The High Performance Political Party

DRAFT JULY 2022

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The High-Performance Political Party is a concept about creating a new progressive organisation within our political system. Progressive Australians, those who want to see us face our challenges together and maintain a healthy human society, should have a rational conversation about how to best organise ourselves in the 21st century.

Two key aspects of our system are that it produces two options for executive government, and that the executive is drawn from the legislature. The best way to describe Australia's current political divide is 'progressive vs conservative'.

This means being able to see the difference between our hybrid Westminster system of government itself, and the state of the current major parties incumbent in those two positions.

The people on the progressive side are best served if we have a single open, modern, and transparent organisation with a large number of people involved, with an open meritocracy to produce leaders. This will give the organisation and its people more integrity.

It is not in our interests as progressive Australians to fracture into smaller groups or tribes. The ALP is becoming a smaller group, with many more progressives outside the tent rather than in it. The Greens are not broad enough to set themselves up to offer an alternative executive government. Independents are not capable of forming an executive.

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(July 2022 Version)

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Introduction

The major political parties we have today are designed for a 20th-century Australia that no longer exists. They are not functioning effectively. Progressive Australians will be best served by forming a large new political party that is open, modern, and transparent. It would seek to become the progressive option for government within our two-party system.

The current state of the two main parties presents an opportunity for a big evolutionary leap forward in organisational structure and design, rather than small, hesitant steps.

How we organise ourselves is a choice that affects our lives. Over the course of the 21st century, the global average temperature will go up by 2–4 degrees, the world population will reach over 10 billion, and humanity will face serious resource depletion. Humanity's adverse effects on the natural world have become increasingly evident.[1] New challenges—much like COVID-19—will arise and continue to put pressure on our existing societies. Maintaining a prosperous and equitable society during this time will be challenging, and it will be essential to have both social unity and a strong social fabric. We can only

deal with these challenges as a strong civil society, not as individuals.

To have the best chance of making a long-term difference, we should organise into a party that can attract a large number of participants, takes a systematic approach to producing future leaders, and has the ability to win election majorities outright and to form effective executive governments.

Key characteristics of our democracy include: two options for executive government, a reality within which there can be only one main progressive political force; and an executive branch of government which is drawn from the legislative. The two-party system has significant strengths in its ability to provide stable government. Although this system has its downfalls, we can't reasonably change it. We are better off being objective and using the system to our best advantage. The current split in Australian politics is best represented by the terms 'Progressive' and 'Conservative'.

Progressives will be best served by a single, modern, vibrant organisation that is open, transparent, and able to successfully channel both a quantity and quality of talented individuals into parliaments across the country. It is in our interests to include as many people on the progressive side as possible. It should be an easy and appealing organisation to join and in which to participate.

As progressives, it is not in our interests to break up into smaller groups, tribes, parties, and individuals. Our system does not reward this approach. It is in

our interests to work out rational and logical ways to work together within a single large organisation in significant numbers and in a way that is relevant to life today. Sentimental attachment to the political structures and parties of the past and present will not help.

People don't all have to agree on everything to belong to the same political party—especially in a system like ours. This new organisation will contain different groups and points of view. It's about having open discussions among progressive Australians about how we best organise ourselves. People both within and outside our current organisations have a strong mutual interest in working together.

The entrance of an organisation of this type into Australian politics is much more likely to lead to sustained periods of progressive government. Our party structures are not set in stone and must have the capacity to evolve in line with societal needs.

We can make use of advances in communication technology previously unavailable to society, in the way that we seek social and political involvement. A new institution can be custom-designed for 21st-century Australia—a bit like pressing the organisational 'reset button' and going from the 1890s to the 2020s. A new 21st-century organisation of this type can be established with the advantages of a clean slate and no baggage.

This work does not consider or examine:

- the judicial branch of government, instead

focusing solely on the executive and legislative branches
- Australian state governments, instead focusing on federal politics and the House of Representatives
- how parliamentary leaders are selected
- caucus solidarity
- funding models
- gender representation
- youth politics
- operations of the 'party machine'.

Chapter 1:

Making the Best of the System We Have

Australia's system for forming federal governments has its roots in English parliaments, as far back as the 13th century. The key early building blocks include:

- separate elections for geographic districts with a 'winner-takes-all' voting system. The winner gets to be a member of parliament. Second place, even if awfully close, gets nothing
- having two opposing blocs on either side of the Speaker—an evolution of two sets of advisors on either side of the King or Queen. The UK Parliament has two rows of benches facing each other, headed by a central throne for the Speaker, reminiscent of two groups of advisors before a monarch
- the idea of the executive branch of government (the prime minister and other cabinet ministers) being drawn from the largest bloc in the legislative branch (parliament)
- the rituals and objects in the parliamentary chambers
- the names and functions of the official officers in

the chamber.

There is no clear pathway to change how our system works. It also has significant strengths that enable stable governments. A more successful path is understanding how it works and using it to our best advantage. This requires understanding how governments are formed—not how legislation is passed. The two-party state is one where the political system produces two dominant political parties. The system started developing in 17th-century England. The emergence of the liberals (Whigs) and conservatives (Tories) as political factions was an evolution of the Westminster system.

In Australia, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) has been occupying one of the two spots since the early 1900s. They have either been the opposition or the government since that time. The non-Labor, more conservative side has been occupied by the Liberal and National parties since 1945. The coalition between the Liberal Party and Nationals is effectively an alliance between city and country non-Labor forces. It is a faux coalition when compared to genuine multi-party systems.

The two-party system is found in a number of countries worldwide, but mainly in the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. Two-party states do not prohibit other parties from engaging in politics. Many smaller parties and independent candidates exist, but the system presents a choice of two alternatives for government. The party

that wins elections forms and controls the government themselves. They do not need to form coalitions with other parties to do so. Minority governments are rare.

Australia can be described as a 'disguised' two-party state. There is a smorgasbord of party options, but only two of them are choices for executive government.

Two-Party Versus Multi-Party States

Multi-party states consistently have three or more parties involved in forming government. In these systems, coalitions are the norm. Individual parties rarely manage to form majority governments alone. Multi-party states generally use a proportional voting system; for example, if a given party gets 15% of the vote, they will get 15% of the parliamentary seats as well. It is more likely for multi-party states to have coalition governments due to their proportional distribution of votes.

In a two-party state, factions—i.e., groups with similar ideas but some important differences—are more likely to be found within the large parties. Meanwhile, in a multi-party state where coalitions are much more common and parties are (generally) smaller, factions don't exist as much because they would just manifest as separate parties. The two parties are umbrella organisations, each hosting different views. American Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said during the 2020 US presidential election: 'In another country, Joe Biden and I would not be in the same party'. This is in reference to the two-party

system in the US and the Democratic Party's nature as an umbrella organisation.

In a two-party system, there is a consistency to the balance of power in that it only really shifts back and forth between the two major parties. Ideological and political changes over time are more likely to be absorbed and incorporated into the pre-existing party dynamics. One feature of the two-party system is its stability. Two-party states are generally more stable due to the ability of a single party to govern unhindered between elections.

BASIC DEMOCRATIC VOTING METHODS

Winner-Takes-All Voting	The winner gets to be the MP, President or whatever position the election is for. There are a few different ways to hold this type of election. **A. First-Past-The-Post Voting (also known as plurality voting)** Each elector has only 1 vote. The candidate with the highest percentage of votes wins, regardless of how high that percentage is (i.e. if the largest percentage of votes for a single candidate was 30%, that candidate would win despite not having an overall majority of votes). This is a basic model of election that goes back at least 2500 years. It is used in the UK House of Commons. **B. Preferential Voting** This is the voting method used in Australia's House of Representatives. Each elector must rank the candidates in order of preference on their ballot. Candidates with the least votes are eliminated with their next preferences being distributed, until only two candidates remain, from which a winner is determined by percentage majority. This is also called instant-runoff voting. Used to select the French President. **C. Runoff Voting** Each elector has only 1 vote. If a candidate receives an absolute majority – more than 50% – of the votes, they win. However, if no candidate receives enough, then a second round of voting occurs in which only the two most-voted candidates in the first round are available to choose. The candidate with the majority of votes in this round wins.
Proportional Representation	Each party or group receives a percentage of representation roughly equal to the percentage of votes they received during the election. There are different ways that voting can work, but the idea is to achieve a proportional outcome. If 20% of the population supports a party, it will get about 20% of the members of the assembly. Used in France, Germany, and most countries in Europe.

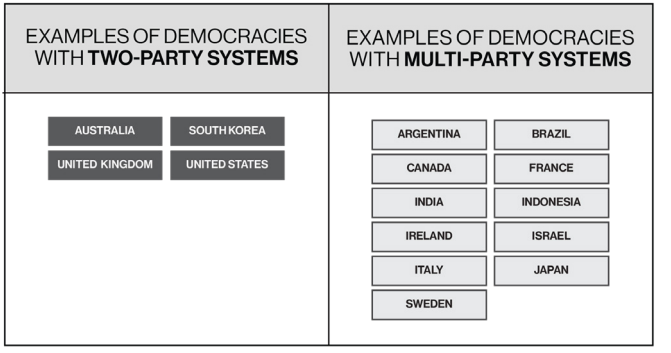
The political atmosphere in two-party states is likely to be confrontational, as the two blocs are at each other's throats most of the time. Both the Australian and American systems offer many good examples. Multi-party states are not free of confrontation between parties, but they incentivise cooperation, bargains, and compromises to a much greater extent.

In the multi-party system, change is more enabled by the constant shift of which parties are forming coalitions with one another. As new ideas and focuses are introduced and developed, new parties reflecting those ideas are more likely to emerge, grow, and have a chance to get some power by joining coalitions. Governments can collapse between elections as alliances shift. One notable example is Italy, which has had 69 governments since 1945, averaging a change of government every 1.11 years.

In multi-party systems, centrist parties may well prosper due to the coalition-forming dynamics which are required to form government. This has been the case in Germany, with both the big centre-right and centre-left parties. They became smaller over the decades but held power for much of the Merkel era by forming a centrist coalition.

Things can go wrong in multi-party states where there are deep social fractures. A recent prime case is Belgium, which took 17 months (May 2019 – October 2020) to form a government—for over a year, through the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Belgium had no government as no group of parties was able to form a majority in their parliament. Another example

is Israel, which has held six elections in nine years due to the inability of any group of parties to remain together.



How Our System Works to Produce Two-Party Outcomes

Australia has a political system that is likely to produce two-party outcomes. This is demonstrated by our election outcomes over the last 70 years. It can be explained by looking at both the historical evolution and the mechanics of the system.

Australia uses a Westminster-style electoral system with winner-takes-all elections to choose representatives of geographical electorates. Australia has 151 federal electorates as of the 2022 federal election, each represented by one seat in Federal Parliament and home to an average of 114,100 registered voters. An independent body, the Australian Electoral Commission, determines the number of

House members assigned to each state and territory based on their populations, and establishes the boundaries of the electorates.

In 1951, French sociologist Maurice Duverger identified a particular function of how voting systems relate to party systems, now known as 'Duverger's law'.[2] Duverger's law examines the first-past-the-post voting system used in the UK. In first-past-the-post elections, the winner is whoever gets the most votes. This is simple if two people are standing for election, and more complex with more candidates. Duverger's law states: *'the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system*'.[3]

Duverger argues that this happens for two key reasons: smaller parties are disincentivised to form in the first place because they will struggle to win seats or representation away from existing large parties; and secondly, voters are afraid of voting for a smaller party, even if it more closely aligns with their values than a large party, because they fear 'wasting' their vote. In a sort of self-fulling prophecy, these factors help ensure such minor parties never gain enough traction. While the system may be disrupted by a new party taking the place of one of its incumbents, it will reset to a duality. This is what happened in both the UK and Australia, when Labor parties took one of each country's two 'governing party' spots in the early 20th century.

Early on, Australia used first-past-the-post elections but adopted preferential voting for the House of Representatives in 1918. The outcomes of elections throughout the 20th century suggest this development

helped entrench the two-party system. In a preferential voting system, each voter ranks the candidates in order of preference. In Australia, which also has compulsory voting, voters must write a number against every candidate for their local seat in the House of Representatives (the Senate requires a minimum number of preferences).

After the first-preference (number 1) votes are counted, candidates with the fewest are eliminated, and the ballots that have those eliminated candidates marked as number 1 are redistributed to whoever is marked as number 2. In the House of Representatives, this process repeats until two candidates remain. Eventually, all the votes cast in the election end up supporting one or the other. In Australia, this breakdown is often called the 'two-party preferred' result.[4] This is one major reason Australia has a two-party system. As first preferences are distributed, the system typically defaults to a two-party preferred outcome.

Third parties saw decreasing numbers in Australia's House of Representatives in the decades after the adoption of preferential voting. In elections from 1937 to 2007 there were no more than five seats filled by those same groups (3–6% as total seat numbers grew). The killer fact is that 16 of the 27 parliaments formed during this time had no crossbench members in the lower house at all.[5] [6] While the 2022 election has given us the highest number of independent seats in any election so far, with a total of 16 out of 151 seats not held by either of the two major parties, it is still only

10.5% of Parliament. The election that gave us the highest percentage of independent seats was back in 1934, with 14 out of 74 seats or 18.9% being held by independents.

The final evolution—the nail in the coffin—was the introduction of public funding for political parties in the 1980s. This further entrenched the two incumbent parties as funding to a given party is based on the percentage of votes it earned in the most recent election. A party must also receive at least 4% of the overall vote count in an election to qualify for funding in the first place, another barrier to entry for alternative parties.

The normal mode of Australian government is that one of two parties wins a majority and forms executive government on their own without help from others.

For the people who want Australia to look to its challenges, having an effective organisation that can win majority governments and be effective is the best option.

A high number of people not voting for either of the two parties is a fraying of the system, but it does not in any way fundamentally alter it. It is a change in voting patterns that can change again. To not use the system as it is meant to be used—e.g., one party being able to form a majority—is to invite instability, like forcing a round peg into a square hole.

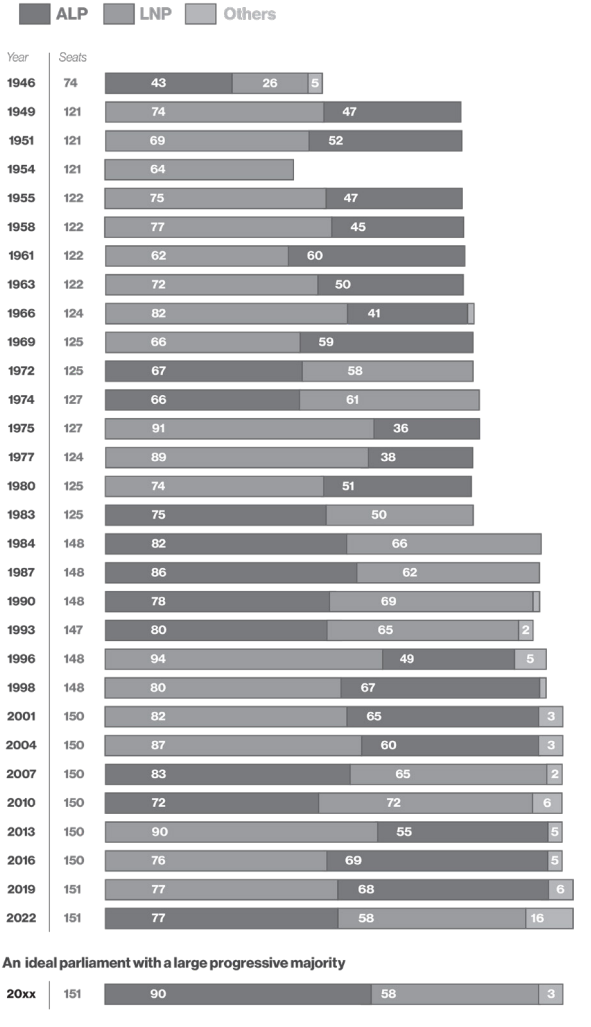
Duverger also commented on how one of the two parties can be replaced:

> *So long as a new party which aims at competing with the two old parties still remains weak the system works*

against it, raising a barrier against its progress. If, however, it succeeds in outstripping one of its forerunners, then the latter takes its place as third party and the process of elimination is transferred.[7]

In the long-term, this is the best way of 'fixing' the system and restoring its integrity.

