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FIGHTING INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA

THE WAY IN: REPRESENTATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

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About Per Capita

Per Capita is an independent progressive think tank, dedicated to fighting inequality in Australia. We work to build a new vision for Australia based on fairness, shared prosperity, community and social justice.

Our research is rigorous, evidence-based and long-term in its outlook. We consider the national challenges of the next decade rather than the next election cycle. We ask original questions and offer fresh solutions, drawing on new thinking in social science, economics and public policy.

Our audience is the interested public, not just experts and policy makers. We engage all Australians who want to see rigorous thinking and evidence-based analysis applied to the issues facing our country's future.

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Introduction

Our Parliament is elected to represent us, but many of us feel unrepresented by our members of Parliament. Public faith in our democratic institutions can be undermined by the sense that powerful interests have more traction than the public interest. The stereotype of MPs as wealthy, white, men with law degrees or union backgrounds carries with it the implication that the outcomes of parliamentary business benefit those with the same background.

But is there truth to the stereotype? This research paper asks whether there is an established 'way in' to Parliament, whether MPs overwhelmingly come from the same demographic backgrounds, schools, and career paths, and whether this might have implications for policy. It also tracks how these trends have developed over the last thirty years, and asks whether Parliament has become more representative in response to advocacy for quotas and other redistributions of power and influence.

This paper compiles information on every federal MP from the 1988 and 2018 Parliaments across four categories: demographic backgrounds, schooling, tertiary education, and career experience. It compares the percentages of MPs with specific backgrounds against the percentage of Australians with similar backgrounds, tracking how representative Parliament was in 1988 and how representative it became over the next thirty years.

Information on current MPs came from ParlInfo biographies, from MPs' own websites, and in some instances from media interviews or Hansards. Information on 1988's MPs came from ParlInfo biographies, from obituaries, and from The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate.

Executive Summary

Across the categories we looked at, we found a number of notable trends in Parliamentary representation.

Demographics

Within demographics we looked at three categories: birthplace, i.e. the representation of Australian-born citizens and migrants in Parliament; cultural ancestry, i.e. the representation of different ethnic groups in Parliament; and gender, i.e. the representation of different genders in Parliament.

The story of birthplace is a static one. Although the proportion of Australians born in Australia has decreased significantly since 1988, the proportion of MPs born in Australia has not decreased at all. Since 1988, the proportion of Australians born overseas has risen from 22% to 33%, but their representation in Parliament has remained stalled at 11-12%. In 1988 as today, smaller parties were more likely to have better representation of migrants, with a third of minor party MPs in 1988 and half of 2018's Greens born overseas.

While Parliament has diversified culturally since 1988, it is still overwhelmingly dominated by MPs with Anglo- and northern European backgrounds. Established European migrant groups like Italians and Greeks now have proportionate representation in Parliament, but no other ancestry does. Only the ALP has managed to achieve proportionate representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. In 30 years, Parliament as a whole has not been able to achieve this.

Gender representation in our Parliament is improving slowly. Women, who make up more than half of the Australian population, still make up only a third of MPs, but this is a significant improvement on 1988, when only a tenth of MPs were women. The story is highly variable across party: there has been a very slow increase in female representation in the Liberal party, which opposes quotas, but the ALP, which introduced a quota system in the 1990s, has subsequently quadrupled its female representation. The National party has added only 1 female MP since 1988.

Schooling

Graduates from government schools were under-represented in 1988, and they are still under-represented today. Then and now, MPs are much more likely to be privately educated than the broader public, but an unexpected trend has been the surge in MPs who were educated at Catholic schools. A full quarter of 2018's Parliament received a Catholic education.

Tertiary education

MPs in 1988 and 2018 are more highly educated than the public at large, and as more Australians have attained post-school qualifications, so too have MPs. A quarter of Australians have a Bachelor degree or higher (including graduate certificates, graduate diplomas, and postgraduate degrees) while nearly three quarters of MPs are educated to this level. Notably, graduates of vocational programmes have been significantly under-represented in Parliament over the last 30 years. 30% of Australians have a post-school Certificate or Diploma rather than a degree, usually delivered through a TAFE provider, but only 9% of Parliament has a vocational qualification as their highest qualification (up from 4.5% in 1988).

