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ELECTION CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

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Scott Morrison—reminiscent of Tony Abbott in the 2013 federal election—campaigning until the last moment of the 2019 election campaign, ending up in the marginal seat of Bass, Tasmania, on election morning, 18 May. The previous day, he had crisscrossed Queensland and finished in the marginal coastal seat of Gilmore in New South Wales. The Coalition was rewarded with one additional seat and majority government. The House of Representatives is finely balanced; the Coalition is a bad by-election away from relying on the Speaker’s casting vote. While few seats changed hands in the election, the outcome was ‘transformative’.

Some jurisdictions formally recognise that campaigning commences well before the actual election announcement; the United Kingdom, for example, acknowledges a ‘pre-campaigning’ period of about three months—generally known as the ‘long’ campaign (White 2015). In Australia, there was a clear policy divide between the major parties, with the Coalition promising tax cuts and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) supporting new welfare and energy initiatives funded by closing tax loopholes—a divide that had developed over several Budget cycles. In an era of the ‘continuous campaign’, most of Labor’s new policies and the government’s new expenditure commitments

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were released well ahead of the election announcement. The 2019 election campaign, like the 2013 campaign and to a degree the 2016 one, was fought not 'principally on policy issues, but on personalities' (Johnson et al. 2015: 1; Gauja et al. 2018: 3).

This chapter is therefore divided into four parts: distinctive features of the overall campaign; the campaign context (the legacy of Malcolm Turnbull's prime ministership); the long campaign (from the beginning of Scott Morrison's prime ministership), covering critical issues and events well before Morrison called the election on 11 April 2019 for an 18 May House and half-Senate election; and the 'real' campaign, commencing with the federal Budget speech a week before the election was called.

Distinctive features of the campaign

The interrelated themes of the campaign were leadership, by-elections, State elections, opinion polls and the emergence of issues such as migration limits and refugees, urban infrastructure, housing affordability, religious freedom, the recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, aged care, 'closing the gap' strategies, terrorism, the economy and specifically the Budget surplus, domestic violence, medical research, a levy on banks, taxation, emissions targets, the 'living wage' and Australian citizenship.² The politics of personality and different strands of populism were features of the 2019 election campaign. They are interrelated, as personalised parties led by charismatic leaders that attack mainstream parties and institutions as 'untrustworthy' are one kind of populism that fills a perceived representation gap (Taggart 2002: 62).

Prior to the election campaign and during the campaign itself, the use of social media was important. For example, claims about the ALP's alleged plans to introduce a 'death tax' were virulent on social media and were used in Liberal Party campaign advertising—as in the words of a campaign brochure distributed by the Canberra Liberals (2019): 'Labor will tax, your rent, your home, your car, your retirement—LABOR WILL TAX YOU TO DEATH.'³

2 This list is taken from formal policy announcements and major speeches by the Coalition and Labor leaders.

3 US Republican pollster Frank Luntz is generally credited with organising the widespread use of the term 'death tax' in the mid-1990s as a way of mobilising public opinion against estate taxes.

Shorten wasted valuable time during the election campaign issuing denials. Ultra-right groups played on fears that the ALP was anti-growth, anti-mining and anti-jobs, running social media campaigns through Facebook and producing social media posts on Corflute signs during the Longman by-election (28 July 2018).

In the lead-up to the election announcement, the Coalition, its associated groups and sections of the print and electronic media depicted the ALP's longstanding policies to remove tax breaks as plans to introduce 'new' taxes. This was from the Abbott playbook, borrowed from US Republican strategists, as in Abbott's claims in 2013 that Labor would put a big tax on everything (see Johnson et al. 2015) and his later attacks on Turnbull's 'tax on coal'. Retiring Liberal Member of Parliament (MP) Christopher Pyne letterboxed his electorate in Adelaide with pamphlets saying Labor's proposed negative gearing changes would create a 'housing tax' and a new recession. Conservative think tank the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) also argued that the living wage policy would create a recession (Creighton 2019: 5).

The 2017–18 and 2018–19 federal Budgets had provided opportunities for the political leaders to articulate policies and develop themes; some issues had carried over from the 2016–17 Budget and the 2016 election. Clear differences emerged between the two sides of politics on fiscal policies, with the Coalition's flatter tax structures and corporate tax cuts versus Labor's slanting of tax reform towards lower-income workers. Labor would initiate a major review of the Newstart Allowance for the unemployed, which the Coalition strenuously opposed. The Coalition saw itself as providing opportunities, rewarding success and supporting business investment—in line with Turnbull's signature National Innovation and Science Agenda. The ALP could depict itself as the 'fair go' party versus the Coalition's 'mates' rates. Such a strategy may have looked effective against Turnbull but would not stick so easily against Morrison. See, for example, Shadow Minister for Finance Jim Chalmers's (2019) tweet about Minister for Finance Mathias Cormann and Prime Minister Morrison's travel 'perks' from corporate friends.

Turnbull had released an overarching signature policy and rearranged the Commonwealth bureaucracy to support this,⁴ whereas Morrison and his opponent, Bill Shorten, made policy-oriented set-piece speeches (see Table 2.1).

4 The National Innovation and Science Agenda provided little 'new' money but considerable repurposing of funds, especially around research grants and business and university incentives.

