7

The House of Representatives Results

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At the 2016 Australian federal election, the first-term Liberal–National Coalition government faced a significant swing against it, suffering a net loss of 12 seats. The government managed to win a narrow majority, with just 76 out of 150 seats. This chapter covers the results of the election in the House of Representatives, focusing on key electoral contests, as well as explaining the electoral system used for the House of Representatives, redistributions conducted prior to the elections, by-elections held during the previous term, the number of nominations made for the House of Representatives and the impact of preferences on the election result.

Electoral system

The House of Representatives is the lower house of Australia's bicameral parliament. Elections are usually held simultaneously with elections for the upper house (Senate), although Senate elections are conducted using a method of proportional representation. House of Representatives elections are due once every three years. Australia's House of Representatives consists of 150 members, each elected to represent a single-member constituency. Members are elected using compulsory preferential voting, with voters required to effectively choose preferences between every candidate on the ballot. If no candidate wins more than half of the vote,

the vote for the lowest-polling candidate is redistributed according to the preferences of that candidate's voters, and this process is repeated until a candidate has a majority of the vote.

Due to this preferential voting system, this chapter will refer to the vote for candidates before and after preferences are distributed. The term 'primary vote' refers to first preference votes that have not been distributed. The term 'two-candidate preferred vote' is the vote for each of the two final candidates standing after the distribution of all other candidates' preferences. The term 'two-party preferred vote' refers to the vote for the Labor candidate and the highest-polling Coalition candidate when all other candidates have been excluded and have had their preferences distributed. Two-candidate preferred and two-party preferred voting figures are the same in most electorates, but in a sizeable minority of seats where the final race was not between a Labor candidate and Coalition candidate, these data points will differ.

2013 election

The 2013 election produced a resounding victory for the Coalition. This coalition had been out of power for two terms, since the defeat of the Howard government in 2007. The Coalition had come close to winning in 2010, with the incumbent Labor government losing its majority in the House of Representatives and relying on Independents and a Greens MP to govern. In 2013, the Coalition won 90 seats in the House of Representatives, a gain of 17 seats. The Labor Party's numbers were cut from 72 to 55. The House of Representatives also included one member each from the Greens, the Palmer United Party and Katter's Australian Party, along with two Independent members (Table 7.1).

There was a swing of 1.9 per cent to the Coalition, and a large 5.5 per cent swing to the Palmer United Party, which was a new party formed since the last election. There were large swings against Labor (4.6 per cent) and the Greens (3.1 per cent), with the vote for Other parties increasing marginally. The Coalition polled 53.49 per cent of the two-party preferred vote, with all minor party and Independent votes distributed between Labor and the Coalition. This was a swing of 3.61 per cent compared to the 2010 election.

Table 7.1. Results of the 2013 federal election by party

Party	Votes	Percentage	Swing	Seats	Seat change
Liberal–National Coalition	5,882,818	45.55	1.93	90	17
Australian Labor Party	4,311,365	33.38	−4.61	55	−17
Australian Greens	1,116,918	8.65	−3.11	1	0
Palmer United Party	709,035	5.49	5.49	1	1
Katter's Australian Party	134,226	1.04	0.73	1	0
Independents	177,217	1.37	−0.84	2	−1
Other	583,348	4.52	0.41	0	0

Source. Compiled by author from Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) data (2013a, 2013b).

Redistribution of electoral boundaries

Following the 2013 federal election, House of Representatives electoral boundaries were redrawn in the States of New South Wales (NSW) and Western Australia (WA), as well as the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Redistributions are conducted independently of political parties and partisan officials, and electoral boundaries are drawn with little regard to the political impact of particular boundaries. Australia does not see the partisan decision-making that is present in many States in the United States, or the gerrymandered electoral boundaries those decisions produce.

The number of seats each State is entitled to fill is recalculated after each election based on population data. In November 2014, it was found that NSW had lost its 48th electorate, and WA gained a 16th electorate. This required a redistribution in both States. A redistribution was also required in the ACT, as seven years had passed since the boundaries had been drawn.

The Labor-held electorate of Charlton in the Hunter region of NSW was effectively abolished, with neighbouring seats significantly redrawn to absorb this territory. Three Liberal-held electorates were redrawn to be notionally Labor-held on the new boundaries: Dobell on the NSW Central Coast, Macarthur in south-western Sydney and Barton in southern Sydney. The southern NSW seat of Throsby was renamed Whitlam. The new 16th electorate in WA was created as a notional Liberal seat in the south-east of Perth, named Burt. Changes in the ACT

were minor, with the northern seat of Fraser renamed Fenner. Parts of the Canberra city centre were transferred from Fraser to the neighbouring seat of Canberra.

These changes resulted in a net gain of two seats for Labor. This left the Coalition with 88 seats, and Labor with 57, in the lead-up to the 2016 federal election. A loss of 13 seats would have cost the Coalition its majority, while a gain of 19 seats for Labor would have given them a majority.

