

Liberals gain strong swing in Western Australia

In August 2008, WA's Premier, Alan Carpenter, called an election just after Colin Barnett, who was expecting to [retire as an MP](#), became Liberal leader again, in place of Troy Buswell. Labor lost government then after it suffered a 4.1% swing and won 28 seats in an expanded Legislative Assembly of 59. The Nationals (4 seats) eventually joined the Liberals (24 seats) with support from three independents (Dr Liz Constable, not opposed by a Liberal in Churchlands, became Education Minister) after securing a '[royalties for regions](#)' guarantee of non-metropolitan expenditure equal to 25% of mining revenue.

In the Legislative Council in 2008, each of the three metropolitan regions elected three Liberal, two Labor and one Greens MLC. The Mining and Pastoral Region divided similarly, except two Liberals and a National succeeded. However in the Agricultural and South West Regions, the Liberals and Nationals combined won five and four of the six seats respectively to hold a solid Council majority.

Under [amending legislation](#), future elections would occur on the second Saturday in March every four years, making for a longer immediate term. After the [major redistributions of 2007](#) following passage of 'one vote one value' legislation, [minor boundary changes this time](#) affected only a small number of seats noticeably.

The Fremantle by-election in May 2009, following ALP [electoral reformer](#) Jim [McGinty's](#) resignation, resulted in a Greens victory, with Adele Carles elected, but she became an independent in 2010 after her affair with Troy Buswell became [widely known](#). Elected as [North West Labor MLA](#), Vince Catania [switched](#) to the [Nationals](#) in July 2009.

Opinion polls generally had Labor first preference percentages in the low 30s except for brief forays to 35% in early 2010, following its change of leader in January 2012, and about a month before polling day. The small rise for Labor during 2013 left it [2.7% below](#) its previous result, while the Liberal increase of 8.7% was also offset by notable declines for the Greens, Family First and independents of 3.5%, 1.4% and 1.4% respectively.

Of the 291 candidates, four seats had just three, nineteen apiece had four or five, eleven had six, and six had seven. Greens nominated in all 59 seats, Australian Christians in 41 and Family First in 16. With compulsory marking of all but one preference, informal voting increased to 6.0%.

The two independent MLAs renominating attracted just 5% and 10% of first preferences while three seats vacated by long-serving Labor MLAs were among the ten that changed hands. With an overall 5.4% swing to the government, the Liberals emerged with 31 seats (53%), and the Nationals 7

(12%), including Pilbara where their leader, Brendon Grylls, transferred and achieved an 18% swing, despite his not living in the electorate. Three [National ministers](#) were in the new government, the same as previously.

Labor's 21 seats (36%) included two with margins of 24 and 56 votes after attracting more than one-quarter and roughly one-third of preferences from Family First and Liberal candidates respectively. Kimberley was held relatively easily after four candidates started with 18-27% of first preferences. Parties and independents that were unsuccessful attracted 13.7% of first preferences.

Legislative Council support levels followed within 0.5% of those in the Assembly except for the newly-formed [Shooters and Fishers](#), who stood only in Council contests, (1.8%); Nationals and independents (both down 1.2%); and Family First (up 0.8%). There were 41 nominations in the Agricultural Region, and 23-26 elsewhere. In metropolitan regions, starting three times with around 0.6 quotas, the Greens lost one place to each of the Liberals and Labor.

Australian Christians, Family First and the Shooters and Fishers tended to support each other on [registered tickets](#), allowing the highest-placed to challenge other parties for the last position (or two in the Mining and Pastoral Region) as a lengthy series of exclusions occurred.

Starting with 3.3%, the Shooters and Fishers succeeded in the [Agricultural Region](#), obtaining significant boosts as the last Labor, National and Greens candidates were excluded, and from an initial 3.7% in the Mining and Pastoral Region, they ended 153 votes short of a quota. [Two countbacks](#) from 2008 were necessary to determine the replacements until 21 May for Nationals switching to become MLAs.

Quite a few of the registered group voting tickets included [numbering that roamed](#) from column to column without being sequential downwards within columns or otherwise consistent. In such circumstances, it was impossible to know in advance which candidate would benefit most from particular ticket votes.

The overall result in non-metropolitan areas of seven Liberals (38%), five Nationals (28%), four Labor (22%) and one each for the Greens and Shooters and Fishers was a major factor in the governing parties doing much better (61% of seats, double Labor's) than indicated by overall statewide support (52.5% first preferences, around 1.5 times Labor's). Unless Labor can significantly increase its votes in these areas, it faces a lengthy period in a minority position in the Legislative Council after having accepted Greens' demands that, in return for equalizing Assembly enrolments in all but the five most dispersed electorates, the six regions elect six members each in place of the previous sevens and fives.

