



MUSEUM  
OF AUSTRALIAN  
DEMOCRACY

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Rural and regional NSW more engaged in democracy: higher turnout, lower informal votes

A review of voting behaviour in New South Wales in the Federal election last year found a substantial difference between regional and city voting patterns.

Informal voting has reached worrying proportions - over 14 per cent in some electorates - and turnout in some city electorates was as low as 88 per cent.

The five electorates with the highest percentages of informal votes are all from the Sydney area with Blaxland topping the list with 14.06%, followed by Fowler, Watson, Chifley and McMahon.

Blaxland is also in the list of electorates with the lowest turnout percentage, which are all made up of city electorates, but behind the electorate of Sydney which has a low 88.15%.

The regional electorate of Lynne has the highest turnout percentage of 95.38% followed by the rural electorates of Calare, Hume, New England and the regional electorate of Macquarie.

Four of the five electorates with the lowest percentage of informal votes are also from rural and regional Australia with New England taking out top spot at 3.54% followed by Lynne, Bradfield, Cowper and Page.

Informal votes constitute invalid votes that have been recorded but not counted towards the final result. They include ballot papers that are not marked at all, identify the voter or which have not been marked correctly.

A recent survey by the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra has shown that one in five Australians have admitted to submitting a donkey vote or refusing to vote at an election. Astonishingly, one in ten also say that they would sell their vote in an election if permitted.

“Voting is one of the staple rights that we have in a democratic society. It is surprising to see that there are a number of Australians who are not having their say,” said Michael Richards, Acting Deputy Director at the Museum of Australian Democracy.

“While some of these numbers on their own are small, when you combine voter turnout with the number of informal votes, the number of people who are not registered and those who choose to submit a donkey vote, you find that you could have around a quarter of the voting population not having their say.”

While the geographic size of each electorate differs substantially the number of registered voters in each stays within 5% of 95,000.

“Australia can celebrate and be proud of its democratic freedoms but should also ensure these freedoms continue well into the future. We encourage all Australians to embrace democracy at a conscious level so that they can each play a role in shaping a positive future,” Mr Richards said.

“From our own personal values, to the way we interact with our family and our local community, down to the choices we are free to make, these are all freedoms we enjoy in a democracy.”

“Democracy is as important today as it has ever been.”

“There are still many issues that are current in Australia and plenty of opportunities for members of the community to have their say on issues both at the community and the national level,” Mr Richards said.

### **Australians have a chance to Have Their Say**

The Museum of Australian Democracy will be holding a “Have Your Say Day” on Wednesday 10 August as a day when it will encourage all Australians to have their say and participate in democracy.

“A number of Australians complain that they don’t have time to think about, or participate in democracy. So the museum is creating the time through “Have Your Say Day”,” said Mr Richards.

“We are encouraging everyone to use this day as a central point to talk about the issues that matter most in their lives. There are many ways that people can get involved, from speaking to friends and work colleagues, participating online or writing to their local representatives.”

More information on “Have Your Say Day” can be found on [www.ourfreedom.com.au](http://www.ourfreedom.com.au) and by following #moadhavemyoursayday

<ends>

Research results:

All results from 2010 Federal Election					
Division	Enrolment	Turnout	Percentage	Informal	Percentage
Banks	98 742	91 534	92.70%	7 665	8.37%
Barton	95 231	87 255	91.62%	8 572	9.82%
Bennelong	98 915	92 504	93.52%	6 820	7.37%
Berowra	95 124	89 847	94.45%	4 123	4.59%
Blaxland	95 362	85 911	90.09%	12 081	14.06%
Bradfield	97 255	90 838	93.40%	3 722	4.10%
Calare	98 463	93 873	95.34%	4 631	4.93%
Charlton	94 474	89 256	94.48%	6 176	6.92%
Chifley	97 605	90 468	92.69%	10 097	11.16%
Cook	100 733	95 116	94.42%	5 528	5.81%
Cowper	94 654	89 025	94.05%	3 857	4.33%
Cunningham	100 643	94 373	93.77%	5 359	5.68%
Dobell	93 646	88 047	94.02%	5 333	6.06%

Eden-Monaro	96 465	91 053	94.39%	5 690	6.25%
Farrer	94 026	88 558	94.18%	5 611	6.34%
Fowler	95 564	88 196	92.29%	11 314	12.83%
Gilmore	96 340	91 157	94.62%	4 658	5.11%
Grayndler	98 112	89 583	91.31%	6 344	7.08%
Greenway	93 837	88 383	94.12%	9 075	10.27%
Hughes	97 998	92 327	94.21%	6 020	6.52%
Hume	97 719	92 780	94.95%	4 764	5.13%
Hunter	91 523	86 697	94.73%	5 585	6.21%
Kingsford Smith	97 730	89 309	91.38%	7 280	8.15%
Lindsay	95 975	90 629	94.43%	7 402	8.17%
Lyne	92 535	88 261	95.38%	3 294	3.73%
Macarthur	90 040	85 102	94.52%	6 899	8.11%
Mackellar	98 520	91 880	93.26%	4 780	5.20%
Macquarie	97 536	92 472	94.81%	5 067	5.48%
McMahon	96 061	89 570	93.24%	9 710	10.84%
Mitchell	93 573	88 681	94.77%	4 952	5.58%
New England	99 616	94 519	94.88%	3 347	3.54%
Newcastle	92 855	86 912	93.60%	4 948	5.69%
North Sydney	97 578	89 695	91.92%	3 986	4.44%
Page	94 336	89 302	94.66%	3 918	4.39%
Parkes	100 170	94 480	94.32%	4 745	5.02%
Parramatta	93 999	85 735	91.21%	7 418	8.65%
Paterson	92 140	87 310	94.76%	4 924	5.64%
Reid	95 878	87 308	91.06%	7 680	8.80%
Richmond	92 391	85 587	92.64%	4 752	5.55%
Riverina	98 584	93 367	94.71%	5 378	5.76%
Robertson	96 588	91 136	94.36%	5 795	6.36%
Shortland	94 224	89 384	94.86%	5 671	6.34%
Sydney	95 286	83 997	88.15%	4 620	5.50%
Throsby	95 871	89 768	93.63%	6 197	6.90%
Warringah	96 708	89 107	92.14%	4 135	4.64%
Watson	97 761	88 022	90.04%	11 265	12.80%

Wentworth	101 446	90 761	89.47%	4 085	4.50%
Werriwa	90 963	84 006	92.35%	8 692	10.35%

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Editor's notes:

- Election figures are from the Australian Electoral Commission for the 2010 Federal election. See also [http://www.aec.gov.au/voting/informal\\_voting/](http://www.aec.gov.au/voting/informal_voting/)
- MOAD survey was conducted with 1,011 participants in July 2011
- A fact sheet on "Have Your Say Day" is also available
- For more information on the Museum of Australian Democracy visit [www.moadoph.gov.au](http://www.moadoph.gov.au)