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The Liberal Party of Australia's Campaign

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The 2016 federal election saw the Coalition returned to government with a reduced majority after a troubled term in office in which it struggled with bad poll numbers, was unable to implement key elements of its legislative agenda, and ultimately replaced first-term prime minister Tony Abbott. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the Liberal campaign in 2016, focusing particularly on the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign strategy, the state of the party organisation and the broader implications of the result for the party system. The first section of the chapter evaluates the party's campaign strategy. I argue that some of the criticisms of the campaign were overstated given the difficult context in which it took place. However, there were weaknesses, most notably the failure to put forward major policies to substantiate the focus on jobs and growth and address voters' underlying sense of economic insecurity. The second section of the chapter examines the organisational health of the Liberal Party in light of the 2016 campaign. It argues that the election demonstrated a number of problems within the Liberal Party organisation, particularly relating to factional influence over preselection processes in New South Wales (NSW), the under representation of women and a relatively weak capacity to mobilise grassroots supporters. The third section of the chapter examines the implications of the election for the Liberal Party's ideological direction and position in the party system. It argues that the result is likely to exacerbate existing tensions between

moderates and conservatives within the party, and the growing influence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON) and the Nick Xenophon Team (NXT) also point to a possible fracturing of the centre-right vote base.

Campaign strategy

In a sense, the Liberal campaign for a second term began on the night Turnbull won the leadership in September 2015. Speaking to the media after winning the party-room ballot, he said he would adopt 'a different style of leadership' from Abbott and he signalled a shift towards a more progressive liberal approach to government, expressing the optimistic view that '[t]here has never been a more exciting time to be alive', and that Australia 'has to be a nation that is agile, that is innovative, that is creative' (Turnbull 2015).

The Liberal strategy during the election campaign continued in this vein with a relatively positive message focused primarily on economic growth, jobs and innovation. This was reflected in the party's television advertising. Industry experts estimate that around only \$1.4 million of the \$6 million television advertising budget was spent on explicit attack ads (Blumer and Conifer 2016). Instead, the most prominent Liberal advertisement during the campaign promoted its 'Plan for a Strong New Economy', and this slogan received prime billing on the party's website throughout the campaign (Liberal Party of Australia (LPA) 2016a). The campaign was also heavily oriented around Turnbull himself. The two advertisements receiving most airtime during the campaign featured Turnbull speaking directly to the camera, and much of the campaign material was marked with a 'presidential crest' inscribed with 'The Turnbull Coalition Team' (Scott and Meers 2016). Despite the government's relatively positive focus, the Liberal campaign was light on policy detail. The major policies on which it focused were a company tax cut announced in the 2016 Budget, which was handed down shortly before the campaign began (Henderson 2016), and a \$2 billion crackdown on welfare fraud that was not announced until the final week of the campaign (Dziedzic 2016).

Although the central message of the campaign was positive, it had important negative elements too. Prior to the start of the official campaign period, the government sought to target Labor as a risk to the economy because of the impact its negative gearing policy would have on house prices (see Massola 2016a). During the campaign, they also used the dispute

between the Country Fire Authority and the Victorian Labor government over a new enterprise bargaining agreement to portray Labor as beholden to the union movement (Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) 2016). They attacked Labor over its policy costings, particularly after Bill Shorten revealed that Labor would run higher deficits over the first four years of the budget cycle. The Liberals also ran an attack ad in the second half of the campaign featuring a 'tradie' who claimed that Labor was going to war on the economy (LPA 2016b), and an ad attacking Labor on the issue of asylum seekers, particularly in the final weeks of the campaign. Eleven days out from the election, Malcolm Turnbull criticised Labor's promise to ban temporary protection visas, claiming that it would:

send an absolutely unequivocal signal to the people smugglers that under a Labor government, anyone who manages to get to Australia on a boat will be able to stay here permanently. It will be used aggressively as a marketing tool by people smugglers (quoted in Massola 2016b).

In some marginal seats, Liberal Party candidates also developed tailored local campaigns that were often more negative than the national campaign. Notable examples include Michelle Landry in Capricornia, who ran advertisements attacking Labor and the Greens on asylum-seeker policy and mining (Scott and Meers 2016), George Christensen in Dawson, who campaigned on preventing Syrian refugees from being settled in his electorate, and Luke Simkins, who was accused of running a smear campaign against Anne Aly, Labor's candidate for Cowan, who is Muslim (Perpitch 2016).