The Outcomes Produced by Our System (House of Reps Elections, 1946—2022)[8]



Chapter 2:

The Current Dynamic is 'Progressive Versus Conservative'

The current divide in 21st-century Australian politics is 'progressive versus conservative'. It is in our interests as progressives to have an organisation which reflects this reality. Most people do not naturally think of the world in terms of two conflicting sets of political ideas. However, our political system frames it is as such, and we must be able to give labels to those ideas. There is only a small percentage of the population who would agree on everything in each camp. Everyone has a bunch of different opinions and influences—their own personal politics.

It is useful to look at how a wide range of political views have been expressed across history through political parties. In the UK, the divide for much of the 18th and 19th centuries was 'liberal versus conservative', represented by the Whigs and the Tories. Meanwhile, in Australia around the time of Federation, more practical matters caused the first public divide of ideas in the parties seeking government: the Protectionist Party and the Free Trade Party. The basic concept of this clash was the

idea of letting goods come freely into a country (free trade) versus using tariffs and other means to restrict imported goods and protect local industry (protectionism). It was a dispute between different groups of businesspeople playing out in public politics: those who made money importing stuff and those who earned money producing something here.

The rise of the labour movement in the late 19th century began the second divide, 'labour versus capital', represented by the Labor Party versus various capital-focused parties (the most notable being the Liberal Party). The ALP took one of the two seats at the table in the early 1900s. In response, the two sides of the earlier 'protectionism versus free trade' dispute merged as an anti-Labor force in 1909, called the Commonwealth Liberal Party. Often referred to as 'the fusion', this was a significant event where two bitter enemies were forced together to face a new common foe.[9]

As a broad concept, 'labour' refers to people whose primary asset to sell is their labour, and the labour movement is focused on improving their conditions and defending their rights. This was traditionally based on recognising the position of workers in society's structure, leading to values like solidarity between workers and strength in numbers. Labour parties have naturally looked to collective solutions to benefit society, using government to produce public goods and services like healthcare, transport, education, and scientific research.

Capital refers to the *owners* of capital, who have the

means to produce goods and provide services, and usually employ labour to do so. The capitalist has to sell the fruits of the labour for a higher price than they pay for it; otherwise, it is not worth the risk of investing. Through investing, the capitalist owns the physical assets and resources (non-human and non-financial) needed to do the work, also known as the means of production. Private ownership of the means of production is the basis of capitalism.[10]

Political parties have often attracted support from the owners of capital by emphasising people's individuality, through values like personal rights, consumer choice, free markets and competition. The tension between capital and labour is central to socialist ideology, which favours public ownership of the means of production. These ideas developed and grew as the 19th century progressed; socialism was a global movement, and the Australian experience reflected this.

Of the 160-odd labour parties that have formed in different countries since the original movement, only five—in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Norway and Sweden—remain viable for forming government. Most others did not take hold and either died out or have pressed on as extremely minor parties, like in the US. In Australia, the labour movement first picked up steam as workers went on strike in 1856 to demand eight-hour working days, and better working conditions and wages. This eventually led to the formation of the ALP.

In 1944, severe party issues within the United

Australia Party (the anti-Labor party at that time) resulted in the formation of the Liberal Party of Australia, the country's current primary non-Labor force.[i] One of the largest ideological flashpoints occurred from 1947 to 1949, over the Chifley Labor government's unsuccessful move to implement state ownership of Australia's private banks. By the 1980s, the idea of a heavily regulated and controlled economy had burned itself out. Both the ALP and the Liberals saw the idea of opening up the economy and pursuing a 'competitive market economy' as the pathway to greater prosperity.

In the 21st century, in many parts of the world, the 'labour versus capital' divide has become one part of a larger mentality and dynamic in politics—that of 'progressive versus conservative'.

'Progressive', in its basic form, is the idea of people working together through governments to make improvements to society. It is based on the idea of progress via advancements in science, technology, and social organisation—among other things—with little

[i] The UAP formed in 1931 out of a merger between Labor defectors, led by Joseph Lyons, and the Nationalist Party, which was a successor to the Commonwealth Liberal Party. Lyons led the UAP to a landslide victory in the 1931 election and retained the leadership until his death in 1937, when he was replaced by Robert Menzies. The party retained government until 1941 when Menzies was forced to give up the leadership to Arthur Fadden, who promptly lost the confidence of the House 40 days later. While Labor took over government, Fadden was replaced as UAP leader by Billy Hughes, who had been involved in previous anti-Labor parties and had been a Labor Prime Minister from 1915-1916. Labor then won a resounding election victory in 1943 and Menzies was soon meeting with other conservatives and forming today's Liberal Party.

to no religious influence on its values.[11] It also strives to enable people to work together to face challenges. People have strived to make improvements to their societies for thousands of years. 'Conservative' beliefs, in their basic form, are adversity to rapid change, and a focus on upholding tradition and traditional social institutions, directly contrasting with progressivism. The conservative tradition has existed for much of recorded human civilisation. Australia's progressive-conservative divide is reflected in the global dynamic, including issues such as:

- the response to climate change and the drive to become more sustainable
- the fight against efforts to deny the scientific evidence for climate change
- economic equality
- the growing number of people working for themselves, outside of traditional employer–employee relationships
- attitudes towards globalisation
- the declining number of people in the workforce who belong to unions
- diversity and inclusion versus more traditional social values, such as the discourses around equal rights—including the marriage equality debate—and multiculturalism
- 'culture wars'—the different narrative frameworks that are projected on society and its development
- media polarisation
- the acceptance of a 'regulated market economy' by almost everyone.

Aspects of the 21st-Century Progressive Movement

In the 21st century, the progressive movement is concerned with:

- dealing with climate change and sustainability
- advocates for a more equitable society
- a focus on effective government
- equal rights for individuals and self-determination
- inclusive and multicultural communities
- equal opportunity
- active opposition to racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Aspects of the 21st-Century Conservative Movement

In the 21st century, the conservative movement is concerned with:

- advocacy for a small government with limited influence over people's daily lives
- a resistance to action on climate change
- advocacy for an unregulated free market
- being influenced by religious beliefs
- a resistance to social change.

Chapter 3:

Our Current Major Party Structures Are Ineffective

Australia has had a consistent structure in its options for government since 1946, the first year that the contemporary Liberal Party stood in an election. The Labor Party began its occupation of one of the two governing spots much earlier in the 20th century. These parties have held the two spots at the table, uninterrupted, since this time. Almost no one alive today in the 2020s would have voted for a choice of government that was not Labor or the Liberal–National Parties. It is unrealistic to expect that this arrangement will continue to be effective and functional for eternity.

Both the Labor and Liberal parties are institutions designed for the 20th century. Both are undergoing problems relating to 21st-century life. They are also firmly entrenched with all the advantages of incumbency. Both are becoming more disfigured as time goes on. They are being abandoned by the general population.

The parties use methods of interaction, membership and organisational design that found success in the 20th century, but no longer work. Meanwhile, our lives today are dominated by organisations, like the tech giants, that are only around 20 years old. Organisations work differently now. In any other field, organisations so outdated would no longer exist. When you look at the current state of our major political parties, they are clearly not particularly potent forces in comparison to previous eras of both parties, to other political parties outside of Australia, or to parties from any time in democratic history. Both are having deep issues with membership.

These organisations have become 'hollowed out'. The party hierarchies and structures—the branches and committees—are still in place, but all the people are gone. The lack of membership is affecting their ability to function.[12] Being a member does not bring self-empowerment. You're not going to affect the organisation. Unless you are part of a large number who join at the same time to influence decisions (e.g., branch stacking), your individual membership is not going to make a difference in these organisations. It's a cost of money, time, and effort. Why bother? Even John Howard recognised there was a problem, observing—'it is the notion of membership that is problematic…rather than support for the party and its policies'.[13] These parties are failing to engage with the reality of 21st-century life, and to function as effective social networks for people in the community with mainstream political ideals.

The rise of individualism in society has been another factor for this declining membership. There has been a lull of dutiful citizens—people who see elections, government and being formally involved with political organisations as an essential part of life in a democracy. The dutiful citizens of the 20th century had no problem with paying money to join the traditional party, nor with putting time into it. University of Sydney politics professor Anika Gauja notes:

> *One of the most prominent themes associated with contemporary social and political change is that of 'individualisation'. As a form of behaviour, individualisation captures the notion that citizens seek to fulfil their own private desires rather than the common good. Driven by social changes such as increasing pressures on time, money and effort, a decline of working-class communities and trade union membership, it has been asserted that people are less willing to participate in collective forms of political activity. Rather than joining political parties, citizens have instead turned to other political organisations to channel their participation, or to direct forms of political action.*[14]

In Gauja's view, these changes signify a shift toward 'expanding political repertoires that are no longer focused on the formal institutions of the state'. Politics is a pain to be a part of. The 2022 federal election saw the lowest voter turnout since the introduction of compulsory voting, with only 89.82% of eligible Australians casting a vote—and the 2019 election

had the fourth-lowest turnout with 91.89%. Of that election, the biggest losses were in electorates with more under-30 voters. The seat of Melbourne, for example, had an under-30 voter percentage of 27% and saw a 5% loss in under-30 voter turnout. While there are many factors to this decline, one of them is the lack of vibrant and functional political parties.

The organisational structures currently in place are no longer resonating with younger generations as they did in previous decades, nor are those structures encouraging long-term political involvement. The authors of the Australian Election Study comment:

> *One of the greatest challenges to democracy in Australia and internationally is to understand the lack of political engagement among the young. Young people are less likely to vote, to join a political party, or to engage in interest groups than at any time since democratisation.*[15]

The 2022 election showed that people do want to be involved with politics. The independents movement mobilised tens of thousands of people, but not within the traditional major parties.

The 'Light on the Hill' Has Gone Out

> *I try to think of the Labor movement, not as putting an extra sixpence into somebody's pocket, or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective—the light on the hill—which we*

aim to reach by working the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand. If it were not for that, the Labor movement would not be worth fighting for.[16]

— Ben Chifley, former prime minister, 1949[ii]

The Australian Labor Party has been a massively positive force in Australia. It has existed since before Federation, making it older than the country itself. It has acted as a vehicle for ordinary working people to demand a fair go. However, the world has changed a lot in the last 130 years—far more than during any other period in human history. It is understandable that the ALP has not kept up with the change that society has experienced.

The fact that the Labor Party has won government in 2022 does not negate any of its organisational weaknesses. Its narratives and organisational structure are not set up for the 21st century. The win should not gloss over and shut down attempts to critique the party's organisational dysfunction.

It still has a good number of competent progressive politicians that are in the new executive government.

To judge the organisation is not to judge its people, the party faithful, or any of its leaders as individuals. The intent is to highlight the problems held by the organisation itself. Most of the ALP's remaining

[ii] The phrase 'light on the hill' is similar to the 'city upon a hill' mentioned within Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:14). Speaking broadly, the phrase is used in politics to refer to a 'beacon of hope'.

members are older people—the True Believers. There are a limited number of people in younger generations who are genuinely interested in the labour movement. Some are genuine True Believers, and some pragmatically accept Labor's deficiencies because it is positioned to gain power. It has an unnecessarily large number of rules and procedures. It also has overly complex hierarchies and interactions between different parts of the organisation. Modern organisations are set up and run quite differently with more streamlined structures and more fluid interactions.

Organisations have lifespans. They become stagnant over time. To many Australians, the ALP is a murky and outdated organisation with unnecessary complexity, factional wars and corruption scandals. It has lost the ability to make meaningful organisational reform. The last big review in 2010, and the lacklustre response, has been a demonstration. It displays all the signs of the crippling decay that affects anything at the end of its lifespan.

It is no longer realistic to cling onto memories of Labor's glorious past and the unfounded hope that something will suddenly change. It is not useful to hold sentimental attachment to the past achievements and strengths of the ALP. It is ill-equipped to address the challenges of a rapidly evolving 21st century. Society has moved on, and the ALP's traditional narratives are stale and ineffective. The two-party system is far older than the Labor Party and the system is in no way contingent on the Labor Party being one of its two options.

By far the greatest strength that the party has is its incumbency. This is likely to be the single biggest factor in achieving change. Its egalitarian values have been the major force for change and a real 'fair go' in Australian politics. It is one side of a coin. After all, it's been around since before the birth of any living Australian. The idea of politics without Labor would be psychologically confusing for many. Who would stand up for the working people?

If you ask a 70-year-old, a 'True Believer' who has been involved in the ALP their entire life, how they see the world, it is likely to be as 'Labor versus non-Labor'. There is a lifetime of memories. It is likely that many people within this group would be hostile to change. There are others, even within this group, however, who rationally recognise that it is not working.

A major source of Labor's funding is automatic by-the-vote funding through elections from the government. It receives a certain amount of money per eligible vote from the Australian Electoral Commission in any given election. In the 2019 federal election, the ALP received a total of $24,684,039 in election funding.[17] It also gets corporate donations and a chunk of money from unions. It does not receive much money from individual people.

A Dated Concept

The idea of a political party comprised of an alliance of unions is a dated concept. Society has moved on. The key issues that unions fought for in the 19th and

20th centuries have been resolved, and a system of worker's rights is in place. While unions represent their members, their intrinsic involvement in one of Australia's two major political parties is no longer necessary.

Unions themselves no longer represent the majority of working-class Australians. As of 2016, only around 14% of employed individuals held union memberships—only 1.5 million Australians are union members, a decrease of 38% since the 1970s.[18] This means that only about 6% of Australian people are actually in unions. Over the years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has published a survey of what percentage of workers are unionised. In 2016, the industry with the highest union density was 'education and training' with 32.5%—a large percentage of which would work for the government, rather than a capitalist employer.[19] The industry with the lowest density was 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' with 1.9%. Twenty years earlier, a handful of industries had union densities of above 50%. Furthermore, the union leaders that hold sway in the Labor Party only represent a small fraction of all Australian union members. Union membership has declined over the years, but the power held by some union leaders within the ALP has not shifted. A handful of union leaders from several key sectors wield a significant amount of influence within the party, but they are not properly representative of the union movement as a whole and are certainly not representative of working-class Australia.

Organisational Arthritis

In 1909 the Labor Party looked like a modern party. It had an external organisation with an extensive branch structure that formulated policy, selected candidates and organised elections.[20]

— Judith Brett, Australian political scientist

Labor is stuck in the organisational structures of the early 20th century. It has failed to update itself for the 21st century and is eroding away amid a rapidly evolving technological and political environment. It has lost the ability to renew itself.

This is not new information. Such problems were already made clear when, in 2010, party elders John Faulkner, Steve Bracks and Bob Carr conducted an extensive review of the Labor Party and produced 31 public recommendations for reform.[21] Among those recommendations, the review called for:

- a system of semi-democratic primaries to allow branch members, affiliated unions, and registered Labor supporters (who are not necessarily party members) to select candidates in an open public process
- the local branch members to get 60% of the votes in the primaries, with 20% going to affiliated unions and 20% to registered Labor supporters in the community
- a dedicated budget for new party-building activities, on both national and state and territory levels

- an explicit community model to better equip members for local campaign work and recruitment
- a National Director of Organising to better grow membership and improve the state of party branches
- an academy to educate members about recruitment, party-building and campaign organisation
- national grants to be made available to local and state branches
- representatives and branches to respond promptly to communications from members and a system to deal with correspondence that is ignored for too long
- a better party structure to enable greater participation by rank-and-file members
- half of the votes at state and federal party conferences to be reserved for affiliated trade unions and half for members, with no delegates from committees, groups like Young Labor or the parliamentary party allowed in the members' contingent
- affiliated unions to be represented at party conferences by financial members only
- greater participation from affiliated unions and their members in party processes
- a national outreach organisation so progressive Australians can better engage with progressive ideas and policies online, organise progressive campaigns in dedicated spaces, and engage better

with the ALP
- the expansion of Labor Connect as a better membership tool for organising and campaigning
- amendments to the party's official principles to allow affiliation of like-minded organisations other than unions.

