

Fairfax-Ipsos poll: Quarterly analysis shows huge road ahead of Scott Morrison and the Coalition

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Prime Minister Scott Morrison is facing a mammoth task in winning back voters before the next election as a new analysis shows the Coalition is trailing Labor by 47 to 53 per cent in two-party terms.

The results confirm a horror slump for the federal government since the last election and reveal the scale of the challenge for Mr Morrison after the Liberal Party dumped Malcolm Turnbull as leader in August.

The government has lost ground in key states and fallen behind with female voters, trailing Labor by 45 to 55 per cent when people are asked how they would allocate their preferences.

The quarterly analysis compiles the results from 3,601 respondents in Fairfax-Ipsos polls over July, August and September, with a margin of error of 1.6 per cent for national results and 2.9 per cent for some state results. This means the analysis covers some of the period when Mr Turnbull suffered a slide in support as prime minister, as well as one survey in September when Mr Morrison had taken power.

Mr Morrison has tried to seize the political initiative by launching a royal commission into aged care, sealing an agreement with Catholic and independent schools on education funding and rushing through laws to counter tampering with fresh strawberries.

Liberals privately concede they are exposed to a powerful backlash from voters in the wake of the leadership turmoil but insist they can regain ground before the next election, due by 18 May next year.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has stepped up a policy contest on education in recent days, promising \$9.8 billion over a decade to extend preschool learning from four-year-olds to three-year-olds in the name of lifting school results. "Labor is leading on the policy front," Mr Shorten said on Friday.

"We've got a vision – not just for the next opinion poll. We've got a vision for the next generation. It's why Labor wants to form a government, we want to hand on a better deal to our Australians than the one we inherited."

The Coalition would lose as many as 18 seats if the latest results were reflected at a general election, given the government is trailing Labor in Queensland by 48 to 52 per cent, in NSW by 48 to 52 per cent and in Victoria by 44 to 56 per cent in two-party terms.

The government's support in Queensland in two-party terms has slumped from 54 per cent at the election, in another sign of the threat to the Liberal National Party also revealed in the Longman byelection on July 28.

The government's support in NSW has fallen from 50 per cent at the election in two-party terms to 48 per cent in the quarterly analysis, while support in Victoria has tumbled from 48 per cent at the election to 44 per cent in the polls.

Victoria, Mr Shorten's home state, remains the weakest state for the Coalition.

The government had a lead in Western Australia of 53 per cent to 47 per cent in two-party terms in the last Fairfax-Ipsos quarterly survey but this has shifted in the latest results, with the government now trailing Labor by 49 per cent to 51 per cent.