

PARTY MACHINES CONKING OUT

Poll prediction Labor and the Coalition face a tough road to a parliamentary majority in 2025, writes John Black.

While Labor has crept over the line this year on minor party preferences, it's hard to see how either Labor or the Coalition in their current form can win a majority of seats in the House of Representatives at the next federal election in 2025.

For the traditional two-party system to work, the major parties need to win at least two-thirds of the House of Representatives seats on the primary vote, as we last saw in 2004 when the majors won 89 out of 150 seats. This number dropped to 64 seats in 2010, 46 seats in 2019 and just 12 seats out of 151 seats this year.

Given the rate of this decline and the associated rise in the success of the minor parties, it's not hard to imagine every seat in 2025 being decided on preference votes cast by up to five different parties or groups. I suspect poor old Antony Green's computer at the ABC might actually blow up on election night, as the actual count could take up to three weeks to determine the last few seats.

After that, without a clear majority of seats for either party, the parties would have to start bargaining over how to form a working majority.

The Coalition held 76 seats before the May election and 58 after it, losing 10 marginal seats to the ALP, two formerly safe Brisbane River seats to the Greens and six of its wealthiest seats to the teals.

It still has 18 of its 58 seats seat vulnerable to challenges in 2025: threatened by the ALP in nine seats, teals in four seats, both the ALP and the teals in another four seats and an independent in the allegedly very safe National Party seat of Nicholls in Victoria.

The ALP held 68 seats before the election and won 10 marginals from the Coalition, and lost one of its richest seats, Griffith in southern Brisbane, to the Greens and one of its poorest seats, Fowler in western Sydney, to an independent.

The ALP now finds itself – as the Coalition did this year – as an incumbent, facing challenges on multiple fronts across the political and socio-economic spectrum, with potential challenges from teals in 20 seats, teals and Greens in seven seats, teals and Liberals in five seats, Liberals in nine seats and, finally, teals, Liberals and Greens in the seat of Higgins in Melbourne.

The starting point for our 2022 ALP two-

Musical chairs

Selected 'safe' seats that might swing in 2025

Electorate	2022 Election, share of votes (%)						2022 won by	2025 could be won by
	ALP	LNP	Greens	Ind	Others	Coalition		
Blaxland	55.5	27.1	6.0	0.0	11.4	34.5	ALP	ALP
Grayndler	53.7	16.0	22.0	2.1	6.2	22.9	ALP	ALP/Teal
Chifley	53.5	24.5	5.6	1.8	14.5	34.6	ALP	ALP
Watson	52.4	26.5	9.2	0.0	12.0	34.6	ALP	ALP
Burt	51.9	23.1	9.5	0.0	15.4	33.3	ALP	ALP
Sydney	51.2	19.6	22.9	0.0	6.3	25.7	ALP	ALP/Teal
Barton	50.6	26.4	12.0	0.0	11.0	34.2	ALP	ALP
Brand	50.6	22.1	11.1	0.0	16.2	32.9	ALP	ALP
Kingston	49.6	26.0	12.1	2.6	9.7	34.2	ALP	ALP/Teal
Greenway	48.6	30.1	6.8	4.9	9.6	38.7	ALP	ALP
Kingsford Smith	48.6	28.5	16.3	0.0	9.6	34.0	ALP	ALP/Teal
Fenner	48.4	27.9	16.7	0.0	7.0	33.8	ALP	ALP/Teal
Bradfield	17.3	45.2	8.9	24.4	4.2	59.6	LNP	LNP/Teal
Nicholls	11.5	45.1	3.0	25.1	15.3	65.9	LNP	Nat/Ind
Wannon	19.1	45.0	5.8	21.9	8.2	60.4	LNP	LNP/Teal
Petrie	30.0	44.0	11.1	0.0	14.8	54.0	LNP	LNP/ALP
McPherson	22.0	43.9	15.2	0.0	19.0	56.8	LNP	LNP/Teal
Sturt	30.7	43.5	16.1	0.0	9.7	50.9	LNP	LNP/ALP
Kooyong	6.6	43.0	5.9	41.3	3.3	64.1	Teal	Teal/Lib
Menzies	33.3	42.4	14.0	0.0	10.3	50.0	LNP	LNP/ALP/Teal
Dickson	31.9	42.4	12.7	3.8	9.3	50.9	LNP	LNP/ALP
Moore	32.9	42.2	13.8	0.0	11.1	50.2	LNP	LNP/ALP
Gilmore	36.0	42.1	10.2	4.2	7.5	49.5	ALP	ALP/LNP
Mackellar	7.9	42.0	5.6	38.5	6.0	63.5	Teal	Teal/Lib
Curtin	13.8	42.9	9.8	29.9	4.7	59.1	Teal	Teal/Lib