Career experience

Some of the most interesting stories came out of the analysis of MPs' previous career experience. In 1988 teaching was the most common route into Parliament, and this has created something of a culture of educators becoming politicians in Australia, especially in the ALP. The second most common 'way in', then and now, is law. A full quarter of Liberal MPs came from law backgrounds in both 1988 and 2018. Then and now, union backgrounds took third place, predominantly as Labor MPs in 1988 and exclusively as ALP MPs in 2018. The proportion of MPs with union backgrounds has risen to 15% of Parliament in 2018, which squares neatly with the 16% of Australian workers who are union members.

While farming and military backgrounds were common 'ways in' in 1988, they are less common routes in 2018. Instead, there has been a surge in MPs running for office after having worked as ministerial or political advisers; almost 40% of MPs (and more than half of Labor MPs) worked as advisers in state or federal government before running for office themselves. Other notable developments are that the number of MPs with banking or finance backgrounds has more than doubled in the 30 years since 1988, and that MPs are also increasingly more likely to have small business backgrounds today.

Demographics

Birthplace

1988[1]	Australia	Parliament (224)	Labor (117)	Liberal (72)	National (24)	Independent/ other (11)
Born in Aus	77.6%	88.8% (199)	85.5% (100)	94.4% (68)	100% (24)	63.6% (7)
Migrant	22.4%	11.2% (25)	14.5% (17)	5.6% (4)	n/a	36.4% (4)

More than three quarters of 1988's Australians were born in Australia, and 1988's Parliament was nearly 90% Australian-born. All three major parties of the time comprised Australian-born MPs by a large majority, especially the Liberal and National parties at 95% and 100% respectively. Smaller parties had a higher representation of Australians born overseas: 3 out of 7 Democrat MPs were born abroad and Irina Dunn, representing the Nuclear Disarmament Party, was also born overseas.

2018[2]	Australia	Parliament (226)	Labor (95)	Liberal (84)	National (21)	Greens (10)	Independent /other (16)
Born in Aus	67%	88.5% (200)	89.5% (85)	91.7% (77)	100% (21)	50% (5)	75% (12)
Migrant	33%	11.5% (26)	10.5% (10)	8.3% (7)	n/a	50% (5)	25% (4)

In 2018, the percentage of Australian residents born in Australia has decreased to 67%, but the makeup of Parliament has barely changed at all. Although only two thirds of Australian residents were born in Australia, 89% of our MPs were, showing that our parliamentary representation has not kept pace with this significant demographic change in the Australian population over the last 30 years. There is wide inter-party variation: 9 in 10 of Labor and Liberal MPs were born in Australia, and all National MPs were, but half of Greens MPs were born abroad.

Cultural ancestry

1988	Australia	Parliament (224)	Labor (117)	Liberal (72)	National (24)	Independent/ other (11)
Anglo	~78.9%[3]	96.9% (217)	96.6% (113)	98.6% (71)	95.8% (23)	90.9% (10)
Italian	3.5%	0.9% (2)	0.9% (1)	1.4% (1)	n/a	n/a
Greek	2.0%	0.9% (2)	1.7% (2)	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Data on Australia's 1988 demography comes from the Year Book Australia, 1988: http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1301.01988?OpenDocument, and the 1986 Census: http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2102.0Main+Features11986?OpenDocument

[2] All data on Australia's 2018 demography from the 2016 Census: http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0Main+Features1002016?OpenDocument

[3] There is no single marker on the Census for an Anglo or northern European background, and many Australians have mixed ancestries and select more than one ancestry on the Census. We added the various Anglo/European markers together to create a range and then opted for the lower end of the range, to more accurately represent the number of Australians (and MPs) who solely have Anglo/European ancestry. We excluded Italian and Greek ancestries from this count and counted them separately, as we felt the representation of these ancestries was important to track.

