

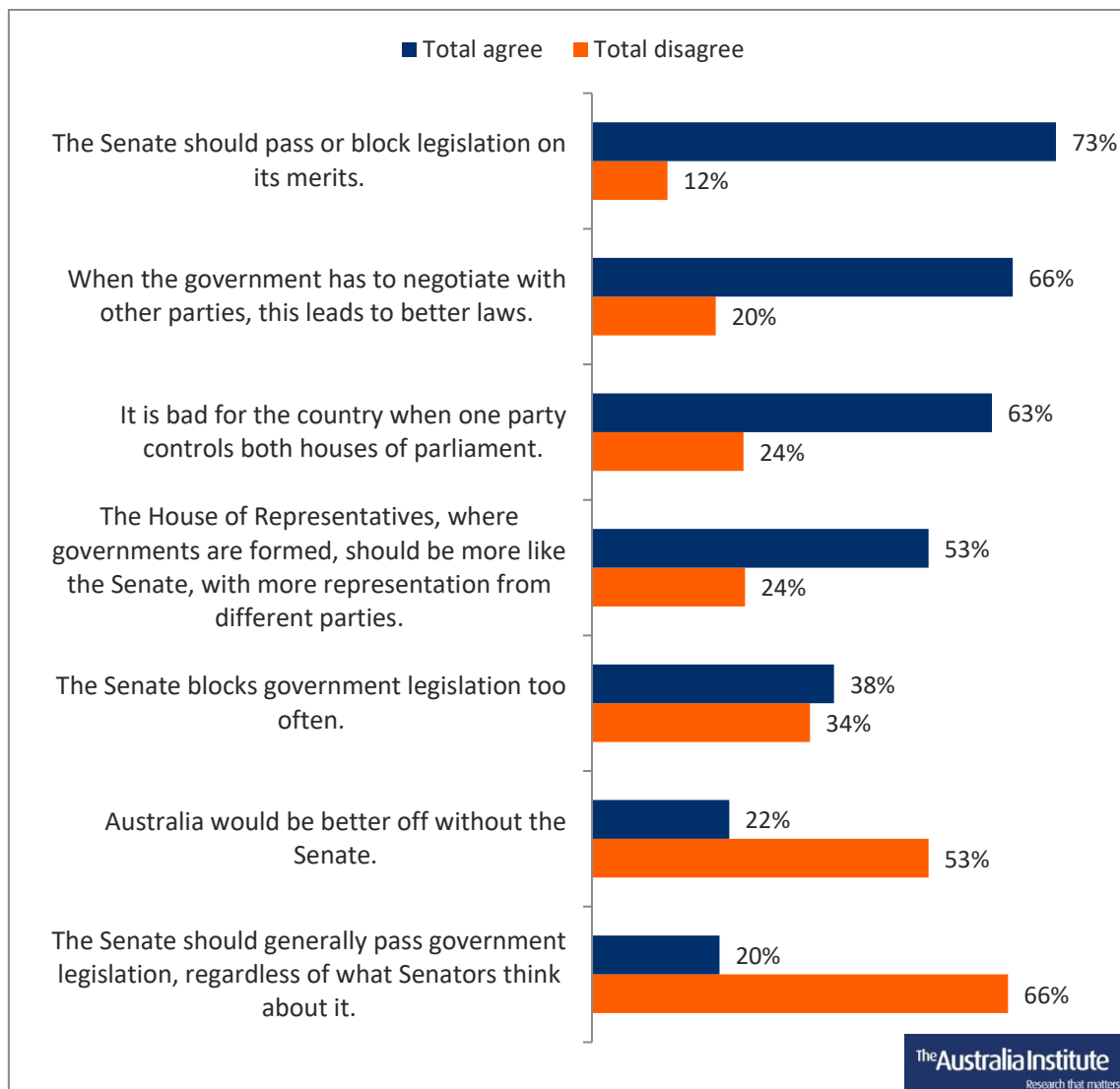
# Polling - Knowledge and attitudes about the Senate

*August 2018*

## Key Results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,449 Australians about knowledge and attitudes about the Senate.