The review made it crystal clear that the party had significant organisational flaws that needed to be resolved. However, less than half of the recommendations were implemented.[22] Most of what was implemented involved 'improved communications' rather than any organisational reform; Labor passed several resolutions that attempted to improve communications between different branches and parliamentary representation. The largest reform—the creation of semi-democratic primaries—failed. Branch stacking was not addressed, as the review focused mainly on how to grow the party, rather than ethical practices.

This review, in tandem with the later 2019 review after the federal election, exposed the shortcomings of the party, and its inability to make significant reform.

Lack of Transparency (aka 'How the **** Does the ALP Actually Work?')

There are plenty of power bases contained within the party which are concealed from the public. This makes it difficult to decipher who actually has power within the party, and why. There is little ability for the public

to understand the power dynamics.

This lack of transparency can also lead to a loss of confidence in representatives and other officials within the party; the public can't see into the organisation and witness what's going on. This allows for covert practices such as branch stacking: the idea of an official, paying membership fees for a large number of people who are uninterested in joining a party, in order to use their votes to seize control at the branch level. Two of Australia's most notorious political operatives in recent years have both emerged from the Labor Party: Eddie Obeid in New South Wales, and Adam Somyurek in Victoria. Both manipulated the party's decayed internal structures to build their own personal power bases.[23]

A Shrinking Membership

The ALP has become hollowed out with fewer people involved. The structures are there, but the people have gone.

The ALP does not disclose its exact membership numbers on its website or in any other public forum. In 2020, National Secretary Paul Erickson stated that the ALP had a total of 60,085 members nationwide, compared to 400,000 members in the 1940s.[24] Over the decades, their membership has sharply decreased while the population has rapidly grown. Further analysis is unclear—the actual number could be far less. Labor consistently inhibits the public's ability to examine its membership. This raises many questions:

- Who is regarded as a member?
- Are union representatives counted as members?
- How many members are found in Young Labor?
- What is the membership churn rate—the number of people who join and then leave?
- What is the age split between younger (e.g., 18–30) and older (60+) active members?

It would be interesting to know the number of members under 50 that have not been signed up by another person or connected via their union. It is reasonable to hypothesise that there are pockets in the country where the party still has significant membership, and pockets where it has wasted away.

There is an inverse incentive for the party machine to not have members—the same way that a hospital runs better without patients. The incentive exists because major sources of funding—public funding and union money—come from elsewhere. These revenue streams exist whether the party has many or fewer members.

Factions are advantaged by having fewer general, non-aligned members. The average age of membership has increased over time, as younger generations become less likely to join.

Young People

Many progress-minded young people recognise the Labor side as the side that is better for a fairer and more socially minded community. However, it is not

appealing, and few want to be part of it. Traditional Labor narratives mean less to them. In a generation that is very used to branding, the ALP's brand is stale. The idea of the 'labour movement' has little meaning.

Young people do care about politics, but there are just not enough interested in the ALP. There are plenty of other forms of progressive activism nationwide which are highly populated by young people. These people are not going to become empowered by the ALP's political process with age, nor are they going to suddenly become attracted to Labor's history and stories. Labor may have spoken to their parents—or, more likely, their grandparents or great-grandparents—but it is not speaking to them.

Leaders

The ALP has been drawing leaders from a narrow sliver of Australian society. It is a small pool. Many of the people in leadership positions have been in the party since youth politics, or through working with unions. This is a miniscule proportion of the adult population.

There are no effective, open and transparent processes to bring people in and develop them. While there are star players, there is rarely the depth and breadth essential to successful teams. When a competent leader emerges, the situation is more akin to a local footy team being carried by their star player and less like the third-string All Blacks still winning the Rugby World Cup with the depth and breadth of

talent that is the mark of an excellent team. The larger the supply of talent in executive government, the better.

The Involvement of Unions in Politics

The unions are strong enough as institutions to stand on their own. They have made significant impacts on Australia's workplace landscape and made life better for millions of people over the decades. Unions are critical, and there are still plenty of organisations today where workers are not properly empowered. However, in the 21st century, many of the major concepts for which unions and the ALP fought have been implemented and are in law.

Protecting what is already in place, and pushing for marginal improvements, are not compelling reasons to occupy such a central place in our democracy. A respectful alliance with unions, rather than a legal affiliation, is more appropriate for the 21st century.

The influence held within the party by a select few unions and their leaders is an impediment to change. It is no longer necessary for union leaders to play such a direct role in the political process via organisational links to a political party. Only 14% of employees in Australia are also union members, and no single industry has more than 35% union members. Unions are no longer representative of a large portion of the population. Less than 1% of the members of ALP-affiliated unions actually belong to the party. Can we really say that the political decisions made in those

members' names truly represents their values? Do they really have a choice in those decisions, or care about them in the first place? If union members are invested in politics, then it seems as though the sensible thing would be for them to become party members.

The division between labour and capital has blurred. Society is full of people whose parents and grandparents were in unions, but now own businesses and employ people. Having one small group hold power like this over the whole side of progressive politics does not make any rational sense. This shift has also coincided with a decline in union membership. More and more people are entering the workforce in areas that do not have stable unions or are simply declining to join. More small businesses are cropping up each year, representative of people having a go for themselves and working independently from the union system.

The relevance of unions within the Labor Party has been in steady decline over the years, but the relationship has barely changed. The 2010s have shown that meaningful reform is no longer possible. The connection to the unions and the power they wield is in the core of the ALP's DNA.

The Liberals Are Now the Conservatives

> *… what we must look for, and it is a matter of desperate importance to our society, is a true revival of liberal thought which will work for social justice and security, for national power and national progress, and for the full*

development of the individual citizen, though not through the dull and deadening process of socialism.

— Robert Menzies, Liberal Party founder and former prime minister, 1944

The Liberal Party as we know it today was formed in 1944, a process spearheaded by Robert Menzies, who went on to become its most significant figure. It was created as a response to severe party issues within the United Australia Party, its most immediate predecessor. Menzies held meetings with other conservative figures and party leaders, as they recognised the existing UAP was no longer functional; they decided to make a more modern and functional organisation for their times. Since then, the Liberal Party has entrenched itself as the non-Labor force in Australia's politics rejecting the 'socialist panacea'. It has been the party backed by business interests and capitalist ideas and its founding description as a 'progressive party' is still regularly quoted, as in this 2019 newspaper article:

Former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull … highlighted the words of Liberal Party founder Sir Robert Menzies, who in 1944 said: 'We took the name 'Liberal' because we were determined to be a progressive party, willing to make experiments, in no sense reactionary but believing in the individual, his right and his enterprise, and rejecting the socialist panacea'.[25]

It has also embraced the liberal ideals of freedom

of the individual, and the conservative ideals of maintaining tradition. It is only really in Australia that the terms 'liberalism' and 'conservativism' merged into a single, anti-socialist force. The word 'liberal' has had different terminological journeys in different parts of the world. In modern North America, where neither of the two major parties is a labour party, it refers to the progressive side.

The Liberal organisation is not as old as Labor. Its organisational DNA is from the mid-20th century—not the late 19th. It is a 'more modern' organisation, but it still shares many organisational similarities. Just like Labor, this party is no longer representative of what we can achieve as a country. It has the same organisational disfigurement. The party is also hollowed out, like Labor, with longstanding structures populated by few members.

Just as Labor had a branch-stacking scandal in 2020, so too did the Liberals, specifically their Victoria branch. The branch's former vice-president, Marcus Bastiaan, was found to have colluded with two MPs (Michael Sukkar and Kevin Andrews) to remove other members from their seats, and found to have bought a small number of votes.

The Conservative Takeover and Vested Interests

> *… We should never as members of the Liberal Party of Australia lose sight of the fact that we are the trustees of two great political traditions. We are … the custodian of the classical liberal tradition within our society … We are*

also the custodians of the conservative tradition in our community. And if you look at the history of the Liberal Party it is at its best when it balances and blends those two traditions.

— John Howard, former prime minister, 2005

The Liberal Party of the 2020s is a conservative force. The more conservative parts of the organisation have essentially taken over. In recent years there has been a massive influx of Pentecostal Christians and other deeply conservative groups. They have come into the organisation and increasingly become more powerful and vocal. The current leaders of the organisation are conservatives like Peter Dutton. The next generation of leaders are also deeply conservative. In the 2022 federal election, a number of potential future moderate Liberal leaders lost to the teal independents. The Liberal Party has always been the party representative of, and funded by, business and corporate interests—but in the 2020s, it is infested with the worst of them. Vested commercial interests have become increasingly powerful within the organisation and created a situation of paralysis, where when the party was in power it was difficult to make decisions in the national interest, like reducing our carbon emissions, because someone, somewhere will lose money.

The industries with the most to lose in decarbonisation have invested their money and effort in a way that works—by putting it into the Liberal Party. There is no prism of good government through

which this made sense. The 2022 election showed there are many people who have voted for the Liberals their whole lives and are disturbed and turned off by the party's current situation.

The Greens Are Not the Solution

> *I believe the Greens as a party are in a similar position to what the Labor Party was 100 years ago … We represent a widespread view of the community and our support is geographically widespread … I think that within 50 years we will supplant one of the major parties in Australia.*[26]
>
> *— Bob Brown, former Greens federal parliamentary leader, 2011*

Many of the issues about the Greens can be attributed to the implications of this statement. Brown's vision of the Greens replacing the ALP as Australia's leading progressive party over the next half-century is a dystopian nightmare. It implies the progressive side will take until 2062 to get our act together.

This vision inherently suggests a 50-year-long period of progressive instability, in which the progressive vote would be split and there would be no truly effective progressive force. Brown's vision depicts the broad umbrella organisation, with the broad community support that progressives need right now, not in the 2060s. We cannot afford to wait for the Greens to slowly transform into a party of government.

The idea that we would have two main parties on

the progressive side—both with severe flaws—is dysfunctional. While the Greens have fulfilled a very important role in representing environmental concerns within contemporary Australian politics, they do not in any way, shape or form offer the option of a governing party capable of consistently winning majority government in the House of Representatives.

The party is founded on radical politics—it is woven into the Greens' DNA. It was formed out of a dissatisfaction with the then-current state of Australian politics and a merging of multiple environmental movements from across the country. An organisational journey to becoming a party of government is impossible. An organisation borne out of an environmental protest movement is not going to make the changes and evolutions required to become a broad umbrella organisation that fits into our two-party system. There are multiple instances of green parties being in power in other countries, but one thing that all of these have in common is their country's use of a fully proportional voting system.

Even if the Greens were to form a coalition with the ALP, it would only manage to put each party's weaknesses clearly on display. Just like Labor, the Greens are not equipped to be the driving force behind progressive 21st-century Australian politics. Within our system it would be easier, and more effective, to bring a strong sustainability faction into a modern, progressive umbrella organisation with the ability to afford a degree of proportional representation within it.

Chapter 4:

Independents Can't Form Executive Government

The changes in the makeup of the 2022 Parliament is a display of the fracturing of 20th-century politics and its political parties. There has been no change to the system. Rather, it is a display of the public's distrust in and unease towards the two main political parties within it. The main change was that well-organised and well-funded independents were successful.

In our system of government, it is the executive that makes all the day-to-day decisions—all the decisions about the allocation of resources, the number of staff members that each new independent MP will have, and so on. Independents are a reactive force, outside of executive government, with the best option of 'keeping the government honest'.

In this Parliament (as in most in our history) one party has control of the executive—the only way the legislative has any power, is in the passing of legislation to the 'upper' house for review. In the current Parliament, the ALP, an increasingly small group with

leaders from a narrow slice of society, is providing 100% of the makeup of the executive.

Any talent the independents might have is wasted. If the independents gained the balance of power in a future Parliament, they would still be a reactionary force outside the executive.

It is not just the independent MPs that are on the outside—it is also all of their supporters. Many of the independents had the largest numbers of volunteers and supporters in their electorates. These people did not see the traditional 'parties' as a viable option.

Once a group of independents thinks about becoming a political organisation within our two-party system, questions have to be asked.

- Are they a party?
- What is the structure of the party?
- If there is two or more people that could be a good representative, how are they going to be selected?

If there is an alternative to thinking about organisational structure and design, then what is it? What is another viable pathway? Seeing the rise of independents is a transition – it has to evolve into something. Having a party you like, that has integrity and can form government, is better than being on the outside.

Chapter 5:

Breaking into the Cartel

In the 1990s, English political scientists Richard Katz and Peter Mair published a paper called *The Emergence of the Cartel Party*.[27] The idea is that the major political parties in countries such as the UK and Australia have, in essence, evolved into a cartel. The parties have created a system of securing state funding for themselves, which accounts for a substantial portion of their funding. According to Katz and Mair's theory, the major parties have become integrated into the state. The term, 'cartel', is commonly attributed to economic cartels, groups of businesspeople who collude in order to dominate a supposedly 'free' market.

In the context of political parties, it is the idea of major political parties coordinating with each other to ensure they remain dominant, and that no new groups can come to power. Specifically, these parties use state money and other resources to maintain their positions. It creates a 'barrier to entry' to any other organisation. Democracy has a fixed menu of options for government.

A major issue for 21st-century progressives is that

'our party' in the cartel, the ALP, is archaic and opaque. The situation would work best for progressives if the main party receiving all the money was open, modern, and transparent. It would give us broader public support, a larger pool of potential leaders and a better chance of winning and performing in government.
To better understand this theory, it is useful to look at how political parties have evolved. Katz and Mair identify four distinct 'eras' of evolution within political parties, particularly in Western European and English society.

Regime Censitaire (Cadre Party)

This era mainly existed when not many people could vote. Votes were generally restricted to male landowners. The people who made up the politically relevant elements of civil society, and the people who occupied positions of power were interlinked, and often knew each other.

The opposing groups, like the Whigs and the Tories, were comprised of informal social networks and factions. They may have been centred around leaders or ideas but were not formal organisations.

The Mass Party

The mass party started to evolve when all males got the vote in the mid-19th century. As more people gained the ability to vote, political parties became more organised and more formal. The mass party model had organised membership, formal structures and meetings. The classic example of this is the rise of

the global labour movement in the 19th century—the disenfranchised elements of society fought for a voice and to be represented within the power of the state.

These parties were explicitly claiming to represent the interests of single segments of society, rather than trying to appeal to everyone. Mass parties acted as agents for the interests of their own groups. The parties themselves were the forums in which that social group could articulate their desires and interests. The rise of this model was also involved with the rise of universal suffrage—all males and then all adults getting the vote changed elections from 'vehicles by which the voters gave consent to be governed by those elected' to 'devices by which the government was held accountable to the people'.[28] Much more recently, Professor Anika Gauja notes:

> *Although many are increasingly questioning the 'golden age' of the mass party and now regard it as a historical episode, it still carries significant weight as a normative model of how political parties should be organised.*[29]

The Catch-All Party

The catch-all party model is credited to Otto Kirchheimer, a German political scientist. In his 1966 text, *The Transformation of West European Party Systems*, Kirchheimer argued the then-modern political party looked for votes wherever it could find them, instead of focusing on any single social group. He believed the party had evolved into being a broker between the state and the public.

