

Media polls point to an accelerating political crisis in Australia

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Corporate media opinion polls published yesterday provide another limited and distorted picture of intensifying economic, social and political discontent, accompanied by collapsing support for the Albanese Labor government.

According to the latest Resolve Political Monitor in the Nine network outlets, Labor's primary vote over the past month fell sharply from 30 to 27 percent. Yet support for the other main party of rule, the Liberal-National Coalition also dropped, from 39 to 38 percent, and there was no major shift to any other party or independents.

Reflecting the growing unease and uncertainty, 38 percent of respondents said they were "uncommitted" with their vote.

This was Labor's worst result since it barely scraped into office in May 2022, on a near-record low vote of 32.5 percent. Labor was only able to form a government because of an even greater implosion in support for the Coalition after a near decade in power.

This week's Resolve poll indicates deepening disaffection with the political establishment as a whole, driven firstly by the steepest decline in working-class living standards for decades.

Labor's 2022 election slogan of a "better future" has proved to be a fraud. Only 13 percent of respondents believed they were better off than when Labor took office, with 59 percent of voters believing they were worse off.

Asked to name their preferred prime minister, voters were equally dissatisfied with both Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Coalition leader Peter Dutton. They each polled just 35 percent, down from 37 percent the previous month, accompanied by an increase in the number of "undecided" voters.

Asked how they rated Albanese, just 31 percent of people said his performance was good, while 57 percent said it was poor. His net result slumped to minus 26 percentage points, from minus 14 a month earlier.

The poll showed the Coalition has taken the lead over Labor in so-called two-party terms, by 51 to 49 percent, when preferences were allocated in the same way as at the

2022 election.

That points to Labor, at best clinging to office as an unstable minority government, depending on the backing of the Greens and/or various independents after the next election, which must be held by May.

If the Coalition forms the next government, it will be headed by a widely reviled figure in Dutton and directed by oligarchic forces, such as billionaire Gina Rinehart, the iron ore magnate who joined Donald Trump's election victory celebrations at his mansion in Florida last month.

Despite the discontent with Labor, there was no significant shift to the right. Support for the Greens, who are trying to prop up and form a coalition with Labor, rose slightly from 11 to 12 percent in the latest survey. Support for Senator Pauline Hanson's far-right One Nation increased from 5 to 7 percent and independents remained on 11 percent.

The latest Newspoll published in the *Australian*, the Murdoch media's national flagship, reported a slight shift away from the Coalition, whose primary vote had fallen a point to 39 percent since early October, while Labor's primary vote of 33 percent had remained unchanged.

It also indicated low approval ratings for Albanese, on minus 14, and Dutton on a net negative rating of minus 12.

These polls were conducted after the release of statistics showing that the Labor government has overseen the biggest reversal in working-class living conditions in decades, with a 9 percent decline in average purchasing power over the past three years, one of the sharpest declines in an advanced economy.

Even these figures understate the impact on working-class households, which are suffering severe financial stress due to high mortgage interest rates and rents, as are workers internationally.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has pointed out, such average results, covering all households, hide the disproportionate impact of mortgage payments—which have risen by 155 percent since May 2022—and still-soaring prices for rents and services. These affect lower-paid workers and young people the most.

This is on top of years of the suppression of wage levels, enforced by the trade union apparatuses, while the billionaires' wealth has soared through price-gouging and the massive corporate bailouts in the 2008-09 global financial crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The polls were conducted also in the context of deteriorating economic conditions globally and in Australia, even before the fascistic Trump administration takes office next month. It is threatening to impose punitive tariffs on China, Australian capitalism's largest export market, and erstwhile allies as well.

According to a recent report by Deloitte Access Economics, Australian government finances have already suffered their biggest ever reversal, outside that resulting from the onset of the COVID pandemic. It forecast the federal government deficit for this financial year would be \$33.5 billion, compared to last year's \$15.8 billion surplus based on high export commodity prices—a turnaround of almost \$50 billion in just 12 months.

As in the US and every country, the corporate and financial elite is demanding major cuts in government spending and deeper attacks on the jobs and conditions of the working class, regardless of which party heads the next government.

The polling period included the final week of parliament for the year, in which the Labor government teamed up with the Greens and the Coalition late last month to ram 31 repressive and other pro-business bills through parliament in less than 24 hours, making a mockery of any pretence of democracy.

Millions of people's lives will be severely affected by these bills, especially the teenagers who will be cut off social media—a blatant act of political censorship—and the 80,000 refugees and immigrants threatened by Trump-style mass deportations.

There is also widespread anger among workers over the Albanese government's dictatorial takeover of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, which is an attack on the democratic rights and conditions of building workers, and all workers.

This disaffection has been compounded by the bipartisan Labor-Coalition support for the intensifying Israeli genocide in Gaza and the plunge into wider US-backed wars in the Middle East and against Russia and China, threatening a nuclear third world war.

Labor is executing the AUKUS program to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, whose \$368 billion price tag has outraged masses of people, and transforming parts of the Australian continent, especially the north and west, into launch sites for aggressive US operations throughout the Indo-Pacific.

The media polls have indicated falling support for Labor ever since the October 2023 defeat of Labor's referendum to enshrine an indigenous Voice to parliament in the Constitution. That was intended to exploit widespread sympathy of the dire plight of Aboriginal people, and to put a progressive gloss on the government's agenda of war and austerity.

It failed because working people concluded that Labor's promises that the Voice would rectify the shocking social conditions of many indigenous people, who are one of the most vulnerable layers of the working class, were worthless given Labor's record of imposing the cost-of-living and housing crisis on the entire working class.

This October's election in the northern Australian state of Queensland saw huge swings against Labor in working-class areas. That debacle followed the landslide defeat of the Labor government in the Northern Territory in August.

These outcomes reflect underlying economic and political processes. As the Socialist Equality Party explained in the resolution adopted at its recent national congress: "The fall in Labor's support is not a conjunctural development, but expresses a historic rupture between the party and its former mass working-class base of support. The globalisation of production in the 1980s obliterated any basis for Labor's earlier program of national economic regulation and limited concessions to the working class to preserve the stability of the capitalist system."

Labor and its partners in the trade union bureaucracy are now opening the door for the possible return of the right-wing Coalition to escalate the attack on workers, just as the Biden-Harris administration did in paving the way for the fascistic Trump victory in the United States.

This highlights the necessity to build the Socialist Equality Party to provide the genuine, revolutionary socialist answer to capitalism, which offers a future only of social misery, war and barbarism.



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