While leadership remained an issue throughout the formal campaign, many of the pre-campaign issues were muted, while others re-emerged with intensity—notably, the economy, taxation, housing and urban infrastructure or ‘congestion’ and the Adani coalmine. Religion re-emerged in the third and final leaders’ debate—only because the compere, the ABC’s Sabra Lane, asked both leaders for their views on the recent sacking of rugby union player Israel Folau by Rugby Australia due to his comments on social media, *inter alia*, that gay people would go to hell.

A number of these key campaign issues had also played out during the by-elections held in 2017 and 2018.⁵ Other issues—notably, the bad behaviour of the banks—did not provide a ‘framework’ for the 2019 election, despite journalist Paul Kelly’s prediction (Kelly 2019: 1). Overall, the Coalition’s strategy of accepting the banking royal commission’s findings and ‘moving on’ reduced Labor’s strategy of reminding voters that Morrison had opposed calls for a royal commission to ‘nothing more than a populist whinge’ (McIlroy 2019: 7).

The 2019 election would be fought along new boundaries, after a 2017–18 redistribution enlarged the House to 151 from 150 and gave Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory new seats, removing one from South Australia (see Raue, Chapter 9, this volume). This was thought likely to benefit the ALP, especially in Victoria, as Melbourne expanded into the regions, and the naming of new and existing seats was contentious.

The context: The Turnbull prime ministership

Malcolm Turnbull fared well after taking over the leadership from Tony Abbott in September 2015, especially in the preferred prime minister ratings of the opinion polls, where he overshadowed Bill Shorten. Such was Turnbull’s standing it was widely anticipated he would call an early election. Instead, he persevered with a double-dissolution strategy over contentious industrial relations legislation and set a 55-day campaign. Turnbull came close to losing the ‘unlosable’ election; the Coalition scraped home with a narrow majority of 76 seats (see Gauja et al. 2018). Despite Shorten’s personal unpopularity and the ALP’s low primary vote, there was a solid two-party-preferred swing to Labor.

5 These were due mainly to MPs’ ineligibility under Section 44(i) of the Australian Constitution.

2017

Turnbull's credibility had suffered a blow and he staggered through 2017 facing multiple challenges, not the least being the long-running imbroglio over the eligibility to sit in the parliament of a number of senior Coalition figures (along with minor party MPs) during 2017—an issue in which ALP figures came to be embroiled the following year after months of declaring the party had robust processes for checking candidate eligibility.

Sussan Ley, Turnbull's Minister for Health, Aged Care and Sport, had resigned her portfolio in January 2017 over some of her travel claims failing the 'pub test'. Travel issues had previously been a headache for the Abbott Government, ensnaring Abbott himself and National Party Leader and Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce. Then Speaker of the House of Representatives Bronwyn Bishop was forced to resign the speakership in 2015 over live footage of her arrival via helicopter at a regional golf course in late 2014. Abbott subsequently initiated a comprehensive review of 'parliamentary entitlements', which reported to Turnbull in 2016. As well as fuelling a lack of respect for and lack of trust in the federal parliament, these events potentially fed the perception that the Coalition was rorting the system and cavorting with the rich and famous while many constituents were doing it tough.

After the High Court found in October 2017 that National Party Leader Joyce was ineligible to sit in parliament,⁶ his seat of New England was immediately declared vacant and writs were issued for a 2 December by-election.⁷ Soon after, Liberal John Alexander resigned his Sydney seat of Bennelong, also over concerns relating to Section 44(i) of the Australian Constitution, and a by-election was set for 16 December.

The loss of two Coalition MPs sent Turnbull into minority government, relying on crossbenchers Rebekha Sharkie and Cathy McGowan during the last parliamentary session of 2017. Both Joyce and Alexander were returned, although Alexander suffered a 5.3 per cent negative swing in

6 The High Court sits as the Court of Disputed Returns on references from the House and/or Senate, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) or petitions from an eligible voter or candidate. See High Court (2017).

7 Joyce survived the by-election only to be caught in a major scandal in early 2018; he received a major telling off from Turnbull and was sent on enforced leave. An update to the Ministerial Code of Conduct—the Statement of Ministerial Standards—banned sexual relations between ministers and their staff.

the primary vote, whereas his opponent, the ALP's seasoned campaigner and former NSW premier Kristina Keneally, gained a positive swing. Her primary vote was up 7.3 per cent.

With the Coalition in minority government, Labor flexed its muscles in the House, again urging the Coalition to call a royal commission into the banks, following a Senate inquiry into the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) in 2014 and media exposés of sharp practices by the banks especially regarding housing and farm finance.⁸ Sections of the National Party were angry at the banks' mishandling of farm loans, were threatening a private member's bill and pushed the government to act, helped by the big banks requesting an inquiry. Finally, the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry was announced, in late November 2017 (Ziffer 2019: 4–7).⁹

2018

The eligibility issue recurred in 2018, this time implicating high-profile ALP MPs David Feeney and Katy Gallagher, among others; Feeney resigned and Senator Gallagher was found to be ineligible. The March by-election for Feeney's Victorian seat of Batman was won by his successor, Ged Kearney, a popular former union leader (see Scott, Chapter 20, this volume). A cluster of by-elections was scheduled for 'Super Saturday', 28 July, with nine-week campaigns. Both the timing and the length of the campaigns were controversial: there was a clash with the date long set for the ALP's national conference. Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Penny Wong, quizzed the electoral commissioner at a Senate Estimates Committee hearing, declaring him to be partisan: 'The timeline in relation to this by-election is demonstrably, substantially different to the timelines which were applied in seats which were previously held by government members, which looks partisan' (see Brown 2018a).¹⁰

8 Bill Shorten had promised a royal commission into the banking and financial sector in the lead-up to the 2016 election.

