

Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume is the latest in a published series of Australian election studies which have contemporaneously analysed Australian federal elections across almost seven decades. This volume represents the 15th edited collection of essays analysing 16 Australian national elections dating back to 1958 (with the series beginning effectively from the pivotal election of 1972 and since then missing only two elections, 1974 and 1984, to the present day—a complete list of previous titles is appended below). The series involves Australia’s leading political science academics, as well as contributions from senior political journalists and expert practitioners including serving and former politicians and their political staffers. The series has always blended analysis from political players and key insiders who often participated in campaigns themselves as decision-makers and combatants, along with academics able to stand back and reflect on the political contest, tracing longer-term trends, themes and resonances. The objective of each study was to explain the dynamics of a particular electoral contest (and its subsequent outcome) by discussing a range of background factors and contributory influences as well as exploring the significance of the proximate factors that helped shape the eventual result of the campaign.

The previous post-election volume, *Julia 2010: The caretaker election* (edited by Marian Simms and John Wanna), also published by ANU Press, highlighted the electoral backlash that eventually resulted in a hung parliament and a minority Labor Government lasting from September 2010 to September 2013. Julia Gillard, after seizing the prime ministership from Kevin Rudd at the end of his first term in office, went directly into the 2010 campaign without a clear narrative, while also facing accusations she was duplicitous and doubts over the legitimacy and effectiveness of her leadership. Her conservative opponent, Tony Abbott, had not shone in the popularity stakes but had united a previously fractious opposition and made it electorally competitive. The resulting hung parliament, with the Coalition holding 73 seats, Labor on 72 and five largely conservative crossbenchers, fashioned together a minority Labor Government which was without an electoral mandate and quickly lost electoral support. Three years later, the 2013 federal election reflected the electoral culmination of Tony Abbott’s successful oppositional campaign against an increasingly dysfunctional Labor minority Government. With Labor’s caucus desperately ditching Gillard and returning Rudd to the prime ministership on the eve of the election, Abbott was able to profit from Labor’s disarray. For the conservatives, the 2013 election completed a strategy of ousting Labor from office that had begun in 2010, and allowed a regenerated Coalition to be installed as the alternative government. However, the result also indicated a widespread disaffection across

the electorate with the political leaders of the day and with the major political parties including the Greens. There was both a mood of resignation and an element of political retribution at play in the 2013 federal election; it produced an electoral volatility that seemed all but unremarkable to many Australians but totally perplexed many overseas observers of Australian politics.

The explanations behind the outcome of the 2013 election are manifold and contextual. Simple explanations are notoriously misleading—such as Labor lost the election purely because of its internal disunity, or that the conservatives won by their relentless negativity. In fact, in some parts of Australia there was no change or hardly any in party representation whereas others had massive swings and not necessarily where they were expected. Paradoxically, Labor actually won increased support in a few constituencies, whereas the Coalition gained only a relatively small swing towards it even though it could comfortably form government. Accordingly, the expert contributors to this volume together offer a comprehensive assessment of the 2013 election with a richness of perspectives and analytical approaches only such a collection of intentionally diverse contributors can provide. They explore the key themes of the electoral contest, the battle over ideas and values, the campaign strategies of the political parties, the policy and platform differences, the clash between the two leaders, the media coverage and advertising strategies, societal and demographic factors, changing voting patterns and regional variations, and the salience of issues and interests.

Previous volumes analysing Australian federal elections have long been characterised by a commendable breadth in both the approaches and methodologies adopted and the large range of factors analysed by the contributors. While the studies identify key themes that were present in specific elections, the current editors, like their predecessors, remain convinced that election outcomes are determined by multiple factors and a complex web of influences (some even contradictory or countervailing). Consequently, useful insights into the nature and outcome of election campaigns can best be gained by using a wide lens of perspectives and a range of quantitative and qualitative approaches. That is why this book has an unusually large number of contributors compared with many election studies overseas (see e.g. Nelson 2013; Allen and Barrie 2010). It is also the reason why the editors have made a deliberate effort to include many newer voices to accompany the more established members of the political science profession who have specialised in political and electoral research. Hence, the present volume focuses on key themes and topics which other electoral studies overseas have also identified as increasingly important, such as new modes of political communication (see e.g. Wring, Mortimore and Atkinson 2011; Levine and Roberts 2012), as well as detailed voting studies and analysis of issues ranging from political economy

