2014 Victorian state election

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Executive summary

- On 29 November 2014, Victorian electors went to the polls for the Victorian 2014 state election and elected Labor, bringing the Coalition Government’s reign to an end after a single term in power.

- While Labor won a majority, with 47 seats in the 88 seat Legislative Assembly, it only won 14 of the 40 seats in the Legislative Council. In the Legislative Assembly the Coalition won 38 seats (30 Liberal and 8 Nationals), the Greens won two and an independent won one. In the Legislative Council, the Coalition won 16 seats, the Greens won five, two seats were won by the Shooters and Fishers, and the Sex Party, Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and Vote 1 Local Jobs all won one each.

- This election ended an eventful term of the Victorian parliament, which saw Premier Ted Baillieu stand down and be replaced by Denis Napthine, and the Speaker, Liberal MP Ken Smith resign.

- At the previous Victorian election the Coalition had won a very narrow victory, with 45 seats in the Legislative Assembly compared to Labor’s 43. Geoff Shaw, Liberal MP for Frankston, became embroiled in a scandal over alleged misuse of his taxpayer-funded car, and eventually quit the Liberal Party during the term to sit as an independent MP. The Parliament voted to suspend Shaw from sitting in Parliament, fined him $6,838, and ordered him to apologise. Shaw’s apology was decried as being insincere by Premier Napthine, who then tabled a motion to expel him. But while Shaw narrowly survived the motion and remained in the Parliament, he was soundly defeated at the election.

- The most salient local issue of the campaign was the East West Link road project. The Victorian Coalition Government, with the support of the federal Coalition Government, was determined to press ahead with a proposed $8–10 billion section of the road. The ALP stated that they would scrap the project and redirect the money to other infrastructure projects, including public transport, despite the potential for later having to pay compensation to the contractor.

- Federal politics also featured heavily in the Victorian election. Various measures in the federal Government’s 2014 Budget, in particular, the timing of the petrol excise increase which commenced 19 days before the election, were felt to affect the Victorian Government’s prospects of re-election. However, the Victorian Coalition Government had been polling poorly all term, so even the appearance of Prime Minister Abbott on the campaign trail may not have ultimately affected the outcome.

- The trend towards increased early voting was again evident, with almost a million early votes cast. This was in addition to almost 300,000 postal votes, nearly double the number cast in the 2010 state election. However, despite fears these early votes would delay the election results, Napthine conceded defeat on behalf of his government just before 10 pm on election night, and announced he would step down as leader.
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Introduction

On 29 November 2014, over 3.5 million eligible Victorians voted to elect the 58th Victorian Parliament. Electors voted for representatives in 88 Legislative Assembly districts and eight Legislative Council regions. Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews led the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to victory, winning 47 seats with 52 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote, ending Premier Denis Napthine’s Coalition rule after a single term.

Four years earlier, Liberal Ted Baillieu—then Leader of the Opposition—had been elected Premier of Victoria with a two-seat majority. He resigned as Premier on 7 March 2013 following a factional crisis during which controversial Frankston MP Geoff Shaw quit the Liberal Party, citing a ‘general loss of confidence’ Victorians felt in the Government’s leadership. He was replaced mid-term by Denis Naphine.

Denis Napthine was first elected to parliament in 1988 and was Minister for Ports, Regional Cities, Racing and Major Projects in the Baillieu Cabinet. He was also a minister in the Kennett Government between 1996 and 1999; this included a 13-day term as Treasurer. Earlier, Naphine had been the leader of the Liberal Party in opposition following the Kennett Government’s loss in 1999; but the Liberal Party replaced him with Robert Doyle in 2002. Naphine’s loss of government made him the first one-term premier of Victoria in nearly 60 years.

The MP who precipitated Baillieu’s fall, Geoff Shaw, became an increasingly controversial figure throughout the 57th Parliament; quitting the Liberals, sitting as an independent MP, and becoming embroiled in a scandal over alleged misuse of his taxpayer-funded car. Shaw stayed in the Parliament and recontested his seat, but was not re-elected.

The Victorian electoral landscape

The electoral system

The Legislative Assembly has a fixed four-year term with elections for both the Assembly and the Legislative Council held on the last Saturday in November every four years.

Victoria uses a preferential ballot in single-member seats for the Legislative Assembly, similar to federal House of Representatives voting, and the single transferable vote in multi-member seats for the proportionally represented Legislative Council. Victorian Legislative Assembly ballot papers resemble Senate ballot papers—voters can either vote above the line, using their preferred party’s group voting ticket, or below the line. Below the line voting uses optional preferential voting, and voters who vote below the line must number at least five preferences.

The Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee recommended, in a report tabled on 27 March 2014, that the state adopt optional preferential voting (OPV) for Victorian elections. The report argued for optional preferential voting because it would ‘lower the rate of unintentional informal voting’. Optional preferential voting makes it easier for the candidate leading on first preferences to reach 50% of a shrinking pool of votes in the count, and harder for a second placed candidate to come from behind and win.

The Government’s response to that recommendation was that such a change would require further consideration, and no further action was taken towards implementing OPV.

5. J Ferguson, ‘With friends like these…’, The Australian, 6 November 2014, p. 11.
7. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
Revised electoral boundaries in Victoria

On 17 October 2013, the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Victoria released the final electoral boundaries for Victoria that would apply at the State election, scheduled for 29 November 2014. The redistribution of electoral boundaries, applying to both Houses of Parliament, would ensure as far as possible that each vote had an equal value, and that each elector was represented equally in the Victorian Parliament.

Fifteen of the 88 electoral districts were technically replaced in the redistribution—but ten were effectively only name changes, leaving five seats that were abolished and replaced with new seats. One Liberal seat, Doncaster, was abolished in Melbourne’s east and two National seats in country Victoria (Rodney and Swan Hill) were abolished and replaced with one new notionally Nationals seat of Murray Plains. Two notionally Labor-held seats, Sunbury and Werribee, were created in Melbourne’s western suburbs. Major boundary changes also resulted in five previously Labor-held seats (Bellarine, Monbulk, Ripon, Yan Yean, and Wendouree, which was renamed from Ballarat West) becoming notionally Liberal-held.

2013 Victorian Redistribution—Summary of party standing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of Parties</th>
<th>LIB</th>
<th>NAT</th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>OTH</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old boundaries - 2010 election</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New boundaries - based on 2010 results</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including Geoff Shaw resignation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of swing, under the old boundaries Labor needed a uniform swing of 1.2 per cent to gain a majority, whereas after the redistribution, Labor only needed a uniform swing of 0.9 per cent. This is despite the fact that Labor lost a net five seats in the redistribution, as the redistribution increased the number of marginal Liberal seats. A detailed analysis of the redistribution was produced by ABC election analyst Antony Green.

