

[GRAHAM RICHARDSON](#)

## At 29 Newspolls and counting, the trajectory is clear for Malcolm Turnbull



Malcolm Turnbull is facing more pressure over his approaching 30th straight Newspoll loss. Picture: Kym Smith

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- The Australian, 3:57PM March 27, 2018, [GRAHAM RICHARDSON](#), Political Columnist  
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This week's Newspoll surprised no one in showing, for the 29th time in a row, Labor ahead of the Coalition and Malcolm Turnbull. What was surprising was the margin.

Despite announcing a superannuation tax grab, clumsily aimed at "the rich" while whacking almost 250,000 part or full pensioners, Labor still held a 53 per cent to 47 per cent lead. When Labor's flawed policy was announced, I immediately wrote that Bill Shorten would have to announce pensioners would be exempt from the super arrangements. No matter how far you try to stretch the definition of rich, it can never include pensioners, who by definition cannot be wealthy.

It took the opposition almost two weeks to make this concession, which left plenty of time for the government, and the Prime Minister in particular, to rip

Labor's new policy apart, but what we got from Turnbull was mostly silence. A good political leader would have smelled Shorten's blood in the water and would have flown into attack mode. A good political leader would have seized the opportunity to go on every talkback radio program and every current affairs television show every day, before Labor relented and excluded pensioners. What we got from Turnbull was one lousy press conference that week. Any advantage was not pressed. Labor did not have to pay for its mistake.

In fact, Labor's primary vote actually went up one point to 39 per cent, the same result achieved by Bob Hawke when he won the 1990 election. This was yet another damning failure on Turnbull's part, as he again demonstrated that he has zero political intelligence.

As the 30th losing Newspoll fast approaches, Turnbull has no one to blame but himself. As he prepares to spin and bluster his way out of the extraordinary significance of that next poll loss, he should remember four words he used to great effect in defeating Tony Abbott: "The trajectory is clear." He cannot escape from the damage of those words.

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He can carry on merrily telling us that during his time as Prime Minister a huge number of jobs has been created and he will almost certainly succeed in securing business tax cuts, but it will be to no avail. There are very few votes in the business tax cuts, even if this is good policy. Until the average punter can see what's in it for him or her, this is a hollow victory.

When you examine the evidence, the trajectory is indeed crystal clear. The disappointment in Turnbull, the man, hangs like a pall over the Coalition's election chances. It is almost impossible to see a Coalition victory under the leadership of this bloke, yet no one in the Liberal Party has the stomach for a leadership change. The lemmings are charging headlong for the cliff.

With their primary vote at an historically low 37 per cent, Coalition MPs and senators know that there aren't enough preferences to save them. Cory Bernardi's Australian Conservatives are failing to blow out a candle with right-

wing voters. Results in the Batman and Bennelong by-elections and the South Australian state poll suggests voters are not buying what Bernardi is selling.

Similarly, the One Nation vote is nowhere near what it was and is highly unlikely to improve. And Nick Xenophon has taken his own political life.

There will be no miraculous resurrection for Turnbull.

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