This party model recruits members wherever they are found, and does so based on policy agreement, rather than social identity. This method is more aggressive than the defensive nature of the mass party and focuses on a wider audience. Parties under this model are more like brokers between the state and civil society. Katz and Mair describe this as a 'Janus-like existence'.[30] The parties are simultaneously aggregating and presenting the public's demands to the bureaucracy of the state, while also acting as agents of the state and defending policies to the public.

> *The idea that parties act as brokers is particularly appropriate to the pluralist conception of democracy … In this view, democracy lies primarily in the bargaining and accommodation of* [independent] *… interests.*[31]
> *The position of parties as brokers between civil society and the state suggests that the parties themselves may have interests that are distinct from those … on either side of the relationship.*[32]

The catch-all party reduces the amount of power that members hold over leaders, giving more to the overall electorate.

The Cartel Party Model

> *We see the emergence of a new type of party, the cartel party, characterized by the interpenetration of party and state, and also by a pattern of inter-party collusion …*[33]

Katz and Mair argue that across the late 20th century,

dominant Western political parties have evolved into something resembling economic cartels—groups which collude with each other to maintain their positions of dominance within the political system. The main way in which the parties maintain the cartel is through state funding based on previous election performance. This produces the large amount of funding needed for the next election, provides organisational stability, and reduces the need for other sources of funding.

Characteristics of the cartel party include:

- contained party competition: 'the parties still compete, but they do so in the knowledge that they share with their competitors a mutual interest in collective organisational survival'[34]
- primary funding is public money: parties must receive a certain percentage of the vote (first preference) to be eligible
- capital-intensive party work and campaigning
- party channels of communication include privileged access to state broadcasters
- politics as a performance of party leaders in the mass media
- politics as a profession.

In the 2019 federal election, the ALP received a total of $24,684,039 in public funding through the electoral system; the Liberal Party received a total of $27,569,610.[35] The current rate of funding per eligible vote provided in state and federal elections is approximately $3. This rate and other payments to

the parties have slowly increased over time.[36] In order for a candidate, party, or other group to be eligible for election funding from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), they must have received at least 4% of first-preference votes in the latest federal election or by-election. This system was introduced by the Hawke Government, passed by Parliament in 1983 and first applied in the 1984 federal election.

The two parties are also able to cooperate to change electoral laws and the regulations of the AEC to create barriers to entry. This has happened in mid-2021, with a new law suddenly tripling the minimum number of members required to register a party to 1500 and significantly strengthening naming rules to the clear benefit of existing parties. There was little debate; neither major party put much effort into either justifying the new rules or engaging with the many objections that were raised.

Katz and Mair also argue that the cartel model has changed our understanding of democracy:

> *… the essence of democracy lies in the ability of voters to choose from a fixed menu of political parties. Parties are groups of leaders who compete for the opportunity to occupy government offices and to take responsibility at the next election for government performance.*[37]

Citizens prefer to invest their interests in places other than political parties, looking for outlets 'where they are more likely to be in full agreement with a narrower range of concerns, and where they feel they can make a difference'.[38]

Chapter 6:

Pathways to Something New

Coming Together, Not Fracturing Apart

People don't have to agree on everything to be part of the same political party. The idea of bunching up in smaller political groups is something that we should resist. It is a path to political impotence. The fragmentation of the progressive vote means that there is no strong base to help win majority government through a functional organisation.

It is in our interests to work out productive ways to come together and work within a single large organisation. Society has gone through many changes, in a multitude of different ways for all adult Australians. People are interacting with each other in new and different ways. It is in our interests to create a scenario where many diverse groups of people and individuals, located in different parts of the country, can participate in the same organisation.

Umbrella Organisations

An umbrella organisation is broad and contains sub-groups and factions that operate within it. It is the basic mode of operation for a successful organisation within a two-party system. It exists in all countries in the world with this system, such as the US, the UK, and Australia.

It means that different people in different factions work together within the same broad party. It does not exist to the same extent in countries with multi-party systems. In those systems, people are more likely to form other parties instead of being forced to work together. An umbrella organisation is going to contain different groups of people that can organise in open ways.

To get people under the umbrella, it must be a self-empowering mode of political expression. The organisation needs processes and structures that allow new or smaller factions and groups to be heard, and seek to grow and be represented. There needs to be a form of proportional representation across the organisation.

It would still be the rational choice for those holding a minority view to be part of such an organisation. They would have a better chance of being in the party that gets to hold power and could organise to seek representation and participation in government, while operating within the stability of the two-party system. The minority voice is still able to be expressed and is more likely to have real impact within an organisation that is able to consistently win government.

Ways of Participating

How people participate in 21st-century volunteer organisations is rapidly evolving. It is becoming distinctly different to participating in 20th-century organisations. There is likely no other point in human history where organisational methods have changed so quickly.

- Regular meetings no longer work for most people. The idea of dutiful citizens turning up to monthly meetings is no longer viable. They are not necessary
- Paying for membership is unlikely to be successful and more likely to limit participation. Studies have shown that paying for membership will stop party supporters from becoming members.[39] People are willing to donate to causes they believe in.

There are fewer dutiful citizens—people who see elections, government and being formally involved with political organisations as an essential part of life in a democracy. People are more selective about the actions they want to be involved in. How people behave is affecting all volunteer organisations—not just political parties.

This is influenced by their lifestyle, how sociable they are, and their personal habits. Politically active people are likely to be on social media, donate money to causes, go to protests on issues that they care about and so forth, rather than join a political party.

Functional ways of getting people to participate could include:

- making full participation easy, low-effort and cost-free
- simplifying and streamlining methods of communication used by the party
- making the times when people physically come together celebrations and festivals, rather than sober decision-making events.

The ideal would be for people to participate in ways that make the system accessible to them, and that meet their methods of interaction.

Transparency and Trust

Members of the party, and the general public, should be able to easily look into the organisation, and witness how its processes operate and how decisions are made. This does not mean that you automatically trust the people within it, but if you can see into the organisation—see how decisions are made, who has what power and why—you are more inclined to think that the organisation itself has integrity.

Transparency and trust could be improved by:

- making the party's operations and processes easy to understand for the layman
- enabling the public to see and comprehend how the organisation's power structures work, and why those structures exist
- ensuring there are no hidden power bases built

into the party structure
- having clear processes for how people can be voted out and removed from positions of power.

It is not about seeing how different groups of people organise, but about seeing the processes of how the organisation makes decisions. It also means that the organisation is more accountable to those who support it.

Achieving Critical Mass

A new party would be best placed to spring into existence with a critical mass of people supporting it before it even exists. It would be better to have a planning and design process that can attract the people necessary to make critical mass possible. A party of this type—a large, broad, and functional umbrella organisation operating within a two-party structure—needs large numbers of people to work and be functional.

Critical mass would help with:

- attracting key people from the existing parties, both members and leaders
- making election success likely in a shorter timeframe
- having large enough numbers to prevent excessive influence from any single group that would affect mainstream accessibility
- validating candidate selection processes by involving more people.

Theoretical Tools

There are some easily understood theoretical tools that can be used as reference points to help in thinking about the construction of a new organisation.

These include:

- John Rawls' thought experiment of the 'Original Position'
- Bernard Crick's 'Political Virtues'
- Max Weber's theory of 'Ideal Types'.

John Rawls's 'Original Position'

John Rawls (1921–2002) was an influential American political philosopher. He worked primarily in the field of social justice, his major work being *A Theory of Justice*.[40] Rawls created a thought experiment called the 'Original Position'. In it, people would have to design a society and make decisions without knowing what social position they would end up holding within that society. They would not know if they would be born into wealth or poverty, what gender or race they would be, or any other aspects of their identity.

These people are forced to make decisions in a state of social equity. They do not know what status or position they would hold. Their choices are made behind a 'veil of ignorance'.

The result of this experiment, the society which participants create, is one that Rawls believed would be more likely to contain more equality and balance. The participants are more likely to select principles with as little bias and as much rationality as possible.

When people are forced to remove themselves from the equation, they promote more equitable living and social standards. Apart from being a great way to think about how to make decisions in our society, it is useful for working out how to best design an organisation to which we all want to belong.

Bernard Crick's Political Virtues

Bernard Crick (1929–2008) was a British political theorist. He put forward the view that 'politics is ethics done in public'—the idea that politics should be about taking action and working in practical ways with other people, rather than only applying grand ideologies.

His major work, *In Defence of Politics* (1972), introduced the idea of political virtues.[41] These are universal virtues that people need to demonstrate if they are to work together effectively in politics, regardless of their own world view. Crick argues that 'certainty' through rigid ideology is anti-political, as politics is inherently uncertain and subjective. Looking for certainty is anti-political as it looks for an objective 'truth' that does not exist. Crick argues in favour of a more flexible and 'human' approach which deals with people, their interactions and coming to mutual solutions. He proposed six political virtues:

Prudence

- The ability to exist with behaviours and governance driven by reason rather than emotion
- Observing the effects of actions before making

new actions.

Conciliation

- Attempting to resolve issues and come to solutions rather than arguing endlessly.

Compromise

- Coming to agreeable resolutions which are not necessarily perfect for all but allow for everyone to get something they want
- Giving up some things you want to get the more important things (considering compromise also helps determine what is most important).

Variety

- Observing the effects of actions before taking new actions
- Engaging with differing viewpoints and interests

Adaptability

- To govern flexibly and be willing to give ground when necessary
- Shifting governing techniques to suit changing times.

Liveliness

- Never being boring or complacent
- Being bold and taking risks.

Crick's virtues provide the attributes that people require in working together to build an effective political organisation. It would be more difficult to work with people who do not share these virtues.

Max Weber's 'Ideal Types'

Max Weber (1864–1920) was a German sociologist. He developed several different social and economic theories and concepts. He is a key theorist on modern Western society and a major contributor to sociology, bureaucracy and thinking on culture and human organisation. His view of social science involves thinking about developing hypothetical and abstract concepts and theories, so as to make sense of the human world.

One of his theories is of 'ideal types'.[42] It refers to the identification of the 'ideal behaviour' desired within an organisation or general social interaction. Ideal types are a subjective aspect of sociology, something to be discussed and philosophised about, rather than a concrete 'fact' used to declare right from wrong. Ideal types do not refer to perfect examples of behaviour, but rather point out behaviours which are 'ideal' or 'preferred'. The concept of ideal types is effectively a tool to be used in the ordering and sorting of reality, boiling down chaotic and complex societies into more easily understood commonalities. The purpose of an ideal type is not to exist, but to act as a benchmark by which real life can be measured.

We can identify the key ideal traits necessary within a new organisation and construct the organisation with these traits in mind. As the organisation continues to develop over time, the traits can act as benchmarks for its evolution.

Key Traits of the Ideal Progressive Political Party

We can work out the key traits that we would want a new organisation to have. It is not about expecting to create the 'perfect political party', but about developing goalposts to work out how the organisation could be constructed and how to measure its success.

Modern Organisation

The ideal party has a 21st-century structure, based on how successful organisations work today. It takes advantage of 21st-century technology and organisational structures to encourage productive dialogue between supporters, members, leaders and the public.

Transparency

People want to be able to look into the organisation and see how it works. It is not about understanding every little decision, but about having a broad level of transparency. People are much more likely to support an organisation when they can clearly understand how it works.

Representing a Broad Cross-Section of the Community

We want everyone who does not identify as a hardcore conservative to be able to consider supporting a single progressive organisation.

Creating Leaders

The ideal progressive party gets the best people that Australia is producing and channels them into our parliaments. It has a streamlined and accessible series of pathways for people who are interested in getting involved.

Set Up for Electoral Success

The ideal progressive party has the ability to consistently win government and is a natural party of government. This is how we get society and Australia to move in the direction that we want it to.

Chapter 7:

A Potent Force Needs People

If political parties adapt or evolve to new institutional environments, it stands to reason that they must also respond to a new type of politically active citizen. This may require a radical rethinking of what we mean by the notion of a political party as a mediating institution and where its organisational boundaries lie. At the very least, a more nuanced account of what it means to be active within, or engaged with a political party, is necessary—one that moves beyond the notion of a formal member.[43]

— Anika Gauja, Australian political scientist

A potent political force needs people to achieve its goals. In a democracy, this is self-evident. The 21st-century human is experiencing prosperity and opportunities that previous generations did not have. The narrative of pulling together for common causes has been weak. We are living in an era of individualism, personalisation, self-identity, and expression. Interest in political participation is at a low ebb. This has been happening in most democratic countries around the world.

The number of 'dutiful citizens', who are interested in active political participation in traditional ways,

is diminished.[44] People are far more likely to want personalised participation where you get to choose your leaders and ways of participating on your own terms. Perhaps this is why the US, the most individualist of nations, has the largest number of people actively involved in the political process—they never really went for the communal 'dutiful citizen' membership model in the first place. There is no idea of membership in American political parties. For all the failings of their democracy, public participation in the process is not one of them. You can choose to register as supporting a party as part of the voter registration processes and get to automatically vote in the preselection of that party's candidates with no further time nor effort.

According to Professor Anika Gauja, Australians are more likely to be involved in 'micro-political forms of participation, such as donating money, signing a petition, or purchasing particular types of goods "without the need to interact with other people"'.[45]

Creating a New Participation Model

Many Australians are interested in creating a progressive future for their country, keeping a strong society together, and facing challenges like climate change. There is no reason that a potent political organisation shouldn't be able to attract a large number of people to participate in it. It is about participating, not about any traditional ideas of membership.

It is in our interests to adapt to the social and

technological realities of 2021, and to develop a new progressive party that can actually function throughout the 21st century.

These conversations are happening around the world in countries like the UK, Germany, and Canada. In 2016, the Canadian Liberals (their progressive party), led by Justin Trudeau, dispensed with the notion of membership entirely. Instead, 'anyone willing to register with the party (for free) is able to participate in policy development and candidate and leadership selection'.[46] This was a jump toward the US model.

Key aspects of a new participation model could include:

Easy to join

- You register once, providing proof of identity and basic personal details—name, date of birth and address—and then update any that change over time. You do not have to do anything to maintain your ongoing full participation; there is no set expiry date except to meet AEC requirements
- Joining is free and there is no ongoing fee. Instead, you may be asked for donations. This model would encourage more people to participate in the party.

Easy to understand

- It is easy for lots of people to understand how it works, and to get information.

Easy to participate in

- It should be easily understood and straightforward for interested individuals and groups to interact with the party and participate

- It should be understood that people will dip in and out, in terms of their level of involvement, through their lives.

How the Major Parties Select Candidates in the US

In the United States, the Democratic and Republican parties allow anyone to participate in selecting candidates for elections. They do this through state-by-state 'primary' elections or large conference-like events called caucuses. When you register to vote, you can also choose to become affiliated with a party, allowing you to participate in its candidate-selection process.

Anyone affiliated with a party gets to vote on that party's candidate. In the lead-up to the 2020 US presidential election, 19 million people voted in the Republican primaries, and 37 million people in the Democratic ones. That means 56 million people—around 16% of the total population—played a role in party processes. That's more than a third of the number who voted in the presidential election that followed.

The system started to emerge in the early 20th century as a way to test the appeal of different candidates, but party leaders still had the final say. The Democrats were first to truly hand the power to voters in its primaries after 1968, when its leaders chose a candidate who had not won any primaries—and who supported the Vietnam War. This infuriated the many anti-war voters who had taken part and led to large protests that turned violent in some cases. Deep disunity split the Democratic vote for president and the Republican Richard Nixon coasted to victory. In the aftermath, the Democrats moved to the modern, open system of candidate selection and the Republicans soon followed suit.

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Using Primaries as Part of the Preselection Process

A feature of the two major political parties in the US is they allow any registered voter to take part in deciding who will represent the party at an election. They do this through open processes called primaries (see 'How the Major Parties Select Candidates in the US').

