

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tally board from the National Tally Room committed to history as Australians change their voting habits

The tally board from the National Tally Room, a significant symbol of Australian democracy, has officially been retired and is set to become part of history at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

The museum, which is a centre of research, cultural resources and engagement around Australia's political system, recently acquired the 28 sections that together formed the massive tally board. It is a donation from the Australian Electoral Commission, and some of the sections still bear the names of candidates from the hotly contested 2010 election.

Daryl Karp, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, says the discontinuation of the National Tally Room and the tally board marks a significant cultural and social shift in the way that Australians engage with democracy and elections.

'Historically the National Tally Room was buzzing on election night and served as a central place for information for the media, politicians, international observers and the public. However, the manual posting of results on the tally board is no longer relevant to the way Australians expect to receive and process information.'

'Our ***Power of 1: Does your voice count?*** exhibition research has shown that more and more Australians are expecting to engage with information about democracy online, and want to engage with democracy on their own terms,' said Daryl.

These changes have seen a number of shifts in the way people engage with democracy – such as the drastic rise in pre-polling votes in state elections. At the 2014 Victorian state election, around 25 per cent of voters voted before Election Day. This followed an increase in 1 million early voters in the 2013 federal election.

'I don't see societal changes marking the end of raucous election night parties but the practice of sitting with family and friends in front of the TV viewing results broadcast live from the National Tally Room, or even visiting the National Tally Room on Election Night is past. The shifts in the way people engage with democracy means that Australians are more likely to be checking their smartphones, or picking up notifications on social media as they go about their normal business,' said Kate Armstrong, Manager of Content Development at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

The tally board from the National Tally Room was used by the Australian Electoral Commission to display the results of federal elections between 1980 and 2010. Each of the 28 sections has nine rotating panels where staff manually updated results. In earlier years, the tally board was the most immediate form of communication of election results. The donation came with supporting resources, including a time-lapse video of the installation and use of the boards.

Kate says the acquisition of the tally board is an important one for the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. 'The tally board from the National Tally Room is unique. It is a significant object that represents both an important period in Australia's political history and a special approach to communication. The retirement of the tally board is strong symbol of Australia's political and societal shift into the digital era.' The tally board will form part of a new exhibition in the future.

Ends

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Notes to editor

- Interview available with Kate Armstrong, Manager of Content Development at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
- Link to blog, available on website [here](#)
- 39 second time-lapse video (2007 Election) and images from blog post available [here](#)
 - All files titled with correct credits