9 The report was delivered in February 2019; subsequently, the CEO and the chair of the National Australia Bank announced their resignations. The former resigned almost immediately and the latter remained until a new chair was appointed.

10 Technically, the Speaker announces the dates of by-elections on advice from the AEC.

In the by-elections, four of the five seats were held by the ALP, while the fifth was held by the Centre Alliance: Braddon (Tas.), Justine Keay (ALP); Fremantle (WA), Josh Wilson (ALP);¹¹ Longman (Qld), Susan Lamb (ALP); Mayo (SA), Rebekha Sharkie (Centre Alliance); and Perth (WA), Patrick Gorman (ALP), who was running in place of former member Tim Hammond, who had resigned for family reasons.

The senators found to be ineligible were replaced by countback (on the complexities of this, see Sawer and Maley, Chapter 3, this volume). Some processes were complicated, such as the disqualification in New South Wales of Fiona Nash, whose replacement, Hollie Hughes, was also found to be ineligible; under Section 44(iv), the replacement was former military official Jim Molan (of the conservative wing of the NSW Liberal Party).¹²

The results of the July 2018 ‘Super Saturday’ by-elections had negative outcomes for the Liberals. The ALP and Centre Alliance held on to their seats, with swings against the Liberals in all seats. The outcome was also detrimental to Turnbull’s leadership, alongside other factors such as internal party and Coalition divisions over his signature National Energy Guarantee (NEG) policy,¹³ and the retention on the Senate’s agenda of the proposed corporate tax cuts for big business. In Longman (Qld), for example, the Liberals’ private research showed locals were deeply unhappy about the proposed corporate tax cuts for big business benefiting the banks and about possible consequential health Budget cuts (Savva 2019: 203). In a complicated process, the Coalition had reshuffled the corporate tax package first mooted in the 2016 Budget, but as late as winter 2018, it was still hoping to pass the second tranche of tax cuts for businesses worth more than \$50 million. In the event, Pauline Hanson withdrew her support for the corporate tax package ahead of the Longman by-election (on 28 July 2018). However, despite Hanson not campaigning in person—due to ‘exhaustion’—and being replaced with a cardboard cut-out figure of herself, Pauline Hanson’s One Nation (PHON) received a swing of 6.49 per cent.

11 Wilson was brought in at the last minute for the 2016 election, as the original candidate had been disendorsed for failing to disclose two convictions (Foster 2016).

12 In December 2017, the Turnbull Government established an inquiry into Section 44 by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. In May 2018, the committee recommended a referendum to change Section 44(i). Molan was relegated to an unwinnable spot for the 2019 Senate ticket and campaigned on a below-the-line strategy, in which he garnered more than 100,000 votes but was ultimately unsuccessful. However, in November 2019, Molan was selected by the NSW Liberal Party to fill a casual vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Arthur Sinodinos.

13 The NEG comprised two elements: an energy price guarantee for consumers and an emissions target.

Arguably, the by-election wins created future problems for Labor. The ALP had issued or reissued policies throughout 2018, including the immediate abolition of franking credit cash refunds and the end of negative gearing for new investors in old stock rental properties from 2020. It had taken these and other policies to the 2018 by-elections and, in the case of its negative gearing reforms, to the 2016 election. Longman is a retirement-belt constituency and, although there was negative campaigning, Labor's primary vote had increased to nearly 40 per cent. Some negative campaigning was around Labor's links with the Greens, as per the polling booth placards put out by the ultra-right (and posted on Facebook): 'This year Bill Shorten, and Susan Lamb voted with the Greens 100% of the time (#THETRUTHMATTERS 2018)'. In the March 2018 Batman by-election in Victoria, the Greens pitched to conservative voters to preference Greens ahead of Labor on account of the ALP's franking credits policy (Carey 2018). Labor subsequently adjusted its 'no franking credits' policy to exclude all pensioners and part-pensioners.

Despite positive signs in 2018 for the Coalition, with the Liberals winning State elections in South Australia and Tasmania, the messiness of the Section 44 situation and the passing of the 30 bad polls milestone for Turnbull in April led to leadership rumblings—based on fears that the Coalition was heading for defeat at the next federal election, which was due by late May 2019.¹⁴ Turnbull's public fight with Joyce over the latter's affair with a staffer had not helped relations with the National Party, which, for largely pragmatic reasons, resented the loss of Joyce—a strong grassroots campaigner—in February 2018. The marriage equality debate had already opened old wounds between progressives and social conservatives in the Coalition.

The promised personal tax cuts from the 2018–19 Budget went awry in the Senate as Pauline Hanson went cool on the package. The Turnbull–Morrison economics team had earlier backed away from the increase in the Medicare Levy for high-income earners proposed in the 2017–18 Budget. Labor had promised better tax cuts for low-income workers, an education funding package for the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector and more health infrastructure. Shorten's general philosophy in developing policy was 'transparency'—in terms of debating issues at the ALP's national conference and promulgating those policies with a unified team (Marr 2015: 2).

