

Newspoll: Malcolm Turnbull, Coalition lose ground to Bill Shorten



The latest Newspoll figures have delivered another blow to Malcolm Turnbull. Picture: Ryan Osland

David Crowe, *The Australian*, 9:30PM October 15, 2017

The Turnbull government is struggling to win back support as it prepares for a new fight on household energy prices, with the Coalition trailing Labor by 46 to 54 per cent in another harsh verdict from voters.

The latest Newspoll, conducted exclusively for *The Australian*, shows Labor has cemented its lead in two-party terms despite a slip in its core support over the past three weeks, with its primary vote falling from 38 to 37 per cent.

In a danger sign for the government, Malcolm Turnbull has lost ground to Bill Shorten as preferred prime minister to lead by 41 to 33 per cent on the key measure, narrowing the gap from the previous result of 42 to 31 per cent.

The Coalition held its core support at 36 per cent over a period when it announced reforms to private health insurance, plans for naval shipbuilding, an agreement with gas exporters to boost domestic supply, increases in medicine funding and an agreement with the states on new powers to fight terrorism.

At 36 per cent, the government's primary vote is six percentage points below its result at the last election amid fears the Coalition is losing supporters

because of the division within its own ranks as well as the rise of Pauline Hanson's One Nation and the Australian Conservatives led by former Liberal senator Cory Bernardi.

One Nation increased its primary vote from 8 to 9 per cent while support for other parties — a group that includes the Nick Xenophon Team as well as the Australian Conservatives — fell from 9 to 8 per cent. Support for the Greens increased from 9 to 10 per cent in a trend that helped Labor keep its lead over the Coalition in two-party terms.

Mr Turnbull's standing with voters has been eroded in the latest survey, with 32 per cent saying they are satisfied with his performance, compared to 35 per cent three weeks ago. The number of voters who are dissatisfied with Mr Turnbull's performance rose from 52 to 56 per cent.

As a result, the Prime Minister's net satisfaction rating — the difference between those who are satisfied and those who are dissatisfied with his performance — worsened to minus 24 percentage points.



Labor leader Bill Shorten has gained ground on Malcolm Turnbull in terms of voter satisfaction. Picture: Gary Ramage

Mr Shorten's net satisfaction rating has also deteriorated, from minus 20 points three weeks ago to minus 22 points in the latest survey. The proportion of voters who are satisfied with the Opposition Leader was steady at 33 per cent but the number who are dissatisfied rose from 53 to 55 per cent.

The latest survey is the 21st consecutive Newspoll in which the Coalition has trailed Labor, a tally that is now used against Mr Turnbull by his critics because he cited the loss of “30 Newspolls in a row” as a reason for challenging Tony Abbott in September 2015.

Mr Turnbull has retained his lead over Mr Shorten as preferred prime minister at a time of disagreement within the Coalition party room on energy policy and continued criticism from Tony Abbott over the government’s direction.

Voters scaled back their support for Mr Turnbull as better prime minister from 42 to 41 per cent, while they increased their support for Mr Shorten from 31 to 33 per cent. The proportion of voters who were “uncommitted” fell from 27 to 26 per cent. As a result, Mr Turnbull saw his lead over Mr Shorten on this measure narrow to 8 percentage points from 11 points three weeks ago and 17 points in the previous survey.

The Newspoll survey of 1583 voters was conducted from Thursday to Sunday and has a margin of error of 2.5 per cent.

Human Services Minister Alan Tudge acknowledged that Mr Abbott’s interventions were having an impact on the government. “Any sense of disunity reflects poorly on a government,” Mr Tudge told interviewer Patricia Karvelas on Sky News before the Newspoll results were published online last night. “Sometimes, when Tony Abbott speaks out, he gives a sense of disunity within the government. “Oftentimes it may just be him and his particular views, but nevertheless the media will portray it as being a more significant split within the party than perhaps what it represents at a particular time.”

Mr Tudge said he was not going to be distracted by speeches from other members that were “contrary to policy”.