



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

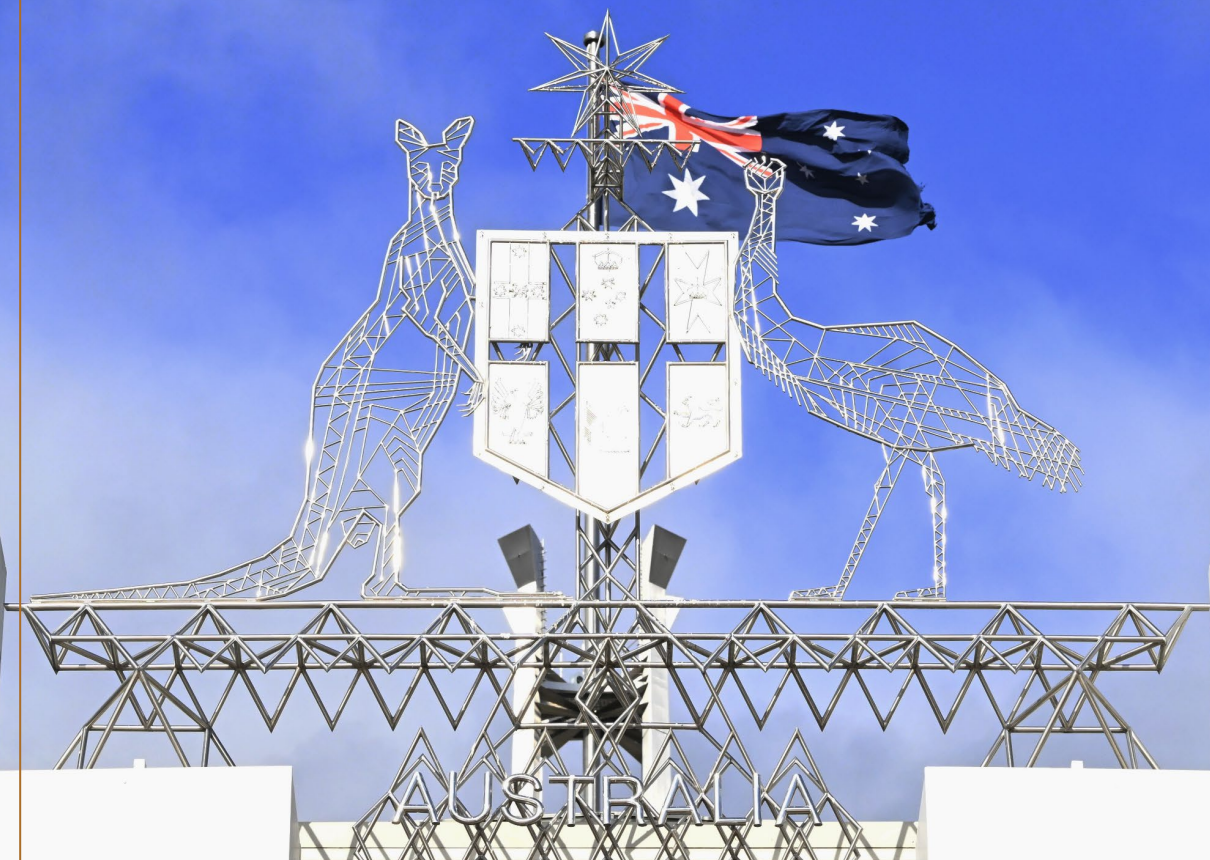


PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY

Issues & Insights | February 2026

Foreword

Steven Fox, Parliamentary Librarian



Confidential, Impartial, Timely

Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of Issues and Insights, the Parliamentary Library’s annual publication designed to illuminate the complex and fast-changing policy landscape confronting parliamentarians in 2026 and beyond. In this edition, we take a thematic approach to some of the most pressing questions shaping Australia’s future—questions that demand both immediate attention and long-term vision.

Across these pages, three broad themes emerge:

- **Governance and Democracy:** How do we safeguard democratic institutions in an era of rising political violence, misinformation, and polarisation? How do we balance freedom of speech with the need to protect social cohesion?
- **Economic Futures:** From the evolution of money and digital currencies to the critical role of research and development funding, Australia’s economic resilience depends on innovation and adaptability. Emerging workforce models, such as the 4-day work week, challenge traditional assumptions about productivity and wellbeing.
- **Social Policy and Workforce:** Demographic change is reshaping Australia’s social fabric, with aged care at the forefront. At the same time, debates around the privatisation of care services raise critical questions about equity, quality, and accountability. Public health ambitions such as creating a tobacco-free future further underscore the intersection of health, regulation, and social norms.

These issues are interconnected, reflecting a world in transition marked by geopolitical uncertainty, technological disruption, and shifting social norms. Our goal is to provide parliamentarians with clear, expert analysis that spark ideas, challenge assumptions, and support informed decision-making.

As always, the Library’s role extends beyond these pages. Our specialists are ready to assist with tailored research and advice across a wide range of policy areas. We invite you to engage with us as you navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead.

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