

## PoliticsNow: Live reaction to PM losing 30th consecutive Newspoll



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull pictured at Teenie Weenies Learning Centre in Panania in western Sydney today. Picture: Richard Dobson



Former prime minister Tony Abbott during the Pollie Pedal Bike Ride in Warragul, Victoria, this morning.

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Hello and welcome to **PoliticsNow**, *The Australian's* live blog on the happenings in federal politics. Liberal MPs are coming out to dismiss the significance of Malcolm Turnbull losing a 30th consecutive Newspoll, and [Tony Abbott](#) is insisting it's "not about me."



**lining**

GREG BROWN AN HOUR AGO | 3:55PM **Ciobo's Newspoll silver**



Australian Trade Minister Steve Ciobo. Picture: AAP.

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo has taken an optimistic angle on today's Newspoll result, saying it was notable that Bill Shorten still trailed Malcolm Turnbull as preferred prime minister.

“For 30 Newspolls Bill Shorten has been behind Malcolm Turnbull as PM, for 30 Newspolls Bill Shorten and the Labor Party continued to trail in terms of preferred prime minister Malcolm Turnbull and the Coalition,” Mr Ciobo told Sky News.

“So I think the Labor Party has gotten very cocky, they are running around crowing as if they have got the next election in the bag, that is why we start to see reckless economic policies like \$200 billion-plus of new taxes that Labor is putting out there.

“This is a Labor party that is drunk on the prospect that they think they have already won the



**Dutton**

[GREG BROWN](#) 3 HOURS AGO | 1.25PM **‘PM one day, not yet’:**

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton says he wants to be prime minister one day but denies there is any push against Malcolm Turnbull.



Peter Dutton. Picture: AAP.

Mr Dutton said the Prime Minister was wrong to cite 30 Newspoll losses as a reason for challenging Tony Abbott for the leadership in 2015.

“I don’t think it is right and history demonstrates that ..I think politics can turn on a dime, there are issues that can change votes over night,” Mr Dutton told 3AW radio.

“I think there is always a pressure on leaders in these situations, there is no question about that, Malcolm says he regrets having used the 30 Newspoll statement and he has been honest about that.

“But for us now we need to concentrate, not on polls and not on who likes who, it is about what is important to the Australian public.”

Mr Dutton said he retained ambitions for the nation’s top job but promised he would stay loyal to Mr Turnbull.

“There are 149 people in the federal parliament, I’m one and I think the other 148, if they’re being honest, would tell you if the opportunity came their way they’d be interested as well,” he said.

“There are lots of reasons why you would want to lead ...what I think is the greatest country in the world.

“That’s something that many parliamentarians aspire to and I think opportunities can come. But for me, as I say, loyalty is important and I’ve made a virtue of that.”



Malcolm

[GREG BROWN](#) 4 HOURS AGO | 12.45PM **‘Please explain,**

Tony Abbott says it is up to Malcolm Turnbull to explain why the Newspoll metric is no longer relevant to leadership, despite it being a key part of the leadership change in 2015.

The former prime minister said he never believed Newspoll should be considered in dumping a sitting prime minister.



Tony Abbott in the Pollie Pedal Bike Ride in Warragul, Victoria. Picture; AAP.

“It is really something for Malcolm to explain, why it applied to me but shouldn’t apply now,” Mr Abbott told 2GB.

“I never did make polls the metric I thought the important thing was winning elections and in two elections I took 25 seats off the Labor Party and that is what really counts not opinion polls that are ephemeral but winning seats which last.”

Mr Abbott attacked the Prime Minister for claiming the Abbott government lacked cabinet consultations and economic leadership.

“He sometimes says it was necessary to get rid of a democratically elected prime minister to restore cabinet government, well I ran a perfectly orthodox cabinet government,” Mr Abbott said.

“I served in the Howard cabinet for much longer than anyone else that is currently in government, the Howard cabinet was a good cabinet, it never leaked until 2007 or thereabouts, so I know all about good cabinet government and I think when it comes to learning from the master no one has learnt more than I have.

“The other point that is sometimes made is that there was no clear economic narrative, well I completely reject that, there was a very, very clear economic narrative under my government.”



[GREG BROWN](#) 4 HOURS AGO | 12.35PM **'Time for strong-**

## **arming over Liddell'**

Tony Abbott says the government should consider forcibly buying the Liddell coal power station in the NSW Hunter Valley.

The former prime minister, who is cycling near the coal plants in Victoria's Latrobe Valley this morning, said the jawboning of AGL may have to escalate into a compulsory acquisition.

"Governments should be very reluctant to compulsory acquire assets but let's face it: it is an essential service, electricity is not an optional extra in the modern world it is an absolute essential service, and if a company is threatening an essential service it is up to the government to take appropriate action and keep that essential service going," Mr Abbott told 2GB radio.

