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CANDIDATES AND PRE-SELECTION

Anika Gauja and Marija Taflaga

Between them, the Coalition parties, the ALP, the Greens and Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON) fielded 520 candidates in 151 House of Representatives seats for the 2019 Australian federal election. Candidate selection—more commonly known as 'pre-selection' in Australia—is the process by which a political party decides who will be its endorsed election candidates. It is a high-stakes activity, involving personal, professional and factional ambitions. Depending on how a party chooses its candidates, it is also one of the best opportunities party members have to exercise power within their parties and to indirectly influence public policy outcomes.

Candidate selection is equally important beyond political parties because it shapes the choice before voters, the composition of parliaments, the interests most likely to be heard in policy debates and legislative outcomes (Cross 2008: 598). As Hazan and Rahat (2010: 10) argue, 'candidate selection affects the fundamental nature of modern democratic politics and governance'. Yet, as Gallagher and Marsh (1988) contend, despite their importance in determining the composition of the legislature, candidate selection contests resemble the 'secret garden' of politics. Although political parties are defined by the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* as organisations seeking to promote the election of one or more candidates to the House of Representatives and the Senate, they are not required to disclose how this selection takes place, nor are they mandated to use a particular method. While it is relatively straightforward to obtain

information on the formal rules governing pre-selections through party rules and constitutions, finding any data on the contests themselves and how these rules are applied in particular cases is far more difficult.

For this chapter, we have created an original database of pre-selection contests and candidate data for the 2019 House of Representatives and Senate elections, compiled by the authors from local and national media accounts, party websites and AEC candidate information. The database covers the Coalition parties—the Liberal Party, the National Party and the Queensland Liberal National Party (LNP)—the ALP, the Greens and PHON in all 151 House of Representatives seats and the Senate tickets for these parties. It provides information on publicly reported pre-selections, whether the contest was competitive, who participated and who was selected as the official party candidate. We also collect information on all candidates selected, including incumbency and gender.

The chapter begins by analysing the number of reported and competitive House of Representatives pre-selection contests. It then outlines the variety of mechanisms used by Australian parties to select their candidates and the stages in the process. We then focus on the 33 pre-selection contests that were competitive—that is, contested by two or more candidates. We end by examining the democratic implications of pre-selection and analysing the candidates selected for the House of Representatives and Senate by incumbency and gender.

Pre-selection contests for the 2019 Australian federal election

Gallagher and Marsh's (1988) assertion that candidate selection is the 'secret garden' of politics is largely confirmed by our data. Of the 520 candidate selections we know occurred, we were able to find publicly reported information on only 326 contests (63 per cent). The presumption, then, is that the selection events that were not publicly reported on consisted of the routine endorsement of incumbent candidates—contests for which there were no challengers for the position—or selections made exclusively by a party executive (appointments), including those made at short notice with limited candidates available. In New South Wales, for example, the Liberal Party State Executive voted to endorse all sitting members (Murphy and Davies 2018). Only in 33 instances across Australia (6 per cent of the total pre-selection events) could we

find evidence of a competitive pre-selection contest—that is, a selection with more than one candidate (Table 4.1). If we examine the number of competitive contests by State and Territory, the Australian Capital Territory is the clear outlier: 56 per cent of pre-selections in the Territory were competitive, compared with a maximum of 6 per cent in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

Table 4.1 Pre-selection contests for the 2019 Australian federal election (House of Representatives)

State or Territory	No. of electorates	No. of candidates/ pre-selection events	Reported pre-selections	Competitive contests
ACT	3	9	6	5
NSW	47	148	88	9
NT	2	6	3	0
Qld	30	119	67	7
SA	10	30	16	1
Tas.	5	20	18	1
Vic.	38	121	86	6
WA	16	67	42	4
Total	151	520	326	33

Source: Authors' own data.

