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The Political Representation of Asian-Australian Populations since the End of White Australia

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Abstract

The racial and ethnic landscape in Australia has changed markedly since the beginning of the postwar migration period in which migrants arrived from Europe, and later from Asia in the late 1970s. While Australians with European ancestry have gradually made it into state and federal parliament, there has been less visibility for Australians of Asian descent. This article provides an overview of demographic migration trends and levels of Asian-Australian political representation in state and federal politics, drawing on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and parliamentary websites. In doing so, we reflect on why political representation of Asian-Australian populations appears to be lagging so far behind.

Introduction

This article examines the changing demographics of Asian migrant and ethnic minority (MEM) populations within Australian state and federal electorates to highlight the scope of MEM underrepresentation as an emerging structural issue for Australian representative democracy. Over the last four decades, Asian-Australian populations have transformed Australia's racial and ethnic landscape. Since the 1970s, the proportion of British migrants has steadily declined, from 41 percent in 1976 to only 21 percent of the total overseas-born population in 2011. In contrast, the opposite has occurred amongst MEM groups, with Asian-born populations more than doubling in the 1970s, and continuing to increase as a proportion of the total overseas born population since the 1980s, growing from 107,753 people or 4 percent in 1971 to about

980,036 people or 24 percent by 2001 (Hugo, 2003, 249, 251). By 2011, despite significant overall population growth, this had become about 1,704,700 people or 26 percent of all overseas-born residents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). According to reported ancestry figures, which include second-, third-, and fourth-generation migrants, Asian-Australian populations account for up to 11 percent of the overall population, and either 5 or 9 percent of all citizens on the basis of birthplace or ancestry (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

These demographic shifts have not been reflected in the racial makeup of Australia's state and federal legislatures. In the 44th Commonwealth Parliament, only five identified with an Asian ancestry and since the 2016 federal election this has in fact dropped to four (three from the Australian Labor Party [ALP] and one from the Liberal Party). This figure could have dropped to three, if not for the chance reelection of Senator Lisa Singh in Tasmania. Across state legislatures as of July 2016, eleven representatives identified as having Asian ancestry. Furthermore, the Australian Human Rights Commission recently claimed that individuals from non-European backgrounds were more likely to run an ASX 200 company, than be elected to the Commonwealth Parliament (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016, 2). These discrepancies call for a detailed analysis of the representation of Asian-Australian groups, particularly in state and federal politics.

This article demonstrates that Australian state and federal parliaments are falling behind, considering the scale of demographic change since the 1980s. It is often assumed that socioeconomic status and language barriers influence the political integration and representation of migrants (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). However, with Asian-Australian populations, language ability and educational attainment is not a viable reason. Since the 1990s, a high proportion of Asian-born migrants in Australia are not only highly skilled and proficient at English but are also more likely to hold a bachelor's or a postgraduate degree compared to migrants from the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe (Pietsch, 2017).

In Australia, there is no doubt that as a postcolonial settler nation, racial discourse is a sensitive aspect of Australia's history, with Asian-Australian citizens sharing the experience of discrimination at both social and institutional levels. In the 2013 Australian Election Study, Asian migrants were 31 percent more likely to report experiences of discrimination compared to British migrants. The question is not whether racial discrimination has an influence on overall levels of MEM politi-

cal representation, but how and to what extent. Within these contexts, it is necessary to ask whether the lack of descriptive representation not only undermines parliament's capacity for substantive representation, but also the political integration of migrants and the reputation of Australia's democratic institutions as a whole.

Defining *Asian Australian*

An important first step in setting out an analytical framework for this article is the definition of 'Asian Australian', particularly considering the diverse use of Asian as a phrase demarcating specific populations in the United States (U.S.) and Great Britain (see Anwar, 1998; Chang, 1993; Modood, 1988). These varied and contrasting uses reinforce that the geographic boundaries of Asia are highly mutable, but are also inherently shaped by state categorization, such as through the distinctive traditions around group identity evident in various national censuses. Take ancestry data collected from England and Wales in the 2001 British census, which included groups such as "Indian," "Pakistani," and "Bangladeshi," but not "Chinese." In contrast, "Chinese" was located under "Asian, Asian Scottish, or Asian British" in Scotland. In 2011, the British census was altered to include "Chinese" as a subcategory of "British Asian," irrespective of region. In comparison, the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census Bureau definition of *Asian* includes those who originate from the "Far East, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent." It is also important to highlight an inherent tension between the use of *Asian* in state categorizations and the cultural role the phrase plays in defining an identity position. For instance, in tracing the history of the term, Li (1998, 21) depicts 'Asian American' as both a geocultural space and a subject position "from its inception" (also Espiritu, 1992; Palumbo-Liu, 1999).

In Australia, both official and academic uses have established contrasting ideas about who can be defined as Asian. The scope of who is Asian has in some instances been indirectly contested, with Southern Asian (such as India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan) and Central and West Asian populations (such as Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey) sometimes excluded, other times included (see Coughlan, 1992; Hugo, 2003; Jayasuriya and Kee, 1999; Khoo et al., 1994; McNamara, 1997; McNamara and Coughlan, 1997). Furthermore, the public meaning has a strong connection to the nation's historical engagement with racism. For example, the escalation of racial violence in the 1980s led the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1991) to use the phrase *Asian Australian*, but

in their definition, West Asian countries such as Cyprus, Lebanon, and Turkey were excluded.

In the Australian census, Asian is not specifically defined as a racial or identity category, and in the last thirty years it has faced numerous geographic revisions.[1] For the purposes of this article, *Asian Australian* is defined to provide coherence with its international and tacit cultural uses, and includes populations from Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and Southern Asia, but excludes the Middle East, as well as Central and West Asia. This approach positions Asia as a geocultural space by aligning Central and West Asia to the Middle East. This approach also modifies a common definition used in the United States by excluding Pacific Islanders, including New Zealanders, who are a large migrant population within Australia, and a group heavily involved in Australia's temporary migration flows.

