

A 15% GST accompanied by income tax cuts has received a thumbs down from voters in the first Newspoll of 2016, which also shows the government maintaining a comfortable two-party lead and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten improving his ratings marginally.

As MPs arrive for Tuesday's start of the parliamentary year, the poll shows 54% oppose a rise in the GST from 10% to 15%, while 37% are in favour and 9% undecided. Most people were not persuaded even by the lure of income tax cuts and compensation for lower income earners.

The Coalition goes into the parliamentary session leading 53% to 47% in two-party terms – unchanged from the end of last year.

The government is yet to indicate whether it will bite the bullet on a higher GST but it is favoured by Treasurer Scott Morrison. Shorten has been running a strong pre-emptive scare campaign. The poll result will reinforce the view of some Liberal backbenchers in marginal seats that raising the GST would be politically hazardous.

NSW Liberal Premier Mike Baird, writing in [Monday's Australian Financial Review](#) has put forward a proposal for a 15% GST, raising more than A\$30 billion extra in 2017-18, that would give the federal government funding for big tax cuts, including a company tax cut. Only about \$7 billion in total would go to the states for health and education in the period until 2020. In four years' time there would be an opportunity for renegotiation and "reset", he writes.

Previously Baird said that, apart from compensation for lower income earners, all the proceeds of a GST rise should go to meeting the looming crisis in state health funding.

In Newspoll 51% of Coalition voters supported a GST rise, while 39% opposed. Labor and Green voters were against it overwhelmingly.

The Coalition's primary vote rose one point over the summer to 46%. Labor gained one point to 34% in the eight weeks since the last poll. The Greens are down one point to 11%.

Malcolm Turnbull leads as better prime minister 59% (down one point) to Shorten's 20% (up six).

Shorten also had slight improvements in his satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. His net satisfaction rating has improved from minus 38 to minus 35. Turnbull's net satisfaction rating was unchanged at 22 points.

There will be meetings both of the cabinet and the full ministry on Monday.

There is still no indication when Nationals leader Warren Truss will clarify his future, despite an impatient Turnbull waiting for him to do so before reshuffling the ministry in the wake of Jamie Briggs resigning as cities minister and Mal Brough standing aside as special minister of state.

Meanwhile, internal bickering continued in the ALP over policy, with federal Labor finance spokesman Tony Burke accusing South Australian Labor Premier Jay Weatherill of "completely drowning in ignorance" if he thought federal Labor could not fund its pledge to implement the rest of the Gonski school funding program.

This followed doubts expressed by Weatherill last week, when he said: "We have the federal Labor Party which is saying some very good things and important things about maintaining its commitment to Gonski and providing support for the health system but we haven't seen any coherent or sustainable way in which that's going to be funded".

Shorten said that he had spoken to Weatherill and "explained to him that Labor, unusually for an opposition, has fully funded its proposals".

Federal Labor and Weatherill have already been at odds over the GST, with Weatherill willing to contemplate a rise if the money was used to fund schools and hospitals.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company

Turnbull travelling well with voters, but a GST increase is not: Newspan

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