ATSI[4]	1.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

1988's parliamentarians came overwhelmingly from Anglo-Australian or north/west European backgrounds, and these ancestries were over-represented in Parliament compared to the wider Australian public. 3.5% of Australian residents listed their ethnicity as Italian on the 1986 Census, and 2% listed their ethnicity as Greek, but these groups were also under-represented in the 1988 Parliament.

There was no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in 1988 Parliament, even though Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians made up at least 1.4% of Australia's population in 1988.

2018	Australia	Parliament (226)	Labor (95)	Liberal (84)	National (21)	Greens (10)	Independent/ other (16)
Anglo	~62.5%	87.2% (197)	87.3% (83)	86.9% (73)	95.2% (20)	80% (8)	81.3% (13)
Italian	4.6%	4.4% (10)	2.1% (2)	6.0% (5)	4.8% (1)	10% (1)	6.3% (1)
ATSI	2.8%	2.2% (5)	3.2% (3)	2.4% (2)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Greek	1.8%	2.2% (5)	2.1% (2)	1.2% (1)	n/a	n/a	12.5% (2)
MENA	2.8%	1.3% (3)	2.1% (2)	1.2% (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a
SEA	3.9%	0.9% (2)	1.1% (1)	1.2% (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a
SA	4.8%	0.4% (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a	10% (1)	n/a
Chinese	5.6%	0.4% (1)	1.1% (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fijian	0.2%	0.4% (1)	1.1% (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SSA	1.1%	0.4% (1)	n/a	1.2% (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a

Anglo/European ethnicities are still over represented in Parliament, although this is somewhat difficult to calculate in the present day with so many Australian residents listing multiple or mixed ancestries on the Census. Still, we can see that the large majority of MPs with Anglo/European ancestries across all political parties is not reflective of the broader Australian public.

Among other commonly listed ethnicities, Australian residents with Italian ancestry are well represented in Parliament, enjoying particularly strong representation in the Liberal party. Those with Greek ancestry are also well represented. Australians with Middle Eastern/North African ancestry, South East Asian ancestry, South Asian ancestry, Chinese ancestry, and Sub-Saharan African ancestry are all well under-represented among our MPs.

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation has improved, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still under-represented in Parliament. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has grown to 2.8% of Australians, but parliamentary representation sits at 2.2%. Over the course of 30 years, the ALP is the only party that has become representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

[4] Data on Australia's 1988 ATSI population comes from the feature article in the Year Book Australia, 1994: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/8dc45512042c8c00ca2569de002139be!OpenDocument

Gender

1988	Australia	Parliament (224)	Labor (117)	Liberal (72)	National (24)	Independent/ other (11)
Male	49.8%	88.4% (198)	89.7% (105)	88.9% (64)	95.8% (23)	54.5% (6)
Female	50.2%	11.6% (26)	10.3% (12)	11.1% (8)	4.2% (1)	45.5% (5)

Less than half of 1988's Australians were men, but men were vastly over-represented in 1988's Parliament. 9 out of 10 Labor and Liberal MPs were men, while the National Party only had 1 female MP. The smaller parties came closer to equal representation: 3 out of 7 Democrats were female, and the Senate gained two more female members in Irina Dunn (Nuclear Disarmament Party) and Jo Vallentine (elected as a member of the Nuclear Disarmament Party but sat as an Independent).

2018	Australia	Parliament (226)	ALP (95)	Liberal (84)	National (21)	Greens (10)	Independent/ other (16)
Male	49.3%	66.8% (151)	53.7% (51)	77.4% (65)	90.5% (19)	50% (5)	68.8% (11)
Female	50.7%	33.2% (75)	46.3% (44)	22.6% (19)	9.5% (2)	50% (5)	31.3% (5)

Women are still vastly under-represented in Parliament. More than half of Australians are women, but two thirds of MPs are men. Since 1988, female representation in Parliament has risen from 11.6% to 33.2%. This change was driven mostly by the ALP quadrupling its female representation by introducing an Affirmative Action Rule in 1994 and a 40:40:20 quota in 2012.[5] The Liberal party opposes quotas and has increased their female representation from 9.4% to 22.6% over the 30 years without them. Incredibly, the National party is still 90.5% male and has added only one female MP since 1988. The Greens are the only major party with equal representation of men and women.