A list of key seats in the election was also produced by the ABC in its ‘Victoria Votes’ election guide.

Victoria’s troubled Parliament

The fraught electoral situation in Victoria was a legacy of the narrow Coalition win in the November 2010 election. Crikey election analyst William Bowe stated of the Coalition:

[It] emerged with 45 seats to 43 for Labor and, for the first time in any Australian federal or state parliament since 1993, no seats for minor parties or independents. That changed in March [2013] when Shaw resigned from the parliamentarian Liberal Party to sit as an independent, which precipitated Ted Baillieu’s resignation as Premier the following day.

By 2013, the controversy involving Liberal-turned-independent MP for Frankston Geoff Shaw had become a major issue within the Parliament, leading to the resignation of Ted Baillieu as party leader and Premier, and his replacement by Denis Napthine. This led, in due course, to the resignation in February 2014 of the Speaker, Liberal MP Ken Smith, with whom Shaw was at loggerheads due to Smith’s referral of Shaw to the Victorian Ombudsman for alleged abuse of entitlements.
Later, Smith declared that he would vote with Labor on any motion to find Shaw in contempt of the Parliament. In response, Shaw declared he would vote with Labor on any no-confidence motion in the Napthine government.  

Shaw’s resignation from the Liberal Party to sit as an independent in March 2014 left the Coalition and the ALP with 43 members each on the floor of the Parliament. This deadlock led to the potential for Shaw to join Labor in a no-confidence vote against the government which would have forced an early election.  

**Geoff Shaw MP suspended**

On 11 June 2014, the Victorian Parliament voted to suspend, not expel, Shaw from sitting in Parliament until September. This was due to misuse of entitlements—Shaw had been using his parliamentary car to pursue business activities. Labor wanted to go further, calling for the formal expulsion of Shaw from the Parliament, although Shaw’s critical vote and the proximity of the state election later in the year meant that neither side of politics was eager for an earlier by-election.  

Shaw’s suspension left the Government and the Opposition locked at 43 members each. But within two days of Parliament’s decision to suspend Shaw, a Herald-Sun poll of 200 voters in Shaw’s electorate of Frankston showed that just 15 per cent of respondents said they would vote for the independent MP, an early indication he would be unlikely to hold his seat in the next election.  

Shaw was fined $6,838; ordered to apologise; and was told he would be expelled from parliament if he failed to meet these conditions by 2 September. Having failed to initially meet these conditions, Shaw was suspended from Parliament for 11 sitting days, before he made a formal apology to the House on 2 September, telling the chamber that he was ‘humbling and sincerely sorry’. However, Premier Denis Napthine still tabled a motion to expel him because his apology was insincere, and a requirement of the apology was that it be sincere and genuine. Expulsion from the House is an extreme measure, and a former Speaker, Ken Coghill, argued that Napthine ‘could be seen to have over-reacted and been ... vindictive’. Coghill agreed that the evidence against Shaw was ‘strong and doubtless deserved a tough penalty’, but there were other important considerations:

> [E]xpelling an MP because of words spoken about his own apology would be a step too far. If a much more serious breach was found in future, what higher penalty would be left for parliament to impose? While expulsion has been used elsewhere to expel MPs, it has generally been for an offence far more serious than these original allegations, much less for merely making an apology claimed to be not ‘appropriate’. Some parliaments have powerful anti-corruption bodies to deal with such cases (such as NSW’s Independent Commission against Corruption). Napthine’s government gave Victoria IBAC, which is incapable of acting in this case.... Napthine has a profound responsibility to demonstrate that he respects the parliament, and to pause and reflect on the punishment for comments about the apology before leaping to another highly questionable expulsion.

When the motion to expel Shaw was put to the house there were 42 noes, and 42 ayes:  

Then the speaker said: ‘The member for Frankston’. ‘No’, came the firm voice of Geoff Shaw. 

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20. Ibid.  
21. Ibid.  
22. Ibid.; Victorian crisis primer, op. cit.  
24. Ibid.  
30. Ibid. (Note: New South Wales’ ICAC has a wide discretion as to what it investigates, but Victoria’s IBAC can only investigate conduct sufficiently serious to constitute an indictable offence. See R Millar, ‘IBAC admits it cannot do its job’, *The Age*, 16 April 2014, p. 7, accessed 4 September 2014.  
As the vote was tied, Shaw remained an MP.

A fortnight later, Shaw again courted controversy when reports emerged that he was expected to join UK climate sceptic Lord Christopher Monckton at a campaign meeting for the hard-right Christian party Rise Up Australia.32 While the loss of Shaw’s seat of Frankston, which he had won for the Liberal Party, was seen as inevitable, the ongoing controversy surrounding Shaw contributed to the public sense the government lacked control of the parliament.33

Shaw, who had won the seat from Labor at the 2010 election, declared that it was his intention to recontest the seat of Frankston, but also noted he ‘would consider pulling out if polls suggested that he was headed for defeat’.34 Frankston had performed as something of a bellwether electorate since 2002, closely following the state-wide vote. Even putting aside the controversy surrounding Shaw, the margin for the southern Melbourne seat was reduced to 0.4 per cent after the boundary redistribution, putting it on an electoral knife-edge.35

A local firefighter, Paul Edbrooke, emerged as Labor’s front-running candidate in Frankston, replacing Helen Constanis who resigned her nomination following allegations of workplace bullying.36 In the election, the seat was reclaimed for Labor by Edbrooke by 336 votes; Shaw only received 12.9 per cent of the first preference votes, well behind the Labor and Liberal candidates.

Early issues to emerge

Law and order issues were an early pre-campaign topic, with the Government announcing tougher sentences for attacks on police and emergency workers.37 Both major parties were also keen to present themselves as champions of school education, especially in Melbourne’s northern suburbs.38

Meanwhile, mining magnate and federal MP Clive Palmer revealed a plan to turn the Latrobe Valley into ‘a minerals processing hub, allowing Australia to cash in on its resources for even higher prices [than unprocessed minerals receive] and address soaring unemployment’.39

The controversial Voluntary Euthanasia Party, led by Dr Phillip Nitschke, planned to contest all upper house seats and some Assembly seats.40 At the election the party ran candidates in five of the eight regions in the Upper House.

