

The case for an expanded parliament

How to increase representation without paying more salaries

Few Australians have interacted with their representative or would feel comfortable doing so, and the numbers have gotten worse over the last decade as the number of people per MP increased.

More MPs would increase the talent pool for ministries, reverse the growth in physical size of rural and regional electorates, and make MPs more responsive to local communities and local issues.

Discussion paper

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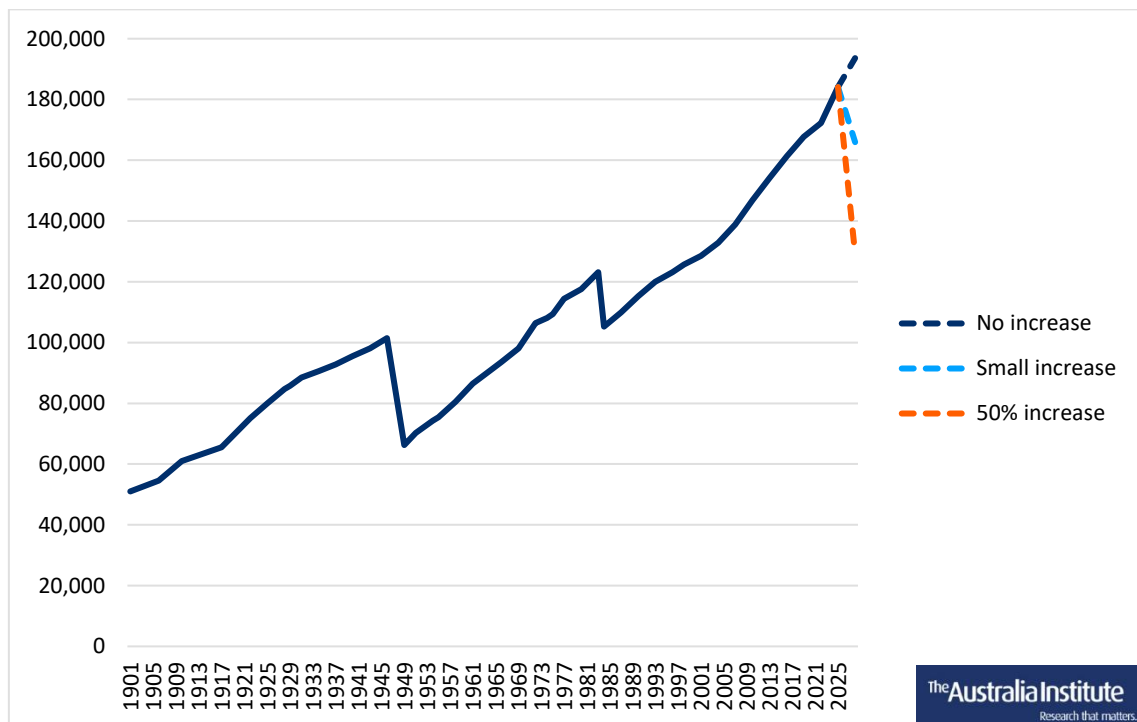
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Summary

Australia’s federal parliamentarians have never been so thinly spread. Whereas at Federation there were 51,000 Australians per House of Representatives MP, there are now 184,000 Australians per MP. That leaves MPs stretched and voters disengaged.

The last substantial increase in parliamentary numbers was over forty years ago, in 1984. Australia’s population has grown by 11 million since then. A small increase in the number of parliamentarians would be welcome but do little to reverse the trend towards larger electorates. A larger increase, in the order of 50%, would be needed to bring back the level of representation Australians enjoyed in the early 2000s.

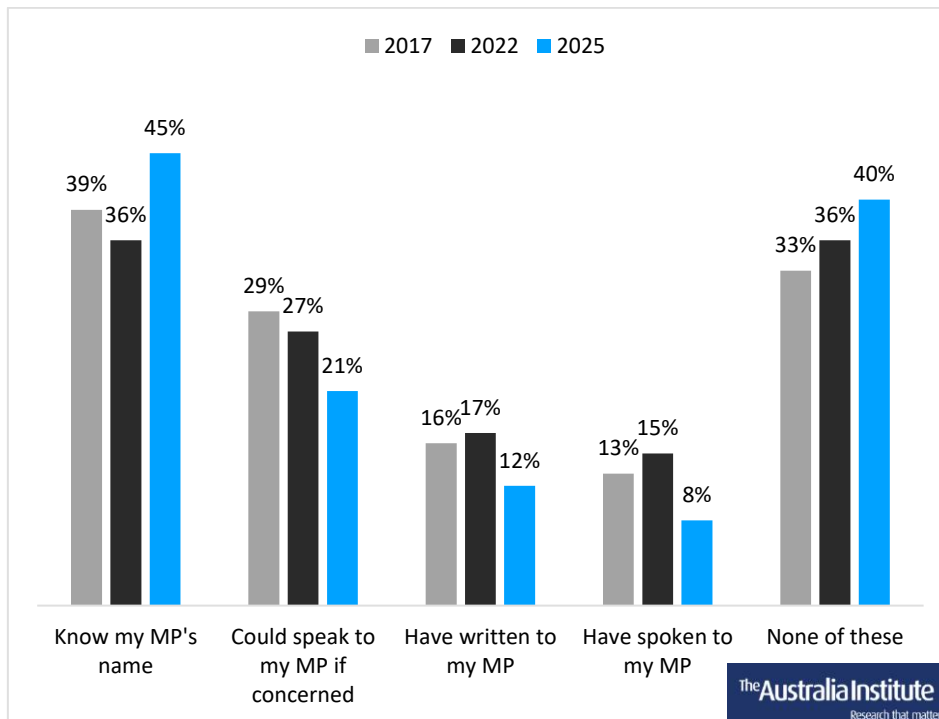
Figure 1: Australians per MP, including possible increases (1901 to 2028)



Source: Australia Institute analysis of AEC enrolment and Census data; Predavec (2025)
Australia has a politician problem: not too many, but too few,
<https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australia-has-a-politician-problem-not-too-many-but-too-few/>

This lack of representation affects political engagement. Few Australians have interacted with their representative or would feel comfortable doing so, and these metrics have gotten worse in the nine years since the Australia Institute first polled Australians about their relationship with their local member.

Figure 2: Relationship with local MP



Source: Australia Institute polling (see appendix)

Increasing the number of parliamentarians by 50% would not fully restore Australian representation to what it was after Bob Hawke's 1984 reforms, but it would give parliamentarians a smaller electorate to focus on and make it easier for voters to mobilise to influence their representatives.

More parliamentarians would make it easier for them to engage with, and be engaged by, the community they are supposed to represent. It would deepen the talent pool from which ministers can be drawn. The number of ministers and assistant ministers has quadrupled while the parliament has only doubled in size.

An increase would also reverse the trend towards larger regional and rural electorates.

An expanded parliament does not need to be expensive. Most costs associated with MPs are to meet electorate needs. These resources can be redistributed to new MPs. The number of people working in politics has already increased to reflect growing populations. Whereas each MP had three electorate staff in the 1980s, they now have five – exactly keeping pace with population growth.

A simple way to improve representation while keeping costs and headcount under control would be to expand Parliament by 50%, but go back to three electorate staff per parliamentarian. This would be headcount neutral, but dramatically reduce the size of electorates and increase the number of parliamentarians.

Introduction

The Albanese Government is seriously considering expanding the Parliament, as the Hawke, Whitlam and Chifley Labor Governments did before it. Such an increase is long overdue, with the Australian population having grown around 11 million since Parliament was last expanded in 1984.

Due to Constitutional limitations, the way to expand the Parliament is to increase the number of senators per state (there are currently 12 per state), and the size of the House of Representatives will increase by roughly double that amount.¹

The smallest increase is +2 senators per state (12 total), and therefore around 25 new MPs. This is reportedly the increase the Albanese Government is considering,² and in line with a recommendation from former Labor MP Bob McMullan.³

Larger increases are +4 senators per state (around 50 new MPs) and +6 senators per state (around 75 MPs).

The Australia Institute has recommended increasing the number of MPs by about 50%. This could be achieved with an additional six senators per state, which would mean 108 senators and roughly 216 MPs across the six states. Territory MPs and senators are handled separately, by legislation, but would bring the total to about 225 MPs.⁴

When the Australia Institute made this recommendation in 2020,⁵ a 50% increase would have restored representation to close to what it was in 1984 after parliament last expanded. With population growth over the last six years, a 50% increase would now instead bring representation to where it was in the early 2000s.

¹ For more details, see Browne (2026) *Why Australia needs more politicians (yes, you read that correctly)*, <https://thepoint.com.au/explainers/260212-why-australia-needs-more-politicians-yes-you-read-that-correctly>

² Sakkal (2026) *Labor's plan for dozens more MPs could bring back Frydenberg*, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/labor-s-plan-for-dozens-more-mps-could-bring-back-frydenberg-20260223-p5o4ls.html>

³ McMullan (2025) *Could the Teals win Senate seats in an expanded parliament?*, <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2025/09/could-the-teals-win-senate-seats-in-an-expanded-parliament/>

⁴ Browne (2020) *Comes with the territory: ensuring fair political representation for Northern Territorians - and all Australians*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/comes-with-the-territory-ensuring-fair-political-representation-for-northern-territorians-and-all-australians/>

⁵ Having made a similar recommendation in 2018.

The most ambitious proposal for an increase in the size of Parliament comes from the right-wing Institute of Public Affairs. As part of its “Reinvigorating Democracy Project”, the IPA published academic William Coleman’s call for a 66% increase in the size of the House of Representatives: increasing from 150 to 250 members. This would restore representation to about what it was after the 1984 reforms.

As Coleman says,

A seat is ‘meaningful’ to the extent it constitutes a specific ‘voice’; a certain note in the musical scale of politics; a particular tile in the political mosaic. Large electorates tend to be more conglomerate and heterogenous; their voters make for a ‘cacophony’, or ‘noise’. Thus an expansion in seats will permit a more meaningful representation of electors.⁶

This year, veteran political editor James Campbell argued for an expansion of Parliament in the *Herald Sun*, based on three main arguments: fairness (some electorates are double the population of others), “consumer” arguments (MPs are too stretched to give good constituent assistance) and to deepen the talent pool.

He says:

From time to time watching TV, you have probably idly wondered how it is that some obvious numpty has managed to survive on the frontbench when it has been clear for years, sometimes decades, that they just are not up to it.

Dear reader, the size of the parliament is almost certainly the real explanation.⁷

Like Coleman, Campbell lands on an extra 100 MPs, which would bring the total to about 250 – still “almost 100 short of the 343 in the Canadian parliament.”

This paper makes the case for an expanded Parliament, and presents a way to keep the expanded Parliament headcount neutral – in other words, how Australia can get more politicians without necessarily having more people working in politics overall.

Terminology

In this paper, “MP” is used as shorthand for a member of the House of Representatives only. “Parliamentarian” is used for MPs and senators together.

⁶ Coleman (2025) *Twelve ideas for reinvigorating Australian democracy*, p 10, <https://ipa.org.au/research/twelve-ideas-for-reinvigorating-australian-democracy>

⁷ Campbell (2026) *You don’t want to hear this, but we need 100 more polties*, <https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/james-campbell-the-unpopular-but-necessary-case-for-giving-australia-more-federal-politicians/news-story/e8c729a5be7969857896d36887718f93>

Large electorates make local members harder to access

In Australia's representative democracy, parliamentarians are accountable to their electorates, both through elections and by being answerable and accessible to their constituents between elections.

Federal parliamentarians are spread more thinly than ever before.

AUSTRALIANS ARE LOSING TOUCH WITH THEIR MP

The Australia Institute has asked three times about Australians' relationship with their local MP: in 2017, 2022 and now in March 2026.