SOURCE: ADS

party preferred (2PP) national voting model for the vote, after preferences, across all Australian seats turned out to be our model of the 2PP vote secured in 2019 by Bill Shorten and his big reform agenda.

The positive demographic drivers of the ALP vote this year were top-quartile income earners moving from the Liberals to the ALP, especially when there were no teal candidates. They were joined by female professionals, casualties of our broken primary healthcare system, and agnostics, a demographic that moved into the ALP 2PP column indirectly via Green preferences.

Other groups driving the ALP 2PP vote across all seats were Chinese-born Australians, reflecting anger at the government's failure to distinguish its criticism of the Chinese Communist Party government

from that of the hard-working and high-achieving group of Chinese-born Australians who were wondering why it was all their fault.

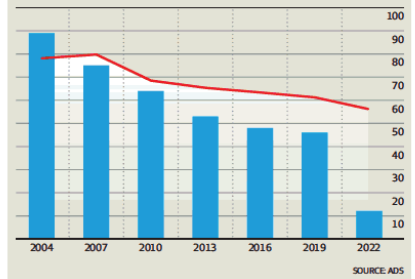
But the stand-out positive factor for Labor this year was the flat 6 per cent average boost to the ALP 2PP vote in Western Australia, which measured the positive impact the Mark McGowan Labor government and the WA campaign had on the national ALP 2PP vote in that state, over and above the role of WA demographic factors, such as mining jobs or higher incomes.

The only negative demographic drivers for the ALP 2PP swing were very low-income women, which was most obvious in Tasmania where the Jackie Lambie Network pinched 6 per cent of the ALP primary vote and seemed reluctant to let any of it flow back in preferences.

Looking ahead, it is not impossible, of

More choices

Election results (%) Seats won on first preferences ALP/Lib vote



SOURCE: ADS



Minor parties and teal independents, including Monique Ryan in Kooyong, were this year's election winners. PHOTO: JOE ARMAO

course, that the new ALP government, led by Anthony Albanese, could lead the nation through the unfolding global economic and political conflict and sweep to victory in the House of Representatives in 2025 without any fundamental economic reforms needed to pay for rising costs in aged care, health, defence and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

On the evidence so far from Treasurer Jim Chalmers, this is not looking good because he seems more intent on assigning blame for the state of the economy than building consensus to fix it.

Then again, from the Coalition viewpoint, maybe new leader Peter Dutton could grow into the sort of leader who works with the Labor Party to end the self-destructive climate wars which have led directly to our current energy crisis. There's no sign of that so far.

Election lesson No.1: People, not ideology

Opinion

Tim Wilson



The obligatory post-election debate about the Liberal Party's future should start by acknowledging: ideas don't vote, people do. The last election proved that Liberals can't govern unless it is a party that represents the cities, suburbs and rural and regional Australia.

While Labor heartland got some strong suburban swings, they were nowhere near enough and would need to double to change a seat's hands, whereas the Labor-Greens-teals triangulation against Liberals in urban communities delivered a very different outcome.

Despite how it was presented, the objective of the teals is not to govern with Labor, but to deny Liberals a governable majority leaving only Labor to govern. For Liberals to recover most, if not all, of these seats is the only way they can regain government.