As June 2014 drew to a close, The Age/Nielsen poll showed Labor with a commanding 59 per cent to 41 per cent lead over the Coalition in two-party preferred terms ‘based on voters’ intended preference allocations’.41

The Coalition’s plight was also compounded by its federal counterpart’s position. As political editor for The Age, Michael Gordon, put it:

> A more accurate, but still grim, picture emerges when you average out the state-by-state results in the past three polls and compare them with the average of the last three polls before last September’s [federal] election. Here, the Coalition’s Victorian vote is nine points down on the 43 per cent primary at the election, compared with a drop of five points in New South Wales and six in Queensland.

Abbott’s personal approval ratings are similarly worse in Victoria than elsewhere, with an average disapproval rating of 61 per cent for the past three months, compared with 54 per cent in NSW. .... Based on preferences at the last election, the poll had Labor in front on two-party terms, 56-44. Based on how those polled said they would

33. J Ferguson, ‘With friends like these…’, op. cit.
allocate preferences, it was even more dire for the Liberals: 59-41 to Labor. Most disturbing for Napthine, however, was that one in three said their voting intention was influenced by Abbott’s budget.\(^{42}\)

Writing in *The Age*, Gordon highlighted Victoria’s strong multicultural affinities—noting its large Indian and Chinese-born populations—and opined that many voters were ‘unnerved by Abbott’s determination to wind back protections against racial discrimination by repealing section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act’.\(^{43}\) He pointed out there was also ‘growing anger within these communities at one of the federal budget’s lesser-known nasties: changes to family reunion laws that mean the only option for those wishing to bring their parents to Australia is to pay more than $100,000 for the necessary visas’.\(^{44}\) The president of the Federation of Chinese Associations, Vincent Chow, said that both issues had ‘damaged the Abbott government’s standing and—by association—hurt Napthine’s prospects’.\(^{45}\) In the end, the federal Government decided not to proceed with changes to section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. In what he described as a ‘leadership call’, the Prime Minister said that the issue had become ‘a complication that we just don’t need’ and that he wanted ‘the communities of our country to be our friend not our critic’.\(^{46}\) Andrews said if the federal race laws were scrapped his party would simply replicate the wording of the current federal provisions in Victoria’s state law.\(^{47}\)

**The East West Link**

The East West Link was a proposed 18 kilometre cross-city tollway connection extending across Melbourne from the Eastern Freeway to the Western Ring Road. It proved to be a divisive and unpopular project, but the Minister for Planning approved the Eastern Section of the East West Link and announced the $8–10 billion Western Section to link the Eastern Freeway through to the Western Ring Road.\(^{48}\) The Greens federal MP for Melbourne Adam Bandt condemned the decision:

> Public transport will be the first casualty of Minister Guy’s go-ahead for East-West, as the tollway will be a disastrous drain on the public purse... If the Napthine Government cared what people think, it would defer signing contracts until after an assessment of the revised design’s full impact. ...Labor must now commit to tearing up any contracts if they win majority government in November.\(^{49}\)

The Victorian Government said it intended to sign all the relevant contracts before the election.\(^{50}\)

On 9 September 2014, an adviser to groups opposed to the project, Andrew Herington, claimed that key promises had been broken, namely:

- any project worth more than $100m would be subject to a cost-benefit analysis before it was funded and
- construction would be underway within 12 months.\(^{51}\)

> [The] main debate over the East West Link has been the secrecy over the business case and whether it is based on highly inflated estimates of the benefits. By refusing to have Infrastructure Australia undertake independent assessments of business cases the government is admitting the highly politicised way in which public funds are being allocated...

The issue was pursued in a later debate where Labor attacked the payment of funds without any proof of value for money. It appears that $1.5bn was secretly paid to Victoria for the East West Link before 30 June this year and both governments have refused to comment. Previously the Abbott government had undertaken to the Senate estimates...

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43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
committee that no funds would be paid for either stage of the East West Link until full business cases were provided. ...

The business case for stage 2 of East West Link, now called the Western Section, has not even been written. Stage 2 remains at the ‘conceptual stage’ despite both state and federal governments committing to it and claiming construction will commence before the end of 2015. None of the preliminary steps required to start the planning approvals have commenced for the Western Section, making any construction next year an impossibility. The only action taken to date has been the appointment of Ernst and Young in late August as business advisers.  

The federal Coalition Government had committed $3 billion to the project, although Infrastructure Australia acknowledged that it did not have a full business case for the project. The Prime Minister declared that the election would be a referendum on the East West Link, and that the federal Government would take back its contribution if it was not to go ahead, rather than being re-allocated to other infrastructure projects, such as public transport.  

Parliament resumes after winter recess

The Victorian Parliament resumed on 5 August 2014, and it appeared that Victoria’s major regional cities might be shaping up as significant players in determining the electoral fortunes of the major parties. Meanwhile, a new political party, People Power Victoria — No Smart Meters was registered as a political party and planned to contest every Upper House seat and some Lower House seats.  

Tensions in the Coalition

The northern Victorian country seat of Euroa was created after the redistribution of electoral boundaries in 2013. On 7 August the Liberal Party endorsed Tony Schneider as their candidate for the newly-formed country seat, despite claims from the Nationals that doing so would be in breach of a long-standing Coalition agreement between the parties. Media reports stated that while the Nationals considered the seat to be ‘Nationals territory’, Liberal Party branch members wanted the opportunity to vote for a Liberal candidate.  

However, at odds with members of his party who wanted the seat to go to a Liberal, former Liberal Premier Ted Baillieu caused controversy by backing a National Party candidate—Baillieu’s former staffer Stephanie Ryan—for the new seat. A Liberal Party member and fundraiser, Alistair Ewart, said he wanted to be considered for pre-selection for Euroa, but said that ‘he and people acting on his behalf were told by Liberal Party headquarters they would not be fielding a candidate’. Ryan contested the seat and won it comfortably for the Nationals.  

One hundred days to go

A poll published by the Herald Sun in mid-August 2014 showed the ALP holding a 52–48 per cent lead over the Napthine Government. Those results, if replicated at the election, would give Labor a 12-seat majority in the Legislative Assembly. The poll also indicated that the Greens vote remained steady at 12 per cent, and the Palmer United Party appeared to be garnering a vote of about three per cent. But Napthine remained the preferred premier, and there was a ‘big turnaround’ in the number of Victorians who felt that their state was heading in the right direction. Voters were evenly divided over who would be best at protecting jobs. Just 28...
per cent of those polled in mid-August backed the building of the East West Link—a major Coalition initiative. Most thought Labor’s key policy of removing the state’s 50 worst level crossings ‘should be given the highest priority’.