"There has been a lot of jawboning of AGL but perhaps it is the time for strong-arming because we just cannot afford to lose Liddell."

Mr Abbott said the Hazelwood coal mine should never have closed and warned the government against allowing AGL to put its profits ahead of the national interest.

"It was closed by a French multinational that put its profits ahead of our national interest, our energy security," he said.

"AGL is an Australian company with an American head but there is no way on God's earth we should allow the AGL boss, who wants to maximise his bonuses, who wants to maximise the prices he gets, there is no way we should allow this to jeopardise our national interest.

"We just cannot allow this to close until we have got alternative affordable reliable baseload power in place."



GREG BROWN 6 HOURS AGO | 11.00AM **Shorten's 'praise' for**

## **Rudd**

Bill Shorten says Kevin Rudd did a “very good job as prime minister” after the former Labor leader savaged him in a tweet this morning. The Opposition Leader said Labor had learnt from its disunity after Mr Rudd tweeted that “Bill (I’m with the coup) Shorten)” would be dismissed as leader if the caucus held him to his own ruthless standards when he was a key player in the 2010 coup.

“I’m not going to interpret someone’s emotions through a tweet. Mr Rudd did a very good job as prime minister of Australia. What I’m focused on is making sure that a united opposition provides a real alternative,” Mr Shorten said. “I want to express my gratitude to my party. The reality is that we’ve learnt from our mistakes. I think if you now look at who would thin the gold medal of disunity, it would be the Coalition. They can’t sit in the same room as each other.”

Earlier, [Mr Rudd tweeted](#): “Ironically, the beneficiaries of the 2010 coup are Malcolm (Godwin Gretch) Turnbull and Bill (I’m with the coup) Shorten. In 87 newspolls I fell behind once. Based on that, coup leaders acted, saying we’d lose election. Both MT&BS wld be long gone if we applied that standard now.”





[GREG BROWN](#) 6 HOURS AGO | 10.40AM **Shorten ‘not defined by**

## **Newspoll’**

Bill Shorten he does not define his success by Newspoll like Malcolm Turnbull does.

The Opposition Leader said the Prime Minister created his own problem by naming 30 Newspolls as a reason for challenging Tony Abbott for the leadership of the Liberal Party.

“It’s Mr Turnbull who said that 30 Newspoll is a definition of success, that’s his problem,” Mr Shorten said.

“I’m not like Mr Turnbull. I don’t define my success or, indeed, my job by what Newspoll does. I actually think the Australian people want us to focus less on polls and personalities and a lot more on what we do for the people.”



[GREG BROWN](#) 7 HOURS AGO | 10.05AM **‘I regret 30 Newspoll**

## **remarks’**

Malcolm Turnbull says he regrets citing 30 Newspoll losses as a reason for rolling Tony Abbott as he insists he has the support of the Liberal partyroom.

The Prime Minister faced media this morning after the highly anticipated Newspoll which had the government trailing Labor for the 30th consecutive time – the same benchmark Mr Turnbull gave for challenging Mr Abbott for the leadership in September 2015.

“I regret making those remarks at the time, making the remarks about 30 Newspolls at the time. But what I promised to do what to provide economic leadership and traditional cabinet government and I have done both,” Mr Turnbull said.





Malcolm Turnbull at Teenie Weenies Learning Centre in Panania in western Sydney. Picture: Richard Dobson.

“Australians are focused on the real contest which is the type of country you want to be. Do we want to be a country that has the strong revenues to fund increased child care, that has record jobs growth, that has lower taxes and more investment?

“Or do we want to be the country Bill Shorten is offering: higher taxes, less investment, lower employment, Australian jobs going overseas.”

Mr Turnbull said his job was not under threat despite the string of bad polls.

“I do have the confidence of my colleagues and no-one is suggesting I don’t,” he said.



GREG BROWN 7 HOURS AGO | 9.20AM **PM, Shorten ‘my**

**beneficiaries’**

Kevin Rudd has used the government’s 30th consecutive Newspoll loss to attack Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten.

He said both leaders would be “long gone” if their parties were as ruthless as the 2010 caucus that ousted him.

“Ironically, the beneficiaries of the 2010 coup are Malcolm (Godwin Gretch) Turnbull and Bill (I’m with the coup) Shorten,” Mr Rudd tweeted.

“In 87 Newspolls I fell behind once. Based on that, coup leaders acted, saying we’d lose election. Both (Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten) would be long gone if we applied that standard now.”