Table 4.2 presents the number of competitive pre-selection contests for the House of Representatives, by party. The Liberal Party staged the greatest number of competitive pre-selection contests, by some margin. Although more Coalition parliamentarians retired before the election was called than did Labor parliamentarians,¹ this alone does not account for the difference. Part of the explanation may be the decision by Labor, which was the frontrunner, to quickly resolve damaging and messy pre-selection contests. The most extreme case of Labor's efforts to settle disputes internally occurred within its Victorian division, where a factional dispute broke out between the Left and the Right. Labor Leader Bill Shorten secured the intervention of Labor's powerful national executive to administer its pre-selections and imposed a \$500 fee on candidates to suppress 'vexatious' factional candidacies (Brown 2018). PHON did not stage a single competitive contest, which is explained by the fact that candidates were chosen exclusively by the party's State and national

¹ Ten Coalition lower house parliamentarians retired, compared with six Labor parliamentarians.

executives. The Greens held only one reported competitive lower house contest, in the Queensland seat of Brisbane. This could be explained by the relatively high cost of resourcing such contests and finding available candidates, which could be difficult for a smaller party to meet.

Table 4.2 Pre-selection contests by party: 2019 Australian federal election (House of Representatives)

Party	Reported pre-selections	Competitive contests	Ratio of competitive to reported contests (%)
LIB/LNP	106	21	20
ALP	67	9	13
Greens	83	1	1
PHON	51	0	0
National Party	19	2	11

Source: Authors' own data.

The diversity of pre-selection methods in Australia

Candidate selection is typically conducted in three stages: 1) establishing both the eligibility and the nomination of candidates (before the contest); 2) a selection process (during the contest); and 3) vetting and endorsement (after the contest). Parties retain high levels of control over candidates because they are the institutional interface between candidates and the AEC. All candidates, including incumbents, must be endorsed by their party before appearing on the ballot under the party name. As noted above, there is significant variation within, and between, the Australian political parties at all three of these stages.

The typical requirement for nomination in Australia is party membership, often for a minimum period (ranging from three months in the South Australian Liberal Party to three years in the Queensland ALP). Additional criteria that may be imposed include trade union membership (in the ALP), attendance at a minimum number of party meetings and nomination by a prescribed minimum number of party members. However, in almost all cases, party executive bodies can override these nomination requirements. For example, the NSW ALP Administration Committee can decide to waive minimum membership requirements if it considers 'there would be a significant advantage to the party if the member concerned was allowed

to contest the selection ballot' (Rule no. 11). Political parties also exercise a power of veto over candidate nominations, which are subject to review. These powers can be extremely broad. For example, the South Australian Liberal executive may refuse to accept a nomination if it is in the 'best interests of the division and shall not be bound to give any reasons'. Therefore, despite the formal rules that govern candidacy requirements, political parties possess significant scope and flexibility to intervene where it may be electorally desirable to do so.

The easiest way of distinguishing between all the different ways of selecting candidates currently used by Australian parties is to focus on which groups or individuals are able to participate in making the decision (the 'selectorate') (see, for example, Cross and Gauja 2014). Selectorates can range from being highly exclusive, with candidates chosen by a single party leader, to highly inclusive, where a candidate might be selected in a primary-style pre-selection open to all voters in the region (see Hazan and Rahat 2010: 35).

Parties' pre-selection methods for their 2019 candidates spread across the entire spectrum. At one end of the spectrum are processes involving a rank-and-file vote. For example, the Labor and Liberal parties conduct rank-and-file pre-selection plebiscites in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Several parties, including the ALP and the National Party, have previously held more open selection contests involving participation from local communities (Gauja 2017), though this was not a feature of the 2019 pre-selections. A more common method is by a selection committee comprising representatives/delegates from various areas of the party organisation (for example, branches, parliamentarians, State council and so on). This is used by the West Australian Liberals to select candidates for the House of Representatives. At the other end of the spectrum are highly exclusive selection processes, such as that used by PHON. In Queensland, for example, candidates are selected by the party's four-person State executive. The national executive continues, however, to exercise significant discretion over the selection of candidates:

The State Executive must ensure that best practices in relation to the vetting of Candidates [are] per instruction from the National Executive which may vary and change from time to time as deemed necessary in the best interests of the Party.²

2 Pauline Hanson's One Nation Queensland State Constitution 2017, s. 5.2.

Apart from the freedom given to State parties to implement their own selection processes as they see fit, many parties retain a significant degree of freedom in being able to alter those processes at short notice.

