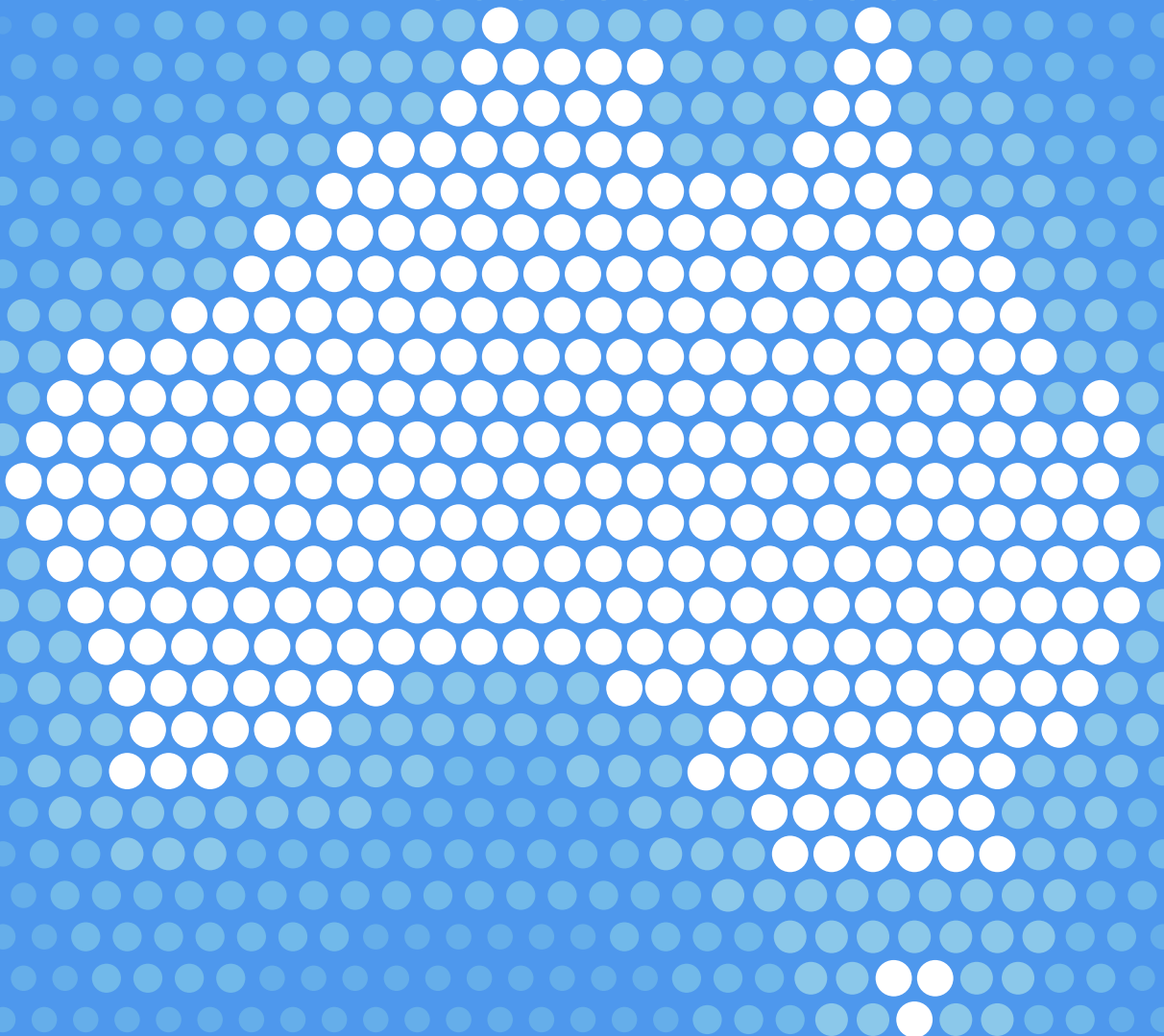


Blueprint Institute

Post-election briefing 2022

Changing constituencies,
changing prospects for reform



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Executive Summary

The 2022 Federal Election has reshaped our political landscape. Labor will form government despite having an astonishingly low primary vote of around 32%. The Coalition - particularly the Liberal Party - also suffered from a historically low primary vote. Yet the Morrison Government primarily lost the election due to the rise of strong independents in traditionally safe, blue ribbon seats.

The Liberal Party's heartland has been decimated. Wentworth, Kooyong, North Sydney, Goldstein, Mackellar, and Warringah - seats that are traditionally held by Ministers, Prime Ministers, and future leaders - are now in the hands of Teal independents. The Coalition banked on picking up seats in the outer suburbs of capital cities to offset expected losses in wealthy inner city electorates. This was a gamble that spectacularly backfired: they lost outer suburban seats to Labor - with voters tired of a government that had been in office for almost a decade - as well as losing their inner city heartland.

Tying the independents that now hold formerly safe Liberal seats together is a commitment to climate action. They all ran campaigns attacking the reticence of the Coalition to accept climate change as the great challenge of our time. They pitched themselves as disaffected small-l liberals - and the electorate responded.

The record number of people voting for candidates that are not members of the major parties demonstrates rising frustration with the ability (or lack thereof) of Labor and the Coalition to provide genuine solutions to the array of issues that face Australia in the 21st Century. The election is a clear indication that we need reform - and we need it now.

