

Within Northcote’s electoral boundaries, the suburbs of Alphington, Fairfield, Northcote, Thornbury and parts of Preston make up this 20.1 sq km electorate. Predominantly residential, the electorate also contains small pockets of industry. It is well-served by public transportation and cycling paths and has a thriving café and music culture.

Housing

These above amenities, along with the electorate’s proximity to the Melbourne CBD, are attractive to young people and consequently the electorate has undergone extensive gentrification over the last 20 years. Median house prices have risen from \$149,000 in the suburb of Northcote in 1996 to \$1,160,500 in 2016.¹ Table 1 presents a variety of property data recorded in ABS census data from 2001 to 2016, such as the rise in rental properties and properties under a mortgage, in the electorate.

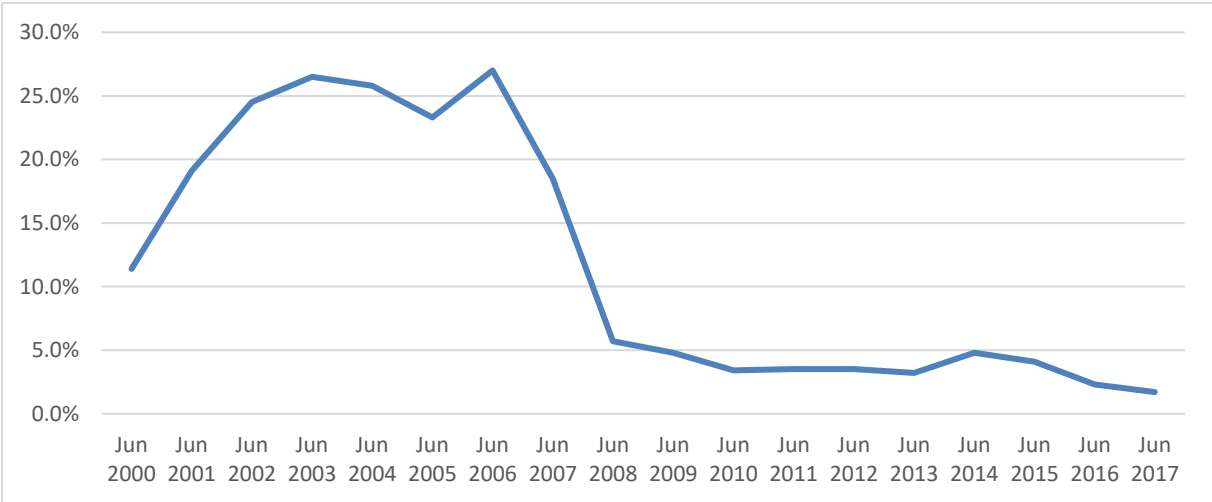
Table 1: Selected property data for Northcote electorate, 2001-2016 censuses

Census Years	2001	2006	2011	2016
Median mortgage repayment (\$/monthly)	1,000-1,199	1,483	2,000	2,000
Median rent (\$/weekly)	150-199	195	310	361
Properties owned outright	35.8%	29.4%	30.2%	27.9%
Properties under mortgage	21.6%	26.9%	29.3%	29%
Rented properties	35%	34.9%	37.9%	40%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [General/Basic community profiles](#) and [QuickStats](#), Northcote State Electoral District 2016, 2011, 2006 and 2001.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services tracks rental lease affordability in Victorian Local Government Areas and Figure 2 charts rental lease affordability in the City of Darebin, which is much larger than the electorate but includes most of the Northcote electorate within it. The graph highlights the very poor affordability of rental leases in the area since 2008.

Figure 2: Percentage of affordable rental leases, Darebin local government area 2000-2017



Source: Department of Health and Human Services website, [Affordable lettings by local government area](#), June 2017

¹ Valuer-General Victoria, (2016) [Guide to Property Values](#), p. 76. and (2006) [Guide to Property Values](#), p. 40

Cultural and language diversity

Although there are still remnants of the increasingly elderly Southern European-born population in the electorate, Table 2 shows the reduction in those language cohorts from the 2001 census to 2016 census, and a rise in English only being spoken at home. This is largely replicated in the birthplace data: a rise in persons born in Australia and England, and a reduction in persons born in Greece and Italy.

Table 2: Languages spoken at home and birthplace in the Northcote Electorate, 2001-2016 censuses

Census Years	2001	2006	2011	2016
<u>Language, top responses (other than English)</u>	%	%	%	%
Greek	12.0	10.5	9.0	7.4
Italian	8.0	6.4	5.4	4.4
Mandarin	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.5
Arabic	2.5	1.9	1.6	1.4
English only	60.5	61.9	65.7	68.4
Birthplace top responses				
Australia	64.0	63.7	65.9	67.0
Greece	6.6	5.5	4.7	3.8
England	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.9
Italy	5.2	4.1	3.4	2.6

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [QuickStats](#), Northcote State Electoral District 2016, 2011, 2006 and 2001.

