elections', <http://elections.uwa.edu.au/>



3.2.2 Informal votes

The level of informal voting is seen by some as a key indicator of democratic health, as it may represent the level of understanding of the electoral process and/or people's engagement with it.²³ Australia is thought to have one of the highest rates of informal voting of the established democracies in the world as a result of:²⁴

- (1) compulsory voting;
 - (2) the large number of non-English speaking migrants in the electorate – some may be unfamiliar with the process of democratic participation;
- and

²³ Australian Electoral Commission, *Analysis of Informal Voting, House of Representatives, 2010 Federal Election*, Research Report No 12, 29 March 2011.

²⁴ Ian McAllister, *The Australian Voter: 50 years of change*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2011, p 8.

- (3) 'the heavy information burden that the electoral system places on voters, both in the frequency and complexity of elections' – Australians are required to vote at a State or Federal election once every 18 months on average.

This finding is supported by Sawer, Abjorensen and Larkin. They note that there have been some instances of relatively high levels of informal voting in electorates with large numbers of voters who speak a language other than English in the home and where confusion may have been caused by the differing electoral systems at various levels of government.²⁵

According to s 268 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth), a vote is informal if:²⁶

- The ballot paper is not marked at all.
- The ballot paper does not have the official mark and has not been initialled by the polling official and the ballot paper is not authentic in the opinion of The Divisional Returning Officer (DRO).
- The ballot paper has writing on it which identifies the voter.
- In the case of an absent vote the ballot paper is not contained in the declaration envelope.
- The voter has not marked a vote correctly for it to be considered acceptable.

In NSW elections, section 122 of the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW) is relevant. A ballot paper is considered informal if any of the following applies:

- It is not initialled by an election official or pre-poll voting officer.
- The voter has failed to record his or her vote on the ballot paper in the manner directed.
- It has any unauthorised mark or writing on it that enables the voter to be identified.

3.2.2.1 *Federal elections*

The following tables compare the level of informal voting within each State and Territory for each Federal Election since 1977. It reveals that in the 2010 Federal Election the level of informal voting for the Senate and House of Representatives was highest in NSW out of the States and Territories.

²⁵ Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 239.

²⁶ As summarised by the Australian Electoral Commission, 'Informal voting', http://www.aec.gov.au/voting/informal_voting/

% of informal votes for the House of Representatives in Federal Elections, by State and Territory

