

Newspoll: Voters see Turnbull as arrogant, remote, uncaring



Opposition Leader Bill Shorten trails Malcolm Turnbull on key leadership qualities.

- The Australian, 12:00AM April 9, 2018, GEOFF.CHAMBERS@Chambersgc

Bill Shorten continues to lag behind Malcolm Turnbull on key leadership qualities with voters declaring he is less “trustworthy, decisive, experienced and likeable”.

But in a danger sign for the Prime Minister, he has continued to lose ground on leadership - attributes and now trails the Opposition Leader on the measures of arrogance, caring for people and being in touch with voters.

Mr Turnbull, who enjoyed a honeymoon period following his leadership coup against Tony Abbott, has suffered sharp falls in eight leadership quality measures.

Exclusive Newspoll data prepared for *The Australian*, based on more than 1500 interviews with voters between Thursday and Sunday, reveals Mr Shorten has effectively drawn level on having a “vision for Australia”, after Mr Turnbull dropped from 66 to 59 per cent in two years.

Voters have also marked down Mr Turnbull in relation to being in touch with voters, slipping from 54 per cent in February 2016 to 42 per cent.

The sharp decline, with Mr Shorten now leading the category by 10 per cent, has influenced a shift in media strategy from Mr Turnbull, with the Prime Minister increasing FM radio and morning television appearances.

Over the weekend, Mr Turnbull — not known as an avid sports fan — attended rugby league, rugby union and AFL matches. He posted Instagram photos to his 92,000 followers showing him inside the sheds with the Sydney Roosters and mingling with the Cronulla Sharks fans.



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull with Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton.

Mr Turnbull maintains a considerable lead over Mr Shorten in the “experienced” stakes, returning to a high of 77 per cent, 14 points ahead of his Labor rival.

In the wake of Mr Shorten moving to abolish cash refunds for dividend imputation credits, a policy described by the government as a “tax grab on retirees”, 59 per cent of Australians described him as arrogant, a 6 per cent increase since last December. Mr Turnbull still has a higher rating in this category at 61 per cent, up from 55 per cent in February 2016.

Mr Shorten, backed by senior Labor colleagues and the trade unions, has spent the past year increasing Labor’s personal attacks on the government, portraying Mr Turnbull as “out of touch”.

“This is an out-of-touch government,” Mr Shorten said at a press conference last month.

Senior Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese, Mr Shorten’s long-time leadership rival, also pushed the “out of touch” message last week.

“This is a government that is out of touch. Our priority isn’t cutting company taxes. It is investment in education, investment in health, investment in childcare,” Mr Albanese said.

Labor has increased its personal attacks on Mr Turnbull following a horror start to the year for the Prime Minister, headlined by the resignation of former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce and the government’s failure to effectively prosecute its campaign against Mr Shorten’s “retiree tax grab”.

Senior government sources told *The Australian* Mr Turnbull needed to wrest back the political agenda from Mr Shorten and press harder on key wedge issues for the Opposition Leader, instead of fighting itself on energy.

“The budget is key. We have to sell that hard and get our message out there and not be drowned out by Labor and the unions,” a source said.