Changing demographics has seen the gentrification of the electorate and an influx of young socially progressive voters, who Associate Professor and political commentator Paul Strangio, describes as ‘post-materialist cosmopolitans’ who are attracted to the Greens idealism.²

Income

Table 3 below, which compares household and family income in the Northcote electorate with Victoria as a whole, reveals that median weekly incomes in the Northcote electorate have been higher than the whole of Victoria for each census period and have been rising at a faster rate. Only in 2001 was the median weekly household income for Victoria higher than the Northcote electorate, but by 2006 Northcote incomes surpassed Victoria as a whole.

Table 3: Census income data – Northcote electorate and Victoria

Census years		2001	2006	2011	2016
Median household income weekly \$	Northcote	700-799	1,036	1,394	1,721
Median household income weekly \$	Victoria	812	1,024	1,216	1,419
Median family income weekly \$	Northcote	1,000-1,199	1,291	1,818	2,257
Median family income weekly \$	Victoria	964	1,189	1,460	1,715

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [QuickStats](#), Northcote State Electoral District 2016, 2011, 2006, [Basic community profile](#) 2001 and [Time Series Profile](#) Victoria 2011.

² B. Lesman, R. Macreadie, C. Ross and P. Darby (2015) [The 2014 State Election](#), *Research Paper*, No. 1, Parliamentary Library, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria, p. 30.

Past elections

Analysis of 2011 census data for the electorates of Melbourne and Prahran won by the Greens at the 2014 election, indicated that both electorates rated very highly for the census attributes of following no religion; being tertiary educated and working as managers and professionals.³ Although Northcote had similar demographics it remained in Labor Party hands at the 2014 election with a margin of six per cent. Changes to these attributes in the seat of Northcote since the 2011 census are as follows:

- Persons who follow no religion rose from 35 per cent in 2011 to 46 per cent in 2016;
- Persons with tertiary education rose from 46.2 per cent in 2011 to 51 per cent in 2016; and
- Persons working as professionals or managers rose from 50.1 per cent in 2011 to 53.9 per cent in 2016.

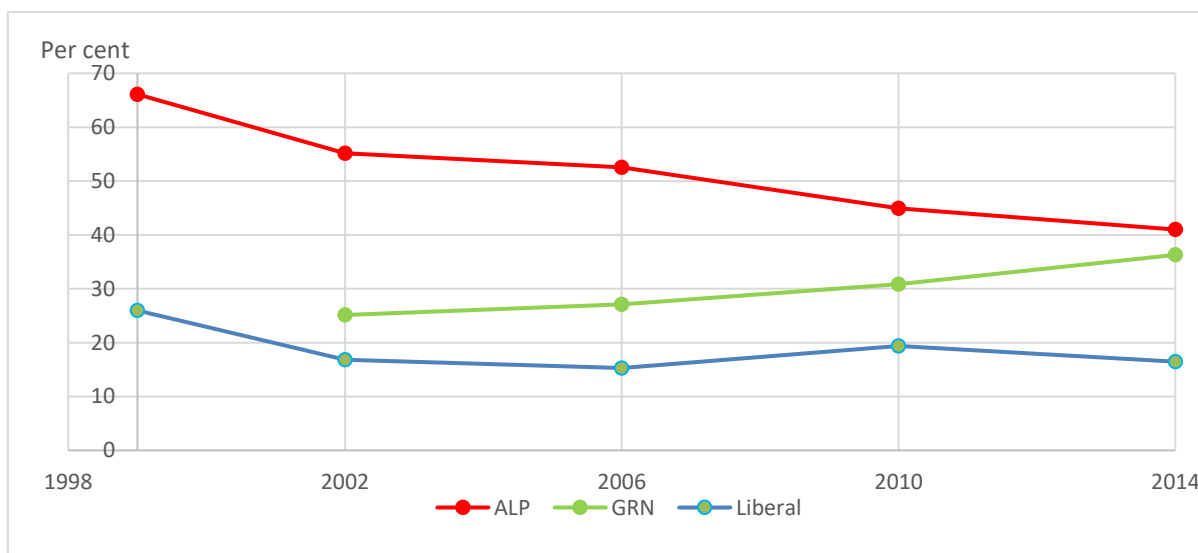
The above statistics are all higher than the average for the whole of Victoria for these attributes, which were 31.7 per cent, 33.5 per cent and 36.8 per cent at the 2016 census, respectively.⁴

The electorate has only been represented by five ALP Members of Parliament since its inception in 1927:

- John Cain Snr, 1927-57;
- Frank Wilkes, 1957-1988;
- Tony Sheehan, 1988-1998;
- Mary Delahunty, 1998-2006; and
- Fiona Richardson, 2006-2017.