By-elections

By-elections were held in three federal electorates during the 2013–16 parliamentary term. Two were triggered by the resignation of senior political figures, and the third was triggered by the death of the sitting member. None of these by-elections resulted in a shift in the political balance of the House of Representatives.

Kevin Rudd resigned from his seat of Griffith shortly after leading Labor to the 2013 election defeat. Rudd had served as prime minister from 2007 until 2010, and had returned to office shortly before the 2013 election. Rudd had held on to Griffith with 53 per cent of the two-party preferred vote at the 2013 election. After Rudd's resignation, Labor candidate Terri Butler won the subsequent by-election despite a 1.25 per cent swing to the Liberal National Party (LNP) after preferences.

Liberal MP Don Randall died in July 2015, triggering a by-election for his seat of Canning in WA. Liberal candidate Andrew Hastie retained the seat despite a 6.55 per cent swing to his Labor rival. The by-election took place less than a week after Malcolm Turnbull had replaced Tony Abbott as prime minister.

Joe Hockey served as treasurer in the Coalition government from 2013 until 2015, when he moved to the backbench at the same time as Malcolm Turnbull became prime minister. Hockey resigned from parliament not long afterwards. The by-election for his seat of North Sydney was held in December 2015. Labor did not contest the seat, and Liberal candidate Trent Zimmerman comfortably won.

Candidates running

There were 994 candidates nominated to run for the 150 House of Representative electorates across Australia at the 2016 federal election. This was fewer than the record number of 1,188 candidates who had nominated in 2013, and also fewer than the number who stood at the elections from 1998 until 2007. The number of candidates in 2010 was slightly fewer than in 2016. Labor and the Greens were the only parties to stand in all 150 seats. At least one candidate from a Coalition party stood in each seat, and the Liberal and National parties ran against each other in 11 seats. A total of 108 Independents nominated for the lower house, while smaller parties nominated 375 candidates.

The smaller parties—Family First, Christian Democratic Party, Animal Justice Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Rise Up Australia—all nominated over 30 candidates. The Palmer United Party, which had run in all 150 electorates in 2013, nominated only a single candidate in the House of Representatives (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1. Total House of Representatives candidates per election, 1990–2016

Source. Constructed by © Ben Raue from AEC data (2004a, 2007a, 2010a, 2013c, 2016a).

National result

There was a significant swing against the Coalition. The Coalition vote dropped by 3.5 per cent, and there were swings of 1–2 per cent to Labor, the Greens and the Nick Xenophon Team. There was also a large increase in the vote for Independents and other small parties. The Coalition narrowly avoided losing its majority. It lost 14 seats, but gained two others, for a total of 76 seats. Labor gained 13 seats from the Coalition, but lost the seat of Chisholm to the Liberal Party, giving them a total of 69 seats. The Palmer United Party's sole seat of Fairfax was lost to the LNP without a fight; former MP Clive Palmer retired, and his party did not contest the seat. The Liberal Party lost the South Australian seat of Mayo to the Nick Xenophon Team, and also lost the Victorian seat of Murray to the Nationals.

Table 7.2. Results of the 2016 federal election by party

Party	Votes	Percentage	Swing	Seats	Seat change
Liberal–National Coalition	5,693,605	42.04	–3.51	76	–12
Australian Labor Party	4,702,296	34.73	1.35	69	12
Australian Greens	1,385,650	10.23	1.58	1	0
Nick Xenophon Team	250,333	1.85	1.85	1	1
Katter's Australian Party	72,879	0.54	–0.5	1	0
Palmer United Party	315	0	–5.49	0	–1
Independents	380,712	2.81	1.44	2	0
Other	1,055,311	7.79	3.28	0	0

Source. Compiled by author from AEC data (2016b, 2016c).

The Coalition managed to win 50.36 per cent of the two-party preferred vote, which was 3.13 per cent less than in 2013 (Table 7.2).

The impact of preferences

There was an overall increase in the vote for parties other than the Coalition and Labor, and the concentration of this vote meant that preferences played a larger role than in recent elections. Labor won 62.2 per cent of preferences, which was a slight increase from 2013, when Labor won 60.3 per cent of preferences. The flow of Greens preferences to Labor dropped slightly from 83 per cent to 81.9 per cent.

Fewer than one third of seats in the House of Representatives were decided without needing to distribute preferences. The winning candidate polled less than a majority of the primary vote in 102 out of 150 races, which is higher than the previous record of 98 seats at the 1998 election (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2. Seats decided on preferences, 1993–2016

Source. Constructed by © Ben Raue from AEC data (2004b, 2007b, 2010b, 2013d, 2016d).