Meanwhile, three strongly conservative parties—the Democratic Labour Party, the Australian Christians, and Rise Up Australia Party—sought to make abortion an issue. Rise Up Australia Party also wanted corporal punishment returned to Victorian schools, and claimed they had done preference deals with the Democratic Labour Party and the Australian Christians.

News also emerged that an LGBTI professional networking organisation, GLOBE, had arranged a forum on LGBTI issues that would see Labor’s Martin Foley debate Liberal MP Clem Newton-Brown, and Greens upper house MP Greg Barber. The speakers at the forum pledged a homophobia-free campaign.

But the unwelcome surprise for many Liberals was the decision by the highly-regarded former Premier Ted Baillieu to quit politics. The Herald Sun reported that:

Dr Napthine led a chorus of former colleagues praising Mr Baillieu. But privately the decision to walk away three months before the poll was met with widespread anger across the Liberal Party. Former premier Jeff Kennett spoke for many who labelled it a selfish act. “He could have done this months ago,” Mr Kennett said. “And now with 98 days to go he’s put his own interests ahead of the party’s.” Mr Kennett said that had Mr Baillieu made his decision earlier, the Liberal Party could have avoided the bloody pre-selection fight for the seat of Kew in which Community Services Minister Mary Wooldridge was humiliated at the hands of former Stonnington mayor Tim Smith.

Contenders for Baillieu’s prized seat of Hawthorn included Institute of Public Affairs executive director John Roskam, Premier Napthine’s legal adviser John Pesutto, Health Minister David Davis, and Minister for Community Services Mary Wooldridge—who was set to lose her lower house seat at the election due to an electoral redistribution. Pesutto eventually won pre-selection, and won the seat for the Liberals at the election.

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews’ pledge to decriminalise cannabis for treatment of life threatening illnesses started to gain traction, with the president of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation saying ‘it would be better if Labor and the Liberals agreed to legalise medicinal cannabis’. The effects of the drug methamphetamine, better known as ‘ice’—widely reported as having reached epidemic proportions—was another election issue given it was fuelling concerns about increased rates of crime. Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews announced an ‘ice action taskforce’ and a range of new criminal offences as part of Labor’s policy package to target drugs and crime.

There were also calls to make domestic violence an election issue, with Domestic Violence Victoria chief executive Fiona McCormack stating that every year domestic violence costs the state economy an estimated $3.4 billion. The domestic violence issue emerged again in controversial circumstances some weeks later when Greens supporters began a ‘provocative campaign’, accusing Labor of supporting ‘male gun violence’ for not taking a stand against duck shooting. The campaign by the Coalition Against Duck Shooting ‘outraged Labor MPs’, who said it was ‘deliberately designed to confuse the party’s message on family violence’.

65.  Ibid.
76.  Ibid.
promised a royal commission on family violence if elected (and subsequently appointed a commissioner on 22 February 2015).  

Newspoll results reported by *The Australian* on 25 August 2014 revealed that the Victorian Liberals’ primary vote was just 32 per cent and the combined Coalition figure was ‘languishing at 35 per cent—nearly 10 points below the 2010 general poll’. The 55 to 45 per cent two-party preferred polling would, if replicated at the election, see Labor winning with a comfortable majority and relegate Napthine’s government to the opposition as the first one-term administration in Victoria since the 1950s.  

Former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett weighed into the debate with an opinion piece in the *Herald Sun* in late August, arguing that ‘It is simply not in our interests to elect a government that does not have a clear majority. Without governments with clear mandates, the opportunity to put communities in the best position to meet challenges [is] much reduced’. He cited five ‘key strengths that must be preserved’: a harmonious society, strong economy, healthy state finances, cultural diversity and robust essential services.  

**Three months to go**

With the opinion polls pointing to a Labor victory, the Coalition seemed set to lose as many as 15 seats. The *Herald Sun* reported that former Victorian premier, Steve Bracks—who led Labor to a narrow victory over Jeff Kennett in 1999—had also ‘put up his hand to mentor Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews ahead of the November election’ to help boost his leadership skills and public image.

**East West Link issues continue to run**

Mid-way through September it emerged that an inner-city councillor, Cam Nation—who was also a former Liberal Party candidate and who, as a councillor, had not been a critic of the East West Link—helped register a new micro-party, the No East West Link Party, to oppose the Link. This seemed an odd move given the Liberals’ support for the Link; however, ‘opponents of the freeway plan have questioned whether the new political party has been set up to funnel votes back to Coalition candidates’. But the major news on transport was the decision by Labor, mid-way through September, that it would not honour any contract for the Link that might be signed before the election:

> Labor tacitly opposed the East West road project since its inception, but was conflicted. More freeways don’t play well in the inner city. ... But what would people in the marginal eastern seats think? Since the 2010 election loss, Labor was nervous about misreading their mood. ... A frequent target of derision were billboards proclaiming support for various social issues on roads exiting the city. The messages would hardly have resonated with people reading them while stuck in traffic on their way home to the suburbs.

> Labor hardheads were also concerned the party would be vulnerable to the old narrative that Labor can’t be trusted with the commercial affairs of state. They feared accusations about sovereign risk, business confidence and a flight of investors. So Labor had a contradictory policy, opposing the road in theory but supporting it in practice.

Nevertheless, Premier Napthine said he would sign the contract for stage one before the caretaker period started.

To counter the Government’s action, two councils—Moreland and Yarra—sought a declaration in the Supreme Court that the decision of the Minister for Planning to approve the Eastern Section of the East West Link was invalid. Labor sought advice from Queen’s Counsel lawyers and a contract law expert, who advised that:

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80. Ibid.
In the event that the Supreme Court holds that the approval decision made by the Minister for Planning on 30 June 2014 is invalid, there is no power to enter into contracts for the Project and any contract entered into will be beyond power and unenforceable.