[GREG BROWN](#) 7 HOURS AGO | 9.15AM **‘Abbott not rolled over**

### **Newspoll’**

Education Minister Simon Birmingham says Newspoll was not the main reason Malcolm Turnbull rolled Tony Abbott as Liberal Party leader.

Senator Birmingham said the Prime Minister cited a “number of things” when he challenged Mr Abbott, including strong economic management.

“On that he’s delivered in spades with more than 420,000 jobs across Australia, delivered just in the last year,” Senator Birmingham told the ABC.

“The Prime Minister also cited the importance of a return to collective cabinet decision making, to strong cabinet government the like of which the Howard government delivered.”



[GREG BROWN](#) 8 HOURS AGO | 9.05AM **‘Unity crucial’**

Cities Minister Angus Taylor says the unity is the “crucial imperative” if the Coalition is improve its stocks and defeat Labor in the next election.

Mr Taylor downplayed today’s 30th consecutive Newspoll loss, believing polls were irrelevant to the public.

Mr Taylor called for unity in the government from Victoria's Warragul where he is taking part in the Pollie Pedal with Tony Abbott.

"I do think it is really critical in the lead up to an election, sometime in the next 12 months or so, that we be unified, we remain unified," Mr Taylor told Sky News.

"I think John Howard put it well in his comments that unity is crucially important if we are to get our message over and if we are going to sell the achievements on jobs on infrastructure."

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8 HOURS AGO | 8.40AM **What Lib MPs are saying**

\* "That's what I think we need to focus on today, being the best possible government with the strongest possible policies": *Tony Abbott*.

\* "We are in a close, tight political environment. The next election is absolutely there to be won": *Malcolm Turnbull*.

\* "The public are expressing an opinion, but it will come to a point where they will have to make a decision about who they trust with economic management and national security and I'm confident that that will be Malcolm Turnbull": *Julie Bishop*.

\* "What (voters) don't want is a Shorten government, people want us to succeed": *Angus Taylor*.

\* "It's not unusual for incumbent governments in between elections being behind in the polls, I mean we're not actually that far behind, truth be told": *Mathias Cormann*.

\* "Jumping at shadows at the Newspoll, or indeed 30 Newspolls, is never going to be the basis for good, sound government": *Eric Abetz*.

AAP



[OLIVIA CAISLEY](#) 8 HOURS AGO | 8.25AM **'It's just one poll'**

Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne has played down the significance of Malcolm Turnbull's 30th consecutive Newspoll loss, saying he believes the Liberals can still win the next election.

In an interview on ABC Radio, Mr Pyne said unlike Tony Abbott, who was ousted at the same milestone, Mr Turnbull had "created 420,000 jobs over the last 12 months" and returned a "traditional cabinet government to the government of Australia".

Mr Pyne dismissed the importance of the result saying, “Newspoll is just one poll, let’s face it”.

“A good poll asks people what their second preference is,” Mr Pyne said. “If we listened to the polls Nick Xenophon would be premier today, because Newspoll said he would be”.

Mr Pyne also pointed to the Liberals’ success in recent state elections and by-elections, saying: “In the last few months we’ve won South Australia, Tasmania and the Bennelong and New England by-elections”.

The Liberal minister said: “When the people are asked to make a decision rather than express an opinion they are not supporting Bill Shorten or the Labor party, they are supporting Malcolm Turnbull and the Liberal party”.

When asked about the Liberals’ trajectory for the next election, Mr Pyne said things were “looking pretty good”.

Trotting out Howard-era poll results, Mr Pyne said John Howard managed a seven point turnaround from a 48-52 poll result after calling the 2004 election.

“I’m actually surprised that the polls are as good as they are,” he said. “The government isn’t in massive trouble”.



GREG BROWN 8 HOURS AGO | 8.15AM **‘Voters have had gutful’**

Opposition resources spokesman Jason Clare says voters “have had a gutful” of the disunity and disarray of the Turnbull government.

“Over the last 12 months the government has been focused on everything but (the voters), we’ve had the dual citizenship debacle, bounced after Christmas into the Barnaby Joyce sex scandal and now this,” Mr Clare told Sky News.

“This is the test that Turnbull set to get rid of Tony Abbott now it has come around like a boomerang and (hit) him on the back of the head.”

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[GREG BROWN](#) 9 HOURS AGO | 8.10AM **‘No leadership**

**ambitions’**

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop says 30 consecutive Newspoll losses is not the test for the Liberal leadership, despite Malcolm Turnbull using it as a reason to roll Tony Abbott.

Ms Bishop said she had no leadership ambitions and planned to remain as deputy leader of the Liberal Party.

“I don’t even envisage these circumstances, the fact is that Malcolm Turnbull retains the confidence of the vast majority of the partyroom, he has laid out an economic plan, he promised to deliver strong economic management and he has delivered on that promise,” Ms Bishop told Sky News.