There is no separate concept of party membership as we know it. Rather than being a subscription with added 'benefits', party membership in the US is linked solely to the electoral process – you just register which party you're affiliated with, and can then freely participate in their primaries.

Primaries are linked to the US system of voter registration; when you register to vote, you can nominate the party you support and register to vote in its primaries, at no additional cost. The big benefit of this system is that it involves large numbers of people in party-political processes.

In starting a big new organisation from scratch, primaries are a tried-and-true way of involving a large number of people. When adjusted for the population difference, if a major Australian party ran a US-style primary process with a roughly equal level of participation as is regularly seen there, several million Australians would be involved in preselecting its candidates.

How the process could work:

- Everyone who is registered as a 'Participant' in the organisation would get to vote in the primaries to select candidates for their lower-house electorate and their state's Senate seats. Your name must be on the party participants roll as well as the national electoral roll
- The candidates for preselection get to build a profile, and they would also be able to campaign to a wide audience
- There could be a certain window of time in which

participants could vote

- The voting process could involve secure modern technology and user-experience design to make participation easy. This must often be balanced with the effects of new processes.

Chapter 8:

Producing Leaders

One of the fundamental factors in progressing Australia is producing the leaders to do it. Beautiful flowers still grow in barren deserts—talent can shine through no matter what the circumstances. But, it is not in our interests to wait around and see what may or may not emerge from barren ground.

A better option for politically active and aware citizens is to create fertile ground that fosters both a high quantity and a high quality of potential leaders. We want a political institution and a culture that is conducive to attracting the best and brightest Australia has to offer. Australia is producing tons of amazing people. The goal is to find and develop a large number of potential cabinet-level leaders capable of running good executive government. Broadly, this would involve:

- creating clear and transparent pathways into politics
- drawing from a large talent pool
- developing potential leaders
- assessing those potential leaders.

This would also require effective ways of selecting candidates, which balance a focus on channelling talented people into parliaments, with a system of preselection that gives all party supporters a say in who represents them. If we balance these two aspects effectively, we would be more comfortable in knowing our representatives were not only popular, but also properly qualified, enabled and informed to run a good government.

The Pool-Size Issue in Australian Politics

There is a pool-size issue built into Australian politics. The number of people from which the executive is chosen is small. A key aspect of the Westminster system of government is that the executive branch of government is drawn from the legislative branch. This system inherently means that the executive is chosen from a very restricted, limited pool. The leader and the ministers must also already be in parliament.

When we adopted the Westminster system and made our own hybrid, the pool got even smaller. For example, we only have 151 members in the House of Representatives. The UK, while larger in population, also has a much larger talent pool to select from—650 in the House of Commons. This is four times as many people in the main legislative body who can become ministers in the executive government. Even as a proportion of its population, the UK Parliament—which, like ours, functions as its ministerial talent

pool—is still 2.6 times larger than Australia's.[iii]

In the US (and many other presidential systems around the world), the potential talent pool for the executive is literally the entire population. The president gets to choose all other members of the executive from the public. This raises the potential pool size for executive government to its highest achievable number as members from the entire country can be picked, rather than just those who have already worked their way into the legislative body. In the US, members of Congress (the US parliament) are there only to make and pass laws—not to be part of executive government.

It is in our interests to pump as much talent into the pool as possible. The best way to overcome this built-in circumstance and improve outcomes is by improving the party processes that decide who gets to stand for election in the first place. The more people we have who can perform important functions in executive government, the better. The fewer of these people we have, the less likely we are going to win, and the less likely we will be able to do a good job when we are in government.

One of the key issues is that 'good local members' are chosen because of their connection and appeal

[iii] For demonstrative purposes, this comparison does not include ministers from the upper houses (Senate, House of Lords). The comparison is based on a UK population of 67.22 million and an Australian population of 25.69 million, each data portion drawn from the World Bank's 2021 population counts. To equal the UK's ratio of potential cabinet ministers to population, Australia would need to almost double the House of Representatives to 248 members.

to the local community. In the US system this would not be a problem; members of Congress are not part of executive government. It is, however, an issue in Australia because it further limits the pool of people who can effectively run executive government. A 'good local member' who has few of the attributes needed to be an effective member of the executive is further limiting the pool size. We don't need them in Federal Parliament—we need people who can help run the federal government. We should seek to have the strongest backbench possible, with lots of ministers-in-waiting from all over the country, ready to step up and join the cabinet when required.

Clear Pathways into Politics

It is in our interests to widen the talent pool of potential leadership in Australia, and to make the process of entering politics more accessible. We are best served by having clear pathways into politics.

It is not in our interests to have politics be, and be perceived to be, something that is murky and dirty to be involved with—obfuscated by unclear processes. Having confused and overly complicated pathways into politics only serves to further increase this lack of clarity, and consequent distrust in those systems by the public and potential leaders.

By making these pathways more transparent and accessible, we can successfully widen the pool, attract the best people, and help develop them as leaders. It is also about having pathways for people from

all different walks of life to be leaders; people who are at different stages in their lives and careers and have different life experiences; people from different backgrounds and educations. Additionally, it provides clear and transparent processes for high-performing professionals to come into the organisation and get elected. By making clear processes of entry into political careers, we can encourage more people to participate.

A Large Talent Pool

The bigger the pool size, the more likely it is you'll attract the people with the most talent. This is true of any situation where you want the people with the best abilities in order to create the best outcomes, whether that's politics, sport or any other area of human endeavour. Take the example of the leading English Premier League football clubs, like Manchester United or Liverpool. Their talent pool is the entire planet, so they can get the best, most skilful players. As a result, they're usually excellent at football. In contrast, the local footy team have a significantly smaller talent pool to draw from, so the ability of their players just isn't going to be as good. Sure, you might get lucky and find a star athlete living in the suburbs, but it's far less likely that you will build a better team than if you were able to pick from a larger pool of players in the first place. If you're trying to win, who wouldn't go with the larger pool?

This same concept can also be applied to politics.

By widening the talent pool, instead pulling from a narrow group, we can choose from the best that Australia has to offer. Plenty of other human endeavours draw from the widest talent pools they can, and politics should be no different.

Developing Talent

It is in our interests to prepare people for the tasks of winning elections and performing in executive government. This concept of learning how to run government as a part of the political process isn't a new idea. The political training academy is a tried-and-true model. Training academies have existed throughout history and are not a new concept.

Nowadays, this concept is rarer in politics than in other disciplines with high levels of risk and which require valuable skills. Think of the training that is required to become a medical specialist. From society's perspective, cabinet ministers are far more important than brain surgeons. We want people to hit the ground running and enter into politics with the best preparation.

A training and development academy can run as an independent arm of the organisation. It is a way to learn the skills necessary for executive government. It would create an environment of competency. People would be better equipped with the knowledge on how to run executive government. This concept also provides transparency, by making it simple for interested people to observe and track the

development of potential candidates.

One of the main, current ways people are trained for political careers is by working in the offices of politicians. This serves as a type of apprenticeship. While it can create situations where people have limited life experience outside of politics, it is also a positive learning process to have people seconded into politicians' offices.

Development curriculum for a political training academy could include:

- theories of administration and governance
- how government works
- how to function as an executive
- rhetoric and presentation skills.

This would allow people to develop over time without being full-time professional politicians.

Assessing

Candidates should be assessed on their potential to perform. This occurs all the time in the real world. It is not about their beliefs—they should be capable of telling you those by themselves. It is about their ability to function and perform in winning elections and running executive government.

This gives us a better idea of the people we are preselecting to represent us. It gives us a better idea of what their strengths, weaknesses and chances of growth might be. In today's culture we're used to assessing people through reality-TV talent shows

where people get judged on their performances. A group of 'Assessors' could be another separate, independent part of the organisation at the development academy. All they would do is give objective ratings based on different criteria. This then gives the people involved in preselecting candidates a better idea of the people they are giving their support to.

The criteria could include:

- management and administrative abilities
- understanding of government
- life experience
- rhetoric
- demonstrable leadership skills.

Assessments allow potential candidates to improve over time, and for other people to see it happen. They would indicate the strengths and weaknesses of each potential leader, as well as the areas in which there would be room for growth and development. The objective is not just to have people elected who share your beliefs. It is to have people who can also be excellent at winning and running government. Assessments would give people a better idea of the candidates they are preselecting to represent them in parliament.

The Ideal Traits of a Senior Minister

There are definable attributes of the people that we want to see in executive government. It is in our

interests to have as many people with these attributes in parliament as possible. Apart from being smart, clever, and functional, these could include:

- the ability to deal with and plan a pathway through complex situations and explain them to the public
- a sound understanding of how executive government works and is administered
- behaviour that enhances public trust in government
- the capacity for long-term decision making
- the ability to communicate with influence and change people's minds
- performance in the 'theatre' of politics with a splash of charisma
- strong but pragmatic political principles and sense of good government
- the ability to lead large groups of public servants
- the ability to think meaningfully about the operation of government.

Selecting Candidates

Our best option for selecting candidates is to have custom-built methods that use the system we have, to the best of our advantage. This means creating new mechanisms that help to overcome its limitations. It is not about creating the perfect outcomes in all situations. It's more about balancing the two desirable outcomes within the possibilities the system imposes on us.

Two competing objectives when it comes to selecting candidates are:

- the need to give the widest possible group of people in each electorate a say in who stands to represent them
- the need to get talented people into executive government.

Selecting our parliamentarians has to strike a balance between channelling talent into executive government and allowing people to have a say in who represents them. There should be ways to channel talent in which the process is on full display.

This will allow all the participants in the organisation, and the public, to have more confidence in the integrity of the process. Without having these mechanisms, it is difficult to overcome the limitations of the 'small pool-size issue' within our system.

The Split-Preselection Mechanism

The split-preselection mechanism allows for a balance between competing priorities. The vote in preselections would be split: 50% from a Selection Council, which is elected by the party Participants and whose main purpose is to channel talent into parliament; and 50% by the Participants directly in each electorate.

Candidates could be nominated in one of two ways: self-nomination as a 'Local', or by being selected to run for the seat by the Selection Council as a 'Star'. All the

people standing for preselection must be part of the candidate pool and must have been assessed according to the party's objective criteria.

During the preselection vote—people on the Council and the participants in the electorate can vote for whomever they want. It is up to the Stars to win support from the Locals, and the Locals to win support from the Council. To be successfully preselected, you must get support from both.

Chapter 9:

Keeping It Simple

Many of the structures and positions that exist in 20th-century organisations are unnecessary in a 21st-century organisation. A primary step in developing the new organisation is deciding what the chosen 'ideals' in governance should be. The construction of the organisation can then be judged on how well it meets them. Chosen ideals could include:

Simplicity

The ability of the general public to understand the roles and processes in the organisation. For such an organisation to play a key role in democracy, it needs to be easy to understand.

Openness and Transparency

People can see into the organisation. It can be understood how decisions are made, and why. It can be understood who has power and how they got it. This also means that the organisation is more accountable to those who support it.

Self-Renewal

The organisation needs the ability to self-renew—to bring new people and ideas into the organisational structure; the ability to update its platforms and to adapt with the times. A self-renewing organisation is more likely to have durability and longevity.

Recognising the Existence of Factions

It is understood that factions will naturally exist within the organisation. It is an integral part of the organisation's existence as an umbrella party. Voting blocs will exist and will organically come and go. This also means having open and clear processes through which factions can both gain and lose representation.

Control Mechanisms

Mechanisms to maintain the integrity and security of the organisation.

Chapter 10:

Draft Organisational Model

The purpose of an organisational draft is to provide a reference point for discussion. This draft covers the basic operations and functions. There are many aspects that it does not cover, including: state branches; funding models; gender representation; caucus solidarity; youth politics; and how parliamentary leaders are selected.

Use of Technology

A fundamentally 21st-century organisation would need to use 21st-century technology to operate. Such technology would provide a platform for people to participate, support the organisation and see what is going on. Obviously, the use of technology should be approached with trepidation, but it can't be ignored.

This could include the ability to:

- see candidate profiles and backgrounds
- see what is going on in the organisation
- get involved with both in-person and online-only events

- get involved with campaign events
- participate in grassroots organising, networking, and campaigning
- vote in preselection and council ballots.

Organisational Overview

There are eight different parts of this organisation.

1. The Participants: people on the electoral roll that choose to be part of the organisation.
2. A Selection Council: 7 to 15 members, elected by the Participants.
3. The Candidate Pool: the pool of people that are seeking to be preselected to represent the party in parliament.
4. The Party Spokesperson: the main voice of the party.
5. A Development Academy: an arm of the organisation focused on developing members of the Candidate Pool.
6. The Candidate Assessors: independent assessors of the abilities of the candidates.
7. Parliamentary Caucus: the group of elected representatives from the party.
8. The Party Machine: its operational side for organising and running the organisation.

The Participants

- Any interested individual should be able to register using the same proof of identity required to join the electoral roll

- There is no upfront cost for becoming a member, nor is there an expiry date on participation
- People could be contacted for donations (in a regulated fashion)
- Participants get to vote for candidates in primary-style preselection processes
- Participants get to vote for the Selection Council members.

A Candidate Pool

A pool of people that have registered to enter the preselection process to stand for election to parliament. Being part of the candidate pool would involve:

- having a profile as a candidate
- entering the talent development program
- subjecting yourself to assessment on performance
- going on candidate forums and taking questions from Participants
- campaigning to win the support of both the Participants and the Council.

The Selection Council

The draft organisational model has a 7- to 15-member Selection Council, elected 100% by the party participants.

Tasks:

- Channel talent into parliament via the split-preselection mechanism with 50% of the preselection vote in each electorate

- Allow for expression beyond parliament
- Allow factions to be expressed within the umbrella organisation in an open and transparent manner
- Allow issues to have a voice
- Allow different voices to be heard and express their thoughts and opinions
- Give participants a say in the direction of the party
- Provide a way for the organisation to renew each election cycle.

How the Council would work:

- Its members would be selected democratically by the Participants
- Council elections would be held reasonably soon after federal elections
- The Council would hold both public and private meetings
- There would be no Council president, but a revolving chairperson system. The council members could speak for themselves, but not for the party as a whole.

What the Council would do:

- Every new Council would update a short platform document after their election
- The Council would get 50% of the votes in preselection of candidates
- It would be a mechanism to get high performing 'Star' candidates into parliament

- It would place 'Star' candidates into preselection races against local candidates.

The Party Spokesperson

A party spokesperson is selected each year. This person is 25–30 years old. They are the main public face of the organisation during a year-long term. They speak for the organisation as a whole. They can only be spokesperson once.

Development Academy

The organisation would have an independent training centre for the candidate pool. It would be run by an independent group of trainers and teachers within the organisation. The main focus of the academy is the development of skills that improve performance. It would be responsible for:

- organising a talent development program
- running short and long courses
- doing performance training to become an effective member of executive government.

Assessment Team

An independent group of assessors. Their purpose is to assess the candidate pool on performance-related criteria and provide feedback. The assessment results would be public.

Parliamentary Caucus

The people who represent the party in parliament.

The Preselection Process

Candidates can be nominated for preselection in one of two ways:

- They can self-nominate as a Local candidate in their electorate
- They can be chosen as a Star candidate to run for a seat by the Selection Council.

Preselection votes would be split: 50% from the members, 50% from the Selection Council. Candidates are selected on a balance of these votes.

During the preselection vote, Selection Council members can vote for whomever they want alongside people in the electorate. To win, all the candidates need to maximise their support from both the local community and the Selection Council.

This allows for situations that produce desired outcomes. It channels talent into parliaments and allows local people to have a say in who represents them.

It's not about creating the perfect outcomes in all situations, but more about balancing desirable outcomes. There are a number of different ways the voting process could work.