A further component in framing an analysis of political representation is the fact that demographers have drawn attention to the escalation of non-permanent migration between Australia and Asia since the late 1990s, with Hugo (2003, 258) arguing "conventional analyses of Asian migration to Australia which focus on permanent settlement are only capturing a fraction (and a decreasing fraction) of all mobility between the region and Australia)" (see Jayasuriya and Kee, 1999, 69–72). Differences in levels of citizenship adoption demonstrate the persistent scale of resident Asian populations who sit at the peripheries of the Australian polity.

In 2011, there were an estimated total of 18,261,800 Australian citizens, accounting for 84 percent of the total population residing in Australia, with 1,546,700 of these citizens being from Asian ancestry (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).[2] Citizenship adoption is significantly lower among Asian-Australian MEM populations, only 65 percent of Asian residents. Furthermore, levels of citizenship range widely within communities on the basis of birthplace, from high levels of adoption amongst those from Laos (88 percent), Cambodia (83 percent), Vietnam (82 percent), and Hong Kong (80 percent), compared to low levels of citizenship from countries such as Malaysia (49 percent), China (47 percent), India (45 percent), South Korea (39 percent), and Indonesia (38 percent). Considering the fact that formal participation in the Australian political process remains dependent upon political membership, data from the 2011 Census has been adapted to focus on citizens within Australia's Asian MEM populations.

Asian-Australian Populations in State and Federal Electorates

Australia embarked upon a mass migration program after World War II that by 1955 would surpass one million people, arriving largely from northern and southern European nations, through arrangements that included displaced-person programs and assisted-passage schemes. The scale of migration and the persistent rollback of discriminatory legislation led to White Australia's gradual demise. The official end of White Australia in 1973 provided the basis for a fundamental transformation in the character of Australian migration flows over the following forty years. The aftermath of the Vietnam War and of Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia brought growth in Asian migration from nations such as Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Cambodia (Burnley, 1989; Coughlan, 1992, 73–115), followed by a boom from the early 1980s from Vietnam, Hong Kong, and the Philippines (McNamara, 1997, 51). Between 1975 and 1995, Southeast Asia (especially Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia) was the most significant source for Asian arrivals, contributing more than half of Australia's Asia-born

Figure 1: Residential populations from key Asian nations, 1901–2011
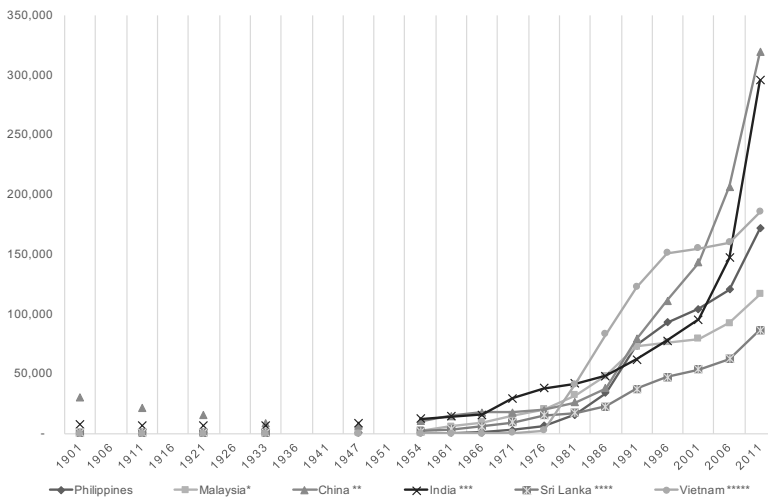
Source: Census 1933, 1954, 1971, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2011
* 1933, 1947 combined with Singapore 1911 Fed Malay states, Johore, Labuan, Sarawak, Malaysia Straits, Malaysia Peninsula, Malaysia undefined, 1921 Fed Malay States
** from 1996 excludes SARs and Taiwan
*** 1911, 1921 British India
**** 1911, 1921 Ceylon
***** 1971 Vietnam includes Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos

population (Hugo, 2003). However, by 1995, Northeast Asian settlers outnumbered Southeast Asians for the first time, reflecting surges from Mainland China and Hong Kong. Since the early 2000s, Asian-Australian arrivals have become concentrated in people born in China and India, supplemented by steady increases in arrivals from the Philippines Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Singapore (as shown in Figure 1).

We have drawn upon three census measures to provide insight into the internal dynamics of Asian-Australian communities in 2011. These are birthplace, ancestry, and language-spoken-at-home (as shown in Table 1).[3] Analysis across these measures reveal that citizens born in an Asian nation represented only 5 percent of the total population, those predominantly speaking an Asian language representing 6 percent, and those from Asian ancestry representing 9 percent.

Analyzing across these datasets provides important insights about the internal composition of Asian-Australian populations. Ancestry figures highlight that the largest groups of Asian-Australian citizens were Chinese (37 percent), Indian (14 percent), Vietnamese (12 percent), and Filipino (11 percent) and that these groups together composed almost 75 percent of all Australian citizens with Asian descent. In comparison, the same national groups born in an Asian country were also the four largest groups, but they composed only 58 percent in total with Vietnam being 16 percent, China being 16 percent, India being 14 percent, and the

Table 1: Cultural and Language Diversity within Asian Australian MEM Citizen Populations, 2011

| Birthplace	Number	%	Language	Number	%	Ancestry*	Number	%
China**	150,728	16.1	Cantonese	209,113	19.3	Chinese	577,034	37.3
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	59,726	6.4	Filipino	35,004	3.2	Filipino	168,320	10.9
India	131,446	14	Hindi	67,826	6.2	Indian	223,002	14.4
Malaysia	56,410	6	Korean	35,130	3.2	Khmer (Cambodian)	28,415	1.8
Korea, Republic of (South)	29,144	3.1	Mandarin	162,290	15	Korean	41,950	2.7
Philippines	115,276	12.3	Tagalog	53,725	4.9	Sri Lankan	53,797	3.5
Sri Lanka	55,001	5.9	Tamil	31,391	2.9	Thai	26,127	1.7
Vietnam	151,347	16.1	Vietnamese	198,809	18.3	Vietnamese	189,666	12.3
Other Asian	274,939	29.3	Other Asian	292,082	26.9	Other Asian	238,432	15.4
Asian subtotal	938,463		Asian subtotal	1,085,370		Asian subtotal	1,546,743	
% total citizen		5.1			5.9			8.5

