



To borrow Turnbull's own words, the Liberals simply left "his arse" for too long on the seat of C1 — the prime ministerial commonwealth car.

Dennis Shanahan, Political Editor, 12:29PM December 3, 2018

The Liberal Party made a big mistake when it removed Malcolm Turnbull in August 2018. The Liberal Party should have removed him as Prime Minister in August 2016.

A move against Turnbull in the dismal days after a dismal Liberal performance at the July 2, 2016 election was perfectly understandable and most importantly, explicable.

In an appalling performance as leader Turnbull failed as a campaigner, under his leadership a net 14 seats were lost and a comfortable majority was reduced to just one seat.

If just 500 to 700 voters in several seats had voted the other way the Coalition's majority would have been lost and the Liberals would have understandably moved against Turnbull without need for explanation.

It was Turnbull who removed a first-term prime minister, failed to exploit the lift in voter support with the removal of Tony Abbott by calling an early election, did not produce any definite policies, vacillated on economic changes, fiddled with the Budget timing, played with the Parliament sitting to call a

double-dissolution election and ran a lacklustre, over-long 8-week election campaign.

He had failed to reconcile factional differences and punished and promoted enemies and friends with long-term negative repercussions. Turnbull was unmanned by the election result and had failed to exploit an inexperienced Labor team with contentious and previously damaging policies.

The “Liberal brand” did not recover from the near-death election experience and went into the longest lowest period of primary vote support in Newspoll survey history.

Had the Liberal Party acted then the answer to Bill Shorten’s question “why isn’t Malcolm Turnbull still prime minister?” would have been obvious — he almost lost the election — and three years before the next election.

Yet, fearful of forcing a by-election in Turnbull’s seat of Wentworth, wary of falling for the Labor leadership change disease and having the former leader “bring down the house” the Party unconsciously denied the inevitable.

As a result of the delay the cost of change leaders has occurred within months of the election, the Wentworth by-election was held and lost anyway, Turnbull’s fury and visible hand in destabilising the Liberal leadership is all the more dangerous and Scott Morrison (or whoever would have been leader) has been given an impossibly short time to establish a successful narrative and mend party divisions.

Turnbull’s vindication for his public defiance of Morrison’s leadership is that he is very concerned about “the brand damage to the party which arose from the leadership change in August when I was removed as prime minister”.

He then uses the following examples to justify his position: “We’ve seen that taken out in the state by-election in Wagga Wagga, we’ve seen it obviously in Wentworth and we’ve seen it in the Victorian state election. I am very concerned that this will put at risk the Berejiklian (NSW Liberal) government.”

What Turnbull doesn’t point to is the brand damage done by the removal of Abbott, the damage done in the 2016 federal election, the damage done in four by-elections in July which he declared were a test of leadership between

him and Shorten and of course, that the Wentworth by-election loss only had to be held because he resigned from Parliament.

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