Which is why debates about turning "left" or "right" are so tawdry. It is the wrong question, and will give the wrong answer.

Politics is about power – or more importantly who is empowered.

Labor wants a corporatised nation where power and decision making is concentrated between Canberra, corporates, big capital funds and unions, like Bob Hawke's Accord. Australians then conform to the negotiated policies that trade flexibility for conformity.

As a sectional party, they assess decisions through the advancement of organised workers, and increasingly through organised capital harnessed by industry superannuation.

As a party organised around universal values of aspiration and opportunity for all, Liberals specifically reject sectionalism for what the party's founder Robert Menzies argued was, the "unorganised and unself-conscious".

The Liberal vision is to advance the national interest through democratising power to the organic institutions of the country – citizens, families, communities, and competitive commerce – to control the nation from individual responsibility up.

It's why Menzies' iconic radio broadcasts were titled the *Forgotten People*, not the *Forgotten Ideas*. An ideological commitment to liberalism is about faith in people.



People need institutions to thrive, but they shouldn't overstep what people can do themselves or are better provided for in a competitive marketplace.

But these are not exclusionary values to any geographic section of the community, nor their state of affluence. Wealthy urban communities are often the trophies reflecting the success of these values in practice and should be celebrated by Liberals, not dismissed.

Electional success also requires

understanding the influences on people's electoral behaviour are changing. Parties used to rely on hereditary influence from parents down to their children.

That still exists, but as the make-up of families has changed so have their dynamics. What might have once been shared over a formal meal may now be shared by a family WhatsApp group.

That is what I witnessed at the last two elections at Beaumaris Secondary College. In 2019, grandparents walked their children and grandchildren into the booth to influence them toward voting Liberal. It was clear that our campaign against Labor's attempt to abolish refundable franking credits had been effective.

It didn't mean their children didn't have their own views, they just weren't as motivated.

The design of the campaign against the retiree tax campaign wasn't a fluke. It was modelled after monitoring the electoral behaviour of family members during the marriage law postal survey.

In the 2017 survey children and wives influenced the decisions of other way family members while survey forms sat on the kitchen table until they were returned



The Greens slogan "two parties too long" rang true this time. PHOTO: GETTY

It's all the other bloke's fault. More Tony Abbott lite than John Howard heavy.

At the core of the dilemma for the Coalition is the Queensland LNP, which seems incapable of doing the job it once did quite effectively as two distinct parties, with the National Party absorbing and neutralising the political carpetbaggers in the bush, while the Liberals won back the professionals and middle-class voters in Brisbane and the provincial cities.

The separate entities maximised the votes across the two conflicting demographics then united to run the government.

To solve the problem of optional preferential voting in Queensland state elections (which no longer applies), the federal Liberals in 2008 let the National Party inside the Queensland Liberal tent, so their rebellious rural cousins could start pissing outside the tent for a change.

The strategy backfired disastrously during the election campaign, when climate change flat-earthers Matt Canavan and Colin Boyce decided to bag the Coalition policy on carbon reduction, shedding Liberal primary votes nationally.

Apparently, the boys thought it was more fun to piss inside the tent while still inside. What japes, eh?

Well, here's a tip, fellas: the miners in the seats you were trying to win hated it. In the top 10 Australian mining seats in Queensland, Western Australian and NSW, the Coalition primary vote and the vote for One Nation dropped 7 per cent, with 5 per cent going to the ALP and 1 per cent each to Greens and independents.

The professionals in the seats you were allegedly trying to win also hated it. In the three Brisbane River seats of Griffith, Brisbane and Ryan, the Coalition primary vote dropped a flat 10 per cent and virtually all of it went straight to the Greens, who won all three seats. And the Greens, of course, thought it was all their own doing.

As we charted the destruction of the major party system in terms of votes and seats, we saw plenty of culprits to whom we could assign blame.

with "yes". But absent a clear issue that motivated others, the same trend as the postal survey appeared at the 2022 election. This time at Beaumaris Secondary children influenced their parents, but more critically wives influenced their husbands.

