



Australia Report

Roger Wilkins, Heribert Dieter,
Aurel Croissant (Coordinator)

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2019

©vege - stock.adobe.com

Executive Summary

Political instability continues to undermine sound policy development and implementation underpinned by a long-term vision. In August 2018, Australia had another change of prime minister, again without an election. There have now been seven changes of prime minister in 11 years, with only two of these the result of a federal election. While intransigence of the Senate – which no government has had control of since 2007 – has been a factor in frustrating policy action and creating instability, a much more important factor has been disunity within the major political parties.

Since the end of the mining boom in 2012, Australia's economic circumstances have fundamentally altered and living standards have remained stagnant. The government's fiscal position has also deteriorated precipitously, although it improved somewhat in the review period thanks to the strength of commodity prices. Difficult fiscal policy decisions will be necessary over the coming years, yet there does not appear to be much appetite for these among the political leadership. That said, after an initial period of policy paralysis, in the last two years the Turnbull government had started to experience some success in passing legislation to achieve reform. To a significant extent, this reflected the government adopting a more moderate or balanced agenda, which was more acceptable to independents and minor parties. This has broadly continued under the new prime minister, Scott Morrison.

Under Turnbull's leadership, the government recognized the need to develop new growth industries. The former prime minister emphasized the need for Australia to be "innovative and agile," although he did not lay out a plan for fostering innovation and agility. One factor supporting the economy is the continued relative weakness of the Australian dollar, which improves its competitive position for tourism and education services in particular. The end of the housing boom may result in declining domestic demand and could end Australia's 27-year-long phase of economic growth.

Economic and social outcomes continue to be relatively good in absolute terms, and sustainable policy performance compares reasonably favorably with many other developed countries. In particular, the fiscal position continues to be considerably stronger than in many other OECD countries. However, real wages and household incomes remain stagnant. The last year

has also seen sizable declines in house prices in Sydney and Melbourne, which together account for half the Australian housing market by value. This is generally a positive development, but poses risks for the financial system and the wider economy.

Overall, policy performance remained relatively unchanged in the current review period compared with the previous one. There is consequently considerable scope for improvement in governance. In its early years, the coalition government cut public sector employment, reduced funding for several government agencies, and partially reneged on the health and education funding agreements reached between the state and territorial governments prior to the 2013 election. More recent government actions have only slightly improved the situation. In particular, many persistent problems remain, including the vertical fiscal imbalances between the federal, state and territory governments; the lack of a coherent, effective and sustainable energy policy; the absence of legally protected human rights; the politicization of the public sector; and the degree of concentration in media ownership.

The former prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, demonstrated an appreciation of the problems currently faced by the country, along with a willingness to negotiate and compromise with other parties to achieve policy reforms. Unfortunately, he was unable to translate this into substantive change. It remains to be seen if his successor fares any better.

Key Challenges

Australia faces a number of major strategic challenges over the coming years. The most pressing are addressing the lack of growth in wages, managing and adapting to population growth, developing a sustainable, reliable and cost-effective energy sector, preserving and enhancing social cohesion and the system of social protection, and delivering an affordable housing system that meets the community's needs. It is unclear, or at least contentious, what policies are required to restore wage growth and preserve social cohesion, but the policies required to address the other key challenges are reasonably clear.

In adapting to population growth, the most important requirement is significant increases in public infrastructure investment. Indeed, Australia's current predicament is such that increased investment is required not to cope with future population growth, but to adequately cater for the growth that has already taken place. Infrastructure investment would also help improve deficiencies in the housing market (although additional policies are also

required to address this issue). Arguably, the price for Australia's low level of public debt has been underinvestment in infrastructure. In recent years, there has been some progress in increasing infrastructure investment, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne. But much more needs to be done, and the state governments that have primary responsibility are hampered by the vertical fiscal imbalance that sees them unable to raise additional revenue to help fund the investment.

On energy policy, the Turnbull government appeared to be making some progress toward achieving a coherent and stable energy policy, but ultimately could not secure the agreement of all party members. It therefore remains a challenge to implement a policy that reduces carbon emissions, increases reliability and reduces costs to consumers. Australia has much scope for improvements in responding to environmental challenges. Considering Australia's climate, there is considerable potential for the development of sustainable policies on energy and the environment. Transport could be made greener, for instance, by financing improvements to inadequate public transport systems through an increase in excise duties on fuel.

In international relations, Australia is facing a rapidly deteriorating situation. Its biggest customer, China, is intervening in Australia's domestic policymaking and becoming a much more aggressive player in the Indo-Pacific region. The Australian government is aware of the challenges, but may have to choose between political preferences and commercial interests. The choice will not be simple given the vulnerabilities of the Australian economy.

Other strategic challenges are more perennial. Closely related to the structural deficit has been managing the implications of an aging population. Existing policies have better prepared Australia for this demographic shift compared to most other developed countries. However, the inefficiencies inherent in the federal system of government have proven more problematic. Notable problems include the division between federal and state responsibilities, and a vertical fiscal imbalance. The need to secure agreement with the states on most major issues of shared concern has proven difficult for recent federal governments, particularly in the policy areas of water, health, education and transport infrastructure. The autonomy of states and their accountability should be strengthened, while the conditionality of grants from the federal budget should be reduced.

The federal Labor government was at least as proactive in addressing this issue as any past government but found progress difficult. "Cooperative federalism" was supposed to overcome entrenched, parochial interests, but has proven inadequate in facilitating reform on contentious issues. Policies designed, for

example, to increase the efficiency of water use or ensure a fairer allocation of water rights have eluded successive governments, and the issue of water security remains a prominent and immediate issue. Australia's failure to address the water issue reflects structural problems in the federal system.

The tax system also remains complex and inefficient. The 2010 Henry Tax Review produced 138 recommendations for improvements. However, the previous Labor government only adopted a few of these. Similarly, the Liberal-National coalition government has shown little inclination to radically reform the system. While there are many tax reforms required, among the more important, recommended by the OECD, are raising the goods and services tax rate, and introducing a land tax.

Other long-standing deficiencies that should be priorities for reform include diversification of media ownership; improving regulatory impact assessments by expanding their scope and application; increasing public consultation and transparency, and conducting consultation prior to policy decisions; and introducing a bill of human rights.

Finally, the situation of indigenous Australians continues to be the most serious social failure of the Australian political system. Over recent decades, numerous policy initiatives have attempted to address the appalling outcomes experienced by indigenous people, but there is little evidence that substantive progress has been made. Remediating this must remain a priority over the coming years.

Citation:

OECD, Economic Survey Australia, December 2014, p. 11.

Kate Darian-Smith: Indigenes Australien – von der britischen Besiedlung bis zur Gegenwart, in: Bettina Biedermann, Heribert Dieter (eds.): Länderbericht Australien. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2012, S. 93-125.

<https://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Australia-2017-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>

<https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>

Party Polarization

The dominance of two major political groups, the Labor party and the Liberal-National coalition, induces strong partisanship and extreme reluctance to reach cross-party agreements. Whichever major group is in power, however, typically needs to negotiate with the minor parties and independents to pass

legislation in the upper house. Agreements are regularly reached, although as a result most governments feel only partially able to implement their legislative agenda. (Score: 5)

Policy Performance

I. Economic Policies

Economy

Economic Policy
Score: 6

Australia's economy experienced moderate improvement in the year-long period to 8 November 2018. GDP growth returned to its long-term trend. However, real household disposable income per capita was stagnant, and as of mid-2018 remains 1% below its 2012 level. The economy has struggled to adapt to the end of the mining boom, when record-high commodity prices delivered substantial growth in national income. The decline in terms of trade has hit wages, and hence household incomes, hard. The end of the boom also saw a decline in tax revenue as a share of GDP, resulting in a succession of substantial budget deficits from 2009. However, tax revenue has picked up in the last year, primarily due to growth in company tax receipts, in turn reflecting improvements in commodity prices. A lack of microeconomic and tax reforms over the last decade nonetheless continues to act as a drag on Australia's economic growth prospects. The housing boom, which was a significant driver of economic growth for almost three decades, has come to an end. House prices may well decline further, and even a dramatic reduction of property prices cannot be completely discounted.

The main barrier to integrated economic policy continues to be the federal structure of government, and the duplication of many services and regulatory functions between the federal government and the governments of the six states and two territories. The federal system has proven to be a barrier to achieving cooperation across jurisdictions. As a result, reform of many social services, most notably health and education, has reached an impasse. The core of the problem is the limited revenue-raising powers held by the states, which

are dependent on block grants from the federal government. Prior to the 2016 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), then Prime Minister Turnbull floated a proposal to reintroduce state income taxes as a way of eliminating the “vertical fiscal imbalance.” However, all but one of the state and territory leaders quickly rejected the proposal.

Citation:

Matt Wade: Housing slump ‘the biggest threat to the Australian economy,’ Sydney Morning Herald, 5 December 2018, available at <https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/housing-slump-the-biggest-threat-to-the-australian-economy-20181204-p50k79.html>

Labor Markets

Labor Market
Policy
Score: 7

Since the peak of the mining boom in 2012, unemployment has risen but continues to be comparatively low. However, underemployment – part-time workers seeking more hours of work – has remained very high. Wage growth has been very subdued, with almost no increase in real average earnings since 2013. Questions have been raised as to whether the industrial relations system has excessively reduced the bargaining power of employees, for example through restraints on the right to strike, contributing to tepid wage growth.

Minimum wages, which are set by an independent statutory authority, the Fair Work Commission, have potentially acted as an increasing constraint on employment over the review period. The national minimum wage is relatively high by international standards, at approximately 55% of the median full-time wage; more importantly, there are also a large number of industry- and occupation-specific minimum wages that can be substantially higher than the national minimum wage. Taking effect in July 2018, the minimum wage was increased by 3.2% to AUD 18.93 per hour. In the context of stagnation in real wages in the broader economy, the “bite” of minimum wages (i.e., the extent to which they negatively impact employment) has been increasing. Nevertheless, high minimum wages have arguably contributed to stabilizing domestic demand.

So-called “skills shortages” have been a recurring topic of concern in the Australian labor market in recent years. One response has been to allow more skilled immigrants to enter the country on temporary 457 visas. The number of workers on 457 visas increased considerably up to 2013, reaching 126,348 in that year. However, following concerns that employers were misusing the program to obtain cheap labor, the federal government tightened the conditions under which 457 visas could be obtained, resulting in a decline to 95,360 by March 2017. Previously, one-quarter of 457 visas were given to software developers from India.

The Australian government in effect tightened the conditions for temporary workers from abroad. The “Temporary Skills Shortage Visa” is a new visa category (482) and results in both higher costs for the employer and in stricter conditions, which include a minimum wage for the foreign worker of AUD 53.900 plus retirement provisions. The visa application alone will cost larger corporations AUD 7.200 in government fees alone.

Citation:

Department of Immigration and Border Protection ‘Changes to the Subclass 457 program’:
<http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/changes-457-program.htm>

Updated data on 457 visas granted is available on the Australian Border Force web site:

<http://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/work-in-australia>.

Minimum wage: How does Australia compare to other countries? ABC. 31 May 2016. Available at
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-31/minimum-wage-how-does-australia-compare/7461794>

Australia to axe foreign workers visa scheme, Financial Times, 19 April 2017, p. 4.

Mike Toten: From 457 visas to 482s: 25 more hurdles to jump? 8 April 2018. Available at
<https://hradvance.com.au/news-articles/%E2%80%8Bfrom-457-visas-to-482s-25-more-hurdles-to-jump>

Taxes

Tax Policy
 Score: 6

The tax system achieves a reasonably high degree of horizontal equity, with income generally taxed at the same rate irrespective of its source. The main exception is capital-gains taxation, where the family home is exempt from taxation and a 50% discount is applied to capital gains on other assets held at least one year. A further significant exemption is retirement savings (known as superannuation), which are minimally taxed. These exceptions aside, the income-tax system is moderately progressive. Australia’s taxation system redistributes less than other OECD countries, and relatively high remuneration after taxes and social security is a major pull-factor in its migration policy.