[5] https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/ElectoralQuotas#_Toc372193126

Schooling

1988[6]	Australia	Parliament (224)	Labor (117)	Liberal (72)	National (24)	Independent/ other (11)
Public	70%	26.8% (60)	31.6% (37)	18.1% (13)	16.7% (4)	54.5% (6)
Independent	30%	17.4% (39)	6.8% (8)	34.7% (25)	20.8% (5)	9.1% (1)
Catholic		11.6% (26)	10.3% (12)	8.3% (6)	20.8% (5)	27.3% (3)
Unknown		44.2% (99)	51.3% (60)	38.9% (28)	41.7% (10)	9.1% (1)

Information on nearly half of the 1988 Parliament's secondary schooling was unavailable, making analysis a little more difficult, but still some clear patterns emerge. MPs were more likely to be privately educated than the Australian public, and Labor MPs were more likely to be publicly educated than Liberal or National MPs. Independent schools were a more popular choice for privately educated MPs than Catholic schools.

2018[7]	Australia	Parliament (226)	Labor (95)	Liberal (84)	National (21)	Greens (10)	Independent/ other (16)
Public	65.6%	38.9% (88)	48.4% (46)	31.0% (26)	28.6% (6)	30% (3)	43.8% (7)
Indep.	14.5%	19% (43)	8.4% (8)	29.8% (25)	23.8% (5)	20% (2)	18.8% (3)
Catholic	19.9%	24.8% (56)	26.3% (25)	25% (21)	33.3% (7)	10% (1)	12.5% (2)
Unknown		17.3% (39)	16.8% (16)	14.3% (12)	14.3% (3)	40% (4)	25% (4)

With much more data available for the 2018 Parliament, it is clear that Parliament is still highly unrepresentative of the country when it comes to secondary school education. While 66% of Australians went to public school, only 39% of MPs did. Nearly half of ALP MPs were publicly educated, while only 3 in 10 Liberal and National MPs went to government schools. 44% of our MPs attended private schools. A full quarter of MPs, including a third of National MPs, received a Catholic education.

It's important to note that there is still a fairly low level of transparency around MPs' schooling, with 39 MPs not publicly disclosing their educational background. This skews the data somewhat, especially for a small party like the Greens with only 10 members, 4 of whom have not publicly disclosed their schooling.

[6] Data on Australian schooling in 1988 from the 1986 Census, which only categorises schools as 'government' or 'non-government': http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/0D42204C00A51765CA2574CE0015DD7C/$File/25020_1986_Australia_in_Profile.pdf

[7] Data on Australian schooling from *Schools, Australia, 2017:* http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4221.0

Tertiary education

1988[8]	Australia	Parliament (224)	Labor (117)	Liberal (72)	National (24)	Independent/ other (11)
None	69.8%	15.6% (35)	15.4% (18)	11.1% (8)	33.3% (8)	9.1% (1)
Cert/Dip/ TAFE	21.6%	4.5% (10)	3.4% (4)	5.6% (4)	8.3% (2)	n/a
Degree	8.6%	62.1% (139)	60.7% (71)	70.8% (51)	33.3% (8)	81.8% (9)
Unknown		18.8% (42)	22.2% (26)	12.5% (9)	25% (6)	9.1% (1)

In 1988, our Parliament was significantly more educated than the Australian public at large. Nearly 9% of Australians had a degree in 1988, whereas 62% of MPs did. The Liberal Party was the highest educated with 7 in 10 earning a degree, and the National Party was most representative with the highest proportion of MPs with no degree or with a Cert/Diploma/TAFE qualification.

Information on the highest qualification achieved by 1988's MPs was relatively difficult to find, leaving a number of unknowns (especially in the Labor and National parties) that might skew the data somewhat.

