

## **'Sad' truth is that Malcolm Turnbull is doomed and savaging of Tony Abbott shows it**

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MALCOLM Turnbull made three things clear by calling Tony Abbott "sad", just for giving him great ideas to save his dying government.

Turnbull won't change.

His government will fall.

And conservatives will never get what they want from the Liberals while Turnbull leads.

Even more Liberal voters will decide they may as well vote instead for Cory Bernardi's Australian Conservatives. Or the Liberal Democrats. Or Pauline Hanson.

Turnbull and his team last week mocked and savaged Abbott after the former prime minister warned Turnbull's government would "drift to defeat" if it didn't sharpen up and move to the Right.

Few traditional Liberals would quarrel in principle with the steps Abbott suggested. "In short, why not say to the people of Australia: we'll cut the (renewable energy target) to help with your power bills; we'll cut immigration to make housing more affordable; we'll scrap the Human Rights Commission to stop official bullying; we'll stop all new spending to end ripping off our grandkids; and we'll reform the Senate to have government, not gridlock."

What is wrong with that agenda? Wouldn't the Turnbull Government be more potent if it took it on — not least by intensifying the fight against Labor's insane policy to triple the renewable energy we now use?

Wouldn't that platform — especially curbing the recklessly large immigration intake — also appeal to the voters now deserting the Liberals for One Nation?



Malcolm Turnbull is famously unable to take responsibility for his disasters.

Yet check how Abbott's advice was screamed down by Turnbull supporters in the government and media, many blinded by hatred of Abbott and contempt for conservatives. What better proof that the people who have hijacked the Liberals still don't understand why the party is losing its base and is in mortal danger?

Turnbull called Abbott "sad". Finance Minister Matthias Cormann, a former Abbott loyalist, called him "deliberately destructive". Defence Industries Minister Christopher Pyne, of the Liberals' Left, laboriously went through each of Abbott's suggestions to explain that Abbott was just a hypocrite who hadn't implemented any of these "catastrophic" things when he was prime minister.

But note the telltale difference. Abbott talked policy. His enemies replied with personal attacks, always a sign of weakness. So what if Abbott as prime minister caved in under intense media and internal pressure and did not do what he now recommends?

BLOG WITH ANDREW BOLT

He's learned from his failures. But have his colleagues? Journalists are now repeating the spin that Abbott has simply united conservatives around Turnbull and even "strengthened" the government.

Seriously? A warning to Turnbull backers: killing Abbott will not save Turnbull.

The government is not way behind in the polls because of Abbott. The public makes up its own mind whether he speaks or shuts up. The government is way behind because of Turnbull, who has led it too far to the Left, while meanwhile struggling to explain any economic or cultural agenda as the Budget blows out and the economy limps.

The voters see all this and will judge. Abbott's advice will not produce the bad polls. The opposite is true: Turnbull's bad polls have produced Abbott's advice. But Turnbull is famously unable to take responsibility for his disasters and will this week blame Abbott for what will be yet another bad Newspoll for the government.



Tony Abbott is not destroying the Liberals but trying to save them.

Already Turnbull supporters are claiming Abbott has just destroyed the momentum from Turnbull's good performance over the past few weeks. But what actually happened in Turnbull's "good" weeks?

He got media praise for abusing Labor leader Bill Shorten as a "social-climbing parasite", but that's hardly likely to impress voters. True, he did also put heat on Labor over its mad renewable energy policy, although he still promises more wind power himself as bills keep rising and the electricity starts flickering. But even his attacks on Labor can't hide the yawning problems dogging the government — problems that became only more obvious even in these "good" weeks.

Turnbull's Budget in now is such strife that Treasurer Scott Morrison has warned taxes may have to rise. Now Fair Work Australia has cut Sunday penalty rates for retail workers, which is a good reform but a political headache for a prime minister so famously rich.

Meanwhile, Turnbull keeps missing chances to set a cultural lead as well. Last week, we had a school allowing Muslim students to refuse to shake the hands of women, while a Muslim leader explained how the Koran endorsed wife-beating.

Yet Turnbull seemed to have lost his voice.

No, the problem really isn't Abbott, who is not destroying the Liberals but trying to save them. The problem really is Turnbull, now treating even useful advice as an act of war.