In the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia is beset by a series of enduring challenges that demand substantive policy reform. This is despite several indicators pointing to a robust economic recovery. The jobs market is undeniably strong—unemployment at [3.9%](#) and underemployment at 6.1%. Our economic growth is stronger than comparable international

economies, and inflation is lower than the US, EU, UK, and Singapore.

However, these indicators mask serious structural deficiencies. A return to the pre-pandemic status quo would be disastrous for the Australian economy. Real wage growth was anaemic for years before the pandemic and has yet to show signs of acceleration. Productivity growth, which determines wage growth and our living standards in the long run, was stuck in a multi-year rut before the pandemic and remains sluggish today. Investment, too, has been falling as a share of the economy for almost a decade, and is now near a two-decade low. And the potential of high inflation looms on the horizon.

The Australian economy is underperforming and we need structural, long-term [solutions](#). But both the Coalition and Labor offered very little by way of meaningful reform or engagement with key policy challenges in the campaign.

This paper summarises that campaign, the results, the key themes, and the prospects for real, impactful reform in our new parliament. Blueprint believes that the pathway to a better Australia lies in ensuring that policy is evidence based, socially progressive, fiscally conservative, friendly to the free market, and environmentally conscious.

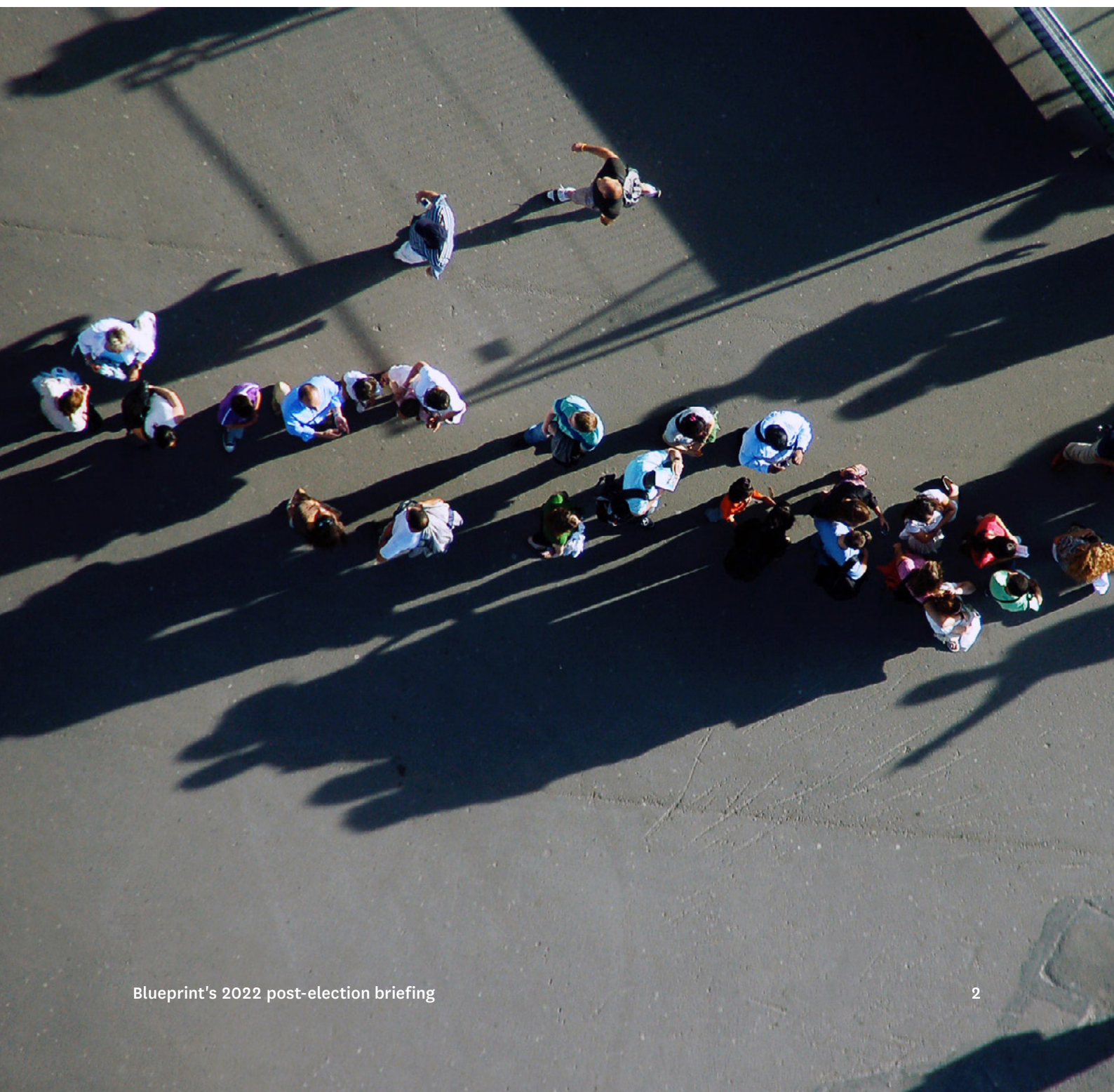
We look forward to working constructively with all members of the 47th parliament and encourage the major parties to heed the electoral warning shots across their bow evidenced by their plummeting primary votes.

As adherents to classical liberalism, we encourage the Coalition - particularly the Liberal party - to learn the right lessons from this defeat. They have been the natural party of government post WWII due to their ability to appeal to a 'broad church'. They must not shift to the populist right as some commentators are demanding. They must re-engage their traditional base, and stop listening to those who bastardise their party's philosophy to shroud luddite attitudes toward progress and veil naked bigotry towards people that make them uncomfortable.