The candidates leading on primary votes in most seats maintained their lead and won the seats after the distribution of preferences. There were, however, 16 seats where a candidate, trailing on primary votes, won the seat. Labor candidates overtook the Coalition candidate in 14 seats. Labor's David Feeney also won the seat of Batman, despite the Greens polling a higher primary vote, and Nick Xenophon Team's Rebekha Sharkie overtook the Liberal candidate in the seat of Mayo.

Enrolment, turnout and informal voting

Only 90.86 per cent of those enrolled to vote turned out to vote at the 2016 Australian federal election. This was the lowest turnout for an Australian federal election since compulsory voting was first enforced for the 1925 election (if turnout is calculated as the proportion of those enrolled who turned out to vote).

Table 7.3. Turnout 2013 and 2016 (percentages)

Election	Enrolment	Turnout	Informal votes	Votes/Potential enrolment
2013	92.39	93.29	5.91	86.19
2016	95.11	90.86	5.05	86.41

Source. Compiled by author from AEC data (2013e, 2013f, 2016e, 2016f).

Major efforts by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) over the previous term had significantly increased the size of the roll, from 14.7 million to just under 15.7 million. The AEC estimated that 92.4 per cent of potential voters were enrolled for the 2013 election; this figure increased to 95.1 per cent at the 2016 election. If turnout is calculated as a proportion of the total eligible population, turnout appears to have slightly increased from 86.2 per cent to 86.4 per cent.

Informal voting dropped from 5.91 per cent to 5.05 per cent. Informal voting was highest at 7.35 per cent in the Northern Territory (NT) and 6.17 per cent in NSW, although the rate in NSW was 1.41 per cent lower than in 2013 (Table 7.3).

Labor–Coalition contests: State by State

Labor gained 13 seats from the Coalition in 2016: four seats in NSW, three in Tasmania (TAS), two in Queensland (QLD), two in WA and one each in South Australia (SA) and NT. The Liberal Party gained one seat from Labor: the seat of Chisholm in Victoria (VIC). There were also three Liberal-held seats in NSW which had been redrawn into notional Labor seats in the preceding redistribution, and were then won by Labor at the election: Barton, Dobell and Paterson (see Table 7.4).

Table 7.4. Seats changing hands at the 2016 federal election

Seat	State	Incumbent	Winner	Margin (%)
Barton*	NSW	Liberal	Labor	8.3
Bass	TAS	Liberal	Labor	6.1
Braddon	TAS	Liberal	Labor	2.2
Burt	WA	Liberal	Labor	7.1
Chisholm	VIC	Labor	Liberal	1.2
Cowan	WA	Liberal	Labor	0.7
Dobell*	NSW	Liberal	Labor	4.8

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Seat	State	Incumbent	Winner	Margin (%)
Eden-Monaro	NSW	Liberal	Labor	2.9
Fairfax	QLD	Palmer United	Liberal National	10.9
Herbert	NSW	Liberal National	Labor	0.02
Hindmarsh	SA	Liberal	Labor	0.6
Lindsay	NSW	Liberal	Labor	1.1
Longman	QLD	Liberal National	Labor	0.8
Lyons	TAS	Liberal	Labor	2.3
Macarthur	NSW	Liberal	Labor	8.3
Macquarie	NSW	Liberal	Labor	2.2
Mayo	SA	Liberal	Nick Xenophon Team	5.0
Murray	VIC	Liberal	National	5.1
Paterson*	NSW	Liberal	Labor	10.7
Solomon	NT	Country Liberal	Labor	6.0

*Barton, Dobell and Paterson were won by the Liberal Party in 2013, but were redrawn into notional Labor seats at the redistribution prior to the 2016 federal election

Source. Calculated by author from AEC data.

New South Wales

Labor made more gains in NSW than in any other State, retaining three Liberal seats redrawn into Labor seats in the redistribution and picking up a further four. Labor did particularly well in western Sydney, picking up the three key seats, but they did less well in seats closer to the city centre. The picture for Labor was also varied in the two key regional electorates, Page and Eden-Monaro, with Labor picking up one of those two seats. Pre-election polling suggested that Labor was on track easily to regain the northern NSW seat of Page, where former Labor MP Janelle Saffin was aiming to win her seat back. In reality, Page swung by only 0.8 per cent to Labor, and the Nationals' Kevin Hogan was comfortably re-elected. At the other end of NSW, Labor regained the south-eastern electorate of Eden-Monaro with a 5.8 per cent swing. Former MP Mike Kelly was returned to parliament with 52.9 per cent of the vote after preferences.

There were three marginal seats in play on the NSW Central Coast and in the Hunter region. The Liberal-held electorates of Dobell and Paterson were both redrawn in the redistribution and had become notional Labor seats. Labor managed to win both of these seats with swings of 4.6 per cent in Dobell and 10.5 per cent in Paterson.

The Liberal Party had more luck in the neighbouring seat of Robertson. A swing of 2 per cent was not enough to unseat Liberal MP Lucy Wicks, who was left with 51.1 per cent of the two-candidate preferred vote.