The review period saw only minor changes to income tax. However, the federal government budget published in May 2018 laid out a seven-year plan for radical changes to the income tax schedule. Under the plan, from 2024 over 90% of taxpayers would face a top marginal income tax rate of 32.5%, which would apply on incomes up to AUD 200,000 per annum. The current 37% tax rate, applying to incomes AUD 40,000 - 180,000 would be eliminated, with the current maximum 45% rate retained for incomes over AUD 200,000. If implemented, this would represent a significant reduction in the progressivity of the income tax system. The Labor opposition has indicated that it does not support the plan.

The government has been frustrated by the Senate in its attempts to reduce the company tax rate from 30% to 25%, and has settled on a phased reduction for

companies with annual turnover of less than AUD 50 million. The 25% tax rate will be fully implemented for companies with an annual turnover of less than AUD 50 million from 2021.

The tax-to-GDP ratio in Australia is among the lowest of any OECD economy. Arguably, this low level of taxation creates bottlenecks in infrastructure development, which have not been sufficiently addressed. Sydney and Melbourne are particularly exposed to infrastructure bottlenecks, although there has been a substantial surge in infrastructure investment in recent years (albeit, mostly funded by state governments).

With regard to sufficient inflow of tax revenue, as outlined in detail under the “budgets” indicator, despite some recovery of tax revenue in the review period, concerns persist that the federal government faces a structural deficit that will require difficult fiscal decisions in the near future, most likely involving a combination of reductions in spending and tax increases. Moreover, there is a long-standing concern over the fiscal sustainability of state and territory governments, which have very limited capacities for raising revenue. The increasing need for health and education expenditure by the states and territories has outpaced revenue growth.

Citation:

Australia's Future Tax System, Report to the Treasurer. Canberra: Commonwealth Government, 2009. Available from http://taxreview.treasury.gov.au/content/Content.aspx?doc=html/pubs_reports.htm.

Australian Government ‘Re:think Tax Discussion Paper,’ March 2015: <http://bettertax.gov.au/publications/discussion-paper/>.

<http://www.treasury.gov.au/Policy-Topics/Taxation/Pocket-Guide-to-the-Australian-Tax-System/Pocket-Guide-to-the-Australian-Tax-System/Part-1>

Shamsher Kainth: Migrants in Australia among the happiest in the world: report, SBS, 18 March 2018, available at <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/punjabi/en/article/2018/03/27/migrants-australia-among-happiest-world-report>

Budgets

Budgetary Policy
Score: 7

While net federal government debt currently stands at approximately 20% of GDP, the consensus is that Australia has a structural deficit. This means that, averaged over the business cycle, existing revenue streams will not adequately meet ongoing expenditure needs given current tax rates and expenditure levels. The reasoning is that commodity prices will not return to pre-2008 levels, and expenditure demands are projected to increase over coming years, partially due to an aging population. The combination of weak commodity prices and a real-estate induced recession may lead to a significant deterioration of the fiscal position.

Australia's fiscal position, while still relatively weak, showed signs of improvement in the review period, following mild improvements in 2017. While the budget remains in deficit, modest expenditure and revenue measures were implemented in the 2017 and 2018 budgets which have moderated the growth of government debt. Rather than explicit measures to increase revenue and reduce expenditure, the key driver of a return to fiscal balance is bracket creep, whereby non-indexation of tax thresholds result in a rise in the average tax rate on income.

Citation:

Australian Government Treasury historical budget and net worth data: http://www.budget.gov.au/2017-18/content/bp1/download/bp1_bs11.pdf

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/story-streams/federal-budget-2017/2017-05-09/federal-budget-2017-winners-losers/8505738>

Reserve Bank warns regulators could take drastic action to cool Sydney, Melbourne housing market. The Sydney Morning Herald. 18 April 2017. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/reserve-bank-warns-regulators-could-take-drastic-action-to-cool-sydney-melbourne-housing-market-20170418-gvmszs.html>

<http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/files/Australian-Infrastructure-Audit-Executive-Summary.pdf>.

John Kehoe: Australia most exposed to housing debt downturn. Australian Financial Review. 30 October 2018. Available at <https://www.afr.com/news/economy/australia-most-exposed-to-housing-debt-downturn-20181030-h179ko>

Research, Innovation and Infrastructure

R&I Policy
Score: 4

After the Abbott government was elected in September 2013, government support for research and innovation was reduced considerably and has not materially recovered. The Abbott government cut funding to the Australian Research Council scheme, which funds non-medical university research, and abolished the Australian Renewable Energy agency, which acted to support renewable energy projects in their start-up and early stages. Also telling was the fact that under the Abbott government there was no science minister for the first time since 1931. However, with the replacement of Abbott by Malcolm Turnbull as prime minister in September 2015, a new cabinet was formed that included a science minister, and the Department of Industry and Science was expanded to become the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science. The National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) was announced in December 2015, emphasizing science, research and innovation as long-term drivers of economic prosperity, jobs and growth. As part of this agenda, AUD 1.1 billion was committed over four years to 24 measures aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship, fostering collaboration between industry and

researchers, developing and attracting talent, and by government “leading by example.” In November 2017, a report was released laying out a strategic plan to 2030 for optimizing investment in Australian innovation. The Australian government, in its May 2018 response to the report, expressed support in principle for most of the recommendations, but there is little evidence of substantive policy change since then.

Citation:

Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, ‘Australian Innovation system Report 2012’: <http://www.innovation.gov.au/Innovation/Policy/AustralianInnovationSystemReport/AISR2012/index.html>

Innovation and Science Australia 2017, Australia 2030: prosperity through innovation, Australian Government, Canberra: <https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/g/files/net3906/f/May%202018/document/pdf/australia-2030-prosperity-through-innovation-full-report.pdf>

OECD, Economic Survey Australia 2014, Paris: OECD, 16 December 2014.

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/federal-budget/federal-budget-scientists-push-for-more-research-funding-20160411-go3uaa.html>

Emma Alberici: Innovation is still the key to jobs and growth. ABC. 17 May 2018. Available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-18/innovation-the-key-to-jobs-and-growth/9772938>

Global Financial System

Stabilizing
Global Financial
System
Score: 6

As a globally oriented country with a high degree of international economic integration, including financial market integration, Australia has a strong interest in promoting a stable, efficient and transparent international financial system. Australia displays a strong commitment to preventing criminal financial activities, including tax evasion. To that end, the government has information sharing arrangements with a number of countries. However, Australia is a relatively small player in international finance and has a limited ability to shape the regulatory process within multilateral institutions.

Prudential supervision of Australian banks and other financial institutions is generally of high quality. Indeed, reflecting its strong regulations, no Australian bank experienced substantial financial difficulties throughout the financial crises that began in 2008. In 2014, the Abbott government commissioned a broad-ranging inquiry into the Australian financial system, focusing on how the financial system can most effectively help the Australian economy be productive, grow and meet the financial needs of Australians. The report made 44 recommendations, a number of which were implemented by the subsequent Turnbull government, including an increase in banks’ capital adequacy requirements. According to government estimates, the four largest banks needed an additional AUD 40 billion in fresh capital. Additionally, the

2017 budget introduced a “major bank levy” on banks with over AUD 100 billion in total liabilities, which applied to the five largest banks from 1 July 2017. The levy rate is set at 0.015% of the balance of a bank’s total liabilities (but with a number of exclusions), and is expected to raise approximately AUD 1.5 - 1.6 billion per annum.

While Australian banks appear to be stable, they have substantial exposure to real estate lending. 60% of the Australian financial system’s loan book is in real estate lending. A severe decline of house prices would cause severe problems for the banking system. A further cause for concern about future prospects for the banking system is that, motivated by widespread reports of unconscionable conduct by banks and other financial institutions, in 2018 the federal government initiated a Royal Commission of Inquiry into misconduct in the finance industry. The inquiry was ongoing as of the end of the review period and is due to report in February 2019.

Australia has accumulated a high level of foreign debt, with net debt of over AUD 1 trillion and gross debt of AUD 1.9 trillion. While this high level of debt is a risk to Australia’s financial stability, Australian governments have not addressed this issue, arguing that it reflects the decisions of the private sector (including households). An increase in real interest rates, initiated by the U.S. Federal Reserve, will place a significant burden on Australian debtors. In 2017, household debt was 211% of net disposable income, one of the highest ratios in the OECD.

Citation:

Buttiglione, Luigi; Lane, Philip R.; Reichlin, Lucrezia and Vincent Reinhart (2014): Deleveraging? What Deleveraging? Center for Economic Policy Research, Geneva Reports on the World Economy, Nr. 16 (September 2014), p. 15.

Financial System Inquiry Final Report, December 2014: <http://fsi.gov.au/publications/final-report/>

<https://financialservices.royalcommission.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Is it time to end ultra-low rate regime? *The Australian*. 11./12. March 2017, p. 25.

<https://tradingeconomics.com/australia/external-debt>

The Economist, Like a shag on a rock. 16 May 2015. S. 63.

<https://data.oecd.org/hha/household-debt.htm#indicator-chart>

Emily Cadman: Moody’s move shines light on Australia’s home loan risks, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 2018, available at <https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/moodys-move-shines-light-on-australias-home-loan-risks-20170620-gwufh4.html>

Michael Janda: Australia’s debt binge ‘coming to an end,’ says Bank for International Settlements. 25 June 2018. Available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-25/australia-named-as-household-debt-problem-country/9905390>

OECD: Households accounts, available at <https://data.oecd.org/hha/household-debt.htm>

II. Social Policies

Education

Education Policy
Score: 6

The quality of Australia's education system tends to be higher in non-government schools and in major metropolitan regions. Overall the high school completion rate is around 80%. However, the low level of preschool spending continues to be a weak point: Australia spends one-quarter of the OECD average on preschools and the country has been falling down the PISA rankings among countries in its region.

Regarding equity, the continued high level of government subsidies to non-government schools means inequity in schooling outcomes is high. Unsurprisingly, given the high levels of government subsidy of private education, rates of enrollment in private schools in Australia are significantly higher than the OECD average. Despite subsidies, tuition fees at private school are often beyond the means of less affluent parents, creating inequality. Moreover, inequity has increased, as government funding per student in non-government schools has increased at a faster rate than government funding per student in government schools. The 2017 budget took steps toward reducing inequity, boosting funding to government schools and reducing funding to some non-government schools in the period 2017 - 2027. However, following a backlash from the Catholic school sector, which accounts for approximately half the non-government school sector, in September 2018 the government announced an increase in funding to Catholic schools of AUD 4.5 billion over 10 years.

In the higher education sector, the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP), introduced in 1989, continues to be an important mechanism for equitably and sustainably funding higher education. The scheme has increased the extent to which students bear the cost of their education without diminishing access to higher education for students from poor families. Several measures in recent years have sought to reduce the cost to government of the higher education system. The 2015 budget contained measures requiring Australians living overseas to repay HELP debts on the same terms as those faced by Australian residents. This took effect on 1 January 2016. Additional measures in 2017 included decreased direct government funding of universities, increased student fees and a reduced income threshold at which students begin repaying their HELP debt.

With regard to efficiency, there is much room for improvement. Australia's educational system is complex, with shared responsibilities between the states and the government, with funding coming primarily from the latter, which contributes to inefficiencies. Federal funding for vocational education and training is limited. State and territory governments are highly revenue-constrained, and as a consequence the sector is relatively poorly funded. In recent years, a HELP scheme for vocational training, called VET Student Loans, has been established, but applies only to diploma-level courses. The higher education sector is generally efficient and universities have had to be entrepreneurial to prosper, aggressively marketing to international students and pursuing independent sources of research funds.