**Figure 1 – Attitudes towards the Senate**



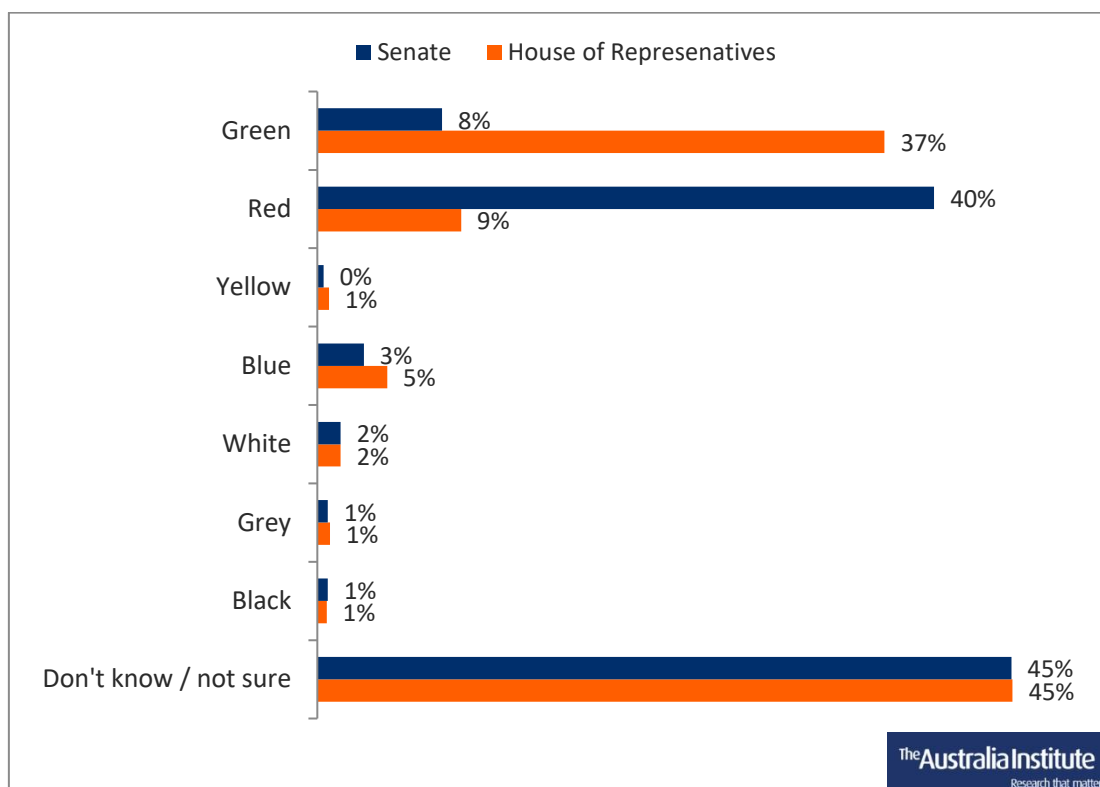
- There was broad support for the Senate as a House of Review that assesses government legislation on its merits (73% agree) and that should not generally pass government legislation regardless of what Senators think about it (66% disagree).
- Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that when the government has to negotiate with other parties this leads to better laws (66% agree), and that it is bad for the country when one party controls both houses of parliament (63% agree). Similarly, most disagreed with the idea that Australia would be better off without the Senate (53% disagree).
- However, respondents were much more split on whether the Senate blocks government legislation too often, with 38% agreeing, 34% disagreeing and 27% saying they did not know.
  - Most LNP voters had this view (56% agree) and more PHON voters agreed than disagreed (43% agree, 28% disagree).
- Interestingly, most respondents (53%) supported the House of Representatives being more like the Senate, in having more representation from different parties.
  - Amongst voters for every party, more supported than opposed this idea, with a majority of voters for all parties except the LNP.

## Knowledge about the Senate

Despite wide support for the Senate as a house of review, respondents had a lower level of knowledge about the Senate. However

- Most respondents were not able to correctly identify the colour of the two chambers of Australian Parliament (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - What colour is the Senate and the House of Representatives?