Labor performed quite strongly in a series of marginal seats around western Sydney, gaining three and maintaining a hold on two others. Labor gained the seats of Lindsay, Macquarie and Macarthur on the western and south-western fringes of Sydney, with swings to Labor of 4 per cent, 6.7 per cent and 11.7 per cent, respectively. The swing to Labor in Macarthur was particularly remarkable: multiple polls indicated that the seat was very close, but Labor's Mike Freeland ended up polling 58.3 per cent of the vote after preferences. Swings of 3.6 per cent in Greenway and 6.2 per cent in Parramatta have strengthened Labor's hold on these two marginal seats.

Closer to inner Sydney, there were three other key marginal seats in play. The Liberal-held seat of Barton was significantly redrawn in the recent redistribution, pulling the seat into Labor-friendly areas around Marrickville and away from the Liberal-voting suburbs along the Georges River. The new version of Barton was considered to have a notional Labor margin of 4.4 per cent, after the Liberal Party's Nickolas Varvaris had won with a 0.3 per cent margin at the 2013 election. Labor's Linda Burney defeated Varvaris, with a swing of 3.9 per cent giving her 58.3 per cent of the vote after preferences. Labor was less successful in the nearby seats of Reid and Banks. Both seats lie along major waterways, with expensive waterfront properties along the Parramatta River and the Georges River, respectively. Labor held both seats prior to the 2013 election, when they were lost to the Liberal Party. Overlapping marginal Liberal State seats, won at the 2011 State election, remained in Liberal hands despite much larger swings in other parts of NSW at the 2015 State election. Liberal MP David Coleman held Banks by a slim 2.8 per cent margin, but held on after the swing to Labor was limited to 1.36 per cent. His colleague Craig Laundy held Reid by 3.3 per cent, and likewise suffered a swing of only 1.36 per cent.

Victoria

Labor's performance in Victoria was quite different in inner Melbourne from the outer fringe of the metropolitan region. In addition to four inner-city electorates where Labor lost ground to the Greens on the two-candidate preferred count, Labor suffered a swing to the Liberal Party in six other inner-suburban electorates: Melbourne Ports, Goldstein,

Kooyong, Deakin, Aston and Chisholm. Labor had high hopes for regaining the electorate of Deakin, but a 2.5 per cent swing to the Liberal Party strengthened Michael Sukkar's hold on the seat. In Bruce and Chisholm, longstanding Labor MPs were retiring, creating a real danger of Labor losing these seats. Labor was able to gain a swing of 2.3 per cent in Bruce, but they were less lucky in Chisholm. Liberal candidate Julia Banks was the only Coalition candidate to win a seat from Labor, thanks to a 2.8 per cent swing to the Liberal Party.

Labor performed more strongly in the outer fringe of Melbourne, but was not able to gain any seats. There were doubts about Labor's ability to hold on to McEwen, covering the northern fringe of Melbourne and nearby rural areas. Labor's Rob Mitchell held the seat by only a 0.2 per cent margin. Controversy around a proposed industrial agreement covering the Country Fire Authority (CFA) was thought to be a factor in this bushfire-affected electorate. In reality, Mitchell gained a large 7.7 per cent swing, winning comfortably. Meanwhile, Labor gained swings in the seats of La Trobe, on the south-eastern outskirts of Melbourne, and Corangamite on the south-western outskirts of Geelong, but not enough to win either seat. Labor's Simon Curtis gained a 2.6 per cent swing in La Trobe, while Labor's Libby Coker gained a swing of only 0.8 per cent in Corangamite.

Queensland

Queensland is always home to a large number of marginal seats. While Labor gained swings in most of these seats, and came close to winning many, it managed to make only two gains. Labor lost ground in a series of inner-Brisbane electorates. Labor held hopes of gaining the seat of Brisbane upon the retirement of sitting LNP MP Teresa Gambaro, but her successor Trevor Evans strengthened the LNP margin by 1.6 per cent. Labor's Terri Butler faced some trouble in her own seat of Griffith, with the Labor margin cut by 1.5 per cent compared to the last election, when the seat was contested by then prime minister Kevin Rudd.

Labor achieved large swings in a number of seats in outer Brisbane, but only managed to win one seat. Labor gained a 3.75 per cent swing in the outer south seat of Forde, but this was not quite enough to gain the seat. Sitting MP Bert van Manen survived with 50.6 per cent of the vote after preferences. On the northern fringe of Brisbane, three electorates played a key role in the election. Labor won the LNP seat of Longman, defeating two-term MP Wyatt Roy thanks to a 7.7 per cent swing. In the

neighbouring seat of Dickson, a 5.1 per cent swing was not enough to remove senior minister Peter Dutton. The seat of Petrie, which borders both Longman and Dickson, was one of the most marginal Coalition seats prior to the election, held by the LNP's Luke Howarth by a 0.5 per cent margin. A swing of 1.1 per cent to the LNP saw Howarth hold on to his seat.