Chapter 11:

People

These stories about fictional people demonstrate key aspects of the organisational model.

Betty – Star Candidate

Betty has a first-class master's degree in public administration. She has spent much of her working life in a variety of different organisational settings in both the public and private sectors. She has always given her time to the community. Betty is articulate and knows what she wants from good government. And she knows how to sell it.

All her prior learning and life experience meant that after coming to some events, becoming more involved with the organisation and joining the Development Academy, Betty has scored highly with the Assessors.

She has been picked by the Council to stand for preselection in a lower-house seat in the state where she lives, in a different electorate. There are no opportunities in the electorate where she currently lives.

If she is going to win preselection, then she has to build support from the local people in the electorate and maintain the support of the Council.

Bob – Local Candidate

As a child, Bob was more of a practical mind. He was a smart, and quickly grasped new concepts, but didn't like school much. He did, however, think a lot about how the world worked, and he was firmly guided by science and facts.

As a young man, he did an apprenticeship as a welder but spent most of his time surfing. As he got older, he became more interested in self-learning and his political thoughts developed. He was involved with a bunch of local community initiatives in his town and became active in local government.

Over the years Bob has also learned how to communicate effectively to large groups. He is a great storyteller and a charismatic speaker. People from up and down the coast come to events where he is speaking. He is good at connecting policy with people's lives in a way that makes sense.

Bob enjoys participating in the organisation but feels he can do more. He's put himself into the Development Academy, has completed several courses and been assessed a few times; his numbers are improving. He now knows a lot more about how the federal government works and is developing his own ideas about running it effectively.

Bob knows the competition to be selected as a Star

candidate is fierce, but the preselection in his home electorate is up for grabs. It's a genuine opportunity.

In order to win preselection as a Local candidate, he needs to maintain the support of his community and be able to win votes from the Selection Council. He believes he has already secured the support of one Council member who is likely to promote him to the others.

Jill and Janet – Participants

Jill and Janet knew each other for years before they became a couple. Both were passionate about making their voices heard on the issues they cared about. They have related occupations. Jill is a nurse and Janet works in the state health department.

Life is busy—they have been through a lot of stress recently. They have been on the front line since the pandemic started. Janet has a child on the way.

They want to have a say in politics, but now is not the time to be active. A few years ago, they had more time—and in a few years, they will have more time again. But they still want to be involved in democracy and have their say. For them, the chance to vote in the primaries to select candidates for parliament and have a say in who sits on the Council is just the right level of involvement.

The process is easy to understand and participate in. They have seen the choices, read the Assessor Reports on the candidates and understand a little about the people standing. Jill likes the Star candidate the

Council has put into the preselection; she thinks we need high-achieving people in government. Janet, on the other hand, prefers a Local in the race. She knows him; he is clever and comes up with interesting ideas. She knows he would be good in parliament.

Jill and Janet both enjoy being part of a major political party that is functional and open. Most of their friends participate and vote in the primaries and to elect the Council as well. They know that being part of this organisation is the best chance they have to contribute to a good life for themselves, their future family and the whole country. They both believe in it and feel a new sense of optimism. 'We can do this!'

Michael – Council Member

Michael is an Australian ex-prime minister.

He never really got on with the party he was leading. He was never part of the tribe. He always had a strong belief in building a better Australia. He is a modern progressive. He knew the party wasn't in the best shape when he first joined it. But the other side was even less attractive.

He understands that party politics is one of the compromises of living in a democracy. Now he is largely estranged from his former party. There is no love lost on either side.

But he still has significant support in the general population. His passion has never waned, and he still believes in putting all his energy into fighting the good fight for the interests of the country. The media

landscape is horrible, by the way.

The new organisation is great for Michael. He's on the Council and is helping make meaningful choices. He is not on the outside anymore, looking frustrated at all the dysfunctions. He is part of the solution. He could see that a modern, open organisation with functional systems was a better way.

He is helping to shape the party platform and has a vote on who the Council selects to stand in parliaments. He has been surprised at the quality of the talent that has stepped forward when there are clear and open processes. It also means that he's dealing with people who may have been his political opponents in the past; they now find themselves together on the right side of history. Michael is enjoying politics again.

Flick – Party Spokesperson

Flick is the person who is just happy to help. She enjoys being involved in decision-making and communicating in big groups. She has volunteered for heaps of organisations and stood for election dozens of times. When she wins, she does a good job and puts in the work.

Back in the day, it had been fun to think up the ideas for her campaign for school captain for Year 10. At uni she had been in one of the political clubs, was a student rep and sat on the union board. Public speaking had come a bit more slowly. She had actually been born with a slight stutter. But by the time she

was a young adult, no one could tell. She stuttered deliberately sometimes now just so people would see she had a flaw.

Flick could do a fantastic job as a Spokesperson. She knows all the things she wants to talk about. She also understands the formalities. It would mean traveling to most parts of the country and talking a lot. She understands that the purpose of the role is not to be just another politician, but to be an advocate for the future progress of Australia.

Craig – Participant

Craig doesn't like politicians much, but he's not an idiot. He knows that politics must exist for there to be a functioning society and democracy; he has a sense of what it means to be a citizen. He also knows people who have disappeared down conspiracy-theory rabbit holes.

Craig did an apprenticeship. He had the full advantages of the award wages system and support when he was coming up. He is not aware of the time before the industrial relations system existed. He has spent about half his career working for others in big companies and small business and about half working on his own.

He is doing okay; he knows he has a good life and is not in too much debt. He does think about the future and what it is going to be like for his children. He can see climate change is a big problem—he does respect the science—but he knows a lot of people who don't

give it much thought. He's seen what bushfires can do; he's a volunteer with his local brigade. He knows the fires aren't going to get any better…

Craig has never belonged to a political party; he's never really thought about joining one. But he's starting to find the country's lack of general direction alarming. He's learned about how the organisation works and how to participate. It wasn't hard. It didn't cost anything. He hasn't donated any money yet, but would if the right moment came.

Leroy – Participant and Donor

Leroy is a spectacularly successful and talented Australian tech entrepreneur. His company is a pioneer in its field, and knows a thing or two about working collaboratively. Its valuation on the US stock market has made Leroy rich by global standards, and especially for Australia.

The organisation gave Leroy a great opportunity to give back to his country and he knew it. He was passionate about renewable energy projects.

When it came to politics, the landscape had been looking bleak. Leroy had given money to candidates across the board from different parties and independents who had a strong climate-change agenda. He quickly grasped that a modern progressive organisation that made the best of the political system was the way to go. As Leroy often says, 'Better teams mean better outcomes.'

Nigel – Participant

Nigel came to Australia with his family at age 10. There had been a few ugly incidents growing up as an ethnic child, but mostly he feels he's had a great life here. He has received a great public education and was the first in his family to go to uni.

Nigel started a services business about 15 years ago. It is doing well, and now has about 20 employees. He remembers when he first started making money. He used to complain about how he was getting 'robbed' by all the taxes and government charges. All this money was coming into the bank account, but it always seemed to go back out again. He'd naturally supported reductions in company tax rates over the years. Now, he finds he makes at least three to five times more than any of his employees each year.

The Black Summer bushfires were a wake-up call and COVID-19 was Nigel's turning point. The fires made him reconsider what is important, and living in the post-pandemic world gave him time to pause and reflect. His business had received hundreds of thousands of dollars in government support during the pandemic.

He now understands that the challenges Australia is facing can only be dealt with together and not as individuals, which is why he signed up to participate in the organisation.

Rachel – Parliamentarian

Rachel belongs to all the major minorities. She has

a razor-sharp mind. She had been a senior member of the Labor shadow ministry for some time and a minister before that.

Rachel came to the organisation with an intensely personal perspective on federal politics, having ridden the waves of the previous decade's election campaigns. She was often seen travelling with the leader throughout the campaign and appearing on the election panel of the state broadcaster on the night itself, maintaining perfect composure as the results came in. She had inherited the informal role of 'Inquisitor General', which had evolved over the last 25 years of mostly conservative rule, using the Senate and its committees to 'keep the bastards honest'.

Rachel had never had much in common with traditional Labor history and mythology. She had no illusions when she started in the ALP with the help of close friends. She had read the party history and experienced the same double take as many contemporary Australians when she read its first platform from 1901. She understood that political parties had to evolve and reflect the times and was aware that in the ALP, this evolution had stalled.

Vicky & Lynn – Participants

Vicky and Lynn don't know each other, but are both from political families. They were born into it and are proud to continue the tradition. Vicky is from a rural family with socialist roots, and she remembers going along to ALP meetings as a small child. Lynn was from

a middle-class family and grew up in the city. Her father introduced her to the Liberal Party when she was in high school.

Both women are dutiful, model citizens who have belonged to their respective parties for about 50 years. They have served their local branches in a variety of different positions and held offices such as president, secretary, and treasurer at different times. For them, being involved has been a normal part of democracy. They both generally believe you have to work for a good society and put your own time and money into it.

When the children moved out, back in the 90s, they had found space to set up a new computer and a filing cabinet. They both had the names and numbers of all the main people in the local party tacked to their walls for decades. Vicky had 30 years of dusty old campaign posters in a corner of the garage; Lynn had a draw full of campaign mementos of similar vintage. Both have a collection of classic political badges from the 70s and 80s. Recently, they have been astounded at the state of their respective parties.

Vicky and Lynn find themselves on the same side of most arguments these days, since getting involved with the new organisation. One thing they definitely agree on is that neither the children nor the grandchildren are interested in the ways of the old parties.

Vincent – Council Member

Vincent was the founding leader of a minor political

party. Along with all his colleagues and friends, he had been turned off by the state of the two main parties. Their views could be summed up as 'a pox on both of their houses'.

Vincent felt the Liberals had turned into a version of warped conservatism that was reactionary and evidence denying, destroying the nation rather than building it. Labor was closed, inaccessible and going nowhere—a 130-year-old movement and its decaying organisation that had lost any relevance to their lives.

Vincent knew what he was up against when he started. He'd read all the histories of the different minor parties. It was hard to go against the system. But what choice was there? The system was not working. Those old parties didn't reflect reality.

When Vincent became involved with the new organisation, its structure was a blessing. He was basically able to transfer most of his people and their energy into the new open and modern organisational structure. Vincent's attraction to the new organisational model was based on rational thinking and logic.

Bill Blue – Council Member

When the global Green movement took off around the world in the 80s, Bill became the Australian face of it. Half the criticism he copped in those days had nothing to do with his politics, but not even the most bigoted forestry worker in Tasmania had called him a coward.

He remembered the early talks with the European

Greens politicians—those brief awkward silences when the subject of the Australian political system came up. Needless to say, he was an advocate of proportional representation.

Fast forward to the 2020s and it was good to see the Greens do so well in the proportional state government systems, especially in Tasmania and the ACT. The party had done well in the Senate, basically replacing the Democrats, but the lower house was a tough nut to crack.

Initially Bill didn't know what to really think about a new organisational model. How could people be expected to give up all the years of work they had put into building the Greens?

But the idea of a modern organisation intrigued him. The two-party system wasn't going anywhere. The new organisation allowed for smaller factions to grow and develop. Maybe by 2060, environmentalists would be the most influential progressive faction!

Heather – Parliamentarian

Heather was a Senator from a relatively large minor party. She had spent much of her time on the political frontline, standing up against the crazies and bigots. As a woman in the political arena for over a decade, the attacks were often personal. But she was tough; as Katy Perry sings, 'A tiger don't lose no sleep, don't need opinions from a shellfish or a sheep'.

In the time Heather had belonged to it, the party had divided into two factions. Both had strong

environmental values. One group, sometimes called the 'Watermelons', had an old-fashioned socialist outlook. The other group had a collection of modern, mainstream progressive views. The second group was better suited to working within a party of government than the first. With the appearance of a new organisational model this was apparent. It became a critical issue.

Heather had observed that in contemporary politics, progressives across the parties often agreed on what they were against—like Australia's lack of action of climate change or the manipulation of democracy by malignant media companies. It was clear that the existing parties, both major and minor, were from yesterday's world.

Jess – Participant

Jess recently turned 18 and registered to be a participant in the organisation around the same time that she registered to vote.

Like many of her friends, Jess experienced anxiety about climate change growing up. She had started to understand and think about the science pretty early on. She was a Greta Thunberg fan and went to all the School Strike for Climate rallies. She's also been to a few Extinction Rebellion protests.

Jess knows there are a broad range of people and views in the organisation. Everyone is keen for action on climate change—and we need to move forward together. She gets how the political system works and

how the organisation was set up to make the best of it. It's easy for lots of people to join and participate in, with a system to produce leaders from a big talent pool.

Jess knows people don't all want to move forward at the same pace, and she feels this is the best way to achieve positive change and consistently have progressive governments in her lifetime.

Wally – Future Candidate

Wally had just completed an international relations degree and was about to start another one in engineering. He liked doing physical work and using his brain. Where would Wally be in 10 years? He had lots of options. Wally's world was full of opportunities.

All the renewable energy and hydrogen production projects in inland Australia were intriguing. There is a lot of infrastructure that will have to be built. Everywhere he turned there were sliding doors that Wally could walk through.

Wally had grown up in a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. He had also thought about politics. He liked the idea of working for himself, but he also liked the idea of working for the country. And he had been gifted with a sprinkle of charisma. Wally was a natural leader.

The new organisation, with its clear and open process, meant this would continue to be an option throughout his career. He would not have to make a choice now. It wasn't about doing your time in

the party, demonstrating your loyalty to a faction, or navigating mysterious networks of power and privilege. There was nothing tribal about it.

It also made sense from the point of view of society, as a vehicle for change. A clear and open process to get the country's top performers across many fields into parliaments was a logical and rational approach. In the 21st century, this is the only way to go. If you don't have the tools, you can't do the job.

Jenny – Former CEO of Stand Up!!

Stand Up!! was a grass-roots campaigning organisation that had burst onto the scene with a breath of fresh air and a bright flash of colour-coordinated humanity. It spoke to the bulk of progressive Australians about shared beliefs for the future and important issues. It was about these shared beliefs and not about if people identified with a particular political party, group, or tribe.

Part of the reason Stand Up!! worked so well was that it filled a need. People wanted to be involved in the progressive side of politics, but they did not want to be involved with the existing political parties. It had been filling a space that the political parties couldn't. Stand Up!! was able to reach a broader cross-section of the community than the Greens, and Labor wasn't a bright beacon to anyone anymore.

Stand Up!! reflected the new forms of political participation. It was easy to join and be part of. It was arguably the largest force by the numbers on the

progressive side of politics. It also wasn't messy like actually being a member of one of the parties. But its role had become more muddled over time. If you are campaigning in an election campaign, but you're not actually a political party, then what are you there for?

Jenny remembers the staff laughing at the office about one election-day story. Three generations of one family working at the same election booth: the grandma for Labor, the mother for the Greens and the grandson for Stand Up!! The mother had given up on Labor and joined the Greens years ago. The grandson felt more comfortable campaigning for Stand Up!!

It was sort of funny, Jenny thought, but also sort of not.

Jenny and some of her staff realised that with the new organisation, the era of Stand Up!! would be over. But that was a good thing. They had helped provide a pathway forward. They and their supporters can now use their skills and energy to help progressive people find common ground within the new organisation.

Appendix 1:

Historical Commentary on the Two-Party System

Modern democracy started to become more defined in Western countries in the early- to mid-19th century. Voting became open to all adult males in the US and the UK around this time. For hundreds of years, voting had been restricted to landowners and taxpayers, a tiny fraction of the population. As electorates became larger, people started to discuss and think about how elections work. Basic plurality voting (first-past-the-post) had been around since ancient times, including in Greece and Rome. A group of different candidates stood for the election and the person with the most votes won.