The councils’ action is due to be heard after the election, on 12 December. Mr Andrews says an incoming Labor government would not defend the challenge; the presumption is that would increase the likelihood the councils would win, with the knock on effect that any signed contract would consequently be invalid (although the government might still be liable to compensate the winning contractor if it cancelled the project).86

After the election and change of government the councils indefinitely delayed their legal action.87 Transport consultant Alan Davies set out a number of reasons why Napthine should not sign the contract before the election. These included the proximity of the start of the caretaker period (one and a half months), the size of the contract, doubts about the economic viability of the motorway, and issues with securing finance for the project whilst it was subject to ongoing legal challenges.88 An editorial in the Herald Sun newspaper opined that, if the Link did not go ahead, the consortium that was likely to sign contracts well before the election ‘would have no hesitation in trying to recoup its losses, which could potentially run into hundreds of millions of dollars. Thousands of jobs would be lost and Victorians would be left with the bill’.89 But even before construction had begun the Napthine government had spent $400 million on the Link.90

Statistics on service delivery a perennial election issue

Statistics on matters such as crime, ambulance and fire response times, and child protection issues are standard fare in state election campaigns, and things were no different during the Victorian campaign. Analysis by The Age’s Josh Gordon in late September 2014 noted:

• Police Commissioner Ken Lay would delay the November crime statistics ‘because they are due just three days before the November 29 election’
• Ambulance Victoria was refusing to publish paramedic response times to cardiac arrests claiming there was ‘clear potential for confusion, misunderstanding or unnecessary debate’
• the Country Fire Authority was refusing to release response time data for 14 volunteer brigades because it could lead to ‘misrepresentations’ and
• Commissioner for Children and Young People Bernie Geary would not release his investigation into the sexual exploitation of children in residential care ‘because he did not want it to be politicised’ or ‘part of the machinations of the election campaign’.91

Fifty days to go

As the Victorian Parliament entered its last sitting week prior to the election, numerous bills languished on the notice paper ‘including recommendations from the child abuse inquiry, laws to protect consumers from dodgy builders, and legislation to allow electronic monitoring bracelets for disabled offenders on leave from a treatment facility’.92

The Government found itself forced to prioritise legislative changes to the state’s anti-corruption body, laws to expunge historic gay sex convictions, and extensions to family violence prevention notices.93 Dr Napthine said it

86. Ibid.
88. Davies op. cit.
93. Ibid.
was ‘common for pieces of legislation to sit on the notice paper at the end of a parliament’ and announced the
government would re-introduce the remaining bills if re-elected.94

**Political donations**

In an opinion piece in *The Age*, Dr Colleen Lewis—an adjunct professor with the National Centre for Australian
Studies at Monash University—said that with only 45 days to go before the election, Victorians had ‘little
knowledge about the political donations policies of various parties’.95 She said:

> An examination of the four major parties’ websites shows only the Greens outline in detail their internal position on
the issue. However, all note that contributions greater than $11,200 are subject to disclosure under the
Commonwealth Electoral Act. What Victorians need to know, from any party fielding candidates, is exactly who is
donating to them, how much they have given, over what period of time, and what, if any, are the donors’ business
affiliations.

This information is not available because Victoria does not have a donations disclosure policy (although all parties
must lodge with the Victorian Election Commission a copy of their federal annual return, which refers to the
$50,000 cap on any donations received from casinos and gambling licensees).96

Lewis argued that, with current technology it would be ‘easy and inexpensive’ for information about who
donated to what party or candidate—and how much—to be posted on a public website in real time ‘or within 24
to 48 hours after money changes hands’.97

**Political recognition factors**

The election campaign resulted in some confusion about how Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews—a relatively
unknown politician—was presented to the electorate. Andrews had taken over the Labor leadership after the
election defeat of the Brumby Labor government in 2010, in which he had been health minister.98

With a month to go before the election, a straw poll of 206 enrolled voters in the CBD found ‘barely a third were
able to name [Labor leader Daniel Andrews] when shown his photograph’.99 It was reported that:

> Mr Andrews has been dogged by claims voters do not know who he is. He recently tried to soften his image with a
name change from Daniel to Dan in some campaign material, but it seems to have had little impact.100 ... Referring
to Mr Andrews’ low recognition rate, former Liberal adviser Grahame Morris said: ‘Jeff Kennett’s dog would have a
higher profile than that’.101

Similarly, less than two-thirds of those polled recognised the Premier, Denis Napthine.102

In the lead up to and during the campaign Andrews lost weight, started wearing more casual clothing such as
jeans, and also featured his family, including his three young children, heavily in his campaign in a move political
commentators stated was designed to convey authenticity.103

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94. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. J Ferguson, ‘**On the brink of victory**’, *The Australian*, 3 November 2014, p. 9; P Carlyon, ‘**Dan’s ‘beautiful’ day**’, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 30
The official campaign

The federal factor

While state branches of federal parties experiencing controversy are often heard to argue that the state election is being fought purely on local issues, in the case of the Victorian election it was difficult for the Victorian Coalition to escape the gravitational pull of the Federal Government’s policies. The reverberations from the federal budget, for example, featured heavily in the election campaign. Federal budget issues included the Medicare co-payment (the ‘GP tax’) and the push for the states to lobby for an increase in the GST.104

The announcement of an increase in the petrol excise when the campaign was underway in late October, due to commence 19 days before election day, was not only damaging to the state government’s campaign, but was interpreted in the media as evidence that the federal government was uninterested in aiding the re-election of its state colleagues. A Federal Liberal source was quoted as saying that the federal Government ‘didn’t have time any more to pander to the states’. There was also a feeling that the state Liberals were polling so poorly that it did not really matter what the federal Government did.105

Commentator Peter van Onselen commented that ‘I doubt malice was behind the [petrol excise] announcement. More likely it was rank incompetence. After all, if the Liberals in Victoria do lose that’s bad news for Abbott too’.106

The tension between the Victorian leader and his federal counterpart was highlighted when Dr Napthine and Prime Minister Abbott held a joint event of the sort that Dr Napthine appeared to have been trying to avoid.107 This event announced a crack-down on union corruption four weeks out from the election. During the event Abbott physically embraced Dr Napthine, saying he would stand ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with the Premier, but Dr Napthine was described as looking like ‘a turtle trying to recoil into its shell’.108 Abbott also said that he intended to attend the election launch, though the Victorian Liberals appeared less enthusiastic about the Prime Minister’s involvement in the campaign.109 Some days later, reflecting on the evident tensions between himself and the Prime Minister, Dr Napthine described his relationship stating that, ‘We get on very professionally... but he’s never been in my mateship book’.110

The Labor Party took advantage of the unpopularity of the Prime Minister by linking the Premier and the Prime Minister, including running advertising with the Prime Minister and Premier wearing the same ties.111 The Victorian Liberals blamed both the federal Government, and Labor’s strategy of depicting Denis Napthine as being close to Tony Abbott, as damaging the slight swing back to the Coalition that had been observed in the preceding weeks in some key marginal seats.112 Liberals argued that one source of the problems was the tendency for the federal Liberals to view everything through the perspective of Sydney, not understanding the unique characteristics of the Victorian electorate.113