Citation:

David Gonski, 'Final Report of the Review of Funding for Schooling,' December 2011: <http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review>

Moshe Justman and Chris Ryan, 'What's Wrong with the Gonski Report: Funding Reform and Student Achievement?' Policy Brief No. 2/13. Melbourne Institute. The University of Melbourne. April 2013: http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/downloads/policy_briefs_series/pb2013n02.pdf

<http://studyassist.gov.au/sites/StudyAssist/VET%20Student%20Loans>

http://www.oecd.org/edu/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20AUSTRALIA_EN.pdf

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018_eag-2018-en

Lisa Pryor, The End of the Australian Dream. The New York Times. 2. May 2017. p. 1, 13.

Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion
Policy
Score: 5

Australia has a mixed record on social inclusion. While successive governments have made considerable efforts to promote social policies that reduce social exclusion, the comparatively flexible labor market has probably been the most effective instrument with regard to ensuring social inclusion.

Despite a relatively unequal income distribution and other weaknesses of social policies, Australians are quite content with their lives. Life satisfaction in Australia is higher than in many other OECD countries and almost as high as in the Scandinavian countries.

Promoting social inclusion did not become an explicit policy goal at the federal level until the election of the Labor government in 2007. After coming into office in 2013, the conservative Abbott government reversed course and removed all references to social inclusion from policy documents. While Prime Minister Abbott did take personal responsibility for indigenous affairs,

the dire situation of the indigenous population continues to be one of Australia's most pressing social issues. Life expectancy of indigenous Australians is approximately ten years lower than the Australian average.

In December 2013, the minister for social services commissioned a review of the welfare system with the goal of identifying possible improvements and ensuring the system was sustainable, effective, coherent and encouraged people to work. The review recommended the adoption of an "investment approach" within Australia's social support system, which in turn would ideally reduce long-term reliance on welfare through targeted investments in benefit recipients. In response, in 2015 the government instituted the "Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare." To date, the main tangible outcome of this approach has been the AUD 96.1 million "Try, Test and Learn Fund," which is currently trialing new or innovative approaches to assist priority groups identified through data analysis as being at high risk of long-term welfare dependency.

Citation:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Mortality and life expectancy of Indigenous Australians 2008 to 2012. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129548470&tab=2>.

Reference Group on Welfare Reform, 'A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes.' Australian Government. February 2015: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/review-of-australias-welfare-system/a-new-system-for-better-employment-and-social-outcomes-full-version-of-the-final-report>.

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Table_1_Youth_unemployment,_2014Q4_%28%25%29.png

<https://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-1-health-status-and-outcomes/120-infant-and-child-mortality.html>

<https://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-1-health-status-and-outcomes/119-life-expectancy-birth.html>

Health

Health Policy
Score: 7

The Australian health care system is a complex mix of public and private sector health care provision and funding. Correspondingly, its performance on quality, inclusiveness and cost efficiency is variable across the components of the system. The federal government directly funds health care through three schemes: Medicare, which subsidizes services provided by doctors; the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), which subsidizes prescription medications; and a means-tested private health insurance subsidy. Medicare is the most important pillar in delivering affordable health care to the entire population, but it has design features that decrease efficiency and fail to promote equity of access. For example, the level of the subsidy is generally not contingent on the price charged by the doctor. The PBS is perhaps the

most successful pillar of health care policy in Australia, granting the Australian community access to medications at a low unit cost.

Quality of medical care in Australia is in general of a high standard, reflecting a highly skilled workforce and a strong tradition of rigorous and high-quality doctor training in public hospitals. However, several medical procedures are difficult to access for people without private health insurance. In particular, waiting periods for non-emergency operations in public hospitals can be many years. Public funding of dental care is also very limited and private dental care can be prohibitively expensive for those on low incomes without private health insurance. Consequently, dental health care for low income groups is poor.

Regarding inclusiveness, significant inequality persists in access to some medical services, such as non-emergency surgery and dental care. Indigenous health outcomes are particularly poor. In 2014, the federal government launched a dental scheme aimed at addressing inequity in access to dental care, but the current coalition government has withdrawn support for the scheme. Lack of access to non-emergency surgery reflects, to a significant extent, the funding constraints of the states and territories, which are responsible for funding public hospitals. This was a significant motivation behind the 2011 National Health Reform Agreement, which sought to provide more sustainable funding arrangements for Australia's health system. Key features of the agreement included: additional federal funding for hospitals from 2015 to 2020 and for non-emergency surgery from 2010 to 2016; the establishment of an independent hospital pricing authority to set a national efficient price for hospital services and a national health performance authority to review hospital performance. However, in its first budget in 2014, the Abbott government reduced hospital funding and implemented a freeze on the indexation of subsidies for out-of-hospital medical services until 2018. This freeze was partially removed by the Turnbull government in July 2017.

Finally, concerning cost-effectiveness, the health care system is rife with inefficiencies and perverse incentives. Total health care expenditure is relatively low, but as is the case in most developed countries, the government faces significant challenges due to rising costs from an aging population and development of new diagnostic tools and treatments. The government's Productivity Commission made a number of recommendations to improve cost-effectiveness, including eliminating low-value health interventions, adopting the principle of patient-centered care, and making better use of health system data.

Productivity Commission five-year productivity review:
<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/productivity-review/report>

Sunil K. Dixit; Murali Samasivan: A review of the Australian health care system: A policy perspective, Sage Med, April 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5900819/>

Families

Family Policy
 Score: 7

The high cost of child care for children not yet at school continues to be a problem for many families in Australia. However, in the 2015 budget, the government announced a plan to spend AUD 3.5 billion over five years on child care assistance, including a new child care subsidy (CCS) that commenced on 1 July 2018. Replacing several existing subsidy programs, the CCS is a single subsidy based on family income. Families earning AUD 66,958 or less receive a subsidy of 85% of their child care fees. The subsidy rate gradually declines as family income increases and is zero for families with incomes in excess of AUD 351,248. For families with incomes in excess of AUD 186,958, there is an annual cap on the subsidy of AUD 10,190 per child. Eligibility for the CCS is determined by an activity test that closely aligns the hours of subsidized care with the amount of work, training, study or any other recognized activity such as volunteering by parents. Despite taxpayer-funded subsidies for child care, costs have risen for parents, growing by 48.7% in real terms (or 6.8% annually) from 2011 to 2017.

Following large increases in family payments over the early 2000s, in recent years these payments have been scaled back. In 2014, the “baby bonus,” a tax-free payment of up to AUD 5,000 payable on birth or adoption of a child, was abolished. In 2016, the government managed to pass some reductions to family payments through the Senate, including reducing payments to families where the youngest child is between the ages of 13 and 18, and to families with a household income over AUD 80,000 per year. Additional minor reductions in family payments were announced in the 2017 budget.

A government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011, providing 18 weeks of government-funded paid leave at the level of the full-time national minimum wage. Prior to the scheme, only 54% of female employees and 50% of male employees had access to some form of PPL. The scheme therefore considerably expanded access to PPL.

Welfare policy has increasingly encouraged or compelled mothers who are welfare recipients to take up employment. Starting in July 2006, new single-parent recipients were transferred to the unemployment benefit once the youngest child reached eight years of age. In January 2013, this policy was

applied to all recipients of Parenting Payment irrespective of when they began receiving it; in the case of partnered recipients of Parenting Payment, transfer to the unemployment benefit occurs once the youngest child reaches six years of age. With unemployment benefits, single parents receive a lower level of benefits and are required to seek employment of at least 15 hours per week.

Citation:

OECD, Economic Survey Australia 2014, p. 61 and 69.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/little-support-for-parents-of-austistic-kids-20161020-gs6vov.html>

Eugenie Joseph: Why childcare is not affordable, The Centre for Independent Studies. August 2018. Available at <https://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2018/08/tr37.pdf>

Pensions

Pension Policy
Score: 8

Australia has two explicit pension systems, the public age pension and private employment-related pensions. The public age pension is funded from general taxation revenue, and because it is means-tested, it effectively acts as a social safety net. Pensioners enjoy additional benefits such as access to universal health care, concessions on pharmaceutical and other government services, and tax concessions.

Currently, the public age pension is still the dominant source of income for retirees. Approximately 70% of pensioners receive a means-tested pension from the government. About 41% of pensioners receive a reduced government pension due to their own assets. The result is that Australian pensioners' income is the second lowest in the OECD compared to the income of the working population. Measured income poverty of pensioners relying on public age pensions is therefore relatively high. However, over 80% of pensioners own their home. This, combined with the large expenditure subsidies they receive, means that broader poverty measures that take wealth and expenditure subsidies into account show low rates of deprivation among this group. In some cases, pensioners without their own home are forced to retire to rural Australia in order to find affordable housing. A few even migrate abroad.

Over time the balance will shift toward the private pension system, which was only introduced on a large scale in 1992, and reached a minimum contribution rate of 9% of earnings only in 2002. The minimum contribution rate increased to 9.5% on 1 July 2014 and was scheduled to increase by a further 0.5% per year until it reached 12% on 1 July 2019. However, in 2014 the Abbott government deferred further increases until 1 July 2021. Contributions to

private pensions are concessionally taxed at a flat rate of 15%, and private pension income in retirement is largely tax exempt.

Population aging has increased anticipated pressures on the pension system. In response, the government indicated in its 2009 - 2010 budget that it would progressively increase the age of eligibility for the public age pension from 65 to 67 years (by July 2023).

In terms of intergenerational inequity, the gradual nature of the shift since 1992 from a pay-as-you-go public pension toward a private pension system supplemented by a public pension has meant that relatively little inequity has resulted between generations.

Lastly, concerning the fiscal sustainability of the pension system, while reliance on the public age pension will continue to be high for many years, in broad terms the pension system is relatively sustainable, with private pensions increasingly taking on more of the financial burden. Concerns have been raised, however, about the sustainability and equity of maintaining the tax-free status of private retirement income. The current absence of significant constraints on how private pension assets are used is also of concern, with some evidence that retirees run down private pension holdings too quickly and become reliant on the public age pension.

Citation:

OECD, Pensions at a glance. Paris, OECD 2013. p. 68 - 70.

OECD, Pensions at a glance, Paris, OECD 2015. p. 207 - 211. http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oced/social-issues-migration-health/pensions-at-a-glance-2015_pension_glance-2015-en#page209

Lisa Pryor, The End of the Australian Dream. The New York Times. 2 May 2017. p. 1, 13.

Eden Gillespie: The pensioners retiring overseas because they can't afford Australia, ABC News, 16 May 2018, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-16/pensioners-retiring-overseas-because-they-cant-afford-australia/9762418>

Integration

Integration Policy
Score: 8

Relative to its population size, Australia has maintained one of the largest immigration programs of any established democracy in the post-World War II era. Over one-fifth of the population is foreign-born. Successful integration of immigrants has therefore been a policy priority for much of Australia's history. In general, Australia has and continues to be highly successful in integrating immigrants. The most important contributor to this success has been a highly selective immigration policy. Most migrants are selected on the basis of their skills and English language ability. Post-migration, explicit

integration efforts primarily consist of encouraging immigrants to apply for citizenship. The combination of a steadily growing economy and the exclusion of migrants from welfare payments in the first two years after their arrival has meant most migrants find employment. Australia is more successful than most OECD countries regarding the integration of migrants into the labor market. The effect has been a swift integration into Australian society. The selection of migrants and limited access to welfare payments, combined with a cosmopolitan society, have demonstrated above average success.