Particularly on climate change, they must act. Liberals – as friends of the free market – know there is no movement more amenable to conservation and climate action than liberalism. They know we should be supporting the private sector's desire to speed up the exit of coal from the grid rather than forcing energy companies to keep open loss-making coal-fired power stations (a perfect example of government overreach if there ever was one). They know that there is enormous economic opportunity in diversifying

regional industry. They know that it is lunacy to allow good environmental policy to be hampered by partisanship. They know that, as Liberals, Burke's view of society as a partnership between the living, the unborn and the dead, resonates – and that the greatest thing they can do is to pass on a world to their children that is sustainable, and unravaged by climate change.

David Cross
CEO



Key conclusions

1. The Coalition has abandoned its traditional base

It did not make gains in outer suburban seats where a mythical ‘new base’ supposedly exists, and suffered decisive losses in ‘blue ribbon’ electorates.

2. The Nationals only made gains where their candidate was climate conscious

And went backwards where they were climate sceptic or Matt Canavan played a big role. This shows that our understanding of climate action as unpalatable in the bush is wrong—the whole electorate cares about this issue.

3. Key climate seats went to the Greens or independents, not Labor

This shows Labor has more to do on climate.

4. All politics is local

Voters can tell when their local concerns are disregarded by major parties. They can see through rhetoric.

5. COVID-19 electoral advantage is now gone

Except in WA, where Labor benefitted from Mark McGowan’s popularity.

Given the historically low primary vote for both Labor and the Coalition, and the new expanded cross-bench, **there is an opportunity for the new parliament to embrace a bipartisan approach to our biggest policy challenges**—creating effective, lasting solutions.

Key seat snapshots—what can we learn?

1. The Coalition has abandoned its traditional ‘broad church’ base. It suffered decisive losses among professional voters in ‘blue ribbon’ electorates and did not make meaningful gains in outer suburbia.

‘Teal’ seats

Result: Liberal loss, independent gain—swings mostly between 10-18%.

The Liberal Party has lost six inner-city cosmopolitan seats in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth to “teal” independents—they include Kooyong (VIC), Goldstein (VIC), Wentworth (NSW), Mackellar (NSW), North Sydney (NSW), and Curtin (WA). These six electorates add to Warringah (NSW), another former-Liberal seat won by independent Zali Stegall in 2019—she extended her margin at this election by 3.9%.

Until Saturday, the six “teal” seats had been held almost exclusively by the Liberal Party since Federation. Many are the former electorates of the Party’s most significant historical figures, including founder Robert Menzies (Kooyong), former leader Andrew Peacock (Kooyong), former leader John Hewson (Wentworth), former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull (Wentworth), and former trade minister Andrew Robb (Goldstein). Other than Wentworth, which already sat on a tight margin, extraordinary swings ranging between 10-16% will leave the Liberal Party virtually unrepresented in Melbourne, and for the first time, unrepresented in a single seat overlooking Sydney harbour.

This dramatic shift is illustrative of the Liberal Party’s shattered base. The long standing “broad church”, [described](#) by former Prime Minister John Howard to include both the classical liberal and conservative traditions, has crumbled. In the six “teal” seats, traditional liberal voters moved decisively against “moderate” incumbents to send a new swathe of climate-conscious, female independents to Canberra.

The loss of these seats will leave the Liberal Party stripped of talent and many of its leading

progressives. Treasurer and Liberal leader-in-waiting Josh Frydenberg is one of the most significant losses, missing out to independent Monique Ryan in Kooyong.

Bennelong (NSW)

Result (at time of writing): Liberal loss, Labor gain—Jerome Laxale (ALP) 51.1% vs Simon Kennedy (LIB) 48.9% (8% swing to ALP).

Labor has won Bennelong at this election after the incumbent Liberal MP John Alexander retired. The Liberal campaign was hampered by pre-selection issues, with Kennedy only confirmed in late March, and the candidate’s past comments regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

Parramatta (NSW)

Result: Labor retain—Andrew Charlton (ALP) 54.6% vs Maria Kovacic (LIB) 45.4% (1.1% swing to ALP).

Parramatta is a Western Sydney electorate that the Morrison administration hoped to gain as part of its strategy to build a new Liberal base in working class suburbs. However, Labor has not only retained Parramatta, but done so with an increased margin. What’s more, this was achieved with “parachute” candidate Andrew Charlton, a wealthy economist from Bellevue Hill.

Bass (TAS)

Result: Liberal retain—Bridget Archer (LIB) 51.1% vs Ross Hart (ALP) 48.9% (0.7% swing to LIB).

Incumbent Liberal Bridget Archer has retained her marginal seat of Bass. In doing so, she has defied the national swing against the coalition by distancing herself from the Morrison Government. During her term, Archer was commended for [crossing the floor](#) to vote against the Coalition in favour of an integrity commission and LGBTQI rights. This shows that those Liberal candidates who managed to distance themselves from the Morrison’s election campaign were rewarded by voters.

Gilmore (NSW)

Result (at time of writing): Liberal gain—Andrew Constance (LIB) 50.2% vs Fiona Phillips (ALP) 49.8% (2.8% swing to LIB).