The graph of the first preference results for the last five elections presented in Figure 3, demonstrates how voting preferences have changed in the electorate since 1999. The 2010 election was notable for being the first year that first preference counts for the Labor Party fell below 50 per cent.

Figure 3: First preference counts at Victorian elections



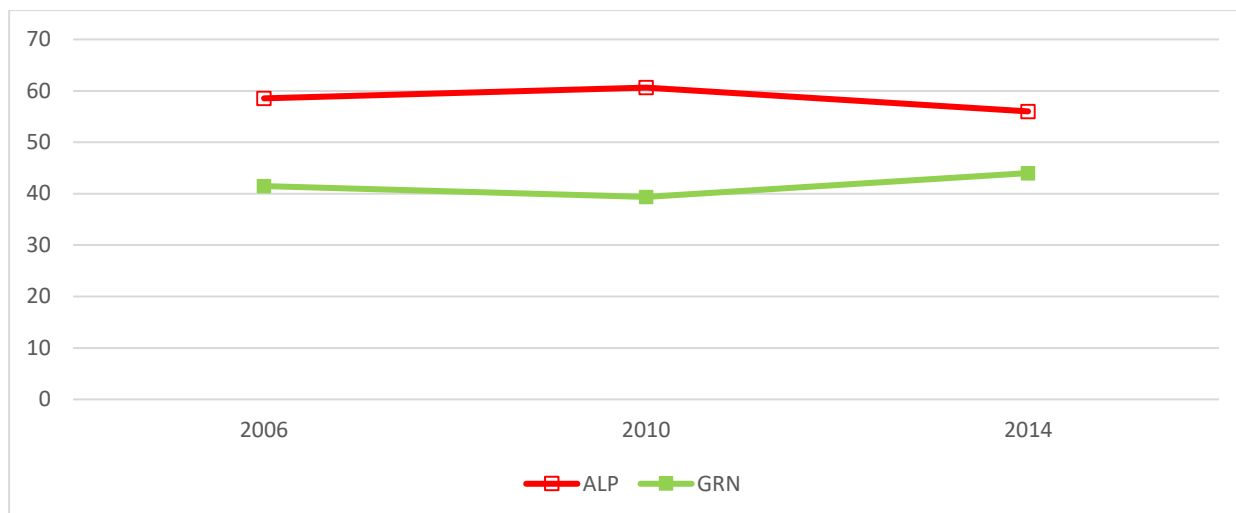
Source: Victorian Electoral Commission website, [State Election Results 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 elections](#)

Figure 4, which illustrates the results after the distribution of preferences for the two parties in contention, shows that the Labor Party has retained the seat with reasonable margins over the last three elections. Preference flows from the Liberal Party have strongly favoured the Labor candidate.

³ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [QuickStats](#), Northcote State Electoral District 2016 and 2011 and [Basic community profile 2011](#).

Figure 4: Results after the distribution of preferences



Source: Victorian Electoral Commission website, [State Election Results 2006, 2010 and 2014 elections](#)

Table 4 which sets out the distribution of preference votes for Northcote at the 2014 election demonstrates how Liberal Party preferences ultimately handed the seat to the Labor Party.

Table 4: Distribution of preferences votes at the 2014 Election

	McCARNEY, Jamie Basics Rock'nRoll Party	RICHARDSON, Fiona Labor	FENN, Helen Family First Party	PURCELL, Georgina Animal Justice Party	D'ANGELO, Anthony Liberal	EDWARDS, Bryony IND	McCARTHY, Trent Greens
Total first preference votes	1043	15928	390	678	6407	324	14101
First Preference Count %	2.7	41.0	1.0	1.7	16.5	0.8	36.3
Transfer of 324 EDWARDS	44	28	14	94	27		117
Progressive Total	1087	15956	404	772	6434		14218
Transfer of 404 FENN	58	105		68	120		53
Progressive Total	1145	16061		840	6554		14271
Transfer of 840 PURCELL	190	162			81		407
Progressive Total	1335	16223			6635		14678
Transfer of 1335 McCARNEY		584			189		562
Progressive Total		16807			6824		15240
Transfer of 6824 D'ANGELO		4976					1848
FINAL TOTAL		21,783					17,088
Count After Preferences %		56.0					44.0

Source: Victorian Electoral Commission website, [State Election 2014: Northcote District Distribution of preference votes](#)

The preference flows favoured the Labor Party by 73 per cent to 27 per cent for the Greens. If the flows had been reversed, the Greens candidate would have won the seat. But even a 50-50 split of Liberal Party preferences would have resulted in a Labor win at the 2014 election.

Currently the Labor Party has a margin of six per cent on a two candidate preferred basis, versus the Greens.