The final stage of the candidate selection process is receiving the endorsement of the party after the selection contest has taken place. As with nomination procedures, political parties possess the ability to intervene at this point to refuse endorsement. This can occur at both the State and the national levels. For example, the ALP's administrative committee in Queensland shall not endorse a candidate for public office if 'such person's record shows failure, without good and cogent reasons, to vote for and/or defend Labor's legislation or if that person's candidature may prejudice Labor's prospects'.³ Party executives may also intervene to disendorse candidates after the close of nominations, which occurred in several instances in 2019 (see Sawer and Maley, Chapter 3, this volume). One Labor, two Greens and four Liberal Party lower house candidates were either disendorsed or resigned under pressure from the party after social media commentary was uncovered that revealed sexist, homophobic and racist comments.⁴

Candidate selection in the Senate operates differently from that in the House of Representatives. This is the product of different voting systems, which sees parties produce party list tickets. As parties are organised federally, there is variation across and within Australian Senate candidate selection procedures. However, as a general rule, Senate contests tend to be more centralised and have the greater potential to be influenced by the party's central office. Again, PHON represents one extreme, where the party appoints candidates, and the Greens are at the other, where some States hold party-wide membership ballots. For both these parties, it is the Senate contest that really matters. By contrast, the Liberal and Labor parties tend to use mixed systems, with a combination of membership representation and central organisational representatives (Cross and Gauja 2014), and have been disinclined to introduce radical reform of procedures (Miragliotta 2013).

3 2018 Rules of the Australian Labor Party (State of Queensland), s. 49(3).

4 ALP: Luke Creasey (Melbourne); Greens: Jay Dessi (Lalor), David Paull (Parkes); Liberal: Jeremy Hearn (Isaacs), Peter Killin (Wills), Jessica Whelan (Lyons) and Gurpal Singh (Scullin).

Senate contests are usually competitive, in so far as there is a competitive process for allocating winnable positions on the Senate ballot. What may not always occur is the entrance of non-incumbent candidates to this process. As parties are likely to secure, at best, three senators, the real contest on Senate tickets is to resolve the order of names. Senators, compared with members of the House, tend to have stronger backgrounds in the party organisation and are more likely to have had a ‘careerist’ trajectory into politics (van Onselen 2015; Miragliotta and Errington 2012). For this reason, Senate contests are regularly the cause of factional manoeuvrings, and it is through this lens that much scrutiny of Senate pre-selection contests arises in the news.

Notable pre-selection contests for the 2019 Australian federal election

House of Representatives

Table 4.3 provides the details of all the competitive pre-selection contests held by the major parties and the Greens for the 2019 House of Representatives election. As the table shows, a major reason for a competitive pre-selection is the retirement or resignation of a sitting parliamentarian.

The creation of the new seat of Bean in the Australian Capital Territory saw both the Liberals and Labor hold pre-selections in which multiple candidates contested. The ALP’s pre-selection contest was won by David Smith, who had served in the Senate since May 2018, when Katy Gallagher was disqualified for failing to properly renounce her UK citizenship (for details on the citizenship crisis, see Taflaga and Curtin 2018, 2019). The Liberal Party pre-selected Ed Cocks, who competed with Jane Hiatt, a small business owner (Whyte 2018b). Following the resignation of the ALP’s Gai Brodtmann in the seat of Canberra, competitive contests were also held by both parties in that seat. The ALP’s contest was won by Alicia Payne, running against four men, in a contest that saw the intervention of the party’s national executive to investigate the distribution of flyers making damaging claims against one of the candidates (Whyte 2018a). The pre-selected Liberal candidate, Mina Zaki, was plagued by allegations that she had not finalised the renunciation of her Afghan citizenship (Whyte 2019).

