

From the Editor

Rodney Smith

Professor of Australian Politics, University of Sydney

Covid-19 is affecting everyone, directly or indirectly, in many ways. It has become central to our public discourse and our private imaginings. As the pandemic persists, scholars and practitioners are reflecting increasingly seriously on its profound implications for social, economic and political life. In that vein, the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* is pleased to present three detailed analyses of the effects of the pandemic on representative democracy.

In the first, Stephen Mills criticises the ‘growing capacity and willingness’ of Australian governments ‘to govern without Parliament, and an acquiescent Parliament unable to define a more assertive role for itself’. He argues that Parliament must be allowed to pursue its traditional roles in response to the coronavirus crisis. In the second article, the Hon. Jonathan O’Dea, Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, makes a similar case for keeping Parliament operating and promotes the possibility of a ‘virtual’ NSW Parliament, reviewing virtual parliamentary experiences from a range of other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally in support. The third article, by Graeme Orr, teases out the knotty administrative, political and legal issues raised by efforts to hold, modify, postpone or abandon elections while the pandemic continues. Again, his article includes evidence from a range of jurisdictions across the world.

Elsewhere in this issue, Will Sanders presents a thorough and insightful analysis of the dynamics of Aboriginal voting in the Northern Territory over recent decades, arguing that Aboriginal enrolment and turnout figures point to a ‘potential Aboriginal electoral power that is as-yet unused’. The articles in this issue conclude with two discussions of Australian State upper houses. Kate Crowley and Joshua Lippis draw on extensive interviews and other evidence to shine light on the previously under-explored legislative and policy influence of Independent Members of the Tasmanian Legislative Council. Finally, a lively article by Patrick O’Brien suggests some possible direct and indirect measures to improve the quality of debate in State upper houses.

As these articles suggest, the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* is keen to publish articles on a range of topics related to Parliament and representative democracy more generally, and is keen to address critical issues of the day in a timely fashion where possible.