However, concerns have arisen in recent years about the large number of temporary skilled immigrants, many from island states in the South Pacific. Historically, immigration in Australia has been conceived as permanent resettlement, and the phenomenon of large numbers of temporary immigrants is relatively new, only taking on significant proportions this century. Granting of temporary migrant visas peaked around 2014, when more than 100,000 visas were issued. By its nature, the temporary-immigration program is not geared toward long-term integration of immigrants, creating some potential for breakdown in social cohesion. However, in the last several years, the government has introduced regulations and fees which have reduced the number of temporary visas issued.

Despite Australia's relatively open immigration policy, an ongoing concern relates to asylum-seekers who have arrived, usually on boats from Southeast Asia. Mandatory detention was introduced for asylum-seekers in the 1990s, and offshore processing of asylum-seekers was reinstated in 2012. Following the 2013 election, the coalition introduced Operation Sovereign Borders, under which the Australian navy prevents all vessels containing asylum-seekers from reaching Australia. While politically very controversial, the policy appears to have been effective in dramatically reducing the number of asylum-seekers attempting to arrive by boat. Tight control of Australia's borders arguably strengthens the political support for continued high levels of skilled and business immigration.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/asylum-seeker-boat-tumbacks-supported-by-71-percent-in-poll-20140603-39h2a.html>

<https://www.justlanded.com/english/Australia/Australia-Guide/Jobs/Unemployment-Benefit>

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration/dramatic-decrease-in-asylumseeker-deaths/news-story/0967f643c9a38e09d36d0ad1c28c8a54>

Internal Security
Policy
Score: 8

Safe Living

Internal security is primarily the responsibility of the states and there is correspondingly some variation in policies and outcomes across them. In most states crime rates are relatively low. Coordination between various policing, enforcement and intelligence-gathering authorities is generally satisfactory.

Responsibility for internal security at the national level rests with the Australian federal police and the Australian security intelligence organization; the latter has no powers of arrest and relies on the police for support. Both rely on the criminal law for prosecutions, as well as on the Anti-Terrorism Act 2005. International organized crime that is not terrorism-related is investigated by the Australian crime commission.

In 2015, the coalition government introduced several measures aimed at countering terrorism and improving national security more generally. Most significant was the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Act 2015, allowing increased surveillance of electronic communications and imposing requirements on internet service providers to retain data for minimum periods. The act was opposed by groups concerned that it unduly infringes on civil liberties, as well as by telecommunications providers, who argued it would impose substantial costs on them. In 2016, the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) was passed, which grants the government explicit powers to revoke Australian citizenship of dual citizens convicted of engaging in terrorist-related activities.

Violent crime has decreased in Australia, but the situation has improved more for men than for women. Most female murder victims die at the hands of their male partners and family violence remains a big issue in Australian society.

In July 2017, the prime minister announced that the government would establish a home affairs portfolio that will bring together Australia's immigration, border protection, law enforcement and domestic security agencies in a single portfolio. The new portfolio will be more similar to the UK model than the U.S. model – a federation of border and security agencies under which the various agencies retain statutory independence.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/martin-place-cafe-siege-overreaction-from-fear-is-a-measure-of-a-terrorists-success-20141215-127rih.html>

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/nsw-crime-statistics-12-major-crime-types-fall-to-their-lowest-in-20-years-20160905-gr921b.html>

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1718/Quick_Guides/HomeAffairs

Caitlin Fitzsimmons: Australia is safer than it used to be but family violence persists. Sydney Morning Herald. 21 July 2018. Available at <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/australia-is-safer-than-it-used-to-be-but-family-violence-persists-20180720-p4zsqy.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-06/fact-file-domestic-violence-statistics/7147938>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-trauma/201806/domestic-abuse-linked-financial-crisis>

Global Inequalities

Global Social
Policy
Score: 6

Australia plays a significant role in the region with regard to promoting economic development and poverty alleviation in less developed countries, particularly in the Pacific. Australia is also a strong advocate of trade liberalization, especially in relation to agricultural products, which is critically important to economic development in most developing countries.

However, the 2014 government budget included cuts to foreign aid of AUD 7.6 billion over five years, which arguably represents a backward step in promoting economic opportunities in developing countries.

Since 2017, the increasingly aggressive foreign policy of China has resulted in an expansion of Australia's regional aid programs.

Due to its status as a middle power, Australia lacks leverage on some issues. It has been unable to provide a major impetus to further develop the multilateral trading system, for example. Australian governments have supported the multilateral trading system rhetorically, but have at the same time contributed to the weakening of the WTO by implementing a number of preferential trade agreements. Australia has concluded free trade agreements (FTAs) with all major economies in Asia (ASEAN, South Korea, China and Japan).

Citation:
<http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/>

Rod McGuirk: Australia details investment in Pacific as China clout grows. AP News. 8 November 2018. Available at <https://www.apnews.com/cf3404ef6f4b404197e83066179aa4f4>

III. Environmental Policies

Environment

Environmental
Policy
Score: 5

Australia's economy is based to a considerable extent on the exploitation of natural resources and on a resource-intensive mode of agricultural production and exportation. Therefore, the trade-off between environmental concerns and economic growth is a topic of great public debate.

Environmental policy in Australia has focused very much in recent years on climate change and water security. Some progress has been made on water security in recent years, including the construction of desalination plants and the creation of the Murray-Darling Basin water management plan. However, energy consumption is generally high and, despite great potential for solar and wind energy, the contribution of renewable energy to the grid remains relatively low.

Australia's infrastructure continues to be stretched thin, a fact contributing to rising carbon emissions. Public transport in Australian cities is less developed than in comparable European or Asian cities. Investment in infrastructure has been deficient, and must become a key component in Australia's environmental policy over coming decades.

One of the early acts of Prime Minister Abbott's Liberal-National coalition government was to abolish the carbon tax introduced by the previous Labor government in 2012, which ceased to apply from 1 July 2014. The government remains committed to reducing by 2030 carbon emissions by anywhere from 26% to 28% compared to 2005 levels, but currently have no effective means of achieving this.

A government-commissioned review of the national electricity market was published in June 2017. Most of its recommendations were accepted, but in the intervening period up to the end of the review period, there has been almost no progress on the policy front. Industry uncertainty therefore persists, undermining incentives to invest in energy generation, and contributing to record-high energy prices for consumers, low levels of reliability, and very limited progress on emissions reductions.

Biodiversity decline is also a significant concern in Australia, with considerable evidence of an acceleration in decline over recent decades. In

response to this concern, in October 2010 the Australian government released “Australia’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 - 2030,” which provides the guiding framework for conserving Australia’s biodiversity over that period. Various policies to address the decline in biodiversity have been implemented, though more action is required.

Citation:

Australian Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, ‘Australia’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030,’ 2010: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/strategy-2010-30/pubs/biodiversity-strategy-2010.pdf>

Murray-Darling Basin Authority: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/>

In Australien herrscht wegen der Volatilität der Strompreise und der sich häufenden Blackouts eine Energiekrise, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 11. Mai 2017.

Tesla to build world’s biggest lithium ion battery in South Australia, The Guardian, 7. July 2017, www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/07/tesla-to-build-worlds-biggest-lithium-ion-battery-in-south-australia

Electricity Market Review: <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/1d6b0464-6162-4223-ac08-3395a6b1c7fa/files/electricity-market-review-final-report.pdf>

Global Environmental Protection

Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 6

Australia is not prioritizing the advancement of global environmental protection regimes. After winning the 2013 election, the coalition abolished the carbon tax introduced by the previous labor government. While this is a domestic issue, the coalition’s strong anti-carbon tax posture indicates the Liberal party and its coalition partner is much less enthusiastic than the previous Labor party government about participating in a global environmental protection regime.

Citation:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/02/australia-will-honour-paris-climate-agreement-simon-birmingham-says>

Quality of Democracy

Electoral Processes

Candidacy
Procedures
Score: 10

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is an independent statutory authority that oversees the registration of candidates and parties according to the registration provisions of Part XI of the Commonwealth Electoral Act. The AEC is accountable for the conduct of elections to a cross-party parliamentary committee, the joint standing committee on electoral matters (JSCEM). JSCEM holds inquiries into and reports on any issues relating to electoral laws and practices and their administration.

There are no significant barriers to registration for any potential candidate or party. A party requires a minimum of 500 members who are on the electoral roll. A candidate for a federal election must be an Australian citizen, without dual citizenship, at least 18 years old and must not be serving a prison sentence of 12 months or more, or be an undischarged bankrupt or insolvent.

There have been no changes to the laws relating to candidacy procedures in the period under review, and the process remains open, transparent and in line with international best practices. However, in October 2017, following revelations that at least seven parliamentarians held citizenship of another country – in most cases by ancestry rather than by birth – the High Court ruled that five parliamentarians were ineligible to serve as members of Australia’s parliament. This generated considerable political instability.

Media Access
Score: 8

There are no explicit barriers restricting access to the media for any political party or candidate. The media is generally independent, and highly activist. Furthermore, the public broadcasters – the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) – are required under the Australian Broadcasting Act to provide balanced coverage. In practice, the two dominant parties attract most coverage and it is somewhat difficult for minor parties to obtain media coverage. For example, the ABC has a practice of providing free air time to each of the two main parties (Labor and the Liberal-National coalition) during the election campaign, a service not extended to other political parties. Print media is highly concentrated and biased toward the established parties. However, independent and minor-party senators do attract considerable media attention when the governing party does

not have a majority in the Senate, and therefore requires their support to pass legislation. In recent decades, this has been the rule rather than the exception.

In terms of advertising, there are no restrictions on expenditures by candidates or parties, although no advertising is permitted in the three days up to and including polling day. Inequity in access to the media through advertising does arguably arise, as the governing party has the capacity to run advertising campaigns that nominally serve to provide information to the public about government policies and programs, but which are in fact primarily conducted to advance the electoral interests of the governing party.

Voting and
Registration
Rights
Score: 10

No changes to voting rights occurred in the review period. Registration on the electoral roll and voting are compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 years and over, although compliance is somewhat less than 100%, particularly among young people. Prisoners serving terms of three years or more are not entitled to vote in federal elections until after their release, but all other adult citizens can participate in federal elections and there is no evidence that any person has been prevented from voting.

Party Financing
Score: 8

All candidates in state and federal elections are entitled to public funding, subject to obtaining at least 4% of the first preference vote. The amount to be paid is calculated by multiplying the number of votes obtained by the election funding rate for that year. The funding rate is indexed every six months to increase in line with the consumer price index; for the 2016 election, it was 262.8 cents per eligible vote in both houses of parliament (House of Representatives and Senate). The total election funding paid in the 2016 federal election was AUD 62.8 million. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) administers the distribution of funding and provides full public accounts of payments made.

For private funding, there are no limits on the value of donations, and while there are disclosure rules, they are not comprehensive and vary considerably across state governments. At the federal level, for example, candidates endorsed by a registered political party may roll their reporting of donations received into their annual party return, which, in the case of the July 2016 federal election, was not due for release until October 2017. The AEC does, however, rigorously monitor and enforce the disclosure requirements in place. Several of the state and territory governments have in recent years legislated to improve disclosure requirements for private funding and in some cases limit donations. Other states, such as Victoria, introduced a non-binding Code of Conduct in October 2011.

In June 2017, an investigation by journalists into Chinese attempts to influence Australian political parties revealed that both major political parties accepted donations believed to have originated from the Chinese government. The

prime minister subsequently ordered an inquiry into espionage and foreign interference laws. The conflict between Australia and China escalated in late 2017: the Australian government accused China of undue interference, while Chinese commentators have labeled Australia an agent of the United States. Australia's relationship with China remains tense.