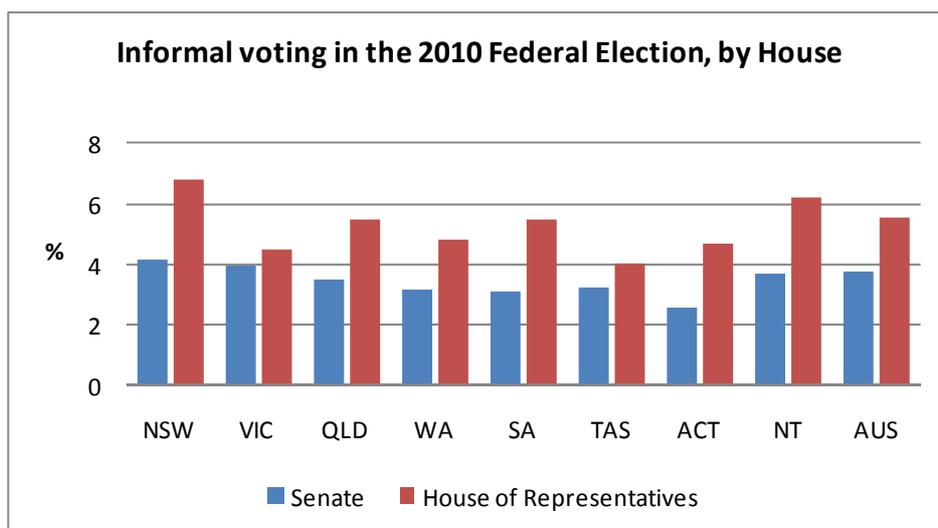
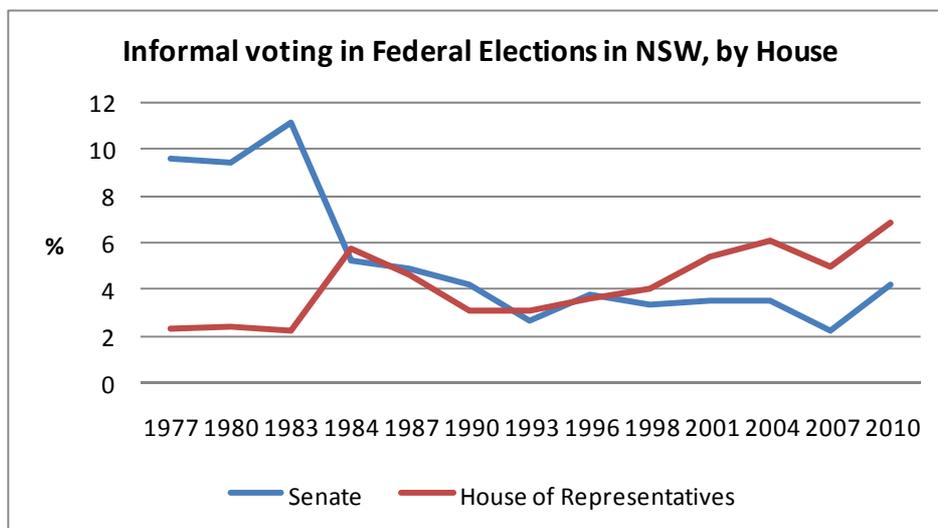
Year	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUS
1977	2.3	2.8	1.5	3.3	3.4	2.6	2.4	3.5	2.5
1980	2.4	2.7	1.8	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.1	4.9	2.5
1983	2.2	2.2	1.3	2.0	2.7	2.3	2.2	4.4	2.1
1984	5.7	7.5	4.5	7.1	8.2	5.9	4.7	4.6	6.3
1987	4.6	5.3	3.4	6.6	6.8	5.0	3.5	5.8	4.9
1990	3.1	3.5	2.2	3.7	3.7	3.3	3.0	3.4	3.2
1993	3.1	2.8	2.6	2.5	4.1	2.7	3.4	3.1	3.0
1996	3.6	2.9	2.6	3.2	4.1	2.4	2.8	3.4	3.2
1998	4.01	3.51	3.33	4.18	4.54	3.09	2.87	4.16	3.78
2001	5.4	4.0	4.8	4.9	5.5	3.4	3.5	4.6	4.8
2004	6.1	4.1	5.2	5.3	5.6	3.6	3.4	4.5	5.2
2007	4.95	3.25	3.56	3.85	3.78	2.92	2.31	3.85	3.95
2010	6.83	4.5	5.45	4.82	5.46	4.04	4.66	6.19	5.55

- The 1983 figures include missing and discarded votes.

% of informal votes for the Senate in Federal Elections, by State and Territory

Year	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUS
1977	9.6	9.1	8.0	8.2	10.4	7.1	3.1	6.5	9.0
1980	9.4	11.1	9.2	9.9	8.7	7.4	2.8	7.3	9.6
1983	11.1	10.7	8.6	8.1	8.8	7.4	3.3	4.7	9.9
1984	5.2	3.7	2.7	4.2	5.0	5.7	3.1	2.8	4.3
1987	4.9	4.0	3.1	3.3	3.8	3.8	2.4	3.7	4.1
1990	4.2	3.6	2.5	2.9	2.5	3.1	2.4	2.8	3.4
1993	2.7	3.1	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.6	1.6	2.8	2.6
1996	3.8	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.8	3.5
1998	3.31	3.78	3.04	2.68	2.81	3.05	1.97	1.99	3.24
2001	3.5	5.6	3.0	3.6	3.1	3.3	2.3	2.8	3.9
2004	3.5	5.1	2.8	3.5	3.5	3.4	2.5	3.1	3.8
2007	2.24	3.28	2.34	2.42	2.38	2.63	1.7	1.94	2.55
2010	4.17	3.94	3.5	3.18	3.12	3.23	2.55	3.69	3.75

