

26 May 2017

### **MEDIA RELEASE: Australian Attitudes to Elections Survey**

2016 saw the Liberal-Nationals Coalition retain power in a dramatic federal election. There was high drama and theatrics with the controversial “mediscare” campaign and the re-emergence of One Nation as a political force, but once the dust settled, had much really changed? The rise of the minor parties and the diverse makeup of the Senate suggest there is widespread dissatisfaction with the traditional majors. At the polling booths, many voters appeared disgruntled that they had to be there at all. Angrily marching past party volunteers with how to vote cards, it seemed that many were dissatisfied with all the choices on offer and would have preferred not to vote at all.

Led by chief researcher Dr Benjamin T. Jones, the School of History at the Australian National University is hosting the Australian Attitudes to Elections Survey (AAES). This short online survey asks participants if they think elections really matter? Does it make much difference which of the major parties are in power? Should Australians be forced to vote? Should Australians be allowed to vote if they cannot demonstrate a basic understanding of our parliamentary system? Are donkey votes lazy and irresponsible or a valid form of protest?

Dr Jones has said: “This survey is designed to give us a snap shot of how Australians feel about the election process. Whether they passionately support our compulsory voting system or feel it is counterproductive to coerce people to the polling stations, we want to better understand contemporary attitudes to our democracy.”

“We have had a drama-filled election in Australia and, of course, there was the incredible result in the United States. Now is an ideal time for Australians to think about elections. Is a compulsory right a contradiction in terms? Does the rise of Trump in the US and Hanson here indicate widespread dissatisfaction with politics in general or merely with the majors? While some Australians would rather not vote at all, others feel that schools and universities should do more to teach civics and the importance of political engagement. We hope all these voices come out in the survey.”

The results of the AAES will be published on the School of History website.

For more information please visit the AAES website [HERE](#).

Benjamin T. Jones  
Benjamin.jones@anu.edu.au  
0417652310