Source: ABS Census 2011
* Ancestry compiled from multiresponse. Because this is not an enumerated total it represents a proxy for scope of ancestry identification.
** China excludes SARs and Taiwan

Philippines being 12 percent. Asian Australians spoke 190 different languages at home, and the languages most frequently spoken were English (30 percent), Cantonese (13 percent), Vietnamese (12 percent), and Mandarin (10 percent). These figures reveal that about 554, 400 people (almost 36 percent of citizens who professed an Asian ancestry) were born in Australia, and in 2011 the average Asian-Australian citizen was significantly younger than the average Australian, thirty-three years old compared to thirty-eight for the broader population.
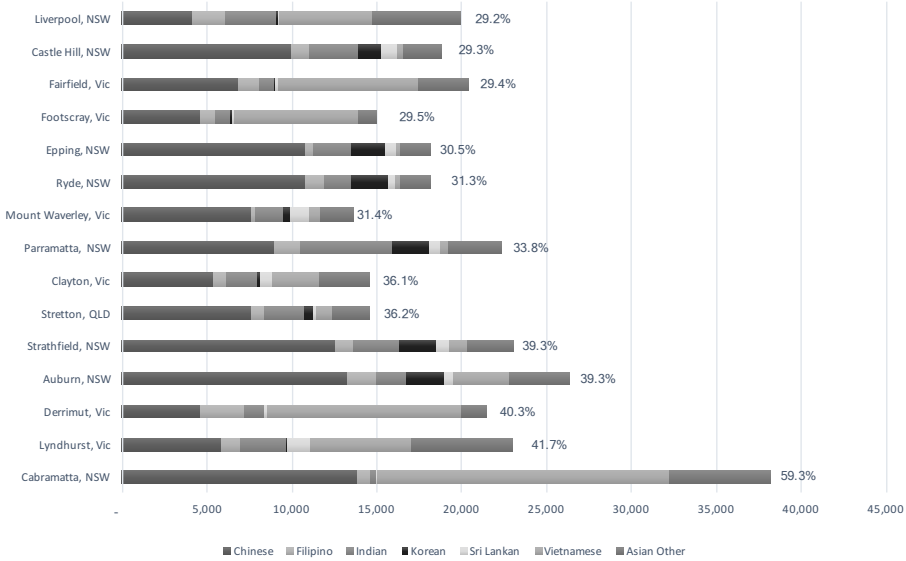
Utilizing ancestry data, we have identified Commonwealth and state electorates with the largest number of Asian-Australian citizens, depicting residential concentrations relevant to the election of lower house seats, such as the House of Representatives, and respective state legislative assemblies (as shown in Figures 2 and 3). This reveals that the greatest potential electoral influence by or upon Asian-Australian citizens is concentrated in urban centers, in particular Sydney and Melbourne. Up to 91 percent of Australian citizens with Asian descent lived

Figure 2: Commonwealth Electoral Districts with Largest Proportion of Citizens Identifying with Asian Ancestry, 2011
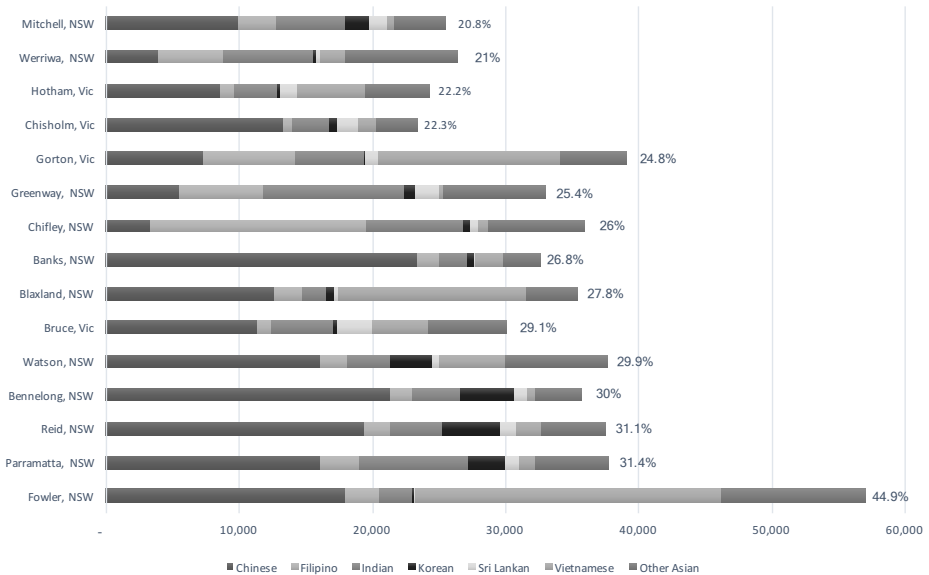
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder. Findings based on use of ABS TableBuilder data

Figure 3: State Electoral Districts with Largest Proportion
of Citizens Identifying with Asian Ancestry, 2011

District	Proportion
Liverpool, NSW	29.2%
Castle Hill, NSW	29.3%
Fairfield, Vic	29.4%
Footscray, Vic	29.5%
Epping, NSW	30.5%
Ryde, NSW	31.3%
Mount Waverley, Vic	31.4%
Parramatta, NSW	33.8%
Clayton, Vic	36.1%
Stretton, QLD	36.2%
Strathfield, NSW	39.3%
Auburn, NSW	39.3%
Derrimut, Vic	40.3%
Lyndhurst, Vic	41.7%
Cabramatta, NSW	59.3%

■ Chinese ■ Filipino ■ Indian ■ Korean ■ Sri Lankan ■ Vietnamese ■ Asian Other

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder.
Findings based on use of ABS TableBuilder data

in a major city, compared to 64 percent of Australian citizens in general, and 68 percent of all Asian-Australian citizens lived in either Sydney or Melbourne.

The breakdown by seat demonstrates variance in the ancestry composition across these key seats, with some containing larger concentrations from specific ancestry groups, such as Chinese and Vietnamese ancestry in the Commonwealth seats of Fowler and Blaxland, and with other seats predominantly composed of citizens from single ancestries such as the Chinese in Banks and the Filipinos in Chifley.

