

Labor projected to win 14 Coalition seats: Newspoll4:07



Labor is projected to take 14 seats from the Coalition at the upcoming federal election despite its primary vote falling three points to 38 per cent in the latest Newspoll. The Australian's National Affairs

Editor Simon Benson has told Sky News that Bill Shorten is still 'clearly in the box seat to win the election'. The poll is the best result for the Morrison government since Malcolm Turnbull was ousted in August last year.

Simon Benson, January 29th 2019, National Affairs Editor

Scott Morrison has been thrown an electoral lifeline, despite a string of senior ministers declaring they will quit politics at the May election, with the Coalition returning to its highest poll ratings since the removal of Malcolm Turnbull.

The lift for the government, which two months ago was facing a broadscale collapse in support, comes after the Prime Minister and Treasurer ramped up their attack on Labor's tax-and-spend agenda.

The first Newspoll for 2019, conducted exclusively for The Australian, shows a five-point turnaround in popular support for the two major parties since - December, with the Coalition's primary vote lifting two points to 37 per cent and Labor falling three points to 38 per cent.

Labor MP Cathy O'Toole could struggle for minor-party preferences in her ultra-marginal electorate of Herbert.

Mr Morrison, who will deliver a major economic address today, also maintains a strong lead over Labor leader Bill Shorten as preferred prime minister with little more than 100 days before an expected election in mid-May.

It is the best result for the Morrison government since its post-coup peak in October and marks a four-point reversal in the two-party vote since December, when it was behind 55 to 45 per cent on a two-party-preferred basis, sparking predictions of an electoral wipe-out.

GRAPHIC: Latest Newspoll

With Labor commanding a significant election-winning lead of 53-47 after preferences, the Coalition would reduce the scale of a defeat from the possible loss of 21 seats to 14 if the poll results were replicated at the general election on a uniform basis. This represents a swing against the government of 3.4 per cent since the 2016 election.

There has been little movement in the popularity contest between both leaders over the summer break, according to the Newspoll, despite Mr Morrison coming under pressure on his return to work.

A public brawl broke out over the decision to run former ALP president Warren Mundine as the Liberal candidate for the NSW marginal seat of Gilmore. The Prime Minister was also faced with the resignation of three ministers.

Labor has also come under renewed pressure over the economic consequences of its policies to wind back negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts, with Josh Frydenberg mounting a relentless campaign against the policy changes this month. Mr Morrison told *The Australian* last night that voting Australians would soon face one of the most important decisions in decades.

“As the election gets closer, Australians will see a very stark contrast between our economic record and the future plans of the government and how it can improve people’s lives and circumstances over the next decade,” the Prime Minister said. “The alternative is that Australians will find out how important it is to have a strong economy when they don’t have one under Bill Shorten.”

According to the poll of 1634 voters nationally, conducted from last Thursday to Sunday, Mr Morrison remained the preferred prime minister over Mr Shorten, albeit with a one-point reduction in his lead to 43 to 36 per cent.

Mr Morrison's satisfaction levels fell two points to 40 per cent while those claiming to be dissatisfied with his performance rose the same to 47 per cent. This represented a negative satisfaction rating of minus seven compared with Mr Shorten's slightly improved approval rating of minus 13 on a 37-50 split.

The Greens remained unchanged on a relative low 9 per cent of primary votes, with more support swinging behind other minor parties and independents. Their aggregate vote lifted two points to 10 per cent. One Nation dropped a point to 6 per cent but this still represents a significantly higher vote than the 1.3 per cent recorded nationally at the 2016 double-dissolution election.

The Newspoll follows a messy start to the year for the Morrison government. Mr Shorten has sought to capitalise on the resignations of Industrial Relations Minister Kelly O'Dwyer, Human Services Minister Michael Keenan and Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion over the past week. Ms O'Dwyer and Mr Keenan cited a desire to spend more time with their respective families. Senator Scullion said he believed it was time to step down after almost 20 years in parliament.

Mr Morrison rejected claims he was leading a sinking-ship government, with Labor also losing senior members of its frontbench to pre-election retirements.

Mr Shorten, who campaigned in Queensland last week, yesterday focused his attack on "disunity" within the government. "Every day, day after day, we see fresh chaos and continuing disunity in the government ... This is a government that's lurching from crisis to crisis, and in the meantime the big issues are just not getting addressed," Mr Shorten said.