

Encouragement for Turnbull in Newspoll as Parliamentary year starts

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

The first [Newspoll](#) for 2018 brings encouraging figures for the Coalition, although it continues to trail Labor – for the 26th consecutive time.

Malcolm Turnbull has extended his lead over Bill Shorten as better prime minister, and the Coalition primary vote has risen 2 points to 38%, compared with late December.

The Coalition now trails 48-52% on the two-party vote – the best result for it since April last year - compared with 47-53% [before Christmas](#) .

The poll comes as Parliament resumes on Monday, with the dual citizenship issue still front and centre, together with the debate over the cost of living and the government's attempt to get the rest of its company tax package legislated.

The poll is in line with the general feeling in political circles that Turnbull has picked up his game and Shorten is under pressure, especially as a result of the citizenship issue, with a [byelection fight](#) with the Greens in the Labor seat of Batman and the threat of more byelections in ALP seats.

But the Coalition is still on track to losing 30 consecutive polls – the number Turnbull highlighted when challenging for the prime ministership in 2015.

Turnbull leads Shorten as preferred prime minister by 45% (up 4 points) to 31% (down 3 points). This is the biggest lead Turnbull has had since August.

Labor's primary vote remains on 37%, and the Greens are unchanged on 10% but there has been a further fall in the One Nation vote, which is now on 5%, compared with 10% in mid November. The Coalition is benefiting from the One Nation decline in support.

Encouragement for Turnbull in Newspoll as Parliamentary year starts

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

In the citizenship battle, the government is continuing to push for Susan Lamb, Labor member in the marginal Queensland seat of Longman, to resign – as David Feeney did in Batman last week – because she is a dual British citizen. The government has threatened to refer her, as well as two other Labor MPs, to the High Court.

Following his criticism last week of rising health insurance premiums, Shorten on Sunday announced a Labor government would freeze premium increases to 2% in each of its first two years in office. The opposition says this would leave a family who paid the national average premium \$340 better off in total over the two years. The average premium for a family, including obstetrics, is \$4731 a year.

Shorten said Labor would also have a Productivity Commission inquiry “to look at serious reform of the private health insurance sector.”

Labor wanted to ensure that small, not-for-profit private health insurers remained competitive and able to grow “in what is becoming an increasingly uncompetitive market,” he said.

As MPs return they will be met by a big demonstration outside Parliament on Monday against the controversial proposed Adani mine. An assistant minister, Karen Andrews, who is from Queensland, told Sky on Sunday there would now not be federal funding for the rail line for the mine.

She said funding from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility would need support from the Queensland Labor government. But Queensland premier Annastacia Palaszczuk announced during the state election campaign her government would veto any such funding.

“So the advice that I’ve been given from the Resources Minister [Matt Canavan] is that the financing will not proceed,” Andrews said.

Labor is under pressure over Adani in the Batman byelection and on Friday Shorten moved closer to opposing the project.

Encouragement for Turnbull in Newpoll as Parliamentary year starts

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Labor's infrastructure spokesman Anthony Albanese told Sky on Sunday he had never seen the economics of the project stacking up.

Albanese and Shorten differed in their assessments of Batman, where Labor faces a huge threat from the Greens, with Albanese raising expectations and Shorten lowering them. Albanese said Labor "should win the seat", pointing out that Feeney had had a bad campaign in 2016 (he had neglected to declare a house worth more than \$2 million). Shorten, speaking on the ABC, said it would be "difficult" to win the seat.

Meanwhile, Turnbull said heads should roll in the farcical affair of the trove of confidential documents that turned up in two filing cabinets sold by a Canberra second hand shop. The cabinets have been traced to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Turnbull told the ABC: "The idea that public servants, entrusted with highly confidential documents, would put them in a safe, lock the safe, lose the keys, and then sell the safe without checking what was in it – it beggars belief.

"If you put it in a episode of Utopia ... I imagine an editor or producer would have said, 'no, that stretches credulity. Take it out,'" the Prime Minister said.

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 their academic appointment.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Read more <http://theconversation.com/encouragement-for-turnbull-in-newpoll-as-parliamentary-year-starts-91216>