14 If a half-Senate election were to be held alongside the House election.

The ALP's retention of Longman in July with a 9 per cent swing against the Liberals, and a high PHON primary vote of 17 per cent, worried Queensland Liberals in nearby marginal seats, including the Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, in the Brisbane seat of Dickson. The fourth week of August 2018 was a political circus, resulting in Turnbull losing the leadership to Morrison on a second contest after Turnbull called a leadership 'spill' and saw off an initial challenge from Dutton (see Strangio and Walter, Chapter 6, this volume).

The long campaign: The Morrison prime ministership

2018

Malcolm Turnbull's resignation from parliament after he lost the prime ministership in August triggered a by-election in Wentworth (NSW) on 20 October 2018. Independent candidate Dr Kerryn Phelps won narrowly and took her seat in parliament on 26 November; the Morrison Government was in a minority.¹⁵ Its minority status was reiterated the next day when Julia Banks—an outspoken critic of bullying by men within the Liberal Party and of the dumping of Turnbull—resigned from the Liberal Party and joined the crossbench (see Curtin and Sheppard, Chapter 18, this volume).¹⁶ After the Wentworth by-election, the next major test of Morrison's performance was the Victorian State election of 24 November 2018; State Labor received a positive swing and moved into Liberal heartland seats. As outlined by Nick Economou et al. (Chapter 11, this volume), this was widely seen as indicating that, federally, the Liberals would have serious trouble in Victoria.

15 In August, as a protest against the Liberal leadership changes, Kevin Hogan, Nationals MP for Page, moved to the crossbench, while still attending National Party meetings and continuing to be a National Party MP; he promised supply and confidence. He was backed by National Party Leader, Michael McCormack.

16 Banks apparently did so without providing advance notice to the party leadership and while Morrison was giving a press conference. Banks was the only Coalition candidate to win a seat from the ALP in the 2016 election.

Table 2.1 The long campaign

Name/date	Event
Bill Shorten 29 October 2018	Address to the Lowy Institute, Sydney: 'The foreign policy of the next Labor Government'
Scott Morrison 19 November 2018	Bradfield Address, Sydney: migration limits, population policy and urban infrastructure
Bill Shorten 22 November 2018	Energy policy launch, Sydney, with Chris Bowen (Shadow Treasurer) and Mark Butler (Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate Change): emissions reductions, solar storage battery subsidy; NEG back on the table
Bill Shorten 16–18 December 2018	ALP National Conference, Adelaide: housing affordability theme
Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Minister for Finance Mathias Cormann 17 December 2018	Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) released: surplus foreshadowed by next financial year
Bill Shorten 14 January 2019	Announces \$50 million for diabetes research; major funding boost for Kakadu National Park, Kakadu, Northern Territory (NT)
Scott Morrison 13 January 2019	Announces additional funding for Kakadu National Park (NT) and Australia Day citizenship policy at a press conference with Indigenous Country Liberal Party candidate Jacinta Price at Jabiru, which is surrounded by Kakadu
Scott Morrison 29 January 2019	Speech to Brothers Rugby Union Club, Brisbane: Coalition will deliver jobs and growth
Scott Morrison 11 February 2019	Address to National Press Club, Canberra: government to increase aged care funding by \$662 million
Scott Morrison 5 March 2019	<i>Australian Financial Review (AFR)</i> Business Summit, Sydney: Labor would be bad for the economy
Bill Shorten 6 March 2019	<i>AFR</i> Business Summit speech, Sydney: next election would be a referendum on wages; ALP needed to work with business and unions
Bill Shorten 26 March 2019	'Living wage' policy press release
Bill Shorten 31 March 2019	Press release for 1 April: climate change, emissions reductions and waste strategies (Mark Butler's electric car target tweet the previous day)
Treasurer Josh Frydenberg 2 April 2019	Budget speech: infrastructure, tax cuts, support for business
Bill Shorten 4 April 2019	Budget reply speech: ALP opposed second and third stages of tax cuts; unveiled \$2.3 billion cancer care package Address to Labor Business Forum, Canberra
Scott Morrison 5 April 2019	Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability announced

Morrison, speaking after the resumption of parliament on 26 November, warned Shorten not to get too ‘carried away’ with the State election results, arguing the next federal election would be different—it would be Morrison versus Shorten. John Howard said Shorten was expecting a ‘coronation’ (Karp 2019). Morrison was active on the policy front—setting up an aged care royal commission (which commenced its work on 18 January 2019), dumping plans to raise the retirement age to 70 from 67 for aged pension eligibility, apologising in the parliament to victims of institutional child abuse and bringing Abbott and Joyce back into the fold with roving ambassadorial briefs for Indigenous affairs and the drought, respectively. The Commonwealth–State National Drought Summit was held at Old Parliament House in Canberra on 26 October 2018. Morrison’s headland Project Sydney Bradfield Oration of 19 November (sponsored by Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph*) supported limits on immigration and the bolstering of urban infrastructure in Sydney and north Queensland, among other places (see Morrison 2018).