The Coalition’s concern about the federal factors appeared to be justified, with an exit poll finding that 46 per cent of voters cited the federal Budget as a significant issue in their voting decision.114 Election post-mortems of the eventual Coalition loss quickly blamed the $7 Medicare co-payment as a key reason for the defeat.115

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105. Ibid.
108. P Akerman and J Ferguson, ‘Liberals uneasy at Abbott embrace’, Weekend Australian, 1 November 2014, p. 8; 4
109. Ibid.
110. J Ferguson, ‘With friends like these...’, The Australian, 6 November 2014, p. 11.
111. J Ferguson, ‘Labor on attack over PM’s record’, The Australian, 11 November 2014, p. 4
115. Ibid.
Opinion polls spell defeat for the Government

The day before Labor launched its election campaign, five weeks out from the election; Newspoll had Labor on a primary vote of 37 per cent with the Coalition on 35, with Labor’s two party preferred vote of 55 per cent—ten percentage points ahead of the Coalition’s 45 per cent. This followed Labor’s lead over the Coalition in private and public polling throughout 2014, and through most of the term, with commentators suggesting that a hung parliament was not out of the question.\(^\text{116}\)

At the issue of the writs for the election, betting agency Sportsbet was offering odds for Labor of $1.28 and odds for the Coalition of $3.50. This equates to an implied probability of a 78.13 per cent chance of a Labor win.\(^\text{117}\)

While Labor continued to hold a comfortable lead, with the Liberal Premier well ahead of the Opposition Leader in preferred premier ratings, there was an expectation in the media that the polls would narrow going into the election.

Polling commissioned by the Australian Greens found that the Greens would win two inner-city seats from the ALP. Both of these seats, Melbourne and Richmond, overlap areas that federal Greens member Adam Bandt won in 2010 and retained at the 2013 federal election.\(^\text{118}\) The seat of Brunswick was also noted as a seat the Greens were targeting.\(^\text{119}\) Analysts also believed that the Greens would secure the balance of power in the upper house.\(^\text{120}\)

The final Ipsos poll before the election showed the Coalition closing on Labor, with a 50/50 two-party preferred vote and the Coalition vote up four points since the beginning of November. Denis Napthine led Daniel Andrews as preferred premier by 44 to 42. The final Newspoll had Labor leading 54 per cent to 46.\(^\text{121}\) Despite the occasional rays of polling sunshine, reports suggested that some weeks before this federal Liberal MPs had essentially written off the chances of a win in Victoria due to the Coalition polling poorly in both state and federal issues and a weak campaign.\(^\text{122}\)

Labor and Crown Casino

At the beginning of November, Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews attended an event with Crown Casino founder Lloyd Williams. Williams, unaware he was being recorded by a television camera operator, stated that businessman ‘James [Packer] is going to be kicking every goal he can for you’.\(^\text{123}\)

Andrews quickly distanced himself from any association with Packer, whom he described as a friend, and denied that the support was in response to Labor’s support for extending Crown’s casino license.\(^\text{124}\) The next day Packer himself stated that Williams’ offer did not reflect his views.\(^\text{125}\) Williams’ offer was said to have caused ‘growing anger’ in the Liberal Party, and was linked to the Coalition Government’s surprise increased taxation of the casino.\(^\text{126}\)

The CFMEU and TURC

Daniel Andrews came from the Socialist Left faction of the ALP, according to a report ‘has not wavered, for a second, in his allegiance to the Left, remaining steadfast in his support for the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union state division under its secretary John Setka’.\(^\text{127}\) At the start of November 2014 the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption (TURC) heard that Setka should be charged

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118. R Willingham and H Cook, ‘Greens lead in inner city seats, poll finds’, The Saturday Age, 8 November 2014, p. 5
with blackmail. There was some debate, however, as to the extent to which this association might damage the Opposition Leader due to ‘a sense that Victorians have lived with criminal unions for so long that they have become accustomed to the madness’. This did not stop the Liberals pouring significant resources into a ‘blitz’ of advertising linking Andrews with the CFMEU.

**Scandals on all sides of politics**

The Victorian election seemed to be particularly plagued by scandals affecting all sides of politics. For example, a Labor candidate, Natalie Suleyman, found herself under pressure by the Liberals to resign as the candidate for the west suburban seat of St Albans over her alleged ‘history of false and misleading evidence to an Ombudsman’s inquiry, questions over her mobile phone use and accusations of bullying and harassment’.

**Skeletons in the social media cupboard**

Social media continued to be a stumbling block for parties who had endorsed candidates engaging in certain social media activities that could damage their parties and chances of being elected:

A Liberal candidate at November’s state election quit in disgrace last night after party officials were told of hundreds of offensive sexist and racist posts on his Facebook page. Jack Lyons, who was standing for the marginal seat of Bendigo West, quit two hours after the Herald Sun alerted party officials he had described the regional city as ‘needing an enema’ and called its historical Golden Dragon Museum ‘ching chong gardens’.

Lyons’ replacement, Michael Langdon, was unanimously endorsed by the Liberal Party’s administrative committee as the new Bendigo West candidate. The party said that ‘party officials had called all candidates on Monday night to emphasise that any private social media accounts needed to be disclosed’.

Another Liberal candidate, Aaron Lane—former Young Liberal president and fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs—also resigned after making crude comments on social media. He also lost his work as a casual sessional law tutor at Deakin University. Within days the Liberals were again on the defensive when a member, Tim Dark, was forced to resign from his post at Swinburne University Liberal Club after posting homophobic and sexist comments on Facebook.

**Labor’s ‘Tapegate’**

The Labor opposition faced a potential scandal over what became known as ‘tapegate’. It was alleged that a Labor official had obtained the dictaphone of a Fairfax journalist that contained a recording of an off-the-record interview with the previous Liberal leader and premier Ted Baillieu which was emailed to sitting Victorian MPs by an apparent Liberal Party member, who appeared not to exist. The incident was referred to Victoria Police; however, the outcome is unknown.

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128. S Drill, ‘Setka should face charge’, *Herald Sun*, 1 November 2014, p. 3.
129. J Ferguson, ‘With friends like these…’, op. cit.
Palmer United Party’s candidate trouble

PUP leader Clive Palmer entered the Victorian election race on 7 November with a press conference, even though at that point he was ‘without any candidates or major policy spruik to Victorians’. His aim was to seize the balance of power in the upper house.140

However, shortly before the election it was revealed that one of the PUP candidates, Jack Kennedy, listed as the party’s third candidate for the upper house in the South-Eastern Metropolitan district, was found guilty of reckless injury in 1989. The party sought an injunction to halt the printing of the ballot papers, as the candidate would have been ineligible to enter Parliament. The application was refused in the Supreme Court as the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) did not allow for the removal of a candidate once the candidate had been nominated.141 Kennedy remained on the ballot as a PUP candidate and received just under 0.1 per cent of the first preference vote in the district.

