

The next Western Australian election will be held in six months, on 11 March 2017. A [ReachTEL poll](#),

conducted on Thursday night from a sample of 1720, gives the Liberals real hope of coming back from what seemed a lost cause earlier this year, and winning a third successive term.

Including the 6.3% undecided, primary votes are 43.6% for the Liberals and Nationals combined (up 3.9 points since March), 36.5% for Labor (down 0.2) and 7.7% for the Greens (down 4.4). When undecided are excluded, primary votes become 46.5% for the Liberals/Nationals, 39.0% for Labor and 8.2% for the Greens.

The two party figure given by the poll was 51-49 to Labor, a five point gain for the Liberal/Nationals since March. However, there is no realistic way Labor could be leading with a Liberal/National primary at 46.5% and a low Greens vote. Presumably undecided voters, when pushed, were much better for Labor than decided voters, and respondent allocation of preferences also helped.

Opposition leader Mark McGowan continued to lead Premier Colin Barnett by 55-45 as better Premier, down from 61-39 in March. ReachTEL polls give opposition leaders much better preferred PM/Premier scores than other polls because of their forced choice questions.

The poor polling earlier this year had created some leadership speculation within the WA Liberals. ReachTEL asked which of five candidates voters preferred as Liberal leader. Barnett won 45%, followed by his deputy, Liza Harvey, at 31%. Only 5.5% supported Barnett's leadership rival, Dean Nalder.

Early this year, the Liberals appeared to be heading for a large loss under Barnett, but they have now made a big recovery to a position where they can win the next election. This poll should also ease the internal pressure on Barnett.

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WA ReachTEL: Liberals stage big recovery to election winning position

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