Morrison attended to party discipline and, on 3 December, called a special meeting of the federal Parliamentary Liberal Party to change its rules to require a two-thirds majority to initiate any future leadership ballot. Morrison’s Sydney Institute speech of 14 December 2018 promised to recognise West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

The ALP’s national conference—postponed from July due to the clash with the Super Saturday by-elections—was held on 16–18 December 2018 in Adelaide—and in retrospect was a dress rehearsal for the ALP’s 2019 policy launch on 5 May 2019. Social policies were highlighted, especially on housing affordability, and a compromise on refugees was announced (an increased intake overall but firm policy on strong borders). Shorten’s set-piece speech was well received (e.g. Wright 2018). The conferral of life membership of the ALP on former prime ministers Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Paul Keating foreshadowed their appearance at the ALP policy launch.

2019

Early in 2019, Morrison made policy announcements on jobs and economic growth, a boost to aged care expenditure, Indigenous education, emissions reduction and domestic violence, and attended a mosque open day. He established a review into ‘best practices’ for dealing with internal Liberal Party complaints, such as those over bullying; he cut permanent

migration, gave a huge funding boost to regional infrastructure, including increased spending on Kakadu National Park and surrounding roads, and defended the Budget.

Most of these announcements were positive campaigning. There were two striking examples of the 'negative' Morrison: his address to the *Australian Financial Review* Business Summit (on 5 March), in which he made a scathing attack on Labor's economic credentials; and his appearance on the TV show *The Project* in late March, during which he attacked host Waleed Aly. Morrison was retaliating over Aly's recent claim that Morrison had used Islamophobia for political gain in 2010–11. In the wake of the Christchurch, New Zealand, terror attack of 15 March 2019, Morrison condemned anti-Muslim statements, denied the Coalition was anti-Muslim and saw to it that Liberal candidates who had made anti-Muslim comments were disendorsed.¹⁷

While candidates and preselection are discussed in Anika Gauja and Marija Taflaga's Chapter 4 (this volume), it is worthwhile mentioning Morrison's installation (via the NSW State Executive) of Indigenous business leader Warren Mundine in the marginal NSW coastal seat of Gilmore as a rare example of a questionable decision.¹⁸

The Nationals' Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister Andrew Broad resigned from the rural Victorian seat of Mallee in January 2019 following his resignation from the ministry (in December 2018) over a scandal exposed in the women's magazine *New Idea*. There were rumours that Bridget McKenzie, the Nationals' Deputy Leader, would resign from the Senate to contest Mallee or Indi; she had already moved her senate office to Wodonga in the electorate of Indi, from Bendigo (D'Agostino and Johnston 2018). Indi was held by popular Independent MP Cathy McGowan.

The results of the NSW State election on 23 March 2019 were more heartening for the federal Liberals, although not for their National Party counterparts, than the Victorian results, as the State Coalition government retained office. Subsequently, State ALP Leader Michael Daley was forced

17 He also carpeted the Turkish Ambassador over anti-Anzac comments made by the Turkish Prime Minister in response to the Christchurch shootings.

18 Gilmore had seen running factional battles between rival Liberal groups and, as an open seat, the National Party had endorsed a high-profile former MP. It was targeted by the ACTU as a potentially winnable seat.

to step down due to some historical anti-Asian remarks of his that had been recorded; it was some days before he announced he would not recontest. Labor went into the 2019 federal election campaign in New South Wales awkwardly, with a caretaker State leader.¹⁹

Ministerial retirements and new candidate picks dominated media discussion in the first quarter of 2019, as did speculation over whether various Turnbull-orientated Liberals would resign. Kelly O'Dwyer announced her intention to resign on Saturday, 19 January. Late the following week, Coalition ministers Michael Keenan and Nigel Scullion also announced they would not contest the upcoming election. Former Liberal MP for the marginal seat of Chisholm, Julia Banks, was running as an Independent for the Victorian seat of Flinders, which was held by Liberal Minister for Health, Greg Hunt—originally a 'moderate' but over time a supporter of conservatives Abbott and Dutton.²⁰ In February, former foreign minister and failed leadership contender Julie Bishop said she would not recontest the seat of Curtin (WA). The retirements of ministers Christopher Pyne and Steve Ciobo were confirmed on 2 March 2019, and former Army Reserve brigadier Linda Reynolds replaced Ciobo as Minister for Defence Industry on 4 March (and her shift to the Defence Ministry after the election, in place of Pyne, was foreshadowed). The Sunday papers featured Julie Bishop 'blaming' Pyne, as well as Mathias Cormann, for undermining her in the previous year's Liberal leadership ballot, claiming she would have been well-placed to win the May election (Spagnolo 2019). Former staunch Turnbull supporter and small business minister Craig Laundy announced his retirement in March—stepping down as the Member for Reid, which became an open seat and a venue for Coalition and Labor events. John Howard campaigned strongly on behalf of the new Liberal candidate in Reid, Fiona Martin (Clench 2019).

There were other high-profile announcements and retirements—notably, of Cathy McGowan, the Independent MP for Indi (announced via a tweet on 14 January). She had tweeted her successor's name, Helen Haines, the previous day. On 15 January, Rob Oakeshott (a former Independent

19 There were concerns about federal implications, especially for those seats with high proportions of Asian voters. The ALP's primary vote was 33 per cent and it won only two seats. The Coalition lost two National Party seats to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party as part of a backlash over the problematic water policy.