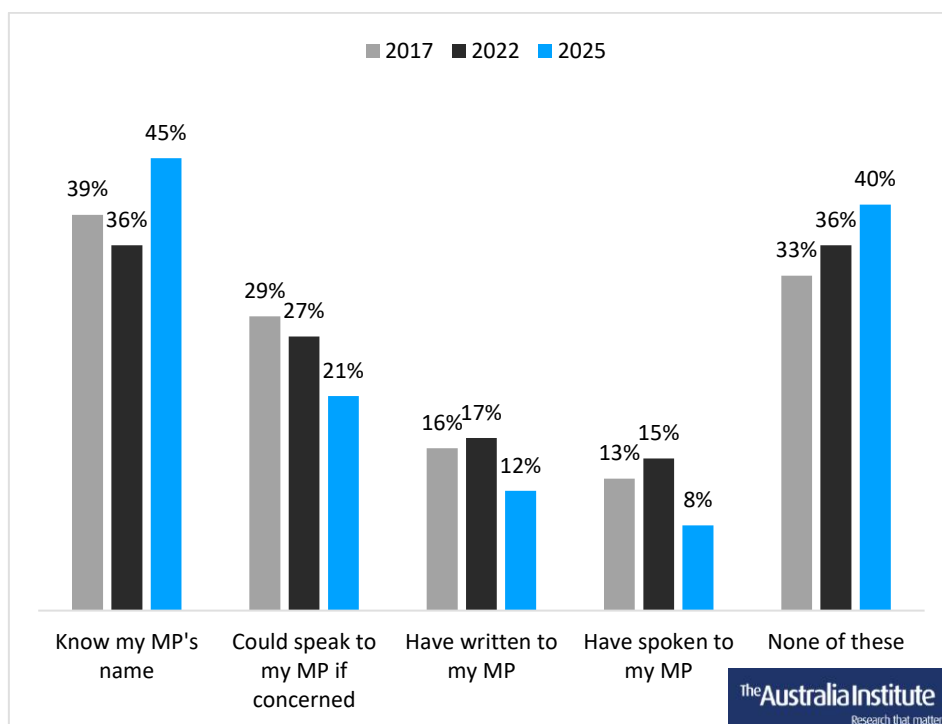
The results show a decline in access to and confidence approaching one's local MP.

- Only 21% of Australians feel confident they would be able to speak with my local MP if they had a concern about a current political issue, down from 29% in 2017.
- Only 12% of Australians have written to their local MP, down from 16% in 2017.
- Only 8% of Australians have spoken to their local MP, down from 13% in 2017.
- More Australians can name their local MP (45%), up from 39% in 2017.

These results suggest that local members are stretched thin, seen as unapproachable and hard to access. Between the 2016 and 2025 federal elections, the number of voters per local member increased from 104,000 to 121,000.

Constituents could be expected to take a while to get to know their local member, especially if there was a change in representation. However, the results for 2026 (polled about 10 months after the 2025 election) are much worse than for 2017 (polled nine to 10 months after the 2016 election). The 2022 poll was held less than two months after the 2022 election, but the results are better on most measures than the 2025 results.

Figure 3: Relationship with local MP



Source: Australia Institute polling (see appendix)

The polling research also shows that few Australians have high trust in Parliament (10% versus 59% low trust), although it is worth noting that greater numbers – though not a majority – are happy with their local MP (41% happy versus 33% unhappy, with 26% undecided).

LESS REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

In the 40 years since Australia last expanded the parliament, the population increased by 11 million – from under 16 million to about 28 million – without Australians getting any more MPs or senators to represent them.

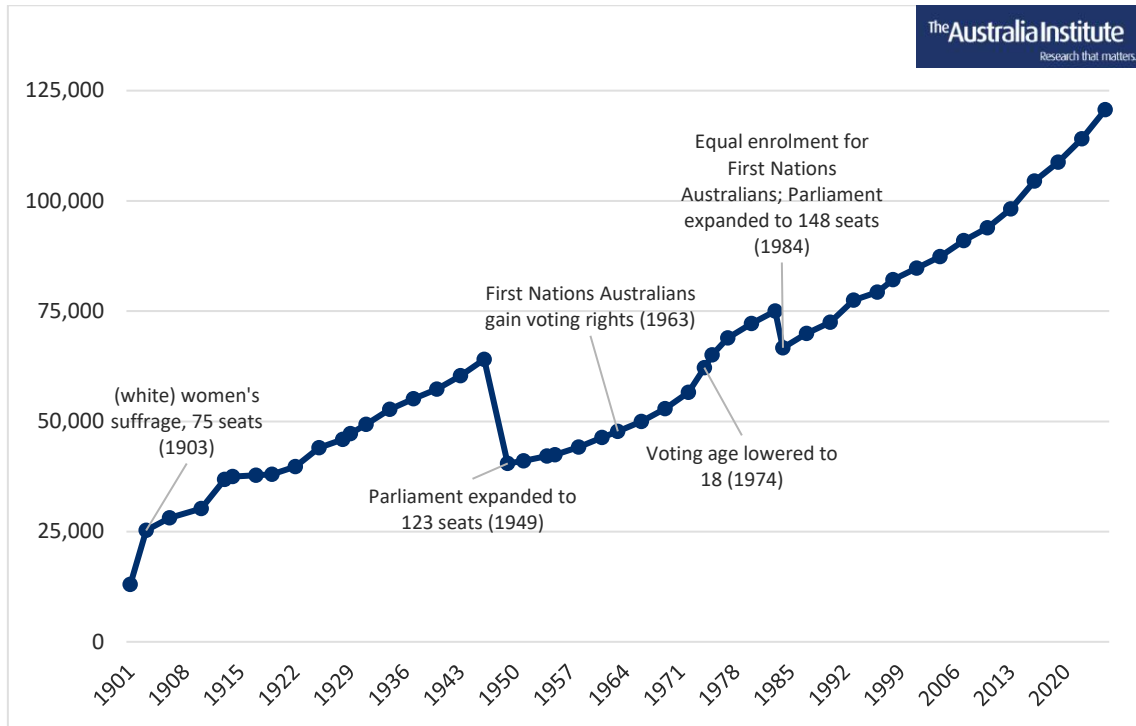
After the 2025 election, each of Australia's 150 members of Parliament must split their attention between more constituents than ever before. There are now 120,892 voters per MP on average, over 6,000 more than in 2022.

By contrast, in 1903 (the first election where most women could vote), there were just 25,000 voters and 51,000 Australians per MP. There would be 547 MPs today, instead of 150, if Australia had maintained its Federation ratio of 51,000 Australians per MP.

In the intervening 122 years, the federal parliament has significantly expanded twice: from 74 to 121 seats in 1949, and from 125 to 148 in 1984. Both times, the number of people per seat sat at a record high: 64,000 and 75,000 respectively.

Neither of these changes returned the ratio of parliamentarians to population to original Federation levels. After the increase in representation in 1949, levels of representation returned to pre-1949 reform levels after two decades. After the smaller increase in 1984, levels returned to pre-1984 reform levels after just one decade.

Figure 4: Average number of voters in each House of Representatives seat



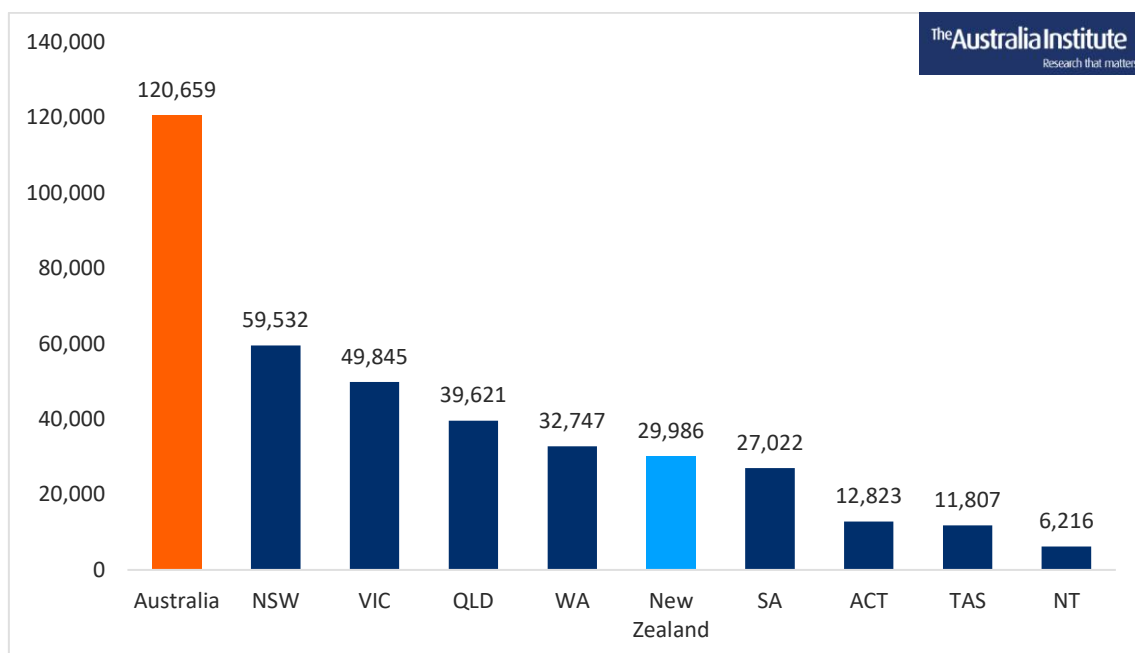
Source: Australia Institute analysis of AEC enrolment data; Predavec (2025) *Australia has a politician problem: not too many, but too few*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australia-has-a-politician-problem-not-too-many-but-too-few/>

Voting rights have also expanded: women’s suffrage came in 1903 (though not for all women), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voting rights took until 1963, and the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 in 1974.

But while there are nine times as many registered voters today as in 1903, the number of electorates has only doubled.

Australia also has far fewer representatives per person on a federal level than in states and territories. Each member of NSW’s Legislative Assembly represents just under 60,000 voters, half as many as a federal MP. Each Northern Territory MLA represents just 6,000 people. Tasmania has recently expanded its parliament, reducing the number of voters per seat from almost 16,000 to under 12,000.

Figure 5: Average number of voters in each lower house seat



Source: Australia Institute analysis of AEC enrolment data, Predavec (2025) *Australia has a politician problem: not too many, but too few*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australia-has-a-politician-problem-not-too-many-but-too-few/>

Australians think state and territory governments better reflect the interests and needs of the community than the Commonwealth.⁸ Perhaps part of the reason for this is that they have far more local representation at that level of government, allowing MPs to be more responsive to their concerns.

Australia's MP-voter ratio is also low by international standards. Canada, the UK, France and Germany all have more representation than Australia in their national parliaments. New Zealand has one MP for every 30,000 voters: four times Australia's ratio.⁹

⁸ Centre for Policy Development (2025) *2025 Purpose of government pulse*, p. 18, <https://cpd.org.au/work/2025-purpose-of-government-pulse/>

⁹ Predavec (2025) *Australia has a politician problem: not too many, but too few*; Calculated by dividing number of enrolled voters by number of seats in the lower house (or only house in the case of unicameral parliaments) at the most recent election. For New Zealand in 2023, see Electoral Commission New Zealand (2023) *2023 General Election: Voter turnout statistics*, <https://elections.nz/democracy-in-nz/historical-events/2023-general-election/voter-turnout-statistics/>

LARGER PARLIAMENTS ENCOURAGE FREE THOUGHT

Australia has remarkably high levels of party discipline, meaning that parliamentarians are reluctant to vote against – or even speak out against – their party leadership or break from the majority position.