With the rise of modern democracy, many new voting methods were invented. Most of these alternatives involved achieving more proportional outcomes. Much of the commentary we have is from people talking about the two-party system and the different voting methods in an effort to change them. The understanding of how to influence the electoral

system emerged over the 19th and 20th centuries. American political scientist William Riker observed in the early 1980s:

> *Once these large electorates existed, there also existed a motive for politicians to attempt to manipulate the outcomes in elections, and hence methods other than plurality voting were discussed and adopted. Naturally proponents and opponents of alternative methods also thought deeply about the consequences of alternative methods.*[49]

Some of the first commentary on the duality of the Westminster system comes from the 1850s, with arguments and proposals to change the voting system and achieve more proportional representation.

> *In 1859 Thomas Hare in* The Election of Representatives *set forth an elaborate method of proportional representation, the single transferable vote, and in 1861 John Stuart Mill popularised it in* Considerations on Representative Government *which contained a philosophical justification of Hare's method. Mill believed parliament should contain "not just the two great parties alone" but representatives of me "every minority … consisting of a sufficiently large number," which number he defined precisely as the number of votes divided by the number of seats.*[50]

Thomas Hare was a British lawyer, MP, political scientist and proponent of electoral reform. His scheme was that the UK would be one electorate for the return of all 654 members of the House of

Commons. Many different political minorities would get represented.

The idea of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) for how the voting system would work has lived on around the world and in Australia. It is the method of voting for the federal upper house (the Senate), and the upper houses of the Australian states. It is also part of the Hare-Clark system used in the lower house of Tasmania and the ACT.

In 1867 there was a debate in the UK Parliament about cumulative voting, another type of proportional representation. The argument was more about the types of people that would be elected to parliament than a deep examination of the new method's effects on the two-party system. The two principles in the debate were key figures of their time: John Stuart Mill, an MP, economist and founder of the philosophy of utilitarianism; and Benjamin Disraeli, a conservative politician who twice served as Prime Minister.

Mill, early in the debate:

> *The right honorable gentleman said one thing that perfectly amazed me. He said that ... it was wrong that the representation of any community should represent it only in a single aspect, should represent only one interest—only its Tory or Liberal opinion; and he added that, at present, this was not the case, but that such a state of things would be produced by the adoption of this proposal. I apprehend that then, even more than now, each party would desire to be represented ... by those men who would be most acceptable to the general body of the constituencies fully as much, if not more, than they do now.*[51]

Disraeli, at some point later:

> *I have always been of the opinion with respect to this cumulative voting and other schemes having for their object to represent minorities, that they are admirable schemes for bringing crochetty men into this House—an inconvenience which we have hitherto avoided, although it appears that we now have some few exceptions to the general state of things;* [John Stuart Mill then sat on the other side of the House] *but I do not think we ought to legislate to increase the number of specimens.*[52]

The effects of plurality (first-past-the-post) voting on the number of parties was commented on by Henry Droop in 1869. Droop was an English barrister and another advocate for proportional representation. He invented the Droop quota, a commonly used formula in proportional voting. Droop is an early commentator on the strong link between plurality voting and the two-party system:

> *Each elector has practically only a choice between two candidates or sets of candidates. As success depends upon obtaining a majority of the aggregate votes of all the electors, an election is usually reduced to a contest between the two most popular candidates or sets of candidates. Even if other candidates go to the poll, the electors usually find out that their votes will be thrown away, unless given in favour of one or the other of the parties between whom the election really lies.*[53]

Later, in 1881, he said:

> *These phenomena* [of two-party systems] *I cannot explain*

by any theory of a natural division between opposing tendencies of thought, and the only explanation which seems to me to account for them is that the two opposing parties into which we find politicians divided in each of these countries [including the United Kingdom] *have been formed and are kept together by majority voting.*[54] *I am far from imagining that the substitution of proportional representation for majority voting would prevent the bulk of the members of such a representative assembly as the House of Commons from being still divided, ordinarily into two principal parties.*[55]

In 1896, American academic A. Lawrence Lowell published *Governments and Parties in Continental Europe*. The work analysed the implementation and development of various party and parliamentary structures in different European countries. Lowell went on to be the president of Harvard University for 22 years and a well-known public figure (he was once on the cover of *Time* magazine). In this book he noted that continental Europe, broadly speaking, tended to avoid the rigid two-party structure, more commonly resulting in multi-party dynamics:

A study of the nature and development of parties is … the most important one that can occupy the student of political philosophy to-day [sic]. *Among Anglo-Saxon people … there are usually two great parties which dispute for mastery in the state. But in the countries on the continent of Europe this is not usually true. We there find a number of parties or groups which are independent of each other to a greater or less extent, and form coalitions,*

sometimes of a most unnatural kind, to support or oppose the government of the hour.[56]

Lowell also refuted the notion that the two-party system, at least in the UK, was struggling. He further argued for the parliamentary system's requirement of a two-party split:

… it has been frequently asserted that the two great parties in the House of Commons are destined to come to an end, and be replaced by a number of independent groups, [but] *the prophecy does not accord with existence.*[57]

A division into two parties is not only the normal result of the parliamentary system, but also an essential condition of its success.[58]

… a division of the Chamber into two parties, and two parties only, is necessary in order that the parliamentary form of government should permanently produce good results.[59]

There were other rigorous defences of the two-party system at the time. For example, American author Professor Paul S. Reinsch published a work called *World Politics: At the End of the Nineteenth Century as Influenced by the Oriental Situation*. Note the words 'great organizations':

The political experience of the last two centuries has proved that free government and party government are almost convertible terms. It is still as true as when Burke wrote his famous defense of party, in his Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, that, for the realization*

of political freedom, the organization of the electorate into regular and permanent parties is necessary. Parliamentary government has attained its highest success only in those countries where political power is held alternately by two great national parties. As soon as factional interests become predominant; as soon as the stability of government depends upon the artificial grouping of minor conflicting interests; as soon as the nation lacks the tonic effect of the mutual criticisms of great organizations, the highest form of free government becomes unattainable.[60]

1901, with Federation and the new Australian Constitution, was the key point in Australia's history where we could have taken a turn towards something different and changed our party system.

The creation of a new country with a new constitution presented an opportunity. One person who saw this opportunity was Thomas Ashworth from Melbourne. He had run away to sea at 13 and then went on to be a carpenter, architect and politician. In 1901, along with his brother, he published *Proportional Representation Applied to Party Government: A New Electoral System*.

The Ashworths liked the idea of proportional representation and believed in the importance of the two-party state. Their basic idea was that there should be multi-member electorates with proportional representation, but with only the main two parties being able to compete. Proportional voting, in their view, was simply a means to give the public the best choices the two parties could offer. The challenge of

making it onto the party's candidates list would act as a filter and also allow for minorities to be represented. The restriction to only two parties would maintain the majority–minority dynamic and the stability of the system.

The preface to the work reads:

> *The claim that every section of the people is entitled to representation appears at first sight so just that it seems intolerable that a method should have been used all these years which excludes the minority in each electorate from any share of representation; and, of course, the injustice becomes more evident when the electorate returns several members. But in view of the adage that it is the excellence of old institutions which preserves them, it is surely a rash conclusion that the present method of election has no compensating merit. We believe there is such a merit—namely, that the present method of election has developed the party system. Once this truth is grasped, it is quite evident that the Hare system would be absolutely destructive to party government, since each electorate would be contested, not by two organized parties, but by several groups. For it is precisely this splitting into groups which is causing such anxiety among thoughtful observers as to the future of representative institutions … The object of this book is to suggest a reform, which possesses the advantages of both methods and the disadvantages of neither; which will still ensure that each electorate is contested by the two main parties, but will allow its just share of representation to each; and which will, by discouraging the formation of minor groups, provide a remedy for the evil instead of aggravating it.*[61]

The Ashworths also made an interesting historical comparison between the 14th- and 19th-century Westminster systems:

> *How do the conditions presented by the nineteenth century differ from those of the fourteenth? And how is the problem of representation affected? We have seen that the great forces which animated the nation in the fourteenth century were organization and leadership. Have these forces ceased to operate? Assuredly not. In the fourteenth century we had a united people organized under its chosen leaders against the encroachments of the King and nobility on its national liberty. In the nineteenth century the people have won their political independence, but the struggle is now carried on between two great organized parties. The principle of leadership is still as strong as ever. The careers of Pitt, Peel, Palmerston, Beaconsfield, and Gladstone attest that fact. The one great difference, then, between the fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries is that instead of one party there are two. The problem of representation in the fourteenth century was to keep the people together in one united party, and to allow them to select their most popular leaders. Surely the problem is different in the nineteenth century. The requirements now are to organize the people into two great parties, and to allow each party separately to elect its most popular leaders. And yet we are still using the same method of election as our forefathers used six centuries ago. Although the conditions have entirely changed, we have not adapted the electoral machinery to the change. The system of single-membered electorates was rational in the fourteenth century, because*

there was only one party. Is it not on the face of it absurd to-day, when there are two parties?[62]

On the division between the two parties:

A more rational view of the distinction which often underlies party divisions is between those who desire change and those who oppose change. J.S. Mill points out how the latter may often be useful in preventing progress in a wrong direction. There are times when such attitude is called for, but generally speaking we may say that the fundamental distinction between parties should be a difference of opinion as to the direction of progress. Nor is it inconsistent for a party to change its opinion or alter its policy; on the contrary, it is essential to progress. The majority must often modify its policy in the light of the criticism of the minority, and the minority must often drop the unpopular proposals which have put it in a minority. These features are all essential to the working of the political machine.[63]

An interesting historical note is that at the time Lowell, Reinsch and the Ashworths were writing, the labour movement was in existence, but it had not yet begun its successful journey to become one of the two major parties in some of the countries they wrote about. While there was an awareness of socialism, the idea of the labour party itself did not rate a mention in their commentaries.

In the first quarter of the 20th century, proportional voting had its time in the sun. This corresponded with the rise of the Labour Party as a significant electoral

force, William Riker observed.

> *Practical publicists, excited by the controversy over proportional representation, which was considered or adopted in most European countries between 1900 and 1925, tended to favour proportional representation if they belonged to parties without a majority and to oppose it if they belonged to parties with the majority or close to it … One author who explicitly stated this belief was J. Ramsay MacDonald, later a Labour prime minister, who wrote frequently against proportional representation … (MacDonald 1909, p. 137). As a socialist he thought the plurality system was a good discipline for new socialist parties like the Labour party, and furthermore, when his party won, he wanted it to win the whole thing—His Majesty's Government—not just a chance at a coalition.*[64]

As proportional representation became a common reality, the links between the voting systems and the party structures became more evident. There was more criticism of the new voting methods.

> *Two strands of intellectual development removed the doubts. One was the spread of dissatisfaction in the 1930s with proportional representation; the other was an increased scholarly examination of the origins of the two-party system that characterized the successful American polity … An excellent example of the effect of that experience is observable in the two editions of a Fabian Society tract by Herman Finer, a prominent student of comparative politics. In the initial edition (1924), he criticized proportional representation in much the same way as had MacDonald fifteen years earlier, that*

is, as a system that confused responsibility. In the second edition (1935), however, he added a postscript in which he blamed proportional representation in Italy and Germany for increasing the number of political parties. Then he attributed the weakness of executives and the instability of governments to the multiplicity of parties, and he explained the rise of Mussolini and Hitler as a reaction: 'people become so distracted by fumbling governments, that they will acquiesce in any sort of dictatorship ...' (Finer 1935, p. 16). Hermens's Democracy or Anarchy: A Study of Proportional Representation *(1941) constitutes the most elaborate indictment of this electoral system for its encouragement of National Socialism.*[65]

Observations of the two-party system and its relationship to plurality voting were refined and reformulated by Maurice Duverger in *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (1951, 3rd ed. 1964). Duverger was a French political scientist and left-wing politician. In a section of the book devoted to the two-party system, he laid out a myriad of observations on the system and its effects.

On the differences between the French and UK systems of government:

The experts emphasize the fact that the British Cabinet enjoys at all times the right to dissolve Parliament, whereas the French government is less well-armed against the National Assembly; for them the threat of dissolution appears to be the essential means of avoiding ministerial crises. This explanation is advanced by some Englishmen who reproach the French with having adopted the

parliamentary 'motor' and having forgotten to include a 'brake'. This explanation, although closer to the truth than the other, is still very inadequate; in practice the British Cabinet never uses the power of dissolution to bring pressure to bear on Parliament in order to avoid a vote of censure or to escape its consequences, for the very good reason that such a vote is almost always impossible, since an absolute majority is in the hands of a single party. And here the fundamental difference separating the two systems clearly shows itself: the number of parties … a homogenous and powerful Cabinet has at its disposition a stable and coherent majority. In the other case a coalition between several parties, differing in their programmes and their supporters, is required to set up a ministry, which remains paralysed by its internal divisions as well as by the necessity of maintaining amidst considerable difficulties the precarious alliance on which its parliamentary majority is based.[66]

On the US system:

It is not always easy to make the distinction between two-party and multi-party systems because there exist alongside the major parties a number of small groups. In the United States, for example, in the shadow of the two Democratic and Republican giants there are to be found a few pygmies: the Labor, Socialist, Farmer, Prohibitionist, and Progressive parties … However, the obvious disproportion between them and the major traditional parties, as well as their local and ephemeral character, makes it possible for us to consider the United States system as typically two-party.[67]

On the resetting of the British system after Labor got one of the top two spots:

> *… the dual nature of the British system is undeniable. For we must rise above the restricted and fragmentary view to examine the general tendencies of the system. We then note that England has had two parties throughout her whole history up to 1906, when the Labour movement began to show signs of development, that since 1918 and especially since 1924 there has been a gradual process of elimination of the Liberal party tending to the re-establishment of a new two-party system, and that at the present moment this process seems to be near its end.*[68]

On the US system (again):

> *In the United States dualism has never been seriously threatened; the parties have changed profoundly since the rivalry between Jefferson and Hamilton which epitomized the opposition of Republicans to Federalists, the former defending State rights, the latter urging an increase in the powers of the Union. After the break-up of the Federalist party and a period of confusion the two-party system reappeared with the opposition between the Democrats grouped around Jackson and the 'National-Republicans', led by Clay and Adams, who were also called 'Whigs'; these different names masked the old Jeffersonian party. The Civil War naturally introduced considerable confusion into the position of the parties and their organization; none the less* [sic] *it did not appreciably modify the two-party system, which reappeared after the war in the antithesis between republicans and Democrats."*[69]

On the situation with the creation of the Commonwealth countries:

> *… in the countries of the British Commonwealth the traditional opposition of Tories and Whigs, of Conservatives and Liberals, underwent a profound crisis at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the birth of Socialist parties gave rise to a three-party system. The question could then be asked whether this system was not going to become permanent. However, the two-party system triumphed in the end, as a result either of the elimination of the Liberal party or of its fusion with the Conservatives.*[70]

On the effects of socialism on the two-party structure:

> *"The birth of Socialist parties was an almost universal phenomenon in Europe and the British Dominions at the turn of the century. However, the two-party system was not everywhere destroyed. As a matter of face only one of the countries in which a two-party system flourished previously was unable to re-establish it: Belgium, because of the electoral reform of 1899. Everywhere else the two-party system suffered a period of eclipse of varying duration, to be reborn later in a new guise approximately in conformity with the class-struggle pattern of Marxist doctrine: opposition between a Bourgeois and a Socialist party. The former is sometimes the product of a fusion between two older parties, Conservative and Liberal, as is the case in Australia and New Zealand.*[71]

On the labour movement obtaining one of the two-party spots:

What we are considering is much more a 'Conservative-Labour' than a 'Conservative–Socialist' dualism. The new two-party system was established only in countries with Socialist parties based on Trade Unions, indirect in structure, with little doctrinal dogmatism, and of reformist and non-revolutionary tendencies. The last feature is fundamental: a two-party system cannot be maintained if one of the parties seeks to destroy the established order.[72]

