

Mark Latham helps Hanson in robocall attacking Shorten

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Bill Shorten has lashed out at Mark Latham as “someone who ratted on battlers” after the former Labor leader’s robo message to Longman voters, authorised by Pauline Hanson.

In the calls, Latham says he has had “personal experience with Bill Shorten’s dishonesty”.

“He just lies, and lies and lies,” says Latham, introducing himself as former Labor leader.

Latham appeals to voters not to reward Shorten’s dishonesty. “Don’t vote Labor”, he says, but instead support “minor parties and independents to shake up the system and put some honest politics back into Canberra.”

Hanson is on the call, authorising it for her One Nation party.

Shorten, who has heavily targeted Hanson in the Longman campaign, responded to the robocalls by saying Latham “is someone who ratted on battlers and working Australians years ago, so it’s no wonder he’s teamed up with Hanson.

“This is the same bloke who had a go at domestic violence campaigner Rosie Batty and can now be found in his basement making YouTube videos,” Shorten said.

He said that “no amount of stunts from Pauline Hanson and her mate Mark Latham can hide the fact that she votes with Malcolm Turnbull and the top-end of town 90% of the time down in Canberra.”

Labor pointed to Latham’s words when he was leader in 2004 and called on the government “to match the Labor commitment – no ifs or buts – to have [Hanson] last” on its election ticket.

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The Liberal Democrats have a candidate running in the Longman byelection and have drawn the top position in the field of 11.

Liberal Democrat senator David Leyonhjelm confirmed that Latham was still a member of his party. He said he hadn't known Latham was going to do the call, but it "doesn't cause me any grief".

Leyonhjelm noted that Latham has appealed for people to vote for minor parties, rather than specifically for One Nation.

On earlier speculation that Latham might run for the Liberal Democrats at the election Leyonhjelm said there had been talks but no decision. He said he knew nothing more than what he had seen of the speculation that Hanson might have Latham run for One Nation.

Meanwhile a ReachTEL poll in the Braddon byelection, commissioned by the progressive think tank The Australia Institute, found the Labor vote on 36.3%, a rise from the 33% registered in a Sky ReachTEL poll in early June. The Liberal vote had fallen from 47% to 42.9%. The Greens were on 4.4% in the poll, taken on Friday of 700 respondents.

Campaigning in Braddon on Monday, Malcolm Turnbull condemned Shorten for "lies and negativity".

Asked whether, if he won Braddon and Longman, he'd consider calling an election this year, Turnbull said: "The election will be next year, when it's due."

Brushing aside calls for a royal commission into energy prices, the Prime Minister said the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission had just given the government a very comprehensive report on the electricity sector, in particular the retailers. That report would be released this week. "We've turned the corner on electricity prices," Turnbull said.

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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.

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