



DEPARTMENT
OF THE SENATE

Parliamentary education and its role in strengthening civic engagement and democratic institutions

ASPG 2026

Dr Sarah Moulds and Toni Matulick

The logo for Adelaide University, featuring a stylized 'A' and the text 'Adelaide University'.

Here's a quote:

Imagine if the world was run by *teenagers*! Of course, those that are teenagers now *will* run the world one day – and so the question for the rest of us is: what are we *doing* to prepare them for the task ahead? How are our young people included in our democracy? What kind of spaces are we creating for young people to connect with our parliaments?

Sarah Moulds, *Connected Parliaments* 2024

Globally, trust in
democratic and civic
institutions is in decline



Photo credit: Sarah Moulds,
London 2023

But...

Australia is in a strong position to counter this decline:

The public's belief in their democracy is strong; the 2026 Lowy Institute Poll showed that three-quarters of Australians (73%) explicitly state that "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government". The prospect of Australia sliding into autocracy in the near future is slim. Australians trust that the core principles of a democracy serve them well. Recent OECD data shows that 51% of citizens express high trust in Australia's public institutions — well above the international average. But maintaining that trust requires understanding what Australians believe the purpose of democracy is and what they expect it to deliver.

Purpose of Government Pulse 2026 Australian attitudes towards government and democracy, Centre for Policy Development, p.7

Connected Parliaments

The challenge confronting contemporary democracy is not simply one of declining trust. Increasingly, it is a challenge of connection.



Photo credit: SA Parliament website

Young people **are** engaged and **are** enthusiastic about more opportunities to be involved.

