

Polls point to imploding support for Australian Labor government

Mike Head
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Media polls published yesterday provide a limited and distorted picture of a deepening crisis of the Albanese Labor government and the political establishment as a whole.

The Resolve Political Monitor survey published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Melbourne Age*, and other Nine Media outlets indicates collapsing support for Labor after more than two years in office. The soaring cost of living was recorded as by far the largest issue of voters' concern. This reflects the sharp decline in working-class living standards, compounded by 12 home mortgage interest rate rises since Labor took office falsely promising a "better future."

Like previous such polls, respondents were not asked questions about the government's support for the US-backed Israel genocide in Gaza and the escalating US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which threatens to trigger a nuclear war, and the pouring of billions of dollars into war preparations against China, at the expense of social spending.

It showed Labor's primary vote slipping during the past month from 29 to 28 percent, the lowest level since the Resolve poll began three years ago.

That is well below the near-record low vote of 32.5 percent that Labor obtained at the May 2022 federal election. Labor only scraped into office then, with a narrow majority in the House of Representatives because of the significant collapse in support for the openly right-wing Liberal-National Coalition government, which was greater than that recorded by Labor.

The Resolve survey also recorded that, for the first time since that election, Coalition leader Peter Dutton gained a narrow lead over Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as preferred prime minister, backed by 36 percent of voters compared with 35 percent who favoured Albanese. Primary voting support for the Coalition itself was unchanged over the past month, at 36 percent.

The fact that Dutton, one of the most reviled political leaders in many decades, could now be preferred PM over Albanese is testament to the anti-working-class program imposed by the Labor government, with the willing support

of the trade union apparatuses, that has resulted in intolerable living conditions for broad sections of the population. Far from being a turn to the right by ordinary people, this is the outcome of the common economic and political program of both Labor and the Coalition.

Support for the far-right parties of Senator Pauline Hanson and mining magnate Clive Palmer remained low at a combined 7 percent, while 15 percent of voters registered support for independents or "others."

In another indication of underlying discontent, the number of undecided voters rose from 28 to 30 percent. And 36 percent of respondents said they were not firm in their voting intention and that they were "uncommitted."

The Greens' primary vote rose from 12 to 14 percent over the month despite an hysterical campaign by the corporate media and both Labor and the Coalition, accusing the party of inciting violence and threatening "social cohesion" by giving some support to the widespread public protests against the Israel genocide in Gaza.

The latest *Australian Financial Review*/Freshwater Strategy Poll also showed Albanese had lost significant ground as preferred prime minister. Neither he nor Dutton had a positive approval rating, however. Albanese's rating fell 4 points to minus 12 percent, while Dutton's rose 4 points to minus 5 percent. These were, of course, the only choices offered to the survey respondents.

That poll put Labor's primary vote at 32 percent, and the Coalition's at 40 percent, both unchanged from a month ago, with the Greens down 1 point to 13 percent.

If replicated uniformly at the next election, which must be held before May, this would produce a Labor-minority government holding 73 lower house seats, down from 77, out of 150. The Coalition would rise from 58 seats to 63 seats, resulting in an unstable hung parliament.

There is intensifying speculation in the corporate media that Albanese may call an early election, perhaps as soon as September. This would be a desperate effort to survive before the cost-of-living crisis and the economic situation worsens, largely due to the escalating war against Russia in

Ukraine, resurging global inflation and US tariff and other economic warfare measures against China, by far Australia's largest export market.

The Greens are appealing for a de facto coalition with Labor so that they can prop up the government and the capitalist order, as they did during Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd's minority Labor government from 2010 to 2013.

Labor sources indicate that they may instead seek a partnership with the business-backed "Teal" independents. In 2022, they won seven seats in some of the country's most affluent electorates—former Liberal Party strongholds—by claiming to tackle the climate disaster by supporting the creation of solar and other alternative energy industries.

Labor's crisis has deepened since the defeat of last October's constitutional referendum to establish an elite indigenous Voice in the heart of the government apparatus. That was a damaging blow to Labor's efforts to put a progressive gloss on its program of war and austerity. Workers did not believe Labor's claims that the Voice would improve the appalling conditions of most indigenous people under conditions of an historic decline in working-class living conditions across the board.

The polls confirm that the government's budget last month failed to reverse disaffection or alleviate cost-of-living anger. The budget offered several pittances, such as a one-off \$300 rebate on soaring energy bills, including for the rich, plus previously announced "Stage Three" income tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest households.

Moreover, the more than \$200 billion in reduced income tax revenue over the next decade will mean deeper cuts to public health, education and other social spending. This is on top of the hundreds of billions to be spent on the AUKUS submarines and other weaponry for a US-led war against China. The Labor government is also committed to almost doubling annual military spending to \$100 billion by 2033–34.

Both the government and the Coalition are trying to divert the rising political and social unrest by falsely blaming immigrants and international students for skyrocketing rents and the growing lack of affordable housing.

The government plans to halve net overseas migration from 528,000 last year to 260,000 by next year, primarily by capping overseas student numbers, on whose exorbitant fees universities have increasingly depended to offset their chronic under-funding. The Coalition has vowed to cut the numbers even further.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is the only party providing a socialist alternative to capitalist barbarism, war, social inequality, climate catastrophe and moves toward authoritarian forms of rule. We are campaigning throughout the working class to regain the SEP's official party

registration. This is essential to ensure the SEP's name appears on the ballot papers for the coming federal election.

We urge all our readers to sign up as SEP electoral members. To get back on the ballot, we need 1,500 electoral members. This basic political right was stripped from us and other third-party candidates in 2022 under blatantly anti-democratic electoral laws rushed through parliament by the Coalition and Labor in the lead-up to the last federal election, suddenly trebling the membership requirement from 500 to 1,500.

The political establishment is intent on stamping out any challenge to the two-party system of capitalist rule after decades of a pro-business offensive on working-class conditions by Labor and Coalition governments alike has produced staggering social inequality.

World capitalism's descent into genocide and war is also creating the conditions for a global movement against it. But this requires developing a political leadership in the working class fighting for the only progressive solution—the overthrow of the world capitalist system and its replacement by socialism.

We appeal to all working people, students, and youth: Sign up if you are not already an SEP electoral member and help us recruit the extra electoral members we need to regain our party registration. At the same time, give serious consideration to becoming a full member of our party, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

We urge our readers to complete the form below or contact the SEP:

Phone: (02) 8218 3222

Email: sep@sep.org.au

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