Table 4.3 Competitive pre-selection contests, House of Representatives, 2019

Seat	State/ Territory	Party	Chosen candidate	No. of candidates	Context	TPP swing (%)
Bean	ACT	ALP	David Smith	3	New seat	n.a.
Bean	ACT	LIB	Ed Cocks	2	New seat	n.a.
Canberra	ACT	ALP	Alicia Payne	5	Retiring MP	+4.1
Canberra	ACT	LIB	Mina Zaki	3	Retiring MP (other party)	-4.1
Fenner	ACT	LIB	Leanne Castley	2		+1.3
Cowper	NSW	NAT	Patrick Conaghan	3	Retiring MP	+2.2
Eden- Monaro	NSW	LIB	Fiona Kotvojs	5		+2.1
Gilmore	NSW	LIB	Grant Schultz*	2	Retiring MP	-3.3
Hughes	NSW	LIB	Craig Kelly**	2		+0.5
Lindsay	NSW	LIB	Melissa McIntosh	4	Retiring MP (other party)	+6.2
Mackellar	NSW	LIB	Jason Falinski**	2		-2.5
Page	NSW	ALP	Patrick Deegan	2		-7.1
Parramatta	NSW	LIB	Charles Camenzuli	3		+4.2
Reid	NSW	ALP	Sam Crosby	2	Retiring MP (other party)	+1.5
Bowman	Qld	LNP	Andrew Laming	2		+3.2
Brisbane	Qld	GRN	Andrew Bartlett	3		-1.0
Capricornia	Qld	ALP	Russell Robertson	2		-11.7
Dickson	Qld	ALP	Ali France	2		-2.9
Flynn	Qld	NAT	Ken O'Dowd	2		+7.6
Moncrieff	Qld	LNP	Angie Bell	5	Retiring MP	+0.8
Ryan	Qld	LNP	Julian Simmonds	2		-3.0
Mayo	SA	LIB	Georgina Downer	2		-2.2
Braddon	Tas.	LIB	Gavin Pearce	3		+4.8
Chisholm	Vic.	LIB	Gladys Liu	9	MP resigns from party	-2.3
Higgins	Vic.	LIB	Katie Allen	8	Retiring MP	-6.1

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Seat	State/ Territory	Party	Chosen candidate	No. of candidates	Context	TPP swing (%)
Indi	Vic.	LIB	Steve Martin	3	Retiring MP (other party)	+4.1
Jagajaga	Vic.	ALP	Kate Thwaites	2	Retiring MP	+1.0
Macnamara	Vic.	LIB	Kate Ashmor	3	Retiring MP (other party)	-5.0
Mallee	Vic.	NAT	Anne Webster	6	Retiring MP	-3.6
Curtin	WA	LIB	Celia Hammond	5	Retiring MP	-6.4
Hasluck	WA	ALP	James Martin	3		-3.3
Moore	WA	LIB	Ian Goodenough	5		+0.6
Pearce	WA	ALP	Kim Travers	2		-3.9

n.a. not applicable

LIB = Liberal Party

NAT = National Party

GRN = Greens

* Grant Schultz was chosen by Liberal Party members as the candidate for Gilmore, but this was not endorsed by the State executive.

** Incumbent MP Craig Kelly was challenged by NSW State President Kent Johns, but Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the State executive intervened to endorse Kelly as the candidate. Incumbent Jason Falinski was also endorsed under this process (Murphy and Davies 2018).

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Several Liberal Party pre-selections in New South Wales were controversial. In Gilmore, local party members chose Grant Schultz as the preferred candidate, but this decision was overruled by the party's executive, which installed Warren Mundine as the official candidate (Fist 2019). Schultz consequently resigned from the party and contested the seat as an Independent. Labor's Fiona Phillips won the seat and the Liberals suffered a 16.1 per cent primary vote swing against Mundine. In both Hughes and Mackellar, the Liberal Party executive intervened to endorse the incumbent members, Craig Kelly and Jason Falinski, respectively, from challenges by local members. Interestingly, the Queensland LNP executive did not intervene in the seat of Ryan to re-endorse sitting MP Jane Prentice, who was beaten by local councillor and former staffer Julian Simmonds in a pre-selection challenge (McGowan 2018).

Women were selected in two competitive Liberal pre-selection contests, in the Victorian seats of Chisholm and Higgins. In Chisholm, Gladys Liu was selected from a field of nine candidates to replace Julia Banks, who

resigned from the Liberal Party after making allegations of bullying against others in the party (Preiss 2018). In Higgins, paediatric gastroenterologist Dr Katie Allen was pre-selected to replace the retiring Kelly O'Dwyer (Kehoe 2019). In the West Australian seat of Curtin, former Curtin University vice-chancellor Celia Hammond was chosen to replace retiring Liberal Party minister Julie Bishop (Burrell 2019).

Senate

Several Senate selection contests proved controversial, highlighting continuing strife within some State party divisions. In the Victorian Liberal Party, pre-selections due to be held in May 2018 were cancelled at the eleventh hour as a result of manoeuvrings by the conservative faction within the State council (Norman 2018a). Moderate Senator Jane Hume was perceived to be the primary focus of the conservative faction's efforts to organise, though speculation that conservative MP Kevin Andrews would be unlikely to survive pre-selection was also reported. In August, the Victorian party automatically endorsed all sitting MPs, avoiding a vote of members (Crowe 2018), and in September, as one of his first acts as prime minister, Scott Morrison intervened to see both Victorian senators re-endorsed (Norman 2018b). When the remaining spots on the Victorian Liberal ticket were finalised remains unclear.