One reason for this reluctance is that there is a single, fairly reliable path for promotion: to become a minister or shadow minister. Most parliamentarians either are on the front bench or are working towards that role. The relatively few parliamentarians who rock the boat risk being passed over for promotion.

In much larger parliaments, like the United States (535 parliamentarians) or the United Kingdom (650 MPs, not to mention the around 840 in the House of Lords), the party leadership has much less control – in part because parliamentarians know that the more coveted positions are out of reach for most of them. Party whips must work much harder, and face more frequent and larger rebellions, in part because there are proportionately fewer “carrots” for party leaders to distribute.

How to expand the Parliament

Dramatic changes to the nature of federal representation are possible only with a constitutional referendum (see the appendix). Without a referendum, reform options are limited to changing the number of senators for *all* states (with a flow-on effect for the number of members of the House of Representatives) or changing the number of senators allocated to each territory.

IMPLEMENTATION

Two constitutional rules dictate how the number of parliamentarians can be increased:

1. The number of senators per state must be equal.
2. The number of state MPs in the House of Representatives will be (roughly) double the number of state senators in the Senate (called “the nexus”).¹⁰

Currently, there are six states electing 12 senators each, for a total of 72 state senators. That provides 144 state MPs (in the House of Representatives). There are currently 145 due to rounding.

To increase the number of MPs, the government must therefore increase the number of senators. And since only half the senators are elected at any given time, the number of senators per state will likely only be increased by an even number, for example plus 2 (to 14), plus 4 (to 16), plus 6 (to 18) or plus 8 (to 20).

With six states, that means the number of senators would increase by 12, 24, 36 or 48, and therefore the number of MPs would increase by (roughly) 24, 48, 72 or 96, and the overall number of parliamentarians by (roughly) 36, 72, 108 or 144.

¹⁰ For details, see Gorman and Melleuish (2018) *The nexus clause: A peculiarly Australian obstacle*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23311983.2018.1517591>

Table 1: Options for an increase in the size of Parliament

	Senators per state	At half-Senate election	Total senators for the states	At half-Senate election	MPs for the states
Current	12	6	72	36	~144
+2 sen'rs/state	14	7	84	42	~168
+4 sen'rs/state	16	8	96	48	~192
+6 sen'rs/state	18	9	108	54	~216
+8 sen'rs/state	20	10	120	60	~240

Note: Only half of all state senators are up for election at any given time – this figure is given in the next column along.

SIZE OF THE INCREASE

The Australia Institute has previously proposed expanding the lower house by 50% to 225 seats.¹¹ This would bring Australia’s representation more in line with comparable democracies, as well as the states and territories.

An increase in the number of parliamentarians by about half (from around 150 to around 223 MPs, and from 76 senators to around 130) would lead to much better representation for Australians:

- There would be around 115,000 Australians per MP, instead of around 170,000.
- There would be around 74,000 voters per electorate, down from 110,000. This makes it more likely that local issues can be successfully campaigned on, and allows for more diversity in representatives.
- Every federal seat would be the same size, instead of Tasmanian electorates being significantly smaller than other electorates. For the first time in Australian history, the House of Representatives would be elected on the principle of “one vote, one value”.
- The crossbench would likely be larger, but also more diverse – avoiding the concentration of power in just a small number of independent or minor party MPs.

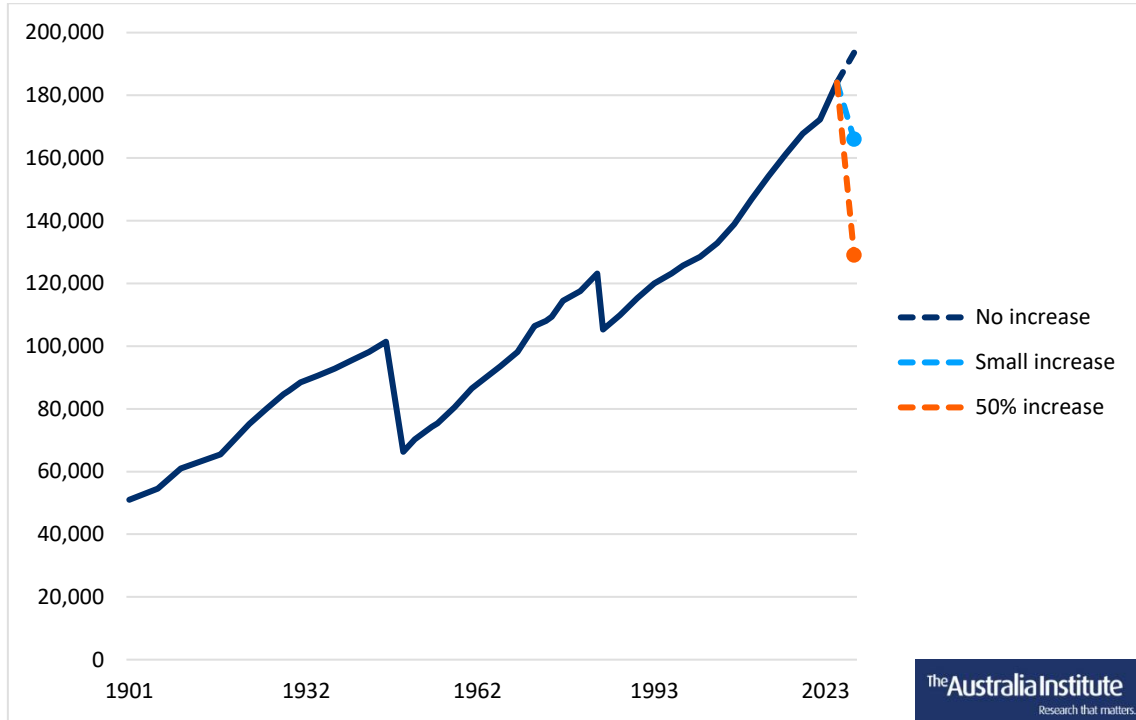
This proposal is the Australian equivalent of the “Wyoming Rule”, which would set the quotient for a US House of Representatives seat at the population of the state with the smallest population.¹²

¹¹ Browne (2018) *It’s time ... for more politicians*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/its-time-for-more-politicians/>; (2020) *Comes with the territory: ensuring fair political representation for Northern Territorians - and all Australians*

¹² Taylor (2010) *Representation in the House: The Wyoming Rule*, <https://www.outsidethebeltway.com/representation-in-the-house-the-wyoming-rule/>

As shown in Figure 6, increasing the number of parliamentarians by 50 percent would only return Australian representation to what it was in the early 2000s. For most of Australian history, MPs represented fewer Australians than they would under either proposed increase in the size of Parliament.

Figure 6: Australians per MP, including possible increases (1901 to 2028)



Source: Australia Institute analysis of AEC enrolment and Census data; Predavec (2025)
Australia has a politician problem: not too many, but too few,
<https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australia-has-a-politician-problem-not-too-many-but-too-few/>

It was always expected that the number of parliamentarians would grow to allow for population growth. The House of Representatives has room for 240 MPs and the Senate for 120 senators.¹³ Adjustments could presumably be made to fit some additional senators.

¹³ Parliamentary Education Office (n.d.) *Australia's Parliament House*, <https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/parliament-house/australias-parliament-house/>

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO AN INCREASE

While expanding the size of Parliament is not popular, it makes little difference whether the increase is small (an additional 25 local members) or medium (an additional 50 local members).

In the Australia Institute's March 2026 polling research, respondents were randomly split into two equal-sized cohorts. Both were told "There has been no increase in the size of the federal Parliament since 1984."

One cohort was asked,

Would you support or oppose increasing the number of MPs by about 25 across Australia (to 175 total) and the number of senators from 12 per state to 14 per state?

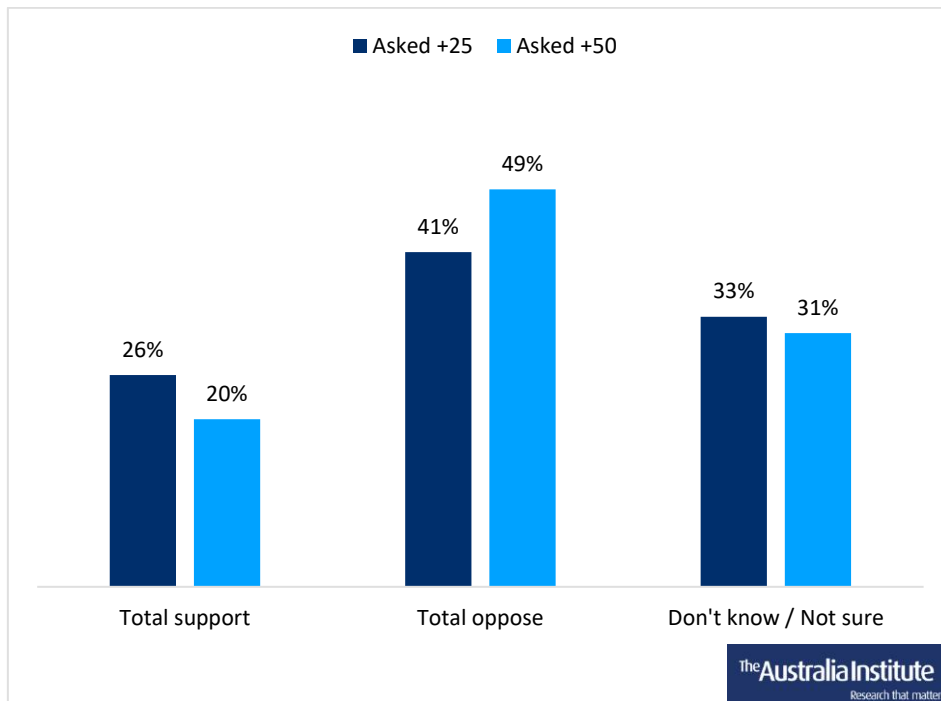
The other was asked,

Would you support or oppose increasing the number of MPs by about 50 across Australia (to 200 total) and the number of senators from 12 per state to 16 per state?

Although one increase was double the size of the other, it made only a small difference to attitudes:

- Total support was one in four (26%) for an additional 25 MPs and one in five (20%) for an additional 50 MPs.
- Total opposition went from two in five (41%) to half (49%).
- There was only a small change among those strongly opposed to an increase: 22% were strongly opposed to an additional 25 MPs and 24% were strongly opposed to an additional 50 MPs.

