

Newspoll: Coalition closes gap on Labor



Turnbull has also consolidated his lead over Shorten as preferred PM. Picture: AAP



Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek after speaking at the NSW State Labor Party Conference at the Sydney Town Hall. Picture: Jenny Evans

Simon Benson, The Australian, 10:38AM July 2, 2018

The Turnbull government has clawed back electoral support in the wake of Bill Shorten's tax policy disaster as voters deliver a warning to the Labor leader

that he risks losing votes over the party's class-war campaign against big business and the Prime Minister's wealth.

An exclusive Newspann, conducted for The Australian, shows approval for the Opposition Leader has fallen to its equal-lowest level in more than a year after he was last week rolled by his shadow cabinet on Labor's company tax policy. With Mr Shorten's leadership under pressure leading into five critical by-elections, now less than four weeks away, the Coalition has again closed the gap to within two points to trail Labor 51-49 on a two-party-preferred basis.

While still pointing to an election loss, the incremental improvement in the government's position comes on the back of the highest approval ratings for Malcolm Turnbull since before the 2016 election and growing support for the government's company tax cuts, which remain stalled in the Senate following Pauline Hanson's refusal to back them.

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Shorten exposed on tax cuts

Colleagues of Mr Shorten, including soon-to-be Labor Party president Wayne Swan, publicly back his leadership amid growing public support for the remaining tax cuts for larger businesses to be passed and voters warning that any move to repeal existing tax cuts would cost the country jobs. "He (Mr Shorten) deserves the opportunity to get out there and take government at the next election," Mr Swan said yesterday, describing his premature tax announcement as an "honest error".

The former treasurer downplayed Labor's prospects in the Longman by-election, saying it would be "extraordinarily difficult" to retain the Queensland seat.

With a majority of voters believing the government's arguments that the tax cuts would deliver more jobs, the issue threatens to become a polarising election issue as voters reveal they are prepared to change their vote on it.

INFLUENCE ON VOTE

	Total
More likely vote Labor	23
Less likely vote Labor	31
Not influence vote	38
Uncommitted	8

Question: Do the changes to the company tax legislation announced by Bill Shorten make you more likely to vote for the Labor Party, less likely to vote for the Labor Party or will they not influence the way you vote?

COMPANY TAX

	May 24-27, 2018	Jun 28-Jul 1, 2018				
		Total	Political Support			One Nation
As soon as possible	36	38	51	23	26	52
In stages over the next 10 years	27	27	37	27	16	20
Not at all	29	27	7	45	50	26
Uncommitted	8	8	5	5	8	2

Question: The Government has announced a tax plan that will reduce the company tax rate for all Australian businesses from 30 per cent to 25 per cent. These changes will be implemented in stages over 10 years. In your opinion, should the proposed changes to the company tax rates come into effect as soon as possible, in stages over 10 years or not at all?

TAX CUTS FOR COMPANIES TURNING OVER

	Total	Political Support			One Nation
		Coalition	Labor	Green	
Strongly support	25	10	41	36	21
Somewhat support	27	25	31	28	33
Total support	52	35	72	64	54
Somewhat oppose	15	18	15	12	14
Strongly oppose	22	39	6	11	24
Total oppose	37	57	21	23	38
Uncommitted	11	8	7	13	8

Question: Bill Shorten has announced that if Labor win office they will stop the already legislated tax cuts for companies with a turnover of \$10m-\$50m a year. Do you support or oppose this plan to take tax cuts away from companies turning over \$10m-\$50m a year?

TAX CUTS FOR COMPANIES TURNING OVER \$2 MILLION-\$10 MILLION

	Total	Political Support			One Nation
		Coalition	Labor	Green	
Strongly support	17	10	22	20	18
Somewhat support	27	22	34	36	26
Total support	44	32	56	56	44
Somewhat oppose	21	21	25	23	23
Strongly oppose	25	39	12	11	26
Total oppose	46	60	37	34	49
Uncommitted	10	8	7	10	7

CREATE MORE JOBS

	Total	Political Support			One Nation
		Coalition	Labor	Green	
Yes	50	76	32	34	47
No	36	15	56	50	42
Uncommitted	14	9	12	16	11

Question: Do you think that lowering company tax for small, medium and large companies will create more jobs and investment in Australia?