This is the only seat gained by the Liberal Party, other than Hughes which was won back from former Liberal Craig Kelly after he defected to the United Australia Party. Tellingly, Liberal candidate Andrew Constance benefited from his record of [having spoken](#) out against Scott Morrison during the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires. Constance is also renowned for championing ambitious electric vehicles policy as transport minister in the NSW state government, and has advocated a more ambitious response to climate change. Again, this outcome demonstrates that where the few Liberal gains did occur, they were for candidates that successfully distanced themselves from the Morrison administration.

2. The Nationals only made gains where their candidates supported net zero, and went backwards where they were net zero-sceptic.

Hunter (NSW)

Result: Labor retain—Dan Repacholi (ALP) 53.8% vs James Thompson (NAT) 46.2% (0.8% swing to ALP).

The electorate of Hunter is one of the best renowned “coal seats” in the country and has traditionally been a jewel in the Labor crown. It has been held by retiring former minister Joel Fitzgibbon for the last 26 years and his father before that. Coal mining is the top [employer](#) and the seat is also host to the Lidell, Bayswater, Eraring and Vales Point B coal-fired power generators.

Although Fitzgibbon’s margin was slashed from 12.5% to [3%](#) in 2019, Dan Repacholi has won Hunter for Labor and slightly increased the party’s margin by roughly one percent. This result is informative because it reflects a repudiation of the Nationals’ campaign against net zero. This result demonstrates that climate-scepticism is not a golden ticket to parliament in regional and rural Australia - these electorates want action on climate too.

Page (NSW)

Result: Kevin Hogan (NAT) 59.4% vs Patrick Deegan (ALP) 40.6% (7.1% swing to NAT).

Kevin Hogan is one of only three Nationals MPs to deliver positive swings for the party above 1.5%. The other two are Darren Chester (Gippsland—4.5% swing to NAT) and Anne Webster (Mallee—4.2% swing to NAT). Tellingly, these three Nationals MPs have distanced themselves from the party’s climate-sceptic leadership, embraced net-zero and offered strong support to renewables projects in their electorates.

3. The climate vote largely went to the Greens or independents, not Labor.

Griffith (Qld)

Result: Labor loss, Greens gain—Max Chandler-Mather (GRN) 62.9% vs Olivia Roberts (LNP) 37.1% (9.2% swing from LNP).

Alongside the success of independent “teal” candidates, the Greens’ victories in metropolitan Queensland suggests that the climate vote, by and large, did not go to Labor. Incumbent Labor MP Terri Butler was primed to become environment minister in an Albanese Government, but Griffith swung heavily to the Greens. Much of this swing appears to have come from the LNP, as the Greens’ primary vote surged by 12.5%, the LNP’s collapsed by 11.1%.

And nationally, the Greens picked up 12.3% of the primary vote, rising by 1.9%. This suggests that the climate policy platform presented by Labor has not been seen as significant enough in key climate seats. The ALP’s climate platform may have insulated it from scare campaigns, but it has also prevented it from picking up support among many voters for whom climate is a key issue.

Additionally, Griffith speaks to unusual voting behaviour among traditional Liberal supporters—in this case, they have been prepared to send a Greens MP to Canberra in the absence of a Liberal Party that is serious about action on climate. Alongside Griffith, the metropolitan seat of Brisbane also fell to the Greens, with LNP incumbent Trevor Evans suffering a 10.2% swing.

4. All politics is local

Fowler (NSW)

Result: Labor loss—Kristina Keneally (ALP) 47.7% vs Dai Le (IND) 52.3% (16.3% swing to independent).

Fowler was a heartland seat for Labor. It was held at the last election with a margin of 14%. On Saturday it experienced the biggest swing in any seat in the country of 16.3%. This swing has reaffirmed the local nature of politics across the country. Local issues can still dominate. Labor's candidate, the former NSW premier Kristina Keneally, living far afield from the constituency was parachuted into the electorate over local lawyer Tu Le. The elected independent Dai Le has outlined that she believed the swing against Labor was because voters felt "insulted" that a local candidate was not chosen. In our national system, politics can still be local.