Figure 7: Support for increasing the size of Parliament by 25 or 50 MPs



Source: Australia Institute polling (see appendix)

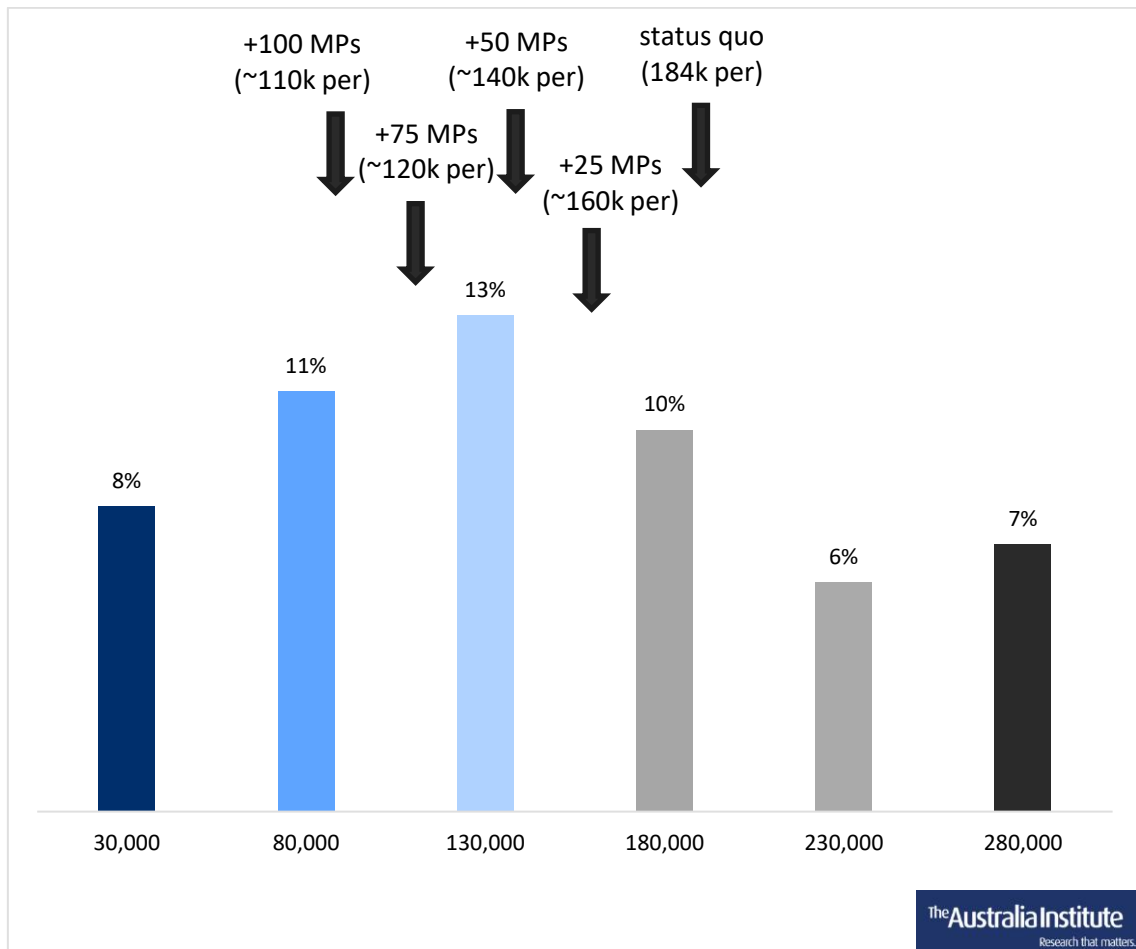
Respondents were then asked a related question: “Which do you think is the ideal number of people to be represented by one local member?” They were given five options between 30,000 and 280,000.

The single most popular response was “Don’t know / Not sure” (45%).

Among those with an opinion, most respondents chose a number that was lower than the status quo – in other words, that would require an expanded Parliament.

- 32% of respondents said a lower ratio, between 30,000 and 130,000 residents, was ideal.
- Only 10% said that the current ratio, 180,000 residents per MP, was ideal.
- Only 13% of respondents said that a higher ratio, 230,000 or 280,000 residents per MP, was ideal.

Figure 8: Ideal residents per local member, and implications for size of Parliament



Source: Australia Institute polling (see appendix)

While a minority of Australians support an expanded Parliament in principle, most Australians with an opinion say the current number of residents per MP is higher than the ideal number.

IMPLICATIONS

If the number of parliamentarians were increased by about half, there would be a number of implications for the electoral system.

In the House of Representatives:

- Six of eight states and territories, with the exceptions of Tasmania and the Northern Territory, would have more MPs.
- Malapportionment, the difference in population between the largest and smallest seats, would be reduced.

Table 2: House of Representatives seats by state and territory

	Status quo	50% increase
NSW	46	69
Vic	38	57
Qld	30	46
SA	10	15
WA	16	25
Tas	5	5
NT	2	2
ACT	3	4
Total	150	223

Source: Author's calculations

The change also has implications for the Senate:

States would elect an odd number of senators each election (9). In general, electing odd numbers makes it easier for one party to win an overall majority of seats,¹⁴ although the more seats there are, the less often preferences are distributed and the more likely it is that minor parties and independents are elected.

Senators would be elected on a 10% quota. This would still be higher than the 8.3% quota for the SA Legislative Council and significantly higher than the 4.5% quota for the NSW Legislative Council and 2.6% quota for the WA Legislative Council, but lower than the current 14% quota for the Australian Senate.

¹⁴ See for example Green (2016) *On Senate Electoral Reform and Blocking Majorities*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-14/on-senate-electoral-reform-and-blocking-majorities/9388754>; Stone (2005) *Constitutional Change and Bicameralism in Australia: the Perversity of 'Reform,'* <https://www.aspg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/06-Stone-conf-paper.pdf>

WHO BENEFITS?

Election analysts do not find any advantage to the Labor Government from an increase in the number of parliamentarians. If anything, the increase would reduce Labor's relative strength very slightly.¹⁵

TERRITORY SENATORS

Because they are provided for separately,¹⁶ the number of territory senators could be increased without an increase in the number of state senators, or vice versa. The number of territory MPs in the House of Representatives would increase proportionately as the number of MPs overall increases, without separate action being required.

Chief Minister of the ACT Andrew Barr has recommended increasing the ACT's senators from two to four. The ACT's two senators represented 454,499 people while Tasmania's 12 senators represent 557,571 people.¹⁷ In other words, each ACT senator represents 227,000 people while each Tasmanian senator represents 46,000 people.

If the ACT received senators in proportion to its population relative to Tasmania's, it would have 10 senators.

When polled in 2021, most Australians supported an increase in the number of senators representing the NT and ACT from two each to four each.¹⁸

An additional two senators for the ACT would also ensure that both major parties are represented. At the moment, there is no federal parliamentarian representing the 52,000 Canberrans (18%) who voted for the Liberal Party.

¹⁵ Bonham (2025) *Yes federal parliament should be expanded and no it isn't a partisan fix*, <https://kevinbonham.blogspot.com/2025/10/yes-federal-parliament-should-be.html>; Raue (2025) *What might an expanded parliament map look like?* <https://www.tallyroom.com.au/63684>

¹⁶ There is a provision for territories to increase their Senate seats, but it is not feasible given the current populations. The number of senators per state would have to more than double before the ACT became entitled to a third senator. *Electoral Act 1918* (Cth), sec.40(2), <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2019C00103/>

¹⁷ Karp and Butler (2022) *Andrew Barr says doubling ACT representation in Senate may be 'appropriate' in light of census*, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jun/29/andrew-barr-says-doubling-act-representation-in-senate-may-be-appropriate-in-light-of-census>; Neale (2022) *Territory rights are Pocock's priority as census spurs call for more ACT senators*, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7800551/territory-rights-are-pococks-priority-as-census-spurs-call-for-more-act-senators/>

¹⁸ The Australia Institute (2021) *Polling – Territory rights*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/polling-territory-rights/>

The number of territory senators should be increased to at least 4 even if there is no change in the overall size of Parliament.

If there *is* an increase in the overall size of Parliament, a further increase in territory senators would be appropriate.

A simple and responsive rule would be to set the territory allocation at half as many senators as are received by each state. Since all territory senators are elected at once, there is no problem with there being an odd number per territory (for example, if there are 18 senators per state there could be 9 for the ACT and 9 for the Northern Territory).

To keep results more proportional, it would be better for territory senators to be elected all at once for three-year terms instead of having the staggered six-year terms of senators from the states.

Pause on politicians has not stopped costs increasing

As Australian electorates get larger in population, and as regional and rural electorates get physically larger as the population urbanises, the cost to service each electorate increases.

Previous estimates of the cost of increasing the number of politicians have assumed that costs would multiply.

In June 2024, the Parliamentary Budget Office estimated for Liberal MP James Stevens the cost of increasing the size of Parliament by 40 (16 new senators, 24 new members of the House of Representatives). In the first full year, this would cost \$75 million, or a little under \$2 million per parliamentarian – including staff, offices and entitlements.¹⁹

However, this assumes that the cost of supplying an MP remains the same. The growth in entitlements in general and electorate staff in particular suggests that much of the increase in per-parliamentarian costs is a consequence of larger electorates.

Australia Institute research in 2025 found that entitlements had grown to \$3.8 million for senators and \$5.3 million for MPs per election cycle, \$600,000 higher than when the Australia Institute last examined the issue in 2023.²⁰

With local members (MPs) spread more thinly, it is understandable that more taxpayer resources are needed – to provide offices and electorate staff to provide services to more constituents, to cover more travel and to cover personal staff for legislative and policy work. However, the effect is a dilution of democratic representation as the actual decision-maker, the MP, becomes less accessible and more remote.

Most of the costs associated with a parliamentarian are electorate-based costs, not the parliamentarians' own salary or personal travel or accommodation expenses:

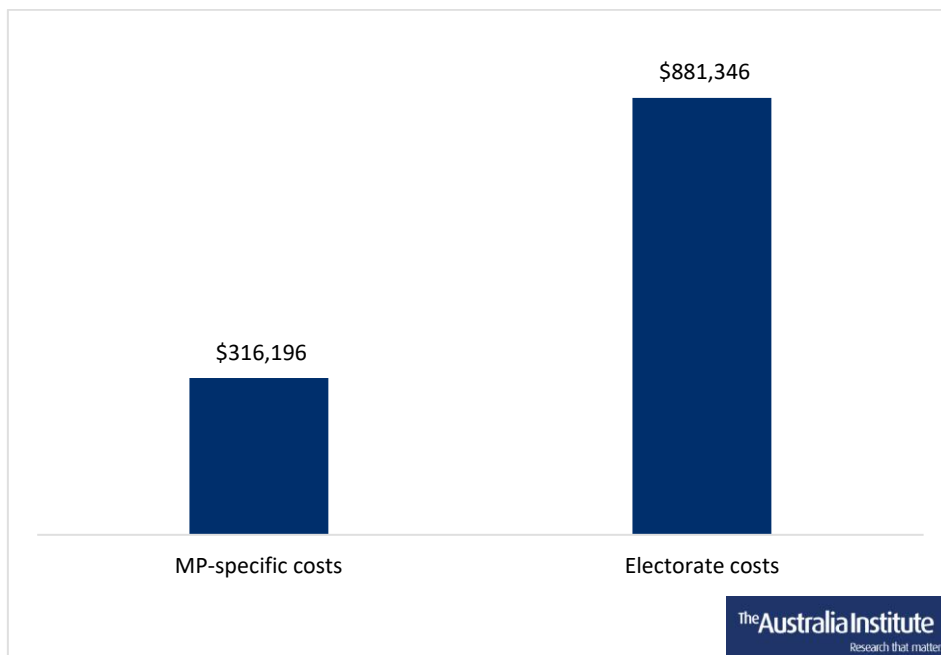
¹⁹ Parliamentary Budget Office (2024) *Increasing the size of Federal Parliament*, <https://www.pbo.gov.au/publications-and-data/publications/costings/increasing-size-federal-parliament>

²⁰ Predavec and Browne (2025) *Advantages of incumbency*, p 7, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/advantages-of-incumbency-2/>

Vehicle allowance, travel allowance, the “nominated traveller” (a staffer funded to travel with the MP) and the MP’s own salary account for \$316,196 of the \$1.2 million in minimum annual entitlements.

The remaining \$881,346 consist of office expenses, electorate allowances, electorate staff and relief staffing, expenses that could be shared with new MPs since there is no change in the number of residents or voters, just more MPs to represent them.