to ethnicity and gender. Encouraging a range of studies and approaches has also resulted in this collection meeting the needs of a diverse readership. In general, the chapters are designed to be read by an informed public, journalists, political advisors and politicians as well as by the book's primary audience of academics and undergraduate students. In short, the editors and authors have endeavoured to ensure that the chapters are both academically rigorous and that they engage a broader audience interested in the key processes of Australian democracy. Nonetheless, given the diversity of approaches taken, some chapters will, by their very nature, have a more technical nature than others. The latter chapters include those by Murray Goot and Simon Jackman on the accuracy of the opinion polls and the predictive capacities of the betting markets. Even here, however, informed readers will be able to follow the general argument while some of the more technical content will be of interest both to professional pollsters and to academic specialists (indeed, Jackman's article engages with major overseas literature on the accuracy of betting markets compared with the polls).

In planning the content of the volume we surveyed the contents of each earlier electoral study back to 1972 to examine their range and breadth of coverage (and mix of authors), plus an extensive sample of similar electoral studies compiled in overseas jurisdictions. The topics canvassed usually include polling, voters, parties, debates, campaigning, media and final results. We tried to ensure that the range of topics covered in comparative studies was in some way replicated in this volume, to provide greater systematisation and for the purposes of comparative analysis. Draft chapters were extensively workshopped by the collective contributors and some invited commentators at a two-day seminar in early November 2013, funded by the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, with support also from the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) at The Australian National University. ANZSOG also provided the facilities at ANU and editorial assistance. The editors wish to thank Hsu-Ann Lee for exceptional editorial assistance, Claire Dixon for logistical support, John Beaton and Margaret Blood from the Academy, Justin Pritchard for earlier research assistance, and also various other people who helped with specific tasks, including Skye Laris, Bernie Shaw, Stuart Smith, Erin Farley, Adam Masters and Alison Plumb. We also wish to thank those discussants and attendees who contributed to the earlier workshop, including Robin Archer from the London School of Economics (LSE). Murray Goot, John Warhurst and Marian Simms were helpful in planning and preparation of this volume, and we wish to thank the expert referees, the Social Sciences Editorial Board and the staff of ANU Press for their invaluable assistance in bringing this manuscript to publication.

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Previous Australian electoral studies in this series include:

Australia Votes: The 1958 Federal Election, edited by D Rawson, 1961 (the first book-length study of a federal election but not part of any series).

Labor to Power: Australia's 1972 Election, edited by H Mayer, 1973 (the second book-length study but again not part of an ongoing series, and also published in *Politics*, Vol 8 (1), 1973).

Australia at the Polls: The National Elections of 1975, edited by HR Penniman, 1977.

The Australian National Elections of 1977, edited by HR Penniman, 1979.

Australia at the Polls: The National Elections of 1980 and 1983, edited by HR Penniman, 1983.

Australia Votes: The 1987 Federal Election, edited by I McAllister and J Warhurst, 1988.

The Greening of Australian Politics: The 1990 Federal Election, edited by C Bean, I McAllister and J Warhurst, 1990.

The 1993 Federal Election, Special Edition of the *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 29, 1994, guest editor C Bean.

The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Australian Federal Election, edited by C Bean, M Simms, S Bennett and J Warhurst, 1997.

Howard's Agenda: The 1998 Australian Election, edited by M Simms and J Warhurst, 2000.

2001: The Centenary Election, edited by J Warhurst and M Simms, 2002.

Mortgage Nation: The 2004 Australian Election, edited by M Simms and J Warhurst, 2005.

Kevin 07: The 2007 Australian Election, in the *Australian Journal of Cultural History*, Part 1 Vol 27 (3) 2009, and Part 2 Vol 28 (1) 2010, guest editor M Simms.

Julia 2010: The caretaker election, edited by M Simms and J Wanna, 2012.

NB: An earlier list of this series and some details about the electoral studies is included in Murray Goot's entry 'Election Studies', in Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts (eds), 2007, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

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