

Andrew Bolt: Turnbull must be dumped as PM, Liberals turn to the Right

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MALCOLM Turnbull is finished as Prime Minister and must be replaced — but only by a conservative. Don't listen to the dumb talk that says Turnbull's crash and burn in the polls proves changing leaders does not work. Wrong. It's changing to a dud leader — whether Julia Gillard or Turnbull — that does not work.

But changing to a better one does. Changing to Paul Keating won Labor the 1993 election. Changing back to Kevin Rudd after Gillard turned toxic saved at least 10 Labor seats at the 2013 election.

RITA PANAHİ: AT LEAST BERNARDI STANDS FOR SOMETHING



The Liberal Party should dump Malcolm Turnbull as PM, writes Andrew Bolt. Picture: Lawrence Pinder

It is now clear the Liberals must also change leaders again. And it is even clearer that the leader they choose must be a conservative and not another Turnbull Leftist. That's not just because nearly one million more Liberal supporters have switched their allegiance to One Nation just since last year's election, boosting Pauline Nation's right-wing party to an astonishing eight to 10 per cent in the latest polls.

It's also the only way to minimise the damage done by Senator Cory Bernardi's decision to quit the Liberals and set up his Australian Conservatives party. If the Liberals tack back to the right, they will make Bernardi seem a less compelling alternative for conservative voters.

AUSTRALIA: Senators Condemn Cory Bernardi Defection From Liberal Party February 0721:10



Shortly after Senator Cory Bernadi announced he quit the Liberal Party on February 7, opposition and former allies took turns slamming the former Coalition member. Senator

Penny Wong was the first to speak and used Bernadi's defection to highlight the chaos within the Federal Government. She said Bernadi was a 'symptom' of a deep division that has crippled Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. The Attorney-General George Brandis said Bernadi had 'done the wrong thing' and said he betrayed the electorate who voted for him while he was running on a Coalition platform. The sentiment was echoed by both the Greens leader Richard Di Natale and by independent Derryn Hinch, who said his resignation from the LNP would've been admirable if he had done it before securing a six-year term as a senator in the July, 2016 elections. The exception to the chamber-wide condemnation was Senator Malcolm Roberts from the far-right One Nation party. Roberts supported Bernadi's lambasting of the 'political elite', who he said were out of touch with the Australian people. Credit: Australian Parliament House via Storyful

Turnbull clearly cannot do that job. He is a man of the left who is unconvincing even when he tries to do the conservative thing, whether now attacking Labor on its mad green energy schemes or on its refusal to let the public decide whether to allow same sex marriage.

Turnbull's heart is clearly not in this and his instincts are wrong. So when he (correctly) says Labor's renewable energy target will drive up power prices, he still can't bring himself to drop his own target. Likewise, when he (correctly) says the public should get to vote on same-sex marriage, he still refuses to rule out letting politicians vote to force it on voters, after all. And when he (correctly) says he's for free speech — a cause taken up by Hanson and Bernadi — he still won't promise to scrap the wicked Racial Discrimination Act that's been used to persecute even seven students protesting against racial segregation at their university.



Former Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi during Senate Question Time at Parliament House on Wednesday. Picture: AAP/Mick Tsikas

Turnbull also has non-ideological problems, of course, including lousy political instincts, poor communication skills and a curious inability to handle people. For instance, why didn't he speak to Bernardi over the past several months, when it was clear the conservative could quit? Even his relationships with the key plotters who made him Prime Minister are badly damaged.

Turnbull deserted Treasurer Scott Morrison after sending him in to sell some of his wilder tax ideas and the two now don't trust each other. Meanwhile, deputy Liberal leader Julie Bishop — who betrayed Abbott as his "loyal deputy" — has said little to defend Turnbull as he fights for his own political life. Doesn't want blood on her Blahniks.

MORE ANDREW BOLT



Treasurer Scott Morrison has trust issues with the PM. Picture: Kym Smith

And so Liberal MPs are now reluctantly asking themselves: if not Turnbull, then who? There's no counting of numbers yet, but the murmuring has started. But here we go again. That early talk is of replacing Turnbull with Bishop, the pollster's pick, with conservative Immigration Minister Peter Dutton as her deputy.

This is mad. Have the Liberals learned nothing from the Turnbull disaster?

Lesson #1: Don't pick a leader just because they're hot in the polls or pushed by the media. Turnbull was wildly popular in the polls and a media darling when he took over. But then he actually had to do stuff, which meant offending some people. He also had to confront the same mulish no-saying Senate, which meant looking weak.

And he had to act like a Liberal leader, which reminded his media mates at the ABC they actually hated all Liberal Prime Ministers and not just Tony Abbott. All that would also happen to Bishop.



The Liberals must learn from the mistake they made when they panicked and replaced Tony Abbott with a leftist. Picture: Ray Strange

Lesson #2: Don't pick someone with no clear idea of what they actually want to do as prime minister. Turnbull was clueless. He blew his popularity when he discussed a hundred plans for fixing the economy — from a GST rise to a new tax for the states — without ever really deciding on one. He was the dog that caught the car when the public was actually screaming for a leader.

Bishop is another Turnbull. What does she actually stand for? Hello?

No, the Liberals must learn from the mistake they made when they panicked and replaced Abbott with a leftist they falsely claimed had a plan. Since then the public has gone even further right. The next Liberal leader must be a conservative.

IF PM GOES, WHO TAKES OVER?

THE Liberals are keeping Malcolm Turnbull as PM for now, not just because they fear voters will hate another change. They also can't see an obvious replacement. Check the contenders:

JULIE BISHOP



Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop. Picture: Kym Smith

The Foreign Minister is the most popular contender. But Turnbull was also popular before becoming PM. More important than popularity going into the job is performance once there. Given that, Bishop carries big negatives. She failed in Opposition as Treasury spokeswoman. And she has gone missing during the blow-up between Turnbull and Donald Trump. She's also a go-with-the-flow whateverist when the times demand a conservative. And after her betrayal of Tony Abbott, who trusts her?

TONY ABBOTT



Former PM Tony Abbott. Picture: AAP/Mick Tsikas

He's been PM before and is the party's best election campaigner. He has shown he can pick the issues that cut through and work against Labor. As a conservative, he would reassure disillusioned Liberals. But Abbott is still not popular and is mocked by many journalists. Many MPs don't trust him when he says he's learned from his mistakes: breaking promises, charging too hard and dropping conservative causes. Some also demand he not bring back capable but controversial Peta Credlin as chief of staff.

PETER DUTTON



Immigration Minister Peter Dutton. Picture: Kym Smith

Another conservative — what the Liberals need. Has performed well as Immigration Minister, stopping the boats and confronting critics of our border laws. The former policeman is down-to-earth, unflappable and takes no prisoners in debates. But Dutton had less success as Abbott's Health Minister, handling a complex portfolio with less clear performance indicators. He also reassures rather than inspires.

SCOTT MORRISON



Treasurer Scott Morrison. Picture: Kym Smith
The Treasurer was brilliant as Immigration Minister. A Christian, he seemed a conservative who could also talk to the Left. At his best a tough debater. But he has struggled as Treasurer and now speaks like a man scared of being interrupted and contradicted — too fast and breathless. He tried to sell Turnbull's tax thought-bubbles and was cut off at the knees. Growth has gone backwards. Moreover, conservative Liberals don't trust him after he helped topple Abbott.

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Those are the frontrunners. But don't rule out Social Services Minister Christian Porter, who is conservative, clever and pleasant. Health Minister Greg Hunt would offer himself as a healer