Figure 9: Advantages of incumbency – MP-specific versus electorate costs



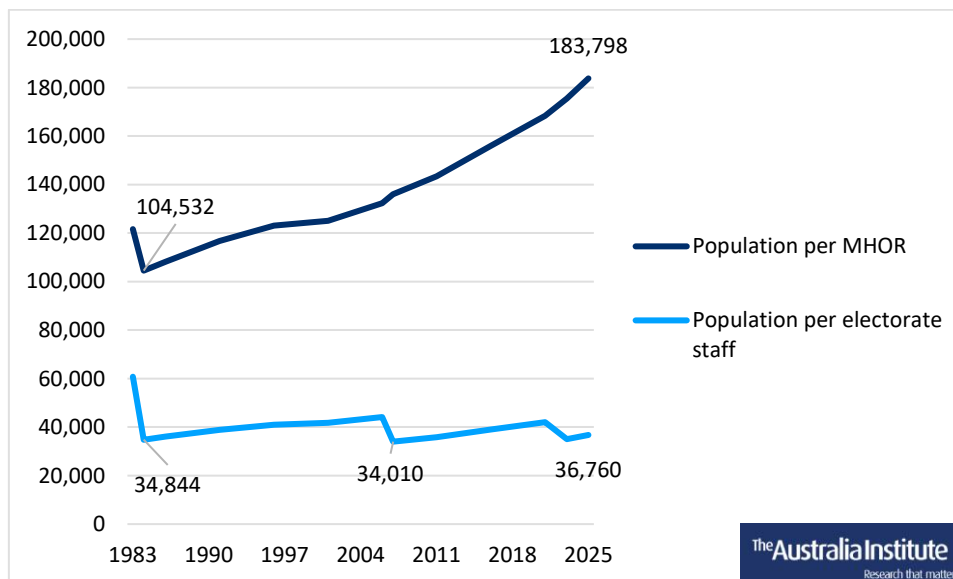
Source: Predavec and Browne (2025) *Advantages of incumbency*,
<https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/advantages-of-incumbency-2/>

Electorate staffer numbers have increased with population

While the number of local members (members of the House of Representatives) has been frozen for over forty years, the number of electorate staff has grown dramatically over that time: from two staff per MP in 1983 to three in 1984, four in 2007 and five in 2023.²¹

Each increase in electorate staff has brought the population per electorate back to 35–36,000 per staffer. The effect, as shown in Figure 10, is that “population per electorate staffer” has remained roughly level even as the local members themselves become harder to access or displace.

Figure 10: Population per member of the House of Representatives and electorate staffer



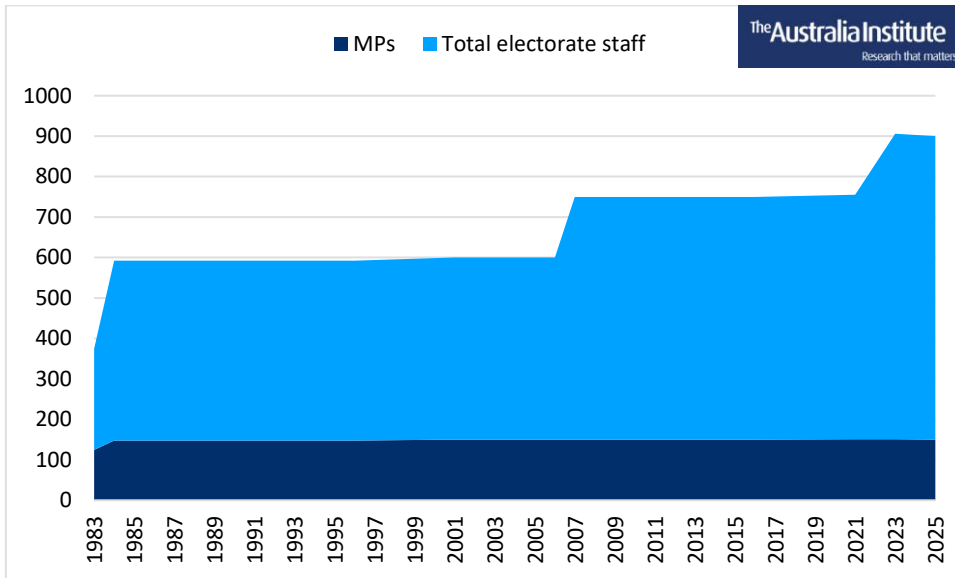
Sources: Australian censuses (population numbers smoothed between census years); PWSS (2025) *The independent review of resourcing in parliamentary offices*, pp 58–59, <https://www.pwss.gov.au/the-independent-review-of-resourcing-in-parliamentarian-offices>

If the number of MPs were increased by 50%, as the Australia Institute has recommended, but the number of electorate staff per MP were cut from five to three, there would be no net change in the total number of MPs plus electorate staff.

²¹ PWSS (2025) *The independent review of resourcing in parliamentary offices*, pp 58–59, <https://www.pwss.gov.au/the-independent-review-of-resourcing-in-parliamentarian-offices>

As Figure 11 shows, there are currently 900 members of the House of Representatives (MHORs) and electoral staff; having about 225 MHORs (a 50% increase from current level) and three staff members per MP would keep the total at 900.

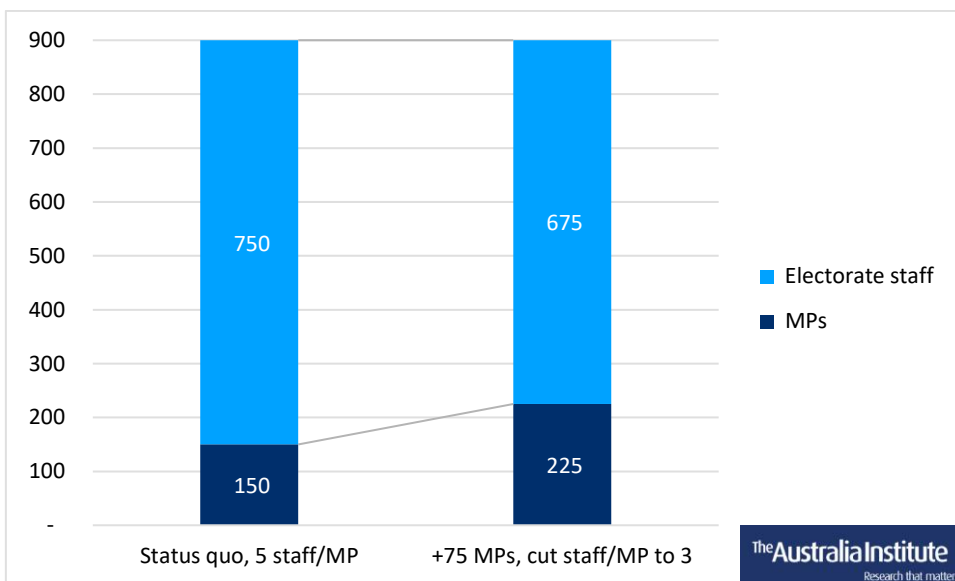
Figure 11: Total number of MHORs and electorate staff



Sources: Australian censuses (figures normalised between census years); PWSS (2025) *The independent review of resourcing in parliamentary offices*, pp 58–59

Of course, the cost of an additional MP is greater than the cost of hiring a single additional electorate staffer, but the total cost of an increase in the number of MPs does not need to be as large as it first appears.

Figure 12: Additional MPs, compensated for by reduction in staff



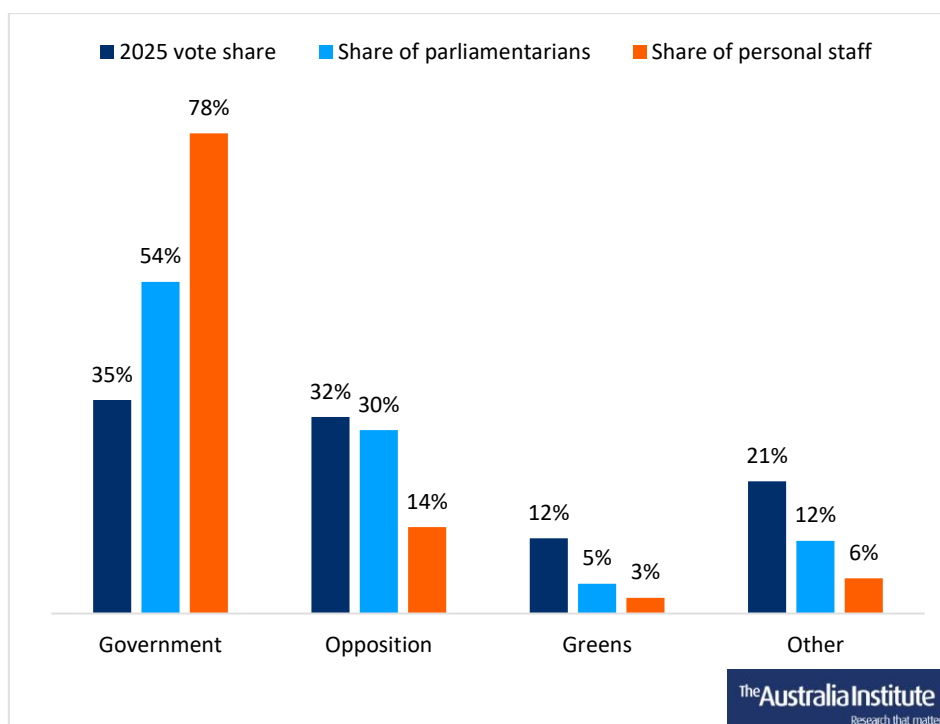
Government personal staff numbers have grown

Personal staff are the political staffers assigned to politicians and former politicians based on their role, rather than by virtue of being a senator or MP.

As of 2025, there are 686 personal staff allocated to parliamentary and other offices.²² Excluding those assigned to parliamentary officers (like the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate), party whips (who help administer and manage their parties) and former prime ministers, there are 629 personal staff working for parliamentarians.

Over three-quarters of personal staff working for parliamentarians, or 489, work for the Government (78%), while only 14%, or 88, work for the Opposition. The crossbench only gets 52 personal staff, including 16 for the Greens, despite independents and minor parties combined receiving more votes than the Liberal–National Coalition at the 2025 election.

Figure 13: Share of votes, parliamentarians and personal staff in 2025



Source: AEC (2025) “2025 Federal Election”, <https://results.aec.gov.au/31496/Website/HouseDefault-31496.htm>; Department of Finance (2025) “Personal Employee Positions as at 1 November 2025”

²² Department of Finance (2025) “Personal Employee Positions as at 1 November 2025”, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/fpa/2025-26_Supplementary_Budget_estimates/finance

As shown in Figure 13 above, the Government has 78% of all personal staff, while the Opposition, Greens and other crossbenchers have disproportionately low allocations compared to both their shares of the vote and their number of MPs. Part of this comes from the naturally higher staffing needs of ministers, whose offices have a greater workload to manage. But the unbalanced nature of personal staffing is also due to how their allocation is divided up.

Unlike electorate staff, personal staff allocations are decided by the prime minister.²³ This gives the prime minister of the day the power to punish and reward politicians. The allocation is arbitrary. For example, when the Greens won more seats, Albanese did not give them more personal staff.²⁴ But when the Liberal–National Coalition lost seats, Albanese cut their personal staff.²⁵

One of the Coalition’s complaints about their staff being cut was that it violated a precedent that the Opposition received 21% or more of the Government’s personal staff allocation (they now have 18%).²⁶ The arbitrary nature of personal staffing also gives significant leverage to the Government of the day, enabling it to use the threat of staffing cuts (or promise of staffing increases, as was the case with recent freedom of information changes²⁷) to influence crossbenchers and the Opposition.

As shown in Figure 14, overall personal staff numbers have increased from a low of 456 under the Rudd Government to 686 in the present day under the Albanese Government. Of the additional 230 staff allocated, over two thirds (167) have gone to government MPs.

The Albanese Government increased overall numbers of personal staff while cutting allocations to crossbench and Opposition MPs (in 2022²⁸ and 2025²⁹ respectively).