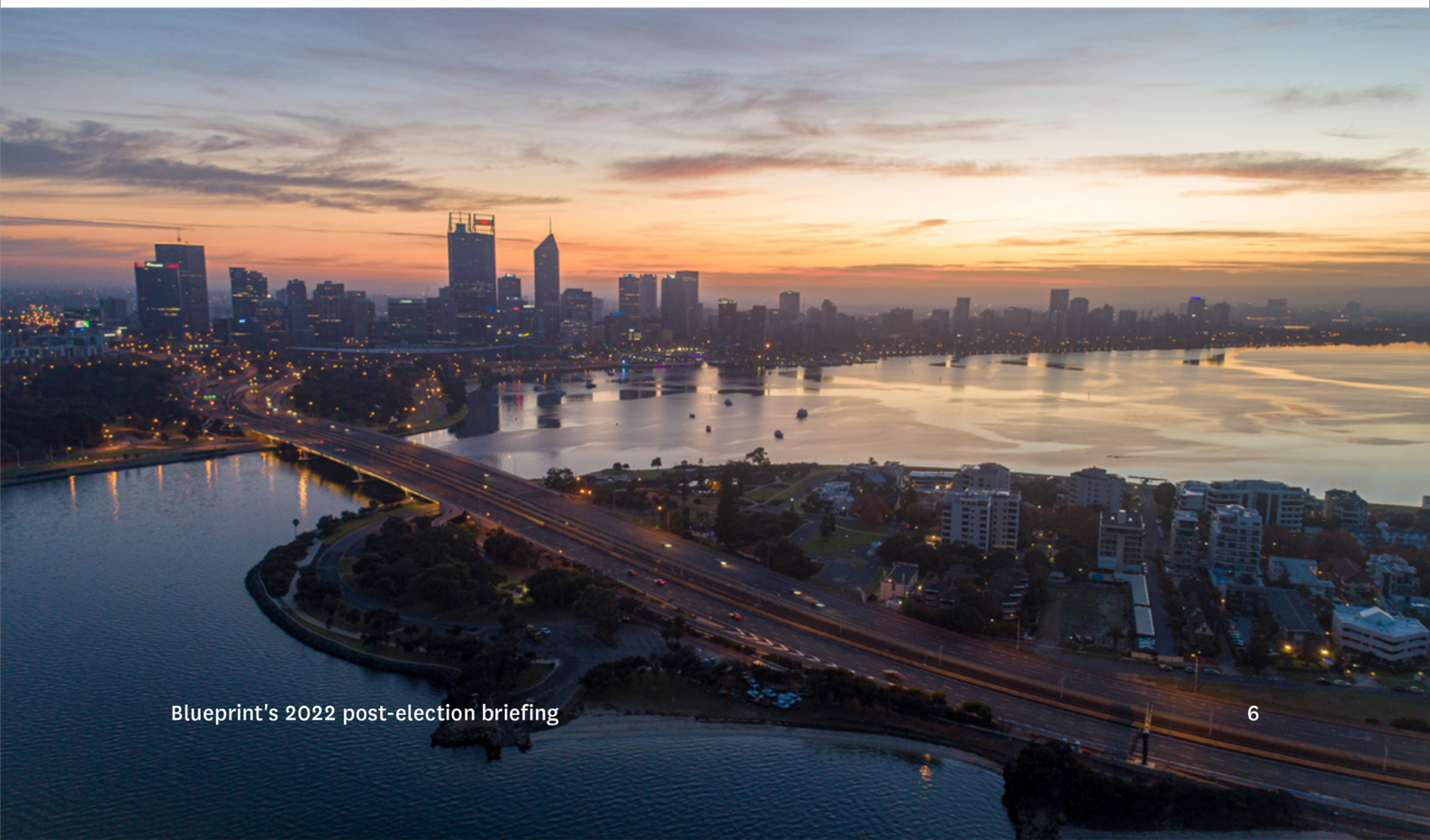
5. COVID-19 electoral advantage is now gone - except in WA, where Labor benefitted from Mark McGowan's popularity

Swan, Pearce, Hasluck, Tangney (WA)

Result: Liberal loss, ALP gain—10% swing across the seats

Voters have mostly forgotten our relative successes in the fight against COVID-19. Even the treasurer, who handed out billions of dollars to keep the economy afloat during lockdowns, has been shown the door. Any "COVID incumbency advantage" is dead. But in Western Australia the story is different.

Swan, Pearce, Hasluck, and Tangney in WA have all been lost by the Liberals and picked up by the ALP. This shift not only reflects the popularity of Labor Premier Mark McGowan (given his deeply parochial but widely supported handling of the pandemic) - it also shows the extent to which the Liberal Party in WA has been reduced to a fringe political force. The sorry state of the Liberal party in WA has caused a former party leader to point to an existential crisis - "we'll die as a party, it's as serious as that".



The campaign and policy platforms

Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited the Governor General in Canberra on Sunday, 10 April, and called an election for Saturday, 21 May, kicking off a six-week campaign. Despite the challenges facing Australia, the campaign was largely contained to a limited personality contest between the two major party leaders. Given both parties' reluctance to engage with the major issues of the day, it is no wonder that many pundits were quick to bemoan what they called a "[Seinfeld election about nothing](#)."

Labor's small-target strategy

Leaning on the findings of its [2019 election review](#)—which blamed its defeat on “the size and complexity of...spending announcements”—Labor adopted a small-target strategy—a narrative of “[renewal, not revolution](#)”. In the policy space, Labor worked to emphasise relative continuity and minimise points of difference with the Coalition. It shared the government's net-zero emissions by 2050 target, pledged to [exempt](#) coal mines from emissions reductions, promised to support the third tranche of income tax cuts, and maintain the \$420 low- and middle-income tax offset, among other policies. It dropped the swathe of ambitious reform ideas championed under Bill Shorten's former leadership.

Labor's policy vision and narrative oriented around a vague pledge to deliver “better government, for a better future”. The party's leader, Anthony Albanese, frequently reminded reporters on the campaign trail that Labor failed in 2019 because it had policies but no compelling “story”. However, in this case, it could be said that the reverse is true—Albanese revived Labor's rhetorical flourish, but did not match it with any policy initiative other than higher spending commitments on aged care, NDIS, healthcare, and childcare.

The Coalition's appeal to continuity

The Coalition too led a campaign with limited policy substance—unsurprising given its increasing [sensitivity to reform](#). Voters were asked to determine if they wanted more of the same - with no coherent vision to address any of the structural issues Australia faces being pitched to the electorate. In an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald, Morrison presented the rare image of an incredibly managerial-level prime minister, uninterested in nation-building reforms: “no”, he remarked when asked if he ever contemplated his policy legacy.