In New South Wales, both the Liberals and the Greens had competitive and controversial pre-selection processes. In New South Wales, incumbent senator and frontrunner for the NSW ticket, Jim Molan (right faction), was relegated to fourth—an unwinnable spot on the Coalition Senate ticket. The moderates Hollie Hughes and Andrew Bragg won 199 and 157 votes, respectively, to Molan's 141 votes. It was believed the surprise result was the consequence of centre-right faction leader Alex Hawke's withdrawal of support from Molan at the last minute (Hunter and Loussikian 2018). The Nationals pre-selected Perin Davey, who took the third spot on the ticket. This deal within the Coalition was viewed with bitterness, because many Nationals believed the third spot was unwinnable given the government's poor performance. Tensions were raised again when Senator Molan ran a below-the-line campaign that saw him garner 132,000 below-the-line votes (a record high) (Chang 2019; Grattan 2019). Despite the campaign's success, and the Coalition's strong performance, it was not enough; Davey was the only senator elected for the Nationals.

A major contest developed when left Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon was challenged by Mehreen Faruqi. Rhiannon's position within the Greens had come under pressure as a result of the NSW Greens' practice of binding members to vote in defiance of decisions made by the federal party. Rhiannon's actions had prompted her suspension from the Greens' party room until the NSW Greens undertook internal reforms (Gartrell 2017). Faruqi won pre-selection over Rhiannon with 60.7 per cent of the vote, in a result seen as a major blow for the left faction (Nicholls 2017).

Turning to other States, minor skirmishes between the factions broke out in the South Australian Labor Party. An unfavourable redistribution saw Mark Butler without a safe seat. The eventual deal between the left and right factions saw the left exchange one of its Senate spots in return for the seat of Adelaide, held by the retiring Kate Ellis of the right (Puddy et al. 2018). In Queensland, the LNP achieved generational renewal when controversial Senator Barry O'Sullivan failed to achieve endorsement and Senator Ian Macdonald was relegated to fourth position on the ticket (Owens 2018). Macdonald took the decision badly, declaring the party was failing to represent north Queensland, and urged supporters to vote for him below the line (AAP 2019). Similar concerns about regional representation were raised within the ALP, with members fearful of a takeover by Brisbane and the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU) (Killoran 2018). Finally, the unaligned Tasmanian Senator Lisa Singh was relegated to the fourth spot on Labor's ticket as a result of a factional deal between the right and left, despite winning second place on the membership ballot (Denholm 2018).

The consequences of pre-selection: Who contests and who is elected?

There is some debate among political scientists about whether women are disadvantaged in relatively more competitive and open selection contests (see, for example, Pruyers et al. 2017). Table 4.4 reports the proportion of women candidates who participated in pre-selection contests for the House of Representatives against the proportion of candidates who were chosen. Evidence from the 2019 Australian federal election pre-selections shows that, while women are still in the minority in such contests in the House, they are just as likely—if not more likely—to be selected as the party's official candidate.

This was the case for all parties except the Greens (for whom only one competitive pre-selection contest was publicly reported) for the House of Representatives. The ALP had the largest share of women as both pre-selection candidates and officially endorsed candidates (44 per cent), followed by the Liberal Party and the National Party—mirroring the partisan patterns of representation observed in the federal parliament (Hough 2019). The existence of Labor's quota rule, which see contests spilled if an insufficient number of women are put forward, likely drives the result for this party. For the Liberal Party, it may be the threat of intervention from State executives or the effect of public pressure given recent and sustained criticism of the low levels of female representation within that party (McMahon 2018).