A number of major criticisms were made of the Liberal campaign after the disappointing election result. The first criticism related to the timing of the election. After trailing Labor in 30 consecutive Newspolls, there was an immediate increase in the government's popularity after Turnbull took the leadership from Abbott. It pulled two points ahead of Labor in the two-party preferred vote, while Turnbull opened up a 34-point lead over Bill Shorten as preferred prime minister (Keany 2015; *Sydney Morning Herald* 2015). However, Turnbull's honeymoon period proved short-lived and his popularity declined significantly over the first half of 2016 (Hudson 2016; see also Beaumont 2016). Some argued that Turnbull should have called the election shortly after the leadership change to capitalise on the government's boost in the polls (e.g. MacCallum 2016).

Nonetheless, going to an election quickly would have carried risks for the government. After all, the previous Labor government had also received an immediate boost in the polls after Julia Gillard took the leadership

from Kevin Rudd, and that proved to be short-lived. In addition, the change in leadership inevitably left the government open to a charge of instability, so the government may have wanted to have more time to create a sense of stability and to deal with the underlying policy issues that had contributed to the Abbott government's unpopularity. Comments from the 2016 Liberal Campaign Director, Tony Nutt, in a post-election speech to the National Press Club broadly support the latter view. Nutt argued that voters 'wanted to know that Malcolm Turnbull and his team had a credible plan, which they were committed to and would implement going forward' (Nutt 2016). In addition, although Nutt does not allude to this in this speech, another important consideration in the timing of the election related to campaign organisation. The previous Liberal Party Director, Brian Loughnane, was married to Abbott's high-profile chief of staff, Peta Credlin, and he stepped down within weeks of the change in leadership (Uhlmann and Glenday 2015). As well as bringing in a new director (Nutt), the party needed time to craft a new campaign strategy, particularly given the different leadership styles and policy approaches of Abbott and Turnbull. The organisation of the Labor campaign in 2013 had been disrupted by the leadership change shortly before the election, and the Coalition was no doubt keen to leave enough time before the election to properly prepare. In sum, it is impossible to know for sure whether an earlier election would have produced a better outcome for the government, but it is easy to see why, at the time, Turnbull may have wanted to leave a longer gap between the leadership change and the election.

A second criticism from within the Liberal Party was that the campaign should have been more negative in its orientation, with a greater focus on attacking Labor and Bill Shorten. For example, Abbott-supporter and dumped minister Senator Eric Abetz asked: '[W]hy did we not run on the carbon tax? Why did we not run on union corruption?' (Meers 2016). However, Nutt defended the campaign strategy against this criticism at his Press Club address, arguing that it had held up well and that adopting a more strongly negative approach would have been counterproductive:

While their [i.e. Labor's] negativity had an effect on the Liberal Party primary vote those votes didn't always flow to Labor. Instead Labor's negative campaign helped drive a high minor party an [sic] independent vote. The danger was that if the Coalition also went to that level of negativity, it would have only boosted the other vote ... The test here is that the published polls at the start of the campaign closely matched

the actual result and the polls at the end of the campaign. That is the campaign was not undermined by being positive but was instead held up against strong negative attacks from Labor, the unions, Greens and others by positive appeals while not failing to strongly contest our opponents on key issues in relevant ways when appropriate (Nutt 2016).

Thus, in Nutt's view, the primarily positive Liberal campaign had proved effective at negating Labor's attacks. A further problem for the Liberal campaign was that advancing a heavily negative campaign, particularly one focused on asylum seekers and the carbon tax, would have sat uneasily with the image Turnbull cultivated before becoming prime minister, and the direction he set for government immediately on taking office. The decline in his popularity coincided with him taking a series of decisions that seemed to contradict this positive liberal rhetoric, so there is reason to question whether a more strongly negative campaign would have been beneficial for the government.

A third criticism of the campaign came from a number of party insiders who argued that Turnbull and Nutt had failed to respond effectively to Labor's claim that the government was planning to privatise Medicare (Labor's so-called 'Mediscare' campaign, see Elliot and Manwaring, Chapter 24, this volume). Former Liberal director and trade minister Andrew Robb reportedly agrees with this criticism in the internal review he conducted into the 2016 Liberal campaign (Murphy 2017). Nutt acknowledged the impact of the Mediscare campaign, claiming that it 'affected votes and seats and contributed to the defeat of a number of MPs' (Nutt 2016). However, he sought to shift the blame onto Labor, describing Mediscare as a 'cold-blooded lie' that involved '[c]ynically and cruelly exploiting some of the most vulnerable in our society' (Nutt 2016). He also argued that the Liberals had identified Mediscare as a threat early on, that 'resources were provided for immediate rebuttal on social media and via earned media appearances', and that '[f]urther TV broadcasts and direct media messages were adjusted to include guaranteed health funding to provide a positive contrast' (Nutt 2016). One example of this was the 'Four Reasons to Support the Coalition' advertisement, which received heavy airplay in the final weeks of the campaign and emphasised that 'Medicare and education funding is guaranteed' (LPA 2016c).

