

## Newspoll: With a win this slim, Shorten could lose the unlosable election



Malcolm Turnbull with Theresa May at Chequers, northwest of London, at the weekend. Picture: AFP  
The Australian, 12:00AM April 23, 2018, [SIMON BENSON](#), Comment

This is possibly worse news for Bill Shorten than it is good news for Malcolm Turnbull.

The Coalition would still lose government based on today's numbers, albeit not quite as badly.

And Turnbull has now officially beaten Tony Abbott's number of losing Newspolls.

But with the gap tightening even further in the latest results, the prospect of Shorten losing the unlosable election also becomes increasingly possible.

It would be unkind to suggest that Turnbull would do well to remain overseas a little longer but many of his colleagues would be wishing it.

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There is a belief held by members on both sides that the margin between Labor and the government should be greater than it was even before today, considering the Coalition's catalogue of political catastrophe.

"We really should be down somewhere around 54-46. We are that bad," one Liberal MP suggested yesterday.

While surprising many Liberal MPs, with the exception of Turnbull who has never believed himself to be that unpopular, the 31st losing Newspoll for the Coalition will undoubtedly and ironically start to rattle some nerves on the Opposition benches.

There have been only a few occasions that the two-party-preferred vote has shown signs of life for Turnbull.

The latest was in February on the return from summer break when it reached 48-52 again for only the fourth time since December 2016.

However, with all these peaks came an immediate slide back to 47-53 or worse.

Turnbull has now managed to not just sustain but improve on a 48-52 result in a consecutive poll for the first time. In normal times this would seem hardly heroic. But these are not ordinary times.

The Coalition primary vote at 38 per cent is still historically low. The tightening two-party-preferred numbers could be One Nation voters deciding to shift their preferences back to the Coalition. But this is impossible to know.

Also impossible to know is whether it is down to a delayed effect of Shorten's retiree tax plan.

Coalition MPs over the past two weeks have only just started their mail-outs to older-aged constituents accusing Shorten of stealing their pensions.

This could now be starting to bite.

What is more important for Turnbull, however, is the optics of it all.

Yes, the Prime Minister has now lost 31 Newspolls and has beaten his own benchmark for failed leadership.

But at 49-51, he is as close as he has been since the election of showing that he could also beat Shorten.

## SIMON BENSON

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Award-winning journalist Simon Benson is The Australian's National Political Editor. He was previously the Daily Telegraph's NSW political editor, and also president of the NSW Parliamentary Press Gallery. He grew up in Melbourne and studied philosophy before completing a postgraduate degree in journalism.