

# ELECTION 2013 – OVERVIEW AND ISSUES

By Bob Lawrence\*

All the opinion polls for the September 7 Federal Election have the Coalition and Labor polling at similar levels. The winner currently looks like being determined by the side that can attract the greatest number of the currently undecided voters, and/or makes fewer errors.

We have put together a handy cheat sheet for Election Night, a la Antony Green, to help you track the progress and anticipate the outcome of the biggest power play in Australian politics in recent times. Will it be a landslide or 2010 all over again? You decide.

### What to look for?

Labor and the Coalition will focus on inner-city marginal seats held by each side in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane; that is, seats that would change if three percent of voters, on a two-party preferred basis, changed their vote to the opposite side.

Labor needs to win five more seats in the 150 House of Representatives, mainly from the Coalition, to govern in its own right. The Coalition needs to win four seats (see table on the following page).

The positions of the two major parties as the campaign takes off, shows Labor reinforcing its fiscal leadership through the Global Financial Crisis, with the Coalition keen to promote real private sector jobs by lowering the imposts on the business sector. Its weapons of choice so far are removing the carbon tax and mining tax as well as cutting company tax to 1.5% as an offset Tony Abbott's maternity leave levy on big business. The tax cut is a clear win for medium and small incorporated businesses that are likely to direct this saving into capital investment and expanded employment.

### Senate

The Senate comprises Senators from the Coalition (34), Labor (31), Greens (9), Democratic Labor Party (1), and one independent Senator, Nick Xenophon (SA).

Of the 76 Senate seats, 40 are to be contested; six in each state and two in each of the territories. However, there is a time delay in the result, as the new Senators do not take their place in the Senate Chamber until July 1 2014. Any Senator losing his/her place in the election remains in parliament until June 30.

### Senate places to be contested in 2013

STATE/TERRITORY	SEATS	LABOR	COALITION	GREENS	OTHER
NSW	6	3	3		
VIC	6	3	3		
QLD	6	3	3		
SA	6	2	2	1	1 (Independent)
WA	6	2	3	1	
TAS	6	3	2	1	
ACT	2	1	1		
NT	2	1	1		
<b>2013 Election</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
2010 Elected (not contested)	36	13	16	6	1 (DLP)
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>

Source; Australian Parliament, Canberra

## ELECTION 2013 – OVERVIEW AND ISSUES

CONTINUED

### Marginal seats

Below are lists of seats deemed marginal. The percentages are on the two party preferred vote.

#### Coalition Marginal Seats

Hasluck	WA	Ken Wyatt	LIB	50.57
Boothby	SA	Andrew Southcott	LIB	50.62
Aston	VIC	Alan Tudge	LIB	50.67
Dunkley	VIC	Bruce Billson	LIB	51.04
Brisbane	QLD	Teresa Gambaro	LNP	51.13
Macquarie	NSW	Louise Markus	LIB	51.26
Forde	QLD	Bert Van Manen	LNP	51.63
Solomon	NT	Natasha Griggs	CLP	51.75
Casey	VIC	Tony Smith	LIB	51.86
Longman	QLD	Wyatt Roy	LNP	51.92
Canning	WA	Don Randall	LIB	52.19
Dawson	QLD	George Christensen	LNP	52.43
Swan	WA	Steve Irons	LIB	52.53
Bonner	QLD	Ross Vasta	LNP	52.82
Macarthur	NSW	Russell Matheson	LIB	53.02
Bennelong	NSW	John Alexander	LIB	53.12
O'Connor	WA	Tony Crook (v Lib/retiring)	NWA	53.56
Flynn	QLD	Ken O'Dowd	LNP	53.58
Sturt	SA	Christopher Pyne	LIB	53.60
Fisher	QLD	Peter Slipper (stood as LNP)	IND	54.13