Liberal corruption allegations

As the campaign progressed it emerged that two Liberal candidates were also being investigated by the Victorian Ombudsman for allegedly corrupt conduct in relation to donations and council planning decisions. The candidates, for marginal Labor-held seats, denied any wrong-doing or involvement in sparking the investigations, although the Liberal Party campaign director blamed ‘political dirty tricks’ for the leak of the allegations.142

Both candidates were cleared by the Ombudsman’s inquiry, although neither were subsequently elected. The Ombudsman found that although property developers had made donations to the councillors, there was no evidence that the donations had been made for any improper purpose. However, the Ombudsman also called for a ban on donations from property developers and increased transparency in donation laws.143

Sex scandals

Meanwhile, Planning Minister Matthew Guy found himself caught up in a scandal involving his senior adviser, Marc Boxer.144 Boxer’s subsequent resignation was the first scandal with a sexual element to hit the Napthine Government. According to The Australian’s Victorian Political Editor John Ferguson:

> The resignation will spark questions about what Mr Guy knew—and when—given Mr Boxer was struck off as a teacher a decade ago over his predatory behaviour and evidence of the sex scandal was freely available on the public record. Mr Guy is considered the man most likely to replace Premier Denis Napthine if the Coalition loses office in November or if Dr Napthine stands down mid-term after winning.145

Guy admitted he knew that an adviser in his office had been struck off the register as a school teacher several years ago, but at the time ‘did not see a need to remove him from his ministerial office’.146 Boxer, following his resignation from Guy’s office, was reported to have found employment in the Department of Planning, albeit with a pay cut.147

Record number of registered parties

With a little over a month to go to the election, 14 parties had registered, including the Palmer United Party (PUP), Animal Justice and Voluntary Euthanasia. Another nine were awaiting final registration, which included Rise Up Australia, the Cyclists Party, No East West Link Party and the Basics Rock ‘N’ Roll Party.148 By the time of

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140. R Willingham, ‘Clive baulks at picking a winner in a two-horse race’, The Age, 7 November 2014, p. 6
145. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
the election the number of registered parties contesting the election had climbed to 21, up from a previous record of 13 parties in 1999. Over half of the parties (11) had registered in the six months before the election. With micro-parties already a notable presence in the federal political sphere, some commentators opined that minor parties—including Clive Palmer’s PUP—would hold the balance of power in Victoria after the state election. However, as Crikey’s Charles Richardson pointed out, much of the story was ‘based on the ruminations of preference whisperer Glenn Druery’. Research by ABC election analyst Antony Green showed ‘only five regions in which a micro-party might have a chance of election, and in most of those the chance is pretty slim. The idea that they might all succeed simultaneously is sheer fantasy’. Green also stated:

> The sort of labyrinthine preferences deals that marred the 2013 Senate election look set to be repeated in the Victorian Legislative Council election, though the odds are we won’t see a victory as improbable as that of Senator Ricky Muir from the Australian Motoring Enthusiasts Party.

The issue with micro-parties and preference deals that plagued that 2013 Senate election also hung over the Victorian Legislative Council election due to its use of a voting system similar to the 2013 Australian Senate electoral system. The quota needed to win a seat in the Victorian Legislative Council is about 16.7 per cent. According to Monash University academic Zareh Ghazarian:

> Since shifting to a multi-member system using proportional representation in 2006, the Legislative Council has had a couple of minor parties win representation. The DLP won a seat in 2006, while the Greens hope to increase their numbers in the chamber this time around. ... [Minor] parties can reach a quota by cobbling together a suite of deals on the flow of preference votes.

### Preference deals and minority government

Due to the perception that Labor was unlikely to win a majority, preference deals and the possibility of a minority Labor government received considerable discussion. Early on, Opposition Leader Andrews rejected the possibility of preference deals with the Greens or the possibility of minority government supported by the Greens. Reports stated that ‘Andrews loathes the Greens’. However, maintaining distance from the Greens was a bi-partisan approach. The Liberals also announced that they would place the Greens last on all preferences and how-to-vote cards, even if it meant giving the ‘anti-Islam, anti-immigration’ far right Rise Up Australia Party higher preferences. Although Rise Up Australia claimed that it had been negotiating a preference deal with the Liberals, the Liberal Party denied any such arrangement.

Glenn Druery, who had received substantial press coverage for his apparent role in co-ordinating minor party preferences in the 2013 federal election, stated that he had been assisting parties in this election with their preference distribution deals.

Amongst the preference deals reported, the Greens appeared to have had an arrangement with PUP, preferencing PUP over Labor in four upper house districts and PUP over the Liberals in seven others. The Greens refused to confirm or deny whether this arrangement was the result of a deal.

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While fears of a minority government in the lower house proved to be unfounded, with Labor winning a comfortable majority, micro-parties did have a degree of success in the upper house. Neither the Coalition nor Labor and the Greens combined could achieve a majority in the upper house without the support of one or more of the minor parties. This included the Shooters and Fishers (who won two upper house seats), Sex Party, DLP and Vote 1 Local Jobs (who won one each).

The polling

Pre-Poll Voting

Victorians were able to cast their vote from 17 November onwards at any one of about 100 pre-poll centres. Early trends led to estimates that the number of such votes might reach 850,000 or even 1 million—meaning more than one in four voters voting early. As a comparison, at the 2010 Victorian election there were 543,763 early votes (the equivalent of pre-poll). This comprised 16.3 per cent of all votes cast. At the 2006 election, there were 273,952 early votes (8.8 per cent of the total).

This high degree of pre-poll voting led to concerns that the result of the election could be delayed as counting the early votes would not commence until the Monday after the election. The Victorian Electoral Commission confirmed it would count only ‘ordinary votes’ on election night, plus a maximum of 2,000 postal votes for each lower house electorate.

The 2014 election saw early voting double from 2010, with a total of just under a million early votes (912,967, 25.79 per cent of total votes) and a further 294,166 (8.31 per cent of total votes) postal votes.

The Election results

The concerns about delayed results proved to be unfounded, and Premier Denis Napthine conceded defeat just before 10pm on election night, indicating that he would also step down as party leader.

The Labor Party, led by Daniel Andrews, won the election, winning 47 of the 88 seats. A comprehensive examination of the results is available from the Victorian Parliamentary Library and Information Service’s report *The 2014 Victorian State Election*.