On the tendency towards dualism in politics:

None the less [sic] *the two-party system seems to correspond to the nature of things, that is to say that political choice usually takes the form of a choice between two alternatives. A duality of parties does not always exist, but almost always there is a duality of tendencies. Every policy implies a choice between two kinds of solution: the so-called compromise solutions lean one way or the other. This is equivalent to saying that the centre does not exist in politics: there may well be a Centre party but there is no centre tendency, no centre doctrine. The term 'centre' is applied to the geometrical spot at which the moderates of opposed tendencies meet: moderates of the Right and moderates of the Left. Every Centre is divided against itself and remains separated into two halves, Left-Centre and Right-Centre. For the Centre is nothing more than the artificial grouping of the right wing of the Left and the left wing of the Right. The fate of the Centre is to be torn asunder, buffeted and annihilated: torn asunder when one of its halves votes Right and the other Left, buffeted when it votes as a group first Right then left, annihilated when it abstains from voting. The dream of the Centre is to achieve*

a synthesis of contradictory aspirations; but synthesis is a power only of the mind. Action involves choice and politics involves action.[73]

On dualism throughout history:

Throughout history all the great factional conflicts have been dualist: Armagnacs and Burgundians, Guelphs and Ghibellines, Catholics and Protestants, Girondins and Jacobins, Conservatives and Liberals, Bourgeois and Socialists, 'Western' and Communist: these antitheses are simplified, but only by neglecting secondary differences. Whenever public opinion is squarely faced with great fundamental problems it tends to crystallize round two opposed poles. The natural movement of societies tends towards the two-party system …[74]

On the way the trade unions mobilised to take one of the spots:

… one of the deep-seated reasons which have led all Anglo-Saxon Socialist parties to organize themselves on a Trade Union basis; it alone could put at their disposal sufficient strength for the 'take-off', small parties being eliminated or driven back into the field of local campaigns. The simple-majority system seems equally capable of re-establishing dualism when it has been destroyed by the appearance of a third party.[75]

On the effects of voting systems:

… the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system [emphasis in original]. *Of all the hypotheses that have been defined in this book, this*

approaches the most nearly perhaps to a true sociological law. An almost complete correlation is observable between the simple-majority single-ballot system and the two-party system: dualist countries use the simple-majority vote and simple-majority vote countries are dualist. The exceptions are very rare and can generally be explained as the result of special conditions.[76]

William Riker was an eminent American political scientist of the 20th century. He brought the idea of game theory and maths into political behaviour and wrote about how people formed political coalitions. It was Riker, in his 1982 paper *The Two-party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science*, who labelled Duverger's key phrase ('the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system') as 'Duverger's law'. In this paper he also provided a history of the development of scholarly understandings of the how the system worked.

On Duverger's law:

It should be the case … that political science, like any other science, has a history, even if it has not heretofore been chronicled. My intention in this essay is to demonstrate that a history does exist, and my vehicle is a particular series of reformulations called Duverger's law. I am not undertaking this demonstration out of chauvinism, merely to claim for students of politics the name and privilege of scientists, but rather to show that the accumulation of knowledge is possible even when dealing with such fragile and transitory phenomenon's as political institutions. This is also why I deal with Duverger's law, a not very

well accepted proposition dealing with institutions of only the last two hundred years. If it is to be demonstrated that knowledge has accumulated, even in this not yet satisfactorily formulated 'law' about an ephemeral institution, then I will have demonstrated at least the possibility of the accumulation of knowledge about politics.[77]

Each elector has practically only a choice between two candidates or sets of candidates. As success depends upon obtaining a majority of the aggregate votes of all the electors, an election is usually reduced to a contest between the two most popular candidates or sets of candidates. Even if other candidates go to the poll, the electors usually find out that their votes will be thrown away, unless given in favour of one or the other of the parties between whom the election really lies.[78]

On the rational choices of donors and potential leaders in regards to third and minor parties:

The interesting question about such parties is not why they begin, but why they fail. I believe the answer is that donors and leaders disappear. A donor buys future influence and access, and many donors are willing to buy from any party that has a chance to win … But as rational purchasers they are not likely to donate to a party with a tiny chance of winning, and in a plurality system, most third parties have only that chance … Similarly a potential leader buys a career, and as a rational purchaser he has no interest in a party that may lose throughout his lifetime.[79]

Appendix 2:

Australian Commentary

A key reference point for Australian political scientists looking at our two-party system is the event known as 'fusion', in the first decade of the 20th century. Fusion refers to the forced merger of non-Labor forces at the time when Labor had taken one of the two spots. It is important for two reasons.

First, it shows how the party structures we still have today were formed. Secondly, it shows how the system can be renewed when it is not working. Older structures can be dumped and replaced by new ones.

The non-labor parties were the Protectionists and the Free Traders (a group that evolved into the Anti-Socialist Party shortly before the merger). Their respective leaders, Alfred Deakin and George Reid, loathed each other. Reid had to quit politics to allow the merger to happen. Charles Richardson, a Melbourne-based writer, describes the situation in 1909 in a 2009 article called *Fusion: The Party System We Had To Have?*

> *The major development of those first eight years (since federation) was the rise of the ALP to be a contender for*

power in its own right. By the third federal election, in 1906, Labor had almost doubled its vote to 36.6 percent—mostly at the expense of the Protectionists. Based in the trade union movement, Labor was a tightly disciplined group; its members pledged themselves to vote as a bloc according to the decisions of caucus, and therefore behaved more like a modern political party than their rivals did. This put them in a strong bargaining position. But the nature of the ALP also provoked resistance. The caucus system was seen as hostile to the individual conscience of MPs; Labor's socialist doctrines, half-hearted as they were, were resisted by the propertied classes; and the very idea of working-class participation in politics was still new and unsettling. As Labor seemed more within reach of a majority, it lost interest in cooperating with middle class politicians, and they in turn began to see themselves as sharing a common interest in resisting Labor's claims.[80]

In 2010 a number of political scientists contributed to the book *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*. Paul Strangio from Monash University wrote about the significance of the event and its ongoing impact.

Because it is generally less well known, one event that might struggle to find a place in the canon of Australian political landmarks is the 1909 realignment of the federal party system: the moment of non-Labor party 'fusion'. Yet, in the durability of its effects, fusion ranks as a profoundly important turning point in the nation's political history.[81] *The party system created in 1909-10 has endured*

essentially intact ever since: Australian politics is still fundamentally played out within the frame of Labor versus non-Labor (Liberal). Challenges to the stability of that system have come and gone or, alternatively, been accommodated within the 'two-party dominant' regime.[82]
The durability of the two-party dominant system and the resilience of voter support for the traditional major parties in Australia are also striking from an international perspective. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, only the United States boasts a party system of greater longevity among the polities to which Australia is commonly compared.[83]
The tripartite order was reinforced at the following election of December 1903 when each party obtained roughly an equal share of seats. It was in the aftermath of that result that Deakin famously compared the situation to 'three elevens': a scenario 'absolutely impossible' in the parliamentary arena as it would be on the cricketing field. The trio, he declared, 'should somehow be resolved into two ... He had not the slightest idea as yet which of the parties were going to endeavour to unite, but unite they must'.[84]

Strangio also discusses how preferential and compulsory voting have anchored the system.

How do we account for the comparative stability of the Australian party system? The diversification of New Zealand party politics since the adoption of a mixed member proportional electoral system is a reminder that preferential voting has been one of the anchor points of Australia's two-party dominant system. Compulsory

voting is also surmised to have provided ballast to the major parties and insulated Australia from commensurate rates of partisan de-alignment experienced in other advanced democracies.[85]

Judith Brett from La Trobe University comments:

The ins and outs of governments in the first decade of Federation are difficult for modern readers to comprehend, accustomed as we are to the disciplined two-party contests that followed fusion, and to governments changing as a result of shifts in popular support at the polls rather than changed alliances within the parliament. Fusion marked ... the end of instability in the parliament as it finally settled into the pattern of government and opposition...[86]

In 2002 Ian McAllister, a political scientist from the Australian National University, wrote a paper titled *Political Parties in Australia: Party Stability in a Utilitarian Society*. He made a number of comments that are pertinent to understanding the situation.

On the Liberal and National parties:

Despite the dominance of the owner–worker cleavage, reflected in Labor–Liberal party competition, the rural–urban division has remained politically salient through the Country (later National) Party. Between 1914 and 1919, a sustained period of low prices for agricultural produce stimulated the rise of country parties dedicated to defending agricultural interests, and they combined to form a single party in 1920, shortly after entering into a coalition with the Liberal Party. The coalition has remained in existence since then, except for two short

periods in 1973–74 and 1987. Despite the permanent nature of the arrangement, there has been little pressure for a merger; two conservative parties, one catering to urban dwellers the other appealing to farmers living in the 'bush', has suited those on the anti-Labor side of politics.[87]

On the stability of the two-party system in Australia:

…the long-term stability of the Australian party system over the course of the twentieth century sets it apart from most others. The parties that compete for electoral support at the close of the twentieth century are very much the descendants of the parties that competed at the beginning of the century. Moreover, with the exception of some comparatively minor splits and fissures, parties outside the major Labor–Liberal/National division have gained little electoral success.[88]

On executive control of the legislature:

A third modification to the Westminster model of responsible party government is the level of discipline that the Australian parties enforce on their members. Labor was the first to achieve effective discipline at both the electoral and parliamentary levels, but the Liberals, of necessity, soon followed (Rydon 1986: 188). Dissent from the party line within the House of Representatives is almost unknown and the party machines have a variety of means by which they can enforce discipline among their members, not the least of which is the threat of 'deselection'—the removal of the person as the party candidate in a constituency. As Jaensch (1994: 239) puts it, 'legislative voting is redundant, except on the rare

"conscience votes" or the rare case when a member of the Liberal or National parties has come under pressure from constituents or the local or state party base."[89]

On the efficiency of the system:

… the political system was embedded within a utilitarian political culture, where efficiency was and is regarded as paramount. What is more efficient than mass political parties, providing accountability, policy choice, and a ready and able elite willing to hold political office? Utilitarianism and its practical embodiment within the electoral system—compulsory voting—have ensured that Australian political parties have remained dominant and relatively unchallenged during the course of the twentieth century.[90]

Anika Gauja, a political scientist from the University of Sydney, is particularly interested in the nature of political engagement and party membership. In a 2019 paper on *The Expanding Party Universe: Patterns of partisan engagement in Australia and the United Kingdom*, she comments on the similarities of the Australian and UK systems:

Australia and the United Kingdom are similar in terms of the electoral system, the degree of party system institutionalization or party de-alignment, comparable long-term rates of formal membership decline, as well as a large number of other institutional variables, including minimal legal restrictions on the participatory opportunities available to non-members. Including both countries in the study (of membership participation)

thus allows us to hold these aggregate intervening factors constant and focus on the individual-level differences between party supporters and non-committed citizens. We should expect to see little variation between Australia and the United Kingdom …[91]

On the nature of modern 21st-century political participation:

One of the most salient findings of our research, with respect to the trajectory of opening up party organizations, was the clear difference between non-committed voters, regular party supporters and strong party supporters in the likelihood that they would engage in party activities in the future. As we move from the non-committed to regular and then strong party supporters, respondents' interest in undertaking future party activities substantially increases. These trends are consistent with the engagement patterns identified above and suggest that as parties think about the future of their organizations, they could potentially draw on a core group of people who are unlikely to join as members, but would participate, for example, in open primaries and issues-based consultation. It also begs the contentious question: do parties need formal members at all?[92]

In 2020 former Labor politician Barry Jones wrote *What Is To Be Done: Political Engagement And Saving The Planet*. There are a number of comments on the nature of the situation with the current parties and the lack of public engagement with them.

On engagement and public trust:

A robust democracy depends on high levels of citizen engagement, and this demands an investment of time, energy, commitment, knowledge, judgement, and balance. Short of armed revolt, which I would not recommend, it is the only way that our system can be reformed to restore the concept of public office as a public trust, and to preference the public interest over vested interests. Are we up to the challenge? And are our schools and universities doing enough to explain how democracy works, and how institutions interact with our lives?

Trust has been declining in the democratic system, and in public institutions …[93]

On the number of people involved in the current parties and what more involvement could achieve:

Of 15 million Australian voters, barely 30,000 have even a nominal involvement in political parties—an engagement of just 0.2 per cent. The parties are small, closed, secretive, and oligarchic, and they prefer it that way.

If, instead of engaging in handwringing and voting with pegs on their noses, 10 per cent of voters joined the political party that they generally voted for and played an active role in policy formulation, they could transform Australian politics very speedily. In practice, even 5 per cent (750,000) might be enough to do so.

This is a modest figure, proportionately, compared to the period after World War II when party memberships were high. But it would transform politics beyond recognition, change party structures, and lead to more courageous policies. The problem for all major parties is that their traditional bases are contracting, so they come to rely on

zealots and lobbyists, selling their integrity to the highest bidder.

"The hegemonic parties discourage a large membership, contrary to what might be expected, because the people who currently run/control/own the parties are unwilling to open up internal debate on policy, and they do not want to lose control.

And engagement needs to be direct, personal, and face-to-face to be effective. As Oscar Wilde reputedly observed, 'The trouble with socialism is that it takes up too many evenings.'[94]

On the choice that the Australian public is currently forced to make:

On the political menu, consumers (that is, voters) have the alternative of McDonald's or KFC. They might prefer something other than a Big Mac or fried chicken, but they must turn up and choose, whether they like it or not.[95]

On the lack of public power in the current parties:

Voters are now spectators, not participants, in the political process, in which the real and the virtual have been inverted, as if a horror movie represents the reality, and the audience cannot change the outcome.

Party structures are oligarchic and secretive, and their members, in practice, comprise two categories: insiders (being small in numbers, but powerful) and outsiders (in large numbers, but ageing and weak).

Factions, trade unions, industry groups, and substantial donors are major players.[96]

On the situation at hand:

If 5 per cent of Australian voters, the estimated 750,000 mentioned above, joined—or even attempted to join—existing parties, they would blow open the entrance to some dark caves. But if the hegemonic parties rejected them, they would then have the option of retreating, or forming a new political force—perhaps a Courage Party. Party apparatchiks are preoccupied with preserving the vehicle, ensuring its electoral support, and less interested in the destination, especially if it is over the hills and far away.

I joined the Australian Labor Party in 1950, just 70 years ago, and would now classify myself as an anxious life member. I owe the ALP a great deal, particularly for my 26 years as a member of parliament, both state and federal, and seven years as a minister. But during a period of dramatic global change with profound implications for Australia and liberal democracy generally, all Australian political parties have demonstrated their inadequacy. Apart from a commitment to 'fairness'—rather a vague concept—the ALP has become very risk-averse, retreating to its historic base, failing to build on the radical innovations driven by Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke, Keating, Rudd, and Gillard. However, some Labor state premiers have been effective, even taking personal responsibility on some issues, which is a rarity.

It is hard to think of an issue that Labor would not modify or abandon under pressure.

If there was a Truth in Politics Act, existing parties could be required to adopt new, more accurate names, for example: The Self-Interest Party; The Coal Party; The

Tepid Party; The Pure Party; or The Me Party.[97]

Sydney businessman Mark Bouris expressed how many people see the current party situation in an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald in early 2021.

> *Once upon a time, Labor stood for really good, solid social values. Today, it stands for the 1000 interests that it represents. And the Liberals, the conservatives, don't stand for middle Australia. You know, the toffs, they ran it, but they knew they had to go to the middle class.*
> *It doesn't have the middle class anymore. It stands for big business and your greedy people, who think it's all about the Mercedes-Benz or expensive lunches and making shitloads of money. And it kills me.*[98]

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