

Some old Labor hands have been recalling this week the appearances of Bill Shorten during the 2006 Beaconsfield mining rescue, that brought the then union leader and political aspirant to the nation's attention.

They showed, above all, a skill in using an occurrence to connect with the public.

Shorten demonstrated that ability again on Wednesday, in his emotional retelling of his mother's life story, saying how his politics had been driven by her inspiration. It was a moment of great "connection" just when he needed it.

Who knows what, if any, impact this will have directly on votes. But it did, and will, have its effect on the unfolding final stretch of the campaign. The first thing it did was give "the day" to Shorten.

In politics, personal stories have always grabbed the public's attention. These days social media magnifies them a thousand percent, as people don't just relate to the anecdote but translate it into their own experience and share that widely.

Suddenly, many people were on social media talking of their mothers' histories. Likewise in the party focus groups, Shorten's teary words were what people wanted to chat about.

À lire aussi : [***View from The Hill: Shorten turns Daily Telegraph sledge to advantage***](#)

The opposition leader who, Beaconsfield notwithstanding, over years has been unable to persuade voters to like him, had suddenly been "humanised". The Daily Telegraph, with its

reprehensible "Mother of Invention" story about what Shorten left out in Monday's shorter account of his mother's career, had managed, inadvertently, to give him a significant platform - and he did not let the opportunity pass.

It's perhaps a long bow, but Shorten may also have gained a little fireproofing for the run up to polling day, at a time when the government wants to demonise him personally, as well as Labor policies.

With the polls close, the coming week will be fierce, because the Coalition's strongest weapons remain its multiple scare campaigns.

The competing pitches of the election - economic responsibility and the dangers of Labor versus the case for change and the need for a "fair go" - are now well-defined.

There is surely little fresh to be said on the central issues, but each side is reinforcing its arguments and its defences in the final sprint.

Labor's release of its costings on Friday comes earlier than these exercises normally do. This partly reflects the opposition's confidence in its numbers. Such confidence is possible because contemporary costings are done by the highly credible Parliamentary Budget Office, making them harder to demolish.

Unlike 2016, when Labor proposed to have a deficit of about A\$16.5 billion more across the forward estimates than that in the official Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook (PEFO), this time the opposition is bettering the Coalition's bottom line. It has bigger projected surpluses through the budget period.

Shadow treasurer Chris Bowen says that based on the recent PEFO numbers, Labor's budget plan would have a surplus in 2019-20 and every year after. "We will show bigger budget surpluses over the forward estimates and the medium-term, achieving a surplus of 1% of GDP by 2022-23, four years earlier than the current government trajectory." A 1% of GDP surplus would be about \$22 billion in that year, compared with the government's projected surplus of

\$9.2 billion.

While Labor has rejected the Coalition’s longer term tax cuts for higher income earners, Bowen stresses that under a Shorten government “further tax relief can be prudently provided when the budget is back in healthy surplus, if the economic and fiscal circumstances allow”.

The costings show budget savings of \$154 billion over a decade by a crackdown on multinationals’ tax avoidance and closing tax “loopholes” (including dividend imputation reform, negative gearing and capital gains tax reform, trusts and superannuation concessions).

À lire aussi : [**Confirmation from NSW Treasury. Labor's negative gearing policy would barely move house prices**](#)

Labor hopes its budget numbers will help counter the government’s line that the opposition’s program is economically irresponsible. But while having the costings out at this stage might take the edge off the overall “scare”, that won’t necessarily lessen the impact of “scares” about particular policies on specific groups, such as retirees and those with negatively-gearred properties.

Sunday is another campaign marker day, when the Liberals hold their formal launch in Melbourne.

Morrison this week has gone out of his way to play down the launch as a “party” occasion, saying it’s about his having “a direct conversation with Australians about the future”.

In keeping with what many have described as Morrison’s presidential campaign (it’s accurate, though the word always sounds odd in the Australian context), the launch is to be focused on him rather than, as in Labor’s case, the team.

Let's face it, options were limited. The Coalition's ongoing “team” has been shrunk by multiple departures at the election; as for having former leaders featured – they'd be like cats in a bag.

À lire aussi : [***View from The Hill: Lots of ministry spots to fill if Morrison wins, while many Shorten ministers would return to a familiar cabinet room***](#)

(Not, incidentally, that the ex-PMs necessarily worked a treat for Labor, despite the media excitement on the day. It was a gesture of unity but would also have reminded many voters of past Labor divisions, and Paul Keating's later sounding off about the “nutters” in the security agencies harming Australia's relations with China was distinctly unhelpful.)

Morrison repeated on Thursday that Sunday would not be “a party hoopla event. It's not an event where, you know, the party comes together and there's lots of backslapping.”

The ALP launch had just shown “the Labor Party are more interested in themselves than they are in the future of this country. This event on the weekend is all about laying out very clearly what the choice is for Australians, and what my plan is, taking Australia forward,” he said.

À lire aussi : [***View from The Hill: Shorten presents the ‘case for change’; in sleek launch***](#)

When you think about it, there's a touch of desperation about this way of looking at things. We still in Australia elect parties, not simply their leaders, even if we have moved towards the “presidential”.

Grattan on Friday: Bill Shorten's moment of “connection” brings back memories of Beaconsfield

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Beyond election day, “the team” is integral to how a government runs. A prime minister doesn’t do it all. One of our more admired post-war governments was Bob Hawke’s – its achievements depended crucially on a combination of two elements, his leadership and a highly talented cabinet.

When he went back to the Liberal party’s roots in Albury soon after becoming leader, Morrison said he had come “with the next generation of the leadership of the Liberal party”.

We’ve not been seeing much of that generation in this campaign. And total focus on a prime minister who, let’s face it, is still on training wheels, does make the whole show look rather thin.

Michelle Grattan ne travaille pas, ne conseille pas, ne possède pas de parts, ne reçoit pas de fonds d'une organisation qui pourrait tirer profit de cet article, et n'a déclaré aucune autre affiliation que son poste universitaire.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Read more <http://theconversation.com/grattan-on-friday-bill-shortens-moment-of-connection-brings-back-memories-of-beaconsfield-116854>