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 'Informal Voting', www.aec.gov.au



3.2.2.2 NSW Elections

The following table compares the level of informal voting in elections for the NSW Legislative Assembly since 1973. It shows a much higher than usual level of informal voting in the 1991 NSW Election. This has been attributed to a change in the formality criteria that took place prior to that election with the result that votes that previously would have been considered formal were now deemed informal. In 1991, the use of ticks and crosses was no longer considered acceptable on the ballot paper for the Legislative Assembly; however, a tick was the correct indication when marking the referendum ballot which was carried out at the same election; and it was also considered acceptable if voting above the line on the ballot paper for the Legislative Council.²⁷

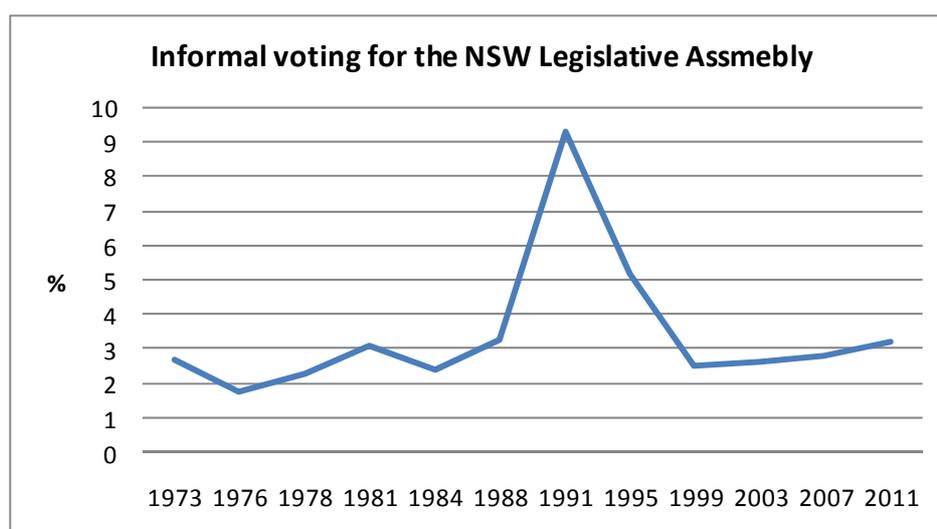
²⁷

Antony Green, 'The 1991 Election' in Michael Hogan and David Clune (eds) *The*

Informal voting, Elections for the NSW Legislative Assembly, %

Date of election	Informal voting %
26-Mar-11	3.20
24-Mar-07	2.77
22-Mar-03	2.62
27-Mar-99	2.51
25-Mar-95	5.15
25-May-91	9.32
19-Mar-88	3.28
24-Mar-84	2.41
19-Sep-81	3.08
7-Oct-78	2.28
1-May-76	1.76
17-Nov-73	2.70

Source: Australian Politics and Elections Database, University of Western Australia, 'Electoral system and voting for the New South Wales Legislative Assembly', <http://elections.uwa.edu.au>

**3.3 Civic activity**

Various groups and organisations in Australia assist in the promotion of a healthy democracy by facilitating political awareness and engagement, whether formal or informal. According to Sawer, Abjorensen and Larkin there are about 700,000 non-profit organisations in Australia which include sports and hobby clubs, private schools, unions, professional and business associations, churches, women's organisations, environmental organisations, and Indigenous and reconciliation organisations.²⁸ The following table shows the number and proportion of people in Australia who are engaged in the community in various

People's Choice: Electoral Politics in 20th Century New South Wales, NSW Parliament and University of Sydney, Sydney, 2001, p 318.

²⁸ Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 232.

ways. It shows that 18.7% of Australians actively participated in civic and political groups.

