

Labor ahead in Newspoll and Ipsos, as Keating comments stir security issue

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Labor has remained in an election-winning position in [Newspoll](#) and the Ipsos poll, although they show widely different movements in Bill Shorten's ratings.

But Labor faced fresh pressure after Paul Keating gave the government an opening to shift the debate onto security, when he declared Australia's security chiefs should be sacked because they were damaging relations with China.

Newspoll, published in the Australian, has the ALP leading the Coalition by an unchanged 51-49% on a two-party basis.

On primary votes, the ALP dropped a point to 36%, while the Coalition was static on 38%, from the last poll a week ago. The Greens remained on 9%; Clive Palmer's United Australia Party was down a point to 4%; One Nation rose a point to 5%.

[Ipsos](#), in the Nine newspapers, shows Labor ahead 52-48%, a deterioration for the ALP from its 53-47% lead a month ago.

Shorten's satisfaction rating in Newspoll fell 4 points to 35% while his dissatisfaction rating rose 2 points to 53%, for a net rating of minus 18. Morrison remains stable on minus 1.

Morrison improved his margin as better prime minister, leading 46 (up 1) to Shorten's 35% (down 2).

But in the Ipsos poll Shorten's ratings had improved significantly in the last month. Morrison continues to lead as preferred PM but the gap has narrowed from 11 points to 5 points, with Morrison now ahead 45-40%.

Shorten's approval increased 4 points to 40%; his disapproval stayed at 51%. Morrison's

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approval was down a point to 47%, and his disapproval was up 5 points to 44%, in Ipsos.

On attributes, Morrison led Shorten 57-39% as having “a firm grasp of economic policy”, but Shorten led Morrison 70-53% on having “the confidence of his party”.

Read more: [View from The Hill: Shorten presents the ‘case for change’ in sleek launch](#)

Keating, speaking after attending the Labor launch in Brisbane, condemned the current policy towards China and blamed security agencies.

He told the ABC, “When the security agencies are running foreign policy, the nutters are in charge”.

The former prime minister said that when Malcolm Turnbull had given John Garnaut – a former journalist and an expert on China who worked for the Turnbull government - “the ticket to go in there, they’ve all gone berko ever since.

“When you have the ASIO chief knocking on MPs’ doors, you know something’s wrong.”

“They’ve lost their strategic bearings, these organisations.

“Whatever you think, China is a great state. It’s always been a great state and now has the second largest economy, soon the largest economy in the world.

"If we have a foreign policy that does not take that into account, we are fools".

He said there was healing to be done. "But I think a Labor government would make a huge shift, just merely making the point that China's entitled to be there, rather than being some illegitimate state that has to be strategically watched".

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton leapt on the Keating comments.

"Bill Shorten must urgently explain whether he agrees with Paul Keating that Australia's security agencies have lost their strategic bearing and whether Australia's security agencies would indeed be headed for a full scale 'clean out' under a Shorten Labor government," Dutton said in a statement.

"Given Mr Shorten made repeated references to the advice he and his colleagues receive from Mr Keating, Australians have every right to be concerned that Labor would unpick Australia's successful national security apparatus," he said.

"Mr Shorten must immediately reveal whether he has had any personal discussions with Mr Keating on this matter and whether Mr Keating has expressed those same views during those meetings," Dutton said.

"Has Mr Keating advocated the abolition of the Department of Home Affairs and is this the reason Mr Shorten refuses to nominate who would be minister in a Shorten government?"

A Labor spokesperson said on Sunday night: "Labor has great respect for our security agencies. We always work co-operatively with them in the national interest."

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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