- More said that the Senate is Red (40%) than said the House of Representatives is Green (37%).
- For each, the next most often selected colour was the colour of the other chamber.
- In both cases, 45% said they did not know.

Respondents were asked if the government currently has a majority in the Senate.

- **Only half of respondents (50%) were able to correctly identify that the government does not have a majority in the Senate.**
  - 22% said the government does have a majority.
  - 28% said they did not know.

- LNP voters were most likely to correctly identify the lack of a government majority in the Senate (55%).
- Greens voters were least likely to select the correct answer (41%).

Respondents were then presented with information about the government needing to seek the support of crossbench Senators. They were then asked if this is normal or unusual.

- **62% of respondents said it was normal for governments to need to negotiate with crossbench Senators and risk having legislation voted down.**
- 24% said it was unusual.

So while respondents showed lower level of knowledge about the Senate than supported it as a house of review, a clear majority know that its role as a house of review is the normal state of affairs in Australian politics.

## Method

The Australia Institute conducted a national survey of 1,449 people 3 August and 15 August 2018, online through Research Now, with nationally representative samples by gender, age and state and territory.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the lower house. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs, but results are also shown separately for undecideds. “LNP” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” includes Centre Alliance, United Australia Party and Independent/Other.

## Detailed results

*What colour is the Senate, the upper house of Parliament, and what colour is the House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament (e.g. their furniture and carpet)?*

### Senate

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
Yellow	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Green	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%	9%	3%
Red	40%	45%	36%	45%	36%	39%	35%
Blue	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
White	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	0%
Grey	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Black	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Don't know / not sure	45%	39%	51%	40%	51%	44%	55%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
Yellow	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Green	6%	8%	8%	12%	11%	4%
Red	41%	42%	40%	32%	36%	25%
Blue	2%	4%	6%	0%	3%	1%
White	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%
Grey	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Black	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Don't know / not sure	47%	42%	44%	54%	46%	68%

## House of Representatives

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
Yellow	<b>1%</b>	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Green	<b>37%</b>	40%	34%	42%	33%	38%	28%
Red	<b>9%</b>	10%	9%	9%	9%	10%	6%
Blue	<b>5%</b>	6%	3%	4%	4%	4%	7%
White	<b>2%</b>	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Grey	<b>1%</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Black	<b>1%</b>	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Don't know / not sure	<b>45%</b>	39%	51%	42%	51%	42%	56%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
Yellow	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Green	37%	39%	39%	27%	32%	25%
Red	7%	11%	8%	12%	11%	5%
Blue	6%	5%	4%	5%	1%	1%
White	1%	1%	1%	3%	4%	3%
Grey	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Black	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Don't know / not sure	46%	42%	46%	53%	50%	67%

***To the best of your knowledge, does the Coalition Government currently have a majority in the Senate, and can pass legislation by itself? Or does it not have a majority in the Senate, and need support from other Senators to pass legislation?***

***The Coalition Government currently***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
Does have a majority in the Senate	<b>22%</b>	23%	21%	23%	19%	24%	24%
Does not have a majority in the Senate	<b>50%</b>	58%	43%	49%	55%	44%	46%
Don't know / not sure	<b>28%</b>	20%	36%	28%	26%	32%	29%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
Does have a majority in the Senate	21%	24%	25%	17%	18%	13%
Does not have a majority in the Senate	55%	50%	41%	51%	43%	31%
Don't know / not sure	24%	27%	34%	31%	39%	56%

***In the current Parliament, the government is not able to pass legislation on its own, but needs to seek the support of crossbench Senators. When enough crossbench Senators vote along with the opposition against legislation, that legislation does not pass.***

***Do you think this situation is normal or unusual for Australia?***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
Normal	<b>62%</b>	69%	54%	64%	61%	61%	57%
Unusual	<b>24%</b>	24%	25%	23%	25%	25%	27%
Don't know/ unsure	<b>14%</b>	7%	20%	13%	14%	14%	16%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
Normal	61%	65%	61%	56%	57%	47%
Unusual	27%	23%	20%	26%	26%	26%
Don't know/ unsure	11%	13%	19%	18%	17%	27%