There are another four key marginal seats on the north coast of QLD. The seat of Herbert is the closest seat in the country. Labor's Cathy O'Toole won the seat by 37 votes, after a recount. Further south, Labor came close to winning Capricornia and Flynn, but fell short in both seats. A 5.5 per cent swing to Labor in Flynn cut the LNP margin back to 1 per cent. Capricornia was already extremely marginal, and Labor managed a swing of only 0.1 per cent to cut the LNP margin to 0.6 per cent. The seat of Dawson, which borders both Herbert and Capricornia, also saw a swing to Labor, but is slightly safer for the LNP than neighbouring seats. The LNP's George Christensen held Dawson by a 7.6 per cent margin; a 4.2 per cent swing to Labor has cut this margin to 3.4 per cent.

Western Australia

Labor has done very poorly in WA over the last decade. Its State delegation was reduced to three out of 15 seats at the 2010 and 2013 elections, which was the end point of a long, slow decline since Labor had dominated WA's federal representation in the 1980s.

There were four Liberal seats at risk of falling to Labor in WA. Two of these seats did change hands. Labor easily gained the new electorate of Burt on the southern fringe of Perth. Burt was created in the recent redistribution with a notional Liberal margin of 6.1 per cent. Labor candidate Matt Keogh had already run in a large part of the electorate at the 2015 Canning by-election, and did particularly well in those parts of the seat slated to move into Burt. Keogh ended up winning Burt easily, with a 13.2 per cent swing. Labor also narrowly gained the seat of Cowan in northern Perth. Labor's Anne Aly defeated sitting Liberal MP Luke Simpkins with a 5.2 per cent swing, winning the seat by a margin of 1,106 votes. Swings of just under 4 per cent were not enough to win the marginal seats of Hasluck and Swan. Liberal MP Ken Wyatt now holds Hasluck by a 2 per cent margin, while Steve Irons holds Swan by a 3.6 per cent margin (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3. Winners of federal seats in Australia, 1984–2016

Source. Constructed by © Ben Raue from Adam Carr (1984, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001) and AEC (2004c, 2007c, 2010c, 2013g, 2016h).

South Australia

Labor gained only one seat from the Liberal Party in SA. Labor's Steve Georganas narrowly regained the seat of Hindmarsh after losing the seat in 2013 to the Liberal Party's Matt Williams. Williams had held the seat by a 1.9 per cent margin, but Georganas won thanks to a 2.5 per cent swing to Labor. Labor had hopes of gaining the seat of Boothby, after coming close to winning in 2010. Liberal MP Andrew Southcott retired in 2016 after holding the seat for 20 years. There was a 3.6 per cent swing towards Labor, but Liberal candidate Nicolle Flint was able to hold on with a 3.5 per cent margin. Boothby had been the best seat for the Nick Xenophon ticket in the Senate in 2013, so there was speculation that the Nick Xenophon Team could overtake Labor in Boothby, but they fell 3.85 per cent short.

The most marginal Labor seat in SA was the seat of Adelaide, held by Labor's Kate Ellis. Ellis increased her margin to 4.65 per cent, on the back of a 0.7 per cent swing after preferences. Ellis's primary vote was cut by 6.3 per cent, with some Labor voters switching to the Nick Xenophon Team, but she comfortably retained the seat when those preferences were distributed.

Tasmania

The Liberal Party suffered major setbacks in Tasmania. In 2013, Liberal candidates won three out of five Tasmanian seats. Despite topping the two-party preferred vote, Labor was reduced to only one seat. In 2016, Labor recovered all three seats lost to the Liberal Party in 2013. Liberal MP Andrew Nikolic held the north-eastern Tasmanian seat of Bass by a 4 per cent margin following the last election. He suffered one of the largest swings across Australia, with Labor's vote after preferences increasing by 10.1 per cent. This left Labor's Ross Hart with 56.1 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. Meanwhile, Liberal MP Brett Whiteley held the north-western Tasmanian seat of Braddon by a 2.6 per cent margin. A 4.8 per cent swing to Labor's Justine Keay swept Whiteley away. Fellow Liberal Eric Hutchinson had won Lyons in 2013, ending 20 years of Labor representation in the central Tasmanian electorate. Hutchinson's 1.2 per cent margin was not enough this time, however, with Labor's Brian Mitchell gaining a 3.5 per cent swing.

Australian Capital Territory

Labor comfortably retained the two seats in the ACT, with 44.3 per cent of the primary vote and 61.1 per cent of the vote after preferences, a swing of 1.34 per cent on the primary vote and 1.2 per cent on the two-party preferred vote. Gai Brodtmann was elected for a third term representing the southern seat of Canberra, while Andrew Leigh won a third term representing the northern seat of Fenner (a new name for the former seat of Fraser). Brodtmann and Leigh both slightly increased their margins of victory, by 0.95 per cent in Canberra and 1.4 per cent in Fenner.