²³ Browne (2025) “EXPLAINER: What are personal staff, and why do they have Clive Palmer contemplating another political campaign?”, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/explainer-what-are-personal-staff-and-why-do-they-have-clive-palmer-contemplating-another-political-campaign/>

²⁴ Curtis (2022) “‘Recent phenomenon’: Albanese doubles down on cuts to crossbench staff numbers”, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/recent-phenomenon-albanese-doubles-down-on-cuts-to-crossbench-staff-numbers-20220627-p5awtr.html>

²⁵ Massola (2025) “‘Arrogant’ Albanese slashes staff for Coalition MPs”, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/arrogant-albanese-slashes-staffing-for-coalition-mps-20250624-p5m9sg.html>

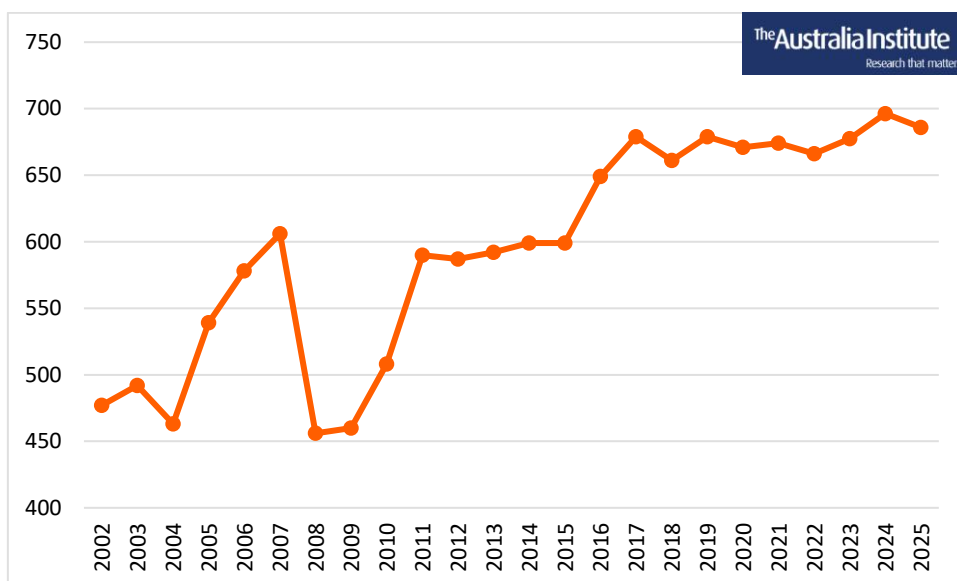
²⁶ Massola (2025) “‘Arrogant’ Albanese slashes staff for Coalition MPs”

²⁷ Newling (2026) *Labor offered Coalition more staff to support dead FOI bill, says Bragg*, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/good-riddance-to-that-rubbish-labor-abandons-friendless-foi-reforms-20260305-p5o7nz.html>

²⁸ Curtis (2022) “‘Recent phenomenon’: Albanese doubles down on cuts to crossbench staff numbers”

²⁹ Massola (2025) “‘Arrogant’ Albanese slashes staff for Coalition MPs”

Figure 14: Personal staff employment 2002–2025



Source: Author compilation of personal staffing information tabled by the Department of Finance in Budget Estimates; PM&C (2022) *Review of the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (Cth)*, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/news/members-parliament-staff-act-review>

The number of government staff has fluctuated depending on the prime minister. There were 207 personal staff allocated to government MPs after Hawke became prime minister in 1983³⁰ rising to 468 by the end of the Howard Government.³¹ Kevin Rudd cut the allocation to 334, but it rose again under Julia Gillard and successive Coalition Governments to reach 482 by the end of Scott Morrison’s time in office.

Albanese increased the allocation in both 2024 and 2025. There are now 501 government personal staff, over double the allocation of the first Hawke Government and over 50% higher than under the Rudd Government.

The large growth in government personal staff provides an alternative way to keep headcount and costs down other than reducing electorate staff: to offset an expanded parliament by returning to lower levels of personal staffing for government ministers.

³⁰ Finance and Public Administration References Committee (2003) *Staff employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*, p. 11, https://www.aph.gov.au/~media/wopapub/senate/committee/fapa_ctte/completed_inquiries/2002_04/mops/report/report_pdf.ashx

³¹ Henderson (2009) *Review of Government staffing*, pp. 2-3, https://www.aph.gov.au/~media/Estimates/Live/fapa_ctte/estimates/bud_0910/finance/tables_documents/Review_govt_staffing.ashx

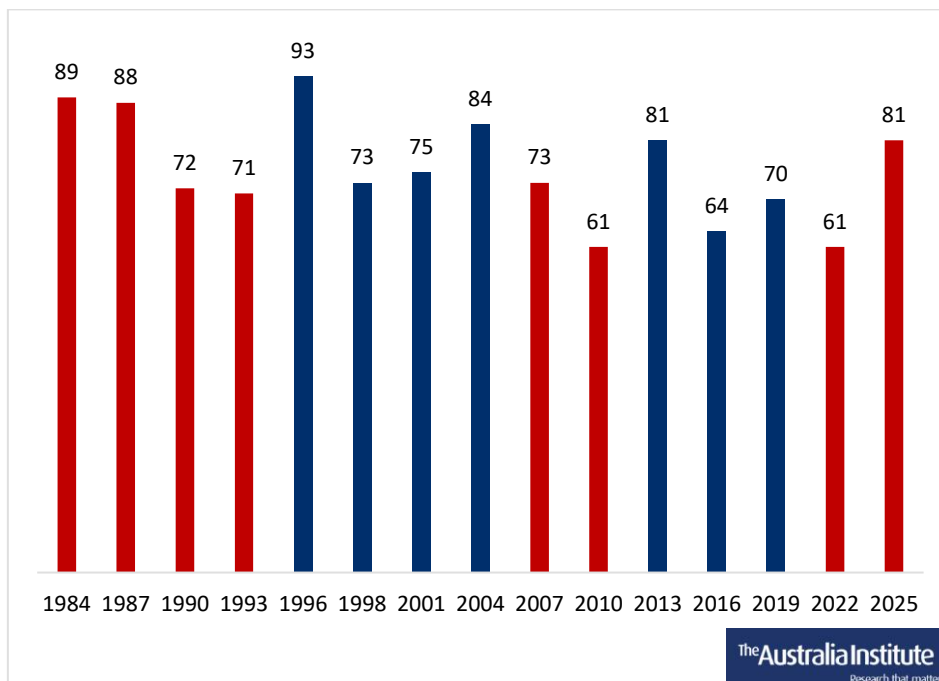
Growing ministry, diminished opposition

Historically, one justification for increasing the size of the Parliament is that it increases the talent pool from which ministers can be drawn. This argument was advanced by Robert Menzies in 1942,³² at which time the size of Parliament had not increased since Federation.

The first Australian government, the Barton Ministry, had around 10 ministers; the second Albanese Ministry has 30, plus 12 assistant ministers.³³ In this time, the size of Parliament has about doubled – but the number of roles to fill is about four times greater. The growth of the committee system also demands talented parliamentarians outside of the ministry and assistant ministers.

The problem is particularly acute when elections are close, as they were in 2016, 2019 and 2022, and for the Labor Party because it has historically had fewer senators than the Coalition.

Figure 15: Government backbenchers



³² Gorman and Melleuish (2018) *The nexus clause: A peculiarly Australian obstacle*

³³ Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (2025) *Current Ministry List*, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/administration/ministry-lists>

Source: Australia Institute calculations from Barber (2017) *Federal election results 1901–2016*, [https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/FederalElectionResults; Ministers of State Act 1952 \(Cth\), sec4](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/FederalElectionResults; Ministers of State Act 1952 (Cth), sec4)

Note: These figures are necessarily simplified, because senators take their seats on a different schedule to House of Representatives MPs. Parliamentary secretaries (now called assistant ministers) were introduced after the 1990 election.³⁴

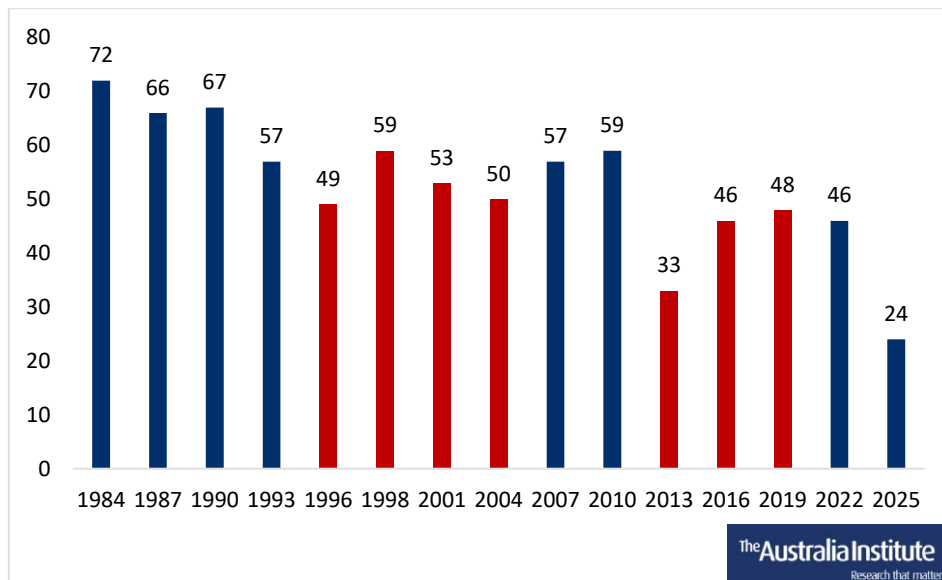
Red results represent Labor governments and blue ones Coalition governments.

As can be seen from the figures above, the 61 government backbenchers following the 2022 election was a historically low result (tied with 2010). The average between 1984 and 2022 was 76 government backbenchers. With the landslide Labor win in 2025, this is not a problem the Albanese Government faces in its second term (with 81 backbenchers).

THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

With its parliamentary numbers at historical lows, the official Opposition has a shallow talent pool from which to draw shadow ministers. This was most acute during the two periods when the National Party quit the Coalition; had the split been permanent there would have been few backbenchers left in the Liberal Party, and by extension almost no competition for shadow ministries.

Figure 16: Shadow backbenchers



³⁴ Nethercote (1999) *Departmental Machinery of Government since 1987*, https://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/rp/rp9899/99rp24

Source: Australia Institute calculations from Parliamentary Handbook (n.d.) “Shadow Ministries”, <https://handbook.aph.gov.au/ministries/shadow-ministries?page=2&pageSize=10>

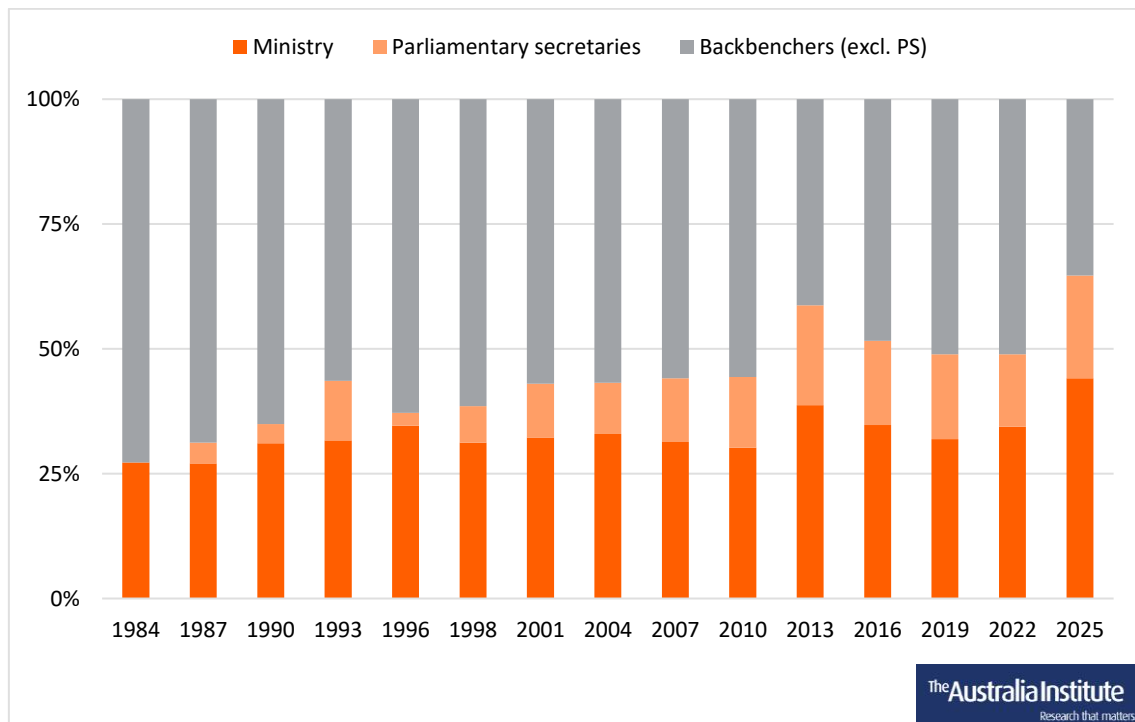
Note: Uses the shadow ministry in place after each election, with the exceptions of Peacock (1989–1990, for 1987), Howard (1995–96, for 1993), Turnbull (2008–09, for 2007), and Taylor (2026–publication, for 2025); Includes parliamentary secretaries from 1987 onwards.

