

# Australia

## *Ethnicity in Australia*

### *Power relations*

All proportions are based on the 2001 Australian Census (Ancestry) except for Muslims and Jews (Religion) and Aborigines (Aboriginality). There may be some double counting.

*Aborigines:* From 1938 to 1967, there were various Aboriginal organisations, such as the Aboriginal Advancement League, and the Federal Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. These agitated for full voting rights, which were granted over the whole country in 1962 and the transfer of Aboriginal Affairs to the Federal government, which happened in 1967. Some official agencies have more recently been established like the Aboriginal Conference (1974) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, which was abolished in 2006. These official agencies took over much of the work of independent organisations, as did the State based Land Councils. There is no longer an independent pressure group, but pressure through official channels. There are no Aboriginal parties, although a few attempts have been made to start one. There are no reserved parliamentary seats for Aborigines, but two have been elected to the Senate through the mainstream parties - both now defeated. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at the 2001 Census totalled 2.2%.

*Jews:* Jews always present definitional problems. The statistic of 0.004 is from the 2001 Census (Religion) and is generally accepted within the Jewish community. Jewish organisations affiliate to the Boards of Deputies in each State, whether they are religious, Zionist or secular. Jews have been present in Australia since 1788 and did not suffer any legal discrimination. Many have sat in colonial, State and Federal Parliaments, although there is only one at present in the national parliament - an historically low number. As with all other ethnic groups, there are no Jewish parties or organisations which run for public office under a specifically ethnic label. Ten acknowledged Jews have sat in the national parliament since 1945, all but one representing the Australian Labor Party. Much larger numbers have sat in the colonial and State parliaments ever since 1856.

*Muslims:* Muslims have only become politically significant since the 1990s, due to previously small numbers. Many Muslim organisations are affiliated to the Federation of Islamic Councils, with branches in each State. There are many other organisations such as the Lebanese Muslim Association and councils of mosques. There are no Muslims in the national parliament and only two (both Turks) in the Victorian State parliament. Events since 2001 have led to national government attempts to create a recognised community leadership, but these have not been very successful. However organised rallies and representations have been made on issues such as the war in Iraq or perceived bias against Muslims. Muslim schools are state subsidised and Muslim imams are licensed to conduct weddings. Muslims who are citizens (the majority) are legally equal to all others. Muslims have been elected to local government positions in the major cities. The figure of 0.015 is from the 2001 Census (Religion).

*Arabs:* Arabs are not coterminous with Muslims, as many are Christians and many Muslims are not Arabs. The figure given here is for those giving Arabic ancestry from the 2001 Census (Ancestry). There is some double counting with Muslims. Arab Christians (mainly Lebanese) have been established since the 1890s and many have entered politics as individuals, including a current State premier and a national minister. There is a substantial Arabic language press, several religious denominations and an Australian-Arabic Council. However there are no specific common objectives other than protection against prejudice. All Arabs who are Australian citizens enjoy equal rights with all others.

*Chinese:* Chinese have been present for 150 years, but were excluded from settlement between the 1880s and 1960s. Consequently they have only recently become significant. The figure of 0.04 is for Chinese ancestry but they are from several different countries and language groups. Chinese have been important in local government and have been mayors of most major cities. They have had limited parliamentary representation and have no parties nominating candidates at that level. There is a large Chinese press with four dailies and a television station.

*Italians:* Italians are the largest non-British ethnic group, created largely by immigration between 1950 and 1970, but with an earlier settlement going back to the 1890s. The figure of 0.04 is for ancestry. There are Italians of local and overseas birth in the national parliament and ministry and in State and local politics, including the current premier of the largest state. There are many Italian organisations, two daily newspapers and radio and television programs. There are no parties nominating for office but some branches of Italian parties and two members elected to the Italian parliament in 2006 to represent overseas Italians.

*Greeks:* Greeks have had a presence since 1890 but their numbers were mainly created by immigration between 1955 and 1975. They have been politically active and have the largest number of non-British members in the national and State parliaments. Many have also served in local government and some as ministers. They have a daily newspaper and several radio and television programs. Most have been identified with the Australian Labor Party but this is changing. The main organisation is centred on the Greek Orthodox Communities in each State but there is a wide variety of organisations. Main political objectives have been directed towards Greek politics and Balkan issues.

*Vietnamese:* There were virtually no Vietnamese in Australia before 1975 and the population has grown since largely from refugee admission and then from family reunion under more relaxed exit conditions. Population concentration has facilitated entry into local government and there have also been members elected to State parliaments. There are no Vietnamese politicians at the national level. There is one daily newspaper and many radio and television programs. Most concern has been with conditions in Vietnam and with disadvantage and discrimination in Australia. However the great majority are citizens and legally equal with all others.

*Others:* Among the very varied 'Others' there have been individual elections to State, national and local bodies and service as ministers in some of them. However there are no 'ethnic' parties and much organisational concern has been with overseas issues, especially for the large number arriving as refugees from Communism between 1947 and 1995. The majority are citizens and enjoy legal equality with all others. There are no limitations officially placed on language use, religion, dress or voting (for citizens) but only a limited entry into effective politics. Many ethnic organisations are affiliated with the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, a publicly funded representative and advisory organisation and advocate of multicultural public policy.