***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? (Randomised order)***

	<b>Total agree</b>	<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know / not sure</b>
The Senate should pass or block legislation on its merits.	<b>73%</b>	<b>12%</b>	28%	45%	10%	2%	15%
When the government has to negotiate with other parties, this leads to better laws.	<b>66%</b>	<b>20%</b>	15%	51%	15%	4%	14%
It is bad for the country when one party controls both houses of parliament.	<b>63%</b>	<b>24%</b>	24%	39%	19%	5%	13%
The House of Representatives, where governments are formed, should be more like the Senate, with more representation from different parties.	<b>53%</b>	<b>24%</b>	12%	42%	19%	5%	23%
The Senate blocks government legislation too often.	<b>38%</b>	<b>34%</b>	10%	29%	27%	7%	27%
Australia would be better off without the Senate.	<b>22%</b>	<b>53%</b>	8%	14%	35%	18%	25%
The Senate should generally pass government legislation, regardless of what Senators think about it.	<b>20%</b>	<b>66%</b>	4%	17%	44%	22%	14%



## Total agree

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
The Senate should pass or block legislation on its merits.	<b>73%</b>	78%	69%	71%	76%	75%	67%
When the government has to negotiate with other parties, this leads to better laws.	<b>66%</b>	66%	67%	67%	64%	69%	68%
It is bad for the country when one party controls both houses of parliament.	<b>63%</b>	61%	65%	64%	65%	62%	65%
The House of Representatives, where governments are formed, should be more like the Senate, with more representation from different parties.	<b>53%</b>	54%	52%	57%	50%	55%	52%
The Senate blocks government legislation too often.	<b>38%</b>	41%	35%	35%	41%	41%	33%
Australia would be better off without the Senate.	<b>22%</b>	26%	18%	18%	26%	23%	16%
The Senate should generally pass government legislation, regardless of what Senators think about it.	<b>20%</b>	23%	18%	19%	18%	23%	16%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
The Senate should pass or block legislation on its merits.	75%	73%	69%	69%	75%	59%
When the government has to negotiate with other parties, this leads to better laws.	55%	74%	74%	67%	68%	61%
It is bad for the country when one party controls both houses of parliament.	44%	74%	77%	61%	69%	61%
The House of Representatives, where governments are formed, should be more like the Senate, with more representation from different parties.	41%	58%	65%	54%	59%	43%
The Senate blocks government legislation too often.	56%	28%	20%	43%	34%	28%
Australia would be better off without the Senate.	29%	15%	16%	27%	24%	18%
The Senate should generally pass government legislation, regardless of what Senators think about it.	30%	14%	11%	19%	20%	17%

***It is bad for the country when one party controls both houses of parliament.***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Strongly agree	24%	25%	22%	24%	27%	23%	24%
Agree	39%	36%	43%	40%	38%	39%	41%
Disagree	19%	24%	15%	20%	18%	21%	14%
Strongly disagree	5%	6%	3%	3%	5%	4%	7%
Don't know / not sure	13%	8%	17%	14%	12%	12%	14%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>17%</b>
Strongly agree	11%	29%	33%	29%	31%	22%
Agree	33%	46%	44%	32%	38%	39%
Disagree	31%	13%	8%	20%	17%	13%
Strongly disagree	9%	1%	3%	5%	4%	4%
Don't know / not sure	16%	11%	13%	14%	10%	22%

***Australia would be better off without the Senate.***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>52%</b>
Strongly agree	8%	10%	5%	6%	11%	7%	5%
Agree	14%	16%	13%	12%	14%	16%	11%
Disagree	35%	37%	33%	34%	37%	35%	37%
Strongly disagree	18%	22%	15%	21%	15%	17%	15%
Don't know / not sure	25%	15%	35%	27%	22%	24%	32%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>38%</b>
Strongly agree	10%	5%	3%	14%	10%	5%
Agree	19%	10%	13%	13%	13%	13%
Disagree	37%	36%	38%	31%	27%	27%
Strongly disagree	11%	24%	22%	11%	21%	11%
Don't know / not sure	23%	25%	25%	31%	29%	44%