Northern Territory

The electorate of Solomon was created in 2001, when the NT was divided into two federal electorates. Labor won the seat for the first time in 2007, before the Country Liberal Party's Natasha Griggs won the seat in 2010. Griggs held Solomon by a 1.4 per cent margin after the 2013 election. A 7.4 per cent swing to Labor's Luke Gosling swept her out on this occasion. Labor's Warren Snowdon has held Lingjari since it was created in 2001, and had served four previous terms representing the entire territory. He came close to losing in 2013, holding on by a 0.88 per cent margin. Snowdon built up his margin in 2016 thanks to a 7.5 per cent swing.

Non-classic contests

The AEC defines a seat as ‘non-classic’ if the final two candidates after the distribution of preferences are not a Labor candidate and a Coalition candidate. So, non-classic seats can include races where an Independent or minor party comes in the top two, or where the final distribution of preferences is between two Coalition candidates. These sorts of outcomes used to be very rare, but have become much more common in the last decade. In particular, the phenomenon of minor parties outpolling one of the major parties in a House of Representatives race, which was once rare, is now commonplace.

Only three non-classic races took place at the 1990, 1993 and 1998 elections, and apart from a brief spike to six races in 1996, the numbers remained low as recently as 2007. In 2007, two Independents and one Green reached the two-candidate preferred count. Since 2007, these numbers have surged. Eight non-classic races took place in 2010. Eleven took place in 2013. At the 2016 federal election, 17 electorates did not end up as a race between Labor and the Coalition; well over 10 per cent of all seats (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4. Non-classic races in federal elections, 1990–2016

Source. Constructed by © Ben Raue from AEC data (2004d, 2007d, 2010d, 2013h, 2016i).

This growth is almost entirely driven by the rise of minor parties and the Greens (see Jackson, Chapter 13, this volume; Kefford, Chapter 15, this volume). The Greens first broke into the top two in the seat of Melbourne in 2007. In 2016, the Greens reached the two-candidate preferred count in four seats in inner-Melbourne and two seats in inner-Sydney. Other minor parties have now also started to break through in other parts of the country. The Nick Xenophon Team reached the top two in four South Australian seats, while Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON) came second in the Queensland seat of Maranoa.

The growth is not driven by an increase in Independents or an increase in Coalition infighting. Independents broke through to the top two in four seats in 2016, well within the normal historical range. While the Western Australian branch of the Nationals has continued to contest Liberal seats, intra-Coalition fights on the east coast are rare, with a Liberal and National candidate both making the final preference count in one seat in 2016.

Minor parties have always played a role in House of Representatives elections, but this role has usually been limited to distributing preferences between the major parties. Minor parties are now in a position to win seats in more parts of the country.

Contests between the Liberal Party and the Nationals

The Liberal Party and the Nationals ran against each other in 11 seats, but there were three seats in particular where either party had a real chance of winning (see Cockfield and Curtin, Chapter 14, this volume). Outside of WA, contests between the two parties are now rare. The parties have merged in QLD, and such contests are unusual in NSW and VIC.

The only serious contest on the east coast between the parties took place in Murray, where sitting Liberal MP Sharman Stone was retiring. The Country Party and the National Party had held Murray continuously from its creation in 1949 until 1996, when the sitting MP's retirement opened the door for Stone to win the seat as a Liberal. The Liberal Party's Duncan McGauchie and the Nationals' Damian Drum contested Murray in 2016. Drum, formerly a Victorian Football League footballer and coach in the Australian Football League, and more recently a State parliamentarian and minister, outpolled McGauchie on primary votes, 35.3 per cent to 32 per cent. After the distribution of preferences, Drum won Murray with 55.1 per cent of the two-candidate preferred vote.

The Nationals traditionally contest all regional Liberal seats in WA. They are strongest in the two largest seats: Durack and O'Connor. The Nationals came second in each of these seats in 2013, having held O'Connor from 2010 to 2013. Primary vote swings away from the party in 2016 saw both Nationals candidates drop behind their Labor rivals, leaving the sitting Liberal MPs to win each seat easily on Nationals preferences.

The Nick Xenophon Team in South Australia

The Nick Xenophon Team (NXT) ran for House of Representatives seats for the first time in 2016. The party ran in every seat in SA, and had a major impact. The party's lowest primary vote in SA was 12.3 per cent in Adelaide; the party exceeded 15 per cent in nine out of 11 seats in the State. NXT won one seat—defeating former minister and Liberal MP Jamie Briggs in his seat of Mayo. Rebekha Sharkie polled 34.9 per cent of the primary vote, and won 55 per cent of the vote after preferences.

