



centre for **democratic** institutions

Political Party Development Course (PPD)

18 - 29 May 2009

Participants

The course is aimed at those engaged in the actual business of politics, political advising and political campaigns - political advisers, campaign workers, party activists, and politicians themselves - in the young democracies of the Asia-Pacific region - Malaysia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa.

Course Objectives

The overall aim of the course is to equip political party officials in the young democracies of the Asia-Pacific with the skills and capacity to strengthen and develop their party systems, which will result in healthier democracies in the region. Participants will also gain an understanding of the administration and workings of the Australian political system, with case studies of major and minor parties.

Networking is a major aspect of the course. This will enhance future relationships between Australia and regional countries, both at the party and governmental levels - as well as establishing new links between the regional countries. Participants will exchange their own knowledge and experiences, so will gain a better understanding of party development within the region.

Participants will gain knowledge and skills to improve the workings and effectiveness of political parties in the region, thereby increasing the vibrancy of these emerging democracies.

Course Dates

The course is held at the Australian National University, over two weeks, from Monday 18 May to Friday 29 May.



The Course

The course will consist of a mixture of lectures, discussions, external site visits, and forums. Participants will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the topics covered, through informal discussion and formal presentations. Related social activities will also be held over the two weeks.

Topics

Functions of Political Parties

The role and functions of parties in the democratic process. Why have parties? What are the benefits/drawbacks of not having parties? Conferring legitimacy on the political system. What do political parties do? Their role in forming governments through providing stable majorities in parliament. Providing consistency on policy issues. Avenue of expression for political elites.

Party Systems and Democratic Development

Dynamics involved in two-party and multi-party systems. Forming coalitions and alliances. Cartelisation.

Australian Political Parties

The Australian party system. Party constitutions, policy platforms, structure (including leadership), internal party democracy, parliamentary representation, history, size of parties, funding sources.

Electoral Systems

How electoral systems relate to party systems - the impact of electoral systems on party representation. Federal - state - territory - local government tiers.

Membership

How are members recruited? How are they retained? The roles members play. How are they managed? How are they treated/used? Are members a burden or an asset? Communication between members (members-lay-parliamentary).

Policy

Development, agenda setting, issue management, competing demands of lay and parliamentary party, achieving consistency. Who or what generates policy?

Campaigns

Deciding campaign strategy (e.g. polling, focus groups, advertising), use of the media, finance, polling day resources.

Pre-selections

How are candidates pre-selected? Does this ensure the best-quality candidates? Can party executives over-ride member decisions?



Parliamentary Wing

Decision-making, strategy, leadership, interaction with lay party, conscience voting, solidarity. Roles of a parliamentarian. Visit the national parliament and ACT assembly.

Finances

Income (corporate and community donations, public funding, membership-derived). What are the main sources of income? The main areas of expenditure?

Women in Politics

The role of women in political parties - in party administration - as parliamentary representatives. Opportunities for greater involvement of women.

Regulation of Parties

Electoral commission requirements, membership numbers, returns, statutory officers for elections, disclosure laws.

Media

The role of the media, media training, authorisation to speak, damage control. Relationships with key media people.

Parties in Action

Visit the national secretariats of Australia's main political parties. Party officials will give presentations on the various aspects of the party's operations.

Being in Opposition

What roles do parties play in opposition? Providing an alternative choice of government. Balance of power roles - spoiling, constructive?

These topics will be incorporated in the following components:

- Lecture and discussion of the Australian situation
- Invited guest/s will discuss the issue from their (party's) perspective (either in a class situation or during a site visit).
- Participants will be able to question the guest.
- Participants will undertake assignments - explaining to the rest of the group how the issue is treated by their parties and countries.
- This will be followed by discussion on the merits and drawbacks of the various ways the issue/topic is treated.



External Visits

- Party secretariats - Labor, Liberal
- Australian Parliament - Question Time in the House of Representatives, meetings with Government, Opposition, and Minor party Members and Senators
- ACT Assembly - meet Assembly Members, the Speaker, Assembly staff

Participant Presentations

On the second day of the course, participants will discuss the party systems in their own countries. Participants will also select one of five course topics, and, in groups, prepare a presentation on this topic. The topics are:

- Internal Party Democracy
- Membership: Recruitment and Maintenance
- Party Finances - Fundraising
- A Voice for Women
- Campaigning

The presentations will address points such as: how this topic is dealt with by their own parties, and if it is dealt with differently by other parties (not represented on the course) in their country; what they believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of how Australian parties deal with the issue; what they have learnt from the discussion on the topic; and what they can take from the course and apply to their party's operations. Participants will select their topics during the first week, and make their presentation during the second week of the course.

Participants will have after-hours access to computers and the Internet to prepare for their presentations.

Social Events

- Welcoming event - Monday 18th May
- Scenic tour of Canberra (optional) - Saturday 23rd May - includes a visit to the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Australian War Memorial and Mt Ainslie lookout.
- Farewell dinner - Friday 29th May