Table 4.4 Competitive contests: Candidates by party and gender in the House of Representatives

Party	No. of House of Representatives pre-selection candidates			No. of House of Representatives candidates selected		
	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women
ALP	14	9	39	5	4	44
LIB/LNP	42	23	35	11	8	42
Greens	2	1	33	1	0	0
Nationals	10	2	17	2	1	33
Total	68	35	34	19	13	41

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 4.5 Candidates nominated for the Senate compared with those elected

Party	Candidates at pre-selection					Elected to the Senate		
	Total no. of candidates	Total candidates selected	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women selected as candidates	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women
ALP	39	37	15	22	59	5	8	62
LIB/LNP	37	31	20	11	35	11	6	35
Greens	37	35	5	30	86	2	4	67
Nationals	8	8	3	5	62	0	1	100
PHON	12	12	9	3	25	1	0	0
Total	133	123	52	71	58	19	18	50

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 4.5 shows that women were a little more likely than men to be selected as Senate candidates and that they went on to win 50 per cent of the seats contested by the five parties considered in this chapter. However, this result is not distributed evenly across all parties. Labor nominated 22 (59 per cent) women and saw eight (62 per cent of their successful candidates) elected. Of the 35 candidates nominated by the Greens, 30 (86 per cent) were women, and they succeeded in electing six senators, 67 per cent of whom were women. The Greens' figures reflect the historically stronger performance of smaller parties in achieving women's representation. It may also reflect the party's policy platform and institutional organisation, which make it a more welcoming environment for women.

On the right, the results were mixed. The Nationals nominated more women than men (62 per cent) at this year's election. This may be because the party considered its chances of electoral success were limited because of the nature of its Coalition agreements with the Liberals. However, it succeeded in electing one woman, Perin Davey from New South Wales. The Liberal Party was once again the laggard; only 35 per cent of its nominations were women (a higher proportion than in the House) and it succeeded in electing six women (35 per cent).

The data presented in Table 4.6 illustrate the effect of incumbency. Women candidates make up a much higher proportion of non-incumbent candidates selected by each of the parties but perform better in the Senate than in the House. This reflects both the current gender imbalance in the federal legislature and historically observed stronger representation for women in the upper chamber. Both the Liberal Party and the ALP nominated a similar percentage of women non-incumbent candidates in the House, but only 15 per cent of Liberal MP incumbents were women. In the Senate, the situation was somewhat reversed: both parties had similar levels of women incumbents (50 per cent ALP versus 42 per cent Liberals), but Labor had one-third more women non-incumbents, reflecting a higher level of women's participation overall. Given the much greater likelihood that incumbents are re-elected, these patterns, especially in the lower house, arguably perpetuate rather than address gender disparities in the parliament. Indeed, following the result, women will make up 47 per cent of Labor parliamentarians and only 23 per cent of Liberal parliamentarians (Norman 2019).

Table 4.6 Candidates selected by incumbency, party and gender in the House of Representatives and the Senate

Party	Incumbent					Non-incumbent						
	House of Representatives			Senate		House of Representatives			Senate			
	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women	M (No.)	F (No.)	Relative % of women
ALP	35	25	42	5	5	50	49	43	47	10	17	63
LIB/LNP	52	9	15	7	5	42	45	39	46	14	6	30
Greens	1	0	0	2	4	67	84	63	43	0	0	0
Nationals	8	0	0	1	0	0	10	6	38	2	5	71
PHON	0	0	0	1	0	0	40	19	32	8	3	27
Total	96	34	26	16	14	47	228	170	43	34	31	48

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Conclusion

Although candidate selection is key to determining the composition of the legislature, Australian parties' pre-selection processes for the 2019 federal election illustrate the closed nature of the majority of these events. Only a tiny proportion of pre-selection contests could be considered competitive. In reality, the decision as to who will be a candidate is often determined by just a handful of people. For party pre-selections to the Senate, this democratic deficit is compounded by factional manoeuvring, culminating in this election, for the Liberal Party, in prime ministerial intervention in Victoria. Some pre-selections are contested, particularly those where an incumbent parliamentarian is retiring, but these are infrequent events. Given the public scepticism about and distrust of parties and politicians in Australia, the closed and secretive nature of pre-selection processes appear to amplify rather than resolve this problem.

Pre-selection contests also have concrete outcomes for the election of women to the federal parliament. On a positive note, our data show that where women do contest competitive pre-selection contests, they are not disadvantaged. However, the effect of incumbency (that is, a predominantly male parliament) continues to perpetuate the gender imbalance in the legislature. This effect is particularly pronounced for parties that have eschewed quotas. With the Coalition parties struggling to improve organisational practices and facilitate more opportunities for women, the underrepresentation of conservative women's voices in the legislature will continue to be an issue leading into the next election.

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