NXT also reached second place in two other South Australian seats: the large regional Liberal seats of Barker and Grey. In Barker, NXT candidate James Stacey polled 29.1 per cent of the primary vote and 45.3 per cent after preferences. In Grey, NXT candidate Andrea Broadfoot achieved 27.8 per cent of the primary vote and 48 per cent after preferences. NXT also polled over 20 per cent in the urban Liberal seats of Boothby and Sturt, and the semi-urban Labor seat of Wakefield.

The Greens

The Greens have long held ambitions of expanding their tally of inner-city electorates in Melbourne and Sydney (see Jackson, Chapter 13, this volume). The seat of Melbourne fell to the Greens in 2010, and they managed to retain the seat in 2013 despite the loss of Liberal preferences. The Greens broke through to win State seats in Balmain in 2011, Melbourne and Prahran in 2014, and Newtown and Ballina in 2015. All except Ballina, which is on the north coast of NSW, were inner-city electorates in Sydney or Melbourne.

At the 2016 election, the picture looked very different for the Greens in the inner-city areas of Melbourne and Sydney. In Melbourne, the Greens were not successful in gaining any additional seats beyond the single seat they already held. However, they achieved large swings in a ring

of five neighbouring electorates, putting them in a stronger position to win a number of these seats in the near future. The same cannot be said, however, for the Greens in inner Sydney (Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5. Greens vote in inner-city federal electorates in Melbourne and Sydney

Source. Constructed by Ben Raue from AEC data (2001, 2004e, 2007e, 2010e, 2013i, 2016j).

In the three inner-city electorates of Melbourne, Wills and Batman, the average Greens primary vote has steadily climbed, first passing 25 per cent in 2010 and reaching almost 37 per cent in 2016. In contrast, the average Greens vote in the inner-city electorates of Sydney and Grayndler first passed 20 per cent in 2004, and has largely stayed around that level for the last decade.

Greens MP Adam Bandt gained a small swing in Melbourne, winning 43.8 per cent of the primary vote—a record for the Greens in a federal election. A swing of approximately 2 per cent away from Labor and to the Liberal Party pushed the Liberal Party into second place. Thanks to this shift, Bandt polled 68.4 per cent of the two-candidate preferred vote against the Liberal candidate. This makes the seat of Melbourne look much more like a safe Greens seat. The Greens gained larger swings in neighbouring electorates, managing a swing of almost 10 per cent on both primary votes and two-candidate preferred votes in Batman, where the Labor candidate, David Feeney, proved embarrassingly accident-prone,

having failed to declare his ownership of a property in the members' register. The Greens' Alex Bhathal polled 37 per cent of the primary vote, and 49 per cent after preferences.

In the seat of Wills, to the north of Melbourne and to the west of Batman, the Greens ran local mayor Samantha Ratnam, and benefited from the retirement of Labor's Kelvin Thomson after 20 years in the seat. She managed a swing of 8.6 per cent on primary votes to poll 30.6 per cent. After preferences were counted, Ratnam polled 45 per cent, a swing of 10.3 per cent. The Greens also made a concerted push in the inner-city Liberal electorate of Higgins. The Greens' Jason Ball gained a swing of 8.6 per cent, which pushed him ahead of the Labor candidate. The Greens reached 42 per cent of the vote after preferences. The Greens also gained a 3.6 per cent swing in Melbourne Ports, putting the party only 3.2 per cent behind Labor MP Michael Danby. To the west of Melbourne, the Greens also polled over 20 per cent in Gellibrand for the first time.

The picture is very different in the inner-city of Sydney. The Greens vote in Grayndler and Sydney peaked in 2010 at almost 26 per cent in Grayndler and almost 24 per cent in Sydney. The vote dropped in both seats in 2013, and the party managed only very modest swings in 2016. Greens candidate Jim Casey polled 22 per cent in Grayndler, a swing of 0.2 per cent. In Sydney, Greens candidate Sylvie Ellsmore polled 18.7 per cent, a swing of 0.5 per cent. In each case, the Greens candidate faced a strong Labor adversary who was a shadow minister from the Left of the party: Tanya Plibersek in Sydney and Anthony Albanese in Grayndler.

Outside of these typically strong inner-Sydney electorates, the Greens generally gained their biggest swings in their strongest seats in inner-Brisbane, inner-Perth and northern NSW. In Brisbane, the Greens managed swings of 4.3 per cent in Ryan, 5.1 per cent in Brisbane and 6.8 per cent in Griffith. In the west, the Greens gained swings of 5.1 per cent in Perth and 5.9 per cent in Fremantle. In northern NSW, the Greens gained a 5.1 per cent swing in Richmond to poll over 20 per cent for the first time, although antinuclear campaigner Helen Caldicott polled almost a quarter of the vote in 1990, an election in which environmental issues were prominent, delivering the seat to the Labor Party over the Nationals' federal leader Charles Blunt.

Independents

High-profile Independents ran in five electorates (see Curtin, Chapter 16, this volume for a more detailed discussion of these contests). Two of these candidates were elected, and three fell short—one falling short by a wide margin.