On the basis of birthplace, Asian-Australian citizens represent about 27 percent of all overseas-born MEM citizens (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In some electoral seats, Asian-Australian citizens represent double this figure. For instance, in the Commonwealth seat of Fowler (NSW), Australian citizens from Asian descent comprised 54 percent, more than half of the overseas-born citizens residing in that electorate. In Bennelong (NSW), Asian-Australian citizens represent 57 percent, and in Parramatta (NSW) 51 percent.[4] State seats contain even

greater concentrations of Asian-Australian citizens, with Asian Australians representing 68 percent of overseas-born citizens in Cabramatta (NSW), 63 percent of overseas-born citizens in Epping (NSW), 60 percent of overseas born in Strathfield (NSW), and 59 percent of overseas-born citizens in Mount Waverley (Vic). Further analysis reinforces that Commonwealth and state seats with the largest Asian-Australian populations generally shared the largest overseas-born populations.[5]

The concentration of Asian-Australian populations in Sydney and Melbourne can in some ways be framed by the emergence of "global" (Sassen, 1991), "gateway" (Ley and Murphy, 2001), and "entrepreneurial" (Jessop, 1997) cities, as well as the transformation of ethnic enclaves into anchors for global processes (Laguerre, 2000; Li, 2006). In comparing the residential concentration of citizen and non-citizen populations, we can identify stronger spatial clusterings of Asian-Australian citizens in the middle and outer suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne, such as in the Commonwealth electorates of Fowler, Blaxland, Chifley, Greenway, Mitchell, Werriwa, and McMahon in Sydney's west, and Menzies, Isaacs, and Aston in the southeast, and Gorton on the west of Melbourne. This sits in contrast to large Asian-Australian non-citizen populations in inner-city seats across four states, including Melbourne (Vic), Sydney (NSW), Swan (WA), and Adelaide (SA). In contrast to these Commonwealth electorates, 'middle-ring' seats such as Bennelong, Watson, Parramatta, Reid, Banks, and Bruce in NSW; Hotham and Chisholm in Vic; and, on a smaller scale, Tangney in WA and Moreton in Qld, sustained large combined citizen and non-citizen populations. The demographic shift of Asian-Australian citizens away from the inner-city areas and out into the suburbs has been described as the growth of ethnoburbs (Li, 2006)—in effect, the development of non-segregated, cross-ethnic population concentrations spurred on by substantial increases in the settlement of highly skilled, well-educated migrants. There are, however, more complex demographic formations occurring, considering the differentiated patterns in the combination of citizen and non-citizen populations, perhaps influenced by the scale of international education and the clustering of students as well as acculturated MEM populations around some of these suburbs.

Based upon the 2013 federal election, several key seats with a large proportion of Asian-Australian citizens were considered marginal, including Parramatta (NSW), Reid (NSW), Bennelong (NSW), Banks (NSW), Chisholm (Vic), and Moreton (QLD). Up to eighteen of the forty-eight Commonwealth electorates (38 percent) with proportionately larger

than average Asian-Australian citizen populations were considered 'marginal' (Pietsch, 2016). Only eight (18 percent) were considered very safe. Across the same forty-eight Commonwealth electorates, the ALP won thirty-three House of Representative seats (69 percent of the total). Up to twenty-six seats or 13 percent were won by the Liberal Party, with only one won by the Liberal Party's coalition partner the Country Liberal Party, for the seat of Solomon in the Northern Territory (and none by the Nationals, or the Liberal Nationals Party in Qld). The Australian Greens won one lower house seat, the seat of Melbourne.

It is notable that attention to the 'ethnic vote' in Australia has predominantly focused on whether there have been distinctive voting patterns amongst migrant and overseas-born Australians (see Forrest, 1988; McAllister and Kelley, 1983). Since the 1980s, questions largely remain about whether the ALP has enjoyed an ethnic voter alignment due to socioeconomic factors evident in particular electorates, or because they maintain a more coherent policy approach on 'ethnic issues' (see Birrell, Healy, and Allen, 2005; Economou, 1994; Jupp, 1969; McAllister and Makkai, 1992). In more recent times, Pietsch (2016) and Zingher and Thomas (2012) have suggested ethnicity is a predictor of vote choice for long-standing Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) migrants, but the strength of ethnicity has decreased as a political influence over the lifetime of immigrant voters.

Even with the existence of electorates with large subsets of Asian constituents, as in 2013, there are only two members of the Federal House of Representatives with Asian ancestry in 2016, Ian Goodenough, Liberal member for Moore (WA), and Gai Brodtmann, Labor member for Canberra (ACT). Neither electorate has a large Asian-Australian population. Only 4 percent of Moore's potential voting electorate identified as from Asian ancestry in 2011, although 45 percent of the electorate were born overseas. In Canberra, 7 percent of the electorate identified as Asian, and only 26 percent were born overseas. At the state level, the significance of Asian-Australian concentrations may have greater relevance. In Liberal Geoff Lee's seat of Parramatta, which he won in March 2011, 24 percent of citizens identified as Asian, with 56 percent born overseas. In Anoulack Chanthivong's Labor seat of Macquarie Fields, which he won in March 2015, 19 percent were from Asian backgrounds and 45 percent were born overseas. For Jenny Leong, Greens member for Newtown, who also won in March 2015, the former seat of Marrickville contained only 10 percent citizens of Asian descent, and 42 percent were born overseas. In Victoria, the ALP's Hong Lim has been the representative for Clarinda, formerly

Clayton, since 1996. Up to 23 percent of the Clarinda electorate were of Asian descent and 63 percent were born overseas. In 2011, this was the state seat with the greatest number of overseas-born citizens in the nation. In contrast, for Jude Perera's seat of Cranbourne, only 6 percent identified as Asian, and only 30 percent were born overseas. Variation in demographic concentration highlights that there is no necessary dependence upon an ethnic vote by current Asian-Australian elected representatives.

Residential concentration is still relevant to the study of political representation, certainly considering the popular assumptions that uncomfortably tie ethnic representatives to electorates with large overseas-born populations, as well as an international literature that identifies density and concentration of communities as critical to how migrants become involved in politics (see Bloemraad, 2006; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 2008; Waldinger, 1996). However, as argued by Saggar (2013, 80) there are important reasons to ask whether an assumed connection between ethnic representatives and ethnic electorates should be considered a cultural straightjacket, by binding representatives to group representation and the actual or perceived interests of those MEM groups.