20 Hunt supported Abbott in the 2015 Liberal Party leadership contest and Dutton in the 2019 Liberal leadership contest, from which Morrison emerged as Liberal leader.

Member for Lynne) stated via a video post on his website that he would run for the nearby seat of Cowper—sensing an opportunity with the sitting National Party MP retiring.

On the Labor side, Bill Shorten's campaign bus was launched, the ALP's National Executive signed off on factional picks for the 2019 election, Labor's primary vote in Newspoll fell from 41 to 38 and veteran ALP Senator Jacinta Collins announced she would not contest the next election, citing family and health reasons, and headed off to a senior role in the Catholic education sector.

As in late 2017 when Turnbull was briefly the prime minister of a minority government, Labor began to seize the political initiative. Shorten established a review of the recent catastrophic mass fish deaths in the Murray–Darling river system, commissioning the Australian Academy of Science to provide a timely report. Two days later, Morrison set up an independent inquiry into the fish deaths by the Commonwealth Agriculture Department.

The most significant example of governing while in opposition was the so-called Medevac legislation, which allowed the timely medical evacuation of ill people from Manus Island and Nauru, fulfilling a major campaigning plank of Phelps's and supported by Labor and the Independents on the Senate crossbench.²¹ This was designed to be a humiliation for Morrison; instead, he gained the advantage, devising amendments to give power to the minister to assess transfers in a timely fashion. This was the first major occasion where Labor underestimated Morrison (Jensen 2019). Shortly after the Bill's passage at the beginning of March, Minister for Home Affairs Dutton reopened the asylum seeker camp on Christmas Island (off the north-west coast of Australia), predicting the arrival of many refugee boats now that medical transfers could easily guarantee entry to Australia.

Having announced its policies on excess franking credits (as amended) and negative gearing/capital gains tax discounts in 2018 and 2016, respectively, in February 2019, in the wake of the devastating banking royal commission's 'Hayne report', Labor announced its 'fairness fund' levy on banks. The levy would be used to support financial counselling for disadvantaged bank customers. *The Australian* newspaper labelled it a '\$640 million hit on banks' (Brown 2019: 1).

21 Senators Hanson and Cory Bernardi opposed the 'Medevac' amendments to a government Bill in the Senate.

In March, Shorten and Chalmers said the election would be about wages, with the Fair Work Commission having a central role. The ALP's 'living wage' policy was released on 25 March 2019. It was attacked by the conservative IPA, which claimed it would push Australia into recession, and the negative gearing changes were also presented as a 'housing tax' that would create a bigger recession. Interestingly, the Chief Executive Officer of the Business Council of Australia (BCA), Jennifer Westacott, welcomed the living wage, and had earlier supported an increase in Newstart, alongside the Minerals Council of Australia.

At his speech to the *AFR* Business Summit in early March, Shorten pushed fair wages as his theme and accused the Prime Minister of denigrating workers in his speech the previous day; Shorten invoked the Hawke-Keating accord era while stepping away from a formal accord himself (see Table 2.1).

Labor fell in with the decision of the Coalition's Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) to restrict annual migration to 160,000, replacing the previous cap of 190,000 per annum. The Coalition would also develop an integrated settlement policy to ease congestion in Melbourne and Sydney. Labor reluctantly agreed while attacking the announcement as 'dog whistling'.

The leaking of footage showing PHON's Steve Dickson and James Ashby in the United States the previous September appearing to solicit a large donation from the National Rifle Association (NRA) was shown on Australian television in March; Bill Shorten questioned the Coalition's preferencing policy, while Morrison responded two days later, recommending Liberals preference PHON below Labor (Worthington 2019). Those LNP politicians in the National Party room, however, indicated they would not preference Labor above PHON.

The Greens (2019) outlined their environment policy in late March, foreshadowed by their Environment Spokesperson, Adam Bandt, depicting coal as the 'modern-day asbestos' (Brown 2018b). Former Greens leader Bob Brown led the anti-Adani convoy, arriving in Brisbane on 22 April for a rally outside Adani's offices: 'Ahead of the march, Brown hit out at media reports detailing posts made by a commenter on a private Facebook page likening people who support the Adani mine to "Nazis who worked in gas chambers"' (Layt 2019).

On 1 April, Shorten officially announced a new strategy on climate change, emissions targets and waste, building on the party's 2018 national platform (ALP 2018: 74–91).²² The previous day, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Mark Butler (2019), had tweeted the ALP's historic electric car policy: 50 per cent of new cars would be electric by 2030. The electric car policy and its costings provided a target for the Coalition.

The 'real' campaign: The 2019 Budget and the 2019 election campaign

The Treasurer's Budget speech on 2 April followed by his speech to the National Press Club on 3 April were well received and showed a degree of pragmatism—for example, by belatedly adding Newstart to the list of benefits to receive a special energy supplement payment of \$75, in line with single pensioners.²³ The 'Budget bounce' of 2 percentage points was reflected in the next week's fortnightly Newspoll. The debate over the Budget marked the real beginning of the 2019 election campaign—notably, the delivery of the Budget was brought forward five to six weeks from the traditional date of the second Tuesday in May, to allow time for an election campaign for a late-May election. Morrison sought a mandate for the tax package, which, if the Coalition were re-elected, would be introduced immediately after the resumption of parliament. (On a different note, Morrison announced a royal commission into disability abuses at the end of Budget week.)