While the Darebin Local Government Area is much larger than the seat of Northcote, the Rucker ward in the south of the municipality fits entirely within the Northcote electorate. It is not the same size as the electorate and misses the northern (Labor) section of the electorate, but, as an indicator, it is interesting to note that two of the three councillors elected at the October 2016 local government election in the Rucker ward were members of the Greens, and the third councillor was an independent.⁵

The Liberal Party have indicated that they do not intend to contest the by-election.⁶ However, the Liberal Democrats are fielding a candidate and it is reported that they are preferencing Labor ahead of the Greens on their party ticket.⁷ Presumably they will attract a share of the conservative vote in the by-election. Additionally, Fiona Richardson was highly regarded in her electorate and a sympathy vote may also play a role in the by-election (whereby some electors may vote Labor as a mark of respect).

At the close of nominations, the Victorian Electoral Commission lists 12 candidates for the by-election, presented below in ballot paper order.⁸ Candidates without parties attached to their names are standing as independents. Laura Chipp is standing as an independent but is endorsed by the Reason Party, which is yet to be registered in Victoria.⁹



Hayward, Russell
Sanaghan, Brian
Thorpe, Lidia, Australian Greens
Lenk, Nina, Animal Justice Party
Chipp, Laura
Cooper, Philip
Rossiter, Dean, Liberal Democrats
Burns, Clare, Australian Labor Party
Toscano, Joseph
Edwards, Bryony
Spirovska, Nevena
Fontana, Vince

In any event, voters will return to the polls in November 2018 for the Victorian state election in circumstances in which all of the main parties and all sides of the political spectrum will be standing for election to the electorate.

⁵ Source: Victorian Electoral Commission website, [Darebin City Council election results 2016](#), see Rucker Ward.

⁶ M. Johnston (2017), 'Fight for Hot Seat', *Herald Sun*, 22 September.

⁷ R. Willingham (2017), 'Northcote by-election polling shows Labor holds small lead ahead of Greens', ABC News website, 25 October.

⁸ Victorian Electoral Commission website, [2017 Northcote State By-election candidates](#)

⁹ Victorian Electoral Commission, personal communication with the author, 25 October 2017.

Key resources

Lesman, B., Macreadie, R., Ross, Dr C. and Darby, P. (2015) [The 2014 State Election](#), *Research Paper*, No. 1, Parliamentary Library, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria. Victorian Electoral Commission website, [State Election Results](#)
Antony Green's [2017 Northcote By-election webpage](#)
Australian Bureau of Statistics website [Census Data](#)
Parliament of Victoria website [Re-Member Database](#)

Additional resources

Media releases

Australian Sex Party (2017) [Laura Chipp hopes to usher in age of reason in Northcote](#), media release, 10 October.

Liberal Coalition (2017) [Did someone mention there was a by-election](#), media release, 15 September.

Premier of Victoria (2017) [Statement from the Premier](#), media release, 23 August.

News articles

Towell, N. (2017) ['Northcotes's byelection turns nasty'](#), *The Age*, 27 October.

Hore, M. (2017) ['Green was bankrupt'](#), *Herald Sun*, 27 October.

Gardiner, E. (2017) ['A dozen to contest'](#), *Northcote Leader*, 25 October.

Gardiner, E. (2017) ['Council uses poll to push priorities'](#), *Northcote Leader*, 25 October.

Talbot, C. (2017) ['Vegan, renter, op shopper. Labor's Northcote candidate ticks all the right boxes'](#), *The Age*, 25 October.

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(2017) ['Triple the ad splash'](#), *Northcote Leader*, 25 October.

(2017) ['Bagging votes in by-election'](#), *Herald Sun*, editorial, 19 October.

Gardiner, E. (2017) ['Fontana slams ALP 'neglect': former Mayor to contest by-election'](#) *Northcote Leader*, 18 October.

Johnston, M. and E. Gardiner (2017) ['Fairer deal' for renters: Tenants given more rights in overhaul'](#), *Preston Leader*, 17 October.

(2017) ['Laura chips in for Northcote'](#), *Ballarat Courier*, 10 October.

Hutchinson, S (2017) ['Labor throws \\$500,000 into by-election bid to lock out Greens threat'](#), *The Australian*, 6 October.

Gardiner, E. (2017) ['Close-up on candidates'](#), *Northcote Leader*, 4 October.

Sullivan, K. (2017) ['Metro is key to rural'](#), *Weekly Times*, 4 October.

Offer, K. and E. Gardiner (2017) ['MP poll to be hot contest: Greens and Labor set to face off in state by-election'](#), *Northcote Leader*, 27 September.

Johnston, M. (2017) ['Fight for hot seat'](#), *Herald Sun*, 22 September.

Dowling, J. and E. Gardiner (2017) ['Burns eyes state seat spot'](#), *Preston Leader*, 12 September.

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