Measuring Descriptive Representation

While in the U.S., Asian American descriptive representation appears to have stagnated with thirteen members from Asian or Pacific Islander descent in the 113th Congress (Kim, 2014, 25), these elected officials were nonetheless members of the most diverse Congress in US history. Likewise, in Britain, it appears ongoing reputational concerns about the diversity of MEM representation has been in decline (Saggar, 2013, 92; also Khan and Sveinsson, 2015), with forty-two representatives entering parliament in 2015, up from twenty-seven in 2010 (Bengtsson, Weale, and Brooks, 2015). In Canada, the election of the Trudeau Liberal government introduced the most diverse parliament in Canada's history, with eighty-eight women and at least ten Muslim representatives (Woolf, 2015). The Canadian outcome builds on research that demonstrates incremental improvements in the level of diverse representation across all levels of Canadian government (Andrew et al., 2008; Black, 2011; Siemiatycki, 2011).

These circumstances are not reflected in Australia. Though there has been some improvement in the last half a decade, particularly for non-Asian MEM groups, this has largely been compensation for severe under-representation over an extensive period. Any comparison be-

tween the size of Asian-Australian populations and the number of state and federal representatives reinforces that significant structural barriers exist in relation to political representation. In part, the institutional barriers are tied to both the quality of statistical information and the paucity of public engagement on this issue. In Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has produced reports on the extent of both gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diversity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010), as has the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library (Hough, 2016; McCann and Wilson, 2014). In contrast, only two reports about MEM diversity have been produced by the NSW parliament (Antony, 2006; Griffith, 1995).

Based upon an analysis of first speeches and available biographical information, a provisional list of Asian-Australian representatives from state and federal government is provided in Table 2. The list outlines twenty-nine representatives from an Asian-Australian background who have served in state and federal parliaments since the end of White Australia. Although the Tasmanian Sir Thomas Bakhap has historically been celebrated as the first parliamentarian with a distinctive connection to an Asian community, being the adopted son of a Chinese merchant, the post–White Australia period has been a more significant period for firsts. The first representative from an Asian ancestry was the former waterside worker and union official Ronald "Bunna" Walsh, who had part-Chinese ancestry, and represented the Victorian seat of Albert Park between 1979 and 1992. It was not until 1988 that Helen Sham-Ho would become the first overseas-born Asian elected to an Australian state parliament, at a time when moderate factional groupings within the Liberal Party had gained ascendancy over the conservatives, and with Nick Greiner leading the Liberals to power in NSW. Australia's first federal parliamentarian of Asian ancestry was Bill O'Chee, an Oxford graduate and a senator for Queensland, who took over a casual vacancy for the National Party in 1990. At the time, he was the youngest person to sit in federal parliament. O'Chee won this in his own right in 1993, before losing in 1998 amid the rise of Pauline Hanson. Also in 1990, former union research officer Kim Yeadon became the member for the rural seat of Granville in NSW state parliament. Yeadon is from mixed Australian and Indian ancestry.

With the end of White Australia, Asian-Australian representation in state and federal electorates has increased from zero in 1978 to sixteen in 2015, but has shown periods of stagnancy and decline, including falling to fifteen in 2016 with the exit of Zhenya "Dio" Wang from

Table 2: State and federal elected representatives with Asian ancestry, 1973-2016

Name	Party	House	State	Seat	Term	Ancestry	Birthplace	Level
Anounlack Chanthivong	ALP	Lower	NSW	Macquarie Fields	2015-present	Laotian	Laos	State
Batong Pham	ALP	Upper	WA		2007-9	Vietnamese	Vietnam	State
Bernice Swee-Lian Pfitzner	LIB	Upper	SA		1990-97	Chinese	Singapore	State
Dr. Peter Hon Jung Wong	UTY	Upper	NSW		1999-2007	Chinese	China	State
Dr. Richard Soon Huat Lim	CTY	Lower	NT	Greatorex	1994-2007	Chinese	Malaysia	State
Ernest Kwok Chung Wong	ALP	Upper	NSW		2013-present	Chinese	Hong Kong	State
Gai Marie Brodtmann	ALP	Lower	ACT	Canberra	2010-present	Chinese, German, Irish, Scottish	Australia	Nat'l
Geoffrey (Geoff) Lee	LIB	Lower	NSW	Parramatta	2011-present	Chinese, Australian	Australia	State
Harriet Shing	ALP	Upper	VIC		2014-present	Chinese, Australian	Australia	State
Helen War-hai Sham-Ho	LIB/IND	Upper	NSW		1988-2003	Chinese	Hong Kong	State
Henry Shui-ling Tsang	ALP	Upper	NSW		1999-2009	Chinese	China	State
Hong Lim	ALP	Lower	VIC	Clarinda	1996-present	Chinese	Cambodia	State
Ian Goodenough	LIB	Lower	WA	Moore	2013-present	English, Portuguese, Malaysian Chinese	Singapore	Nat'l
Jenny Leong	GRN	Lower	NSW	Newtown	2015-present	Chinese, Australian	Australia	State
Jing Shyuan Lee	LIB	Upper	SA		2010-present	Chinese	Malaysia	State
Nitin Daniel Mookhey	ALP	Upper	NSW		2015-present	Indian	Australia	State
Jude Perera	ALP	Lower	VIC	Cranbourne	2002-present	Sri Lankan	Sri Lanka	State
Lisa Maria Singh	ALP	Lower	TAS	Denison	2006-10	Fijian Indian, English	Australia	State
Lisa Maria Singh	ALP	Upper	TAS		2011-present	Fijian Indian, English	Australia	Nat'l
Mehreen Saeed Faruqi	GRN	Upper	NSW		2013-present	Pakistani	Pakistan	State
Michael Johnson	LIB	Lower	QLD	Ryan	2001-10	Chinese, English	Hong Kong	Nat'l
Michael Wai-Man Choi	ALP	Lower	QLD	Capalaba	2001-12	Chinese	Hong Kong	State
Penny Ying-Yen Wong	ALP	Upper	SA		2002-present	Chinese, Australian	Malaysia	Nat'l
Ronald (Bunna) William Walsh	ALP	Lower	VIC	Albert Park	1979-92	British, Chinese	Australia	State
Sang Nguyen	ALP	Upper	VIC		1996-2006	Vietnamese	Vietnam	State
Tchen Tsebin	LIB	Upper	VIC		1999-2005	Chinese	China	Nat'l
Tung Ngo	ALP	Upper	SA		2014-present	Vietnamese	Vietnam	State
William (Bill) George O'Chee	NAT	Upper	QLD		1990-99	Chinese, Irish	Australia	Nat'l
Zhenya (Dio) Wang	PUP	Upper	WA		2014-16	Chinese	China	Nat'l
Kimberley Maxwell Yeadon	ALP	Lower/Upper	NSW	Granville	1990-2007	mixed, Indian	Australia	State