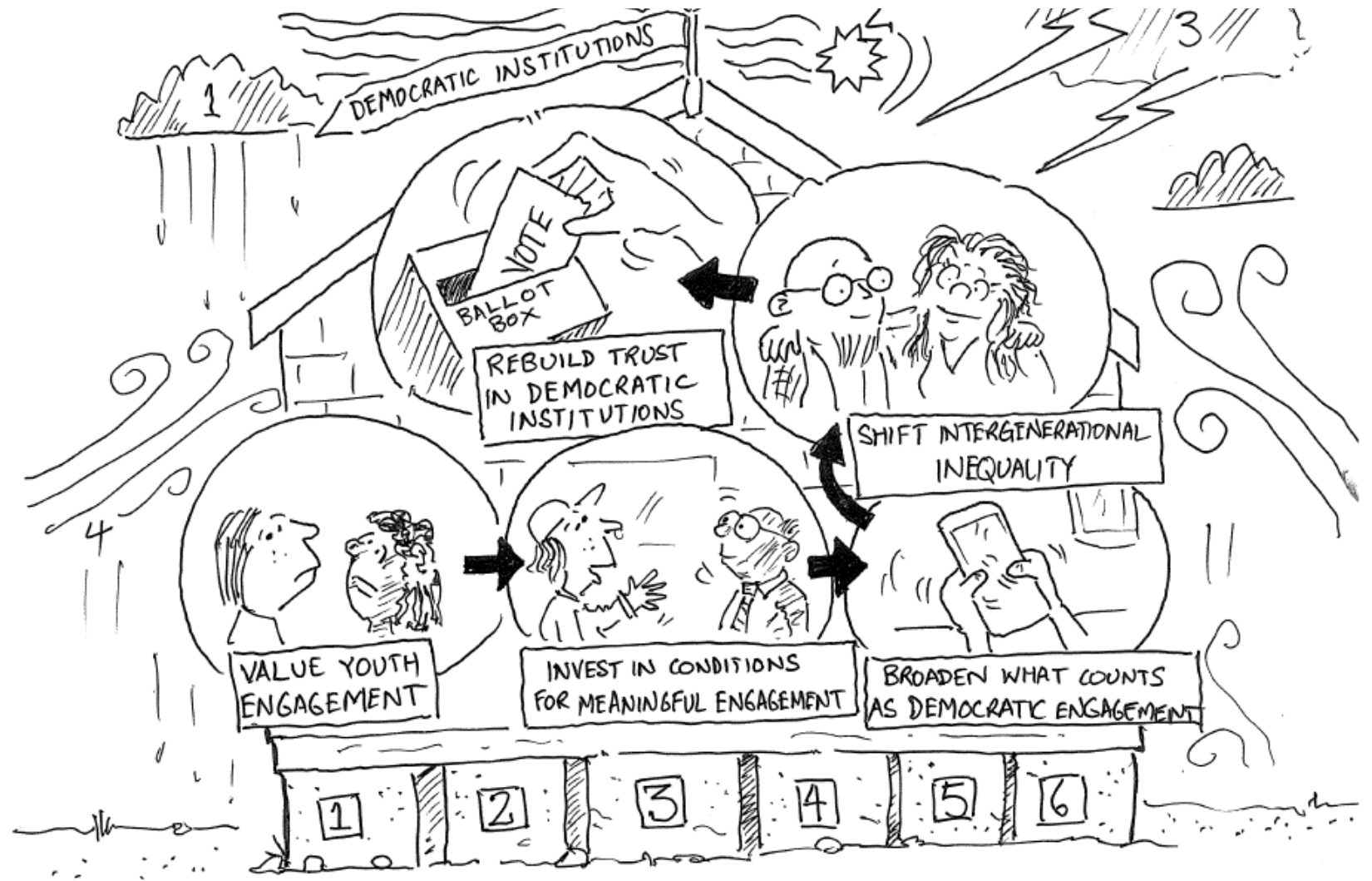


Illustration Credit: Richard Dall, 2023, Adelaide

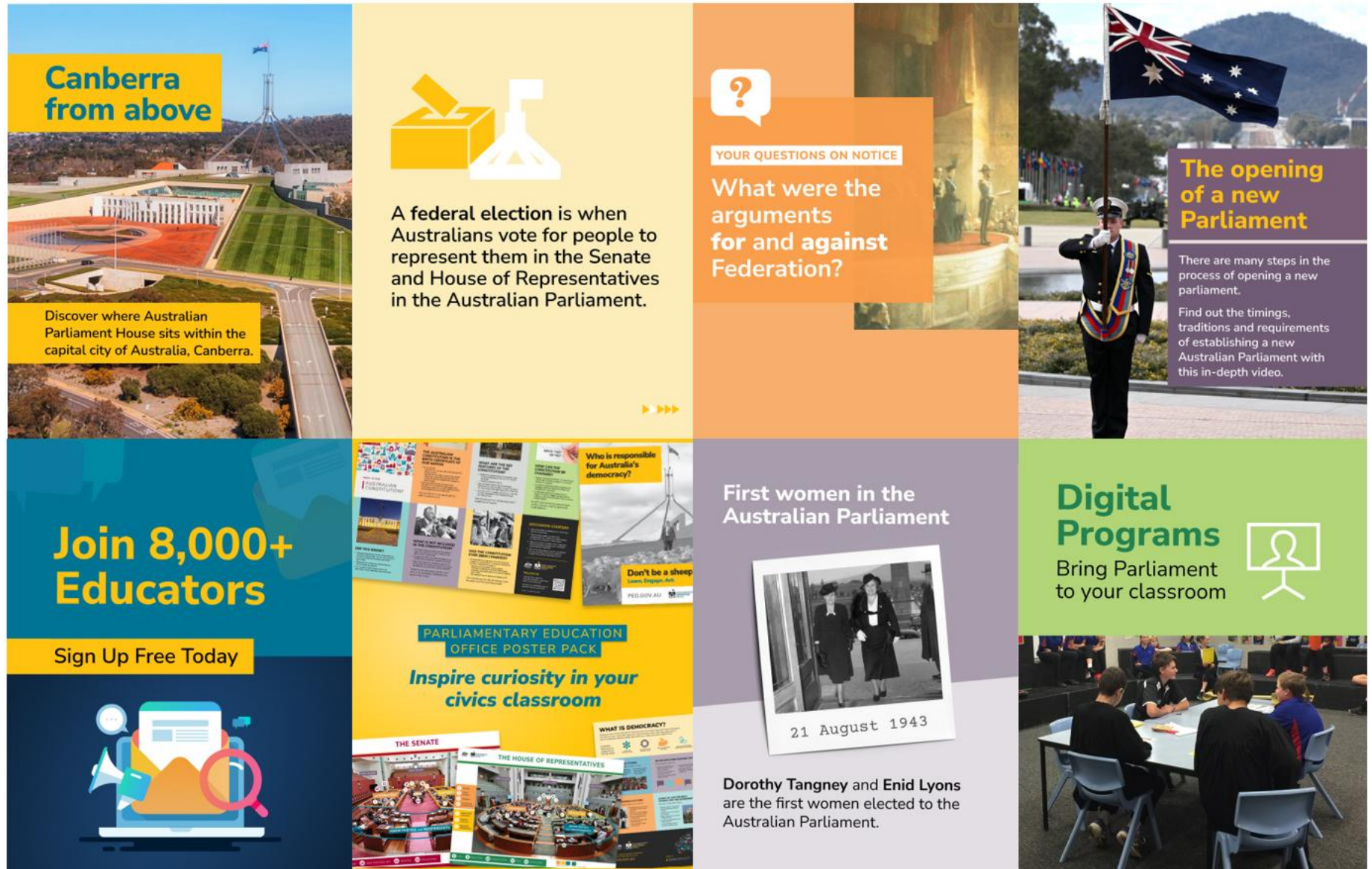


Outreach





Social media and digital programs



Who is missing in this story? A case study....

Approx 4.2 m students enrolled in Australian schools ... never be able to provide a program for all of these students via parliamentary education.

Of the 77,367 students that came to Canberra for a PEO program in 2025 from 1,349 schools, 14,598 of those students (or 18%) are from schools with an ICSEA score value of less than 1000 (lower than average on the socioeconomic disadvantage measure).

A few ideas...



Photo credit: Senedd website



Thursday Island, we're coming! 🇺🇸 Registrations are now open for the 2026 Junior Indigenous Youth Parliament. This exciting program gives Year 5 and 6 Aboriginal...

Photo credit: Qld Parliament