

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Australia

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2007</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>106</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		106		Tentative:		No		
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Tentative:		No																							
SCODE	AUL	CCODE	900	Date of Report	1 November 2008																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	5	5																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
			1 January 1901 (Ind.)																						
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1900																								
Executive(s)	Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (ALP); appointed as the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives, 3 December 2007																								
Legislature	Bicameral: House of Representatives (150 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 24 November 2007) Liberal Party/National Party (LPA/NPA): 63 Australian Labor Party (ALP): 85 Non-partisans: 2 Senate (76 seats; proportionally elected, 12 from each of the 6 states, 2 from each of the two territories; most recent elections, 24 November 2007) LPA-NPA Alliance: 37 ALP: 32 Australian Greens (GREENS): 5 Family First Party (FF): 1 Other: 1																								
Judiciary	High Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Australia is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary form of government in which citizens periodically choose their representatives in free and fair multiparty elections. Elections are held regularly and governing political parties change periodically. John Howard, the leader of the Liberal Party of Australia and leader of the parliamentary opposition prior to 2 March 1996 elections, rose to the position of prime minister when his party defeated the Australian Labor Party in those elections. He remained in the office after the elections of 2001 won by the Liberal Party-National Party coalition. In June 2003, Howard declared that he would seek a fourth term as party leader. Howard's party again took the election in October 2004, giving him his fourth term. Voter dissatisfaction with the country's activist foreign policy under the Liberal/National Alliance administration of John Howard was evident in the victory of the Labor Party (ALP) in November 2007 general elections and, as a result, ALP leader Kevin Rudd replaced Howard as Prime Minister on 3 December 2007.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Australia's political institutions and practices follow the Western liberal democratic tradition, reflecting British and North American experience. The Australian federal government is based in the Westminster model and characterized by the separation of powers with a system of checks and balances that provide for executive accountability before the legislature. All Cabinet members must also be members of Parliament and are responsible to that body. If the Government ceases to command a House of Representatives majority, it is obliged to go to an election or resign. The Government respects the constitutional provisions for an independent judiciary in practice.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

The electoral process is competitive and free from coercion or undue influence by executive officials. The political scene is dominated by four durable parties with mass-based national constituencies; their competition represents different parts of the political spectrum. The Australian Labor Party had its genesis in the trade union movement last century but today represents a broader band of Australian society on the left side of the spectrum. The Liberal Party, which traditionally represents the business community, and its coalition partner the National Party, which predominantly represents rural interests, are on the right of the political spectrum. The Australian Democrats and the West Australian Greens, political parties with close ties to the environmental movement, were formed to capture the balance of power in the Senate, where neither of the major political parties has a majority. Australia's first national party for Aborigines, the Your Voice party, was founded in May 2004 by Aboriginal writer Richard Frankland to represent the interests of Aboriginal people in response to the government's stated intention to abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.