Red results represent Labor oppositions after the election, and blue represents Coalition oppositions.

The Opposition is, at least in theory, the alternative government. It is given special resources and privileges to allow it to present an agenda and vision for the country. If it is to continue in that role, it needs a deeper talent pool from which to draw shadow ministers. An expanded parliament would provide those additional numbers.

As shadow ministries are forced to draw from ever-larger shares of the opposition benches, Opposition backbenchers have become rarer. Not only do reduced talent pools make it more difficult to hold the government of the day to account, but they also force more vulnerable MPs to direct their attention away from their electorates, potentially hurting their electoral prospects.

Figure 17: Share of opposition benches serving in the shadow ministry



Source: Australia Institute calculations from Parliamentary Handbook (n.d.) “Shadow Ministries”

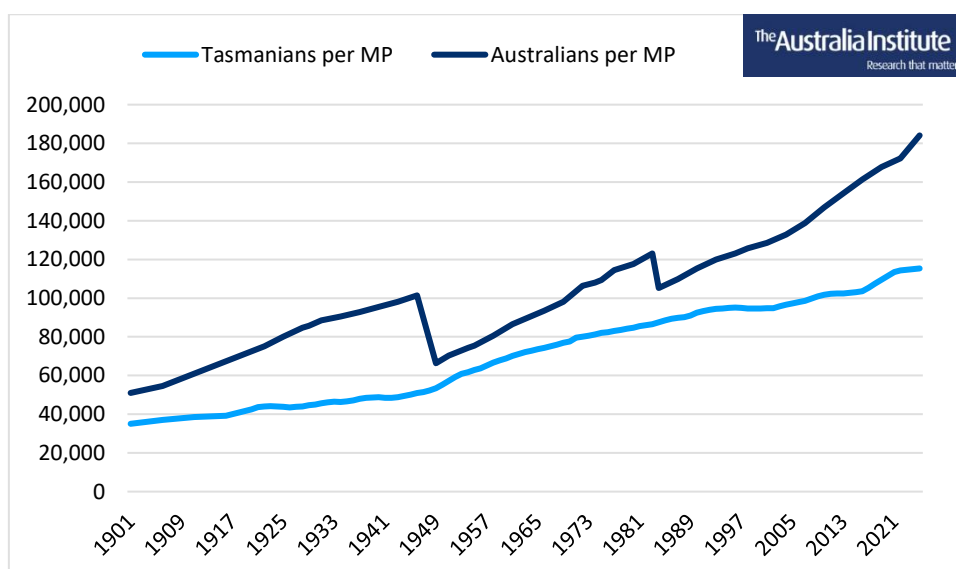
Australia could finally have “one vote, one value”

In general, representation in the House of Representatives is based on the principle of one vote, one value or, at least, the closely related principle of one resident, one value – with seats distributed among states by population and within states by number of electors.³⁵

Under the Constitution, the only specified exception to the distribution of seats by population is that smaller states are permitted a minimum of five seats. Western Australia and Tasmania were the original beneficiaries of this disproportionality; Tasmania remains a beneficiary to this day.

As shown in Figure 18, Tasmania has always had more MPs per capita than its population would suggest, thanks to its guaranteed five seats under the Constitution. These days there are about 0.63 Tasmanians per MP for every Australian per MP. This is a more extreme difference than at Federation, when it was about 0.70. The ratio last dipped below 0.70 in 1983. One year later, the size of the House of Representatives was increased significantly and the ratio rose to 0.83.

Figure 18: Tasmanians per MP



Source: Author’s calculations, from ABS and AEC sources and original research.

³⁵ *Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia*, sec.24; *Electoral Act 1918* (Cth), sec65 <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2019C00103/>

Territory MPs

Territory MPs are distributed based on the same formula as seats for the states, but because of their small overall size, a small change in population can lead to a substantial increase or decrease in representation as the territory's seat entitlement is rounded up or down.

For example, the ACT went from Australia's worst-represented state or territory to its third-best represented when its seat allocation went from two to three.³⁶ The NT is currently the second-best represented state or territory, but if it had gone to just one seat (as was a real risk for the 2022 federal election) it would have been overwhelmingly the worst-represented state or territory: 35,000 people larger than the largest previous electorates that have existed, 90,000 people more than the average 170,000 people per MP, and more than double the 110,000 Tasmanians per MP.³⁷

Residents of smaller polities should at the very least receive the same representation as residents of larger polities. However, because of rounding residents of the ACT and the NT have often received less representation than residents of the states. And they have never received the same level of representation as Tasmanians have, even though the arguments for disproportionate representation for smaller jurisdictions apply even more strongly to the territories than they do to the relatively larger Tasmania.

An expanded parliament reduces the skew created by rounding, which affects the territories and smaller states most.

³⁶ Browne (2018) *It's time ... for more politicians*

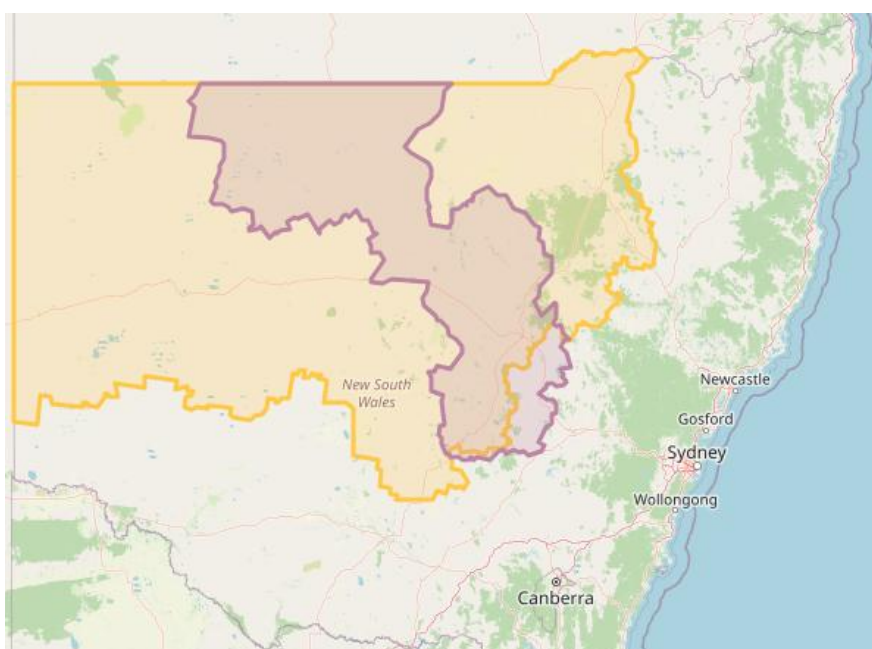
³⁷ Browne (2020) *Comes with the territory: ensuring fair political representation for Northern Territorians - and all Australians*

Physical size of electorates

As Australia's urban population grows faster than its rural and regional population, rural and regional electorates are going to grow geographically larger,³⁸ as they have over the last 40 years since the last expansion of parliament.

The Western NSW electorate of Parkes, for example, has more than doubled in size since its re-creation in 1984.³⁹ Many Australian electorates are larger than entire European countries.

Figure 19: Division of Parkes in 1984–1992 (purple) vs 2024 onwards (yellow)



Source: Parliamentary Handbook (n.d.) *Parkes*,
<https://handbook.aph.gov.au/electorates/New%20South%20Wales/Parkes>

The growing size of regional electorates also presents safety concerns for representatives and their staff. It forces MPs to drive or fly long distances to effectively represent their voters, leading to “far too many near misses” on long drives or flights in small planes.⁴⁰

³⁸ Gorman and Melleuish (2018) *The nexus clause: A peculiarly Australian obstacle*

³⁹ Parliamentary Handbook (2025) *Parkes*,
<https://handbook.aph.gov.au/electorates/New%20South%20Wales/Parkes>

⁴⁰ Wright (2025) *Australian federal MPs: Should the number of politicians be increased?*
<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/past-the-knee-jerk-reaction-there-are-good-reasons-australia-needs-more-politicians-20250903-p5mrzr.html>

Electoralates will get bigger

The Australian Government's Centre for Population projects that "Capital cities are projected to grow nearly twice as fast as rest-of-state areas" over the next 40 years".⁴¹

In the absence of an expanded Parliament, rural and regional electoralates are going to get physically even larger.

⁴¹ Centre for Population (2025) *2025 population statement*,
<https://population.gov.au/publications/statements/2025-population-statement>

Conclusion

An increase in the overall number of MPs would increase the talent pool for ministries, reverse the growth in physical size of rural and regional electorates, and make MPs more responsive to local communities and local issues.

An increase would also give better representation to the territories and bring Australian elections the closest they have ever been to one vote one value.

Opposition to the proposal has often been expressed in terms of the size of parliamentary bureaucracy – that the last thing Australia needs is more politicians. To accommodate this concern, the number of electorate and/or personal staff could be cut in line with the increase in the number of MPs. A 50% increase combined with returning to 3 electorate staff per-MP would, for example, be headcount neutral.

Generally, expansions in the size of Australia’s parliament have only happened every four decades. The Albanese Government has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure Australians are adequately represented by their federal parliamentarians for decades to come.

Any increase in the size of the parliament would be an improvement for Australian democracy, including the minimal increase that the Albanese Government is reportedly considering or the additional 100 MPs recommended by the Institute of Public Affairs and *Herald Sun* editor James Campbell. A 50% increase, an additional 75 or so MPs, represent a transformative democratic reform. It would restore “one vote, one value”, return Australians to the level of representation they enjoyed in the early 2000s and deepen the parliamentary talent pool.

Appendix - Polling

When interpreting this document, please consider the following items:

- For small sample ($n < 50$) – interpret with caution
- All figures have been weighted to be representative of Australians eligible to vote
- The figures are based on a combination of quotas and weights and are representative of all Australians eligible to vote by age, gender, region, education, household income and past vote.
 - Except for questions POLI1A and POLI1B, which have been weighted to age, gender, region and education
- Non-binary gender weighting is equal to its composition within the sample ($n=5$) - not present in the gender breakdown due to low sample size
- All results are based on percentages and have been rounded to 0 decimal places
- Each question will contain banners for:
 - Total level results
 - Gender
 - Age Group
 - State
 - Future voting intention
- For the banner “Future voting intention” all party names have been abbreviated as follows:
 - ALP – Labor
 - COA – Liberal / National Coalition
 - GRE – Greens
 - PHON – Pauline Hanson’s One Nation
 - IND – Independent
 - Other – Other parties
 - UND – Undecided

Methodology:

YouGov conducted a survey of 1502 Australian residents on behalf of The Australia Institute between 12th Mar to 19th Mar 2026, using an online polling methodology. Full details are provided in the methodology statement. The poll is compliant with the Australian Polling Council’s requirements.