*Australians, English and Irish:* Australians, English and Irish as self defined by ancestry are the dominant political force, as they have been since British settlement in 1788. Irish identity was merged with Catholic identity well before 1945, though some vestiges remain. Apart from the Australian-born, English immigrants form the largest overseas-born group in most parliaments and governments. Many legal advantages once extended to British subjects have been eliminated and all citizens by birth or naturalisation enjoy equal legal rights and status, including Aborigines (who are the most socially disadvantaged ethnic group).

*2006-2009:* No information about significant changes during this period. Different sources mention separate acts of violence against minorities. None of the sources mention any changes in the political setting.

Aboriginal Australians (AAs): To this date, the finding of the previous comment section regarding the inconsistent and fragmented political (party) representation of AAs can be confirmed. In 2011 for instance, the Australia's First Nations Political Party (AFNPP) was registered <sup>(102)</sup>. Their political manifesto is concerned with aboriginal issues <sup>(103)</sup>. The homepage of the party does not seem to be maintained however, and no information could be found on recent activities. Predecessors of the AFNPP include the Australia's Indigenous Peoples Party, registered in 1993 and deregistered in 1999 due to a lack of members <sup>(104)</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> [Australian Electoral Commission, 2013]

<sup>103</sup> [AFNPP, 2010]

<sup>104</sup> [Australian Electoral Commission, 2011]

It is worthwhile noting that there have been repeated attempts at representing aboriginal interests outside of party frameworks: In 1990, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was set up as an official government body, with the aim of representing AAs and Torres Strait Islanders interests and to give them influence on decisions which affect their lives/comunities. The concrete objectives of ATSIC were <sup>(105)</sup>:

<sup>105</sup> [Pratt, 2003]

- ensure maximum participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in government policy,
- promote Aboriginal self-management and self-sufficiency,
- further Aboriginal economic, social and cultural development, and
- ensure co-ordination of Commonwealth, state and territory and local government policy affecting Aboriginal people

Following allegations of fraud and corruption, ATSIC was formally abolished after open criticism in 2005. Since then, the representation of aboriginal interests to government has been the responsibility of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination in the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. In line with the EPR definitions regarding the 'access to executive power at the center' variable, and despite the aforementioned existence of the ATSIC not mentioned in the previous comments, it appears recommendable to keep the status 'powerless' for the period 1990-2005 when the ATSIC existed. Despite the fact that each of the agency executives was of aboriginal descent, the ATSIC can be mainly considered an advisory body, not granting 'true' access to executive power. (An example where this is the case would be the Minister of Maori Affairs in New Zealand). In 2009, nearly five years after the abolition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) the Labor government announced that it would support a new national representative body for AAs. Soon after, in 2010, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee. "As a company the Congress is owned and controlled by its membership and independent of Government" <sup>(106)</sup>. As this also does not mark a shift in the AAs relation

<sup>106</sup> [Aboriginal Representative Bodies, 2013]

to the core executive, the representatives within the body are voted by aboriginal communities and show ongoing efforts of exercising political influence and advocate the interests of aboriginal australians.

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Australia*

*From 1946 until 1962*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.84	DOMINANT
Asians	0.04	DISCRIMINATED
Aborigines	0.02	DISCRIMINATED

*From 1963 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Whites	0.84	DOMINANT
Asians	0.04	IRRELEVANT
Aborigines	0.02	POWERLESS

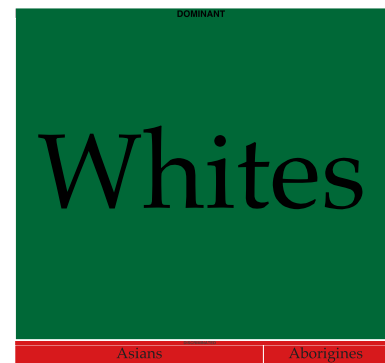


Figure 29: Political status of ethnic groups in Australia during 1946-1962.

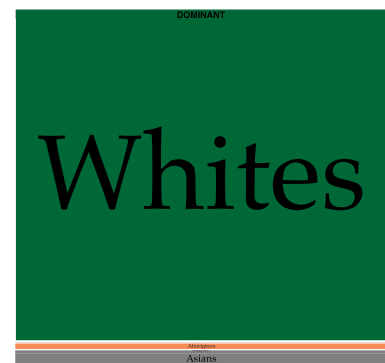


Figure 30: Political status of ethnic groups in Australia during 1963-2013.



## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Australia*

*From 1946 until 2013*



Figure 31: Map of ethnic groups in Australia during 1963-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Whites	7 523 336	Regional & urban
Aborigines		Dispersed
Asians		Urban

Table 13: List of ethnic groups in Australia during 1946-2013.

## *Conflicts in Australia*

*Starting on 2003-03-20*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Australia	Government of Iraq		2003-03-20			
Government of United Kingdom	Government of Iraq		2003-03-20			
Government of United States of America	Government of Iraq		2003-03-20			