The ALP amended its taxation policy in line with some of the Budget surprises, such as the Coalition ditching the Budget repair levy for high-income earners, but retained the essentials of the tax policy taken to the 2018 ALP conference—notably, providing additional tax relief to those earning less than \$40,000 (Shorten 2018).

A new expenditure item was the cancer care package, which became a theme of Labor's campaign strategy and a target for Frydenberg's attacks on the ALP's lack of economic credibility.

22 Shorten had pre-released the press statement on 31 March.

23 See ABC (2019a). Morrison ultimately blamed being in a minority government.

The expected election announcement did not happen on the weekend of 6–7 April; however, a few days later, Morrison said the Liberals would not run election advertisements on Good Friday, Easter Sunday or Anzac Day; Shorten agreed not to advertise on Good Friday or Anzac Day. Morrison announced the election on 11 April (see Table 2.2), releasing a video (Fernando and Palin 2019) and making a strong speech, which consolidated his recent Budget statements while repeating a strong negative line on Labor’s policies (variants of this approach were replayed throughout the campaign by Morrison and were echoed by Treasurer Frydenberg [Lewis and Riordan 2019]):

There is a clear choice ... that will determine the economy that Australians live in, not just for the next three years but for the next decade ... between the government that is delivering a strong economy and will continue to do so, or Bill Shorten’s Labor party that we always know can’t manage money, [between] lowering taxes for all Australians [and] Bill Shorten’s Labor party that will impose higher taxes that will weigh down our economy. It’s taken more than five years to turn around Labor’s budget mess. Now is not the time to turn back. (ABC 2019b)

Labor responded with Shorten announcing via tweet a ‘fair go’ election and Deputy Leader Tanya Plibersek (2019) counteracting Morrison’s claims regarding Labor’s economic credentials and calculating that the mooted surplus would be built on a gross underspend in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Table 2.2 The ‘real’ campaign

Name	Date	Event
Scott Morrison	11 April 2019	Visits Governor-General to call an election, Canberra. Speech: ‘A strong economy’ and ‘lower ... taxes’ with the Coalition; ‘Labor can’t manage money’ and will introduce ‘higher taxes’ (ABC 2019b).
Bill Shorten	11 April 2019	Tweet from Melbourne’s Moonee Ponds: ‘Bring it on! The “fair go” election’
Tanya Plibersek (Deputy Labor Leader)	11 April 2019	Media interview in Melbourne: Labor can manage the economy; Coalition’s projected surplus for 2019–20 based on serious NDIS underspend
Independents	12 April 2019	NSW Liberal Party complaint to the Australian Electoral Commission alleging orchestration of the funding of four Independents: Zali Stegall (Warringah), Kerryn Phelps (Wentworth), Julia Banks (Flinders), Oliver Yates (Kooyong)

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Name	Date	Event
Peter Dutton (Minister for Home Affairs/ Liberal candidate for Dickson)	13 April 2019	Apologises for 'gaffe' about disabled ALP candidate for Dickson, Ali France
Bill Shorten	14 April 2019	Rally for ALP volunteers, with Tanya Plibersek, Senator Kristina Keneally (former ALP NSW Premier), Chris Bowen (Shadow Treasurer) and Senator Penny Wong (Labor Leader in the Senate), Burwood, Sydney (seat of Reid): outlining local effects of ALP health policy, such as major upgrade of Concord Hospital, and defending tax changes – critiquing 'retiree tax' label
Bill Shorten	20 April 2019	Press release: attacking social media scare campaign about alleged Labor 'death tax'
Mathias Cormann (Minister for Finance and Liberal Senate Leader)	26 April 2019	Liberal preferences would not go to Fraser Anning (selected as a replacement for PHON's Malcolm Roberts, he became an Independent, subsequently joining KAP, from which he was expelled in October 2018 for his controversial inaugural speech)
Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek	26 April 2019	Labor's Women's Policy launch, Women's Hospital, Melbourne
Bill Shorten	28 April 2019	'Fair Go for Australia' rally, Box Hill, Melbourne: childcare support package, dental care for children and pensioner/health cards
Scott Morrison	28 April 2019	Western Sydney 'Congestion busting' rally at Homebush Stadium (seat of Reid), with NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and former prime minister John Howard
First Leaders' Debate	29 April 2019	Perth. Shorten won 52:12 of the audience vote; 11 were undecided
Pauline Hanson	30 April 2019	Steve Dickson resigns from PHON over release of secretly recorded footage of him meeting with NRA in New York. Hanson's tearful interview on Channel Nine's <i>A Current Affair</i> and other TV programs
Warringah Debate between Tony Abbott and Zali Steggall	2 May 2019	No winner declared; both seen by audience members as energetic and enthusiastic, and Steggall seen as the frontrunner in the campaign
Second Leaders' Debate	3 May 2019	Brisbane. Shorten won 43:41 of the audience vote; 16 were undecided
Bill Shorten	5 May 2019	ALP policy launch, 'A Fair Go', Brisbane: focus on health, tax cuts for small business, constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians
	7 May 2019	'Mother of invention' front-page <i>Daily Telegraph</i> [Sydney] story accuses Shorten of omitting key facts from his election launch story about his mother's sacrifices for her family