Source: Various parliamentary websites, first speeches and other biographical information

the Australian senate. Unlike the U.S., which has had a prevalence for Japanese American representatives, or Great Britain, which has elected many British South Asians, in Australia, Chinese Australians have had the most distinctive political presence, with eleven representatives of Asian descent coming from Chinese ancestry, and a further seven from mixed-Chinese ancestry. Moreover, an important transition has occurred in the previous five years, away from first-generation Chinese migrants toward Australians of second generation and mixed ancestry, and the addition of the first representatives from Pakistani (Mehreen Faruqi) and Laotian backgrounds (Anounlack Chanthivong). This is notable considering that several breakthroughs for "non-Asian" Muslim Australians (from Western Asia) have also occurred during this period, including Sam Dayastri from Iran (a nonpractising Muslim), Anne Aly from Egypt, and Jihad Dib from Lebanon. Another notable recent feature is that the role of the Liberal, National, and Country-Liberal parties in breaking new ground has faded, with twelve from the fifteen state and federal elected representatives from Asian descent now representing either the ALP or the Australian Greens.

Analysis of Asian-Australian representation according to the Canadian 'proportionality index' demonstrates particular insights into the extent of poor MEM diversity in Australia's parliamentary ranks.[6] There are currently four MEM representatives of Asian descent at the Commonwealth level. With 9 percent of Australian citizens describing themselves as of Asian ancestry in 2011, this establishes a proportionality index score of 0.21. This can be contrasted to 0.64 in terms of gender diversity based upon seventy-three women (32 percent), and 0.73 for the five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders representatives elected to federal parliament in 2016 (2.2 percent). At the state level, the score for Asian-Australian representation is also 0.21.[7] Considering the scale of demographic change in relation to Australia's Asian MEM citizen populations, and overseas-born MEM populations more broadly, Australian state and federal parliaments are clearly falling behind.

So, how should we unpack the barriers that face Asian-Australian candidates and representatives? In terms of the perception of a lack of suitable candidates, there is the perception that cultural issues related to relative interest and engagement in formal political participation may limit supply. For example, it is possible that migrants socialized in authoritarian countries may feel less comfortable or simply have less experience in participating in democratic politics. In less democratic countries throughout Asia, participation in politics is often associated

with corruption and power, as such migrants may experience family pressure to stay out of politics and pursue more 'respectable' careers. In terms of the barriers created by political parties, there are issues around the perception of unconscious bias and lack of appeal to the larger electorate. There are different or additional expectations placed on ethnic representatives by 'selectorate' groups, including the perception that preselection requires population concentration, strong ethnic responsiveness, or access to social and financial resources (see Geron and Lai, 2002, 17). There are also party practices that inadvertently limit the promotion of diverse candidates, including the professionalization of politics and a continued narrowing in the candidate genepool.

A significant factor influencing the low levels of MEM representatives of Asian descent is the strong role of major political parties, who control the pathways into elected office. As Sobolewska (2013) argues in the case of the United Kingdom, parties and party elites frequently act as gatekeepers or facilitators of ethnic minority political representation. In Australia, Jupp (2003) has similarly observed the role of factions in parties, particularly for the ALP in the selection, recruitment, and promotion of MEM candidates. Political parties often sustain in-built racial assumptions about minority candidates. For instance, studies have shown that political parties are more likely to recruit candidates that are ethnically more homogenous than the general population (Andrew et al., 2008a; Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013). In recruiting candidates with electoral appeal, political parties also strategically consider public attitudes toward minority groups. In the 2013 *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey up to 15 percent of Australians reported having negative feelings toward migrants from Asia and 25 percent reported having negative feelings toward migrants from the Middle East (Markus, 2013).

Political parties shape political opportunity through internal candidate selection rules, practices, and subcultures that are distinctively competitive and adversarial, and in which ethnic and religious proportionality plays a very limited part. This is evident in the impact of internal party factions on the length of political careers and the conditions under which parliamentarians finish their terms of office. As has already been noted, the ALP's Lisa Singh almost lost her Senate seat in 2016 because she is factionally unaligned (Aston, 2016). Likewise, the former unaligned Bernice Pfitzner lost her seat in South Australia after failing to attain a higher position on the Liberal Party's state legislative council ticket. While in ill health, Batong Pham was disendorsed by the Western Australian Labor from the upper house because of a

factional dispute, and after serving less than two years (Strutt, 2008). Sang Nguyen lost his Victorian seat to Martin Paluka in 2006 after being displaced by his own Labor Unity faction (Fitzherbert, 2006). In 2005, Tchen Tsebin lost his Senate position because he was aligned to former premier Jeff Kennett, and was displaced by Michael Ronaldson, who was aligned to then federal treasurer Peter Costello and party heavy-weight Michael Kroger (Simpson, 2003). To some extent, the nomination of ethnic representatives to upper house seats for the purposes of broadening the electoral appeal of a political party, can operate as a two-edged sword, with many ethnic representatives beholden to migrant community engagement through blunt measures, such as party expectations around ethnic fundraising, or they become more oner-ously judged for ethnic branchstacking. Those pathways mean that numerous ethnic candidates do not sustain the kinds of factional support that protect longevity in a political career. We have also seen in recent federal and state elections, that while there have been more numerous candidates from migrant backgrounds, very few have been nominated to safe or contestable seats. While understanding the barriers faced by MEM candidates of Asian descent requires further research, it is evident that the actual use of descriptive representative arguments around diversity of candidates have produced some distorting effects within the major parties over time.