2018[9]	Australia	Parliament (226)	Labor (95)	Liberal (84)	National (21)	Greens (10)	Independent/ other (16)
None	44.1%	9.3% (21)	8.4% (8)	6.0% (5)	14.3% (3)	10% (1)	25% (4)
Cert/Dip/ TAFE	30.6%	8.8% (20)	9.5% (9)	6.0% (5)	4.8% (1)	n/a	31.3% (5)
Degree	24.3%	72.3% (164)	75.8% (72)	82.1% (69)	42.3% (9)	80% (8)	37.5% (6)
Unknown		9.3% (21)	6.3% (6)	7.1% (6)	33.3% (7)	10% (1)	6.3% (1)

In 2018, the results are very similar. Although significantly more Australians now have post-school qualifications including degrees, more MPs do too. A quarter of Australians have a Bachelor degree or higher (including graduate certificates, graduate diplomas, and postgraduate degrees) while nearly three quarters of MPs are educated to this level. The Liberal party is still the most highly educated party, with 82% of Liberal MPs holding a Bachelor degree or higher.

Notably, graduates of vocational programmes are significantly under-represented in Parliament. 30% of Australians have a post-school Certificate or Diploma, usually delivered through a TAFE provider, but only 9% of Parliament has a vocational qualification. The smaller and independent parties are more representative of Australia's qualifications. A third of independent/other MPs have a Certificate or Diploma as their highest qualification, and a quarter have no post-school qualifications.

[8] Data on Australian higher education in 1988 from the 1991 Census (the first year for which this was calculated in %): http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/4C64DE2D65803F30CA2574BF00167A44/$File/28210_1991_230_Australia_in_Profile.pdf

[9] Data on Australian higher education today from the 2016 Census: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Educational%20Qualifications%20Data%20Summary%20~65

Career experience

1988	Parliament (224)	Labor (117)	Liberal (72)	National (24)	Independent/ other (11)
Education	23.2% (52)	31.6% (37)	11.1% (8)	n/a	63.6% (7)
Law	16.5% (37)	14.5% (17)	25% (18)	8.3% (2)	n/a
Unions	13.8% (31)	23.1% (27)	2.8% (2)	4.2% (1)	9.1% (1)
Farming	12.9% (29)	3.5% (4)	13.9% (10)	62.5% (15)	n/a
Military	6.3% (14)	4.3% (5)	5.6% (4)	12.5% (3)	18.2% (2)
Banking/finance	4% (9)	0.9% (1)	11.1% (8)	n/a	9.1% (1)
Political advisor	3.6% (8)	3.4% (4)	5.6% (4)	n/a	n/a
Small business	0.9% (2)	0.9% (1)	1.4% (1)	n/a	n/a

In 1988, the 5 most common routes into Parliament were via education, the law, the unions, farming, or the military. Nearly a quarter of 1988's MPs including a third of Labor MPs came from teaching backgrounds and many teachers ran for Parliament as members of smaller parties or as independents. Law was the next most common route into Parliament, with a quarter of Liberal MPs coming into politics via the law.

The unions had representatives in every major political party in 1988, but union members were under-represented as a whole in Parliament; in 1988, a full 42% of Australian workers were trade union members.[10] The farming industry and the military also had strong, cross-party representation in Parliament. Only 4% of MPs came from the banking/finance sector, and only 4% came from a political background. Only 2 MPs, one Labor and one Liberal, claimed a background in small business.

2018	Australia[11]	Parliament (226)	Labor (95)	Liberal (84)	National (21)	Greens (10)	Independent /other (16)
Political advisor	n/a	38.9% (88)	50.5% (48)	42.9% (36)	n/a	10% (1)	18.8% (3)
Law	0.7%	19.9% (45)	18.9% (18)	27.4% (23)	4.8% (1)	20% (2)	6.3% (1)
Unions	n/a	15.0% (34)	34.7% (33)	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.3% (1)
Small business	n/a	12.4% (28)	7.4% (7)	9.5% (8)	42.9% (9)	10% (1)	18.8% (3)
Education	4.1%	12.4% (28)	20% (19)	4.8% (4)	9.5% (2)	10% (1)	12.5% (2)
Banking/ finance[12]	4.2%	9.7% (22)	2.1% (2)	16.7% (14)	14.3% (3)	10% (1)	12.5% (2)

[10] http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/592d2f759d9d38a9ca256ec1000766f7!OpenDocument