With Liberal seats falling from Sydney's northern beaches to Melbourne's bayside it showed a middle-class and aged constituency of women abruptly moved and took other family members with them.

Debates about turning 'left' or 'right' are so tawdry. It is the wrong question, and will give the wrong answer.

In many cases, it involved them acknowledging their local candidate had even done "a good job" and "not being the issue", before they experienced the cull as indiscriminate ballot fodder.

In 2019 the Liberal Party motivated a constituency for them, but by 2022 it had motivated a constituency against them that started with a perception that it was prepared to walk past allegations of disrespecting women, or worse.

Because despite the crowing of double-barrelled hereditary millionaires the wave

Negative campaigns run by the major parties have been like watching the lead characters in *Dumb and Dumber* running for public office. The problem is the voters believe the bad things each side says about the other, and they drift off to minor parties.

The two major parties seem unaware that their big loss of primary votes has not been to each other but to minor parties, and both seem incapable or unwilling to point out the obvious weaknesses in most of the platforms of the minor parties whose policies on defence or tax or economic management or energy are often just plain nuts.

Two creaking major party machines seemed united in their elitist contempt for those voters they were allegedly seeking to represent, inflicting on them a few appallingly unrepresentative and delusional candidates who seemed ruthlessly determined to lose, whatever the cost to the parties which nurtured them.

This cost the majors votes in the seats directly affected, but also in seats containing similar demographics.

Neither leader resonated with a growing tide of young political agnostics and female professionals, the former drifting to the environmental left and the others to the environmental right, but both equally disillusioned with the failure of the two major parties to provide any semblance of leadership or integrity.

Probably the most important demographic for the ALP to regain is the alienated working poor voters, stuck in the second income quartile and reliant on government to help them get a job and a house and feed the kids. They began to give up on the ALP a while back.

This year they just flipped the bird to the ALP en masse, casting their primary votes in protest for the billionaires and political carpetbaggers offering them slogans instead of policies, swelling the votes of the minor and micro parties.

The Liberals need to try to repair the frontal lobotomy they performed on themselves by turning their backs on professional women, the fastest-growing occupation group, to pander to political whackos and social media warriors on the fringe right.

Pardon the pomposity here, but we all really need the two major parties to work together to find a place at the table for angry welfare dependants in the bottom income quartile, for the working poor of the second quartile, for the aspirational migrants and middle class in the third quartile and for professional women in the top quartile.

If the two major parties can't do this, the voters will keep looking elsewhere in 2025 and we can kiss goodbye to stable majority governments in Australia. **AFR**

John Black is executive chairman of profiling company Australian Development Strategies and is a former Labor senator for Queensland.

the teals surfed preceded them.

The new opposition now needs to heed the lessons. It has made a good start by swiftly cementing the final election week policy for first home buyers to be able to use their super savings to buy a home.

The policy of putting homes first, and super second, focuses on how to empower the next generation of Australians. Labor can't match it. As the party of organised capital Labor will always put super funds before the ambitions of young Australians.

And the more Liberals prosecute the argument that super funds can use member's money to buy investment housing that they even rent to their members, but members can't do the same, the more absurd the situation becomes.

The policy simply puts first home buyers on a level-playing field with their own money locked away by Big Super.

And the efficacy is only going to become stronger as Labor makes the case to increase the compulsory super guarantee to 15 per cent from 12 per cent, denying young Australians more of their own disposable income at the time when they need it most.

Ideas in politics matter, but they're a pathway to influencing people; and Liberals do electorally well when their ideas are focused on empowering Australians. **AFR**

Tim Wilson is a former federal Liberal minister and author of The New Social Contract: Renewing the Liberal Vision for Australia.

Rear Window

From back page

Not that anyone in Australian lobbying circles would go that far, God forbid. After all, they show a knack for tight-roping the very strict legal definitions binding influence-peddling.

