

Labor has maintained a 55-45% two-party lead in the latest [Newspann](#), in a weekend of woe for the Morrison government, which is trying to play down the federal contribution to the Victorian Liberal wipeout.

The Coalition's primary vote fell for the third consecutive time, to 34%, in a poll that if replicated at an election would see a loss of 21 seats. Labor's primary vote remained at 40%. One Nation rose 2 points to 8%; the Greens were steady on 9%.

Scott Morrison boosted his lead over Bill Shorten as better PM to 12 points, leading 46-34% compared with 42-36% a fortnight ago. Morrison has a net positive satisfaction rating of plus one, improving from minus 8 in the last poll.

The poll will reinforce Coalition gloom after Saturday's Victorian election which saw a swing to the Labor government estimated by ABC election expert Antony Green at around 4% in two-party terms. While an ALP win was expected, the stunning size of it came as a surprise.

Read more: [Labor has landslide win in Victoria](#)

Even assuming the Victoria election was mainly won (or lost) on state issues, there are clearly federal factors and lessons in this smashing of the Liberals, which if translated federally would potentially put at risk half a dozen Victorian seats.

As Premier Daniel Andrews said, Victoria is a "progressive" state. It stands to reason that Liberal infighting and the dumping of Malcolm Turnbull, the trashing of the National Energy Guarantee and the talking down of renewables, and the broad rightward lean of the federal Coalition alienated many middle-of-the-road Liberal voters.

The anecdotal evidence backs the conclusion that Victorians were sending strong messages to the Liberal party generally, including the federal party.

But are the federal Liberals willing to hear those message? And anyway, does Morrison have the capacity to respond to them effectively?

Morrison has so far demonstrated no personal vision for the country, and his play-for-the-moment tactics are being increasingly seen as unconvincing.

Read more: [Victorian Labor's thumping win reveals how out of step with voters Liberals have become](#)

Morrison took the unusual course of not saying anything about Victoria on Saturday night or Sunday. He will meet the Victorian federal Liberals on Monday to discuss the outcome.

Ahead of that meeting Treasurer Josh Frydenberg - who is from Victoria and is deputy Liberal leader - played down the federal implications. While conceding "the noise from Canberra certainly didn't help", he claimed in an ABC Sunday night interview that the lessons to be learned federally were about grassroots campaigning and the need to rebut "Labor lies". He would not concede a recalibration of policy was needed.

Some in the right will try to write Victoria off as unrepresentative of the nation, just as they did Wentworth. This flies in the face of reality – there were big swings in the eastern suburbs and the sandbelt, the sort of areas the Liberals would expect to be their middle class strongholds.

The government needs to pitch much more to the centre in policy terms but it will be hard to do so.

Given its current positioning, how could it sound moderate on energy and climate policy? It can't go back to the NEG. It is stuck with its obsessions about coal and its distrust of, or at least equivocation about, renewables, as well as its business-bashing threat of divestitures.

On issues such as coal and climate change, the party's eyes have been turned obsessively to Queensland, where there is a raft of marginal seats, without sufficient regard to those in Victoria and NSW. Even in relation to Queensland, there has been a failure to adequately recognise that that state is not monolithic when it comes to issues and priorities.

The right is unlikely to stop its determined effort to take over the party, whatever the cost. Indeed some on the right will argue that the Morrison strategy should be to sharpen the policy differences further, rather than looking to the centre.

The right's mood will be darkened by the Saturday dumping of rightwing senator Jim Molan to an unwinnable position on the NSW Liberal ticket. Molan has [pulled](#) out from Monday's Q&A program; the ABC tweeted that he'd said he could "no longer defend the Liberals".

As if the Victorian result was not sobering enough, the government this week begins the final fortnight of parliament for the year in minority government, with independent Kerry Phelpsworn in on Monday as Turnbull's replacement in Wentworth.

The government wants the focus on national security legislation but other issues will be political irritants for it.

Labor and crossbenchers are pushing the case for a federal anti-corruption body - the sort of initiative that would appeal to voters highly distrustful of politicians.

Crossbenchers Cathy McGowan and Rebekha Sharkie will introduce a private member's bill. 34 former judges have signed an [open letter](#) advertisement calling for a national integrity commission.

View from The Hill: Labor's 55-45% Newspann lead adds to Liberals' weekend of woe

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

They said: "Existing federal integrity agencies lack the necessary jurisdiction, powers and know-how to investigate properly the impartiality and bona fides of decisions made by, and conduct of, the federal government and public sector."

The government is resisting a new body but will need some convincing alternative response.

The government will also be under pressure over Morrison's pledge to legislate to remove the opportunity for religious schools to discriminate against gay students. Negotiations with the opposition have been at an impasse, although the government says it still wants legislation through this fortnight.

In the middle of the fortnight Morrison attends the G20, where he is expected to have a meeting with Donald Trump. One would assume they will canvass the Australian government's consideration of moving our embassy to Jerusalem, with Trump urging Morrison to go ahead with the controversial move.

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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