The Legislative Assembly

Victorian 2014 election results—Legislative Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Nationals</th>
<th>Greens</th>
<th>Independents and Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>36.46</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>11.48</td>
<td>8.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lesman et al, *The 2014 Victorian State Election*

The Labor Party won four more seats in the Legislative Assembly compared to the 2010 election; however, it lost the district of Melbourne to the Greens.

The Coalition lost seven seats in the Legislative Assembly compared to the 2010 election, including Prahran to the Greens and Shepparton to an Independent. The Nationals lost the status of ‘third party’ in the Parliament.

162. Correspondence with Paul Thornton-Smith, Senior Research and Information Officer, Victorian Electoral Commission.
163. D Gray, ‘Victorians voting early (but not often)’, op. cit.
167. Ibid.
winning a total of ten seats, one short of the 11 required for third party status. The Greens won two seats in the Legislative Assembly (Melbourne and Prahran) giving them representation in the lower house for the first time. An Independent, Suzanna Sheed won the seat of Shepparton, in the Legislative Assembly, but Independent (former Liberal), Geoff Shaw, lost his seat of Frankston to Labor.168

The Legislative Council

Victorian 2014 election result—Legislative Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>ALP</th>
<th>Coalition</th>
<th>Greens</th>
<th>Sex Party</th>
<th>DLP</th>
<th>Shooters &amp; Fishers</th>
<th>Vote 1 Local Jobs</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>33.46</td>
<td>36.14</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>2.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seats</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lesman et al., The 2014 Victorian State Election

As predicted before the election, the ALP failed to gain a majority in the Legislative Council, Victoria’s upper house. The ALP won 14 of the 40 Legislative Council seats, the Coalition won 16 seats (14 to the Liberal Party and two to the Nationals), with the Greens winning another five. The ALP lost two seats compared to its results at the previous election, both of which went to the Greens, and the Coalition lost a total of five seats in the Legislative Council to the micro-parties.169

In the Legislative Council the Shooters and Fishers Party of Victoria won two seats, the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) won one seat, the Australian Sex Party won one seat, and Vote 1 Local Jobs won one seat.170 Much like the 2013 federal election, many of the smaller parties that won seats in the Legislative Council did so with small proportions of the vote. The Sex Party, DLP and Shooters and Fishers won their seats on less than 3 per cent of the primary vote. The Vote 1 Local Jobs candidate won on 1.3 per cent of the primary vote.171 As with the federal Senate following the 2013 election, these wins were mostly due to preferences directed through group voting tickets.

Greens’ wins

The Greens’ win in the inner-city seat of Melbourne was known the day after the election, with Ellen Sandell the first Greens MP to sit in the Victorian lower house, winning the seat from Labor.172 This was the first time Labor had lost the seat of Melbourne in 106 years.173

While the Greens’ primary vote state-wide was very similar to its 2010 vote, it focused its campaigning resources on a small number of inner-city seats.174 Apart from Melbourne, there were signs early in the counting that the Greens were competitive against Labor in Richmond and Brunswick, and against the Liberals in Prahran.175 In addition to winning Melbourne, the Greens were eventually successful in winning Prahran from the Liberal Party.

Preferences were important in both of the seats the Greens won. While Greens beat the ALP in first preference votes in Melbourne, Liberal preferences flowed one third to the Greens and two thirds to the ALP, which was enough to give the Greens a two party preferred vote of 52.4 per cent.176 In Prahran, by comparison, the Greens finished third on first preference votes. However, preferences from the Animal Justice Party were sufficient to

168. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
174. Ibid.
175. ‘Historic win for Greens’, op. cit.
176. Lesman et al., op. cit.
put the Greens into second place, ahead of Labor, meaning Labor’s preferences were then distributed. The Greens candidate, Sam Hibbins, won on a two party preferred vote of 50.37 per cent, or 277 votes.

Post-election

Reckonations

The defeat of the one-term Coalition Government led to considerable blame-shifting, with both the performance of that Government and the federal Government said to be at fault. Former Victorian premier Jeff Kennett asserted that the federal Government was a major factor in the Victorian Coalition’s defeat. The outgoing Liberal treasurer specifically cited Joe Hockey’s federal budget as a contributor to the loss. Political commentator Michelle Grattan also stated:

Federal Liberals were trying to minimise or deny the extent to which Victorian voters had cast a reflection on the Abbott government. They say the state polls didn’t shift much in three years — which was going back well before Abbott became PM.

The truth lies in-between. Voters were unimpressed with the state government’s performance and disgusted with its chaotic parliament. But the federal budget, with its array of nasties (many of which haven’t even been passed because of the Senate) and the general style of the federal government played right into Labor’s hands.

Then there were the federal grenades that lobbed in the immediate run up to the election — including the decision to implement fuel excise indexation by regulation and last week’s shemozzle over the Medicare co-payment.

Victorian political scientist Nicholas Economou agreed, stating ‘the pathetic performance by the Liberal party since its unexpected win in 2010’, along with the contributions of the federal Government, led to the loss. Comments from the federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce in relation to the bailout of a Shepparton tinned fruit producer were also blamed for the Nationals’ poor performance by the outgoing Victorian Nationals leader, Peter Ryan. A Liberal Party post-mortem of the defeat blamed the focus on the East West Link and Premier Ted Baillieu’s ‘slow start to government’.

The Liberal leadership

Following the election defeat, Dr Napthine stood down as Liberal leader, stating ‘it’s time for renewal. It is time for change’. Two contenders initially emerged for the leadership: outgoing Planning Minister Matthew Guy and outgoing Treasurer Michael O’Brien. Matthew Guy quickly became the favourite, receiving the endorsement of former premier Jeff Kennett, and went on to lead the party.

While it was reported that Dr Napthine would serve out his four year term and mentor the new leader, a little less than a year after the defeat, he resigned his safe seat and forced a by-election in September 2015.

Conclusion

The Coalition’s loss of government in Victoria—the first after one term in more than 50 years—was widely forecasted by the polls, but was still regarded as unexpected and significant.

177. Ibid.
187. Lesman et al., op. cit.
The result was likely due to multiple factors operating at both the local and the federal level. The most significant of these were the perceived lacklustre performance of the Victorian Coalition Government, accompanied by a mid-term change of leader and Premier, and unpopular policies introduced by the federal Coalition Government. The one-term defeat was followed by a similar loss after one term for the Liberal-National Party Government in Queensland on 31 January 2015. Whether these two results are the beginning of a new trend or a coincidence remains to be seen.