Still, a Crime and Corruption Commission discussion paper in Queensland, calling for submissions on lobbying next month, illuminates how a gold mine awaits influence peddlers in the Sunshine State.

"In Queensland, the government has already commenced planning and



Fallen US lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

recruitment for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games," the CCC warned. "As high-profile projects and developments are announced, there will be increasing demand for positions and contracts, which carries a heightened risk of improper influence."

Think of the opportunities: lobbying for new infrastructure near development sites or pushing the host city to back a new sport? Heck, if Paris will host "breakdancing" in 2024, then surely there's room for State of Origin to go Olympic, or white-shoe power-walking on the Gold Coast?

Anyway, the CCC also noted a "substantial increase in recorded lobbying activities in recent years" amid post-COVID-19 recovery efforts.

A "small number of key groups and individuals appear to have a disproportionate amount of access to government decision-makers", and may retain long-standing connections to those in power. Some had even "been engaged by a political party or government agency while still involved in influencing practices, such as lobbying", it says.

The CCC is also examining how pesky lobbying regulations can be circumvented by having a company hire a person directly. Maybe it's blurry definitions, although some have been very clear on what lines they will not cross.

Take Jim Soorley, the former priest turned Brisbane lord mayor and now ALP powerbroker, who can't actually be a "lobbyist" while serving as chairman of state-owned corporation CS Energy.

Soorley maintained, in an ongoing civil court battle, he was only acting as a "consultant" when he phoned Transport Minister Mark Bailey while researching the status of a restaurant lease on state-owned land.

The restaurant owner had filed a case complaining he thought he was hiring the ex-pollie as a "lobbyist" legally.

Despite the job-title dispute, both sides agreed on the payment method: Soorley receiving \$2500 in cash in a car park.

Geoff Wilson struts his stuff at Ascot

There's nothing that says English summer like Australian business types pulling on fancy clobber for the Royal Ascot-Wimbledon quinnella.

Stockpicker Geoff Wilson of Wilson Asset Management had more cause to dress up than most of his compatriots, as his partly owned Irish thoroughbred State of Rest, the winner of last year's Cox Plate, won the £1 million (\$1.76 million) Prince of Wales stakes last Wednesday.

Then, on Saturday, Wilson was back at Ascot with legendary funds manager turned vintner and breeder Greg Perry as members of the huge syndicate that owns Artorius, which was unlucky to place only third in the Platinum Jubilee Stakes.

"It's surreal being here in top hat and tails, because I've never been in top hat and tails in my life," Wilson said after State of Rest's win, hamming it up just a little for local reporters.

"I moved to Queensland and so I don't usually wear any pants that go lower than the knees," he said straightfaced. He could have said he wore underpants on his head and the Ascot media would have believed him.

It's handy timing to be in London with Wimbledon kicking off next Monday. That's always been a fruitful venue for Australian boards' more creative moments.

The Henley Royal Regatta starts on June 28 – something not everyone appreciates as much as Tony George, head of The King's School in Sydney.

He faces the dispiriting experience of slumming it in business class after some quibbling by the board over the cost of first class air tickets for George and his deputy and their wives.



Clearly not in Queensland: Geoff Wilson.

The opportunity to mingle at Henley with Eton and Harrow counterparts and others can't be understated. Hopefully, Qantas doesn't misplace their luggage.

Closer to home, La Trobe Financial CEO Greg O'Neill held a farewell shindig for all his staff and their partners at Crown in Melbourne on Friday.

Eddie McGuire was MC and guests included Geoff Lloyd, the former CEO of MLC and Perpetual, Liberal senator Andrew Bragg and Hugh Morgan.

Robbie Williams flew in to give a two-hour show for the state guests. O'Neill shouldered the costs for the do, as his swan song at La Trobe. He is bowing out of the firm his father started in 1952, warmed only by his share of the \$US1.5 billion (\$2.2 billion) price Brookfield negotiated with Blackstone for La Trobe, including O'Neill's 20 per cent stake.

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