

Turnbull celebrates victory after Shorten concedes defeat

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

More than a week after the election, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has formally conceded defeat, quickly followed by Malcolm Turnbull welcoming the Coalition's victory.

With several uncertain seats still being counted but the Coalition expecting to be able to govern with a majority in its own right, Shorten on Sunday contacted Turnbull to congratulate him and his wife Lucy.

After both sides have been frustrated by the long wait for results, Shorten also flagged to a news conference in Melbourne that he would write to Turnbull urging electronic voting be looked at to speed things up in future.

Turnbull told his news conference he agreed, saying he had been an advocate of electronic voting for some time.

Turnbull also indicated he believed robocalls and text messages – which featured heavily in Labor's Medicare campaign – should have to carry authorisation.

Shorten said it was clear Turnbull would be in either minority or majority government.

Labor would seek common ground with the government to make the new parliament work, Shorten said, but he also stressed it would stick to its principles and core beliefs. He said the government should not persist with its Medicare cuts, and perhaps should reconsider the retrospective aspect of its superannuation changes.

Five seats are still in doubt – three in Queensland, one in Western Australia, and one in South Australia.

Turnbull welcomed Shorten's comment on looking for common ground, saying: "It's vital that

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this parliament works – it is vital that we work together and as far as we can, find ways upon which we can all agree.”

He declared the Coalition’s “absolutely unrelenting determination to ensure that this parliament delivers good government, wise legislation, and builds on the strength of our economy to ensure that truly our greatest days are ahead of us”.

Turnbull said there would be a Coalition party meeting on Monday week. He also said that while there would be some changes in the ministry because of frontbenchers losing their seats people should not anticipate large-scale changes.

Turnbull said he had been deeply touched by the fact that when Shorten rang he’d had his granddaughter on his hip. “She was a one-year-old witness to history.” Acknowledging many people thought him “an unduly sentimental fellow, sentimental bloke”, he said it was a “beautiful reminder” that “we are trustees for future generations”.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

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