

Did you know?

House to increase by two Members

The House of Representatives will increase in size from 148 to 150 Members at the next federal election. The increase has been triggered by an increase in the size of Australia's population (see 'Who decides how many Members').

The two additional Members will come from Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

The new Western Australian seat (or 'Division') – the State's fifteenth – will be known as Hasluck, to recognise the service rendered to Australia by Sir Paul and Dame Alexandra Hasluck.

Sir Paul enjoyed a unique career in which he was an award-winning journalist, lecturer, writer, influential public servant, diplomat, politician and vice-regal representative. He was the Member for Curtin (WA) from 1949 to 1969; Minister for Territories from 1951 to 1963; Minister for Defence from 1963 to 1964; Minister for External Affairs from 1964 to 1969; and Governor-General from 1969 to 1974.

In the Northern Territory there will be two seats for the first time. The names of the two seats are Solomon and Lingiari, in honour of Vaiben Louis Solomon (1853-1908) and Vincent Lingiari OAM (1908-1988).

Solomon will take in the majority of the urban area centred on Darwin, and Lingiari will cover the remainder of the Northern Territory, as well as the Territories of Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island.

Mr Solomon has been described as the 'Northern Territory's founding father of Federation'. He was an active member of the constitutional conventions leading to Federation and served as both member and mayor of the Palmerston District Council for 17 years. He was elected as one of the first Members of the House of Representatives, as the Member of a South Australian seat that included the Northern Territory.

Mr Lingiari was a member of the Gurindji people from the Victoria River District. He was a stockman and land rights leader who worked for many years to improve conditions for Aboriginal people. In 1966, he led the walk-off of his people from Wave Hill Station, which eventually resulted in the establishment of Wattie Creek and a land grant to the Gurindji people. He was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for service to the Aboriginal people.

The number of Members from each State and Territory at the next election will be: NSW 50, Victoria 37, Queensland 27, Western Australia 15, South Australia 12, Tasmania 5, ACT 2, Northern Territory 2 (total 150).

Who decides how many Members?

The number of Members of the House of Representatives to be elected from each State and Territory is determined by a combination of the Australian Constitution and the Commonwealth Electoral Act.

The Constitution outlines a formula to be used to calculate what is called a 'population quota'. The formula is: the combined population of the six States divided by twice the combined



Photo: Australian Electoral Commission

number of Senators from those States; that 'population quota' figure is then divided individually into each State's and each Territory's population to calculate a 'representation entitlement'.

The Constitution is supplemented by the Electoral Act, which now requires the Electoral Commissioner to conduct the calculation outlined above during the thirteenth month after the first meeting of any newly elected House of Representatives.

The 'Determination of Representation Entitlements' which led to the increase in representation from WA and the NT occurred in December 1999 (13 months after the first meeting of the current Parliament).

The addition of an extra seat in Western Australia and the Northern Territory triggered a re-drawing of the electoral boundaries in those jurisdictions (a redistribution). The boundaries are drawn to ensure that, as near as is practicable, there are the same number of electors in each Division within a State or Territory.

At the time of a redistribution, the number of people enrolled in each new electoral Division may not vary from the State average by more than 10%. The boundaries are drawn so that after three years the projected number of people enrolled in each Division should not vary from the State/Territory average by more than 3.5%.

Re-drawing of electoral boundaries can also be triggered in two other ways: if seven years has elapsed since the previous redistribution, or if the number of electors in more than one third of the Divisions in a State/Territory deviates from the average enrolment by more than 10% in three consecutive months.

Since the last election the boundaries have also been re-drawn in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania under the 'seven year' rule.

For more information visit the Australian Electoral Commission's web site: www.aec.gov.au