Community participation, Australia, 2010

	'000	%
Has actively participated in groups in the last 12 months		
Social groups	10,499.3	62.5
Community support groups	5,860.7	34.9
Civic and political groups	3,143.1	18.7
Types of groups participated in, in last 12 months(a)		
Sport or physical recreation group	5,857.4	34.9
Arts or heritage group	1,380.0	8.2
Religious or spiritual group or organisation	3,050.5	18.2
Adult education, other recreation or special interest group	2,010.5	12.0
Social clubs providing restaurants or bars	3,286.2	19.6
Craft or practical hobby group	1,285.5	7.7
Ethnic / multicultural club	663.4	4.0
Service clubs	1,281.6	7.6
Welfare organisations	1,037.3	6.2
Education and training	2,059.5	12.3
Parenting / children / youth	1,846.9	11.0
Health promotion and support	1,163.7	6.9
Emergency Services	684.3	4.1
International aid and development	586.0	3.5
Trade union, professional / technical association	1,096.4	6.5
Civic group or organisation	553.4	3.3
Environmental or animal welfare group	982.2	5.9
Human and civil rights groups	299.0	1.8
Body corporate or tenants' association	820.0	4.9
Political party	246.3	1.5
Consumer organisation	139.5	0.8

6.5% of those surveyed participated in a trade union or professional/technical association and 5.9% actively participated in an environmental or animal welfare group. The most common responses were sport or physical recreation groups (34.9%), social clubs providing restaurants or bars (19.6%) and religious or spiritual groups or organisations (18.2%).

Of the type of groups people actually participated in, political parties received the second lowest response at 1.5% of respondents, as shown in the above table, ahead only of consumer organisations. However, according to McAllister, 'Parties are central to the operation of democracy... there is perhaps no other established democracy in which they are so closely interwoven into the fabric of the electoral system than in Australia'.²⁹ Sawyer, Abjorensen and Larkin have highlighted that more people belong to the Internet campaigning organisation

²⁹ Ian McAllister, *The Australian Voter: 50 years of change*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2011, p 11.

Get Up!, which was founded in 2005, than to all the political parties combined.³⁰

The table below shows the type of civic activity in which people participated in the previous 12 months.

Type of civic activity participated in, in last 12 months		
Community consultation / public meeting	1,378.1	8.2
Contacted local councillor / territory government member	2,280.4	13.6
Contacted member of parliament	1,071.3	6.4
Signed petition	3,578.6	21.3
Attended protest march / meeting / rally	668.3	4.0
Wrote letter to the editor of a newspaper	566.5	3.4
Participated in a political campaign	418.2	2.5
Boycotted or deliberately bought products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	4,036.9	24.0

Source: ABS, *General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2010*, 4159.0, September 2011

The most common type of civic activity was boycotting or deliberately buying products for political, ethical or environmental reasons (24%), followed by the signing of a petition (21.3%). One of the least common type of civic activity was participation in a political campaign (2.5%).

Essential Media Communications conducted a survey of 1058 respondents asking whether people had ever been, or were currently, members of various organisations. They reported the following findings on 5 December 2011.³¹

³⁰ Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 231.

³¹ Essential Media Communication, *Essential Report*, 5 December 2011.

Membership of various organisations

	Ever been a member	Currently a member	Joined in the last 12 months
Trade union	34%	9%	2%
Professional organisation	28%	13%	3%
Environment group	9%	4%	2%
Religion/church	31%	13%	2%
Book club	14%	4%	1%
Service organisation like Rotary, Lions, Apex etc	9%	4%	1%
School organisation eg parents club, school council	22%	4%	2%
Sports club	38%	17%	6%
Political party	6%	1%	-
Local community group	21%	11%	3%
Special interest or hobby group eg gardening, birdwatching, chess etc	20%	10%	3%
Other organisation	9%	6%	1%
Total members	81%	56%	20%

The falling membership of political parties and trade unions has been remarked upon by numerous commentators. Sawer, Abjorensen and Larkin have noted that:

Declining party membership is, then, a cause for concern for many. At the very least, it indicates disillusionment with, and alienation from, party politics and hence from representative democracy more generally.... Parties also remain the primary vehicles for political recruitment and there is a risk that a narrow membership base, or 'shrinking gene pool', may substantially affect the quality of representation.³²