In Australia, the dynamics of party politics focuses the attention of the major parties on the competition for power, and within this dynamic the proportionality in diversity of representation operates as an extraordinarily low order issue. In addressing these barriers, an approach to reform must be multifaceted (see Siemiatycki, 2011). Firstly, there needs to be recognition among the major political parties about the existence of social and institutional barriers that make it difficult for MEM groups to enter mainstream politics. A view that does not engage with barriers in terms of cultural and ethnic diversity makes invisible the intergenerational impact of British colonization and the White Australia policy on Australian politics and national identity. Secondly, some barriers for Asian-Australian representation are related to changes in the Australian political system. As in other relevant jurisdictions, diversity of representation in Australia largely turns on the character of representative government, including the centrality of the major parties to structuring political opportunity. The professionalization of politics has narrowed the field of candidates and imposes important conditions upon Australia's problems with representative diversity.

Thirdly, there are major global and transnational forces that are re-shaping the boundaries of the polity through migration and temporary labor, which produce lower levels of citizenship and political acculturation, particularly observable amongst resident Asian-Australian populations. Institutional reform is necessary to explore neoteric democratic practices that counteract the dissolution of the Australian nation as the expression of a political community. Fourthly, and finally, there are issues about how seriously the Australian polity takes the reputational risks attached to the lack of representative diversity (Saggar, 2013). State and federal parliaments symbolically represent embodiments of a polity's commitment to democratic practice. In some respects, descriptive diversity is one of the most reliable reflections of the health of a democratic political system. Aside from gender and Indigenous representative diversity, MEM diversity is one of the most visible and reliable basis upon which the health of Australia's democratic institutions can be measured. For a nation that has sustained such a profound commitment to compulsory voting, modes of conventional political participation (including the opportunity to contest and hold elected office) should represent one of the few robust measures of social integration, and the lack of representative diversity should represent a serious warning sign.

Is Descriptive Representation Enough?

A long intellectual legacy has sought to bridge concepts of descriptive and substantive representation, particularly as political theorists have asked how the nation-state should adapt to the challenges of diverse social membership in an era of globalization, and how we might reimagine more inclusive frameworks that underpin democratic political life. Thus our considerations about the under-representation of Asian MEM populations is underpinned by major philosophical questions about the purposes that diversity of elected representation serves.

Pitkin's (1967) canonical account of representation articulated the limits of descriptive (or mirror) representation, and has been a constant departure point in shaping whether minority groups require minority representatives (see Dovi, 2002, 730; Tate, 2003, 15; Williams, 1998, 29). Scholars who have defended implementation of descriptive representative strategies have often targeted deficiencies in existing democratic political arrangements and the under-representation of particular cultural groups (see Dovi, 2002; Phillips, 1995; Tate, 2003; Williams, 1998). Nonetheless, the greatest problem has been the association between the claims

of group representation and cultural essentialism. Positions critical to group representation have outlined the risks implied through the reification of group identities (see Fraser, 2000, 2008; Grillo, 1998). This has been variously described as the "paradox of recognition," which may produce ethnic subjects who channel group identities according to categories produced by state institutions. It has led some theorists to advance alternative arguments that acknowledge sociological critiques of ethnicity, by portraying cultural identifications and practices as fluid, malleable; characterized by internal contestation; and by historical process of interaction with other cultures (see May, Modood, and Squires, 2004, 11; Modood, 2007, 115–16; Phillips, 2007, 16; Song, 2007, 5).

Similar concerns have arisen in Australia. Sawer (1999) once argued, "[W]hile physical presence of members of these groups in parliament may be part of the answer, it is not the whole answer." Aside from encouraging stronger identification with political institutions and access to a wider pool of talent, Sawer contended that "any move beyond the (still vitally important) politics of party political representation opens up vexed questions about how democracies can promote fairer representation of currently marginalised groups without generating perverse effects" (Sawer, 2001, 35; Sawer and Zappalà, 2001, 9). Zappalà (2001, 153) brought attention to local problems around co-option of community leaders through extraparliamentary forms of representation that were supported by state funding. Nonetheless, the substantive representation of marginalized cultural groups is not the only basis for supporting greater diversity of representation. Phillips (1995, 40–44) identified four key reasons for elevating the political visibility of marginalized groups: that it challenges existing hierarchies of power, higher levels of political representation increase the legitimacy of political institutions, a way to redress disadvantage is through introducing advocates on the public stage, and broadening the scope of political discourse available to legislative debate improves the deliberative quality of a democracy. Beyond the more fraught argument that descriptive diversity may translate into substantive diversity abides other arguments around the reputation of democratic institutions, and around representation as a vehicle for the political integration of migrants (Saggar, 2013).

Many American scholars engaged in race and urban politics have argued that the acquisition of political power through identity politics is driven by the potential to break down the kinds of racial barriers that sustain conventional political systems. While numerous studies and projects have mapped the benefits that these political actors have had

for racial and ethnic communities, such as through greater income, employment opportunities, and greater fairness in the distribution of public benefits, they also demonstrate that the transformative potential of changing representative structures on racial lines erodes over time. The electoral excitement that drives identity-based movements eventually dissolves, leading to voter complacency, and the incumbency of excluded groups instigates greater acceptance of existing practices of governance. Moreover, urban theorists such as Harrigan and Vogel (2000, 151) and Browning, Marshall, and Tabb (2003, 14–15), insist that even with the transformation of political institutions through ethnic representation, the fundamental dynamics of city governance remains, for instance, the 'systemic power' inherited by corporate interests and the role of mayors in balancing and managing governing coalitions or urban regimes. These factors in turn set limits on the political choices available to ethnic and raced representatives.