***The Senate should pass or block legislation on its merits.***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Strongly agree	28%	33%	24%	29%	30%	28%	23%
Agree	45%	45%	45%	42%	45%	47%	44%
Disagree	10%	10%	9%	11%	10%	9%	8%
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Don't know / not sure	15%	9%	20%	16%	12%	13%	24%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Strongly agree	28%	26%	32%	27%	32%	17%
Agree	48%	47%	36%	42%	43%	42%
Disagree	10%	10%	8%	10%	9%	11%
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	1%	4%	3%	3%
Don't know / not sure	13%	14%	23%	17%	14%	27%

***The Senate blocks government legislation too often.***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>33%</b>
Strongly agree	10%	12%	8%	9%	9%	12%	7%
Agree	29%	30%	28%	26%	32%	29%	26%
Disagree	27%	32%	24%	29%	27%	27%	27%
Strongly disagree	7%	9%	5%	8%	5%	6%	6%
Don't know / not sure	27%	19%	36%	28%	27%	26%	34%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Strongly agree	16%	5%	4%	12%	10%	4%
Agree	40%	23%	16%	31%	24%	24%
Disagree	17%	38%	29%	24%	24%	16%
Strongly disagree	2%	10%	11%	5%	8%	4%
Don't know / not sure	25%	24%	39%	28%	34%	52%

***The Senate should generally pass government legislation, regardless of what Senators think about it.***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Strongly agree	4%	5%	2%	4%	5%	3%	3%
Agree	17%	18%	15%	16%	13%	20%	12%
Disagree	44%	44%	44%	45%	45%	42%	42%
Strongly disagree	22%	24%	19%	21%	23%	22%	24%
Don't know / not sure	14%	9%	19%	15%	13%	14%	18%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>56%</b>
Strongly agree	5%	2%	3%	5%	4%	2%
Agree	25%	12%	9%	15%	15%	15%
Disagree	45%	47%	37%	41%	39%	42%
Strongly disagree	11%	26%	34%	23%	28%	14%
Don't know / not sure	14%	13%	18%	17%	13%	27%

***The House of Representatives, where governments are formed, should be more like the Senate, with more representation from different parties.***

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Strongly agree	12%	12%	11%	15%	8%	11%	10%
Agree	42%	42%	41%	42%	42%	43%	42%
Disagree	19%	22%	15%	17%	18%	18%	19%
Strongly disagree	5%	8%	3%	5%	8%	5%	2%
Don't know / not sure	23%	16%	29%	21%	24%	23%	27%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Strongly agree	8%	12%	15%	14%	18%	7%
Agree	34%	47%	50%	40%	40%	36%
Disagree	26%	17%	9%	17%	12%	11%
Strongly disagree	11%	3%	3%	1%	4%	3%
Don't know / not sure	22%	22%	24%	28%	25%	43%

***When the government has to negotiate with other parties, this leads to better laws.***

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>Vic</b>	<b>WA</b>
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Strongly agree	<b>15%</b>	16%	15%	18%	16%	14%	13%
Agree	<b>51%</b>	50%	52%	49%	48%	55%	55%
Disagree	<b>15%</b>	17%	13%	14%	18%	15%	11%
Strongly disagree	<b>4%</b>	6%	3%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Don't know / not sure	<b>14%</b>	11%	17%	15%	13%	12%	16%

	<b>LNP</b>	<b>ALP</b>	<b>GRN</b>	<b>PHON</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Undec</b>
<b>Total agree</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Total disagree</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Strongly agree	10%	18%	18%	17%	18%	11%
Agree	45%	56%	56%	50%	50%	50%
Disagree	25%	10%	6%	14%	11%	12%
Strongly disagree	7%	2%	2%	4%	6%	4%
Don't know / not sure	12%	14%	18%	16%	15%	23%