The Coalition emphasised select economic indicators as proof it could be trusted to steer Australia through continuing global uncertainty. Morrison emphasised that the low unemployment and strong growth outcomes were the result of his government's COVID-era stimulus. This narrative of success-through-crisis was combined with several short-term commitments, painted as “blatant vote-bribing” by critics and “cost of living relief” by the Coalition. They included a six-month cut to the fuel excise, a \$400 lower- and middle-income tax offset, and a \$250 handout to welfare recipients.

Labor endorsed each of these short-term initiatives, which included committing to deliver the tax offset if it won government. Such a tactic can be seen to have limited the Coalition's ability to launch attacks of economic irresponsibility on Labor - though they certainly tried.

Climate is marginalised by the two major parties

Throughout their campaign, the Coalition and Labor both attempted to keep climate outside the mainstream agenda. The policies and commitments presented by the major parties sought only to neutralise the climate debate, rather than provide bold, actionable solutions to an ongoing crisis.

The Coalition maintained their limited stance on climate action, assuring Australians that the nation is already ahead of its emissions reduction targets and that the Technology Investment Roadmap secures an easy path to net zero. Labor's campaign didn't take the opportunity to commit to serious climate policy, either. While Labor did commit to an increased emissions reduction goal of 43% on 2005 levels by 2030, real policy announcements about how that might be achieved were lacking.

In line with their tactic to mirror the Coalition on the economy, Labor's climate policy was limited - and agreed to utilise the existing policy framework to achieve climate action. Indeed, Labor pledged to exempt coal from its Safeguard Mechanism, downgraded their 2030 target from 2019, and ruled out a carbon price. Adopting these Abbott-era mechanisms as key climate policies clearly signifies that the voices of many Australians, who want real action on climate, are being ignored.

The result of this was historically high votes for climate-conscious independents - who now occupy a host of formerly safe Liberal seats. Climate 200-funded independents now occupy:

- Kooyong (VIC), Monique Ryan
- Goldstein (VIC), Zoe Daniel
- Wentworth (NSW), Allegra Spender
- Mackellar (NSW), Dr Sophie Scamps
- North Sydney (NSW), Kylea Tink
- Curtin (WA), Kate Chaney
- Warringah (NSW), Zali Steggall (re-elected)

The Greens also registered their best- ever result, raking in 12.3% of the primary vote.

Cost-of-living enters the debate

With the consumer price index data signalling an uptick in inflation and the [wage price index](#) confirming the largest real wages fall this century, the policy response to cost-of-living became a key point of difference between Labor and the Coalition.

Albanese and his shadow treasurer, Jim Chalmers, argued that low wage growth was a "design feature" of the economy under the Coalition. Albanese committed ["absolutely"](#) to support a minimum wage rise of 5.1% by

appealing directly to the Fair Work Commission. In response, Morrison moved to position as the pro-jobs candidate, warning that Albanese's position was "incredibly reckless" and that a forced wage hike would stoke inflation and job losses. Instead, Frydenberg [argued](#) that voters should sit tight in the faith that "historically low unemployment... (will) put upwards pressure on wages."

Morrison abandons the 'teal' for the 'dark blue'

While relatively well-positioned against a small-target Labor, the Coalition's limited policy agenda exposed it to a serious challenge in inner-city, traditional 'blue-ribbon' seats. A series of 'teal' independents offered a genuine alternative for affluent Liberal voters disillusioned by the party's stance on climate, integrity and women.

Building on the success of Keryn Phelps and Zali Steggall in Wentworth and Warringah in 2018 and 2019 respectively, the 'teal' campaigns triggered a revealing debate over how to best advance 'progressive liberal' policy outcomes—from within or without the Liberal 'tent'. Liberal moderates under siege in Wentworth, Mackellar, North Sydney, and Goldstein heralded their success in pushing the Coalition to adopt a net-zero emissions agenda. Their supporters claimed that fewer moderates would empower conservative and hard-right elements in the Liberal Party.

On the other hand, independents argued that moderates ineffectual in an increasingly regressive Coalition. With Morrison failing to campaign alongside embattled moderates, it appeared equally likely that the loss of 'teal' seats could accelerate the movement of the Coalition's 'broad tent' away from progressive liberalism to a renewed conservatism finding favour in the outer suburbs. Morrison all but confirmed this had been incorporated into official Liberal strategy when he remarked that 'teal' constituencies were lost to his government because they had the "luxury" to disassociate from the cost-of-living crisis.

A targeted culture war emerged in the seat of Warringah where PM Morrison hand-picked Katherine Deves as the Liberal candidate. Her controversial comments on transgender rights quickly came to light, and in the face of heavy media scrutiny, Morrison praised Deves for

raising “a serious, significant issue”. Given that Deves is a gift to sitting member Zali Stegall at a local level, it's clear that Morrison's motivations were national. It was a strategic, dog-whistle type manoeuvre to awaken ‘culture war’ anxieties in outer-suburban seats. Morrison was actively sacrificing the ‘teal’ for the ‘new dark blue’.

Housing hits the top of the policy agenda

With home ownership at a historic low, it became a policy issue in the final weeks of the campaign. The house-price-to-income ratio has surged from [2.5](#) in the early 1990s to over six today. With the median house price climbing by over [\\$150,000](#) through 2021 alone, both major parties knew they needed to be seen as responsive. Their capacity to respond, however, was limited by the fact that Labor had taken substantive supply-side tax reforms to the electorate in 2019 and been rejected.

Labor made the first play by announcing a [Shared Equity Scheme](#). Under the proposal, 10,000 first-home buyers would receive a contribution of up to 40% of the cost of their new home from the government each year. Expectations that the policy would put upward pressure on prices were tempered by the fact that it would support a very small number of buyers—but this only served to demonstrate that Labor's proposal would deliver little benefit for the large number of aspiring homeowners locked out of the housing market.