Other kinds of institutional conventions and routines shape the lived subjectivities of members of a political community and thus the capacity for political integration. These can include social policies that deal specifically with the recognition of MEM communities; policies that become embedded as instruments in structuring social orders and may in fact sustain or extend forms of systemic political inequality. The challenge is, as argued by Nancy Fraser (1995, 69), to develop "a *critical* theory of recognition, one that identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality." This is important not only to ensure that minority groups have the opportunity to participate in political decision making, but to safeguard democratic systems where they are subject to intensifying "concentrations of ownership and control of productive property" (Held, 2006, 183). In Australia, multicultural policies have been modified in more recent times to situate the value of cultural diversity in terms of the potential economic contribution of migrants through trade and of diaspora networks, evident in the two most recent iterations of Australia's national policy on multiculturalism (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011, 5; Department of Social Services, 2017, 13; also Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2013, 132–35). These policies position migrants as recipients of Australian citizenship with its corresponding social obligations and excludes reference to building cultural diversity as a body politic, or substantively to multiculturalism as a means for deepening political citizenship (Department of Social Services, 2017, 11). Instead of assuming that mechanisms

for greater descriptive representation will lead to greater migrant political integration we might consider how it is possible to review descriptive representation without beginning with broader mechanisms for migrant political integration.

Greater descriptive representation not only impacts upon the political integration of MEM communities as citizens, but also upon the interests and priorities of political parties, and the political arena ostensibly shapes decision making about the economic life of the nation, from local to national government. In effect, political institutions remain a locus for power. This means that the structure of political opportunities can be selective or uneven in the context of economic globalization (Minnite, 2009, 57–58; also Jones-Correa, 2005; Hochschild and Mollenkopf, 2009). When we analyze descriptive representation, and the practices introduced by parties to redress these gaps, we must also be thinking about whether our democracy is healthy. Does the absence or the introduction of specific practices tied to greater cultural diversity of representation deepen the connection of parliament to the electorate? The global zeitgeist demonstrates the current profound disconnect of democratic polities from conventional politics, and the fact that even strong democratic systems bound together by long-held institutional conventions and routines are capable of radical transformation through the exercise of an intemperate democratic will. The most important reforms must be framed by transforming the relationship between representative and electorate, between parliament and people, and in part must reshape the legitimacy of the Australian parliamentary system as a means for the representation of diverse views. Reforms need to reposition parliament as the vanguard of the nation's democratic values.

Perhaps then the best approach to a reform agenda is to identify a set of principles as preconditions. While as citizens we might accept that Australian political culture is in some ways fundamentally adversarial, and that competition, utility, selectivity, and even discrimination may be common if not inevitable facets of private social and economic life, in civic life these values, and the marginalization of entire communities, in fact renders the nation-state more vulnerable. We are required to reframe assumptions about the Australian body politic as not just a domain for selective or eminent individuals to conquer, but as a civic ecosystem, or a civic network, that requires persistent integration to remain healthy. To fulfill this purpose there are some obvious principles that will enhance political integration. The first set are reputational matters related to modifying the behavior of elected officials

and other conventional political actors. Reforms are necessary to make parliamentarians more accountable. This might include entrusting public institutions to measure and report on descriptive representation, including MEM diversity. In current circumstances, this would preferably include legislative reforms to limit political fundraising, to empower statutory corruption bodies, and stronger criminal penalties for corruption and improper conduct, considering the scale of scandals across the Australian political system, but particularly in NSW in the last decade. The second set are in relation to political literacy. Political literacy across the polity is observably uneven, and greater attention should be placed upon lifting the literacy of MEM populations as citizens and participants in the political process – extending "bridging social capital" to marginalized communities. This effort might be sponsored through government programs. The third set is in relation to experimenting with integrative democratic practices. The character of Australian representative democracy tends to restrain the exercise of the popular will to elections. Other structured methods for matters relevant to MEM and non-MEM communities could be used to build more regular constituent engagement. Finally, the fourth set relates to the role of nonpolitical actors in building the legitimacy of Australian parliamentary democracy. Responsibility for celebrating and building democratic practices cannot primarily reside in elected representatives and the major parties, but should persistently extend to other kinds of public and civic institutions. This can enhance the overall reputation of the political system and strengthen the role of Australians in protecting its integrity.

Notes

1. Before 1990, the phrase *Asian* was based on the UN Statistical Division definition, which included the Middle East. Since 1990, arrivals from the Middle East (including Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq) have not been counted as Asian, and since 2008 the Australian Bureau of Statistics's Standard Australian Classification of Countries has defined three regions as constituting Asia: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and Southern and Central Asia. The current recommendation by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) about the use of *Asia* or *Asian* as a cultural identifier specifically excludes the Middle East.

2. Data for the 2016 Census was not available at the time of submission of this article.

3. Grouping Asian Australians on any one measure provides only a partial picture of these communities. Birthplace, for instance, does not capture Asians born in Australia, or reflect the alternative ethnic backgrounds of those born in an Asian nation (Jayasuriya and Kee, 1999, 18). This is an increasingly problematic assumption considering the intensification of chain migration and transnational mobility in the last few decades. Asian Australians are also often categorized according to NESB. However, many Asian Australians speak English as their first language. Ancestry data here uses the multiancestry function in Table Builder, which does not lead to an exact enumeration. In this context, ancestry figures used here, along with language and birthplace, are ultimately proxies for population scale and diversity.

4. In identifying Australian states, NSW ia an acronym for New South Wales; Qld for Queensland; Vic for Victoria; WA for Western Australia; and SA for South Australia.

5. Nonetheless, there were notable seats with both large overseas-born populations and relatively low proportions of Asian Australians, such as the Commonwealth seats of McMahon (NSW), Moore (WA), Kingsford Smith (NSW), Scullin (Vic), Grayndler (NSW), and Stirling (WA), and state seats such as Dandenong (Vic), Liverpool (NSW), Thomastown (Vic), and Bankstown (NSW).

6. This 'proportionality index' enables broad comparison between a population and elected officials, according to whatever segmentation is considered useful (Andrew et al., 2008). A score of 1 is an indicator of 'perfect' proportionality. More than 1 indicates overrepresentation, while a score greater than 0 but less than 1 indicates underrepresentation, with 0 signifying a total absence of representation.

7. Gender comparison on the proportionality index has drawn from Hough (2016) for representative diversity and Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). In contrast, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diversity has drawn upon Anderson (2016) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014).

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