Citation:

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Inquiry into the funding of political parties and election campaigns, December 2011: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=en/political%20funding/index.htm

Brenton Holmes 'Political financing: regimes and reforms in Australian states and territories,' Parliamentary Library, 19 March 2012: http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/2011-2012/PoliticalFinancing

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/campaign-finance/australia.php>

http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/Reports_On_Federal_Electoral_Events/2010/disclosure.htm#thresholds

http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/Reports_On_Federal_Electoral_Events/2010/fad-report.pdf

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-22/foreign-donations-could-skew-australias-democracy-politicians/7775060>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-06/turnbull-orders-inquiry-following-revelation-asio-warned-parties/8592308>

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/china-criticism-grows-over-australian-foreign-interference-stance-20171211-h02in1.html>

Australien legt sich mit China an. FAZ, 12.Dezember 2017, S. 18.

Popular Decision-Making
Score: 5

Citizens do not have the legal right to propose and take binding decisions on matters of importance to them at any level of government. Since the establishment of the Federation in 1901, citizens have voted on specific issues 44 times, with eight of those succeeding. They cannot initiate the process. Some of these referendums have covered important issues, such as the 1967 referendum on the status of indigenous people in Australian society. However, no referendum has succeeded since 1977. National referendums are mandatory in the case of parliament-proposed changes to the constitution. Constitutional amendments must be approved in a referendum and the result is binding. In addition, states and territories may also hold referendums on issues other than constitutional amendments.

The Citizen Initiated Referendum Bill, which would have enabled citizens of Australia to initiate legislation for the holding of a referendum to alter the constitution, was presented and read in the Senate in 2013, but did not proceed and lapsed at the end of the 43rd parliament in September 2013.

Citation:

http://www.aph.gov.au/~media/05%20About%20Parliament/54%20Parliamentary%20Depts/544%20Parliamentary%20Library/Handbook/43rd_PH_Part5.ashx

Williams, George/Hume, David, 2012, People Power: The History and Future of the Referendum in Australia

Citizen Initiated Referendum Bill 2013, No.

, 2013 (Senator Madigan), A Bill for an act to enable the citizens of Australia to initiate legislation for the holding of a referendum in relation to altering the constitution, and for related purposes, <http://www.restoreaustralia.org.au/petition-ups/CIR%20Bill.pdf>

Australian Election Commission, Referendum dates and results, http://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/referendums/Referendum_Dates_and_Results.htm

Access to Information

Media Freedom
Score: 7

Media organizations – both public and private – are largely independent from government, although the main public broadcaster is accountable to a board of directors appointed by the government. Censorship is mainly restricted to material of a violent or sexual nature. There are, however, several potentially significant threats to media independence. For one, regulation of ownership of media is politicized and some owners are regarded as favorable to the incumbent government. Also, the Anti-Terrorism Act 2005 allows for control orders to restrict freedom of speech by individuals and the freedom of the media to publish their views. The National Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 also restricts the ability of journalists to report on secret intelligence operations, with up to 10 years in jail imposed for exposing errors made by security agencies. Journalists argue that if whistleblowers are punished, journalism will be hurt. The implications of these two pieces of legislation for media freedom have not yet been tested in court.

Citation:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/call-to-scrap-security-laws-that-could-jail-journos/news-story/0b7b4d888751c0b11dc093ccb11c07bd>

<http://www.pressfreedom.org.au/press-media-alliance-freedom-report/introduction/foreword>

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/australia>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-14/china-backlash-australia-questions-of-political-interference/9258462>

Media Pluralism
Score: 4

Australia has a very high degree of concentration of media ownership, with the ownership of national and state newspapers being divided mainly between two companies: Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and the John Fairfax Group. The concentration of newspaper ownership has resulted in a low level of diversity in reporting and editorial positions. There is slightly more diversity in broadcast media, with the government funding two bodies, the Australian

Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service, to provide a balance to the main commercial outlets. There are also three main commercial companies, none of which is politically aligned.

The potential for greater concentration of media ownership increased following the passing in 2017 of amendments to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. The amendments repeal two regulations that prevented any single person from controlling commercial television licenses that broadcast to more than 75% of the federal population or controlling more than two regulated forms of media (i.e., commercial radio, commercial TV or associated newspapers) in one commercial radio license area. Following the passage of this legislation, in mid-2018 a merger was announced between Channel 9, one of the three commercial free-to-air television networks, and Fairfax Media, the second-largest newspaper proprietor and owner of various radio stations.

Citation:

How the Fairfax takeover will further concentrate Australia's media. The Guardian. 2 August 2018. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2018/aug/03/the-fairfax-takeover-and-how-it-will-worsen-australias-media-industry-squeeze>

Access to
Government
Information
Score: 7

Since 1982, access to government information has been largely regulated by the Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act). Under this act, applications for information from the government must be made in writing and agencies must respond within 30 days.

The original FOI Act contained a considerable number of exemptions, including for cabinet documents; internal working documents; documents affecting national security, international relations or relations with states; documents affecting enforcement of law and protection of public safety; documents affecting federal financial or property interests; documents relating to business affairs or research; and documents affecting the national economy.

Ministers were granted considerable discretion to issue “conclusive certificates” stating that information was exempt under the act’s provisions that protect deliberative process documents, national security and defense, cabinet documents, and documents related to federal/state relations. These certificates could not be reviewed at any appeal.

Compliance with the FOI Act was heavily and widely criticized in the past, and the Labor government elected in 2007 passed several pieces of legislation and new regulations that sought to improve community access to government information. This included: the Freedom of Information (Removal of Conclusive Certificates and Other Measures) Act 2009; the Freedom of Information (Fees and Charges) Amendment Regulations 2010; the Australian

Information Commissioner Act 2010; and the Freedom of Information Amendment (Reform) Act 2010, under which requirements to publish information were increased as of 1 May 2011.

In May 2014, the coalition government announced the abolition of the office of the Australian information commissioner, although in principle its main functions will continue to be carried out by other agencies.

Citation:

Attorney General's Department web site describing the 2009 and 2010 Freedom of Information reforms: [http://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/FOI/Pages/Freedomofinformati onreforms.aspx](http://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/FOI/Pages/Freedomofinformati%20onreforms.aspx)

http://www.oaic.gov.au/images/documents/freedom-of-information/applying-the-foi-act/foi-guidelines/part2_Scope_application_FOI_Act_v1.3.pdf

Statement by the Australian Information Commissioner, Freedom of Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner on the government's decision to abolish the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: <http://www.oaic.gov.au/news-and-events/statements/australian-governments-budget-decision-to-disband-oiac/australian-government-s-budget-decision-to-disband-oiac>

Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights
Score: 7

Australia is the only major established democracy which does not have a bill of rights. Civil rights are protected through a significant body of legislation and by the constitution, which contains certain implied rights which are subject to interpretation by the High Court.

While Australia's record of protecting human rights is internationally regarded as strong, criticism continues to be voiced regarding treatment of the indigenous population and the respect accorded to asylum-seekers' civil rights. Even the Labor party supports the policy of offshore processing of asylum-seekers, which is of course denying them rights enjoyed by Australian citizens.

Concerns have been raised about counter-terrorism legislation. The Anti-Terrorism Act 2005 includes a variety of individual powers, including detention for up to 14 days, and restrictions on the movement, activities and contacts of persons subject to "control orders," whether or not those persons have been accused or convicted of any offense. The coalition government has implemented four further tranches of legislation since October 2014. These include the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Act 2015, which requires telecommunications service providers to retain and secure telecommunications metadata for two years. 22 agencies, including the Australian security intelligence organization (ASIO), state police forces, the Australian crime commission and the Australian taxation office are able to view the data without a warrant. The act is opposed by a wide range of

groups, including human rights organizations and civil liberties groups, on the basis that it represents an excessive encroachment on Australians' privacy. Most recently, the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Bill 2015 grants the government explicit powers to revoke Australian citizenship from dual citizens convicted of engaging in terrorist-related activities. The bill has also been criticized for being unconstitutional and for allowing possible retrospective application.

In late 2017, the government announced new laws making it a criminal offense to be in possession of instructional terrorist material or to engage in terrorism hoaxes, and reached agreement with the states and territories to develop national facial biometric matching capability. As of the end of the review period, the government is seeking to pass legislation which imposes new requirements on organizations to assist law enforcement and security agencies to access information, introduces new computer access warrants that enable law enforcement to covertly obtain evidence directly from a device, and increase the power of law enforcement to access data through search and seizure warrants. Opponents argue that these measures represent unjustified infringements on civil liberties.

Citation:

<http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/36221/>

Leonard, P (February–March 2015). "The metadata retention debate rages on" Internet Law Bulletin: <http://www.gtlaw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/The-Metadata-Retention-Debate-rages-on.pdf>

<https://theconversation.com/improved-citizenship-bill-still-invites-criticism-and-high-court-challenges-47153>

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/a-new-low-labor-slams-tumbull-government-plans-to-put-asylum-seekers-on-the-street-20170827-gy4z9b.html>

<https://theconversation.com/the-devil-is-in-the-detail-of-government-bill-to-enable-access-to-communications-data-96909>

Political Liberties
Score: 8

Political liberty is strongly protected by the courts, but is not unfettered. As in other Western countries, anti-terrorist legislation has raised a major challenge to political liberties. The Anti-Terrorism Act 2005 makes any act of sedition illegal, such as urging the overthrow of the government by violence or force, and outlaws any organization that advocates the use of violence or force for that end. One of the main criticisms of the legislation is that it lacks sufficient judicial oversight. Some also regard the design and administration of defamation laws as hampering political liberties, as they in practice act to protect governments, companies and powerful people from scrutiny.

Like many other OECD countries, Australia has seen a rise in anti-Islamic political parties, including Pauline Hanson's One Nation party, which secured

four out of 76 seats in the Senate in the July 2016 federal election. At the same time, there are concerns that freedom of speech may suffer in Australian Universities. In November 2018, the federal government asked a former chief justice of the high court to review the health of freedom of speech on Australia's university campuses.

Citation:

Gareth Hutchens: Universities warn against meddling as inquiry into freedom of speech announced. The Guardian. 14 November 2018. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/14/universities-warn-against-meddling-as-inquiry-into-freedom-of-speech-announced>

Non-discrimination
Score: 7

Australia has developed a substantial body of anti-discrimination legislation, covering sex, race, ethnicity, marital status, pregnancy and disability. The body charged with overseeing this legislation, the Australian Human Rights Commission, is a statutory authority. After completion of a National Human Rights Consultation, Gillard's Labor government moved toward replacing existing anti-discrimination legislation with a single integrated act that additionally incorporated prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Despite a reduction in sexual discrimination over recent decades, a 2016 survey of young Australians indicated that discrimination against women remains a problem.

No changes to legislation were ultimately made during the Gillard government's term in office, and the new coalition government has shown no interest in implementing the changes. Indeed, in November 2013, the attorney general announced a plan to amend part of Australia's racial-discrimination laws by repealing section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, which makes it unlawful for someone to perform an act that is reasonably likely to "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate" someone because of their race or ethnicity. In response to widespread opposition to the proposal, it was abandoned in August 2014. Several members of the coalition government nonetheless continue to advocate for its repeal.

Importantly, the Australian parliament passed a bill on 7 December 2017 that allows same-sex marriage. That bill followed a non-binding referendum, which was supported by 61.6% of Australian voters.

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-evaluation/youth-survey>

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace-relations/gender-discrimination-starts-young-mission-australia-2016-youth-survey-20161202-gt2snt.html>

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/australian-parliament-approves-sex-marriage-lengthy-national-debate/story?id=51637900>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/datablog/ng-interactive/2017/nov/15/same-sex-marriage-survey-how-australia-voted-electorate-by-electorate>

Rule of Law

Legal Certainty
Score: 9

There is strong judicial oversight of executive decisions. Judicial oversight occurs through a well-developed system of administrative courts, and through the High Court. That said, jurisdictional uncertainty between the federal and state governments continues to be an issue. Two recent cases highlighting this uncertainty are a 2013 High Court challenge to the constitutionality of the Minerals Resources Rent Tax (MRRT) introduced by the federal government in 2012, and a 2014 High Court challenge to the constitutionality of federal funding of school chaplains. The High Court ruled the MRRT constitutional, but ruled the chaplaincy program unconstitutional.

