The long lives of the rich and famous?:
A comparative analysis of the life expectancy of Australian politicians and the general population

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This study examines very long run differences in mortality gradients between high income and average individuals in Australia. For the high income individuals it uses unit record data on birth and death dates on around 3500 members of Australian Parliaments including Commonwealth Parliament (since 1900) and various State Parliaments back to 1820s. The rates of mortality and estimates of life expectancy are calculated from the age at which Members of Parliament (MP) enter service and these are compared with comparative rates from various historic Australian life tables. Preliminary results indicate that unlike the general population, the life expectancy of MPs is constant from the 1820s until the 1940s at around 26 years (at 45 years of age) and then increases substantially over the remaining part of the 20th Century. The life expectancy of the general public has been increasing at a much more constant rate. Hence the life-expectancy gaps between MPs and the general public appear to vary substantially over the last century. We will examine the potential causes such as changes in the level of education and MPs pensions over time.