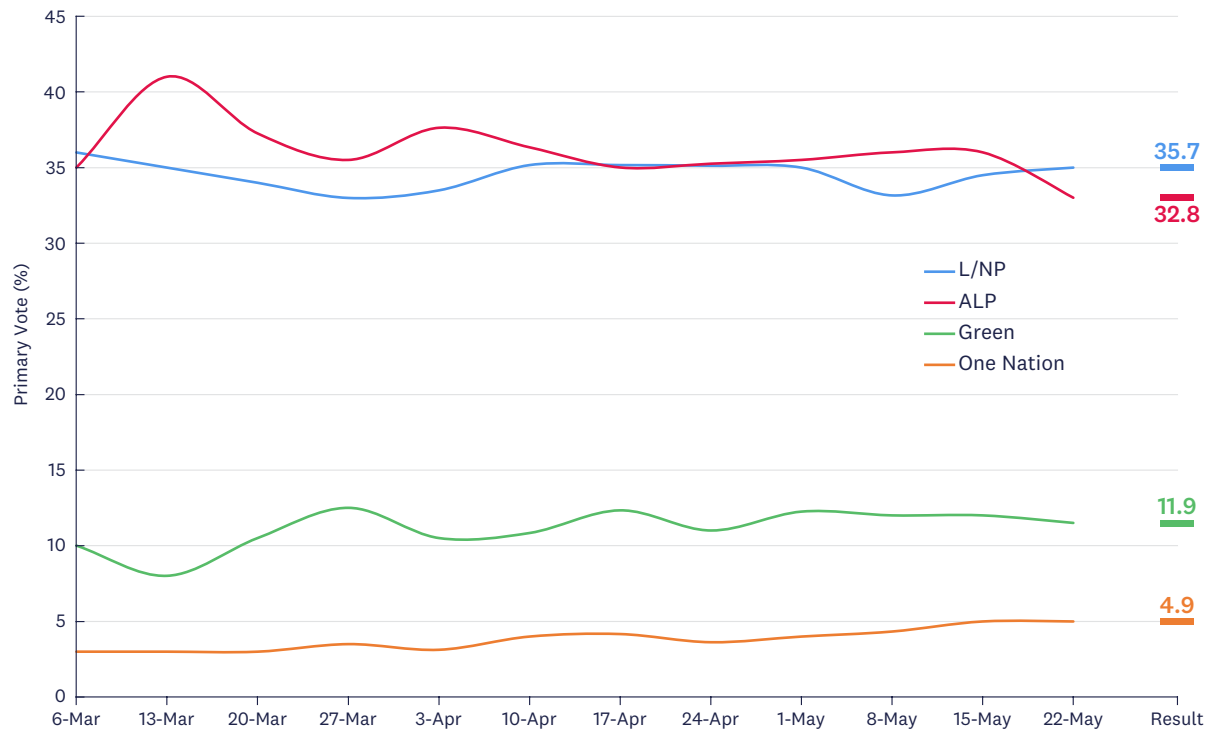
The Coalition took this opportunity to deliver its own demand-side reform: a [Super Home-Buyer Scheme](#) that backbenchers have been agitating for across its term of government. This policy would allow first-home buyers to tap into as much as 40% of their superannuation to fund a deposit on a home. Again, this policy left supply-side issues unresolved. Also, given its broad application, Minister for Superannuation Jane Hume agreed it would put upward pressure on prices.



Timeline of key events

Date	Event
Sun, 10 April	PM Scott Morrison calls a Federal Election for May 21.
Mon, 11 April	Labor leader Anthony Albanese is unable to cite the RBA cash rate or the unemployment rate.
Thurs, 14 April	Unemployment rate of 4% announced by ABS.
Sat, 16 April	PM Morrison refuses to disendorse Warringah candidate Katherine Deves, after historical disparaging remarks about the transgender community are revived.
Tues, 19 April	China's Foreign Ministry announces a security agreement with the Solomon Islands.
Wed, 20 April	First leaders debate—Sky News. Albanese is judged winner by the audience of 100 undecided voters.
Fri, 22 April	Albanese enters isolation after testing positive for COVID-19.
Wed, 27 April	Inflation rate (Consumer Price Index) announced by ABS for 12 months to March: 5.1% (p 2.1% for the quarter).
Fri, 29 April	Albanese exits isolation.
Sat, 30 April	Labor unveils the ' Shared Equity Scheme ' - their principal housing policy.
Tues, 3 May	RBA lifts cash rate from 0.10% to 0.35%, to address inflation.
Fri, 6 May	Former Liberal prime minister Malcolm Turnbull urges voters to “escape from the thrall of the dominant (conservative) faction” by “voting for an independent”.
Sun, 8 May	Second leaders debate—Channel Nine. A dead-heat is called between Albanese and Morrison.
Wed, 11 May	Third leaders debate—Channel Seven. Albanese is judged winner by an audience of undecided voters (45% prefer Albanese, 35% PM Morrison, 20% undecided).
Sun, 15 May	Scott Morrison announces the ' Super Home-Buyer ' scheme at the Coalition's official campaign launch.
Thurs, 19 May	Labor releases its full costings on new spending promises: details new spending of \$18.9 billion, forecasts declining deficits in dollar terms and as a share of the economy each year over the forward estimates.
Fri, 20 May	Labor announces its plan to establish a federal Environmental Protection Agency, leaving its most significant environmental policy to the eve of the election.
Sat, 21 May	Australians take to the polls - Labor declared to have won the election