[11] Where possible, the percentage of Australian workers in each industry has been calculated. Unless otherwise stated, all percentages were calculated using the 2016 Census: http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2071.02016?OpenDocument

[12] Number of people working in the banking/finance sector taken from: https://fintech.treasury.gov.au/the-strength-of-australias-financial-sector/

Farming	1.3%	7.1% (16)	n/a	7.1% (6)	33.3% (7)	10% (1)	12.5% (2)
Military	0.3%	4.0% (9)	2.1% (2)	6.0% (5)	n/a	n/a	12.5% (2)

In 2018, law, unions, and education were still 3 of the 5 most common routes into Parliament, but farming and the military no longer made the cut. They have been replaced by an exponential rise in MPs with backgrounds as political advisors, a doubling of MPs with a banking or finance background, and a significant rise in the number of MPs who have owned or operated small businesses.

Working for other ministers, whether as an electorate officer, policy adviser, research officer, or media adviser, and whether in the federal or state government, is perhaps understandably the most common route to becoming an MP oneself. Outside of politics, law is now the most common background for an MP, with 20% (1 in 5) of our MPs coming from a legal background. Only 0.7% of Australians work in the law, so lawyers are vastly over-represented in Parliament. The firms Mallesons Stephen Jacques and Clayton Utz stood out, with eight MPs having worked at one of these firms.

15% of our MPs came from union backgrounds, with most coming from a trade background into the union movement and then into the ALP. This squares quite neatly with the fact that 16% of Australian workers are union members today.[13] All but 1 of the MPs with union backgrounds are ALP MPs; in 1988, the Liberal and National parties also had union representation.

There has been a significant increase in the number of MPs from backgrounds in small business. This is clearest in the Liberal and National parties, which often campaign on small business interests, but small business is represented in every party. Labor has continued the tradition of moving from education into politics; 20% of its MPs still come from teaching backgrounds. Overall though, the number of educators in Parliament has decreased significantly from 1988 to 12.4%.

Another significant development is the doubling of MPs with banking and finance backgrounds: from 4% in 1988 to 9.7% in 2018. This has been driven by the Liberal and National parties, which had 8 MPs from banking/finance backgrounds in 1988 and have 17 today. Labor, which had 1 MP from a banking/finance background in 1988, has 2 today.

[13] http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/6333.0Main%20Features5August%202016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6333.0&issue=August%202016&num=&view=

Conclusion

In 1988, the way in to Parliament was to be born male in Australia to a white family, attend a private school, get a university degree and then go into education before entering politics. In 2018, the way in is to be born male in Australia to a white family, attend a private school (ideally a Catholic one), get a university degree and then practise as a lawyer (if conservative) or work in a union (if progressive) before entering politics by way of advising and then running for office yourself.

Some things have changed in 30 years. In 2018 you are more likely to have representation in Parliament, or to make it there yourself, as a woman or as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian than you were in 1988, but only on the progressive side of politics. Across the political spectrum, you are more likely to access Parliament if you share ancestry with well-established immigrant communities like the Italian or Greek community than you would have in 1988. As in 1988, having a law or union background will stand you in good stead, but teaching no longer leads to politics the way it used to. Meanwhile, the cohort of MPs comes from a banking or finance background is growing quickly.

Overall, in 30 years, movement has been slow or misdirected for those who would like to see better representation in politics. Quotas have worked to increase the representation of women, but representation of Australia's diverse ethnic groups is still poor. Most MPs share very similar educational experiences and career paths, becoming more professionalised and more concentrated around private, religious educational institutions than they were in 1988.

Some of these trends may have implications for policy. For example, ongoing debates around the funding of private schools, especially Catholic schools, take on a different tone with the knowledge that a quarter of MPs had a Catholic education. So too do discussions about the freedom of religious schools to discriminate against LGBTIQ students and teachers. Massive cuts in funding to TAFE institutions could be linked to the fact that so few MPs attended them. And the influence of the banking and financial industries on politics could come into question as the proportion of MPs who built their careers in those industries grows quickly and approaches the numbers with legal or union backgrounds.