PUT JOBS AT RISK

	Total	Political Support			One Nation
		Coalition	Labor	Green	
Yes	43	70	21	26	51
No	37	17	61	53	29
Uncommitted	20	13	18	21	20

Question: Do you think that by repealing the already legislated company tax cuts Bill Shorten is putting Australian jobs at risk?

SHORTEN'S ATTACK ON TURNBULL

	Total	Political Support			One Nation
		Coalition	Labor	Green	
Yes	32	13	50	48	32
No	55	83	35	36	58
Uncommitted	13	4	15	16	10

Question: Bill Shorten has opposed the tax cuts on the basis that Malcolm Turnbull is just looking after himself and the top end of town. In your opinion is it fair for Bill Shorten to attack Malcolm Turnbull for having been successful in his business career?

** The Australian framed the tax questions before Labor amended its policy on Friday. These surveys were conducted in all states of Australia and in both city and country areas. The data has been weighted to reflect the population distribution. The latest survey is based on 1609 interviews among voters. The maximum sampling error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. Copyright at all times remains with Newspoll.*

Question: Stopping the tax reduction could also be extended to companies with a turnover of \$2m-\$10m a year. Would you support or oppose taking tax cuts away from companies turning over \$2m-\$10m a year?

The poll of 1609 voters, conducted nationally between Thursday and yesterday, revealed a significant bloc prepared to punish Labor had Mr Shorten not been forced to back down on his pledge to repeal them. The poll found that 50 per cent of Labor supporters backed tax cuts being implemented either as soon as possible or in stages over the next 10 years, while 88 per cent of Coalition voters and 72 per cent of One Nation voters also supported the tax cuts.

Overall, 65 per cent of voters polled support the government's tax cut plan, compared with 63 per cent recorded by Newspoll in May. Fifty per cent of

those polled believed extending and lowering taxes on all businesses, including large companies, would stimulate investment and create jobs.

In a repudiation of Labor's class-envy tactics, a majority of voters also rejected the attacks on the Prime Minister's personal success, with 55 per cent claiming it unfair to use Mr Turnbull's wealth as a proxy for its class-based campaign against the big end of town. Even among Labor voters there was some unease with the personal attacks on Mr Turnbull, with 35 per cent claiming it unfair, while 55 per cent regarded the Prime Minister as fair game.

Mr Shorten's approval ratings fell a point to 32 per cent while those dissatisfied grew two points to 57 per cent, delivering a net satisfaction rating of negative 25. This compared with negative 6 per cent for Mr Turnbull. While showing both leaders to be unpopular, it marks the largest gap between them since the July 2016 election.

Mr Shorten also recorded a negative 25-point rating in April, the lowest since he recorded a negative 28-point rating in March 2017. Mr Turnbull retained his improved rating as the preferred prime minister, with 46 per cent backing compared with 31 per cent for Mr Shorten, keeping a 15-point margin between the two leaders.

The poll covered the period soon after the unilateral tax announcement by Mr Shorten last Tuesday but also captured some voters who would have known about the shadow cabinet decision to reverse it on Friday. The poll suggested Mr Shorten's announced changes to repeal the government's already legislated tax cuts for firms up to \$50m in turnover could have been a vote loser for Labor.

Almost a third of all voters, 31 per cent, suggested that repealing tax cuts would make them less likely to vote Labor compared with 23 per cent who would have been more inclined to. While the result will be seen as a vindication of the shadow cabinet's decision to steamroll their leader and keep the government's first phase of tax cuts for businesses with turnovers of up to \$50m, there is still confusion, even among Coalition voters, about the competing plans and whether they should apply to larger companies. A majority, 52 per cent, supported taking tax cuts away from businesses with turnovers of between \$10m and \$50m if Labor was elected, compared with 37 per cent opposed.

Reflecting a mixed bag of opinion, 35 per cent of Coalition voters and 54 per cent of One Nation voters also supported Mr Shorten's original position. Support for keeping tax cuts for smaller businesses, those between \$2m and \$10m turnover, which Labor shadow cabinet also considered, was only marginally in favour, with 46 per cent opposed to repealing them but 44 per cent in favour.

The poll, which marks the 35th lost by the Coalition under Mr Turnbull, showed the Coalition picking up a point on its primary vote to 39 per cent, with Labor dropping a point to 37 per cent. It is only the second time since November 2016 that the Coalition's primary vote had reached 39 per cent. However, it still remains down on its election vote of 42.1 per cent, which delivered it government by only one seat.

The results follows a period in which the government secured passage of the historic \$144 billion personal income tax plan.