Citation:

Michael Crommelin, 'The MRRT Survives, For Now: Fortescue Metals Group Ltd v Commonwealth' on Opinions on High (16 September 2013)

Gabrielle Appleby 'Commonwealth left scrambling by school chaplaincy decision' The Conversation, 19 June 2014: <https://theconversation.com/commonwealth-left-scrambling-by-school-chaplaincy-decision-27935>

Judicial Review
Score: 10

There has been no significant change during the period under review. While the scope for judicial review of government actions is very much affected by legislation allowing for or denying such review, it is nonetheless the case that government and administrative decisions are frequently reviewed by courts. There is a strong tradition of independent judicial review of executive decisions. This tradition stems to a significant extent from the evolution of administrative law, which has spawned an administrative courts process through which complainants may seek a review of executive action. The executive branch generally has very little power to remove judges, which further contributes to the independence of the judiciary. Furthermore, there are many instances in which courts have ruled against the executive. The executive has in the past generally accepted the decisions of the courts or appealed to a higher court, rather than attempting to circumvent the decision.

Appointment of
Justices
Score: 6

The High Court is the final court of appeal for all federal and state courts. While the constitution lays out various rules for the positions of High Court justices, such as tenure and retirement, there are no guidelines for their appointment – apart from them being appointed by the head of state, the governor-general. Prior to 1979, the appointment of High Court justices was largely a matter for the federal government, with little or no consultation with the states and territories. The High Court Act 1979 introduced the requirement for consultation between the chief law officers in the states, the attorneys general and the federal attorney general. While the system is still not transparent, it does appear that there are opportunities for the states to

nominate candidates for a vacant position. However, there has never been a High Court judge from either South Australia or Tasmania, which has been a long-standing bone of contention. Considering the importance of the High Court for the settlement of federal-state relations, there has been concern that judges with a strong federal perspective are regularly being preferred. From the perspective of the public, the appointment process is secret and the public is rarely consulted when a vacancy occurs. In recent years, a debate has emerged whether diversity, as well as representativeness, should be considered during the selection of judges.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/easier-to-pick-a-melbourne-cup-winner-than-next-high-court-judge-20120312-1uwds.html>

<http://www.hcourt.gov.au/justices/about-the-justices>

<https://www.ruleoflaw.org.au/australia-high-court-appointment/>

Corruption
Prevention
Score: 8

Prevention of corruption is reasonably effective. Federal and state governments have established a variety of bodies to investigate corruption by politicians and public officials. Many of these bodies have the powers of Royal Commissions, which means that they can summon witnesses to testify.

At the federal level, these bodies include the Australian crime commission, charged with combating organized crime and public corruption, the Australian securities and investments commission, the main corporate regulator and the Australian national audit office.

Nonetheless, significant potential for corruption persists, particularly at the state and territory level. There have been isolated cases of misconduct in anti-corruption commissions. Allegations of corruption in the granting of mining leases have sparked public outcry, and a New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into corruption in the granting of such leases was in progress throughout the review period. This inquiry has led to the resignations of a number of members of the New South Wales parliament from both the Labor and Liberal parties.

Questions of propriety are also occasionally raised with respect to the awarding of government contracts. Tender processes are not always open, and “commercial-in-confidence” is often cited as the reason for non-disclosure of contracts with private sector firms, raising concerns of favorable treatment extended to friends or favored constituents. Questions of inappropriate personal gain have also been raised when ministers leave parliament to immediately take up positions in companies they had been responsible for regulating.

Australia has been reluctant to address cross-border corruption. A notable exception is the recent action of Australian federal police, which in October 2014 seized assets of allegedly corrupt Chinese officials. This joint operation with Chinese authorities has been a novelty.

Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives are required to report on their financial interests within 28 days of taking the oath of office. These registers were adopted by resolution of the House of Representatives on 8 October 1984 and the Senate on 17 March 1994. However, there have been instances of failure to comply with this requirement, usually with no consequences for the member concerned. Ministers are further subject to a ministerial code of conduct, introduced in 1996. However, this code has no legal standing, and is therefore unenforceable.

Citation:

<http://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/investigations/current-investigations>

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/23/australia-slow-to-tackle-international-corruption-with-just-one-case-in-court>

<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-17/systemic-corruption-inside-ccc-watchdog-finds/6554220>

Governance

I. Executive Capacity

Strategic Capacity

Strategic
Planning
Score: 7

Probably the most important government body for encouraging long-term strategic policy development is the Productivity Commission, which notionally provides advice to government on microeconomic policy, but which increasingly is asked to provide advice in other policy areas. The Productivity Commission conducts reviews and inquiries as directed by government, and also independently produces research reports. All advice and reports are released publicly in a timely fashion.

Within the Federal public service, extensive use is made of committees to undertake strategic planning, and the activities of these committees generally peak immediately before and after the transition to a new government, and in the pre-budget period. The public service also maintains a single department, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, with the aim of coordinating and directing strategic planning across the government as a whole.

The coalition government rationalized the number of government departments and agencies shortly after coming into office in September 2013. The Community and Public Sector Union estimated that 18,000 public sector jobs were cut in the subsequent period as a result, reducing the strategic planning capacity of the public service. The implications for strategic planning are not likely positive.

Citation:

<http://www.blackincbooks.com/books/dog-days>

<http://www.cpsu.org.au/news/why-re-elected-turnbull-government-bad-your-job>

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/paul-keating-australia-lacks-a-foreign-policy-to-negotiate-the-rise-of-china-20160830-gr4y70.html>

Productivity Commission: <https://www.pc.gov.au/>

<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/trade-assistance>

<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/rising-protectionism>

Expert Advice
Score: 6

The federal government has always made extensive use of scientific and specialist scholarly advice, particularly in areas such as health and medicine, and science and technology.

Since the late 1990s, and particularly since 2007, the federal government has funded a range of specialist centers and institutes aimed at undertaking fundamental research and planning, the findings from which feed into government policy. Examples include government support for regulation and compliance centers at the Australian National University, with the Regulatory Institutions Network (RegNet), and the establishment of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, which is a postgraduate faculty set up by the Australian and New Zealand governments, and by the state governments in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Despite these formal mechanisms, academic influence on government decision-making is relatively limited, particularly in the economic and social policy domains. Australian governments accept advice on technical issues, but much less so on political and economic issues. The notable exception is the Productivity Commission, which draws on expert advice when conducting inquiries and reviews.

Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise
Score: 9

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for policy coordination, and as such evaluates and provides advice on major proposals from federal ministries. The department has significant resources, and has authority to draw from, and consult with, appropriate sources across the entire government system.

Citation:
<https://www.pmc.gov.au/who-we-are>

Line Ministries
Score: 9

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) is always involved at an early stage in assisting with the development and drafting of any significant government policy and the resulting legislation. The PMC and the other relevant department must agree on a policy before it can be tabled in cabinet or considered by the relevant minister or ministers.

Cabinet
Committees
Score: 8

Committees serve a purpose in dealing with various matters, which include: highly sensitive issues, for example revenue or security matters; relatively

routine issues, for example a government’s weekly parliamentary program; business that is labor intensive or requires detailed consideration by a smaller group of ministers, for example the expenditure review that takes place before the annual budget, or oversight of the government’s initiatives in relation to a sustainable environment. The prime minister usually establishes a number of standing committees of the cabinet (e.g., expenditure review, national security, parliamentary business). Additional committees, including ad hoc committees, may be set up from time to time for particular purposes, such as handling a national disaster.

Citation:
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint

Ministerial
 Bureaucracy
 Score: 8

There is generally a high level of coordination between federal ministry public servants. In most cases, ministries must coordinate with the Department of Finance and the Treasury, since they are responsible for finding the resources for any new policy developments, and such developments must feed into the government’s spending and budget cycle. Where there are legal implications, there must be coordination with the attorney general’s department. Departments least likely to coordinate their activities across the government portfolio are Defense and Foreign Affairs and Trade, since their activities have the fewest implications across other portfolios.

Coordination is especially effective when the political leadership is driving proposals, but less effective on policy matters initiated at the level of the minister or department, in part reflecting greater uncertainty among civil servants as to the support for the proposal from the political leadership. It also reflects differences in policy priorities and culture across departments, as well as inherent competition between departments for power, relevance and resources.

Informal
 Coordination
 Score: 8

Information coordination procedures exist at the level of the party, where informal consultations on policies take place on a regular basis to make sure that the party leadership supports the government’s direction. This occurs regardless of which party is in office. The federal system and the division of responsibilities between the federal government and the state and territory governments means that informal coordination is always an important component of any policy that may involve the states. These procedures are ad hoc, and take place at two levels, among ministers from different jurisdictions, and at the level of senior public servants.

Digitalization for
 Interministerial
 Coordination
 Score: 7

Government departments and agencies have historically developed information systems independently to meet their own particular needs. There has, however, been growing emphasis on interoperability, recognizing the efficiency gains in implementing policy and more generally running

government, and the benefits of cross-agency data sharing. Notable in this regard is the Digital Transformation Agency, which was established in 2015 to help government departments and agencies undergo digital transformation, and now has central oversight of the government's ICT agenda. Common standards for data security have been developed by the Australian Signals Directorate, although not all agencies are (yet) fully compliant with these standards.

Citation:

Digital Transformation Agency: <https://www.dta.gov.au/>

Information Security Manual: <https://cyber.gov.au/government/publications/australian-government-information-security-manual-ism/>

Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application
Score: 8

The federal government and the state and territory governments require the preparation of regulation impact statements (RIS) for significant regulatory proposals. An RIS provides a formal assessment of the costs and benefits of a regulatory proposal and alternative options for that proposal, followed by a recommendation supporting the most effective and efficient option. RISs are thus not assessments of the socioeconomic impacts of regulatory proposals, although such impacts are implicitly taken into account as part of the process. In recent years, while 75% to 85% of all Australian government proposals with “significant” impacts were subject to an RIS, this proportion was lower for proposals with “highly significant” impacts.

Since many government functions and responsibilities are shared between the federal government and the states, these shared activities are coordinated through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which is the body that brings the federal and state governments together to decide policy. The procedures for the preparation of RIS proposals differ between the federal government and the COAG. Most states and territories have their own requirements for RISs that apply where a regulation will have effect in only a single state or territory. At the federal level, RISs are managed by the office of best practice regulation, which is part of the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

Citation:

Productivity Commission, ‘Regulatory Impact Analysis: Benchmarking,’ Research Report, November 2012: http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/120675/ria-benchmarking.pdf

<http://www.oecd.org/publications/oecd-regulatory-policy-outlook-2015-9789264238770-en.htm>

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/regulation/developing-regulation-impact-statement>

Quality of RIA
Process
Score: 5

The preparation of a RIS follows a standard procedure in which policymakers gather the information that will enable them to evaluate the extent to which the proposed regulatory changes will result in a net benefit to the community. The office of best practice regulation within the Department of Finance and Deregulation, which administers both the federal government and the COAG regulation requirements, seeks a range of information about any new regulation. The level of information required is commensurate with the magnitude of the problem that is being addressed, and the size of the potential impact of the proposal. The office of best practice regulation uses a number of “adequacy criteria” to assess whether a RIS contains the appropriate levels of information and analysis.

In 2012, the Productivity Commission, at the request of the Australian government, produced a report assessing the performance of jurisdictions’ regulatory impact analysis processes, including those at the level of the COAG, and identifying best practices. Findings of major concern from the report include the following: a number of proposals with highly significant impacts were either exempted from RIA processes or were not rigorously analyzed; public consultation on policy development was often perfunctory or occurred only after development of draft legislation; and public transparency – that is, informing stakeholders about revisions to policy proposals and providing information used in decision-making, or providing reasons for not subjecting proposals to impact analysis – was a glaring weakness in most Australian RIA processes. Furthermore, a major problem in implementing RIA requirements was that the policy decisions often occurred prior to commencement of the RIA process. However, the commission concluded that the regulatory impact analysis process was worth retaining despite unclear benefits.