#### Government held marginal seats

Corangamite	VIC	Darren Cheeseman	ALP	50.28
Deakin	VIC	Mike Symon	ALP	50.60
Greenway	NSW	Michelle Rowland	ALP	50.88
Robertson	NSW	Deborah O'Neill	ALP	51.00
Lindsay	NSW	David Bradbury	ALP	51.12
Moreton	QLD	Graham Perrett	ALP	51.13
Banks	NSW	Daryl Melham (retiring)	ALP	51.45
La Trobe	VIC	Laura Smyth	ALP	51.66
Petrie	QLD	Yvette D'Ath	ALP	52.51
Reid	NSW	John Murphy	ALP	52.68
Lilley	QLD	Wayne Swan	ALP	53.18
Brand	WA	Gary Gray	ALP	53.33
Capricornia	QLD	Kirsten Livermore (retiring)	ALP	53.68
Lingiari	NT	Warren Snowdon	ALP	53.70
Page	NSW	Janelle Saffin	ALP	54.19
Grayndler	NSW	Anthony Albanese (Green second)	ALP	54.23
Eden-Monaro	NSW	Mike Kelly	ALP	54.24
Blair	QLD	Shayne Neumann	ALP	54.24
Parramatta	NSW	Julie Owens	ALP	54.37
Dobell	NSW	Craig Thomson (To run as an Independent. No ALP candidate yet endorsed)	ALP	55.07

Source; Australian Electoral Commission

## ELECTION 2013 – OVERVIEW AND ISSUES

CONTINUED

### Election Issues

#### The Economy

While other issues may generate emotional headlines, the economy is the issue and one on which Labor carries a great deal of baggage. It offers as its main defense the fact that Australia has ridden out the Global Financial Crisis under its rule.

The Coalition's attack on the economy is focused on the debt generated by Labor despite inheriting a substantial surplus from the Howard Government six years earlier. Through successive Budget deficits (despite promising surpluses several years ahead) it has led Australia into its worst ever debt position relative to Gross Domestic Product. The Coalition blames the Labor Government's persistent high spending and the massive stimulus package for blowing out Australia's debt to unsustainable levels.

In the inner city areas where the marginal seats will determine government, a biting issue is the cost of living. The Carbon Tax debate was so linked to this issue that it generated the Rudd retreat from it. Management of the economy is a government breaker. Linked to the cost of living and the associated lifestyle are other major issues including employment, housing and access to healthcare and education.

Both sides aim for continued economic growth, employment generation and low interest rates.

#### Leadership

The instability of the ALP leadership has been an ongoing problem for Labor; combined with the fact that there has been massive churn in Cabinet positions. This has allowed the Opposition to paint the Government as unstable and inconsistent in its leadership and direction. Changing back to Kevin Rudd has greatly improved Labor's chances, but a negative legacy remains from the Gillard years with many voters remaining switched off and immune to Labor's messages.

#### Asylum seekers

The treatment of asylum seekers has been an ongoing hot debate since before the 2001 election.

As a point of policy differentiation, Labor opposed the Coalition's policy in the 2007 election and implemented its changes once in office. In its second term, Labor shifted ground under the influence of a wave of illegal immigration and adopted a policy

similar to the Howard Government stance, including offshore processing.

On his return to the leadership in July, Kevin Rudd unveiled a further Howard-like stance, condemning asylum seekers who arrive by boat without a visa to a life in Papua New Guinea and no chance of settling in Australia. The Coalition has since strengthened its policy by putting the military and the Immigration Minister in charge of border protection

#### Child care/Parental leave

There is bi-partisan support for parental entitlement to a period of paid leave after the birth or adoption of a child. On childcare, Labor, Coalition and the Greens emphasise the need for flexible and affordable arrangements for parents, the rollout of the National Quality Standards for childcare and a pay boost for childcare workers.

Labor is proposing to scrap the current baby bonus of \$5,000 for a first child and \$3,000 for subsequent children and replace it with an additional supplement to recipients of Family Tax Benefit Part A. The Coalition described removal of the baby bonus as "objectionable", but it will support the savings measure. It is unlikely to proceed with the planned increase to Family Tax Benefit Part A.

#### Environmental Policy

An emissions trading scheme was initially proposed by Kevin Rudd in the lead up to the 2007 Election but he postponed the idea. Julia Gillard, as the new Prime Minister, loudly refused to implement any carbon pricing in the 2010 Election campaign, but afterwards, in her agreement with the Greens, revived the idea of a carbon price in the form of a Carbon Tax. Her rating in the opinion polls suffered thereafter.

On his return to leadership, Mr Rudd terminated the Carbon Tax. Labor now promises to move to an emissions trading scheme by July 2014, one year earlier than planned, which the Coalition says is a Carbon Tax under a different name.

The Coalition plans to scale back staff in the newly created Climate Change department, and merge it into the Environment Department. Under its "Direct Action" policy a number of initiatives and agencies set up by Labor will be abolished.

\* Bob Lawrence is a Senior Adviser, Media and Government Relations at FIRST Advisers, a Sydney based consultancy specialising in strategic communications and governance assisting companies communicate with investors, manage the media and liaise with government.