Column %	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+
Strongly support	6%	7%	5%	14%	8%	6%	6%	2%
Support	20%	18%	21%	42%	24%	22%	10%	13%
Oppose	19%	19%	18%	4%	12%	21%	24%	22%
Strongly oppose	22%	27%	18%	0%	6%	19%	28%	40%
Don't know / Not sure	33%	29%	38%	40%	50%	32%	32%	23%
NET: Total Support	26%	25%	26%	56%	31%	29%	17%	15%
NET: Total Oppose	41%	46%	36%	4%	19%	40%	52%	62%
Column n	756	336	419	80	111	177	176	212

Table 11. POLI1A. There has been no increase in the size of the federal Parliament since 1984. Would you support or oppose increasing the number of MPs by about 25 across Australia (to 175 total) and the number of senators from 12 per state to 14 per state?

Column %	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	Other	ALP	COA	GRE	PHON	IND	Other	UND
Strongly support	6%	5%	5%	7%	11%	3%	11%	6%	4%	20%	5%	3%	0%	0%
Support	20%	22%	23%	17%	14%	18%	10%	25%	18%	32%	8%	29%	44%	7%
Oppose	19%	19%	18%	19%	12%	22%	27%	19%	27%	7%	21%	15%	16%	13%
Strongly oppose	22%	21%	22%	24%	20%	33%	16%	12%	29%	6%	41%	17%	0%	14%
Don't know / Not sure	33%	33%	32%	33%	43%	24%	36%	38%	22%	35%	25%	36%	40%	66%
NET: Total Support	26%	27%	29%	24%	25%	21%	21%	31%	22%	52%	13%	32%	44%	7%
NET: Total Oppose	41%	40%	39%	43%	32%	55%	43%	31%	57%	13%	62%	32%	16%	27%
Column n	756	224	201	165	61	65	40	218	141	94	181	46	23	53

Table 12. POLI1A. There has been no increase in the size of the federal Parliament since 1984. Would you support or oppose increasing the number of MPs by about 25 across Australia (to 175 total) and the number of senators from 12 per state to 14 per state?

Column %	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+
Strongly support	4%	5%	2%	9%	6%	4%	2%	1%
Support	17%	18%	16%	27%	29%	18%	9%	11%
Oppose	24%	28%	21%	19%	24%	23%	25%	28%
Strongly oppose	24%	26%	22%	0%	9%	23%	31%	39%
Don't know / Not sure	31%	23%	39%	45%	32%	32%	33%	21%
NET: Total Support	20%	23%	18%	36%	35%	22%	11%	12%
NET: Total Oppose	49%	55%	43%	19%	34%	46%	57%	67%
Column n	746	319	423	84	123	161	168	210

Table 13. POLI1B. There has been no increase in the size of the federal Parliament since 1984. Would you support or oppose increasing the number of MPs by about 50 across Australia (to 200 total) and the number of senators from 12 per state to 16 per state?

Column %	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	Other	ALP	COA	GRE	PHON	IND	Other	UND
Strongly support	4%	3%	4%	2%	7%	6%	4%	6%	2%	7%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Support	17%	18%	21%	11%	20%	10%	16%	27%	11%	26%	5%	21%	19%	9%
Oppose	24%	26%	23%	23%	22%	26%	32%	18%	42%	25%	23%	35%	9%	16%
Strongly oppose	24%	23%	21%	33%	16%	30%	17%	12%	24%	12%	48%	25%	35%	15%
Don't know / Not sure	31%	30%	31%	31%	35%	28%	31%	37%	21%	30%	23%	19%	35%	59%
NET: Total Support	20%	21%	25%	13%	27%	16%	20%	34%	13%	33%	6%	21%	22%	10%
NET: Total Oppose	49%	49%	44%	56%	38%	57%	49%	30%	66%	37%	71%	59%	44%	31%
Column n	746	265	184	150	66	45	36	230	140	95	156	39	29	57

Table 14. POLI1B. There has been no increase in the size of the federal Parliament since 1984. Would you support or oppose increasing the number of MPs by about 50 across Australia (to 200 total) and the number of senators from 12 per state to 16 per state?

Column %	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+
30,000	8%	5%	10%	7%	11%	7%	8%	6%
80,000	11%	13%	9%	19%	10%	11%	9%	10%
130,000	13%	16%	11%	17%	16%	11%	13%	12%
180,000	10%	11%	10%	8%	9%	7%	11%	14%
230,000	6%	7%	5%	8%	2%	7%	4%	9%
280,000	7%	10%	4%	1%	2%	7%	11%	9%
Don't know / Not sure	45%	38%	51%	40%	50%	50%	44%	40%
Column n	1502	655	842	164	234	338	344	422

Table 15. POLI2. Across most of Australia, each of the House of Representatives' 150 electorates is required to have roughly the same number of residents. Each electorate is represented by a local member. Which do you think is the ideal number of people to be represented by one local member?

Column %	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	Other	ALP	COA	GRE	PHON	IND	Other	UND
30,000	8%	7%	9%	5%	9%	10%	7%	7%	7%	11%	8%	4%	7%	5%
80,000	11%	12%	11%	10%	9%	5%	20%	12%	9%	20%	10%	7%	5%	3%
130,000	13%	15%	13%	14%	6%	7%	23%	16%	13%	17%	8%	23%	17%	5%
180,000	10%	8%	10%	12%	13%	13%	6%	11%	12%	9%	12%	10%	1%	5%
230,000	6%	6%	4%	8%	6%	9%	5%	5%	6%	4%	8%	11%	9%	4%
280,000	7%	9%	6%	5%	6%	12%	6%	7%	8%	4%	13%	3%	3%	1%
Don't know / Not sure	45%	43%	47%	46%	51%	44%	33%	42%	45%	35%	41%	42%	58%	77%
Column n	1502	489	385	315	127	110	76	448	281	189	337	85	52	110

Table 16. POLI2. Across most of Australia, each of the House of Representatives' 150 electorates is required to have roughly the same number of residents. Each electorate is represented by a local member. Which do you think is the ideal number of people to be represented by one local member?

Column %	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+
Very high	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%
High	9%	11%	8%	10%	5%	8%	10%	11%
Neutral	26%	26%	26%	39%	32%	24%	26%	19%
Low	29%	28%	29%	25%	31%	27%	29%	29%
Very low	30%	31%	29%	11%	24%	34%	31%	38%
Don't know / Not sure	5%	3%	7%	14%	6%	7%	4%	2%
NET: Total High	10%	11%	8%	11%	7%	8%	11%	12%
NET: Total Low	59%	59%	58%	36%	55%	61%	60%	67%
Column n	1502	655	842	164	234	338	344	422

Table 17. FEEL1. How would you describe current levels of trust in the federal Parliament amongst people like you?

Column %	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	Other	ALP	COA	GRE	PHON	IND	Other	UND
Very high	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
High	9%	9%	10%	9%	6%	6%	9%	22%	4%	9%	2%	5%	7%	2%
Neutral	26%	29%	24%	22%	27%	26%	35%	44%	24%	28%	11%	33%	14%	20%
Low	29%	27%	29%	31%	35%	21%	24%	20%	40%	37%	24%	39%	23%	27%
Very low	30%	30%	31%	29%	28%	36%	30%	7%	31%	21%	61%	19%	50%	17%
Don't know / Not sure	5%	4%	6%	8%	3%	9%	2%	4%	1%	5%	2%	3%	6%	34%
NET: Total High	10%	11%	10%	10%	8%	8%	9%	25%	4%	9%	2%	6%	7%	2%
NET: Total Low	59%	56%	60%	61%	63%	57%	53%	27%	71%	58%	85%	58%	73%	44%
Column n	1502	489	385	315	127	110	76	448	281	189	337	85	52	110

Table 18. FEEL1. How would you describe current levels of trust in the federal Parliament amongst people like you?

Column %	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+
Very happy	6%	7%	6%	5%	5%	3%	6%	11%
Happy	35%	34%	35%	37%	40%	34%	35%	31%
Unhappy	19%	20%	17%	20%	16%	18%	21%	19%
Very unhappy	14%	15%	13%	5%	11%	17%	13%	17%
Don't know / Not sure	26%	24%	29%	33%	28%	28%	25%	22%
NET: Total Happy	41%	41%	41%	42%	45%	37%	41%	42%
NET: Total Unhappy	33%	35%	30%	25%	27%	35%	33%	36%
Column n	1502	655	842	164	234	338	344	422

Table 19. FEEL2. Thinking of your local member (the MP who represents your electorate in federal Parliament), are you happy or unhappy with the job they are doing?

Column %	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	Other	ALP	COA	GRE	PHON	IND	Other	UND
Very happy	6%	7%	5%	10%	2%	3%	5%	11%	9%	2%	3%	8%	3%	0%
Happy	35%	38%	28%	35%	36%	38%	37%	54%	33%	35%	26%	29%	19%	20%
Unhappy	19%	20%	21%	18%	21%	17%	13%	11%	23%	22%	23%	29%	21%	11%
Very unhappy	14%	11%	17%	12%	11%	20%	15%	3%	15%	11%	25%	16%	23%	6%
Don't know / Not sure	26%	24%	29%	25%	30%	22%	30%	21%	20%	30%	23%	18%	34%	63%
NET: Total Happy	41%	45%	33%	45%	39%	41%	43%	64%	42%	37%	29%	37%	22%	20%
NET: Total Unhappy	33%	31%	38%	30%	32%	36%	27%	15%	38%	33%	48%	45%	44%	17%
Column n	1502	489	385	315	127	110	76	448	281	189	337	85	52	110

Table 20. FEEL2. Thinking of your local member (the MP who represents your electorate in federal Parliament), are you happy or unhappy with the job they are doing?

Column %	Total	Male	Female	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+
I know the name of my current federal MP	45%	50%	40%	44%	41%	41%	44%	52%
If I had a concern about a current political issue, I feel confident I would be able to speak with my local MP	21%	24%	19%	15%	21%	18%	18%	31%
I have previously written to my local MP	12%	12%	12%	7%	8%	10%	14%	16%
I have previously spoken in person or on the phone to my local MP	8%	10%	7%	10%	8%	7%	7%	10%
None of these	40%	34%	45%	47%	46%	44%	39%	30%
Column n	1502	655	842	164	234	338	344	422

Table 21. FEEL3. Which of the following apply to you?

Column %	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	Other	ALP	COA	GRE	PHON	IND	Other	UND
I know the name of my current federal MP	45%	49%	42%	42%	42%	41%	49%	53%	44%	47%	43%	58%	22%	26%
If I had a concern about a current political issue, I feel confident I would be able to speak with my local MP	21%	23%	19%	24%	23%	15%	13%	29%	21%	22%	18%	25%	12%	7%
I have previously written to my local MP	12%	12%	11%	13%	10%	8%	16%	12%	7%	16%	15%	15%	15%	4%
I have previously spoken in person or on the phone to my local MP	8%	6%	10%	9%	11%	7%	8%	11%	6%	11%	8%	11%	3%	5%
None of these	40%	37%	43%	41%	38%	46%	39%	29%	41%	40%	42%	29%	56%	65%
Column n	1502	489	385	315	127	110	76	448	281	189	337	85	52	110

Table 22. FEEL3. Which of the following apply to you?