

Newspoll: Majors turn tide on Greens, One Nation



Both Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten continue to suffer from poor personal approval ratings. Picture: AAP / David Geraghty

David Crowe, The Australian, 12:00AM July 24, 2017

Malcolm Turnbull has won back supporters from One Nation while Bill Shorten has gained ground on the Greens, as voters turn against the minor parties while cementing Labor's lead over the government of 53 to 47 per cent in two-party terms.

The Coalition's primary vote has increased from 35 to 36 per cent at the expense of Pauline Hanson's One Nation, which has seen its support fall from 11 to 9 per cent in its biggest setback this year.

The latest Newspoll, conducted exclusively for The Australian, also reveals a gain in Labor's primary vote from 36 to 37 per cent, at the same time as a fall in support for the Greens after the forced resignations of the party's two federal deputies over their citizenship. Support for minor parties is now at one of its lowest points for the year, in the wake of the Prime Minister's message last week on national security and the Opposition Leader's attempt to lure younger voters from the Greens with a warning about generational - inequality.

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Mr Turnbull has widened the gap with Mr Shorten as preferred prime minister with a lead of 43 per cent to 32 per cent, regaining a double-digit advantage compared with a difference of only eight percentage points in the last Newspoll two weeks ago.

The results come after the government spent the past week unveiling new policies, including the formation of a home affairs ministry and measures to give the Australian Defence Force more scope to respond to state requests for help in fighting terror threats.

Mr Shorten has stepped up his warnings about increasing inequality in recent days, in a message that echoes British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's, but it made no change to the opposition's lead over the Coalition in two-party terms.

At 36 per cent, the government's primary vote is six percentage points below its result at the election one year ago, amid calls from former prime minister Tony Abbott for a dramatic shift in the government's direction.

The government's success depends in part on drawing back voters it has lost to One Nation during a time of increasing attacks on Mr Turnbull from conservative commentators.

One Nation has surged in support from a primary vote of 1.3 per cent at the election to 10 per cent in the average of the Newspoll surveys over the three months to the end of March, with its support in Queensland reaching 16 per cent. The party's slip in support from 11 per cent in recent Newspolls to 9 per cent in the latest survey is its biggest slide this year.

At 37 per cent, Labor's primary vote is at one of its highest points in the year to date and is more than two percentage points ahead of its result at the last election. Mr Shorten yesterday confirmed Labor's stance on asylum-seekers by declaring that those who came by boat would not be settled in Australia, while he signalled plans for tougher tax rules on the wealthy as part of a wider plan to tackle inequality. "We've got to rebuild confidence. At the heart of confidence is dealing with inequality and a lot of people don't think that they're - getting a square go," Mr Shorten told the ABC. "Look at the wages system — most Australians haven't had a wage rise for two or three years."

The gain in Labor's primary vote in the latest Newspoll takes it closer to the 38 per cent level that saw it secure government after the 2010 election, with preferences from Greens voters taking it to a clear lead over the Coalition in two-party terms. The fall in support for the Greens is within the margin of error for this survey but comes after a series of damaging blows to the party, including the resignation of West Australian senator Scott Ludlam for holding New Zealand dual citizenship and Queensland senator Larissa Waters over dual citizenship with Canada. Greens leader Richard Di Natale has vowed to launch "big campaigns" to build support and appeared yesterday at the Splendour In The Grass music festival on a panel against Labor infrastructure spokesman Anthony Albanese.

The Australian revealed last week that Greens members are increasingly worried about the party's fall in support in Newspoll and other published polls when the past 12 months are compared with the stronger results in the year leading up to the election. The Greens' primary vote averaged 11.75 per cent in the four quarterly Newspoll reports based on surveys conducted from April 2015 to March last year. This fell to 9.75 per cent in the four reports covering the period from August last year to last month.

The swing against the minor parties in the latest Newspoll survey is within the margin of error but represents a positive sign for the Coalition and Labor after months of losing ground.

Support for the Greens, One Nation, other parties and the “uncommitted” vote reached 35 per cent at the end of February, in a horror poll for the government. This has fallen to 32 per cent in the latest survey reflecting the 9 per cent support for One Nation, 9 per cent support for the Greens, 9 per cent support for others and 5 per cent who are uncommitted.

The survey of 1677 voters taken from Thursday to yesterday has a margin of error of 2.4 per cent. It is the 16th consecutive Newspoll where the Coalition has trailed Labor, a tally that Mr Turnbull turned into a test of leadership when he cited the loss of “30 Newspolls in a row” as a reason for challenging Mr Abbott in September 2015.

Mr Turnbull and Mr Shorten continue to suffer from poor personal approval ratings. Mr Shorten’s satisfaction ratings were unchanged, with 33 per cent of voters satisfied and 53 per cent dissatisfied. This results in a net satisfaction rating of minus 20.

Mr Turnbull saw an improvement in his satisfaction rating, which rose from 32 to 34 per cent, and a fall in his dissatisfaction rating from 56 to 54 per cent. As a result, the Prime Minister’s net satisfaction rating was also minus 20 points, an improvement of four points. Mr Turnbull also increased his advantage over Mr Shorten as preferred prime minister to lead by 43 per cent over 32 per cent.

This represents a gap of 11 points, compared with a tighter gap of eight percentage points in the Newspoll two weeks ago.