Name	Date	Event
Third Leaders' Debate	8 May 2019	National Press Club, Canberra: testy exchanges between Shorten and Morrison
Scott Morrison	12 May 2019, Mother's Day	Liberal Party policy launch, 'Building Our Economy, Securing Your Future', Melbourne: major new promise of deposit guarantee scheme for first homebuyers (matched by Labor); attacks on Labor's so-called housing tax
Election day	16 May 2019	Melbourne's <i>Herald Sun</i> releases YouGov/Galaxy polls for 10 marginal seats showing outcome tightening and Liberals leading in Deakin and Flynn

At this stage, Morrison and Frydenberg were focusing on the economy, allowing resources minister Matt Canavan (see Doran and Sweeney 2019) and home affairs minister Peter Dutton to probe Labor's divisions over the Adani coalmine, which was proposed for the Galilee Basin in central Queensland (SBS 2019). While ALP Shadow Assistant Treasurer Andrew Leigh was sharply critical of Adani, Deputy Leader Tanya Plibersek was more nuanced, maintaining she and the party were sceptical, believing the benefits were 'overstated' and the detrimental environmental impacts 'understated' (quoted in Doran and Sweeney 2019). The ALP Member for Herbert (Qld), Cathy O'Toole (ABC 2019c), was a rare Labor voice defending Adani.

Based on the national published polls—especially their two-party-preferred vote—a united team and the careful development of a suite of policies over several years, Labor appeared to be in the ascendancy, whereas the Coalition had endured two leadership changes, disaffected frontbenchers and backbenchers and several scandals. There were few policy achievements and, arguably, the passage of the same-sex marriage legislation in December 2017—and the preceding postal survey—was forced on the Coalition.

The campaign effected a reversal, with the Coalition setting a clear agenda: to continue the approach started by Morrison late in 2018. The Coalition's main theme was set from the start: there was a stark choice between the Coalition, with its consistent track record on managing the economy and introducing lower taxes, and Labor's record of failing to manage the economy and introducing higher taxes. This theme was a continuation of the Coalition's line from early 2019, if not earlier. Labor was on the defensive from early in the campaign (see Zappavigna et al. 2019).

Both leaders—as discussed in other chapters of this volume—crafted policy announcements relevant to the specific location, and campaign expenditure focused on marginal seats (see Table 2.2 for key campaign events, the debates, party launches and themes). Labor (Shorten 2019) had committed to a strong women's policy compared with the Coalition.

The three formal debates were opportunities for both sides to press their policies and showcase their leadership styles. Shorten was 'engaging' well, especially in the first two debates, in which he opted for a personalised approach. Morrison seemed to have a checklist of issues to cover in these debates, such as franking credits, Labor's taxes and border protection (DailyBulletin.com.au 2019). His eagerness to expose Shorten's lack of economic credibility—as in the zinger question about the cost of electric vehicles in the first debate—did not resonate with the audience. Shorten's response was to frame Morrison as a leader who could not be trusted due to the preference deal with Clive Palmer's UAP announced a few days earlier. Shorten asked whether Palmer would be the next prime minister.

For the two debates on free-to-air television, audience figures were considerably higher than in 2016, suggesting a higher level of citizen engagement than was generally expected; the second debate, on *Sky News* (and *Night Sky*), compered by David Speers, had much lower figures but was rebroadcast on social media (see Moran and Rota 2019; Dyers 2019).

Shorten's personalised style was on display towards the end of his official policy launch on 5 May when he invoked his mother's story of hardship as inspiring his commitment to 'a fair go'. Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* ridiculed Shorten's depiction of his mother under the very negative headline of 'Mother of invention', which generated controversy, as the other Murdoch-owned tabloids had chosen not to run the story. Arguably Shorten's strongest speech was his concession speech on election night (ABC 2019d).

The Coalition's policy launch was held on the final Sunday of the campaign, in line with the longstanding convention that ministers may not claim travelling allowances from that day. The Mother's Day theme featured MP Sarah Henderson from the marginal Victorian seat of Corangamite (notionally Labor after the 2018 redistribution). Morrison's motto was 'Building our economy, securing your future'. He recited well-used themes, such as Labor's 'housing tax', and introduced a new deposit guarantee scheme for first homebuyers (immediately matched by Labor).

Morrison’s quiet launch in Melbourne, with his immediate family and senior ministers, contrasted with Shorten’s political family of colleagues and former Labor prime ministers—missing Bob Hawke, who was ill and passed away a week or so later. Kevin Rudd campaigned in Queensland. Former Liberal prime minister John Howard campaigned actively alongside Morrison and various marginal-seat MPs, saying Shorten would be the ‘most left-wing Prime Minister since world war two’ (Karp 2019).

The Labor team had spent much of the campaign on a defensive footing—defending its record on the economy, publicising its ‘fairness’ agenda and trying to explain its tax ‘loopholes’ reform as part of that fairness. Good policies were lost in the narrowcasting of the agenda by the Coalition, and other policies were criticised or dismissed—for example, in claims that Labor’s free cancer treatment policy was ill advised as public treatment was already free, or that the electric car proposal was dictatorial and would be expensive, wasteful of energy and involve costly recharging stations. Even after the ALP costings were approved by the Parliamentary Budget Office on Friday, 10 May, Frydenberg and others airily dismissed the open-ended nature of the ALP’s energy plan.

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