The polls



Source Poll Bludger, ABC Party Results

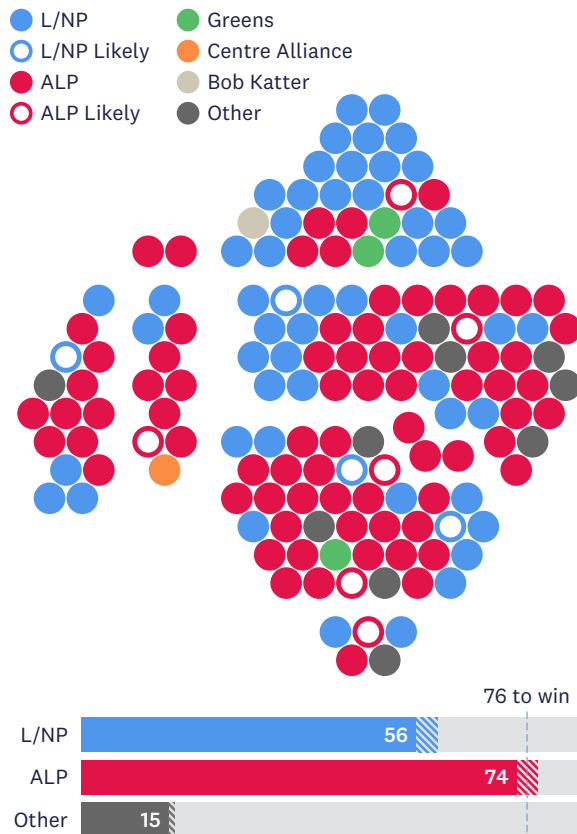
Note Polls were derived as a weekly average from major pollsters (Essential Research, Roy Morgan, Ipsos, Resolve Strategic, and Newspoll). Election results are based on the voting count as at 23 May 2022.

Have the polls been reliable?

Many Australians had their eyes glued to the polls during what some predicted would be a close election, but questions on their reliability have often tainted political discourse. A weekly average of the major polls reflects changes in public opinion throughout the campaign - and the

final election results were this time accurately predicted (making up for the polling failures in 2019). Having said this - at a local level, the polls were less accurate, with most failing to predict the extent of the swing to the 'teal' independents.

The new electoral map



Source [ABC](#)

There is no point beating around the bush—the Liberals have been comprehensively smashed at this election. Morrison’s supposed [“goat track to victory”](#) was more like a fast-track to the political wilderness. The Coalition has achieved a primary vote of around 35.8%, six percentage points lower than its previous worst-ever result in 2019.

It has lost at least 17 seats, including much of the Liberal Party’s traditional heartland and an awful lot of talent—former treasurer Josh Frydenberg has fallen to independent Monique Ryan in Kooyong.

It is clear from the seats analysed that the Coalition has abandoned its base in inner-metropolitan suburbs, but also suffered significant losses in outer-suburbia. As the smoke clears from the electoral battlefield, it is clear the Liberal Party’s heartland has been decimated. Wentworth, Kooyong, North Sydney, Goldstein, Mackellar, and Warringah: safe blue-ribbon seats that are traditionally held by Ministers, Prime Ministers, and future leaders – now in the hands of Teal independents. What’s more, the Nationals have struggled in the bush. Only four of its MPs have delivered gains—each of whom positioned themselves as more climate-conscious than their party-room.

Nonetheless, Labor’s victory is far from convincing. Its primary vote is also historically low at 32.8%—lower even than its “wipeout” result in 2013. As our analysis shows, Labor largely failed to capture the “climate vote”. Every inner-city that changed hands on the back of discontent with the Coalition on climate fell either to independents or the Greens.

So what is the underlying lesson from the election? For the Liberal party it’s that the movement toward the right, away from its classically liberal roots, has damaged its electability. But for Labor, it must be that Australians expect more.

What does this mean for the prospect of reform in Australia?

Australia has elected perhaps the most progressive parliament ever. The cross bench has exploded by at least nine seats, including at least two new Greens MPs and at least seven new “teal” independents. The teals may be nominally conservative on economics, but they are extremely ambitious on climate and social policy—demanding emissions reductions targets that far outpace Labor’s pledge—with no clear policy platform as to how to achieve these targets.

At the same time, Labor has come to power with a minimalist platform for change. Responding to its 2019 loss by adopting a “small-target” strategy, Labor consciously sought to minimise points of difference with the Coalition. On the economy, it has promised nothing by way of structural reform, and Labor’s climate platform retains the Coalition’s key climate policy instruments.

In the face of a large cross bench, the historically low primary votes for Labor and the Coalition, and a limited committed-to-policy agenda, there is a huge opportunity for a more bipartisan approach to the key policy challenges confronting our nation. Neither party, nor Australia, has benefitted from the hyper-politicisation of policy challenges like climate change. In our new parliament, there will be an opportunity to help identify key points of consensus between the major parties, and develop practical solutions that can be embraced by both sides of politics.

This could be a hugely beneficial shift. Policies that are built across the divide tend to last longer, and can even [reduce inefficiencies and enhance budget stability](#). Bipartisan policies can be adopted by Parliament with less friction - leading to a more healthy public policy ecosystem that benefits everyone.