Nonetheless, according to Sawer, Abjorensen and Larkin, despite their falling membership:

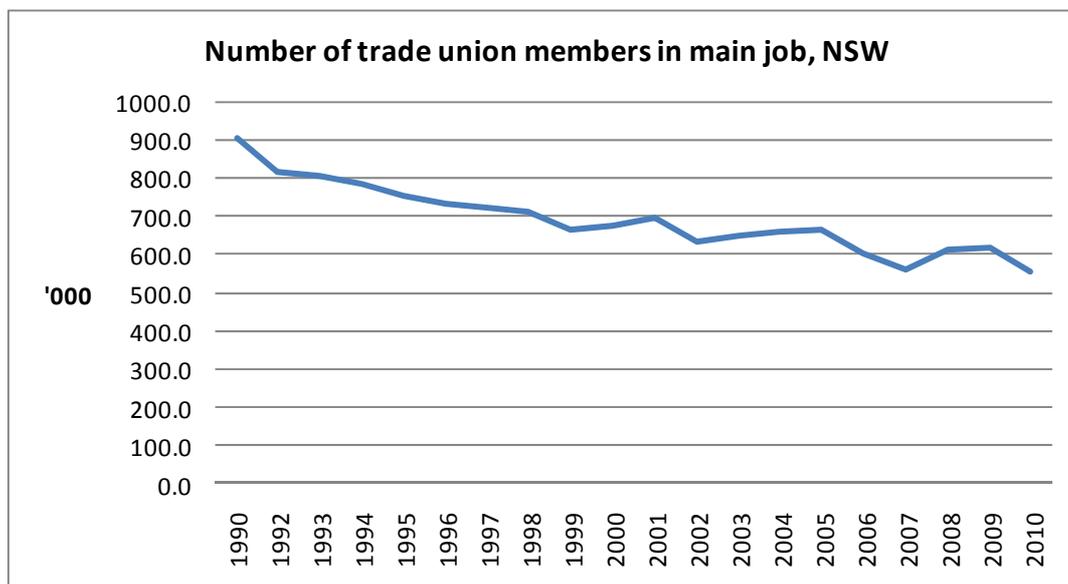
..parties remain the central institutions around which the democratic process is organised. Parties contest elections, form governments, recruit and train future leaders, structure political debate and perform the numerous other functions that representative democracy requires.³³

In August 2010, 18% of Australia's 9.8 million employees were trade union members in their main job.³⁴ The following chart shows the number of trade union members in NSW and illustrates the decline in trade union membership over time. There were 555,700 trade union members in NSW in 2010 compared to 907,300 in 1990, when 41% of all employees in Australia were members of a trade union.

³² Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 136.

³³ Marian Sawer, Norman Abjorensen, Philip Larkin, *Australia: The State of Democracy*, Federation Press, Sydney 2009, p 127.

³⁴ ABS, *Employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership, Australia, August 2010*, 6310.0, May 2011.



Source: ABS, *Employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership, Australia, August 2010*, 6310.0, May 2011.

The following chart compares trade union membership in 2010 among the States and Territories. 31% of all trade union members in Australia are in NSW, 25% are in Victoria and 20% in Queensland.



Source: ABS, *Employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership, Australia, August 2010*, 6310.0, May 2011.

Tasmania has the most unionised workforce, whereas Western Australia, the ACT and Northern Territory are below the national average.



Source: ABS, *Employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership, Australia, August 2010*, 6310.0, May 2011.

McAllister attributes the decline in trade union membership to the following three factors:³⁵

1. Both Labor and Liberal State and federal governments have engaged in wide-ranging legislative change in order to regulate the labour market, including the banning of compulsory unionism.
2. Increased economic competition driven by reductions in tariffs and microeconomic reform has made it harder for unions to pursue demands for higher wages and better conditions. Increased government oversight through the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has also contributed to this trend.
3. Structural changes in the labour market have resulted in workers moving from the traditional union-dominated areas of manufacturing to the service industries where union membership has historically been low.

³⁵ Ian McAllister, *The Australian Voter: 50 years of change*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2011, p 159.