Independent MP Andrew Wilkie was first elected in Denison in 2010, squeaking through with 51.2 per cent of the vote after the allocation of preferences. Wilkie was one of the few candidates ever elected from third place on primary votes. A 16.8 per cent primary vote swing in 2013 solidified Wilkie's hold on Denison, and a further 6 per cent swing in 2016 has put Wilkie in an even stronger position. Wilkie achieved 44 per cent of the primary vote, over 21 percentage points ahead of his closest rival, Labor's Jane Austin. He had 67.8 per cent of the vote after the distribution of preferences.

Fellow Independent MP Cathy McGowan first won Indi at the 2013 election, defeating sitting Liberal MP Sophie Mirabella with over 31 per cent of the primary vote, and 50.25 per cent after preferences. Mirabella returned to contest the seat in 2016, along with a Nationals candidate. McGowan saw off Mirabella's challenge with more ease, increasing her two-candidate preferred vote to 54.8 per cent.

Former Independent MPs Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott returned to contest the Nationals' seats of New England and Cowper, without success. Windsor had stepped down as member for New England prior to the 2013 election, and Barnaby Joyce won the seat. Joyce, a former Queensland senator, had become Nationals leader and deputy prime minister in early 2016. Joyce comfortably defeated Windsor, polling 58.5 per cent of the vote after preferences. In comparison, the Nationals candidate had only managed 28.5 per cent in 2010, the last time the seat was contested by Windsor.

Rob Oakeshott made a last-minute announcement that he would contest the National-held seat of Cowper. Oakeshott had previously represented the State electorate of Port Macquarie from 1996 to 2008 and the federal electorate of Lyne from 2008 to 2013. The recent redistribution moved the city of Port Macquarie from Lyne into the neighbouring seat of Cowper, which had previously been centred on Coffs Harbour. Oakeshott had never contested a seat covering Coffs Harbour as well as his base

of Port Macquarie, and he started his campaign quite late. In the end, Oakeshott polled 45.4 per cent of the vote after preferences, losing to Nationals frontbencher Luke Hartsuyker.

The other high-profile Independent campaign took place in Warringah, where former *Australian Idol* host James Mathison launched a centre-left Independent challenge to former prime minister Tony Abbott. Mathison came fourth, polling 11.4 per cent of the primary vote. His preferences helped push the Greens ahead of Labor.

Two other Independent candidates polled over 10 per cent of the vote in an electorate. In the Western Australian seat of Tangney, the sitting MP Dennis Jensen, who had held the seat as a Liberal since 2004, was denied preselection for the 2016 election, and ran for the seat as an Independent. Jensen fell far short of winning, coming fourth behind the Liberal, Labor and Greens candidates with an 11.9 per cent primary vote. Independent candidate Stephen Ruff, an orthopaedic surgeon, contested North Sydney for the second time, after first running in the 2015 by-election. He had polled 18.8 per cent in the by-election, but managed only 12.8 per cent in 2016.

Other minor parties

Bob Katter was elected for a ninth term as the member for Kennedy. Katter gained a 9 per cent swing, increasing his vote to 61.1 per cent after preferences after his margin had been slashed in 2013. No other Katter's Australian Party candidates polled a significant vote.

Pauline Hanson's One Nation ran in 15 electorates, mostly in QLD, and polled over 10 per cent in nine of these seats. The PHON vote was highest in the electorate of Wright, where the PHON candidate polled 20.9 per cent. PHON also made the final two-candidate preferred count in the vast rural QLD seat of Maranoa. No PHON candidate has achieved this feat since 1998. In Maranoa, PHON's Lynette Keehn came third on the primary vote, but overtook the Labor candidate on minor party preferences, and polled 34.1 per cent of the vote after preferences.

Conclusion

The 2016 federal election saw a swing back to Labor across most of the country, but the picture varied between States. The opposition won a number of seats in NSW and TAS, but was otherwise unable to advance very far, winning no more than two additional seats anywhere else. Victoria, which has been a relatively strong State for Labor in recent years, proved tougher this election: the party lost the seat of Chisholm, and failed to take any other Victorian marginal seat from the government.

The most notable development in the 2016 House of Representatives results is the increased prominence of minor parties. In the past, minor parties were mostly a secondary force in the lower house. While their preferences could help decide seats, they were rarely in a position to threaten seriously the major party hold on a seat. This has been gradually changing over the last decade, but with a notable jump in minor party impact in 2016. Seventeen seats produced results where the top two candidates were not from Labor and the Coalition, with the Greens, Nick Xenophon Team, Katter's Australian Party and PHON all polling in the top two finishers in at least one seat, along with a number of Independents.

These trends may well be in play at the next federal election: a strengthened Labor opposition looking to make electoral gains in Victoria, and a plethora of minor parties seriously threatening Labor and Liberal seats across Australia.

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