Citation:

Productivity Commission, ‘Regulatory Impact Analysis: Benchmarking,’ Research Report, November 2012:
http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/120675/ria-benchmarking.pdf

<http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/Breakout-session-2-Rosalyn%20Bell-RIA-Australia%27s-experience.pdf>

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/regulation/regulation-impact-analysis-training>

Sustainability
Check
Score: 1

Sustainability checks are not an explicitly integrated component of RIAs in Australia. Australia has not formally adopted a sustainability strategy.

Quality of Ex
Post Evaluation
Score: 6

Ex post evaluation of public policies is not a mandated or standard part of policy implementation in Australia. However, Australia was ranked first in ex post evaluation in the OECD Government at a Glance Database. While an effective evaluation system is in place, the effect on the revision of policies

has so far been limited. Periodically, policies are announced with explicit accommodation for their evaluation, but this is the exception rather than the norm. In general, evaluation is more likely to occur for policies developed at the departmental or agency level (as opposed to the top level of government) or for policies that are not politically important/sensitive.

For policies that are evaluated, the quality of evaluation is variable, and rarely is the “gold standard” of a randomized controlled trial used.

Citation:

<https://de.slideshare.net/OECD-GOV/effective-ex-post-evaluation-purpose-and-challenges>

Societal Consultation

Public
Consultation
Score: 7

The degree of societal consultation on policy development varies depending on the issue, the party in government and numerous contextual factors. The key groups often consulted are trade unions and business advocacy groups, but other special interests – religious groups, environmental organizations and pro-family groups, for example – also have advocacy groups that are sometimes brought into discussions about policy. Traditionally, Labor governments have been more likely to consult with trade unions, while coalition governments have been more likely to consult with business groups. However, governments of both persuasions have engaged in extensive consultation on some policies while ignoring consultation on others.

Citation:

<https://www.pc.gov.au/about/core-functions/inquiries-and-studies>

Policy Communication

Coherent
Communication
Score: 8

Australian governments have traditionally made considerable efforts to align their policy priorities with the messages that they communicate to the public. A number of factors have helped in these efforts: a tradition of very strong discipline across all the major political parties (perhaps the strongest among the Westminster democracies); a tradition of suppressing dissent within the parties (often by the threat of deselection at the next election); strong adherence to the Westminster doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility; and an activist mass media and political opposition that seeks to exploit any apparent policy divisions within the government.

However, governments have been relatively unstable since 2007, rendering coherent policy communication more difficult. The current government has proven unable to publicly offer a clear sense of direction, and has suffered

from outspoken dissent by some members of government. In a range of policy fields (e.g., economic policy, foreign policy, climate change policy), the government has been unable to publicly communicate a coherent policy agenda.

Implementation

Government
Effectiveness
Score: 6

In September 2015, Malcolm Turnbull became prime minister. The transition from Abbott to Turnbull increased public optimism that the government would successfully implement its policy agenda. However, optimism soon faded and the government called a “double dissolution” election in July 2016. Under a double dissolution election, all 76 seats in the Senate are contested, rather than the usual 40 seats. The strategy backfired. The coalition government only won a very narrow majority in the lower house and a reduced number of seats in the upper house. Policy gridlock followed, but in 2017 and 2018 the government enjoyed some success in negotiating with the minor parties to pass legislation. That did not, however, prevent the Liberal party from ousting Turnbull and installing Scott Morrison as the new prime minister.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/brilliant-and-fearless-but-paul-keating-was-right-about-turnbull-20090626-czt7.html>

Ministerial
Compliance
Score: 9

Strong party discipline and adherence to the Westminster doctrine of cabinet collective responsibility ensure that ministers have strong incentives to implement the government’s program, rather than follow their own self-interest. Australian prime ministers are very dependent on their party caucuses and cannot govern against the majority in the caucus. Labor prime ministers in particular are limited in their choice of ministers, and typically have to accept the nominations of the various party factions. The recent successful challenge demonstrated that Liberal prime ministers are also increasingly dependent on their caucuses. Moreover, the fluctuations in the Prime Minister’s Office have contributed to weaker discipline in cabinet. In recent years, cabinet collective responsibility has suffered an occasional blow.

Citation:

Pat Weller, Prime ministers, in: Brian Galligan; Winsome Roberts, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, Sydney: Oxford University Press 2007, S. 460 - 463.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/cabinet-ministers-rejected-turnbull-s-1-6-billion-plan-to-cut-power-bills-before-leadership-implosion-20180905-p501wo.html>

Monitoring
Ministries
Score: 10

There is strong central oversight of the federal ministries by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, which reports directly to the prime minister. The federal public service, while independent of the government, is strongly motivated to support the government’s program.

Monitoring
Agencies,
Bureaucracies
Score: 9

The performance of ministries in monitoring the activities of executive agencies varies, in part due to differences in the degree of independence granted to agencies. For example, central bank independence is core to the credibility of monetary policy and is legislatively protected, which constrains parliament's capacity to monitor the agency. This notwithstanding, the general pattern over recent years has been one of increasing accountability of the 170-plus statutory authorities and officeholders to the relevant federal minister. The most notable concrete indicator of this trend is that in 2002 the Australian government commissioned the Review of the Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders (the Uhrig Review). The objective of the review was to identify issues surrounding existing governance arrangements and provide options for the government to improve the performance and get the best from statutory authorities, their office holders and their accountability frameworks. The review was completed in 2004 and a number of the recommendations have since been adopted.

Task Funding
Score: 6

Tasks are delegated to the states and territories not by choice, but by constitutional requirement, yet the states and territories are highly reliant on the federal government to finance the myriad services they provide, including primary, secondary and vocational education, policing, justice systems, public transport, roads and many health services. This dependence has been a source of much conflict, and many would argue it has led to inadequate provision of public services.

The federal government's commitment to completely pass on to states all revenue raised by a broad-based consumption tax introduced in 2000 only marginally reduced the tension between the two levels of government. Certainly, it has not helped that prices in education and health care have in recent years risen faster than general price levels, while the proportion of household expenditure subject to the consumption tax has declined from 61% in 2001 - 02 to approximately 56% in 2016 - 17.

In response, the previous Labor government attempted to address underfunding of health care and education, reaching funding agreements on health care with most jurisdictions in 2011 and making progress on agreements for school funding in early 2013. The coalition government has not shown the same commitment to increasing health and education funding, and indeed has indicated an intention to scale back federal funding. Since its rise to power in September 2013, the coalition government has delivered a significant budget deficit in every fiscal year. Consequently, task funding is likely to fall rather than rise over coming years. The notable exception is for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (currently in the process of being rolled out), which has had its funding secured by a 0.5% increase of the Medicare Levy (levied on taxable income) from July 2019.

Citation:
 Australian Government 'Re:think Tax Discussion Paper,' March 2015:
<http://bettertax.gov.au/publications/discussion-paper/>.

Parliamentary Budget Office report on trends in taxation:
https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Budget_Office/Publications/Research_reports/Trends_affecting_the_sustainability_of_Commonwealth_taxes

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-02/gst-hike-would-raise-130b-modelling-shows/6903782>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-05/school-funding-agreement-sa-first-state-to-sign-up-to-deal/10464122>

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/NDIS

Constitutional
 Discretion
 Score: 5

The responsibilities of the Commonwealth and of the states and territories are clearly laid out in the Australian constitution. However, they have been subject to judicial review over the course of the past century, which has resulted in the increasing centralization of executive power. In turn, the policies of the major political parties have been to increase this centralization in the interests of fiscal and administrative efficiency. Given the restrictions of the Australian constitution, the federal-state relationship is suboptimal, but not as problematic as some state representatives suggest. The states and territories have sought legal redress through the courts on occasions when they have felt that their authority has been diminished by the federal government. On a number of occasions, the federal government has also used its superior financial position to coerce state governments to relinquish powers or adopt favored policies of the federal government, which has had the effect of subverting their constitutional scope for discretion. However, the relationship between the federal and the state level has improved in recent years, although there is room for additional improvement. Considering the asymmetrical relationship of the past, the current situation is much improved.

Citation:
https://www.ceda.com.au/research-and-policy/research/2009/11/economy/six_myths_federal_state

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/everything-is-on-the-table-leaked-coag-agenda-reveals-gst-changes-being-considered-20151208-gli766.html>

<https://www.coag.gov.au/about-coag/agreements/intergovernmental-agreement-implementing-water-reform-murray-darling-basin>

National
 Standards
 Score: 6

The federal government has a strong commitment to providing uniform national services, and it makes considerable effort to ensure that program delivery, particularly in health and education, is as uniform as possible across the country. This attempt at uniformity is necessarily complicated by differences in sizes of states and population distribution, and by resistance

Effective
Regulatory
Enforcement
Score: 6

from state governments keen to preserve their independence. Variation in funding levels according to need (as determined by an independent statutory authority, the Commonwealth Grants Commission) helps to ensure uniformity. Moreover, contingent funding is regularly used by the federal government to achieve uniformity in minimum standards.

With some notable exceptions, the enforcement of regulations is generally effective and unbiased. Exceptions arise in certain industries with large companies, such as in the banking sector, where there is clear evidence of so-called regulatory capture and the regulator does not fully enforce the regulations. More problematic in the Australian context is that the regulations themselves (particularly those specific to an industry) are heavily influenced by powerful vested interests, be they financial institutions, mining companies, property developers or other large companies.

Citation:
<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/watching-the-industry-watchdogs-20180601-p4zito.html>

Adaptability

Domestic
Adaptability
Score: 5

Most government structures are essentially driven by domestic imperatives and are largely insensitive to international and supranational developments. The key government structures of Australia have not changed since the federation of the colonies. Indeed, only a few international events have persuaded Australian governments in recent times to adapt domestic structures. The major exception is in relation to the treaties and conventions to which Australia is a signatory, particularly in the areas of human rights, anti-discrimination and transnational crime, where Australia has been a regional leader. Australian society has been reluctant to support a change in political structures and has resisted doing so when asked in referendums, for example with regard to proposed constitutional changes.

Australian society has demonstrated a willingness to ignore international pressure, such as international criticism of its migration policy or high levels of carbon emissions.

On 18 July 2017 the prime minister announced that the government would establish a Home Affairs portfolio that will bring together Australia's immigration, border protection, law enforcement and domestic security agencies within a single portfolio. This appears to have been primarily driven by a desire to better address international and domestic terrorism threats. However, most commentators do not view this as a positive development for strategic planning or implementation of policy.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1718/Quick_Guides/HomeAffairs

http://www.aec.gov.au/elections/referendums/Referendum_Dates_and_Results.htm

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/immigration/un-human-rights-review-slams-australias-asylum-seeker-policies/news-story/29a4c5e8b0ecf94a327f7fe822dfec07?nk=7466221ea84d656a7525406f82e23bf2-1481452755>

International
Coordination
Score: 7

Australia's comparatively small population and economy, isolated geographic location and status as a South Pacific regional power has tended to work against the country's ability to influence global reform efforts. Nonetheless, there is a governmental culture of seeking to participate in international forums or organizations, including those focused on reform. Primary emphasis tends to be on the Asia-Pacific region, although Australia is also a strong advocate of reducing trade barriers for agricultural products worldwide.