Nationalists lose long-term grip on power in Malta

Early elections were called in Malta after the Nationalist Party's (NP) budget was rejected on 10 December 2012. One of its MPs, who had earlier voted to dismiss a minister and abstained in a no-confidence motion, joined with the Malta Labour Party (MLP) to cause the defeat, as he was unhappy about the awarding of a bus transport contract to a German company. Parliament was dissolved on 7 January 2013, allowing longer for voting identification cards to be prepared. Polling day was set for 9 March 2013.

At the 2008 election, MLP won 34 seats among the thirteen five-member districts, using the single transferable vote, despite receiving slightly fewer votes (48.9%) than the Nationalists (49.3%). Both parties secured majorities of three to two in six districts. MLP prevailed in the only district where there was a narrow margin, and also again won four seats in its consistently biggest stronghold.

Consequently under the revised constitutional provision of 2007, four extra seats were created in order to give the Nationalists a parliamentary majority in keeping with their greater number of first preferences. Four additional seats had been automatically created for them in 1987, and to Labour's benefit in 1996, under the initial 'majority rule' constitutional guarantee of 1987. The Speaker was chosen from outside the ranks of the elected MPs.

In power for all but one brief term in the past twenty-five years, the Nationalists were portrayed as self-centred, in sharp contrast with a much younger MLP leader, Dr Joseph Muscat, who offered hope of major change. What ensued was a swing of 6.0%, and the most decisive outcome since the move to thirteen five-member districts in 1976. Thirty-nine MLP candidates were successful, compared with twenty-six Nationalists, in four outcomes of four to one, five of three to two and four of two to three. Majorities or margins seldom changed in particular districts in the past.

The 268 nominations, between 12 and 25 in each district, included 101 candidates contesting two seats. With voting voluntary, there was again a very high 93% turnout. Just 1.3% of the ballot-papers were blank or otherwise informal, ranging from 1.0% to 1.8% in individual districts. A single first preference suffices. Voters for the two main parties rarely continue beyond their preferred party's candidates. Four bonus seats were created to create an NP presence in parliament roughly akin to its relativity in first preferences.

Outgoing Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi immediately stepped aside from a leadership role, allowing an internal convention to determine that in May. The leaders of two small parties indicated that they would cease that role.

Five MLP and six NP candidates were successful in both of the electorates for which they nominated, so countbacks were held on 28 March and 3 April 2013 respectively to determine how the seat they declined would be filled. With two young NP candidates now successful, and another two women among its four highest initial losers, the number of women elected increased to an all-time high of ten.

Three new parties in the Israeli Government

Early Israeli elections were held on 22 January 2013, after it became clear a State budget for 2013 would not be passed by the end of December. Polls in 2012 seemed certain until a last-minute decision in May by the largest party, Kadima, to join (very briefly, it turned out) the Netanyahu Government. An adverse High Court ruling prompted much effort being unsuccessfully devoted to ending dispensations regarding military duty or civilian service for those choosing a life of religious study.

Jockeying for influence continued for months with the formation, or creation through merger, of many new parties and the disappearance of others. Former television presenter Yair Lapid followed in his father's footsteps in forming a new centrist secular party, Yesh Atid (There is a Future), while a previous Prime Ministerial adviser greatly increased prominence for the nationalist The Jewish Home. Among those ousted from party leadership in membership ballots, former Kadima Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni left the Knesset in May 2012, but returned to public life in late November with the formation of Hatnua (The Movement).

The Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, formed an early electoral alliance and joint list with Yisrael Beteinu (Israel Our Home) to maximize his prospects of being the first asked to try to form the next government. In the hope of a constituent party each time gaining an extra seat from votes additional to the seats their individual final ordinary d'Hondt highest average divisor gave them, six other temporary alliances were registered.

A 2% threshold applies nationally for parties to qualify for seats. Votes for 20 unsuccessful parties aggregated to 7.1%, and 1.1% of ballots were blank or spoilt. The 67.8% turnout equalled the best this century, but it was below turnouts in earlier decades of near 80%.

There appeared to be little public inkling of a sizeable centre-left shift in voter sentiment that resulted in a reduction from 42 to just 31 seats for Likud Beteinu (23.3% support). Having picked up respectively 19 and 12 seats on 14.3% and 9.1% support, Yesh Atid and The Jewish Home indicated that they would only go into government together, and not if religious parties were included. Labor, recovering to 15 seats (11.4% support) after campaigning vigorously on economic and social justice, refused to contemplate being in government. It had split after initially joining the previous government. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak and four others remained as Independence. Mr Barak then surprisingly stated he would not stand again. Other parties won 11, 7, 6 (twice), 4 (twice), 3 and 2 (Kadima) seats.

On 19 February, Mr Netanyahu announced that Hatnua (6 seats, 5.0% support) would be in the next government and that, as Justice Minister, Ms Livni would be in charge of any negotiations with the Palestinians. Yesh Atid and The Jewish Home agreed to join the government on 14 March.