

THE POLITICAL CIRCUS

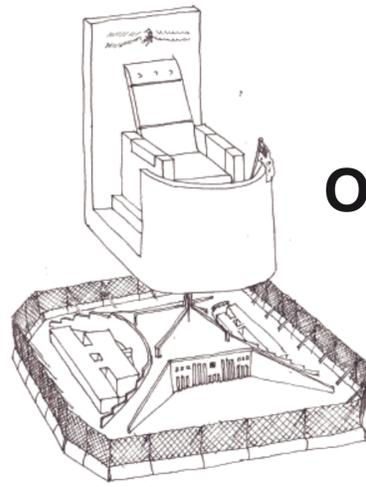
The creation of a new nation on the 1st of January 1901 presented an opportunity to create a new story for a new nation and the imagining a new capital was fundamental to this. However, this project seeks to question why a capital 'city' was required and proposes a more temporal and flexible form that both fulfills the constitutional and representative roles of parliament and democracy.

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'The Political Circus' hopes to build upon the legacy of the Great Exhibitions of Sydney (1879) and Melbourne (1880) and the utopian and idealistic visions that preceded the creation of Canberra. However, the project suggests a break with the unquestioning decision to seek a traditional form of federal capital in the western sense. The project challenges the pre-conceptions of a 'capital' as it was viewed in the period up to the designing of Canberra through the use of technologies and infrastructure available to us now.



...we have before us an almost unique opportunity - an opportunity which has occurred only a few times previously in the history of the world Let us beware lest we lose this unique opportunity."



OR



The Seat of Government

The phrase the seat of government suggests a fixed location, defined by certain boundaries and restrictions. For all Parliament House in Canberra's relative openness it is a static object in a city that is not easily accessible to all residents of the nation.

The Political Circus

The transparency of government in Australia is thus compromised by Canberra as a "Bush Capital". The political circus is a moving federal parliament that visits the state capitals and rural districts allowing access and influence to groups this is not normally afforded to.

82%

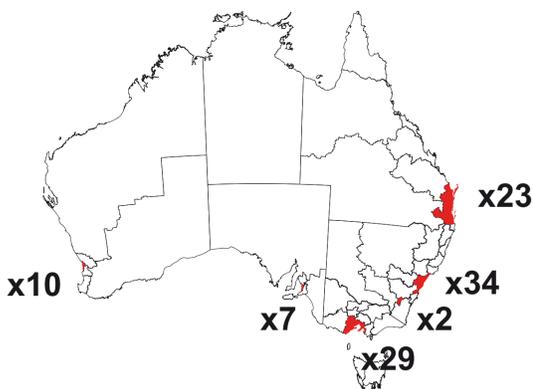
percentage of the year that neither houses of parliament are sitting (or 298 days)

SOURCE: Parliamentary Sittings 2011, revised September 2011, available at www.aec.gov.au



“The parliament ‘city’ is an event - changing to suit the political debates of the day”

RE-DESIGNING POLITICS



Electorates of Australia Zonal Concentration

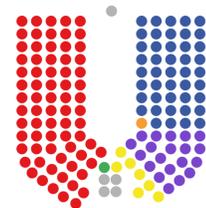
To understand how Australian political representation is affected by the geography it is useful to map electorate localities. The red zones indicate areas with large numbers of electorates and are clearly located in and around the state capitals.

In stark contrast rural areas fall into large electorates spanning differing regions, landscapes etc. What are the implications of this on how people are represented?

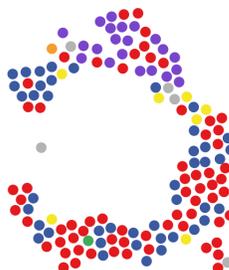
Furthermore, how does a system based on British and American politics cope with these disparities of electorate size?

Clearly a different and more mobile type of representation is required to maintain the quality of representation and engagement in such a landscape.

SOURCE: Australian Electoral Commission: Online, available at www.aec.gov.au



OR

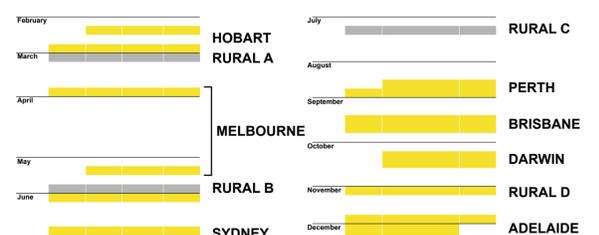


House of Representatives Existing Situation

The spatial arrangement of the Australian political debate is highly significant, both in the aggressive and combative stance of one side against the other and in the grouping of all individuals into their chosen political party. The idea of holding a government to account is one element but the spatial arrangement suggests the difficulty in co-operation?

House of Representatives Geographical Grouping

However, what if the arrangement was one in which MPs are grouped according to their relative geographical position (with considerable distortion of the outline of Australia). This arrangement suggests potential for a politics less based on party and more upon dependency and relationship.



SOURCE: Parliamentary Sittings 2011, revised September 2011, available at www.aec.gov.au

Political Calendar A Travelling Parliament

The two houses of parliament sit for just 18% of the days of the year, all of 294 days not sitting. This results in a great deal of travelling and wasted travel time.

Parliament is not working at a high capacity and it is right that an members time is spent on constituency work. But how can this system be achieved more efficiently? Is there scope to de-centralise the existing capital city typology and bring the capital to the electorate?

The calendar above shows the existing dates on which parliament sit altered to suit a travelling parliament. The key state capitals are visited but time is also allotted to a minimum of 4 rural sittings. These would be both key towns such as Kalgoorlie or Broken Hill as well as symbolic sites.