Australia's international reputation has suffered considerably in the last two decades. Previously, Australia had been a very active player in international forums, for instance in the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). However, the Howard and Abbott governments failed to make constructive contributions to international forums. For example, the Abbott government permitted the G20 summit in November 2014 to become an anti-Putin event. By contrast, Labor governments such as Kevin Rudd's, have been overly ambitious. Rudd's plans for an Asia-Pacific Community were hastily developed and criticized by his own government's adviser. Prime Minister Turnbull has steered a much more cooperative course over his term in office. However, Australia has not been providing significant input to policy development to promote global public goods. The very recent ambition to shape the situation in the South Pacific may mark a turning point in Australia's foreign policy.

Citation:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/13/tony-abbott-says-he-will-shirtfront-vladimir-putin-over-downing-of-mh17>

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/rudds-man-criticized-hasty-asiapacific-community-plan-20101223-196ln.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/commentisfree/2018/jun/19/are-trumps-shenanigans-turning-us-off-international-relations>

Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring
Score: 5

There is little in the way of formal processes to indicate that institutional arrangements are monitored regularly, but such monitoring does occur occasionally. Institutional arrangements do periodically change, often

Institutional
Reform
Score: 7

manifesting as rearrangements and renaming of departments. Ad hoc reviews are also conducted, such as the 2004 Review of the Corporate Governance of Statutory Authorities and Office Holders. In some key areas such as migration, Australian authorities carefully monitor the impact of policies, and rapidly change policy direction if appropriate.

Australia largely accepts and implements recommendations from formal government reviews. Past investigations have covered all aspects of government including finance, taxation, social welfare, defense, security and the environment. There have been frequent structural changes to the main federal government departments, sometimes in response to changing demands and responsibilities, but sometimes simply for political reasons that serve no strategic purpose and may indeed be strategically detrimental. For example, the main department that is responsible for health care has changed its name at least five times in the past two decades in response to changes in its responsibilities. Of course, the change of name alone is insufficient. For instance, there has also been a long debate on the need to improve the country's infrastructure, but implementation in this area has been lackluster.

II. Executive Accountability

Citizens' Participatory Competence

Political
Knowledge
Score: 6

Opinion surveys indicate Australians have a moderate level of understanding of government policies, and that their level of knowledge increases substantially during election campaigns when they pay greater attention to policy matters. Media coverage tends to be limited due to the lack of diversity in Australian media, which is potentially a factor hindering citizens' policy knowledge. On the other hand, voting in elections of all levels of government is compulsory in Australia, which on balance is likely to increase the general level of awareness of government and opposition policies. Furthermore, media coverage of policy platforms during election campaigns is substantial. The robust and successful lobbying efforts of interest groups, including the business community, may have contributed to a weakening of confidence in the political system.

Australian citizens have shown a declining interest in political issues in recent years. During the 2013 federal election, 20% of adults did not vote, because they were not enrolled or failed to cast a valid vote. However, in recent years, the Australian Electoral Commission has made a concerted effort to increase enrollment, resulting in an increase from 92% in 2013 to 96% in 2017. That

said, 9% of enrolled voters did not cast a valid vote at the 2016 election, a record high since voting became compulsory in 1925.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/election-2016-voter-turnout-lowest-since-compulsory-voting-began-in-1925-20160808-gqnij2.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-07/why-do-we-have-compulsory-voting/7484390>

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/one-nation-immigrants-in-inner-west-and-south-west-shift-support-to-pauline-hansons-party/news-story/78152502617feb5659ac54ca6313dc97>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/11/australia-is-in-trouble-majority-media-and-lobbying-destroy-trust-in-politics-garnaut-says>

Open
Government
Score: 7

Much government data and information is published online and is readily accessible. Through its data.gov.au initiative, the government has an express commitment to improving the availability and use of government administrative data. That said, it is also the case that there is much information not made available. Ostensibly, this is for reasons such as national security and citizen privacy/confidentiality, but there is little doubt that political factors also play a role.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, a statutory government agency, provides a considerable and comprehensive amount of data on economic and social conditions in the country, mostly derived from the census conducted every five years and various additional surveys.

Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary
Resources
Score: 9

Members of parliament have considerable resources at their disposal for monitoring government activity and obtaining relevant information to advance policymaking. The parliamentary library is well-resourced with many skilled researchers and is able to respond to requests rapidly, producing reports on policy issues at the request of members. In addition, each senator or member may hire employees in four full-time electorate officer positions. Members who have a second electorate office at federal expense may hire employees in an additional full-time electorate officer position. However, individual members of parliament do not receive allowances to fund independent research.

Obtaining
Documents
Score: 9

The legislature has strong powers, deriving from both Section 49 of the constitution and the Parliamentary Privileges Act, that require the executive arm of government to provide parliament with information. As parliamentary bodies, these powers are vested in parliamentary committees. There are only a very few acceptable reasons for refusal: a minister or other member of the executive who refuses to turn over requested documents can be held in

Summoning
Ministers
Score: 10

contempt of parliament.

Committees have the legal right to summon ministers to appear before committee inquiries, but in practice compulsion to appear is uncommon. Under the principle of comity, a house of parliament does not seek to compel the attendance of members of that house or another house. It is common, however, for members, including ministers, to appear by invitation or by request before committees, to assist with committee inquiries.

Summoning
Experts
Score: 10

Parliamentary committees conduct inquiries, to which experts are always invited to give evidence. Experts are also sometimes compelled to appear before committee inquiries.

Task Area
Congruence
Score: 9

The number of parliamentary committees exceeds the number of government departments (ministries). This is because there are a number of committees concerned with internal matters of parliament, such as parliamentary privileges, procedure and publications. In general, the task area of each “externally oriented” parliamentary committee is confined to one government department, but some government departments have more than one committee monitoring their activities. Usually, the demarcation between task areas of committees that oversee the same department is clear and does not lead to incohesive action by parliament.

Citation:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=comm_list.htm#joint

Media

Media Reporting
Score: 5

Television and radio stations vary in the time they devote to substantive information on policy issues and government decisions. Commercial broadcasters devote relatively little time to such matters, but the state-owned broadcaster, which has one national television station and a number of radio stations, as well as a website, devotes a considerable amount of time to high-quality analysis of government decisions. Newspaper coverage is likewise variable, with the popular newspapers providing superficial coverage and the quality broadsheets providing more in-depth coverage and discussion. While Australia used to have more high-quality newspapers, market concentration has contributed to a decline in print media diversity and quality. The takeover of Australia’s respected newspaper publisher Fairfax by the television station Channel Nine will lead to greater concentration and may further weaken existing newspapers.

To some extent, countering this decline has been the emergence of a number of online-only news providers. While the impact of these news outlets is difficult to assess, it is clear that at least several of them have risen to the status of mass-media outlets that are widely read by the Australian community.

Citation:

<https://theconversation.com/the-death-of-newspapers-have-we-reached-the-tipping-point-54728>

<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/july/1372600800/eric-beecher/death-fairfax-and-end-newspapers>

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2018/aug/03/the-fairfax-takeover-and-how-it-will-worsen-australias-media-industry-squeeze>

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/nov/19/fairfax-media-shareholders-approve-nine-takeover-bid>

Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party
Decision-Making
Score: 4

Elected members and senators - but no other party members - are responsible for decision-making in both major parties. Decisions regarding who should hold positions within the party, such as ministerial positions for the party in government, have largely been at the discretion of the elected leader in coalition governments. Labor prime ministers cannot choose their ministers freely, but instead have to allocate portfolios among a set of candidates selected by the factions.

The Liberal-National coalition has traditionally had a more open and inclusive process for determining leadership than the Labor party, which is dominated by factions to which most members are beholden. These factions are regularly criticized for making opaque decisions and for contributing to a lack of decision-making transparency. In response, the process for selecting the Labor party leader was altered in 2013, giving 50% of the votes to the wider party membership, with the remaining 50% staying with elected members and senators.

With regard to the development of policy agendas, both parties have inclusive forums for developing policy platforms. However, in practice, a small leadership group in each party tightly controls decisions on major policies.

Citation:

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/malcolm-turnbulls-downfall-was-that-he-wasnt-allowed-to-lead-20160705-gpyrnc.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/23/mark-butler-factions-are-destroying-labors-capacity-to-campaign>

Association
Competence
(Employers &
Unions)
Score: 9

The major interest associations, which are run by the employers and business groups and the trade unions, have a history of proposing practical, plausible policies. The main explanation for this is that the government has a long history of involvement and policy consultation with most of the groups (for example, business groups are closely allied with the Liberal party, farmers' and rural groups are allied with the National party, and trade unions are allied with the Labor party). Many elected representatives have at some point in their career been a member of one of these groups, further cementing relations. There are also considerable formal and informal networks linking the various groups to the major political parties, further consolidating the development of practical and coherent policies.

Citation:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/16/in-the-family-majority-of-australias-lobbyists-are-former-political-insiders>

Association
Competence
(Others)
Score: 8

A number of social interest groups, environmental groups and religious groups take responsible and well-considered positions and are, therefore, taken very seriously by government, although there are also groups that take extreme positions. The extent to which the proposals are well thought-out and feasible varies considerably. In general, the proposals from mainstream interest groups are of high quality in part because many elected representatives are drawn from these groups, or have had considerable contact with them prior to their election. The proposals also tend to be of high quality because of the expertise of the groups themselves and their narrow (often single-issue) interest, which means the groups can focus exclusively on a single problem and the ways in which it can be resolved.

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Audit Office
Score: 10

Under the Auditor-General Act 1997, the auditor-general is responsible for providing auditing services to parliament and other public sector entities. The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) supports the auditor-general, who is an independent officer of parliament. The ANAO's purpose is to provide parliament with an independent assessment of selected areas of the public administration, and to provide assurance regarding public sector financial reporting, administration and accountability. This task is undertaken primarily by conducting performance and financial statement audits.

Citation:

<https://www.anao.gov.au/about/auditor-general-and-office>

https://www.aph.gov.au/~/_/link.aspx?id=387AD00794BD41C39579392068D56CF9&_z=z

Ombuds Office
Score: 9

A Commonwealth Ombudsman was established in 1977. Its services are available to anyone who has a complaint about an Australian government agency that they have been unable to resolve. Its charter states that it will investigate complaints where appropriate, deal with complaints in an impartial and effective way, achieve fair outcomes, seek appropriate remedies and promote improved administration by Australian government agencies. Its services are free of charge. There are further ombudsmen in all six states and the Northern Territory, which operate on similar principles, as well as a variety of issue-specific ombudsmen.

Citation:

<http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/consumer-affairs/private-health-insurance-ombudsman-turned-aggrieved-customers-back-to-medibank-20160622-gpovtk.html>

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/small-business/a-very-unusual-case-financial-ombudsman-service-s-failings-laid-bare-before-royal-commission-20180528-p4zhwo.html>

Data Protection
Authority
Score: 7

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC), an independent statutory agency within the attorney general's portfolio, has responsibility for data protection and privacy as per the Privacy Act and other laws. Its responsibilities include conducting investigations, handling complaints and providing advice to the public, government agencies and businesses.

The OAIC was established in 2010 by the Labor government. The Abbott government sought to abolish the agency on coming into office in 2013, but could not secure the support of the Senate. Coalition governments instead reduced the resources available to OAIC, resulting in its diminishing size and efficacy over time. Since 2016, there has been some reversal in the Coalition government's position on OAIC and correspondingly marginal increases in funding.

Citation:

<https://www.themandarin.com.au/88709-last-man-standing-information-and-privacy-commissioner-timothy-pilgrim-to-retire/>

Address | Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung

Carl-Bertelsmann-Straße 256
33311 Gütersloh
Germany
Phone +49 5241 81-0

Dr. Christof Schiller

Phone +49 5241 81-81470
christof.schiller@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Dr. Thorsten Hellmann

Phone +49 5241 81-81236
thorsten.hellmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Pia Paulini

Phone +49 5241 81-81468
pia.paulini@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de
www.sgi-network.org