[GREG BROWN](#) 9 HOURS AGO | 8.05AM **‘Not interested in**

**history’**

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann says the government needs to remain united to ensure it is competitive against Bill Shorten at the next election.



Mathias Cormann. Picture: AAP.

Senator Cormann said he was “not interested in history” as he played down the significance of the Coalition’s 30th consecutive Newspoll loss to Labor.

He claimed the government was united on all the big issues, including on energy, despite the recent creation of the Monash Forum.

“We are not interested in history we are looking forward,” Senator Cormann told ABC radio.

“It is important for us to work as a strong and united and disciplined team and all of us in the Coalition have the responsibility to always remind ourselves that our job is to deliver for the Australian people, our job is to continue to do the best we can to help families around Australia to have the best possible opportunity to get ahead to ensure our country is safe and secure.

“On all of the key policy issues we do have a strong and united position but from time to time there will be debates on policy, of course, the Australian people would expect that.”

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[GREG BROWN](#) 9 HOURS AGO | 7.45AM **‘Not about me’**

Tony Abbott says Malcolm Turnbull's 30th consecutive Newspoll loss is "not about me" as he urges government MPs to focus on improving policy rather than obsessing over polls.

The former prime minister downplayed his own role in the Prime Minister's woes for his continued critiques of the government and his part in the creation of the Monash Forum.

"One of the differences between me and some of my colleagues is that if I have got something to say I don't ring up a journalist and whisper poison into their ears. I say it upfront, openly and I put my name to it," Mr Abbott said from regional Victoria's Warragul.

"I think that is something we need to see more of in our politics, we need to see honesty, we need to see integrity and we need to see people who say what they mean and do what they say."

Mr Abbott refused to say whether he felt vindicated given the 30 consecutive Newspoll losses was a reason Mr Turnbull gave for challenging him as Liberal leader in September 2015.

"It is not about me, it has got to be about what is best for our country and how the government can best deliver that," he said.

"Government is hard, Malcolm Turnbull and I know this better than anyone, but the best way to be a good government is to have clear policies, it's to have a united team, and it is to be obviously distinct from your opponents and that is what I tried to be and do in government and I'm sure that is what the prime minister is trying to be and do now.

"The point I would make is that we shouldn't obsess over polls, I never did, I don't think others should, what we should be focused on is being the best possible government and winning an election."



Tony Abbott at the start of the polliie pedal, which begins at the shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. Picture: Yuri Kouzmin.

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[GREG BROWN](#) 9 HOURS AGO | 7.15AM **30 Newspolls ‘false**

**measure’**

Liberal senator Eric Abetz, a staunch ally of Tony Abbott, says he has “every anticipation” Malcolm Turnbull will remain party leader until the next election.

Senator Abetz said the Prime Minister never should have used losing 30 Newspolls as a reason for rolling Mr Abbott, but it would be wrong to use the same measure as a reason to remove Mr Turnbull as Liberal leader.

“We can describe it how we like be it phony or however but it was a false measure then, it remains a false measure now,” Senator Abetz told ABC radio.

“Governments have a duty to govern, to deliver on good policy for the people of Australia, that needs to be the focus and jumping at shadows at the Newspoll or indeed 30 Newspolls is never going to be the basis for good sound government.”

Senator Abetz said governments could “lose as many Newspolls as it likes” but remain competitive at elections.

He said the government should do more to secure affordable and reliable energy.

“My view is there is no such thing as an unwinnable election or an unlosable election and we have to focus on delivering for the people of Australia,” he said.

“I think we are going well in the jobs area but cost of living is one they are concentrating on and they are expecting us to do a bit more in the area of energy affordability and energy reliability.”





Malcolm Turnbull and Tony Abbott: Newspoll

### What's making news:

Malcolm Turnbull has failed a key test he set for deposing Tony Abbott as prime minister — [losing a 30th consecutive Newspoll](#) — but insists he can still win the next election and maintains popular support to remain Liberal leader.

Malcolm Turnbull has [accepted responsibility](#) for 30 successive Newspoll losses, says the “electoral contest is very close and the election is there to be won” — but warns the main threat to the government is the perception of internal disunity.

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

Andrew Clennell's inside story: [in the PM's office](#), you're either “compliant or an enemy”. One tirade by his right-hand woman sums up the siege mentality.

[Dennis Shanahan](#) writes that the “trajectory is clear” is clear for Malcolm Turnbull: voters have made up their minds and they believe his leadership has failed. To both survive and succeed as Prime Minister in the coming months, Turnbull has to change.

[Simon Benson](#) writes that the Coalition party room is a divided cabal torn between hope and despair and rendered immobile as it convulses over its future.

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