In addition, although the government was relatively slow to respond to Mediscare in the early stages of the campaign, in many ways, the problem predates the official campaign period. Labor generally enjoys an advantage

over the Coalition when voters are polled on which party is better able to handle health policy, and the Coalition was particularly vulnerable on this issue after the unpopular 2014 Budget, which attempted to cut projected spending on hospitals and introduce a Medicare copayment. One important effect of Mediscare, then, was the way it pushed health policy onto the agenda, putting a policy area advantageous to Labor at the forefront of voters' minds. This complicated the response to Mediscare because focusing too much attention on it risked distracting from the issues that the government wanted to dominate the campaign. Once again, this is in line with Nutt's own view:

Research found that the Medicare campaign also helped to shift focus of the campaign onto health and away from the economy. To provide similar weight to rebuttal of this attack would not have neutralised it. It would actually have raised it further as the campaign issue and would have taken valuable resources and focus away from the Coalition's positive appeals. The best way to practically counter it was to shift focus [sic] of the campaign back to the economy and jobs (Nutt 2016).

Nonetheless, although Nutt may be right that focusing on other issues such as jobs and growth was the best way of combating Mediscare, ultimately it is doubtful whether this central feature of the government's campaign was adequately prosecuted. As mentioned above, the government put forward relatively few major policy announcements during the election. This meant there was little policy detail to give substance to the rhetoric about 'jobs and innovation' and 'jobs and growth', and it is likely that more was needed to address the sense of economic insecurity felt by voters in marginal electorates, especially in western Sydney where the Coalition lost a number of seats (Wade 2016).

In sum, the Liberal campaign, which came at the end of a difficult first term in office, was oriented around a relatively positive message about jobs and innovation. Although there was significant internal criticism of the campaign for not being negative enough or for not effectively dealing with the challenge of Labor's 'Mediscare' campaign, there are reasons to treat these criticisms with a degree of caution. A negative campaign approach would have been in conflict with Turnbull's attempt to promote a more positive image, while 'Mediscare' was difficult to combat given that health policy had been such a negative issue for the government since 2014. It is also important to bear in mind that the campaign was trying to convince voters to re-elect a government that had been unpopular for most of its first term in office, and whose leader had been replaced after little more

than two years as prime minister. In this context, simply getting re-elected was a challenge in itself. In the end, the major problem with the campaign may have been the same problem that plagued the government during its first term—the party did not come up with a concrete set of policies to give substance to its rhetoric around jobs and growth and help address voters' sense of economic insecurity.

Party organisation

The 2016 election also highlighted a number of significant organisational problems in the Liberal Party. Perhaps the most evident was the influence of factional powerbrokers over preselection contests, particularly in the NSW division. This problem is well established in the literature on party organisation in Australia (see Gauja 2015) and it has also been highlighted in internal reviews of the Liberal Party's national organisation and the NSW Division (see Staley 2008: 23; Reith 2011: 23). The most recent of these reviews—conducted by former prime minister John Howard in the wake of the 2013 federal election—recommended the use of plebiscites to democratise the preselection process, reduce the influence of factions and make members feel more involved in the party. However, the reforms that were eventually adopted fell well short of these recommendations. The NSW Council instead adopted a compromise proposal to trial plebiscites for preselections in six State and federal seats between 2016 and 2019 (Hurst 2016). This compromise proposal was condemned by critics within the party who argued it did not go far enough and State Council delegates audibly laughed when Turnbull claimed that the Liberal Party was 'not run by factions', or 'by big business or by deals in backrooms' (Murray 2015).

Although the failure to act in response to party reviews is not new or unique to the Liberals, there were a number of very contentious preselection contests in the lead-up to the 2016 election that attracted significant media attention and underlined the need for reform in NSW. One notable example was the conflict over preselection for the NSW Senate ticket. In March 2016, centre-right faction candidate Hollie Hughes won the number one position on the ticket ahead of Minister for International Development and member of the conservative-right faction Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, who was moved down to the second position, while high-profile candidate Jim Molan was relegated to third spot.

Particular criticism was directed at the role of Michael Photios and Nick Campbell, factional powerbrokers within the Liberal Party and lobbyists, who were allowed to exercise proxy votes and reportedly ‘worked the room’ to ensure Hughes was placed ahead of Fierravanti-Wells and Molan (Crowe 2016).¹

There were also a number of other rancorous preselection contests in NSW. In the seat of Mackellar, veteran Liberal MP Bronwyn Bishop, who had been forced to resign as Speaker of the House after a scandal over her travel expenses, had wanted to recontest the seat, but ultimately lost the preselection contest to Joseph Falinski (Dole 2016). In the lead-up to the preselection vote, there was again public criticism of the process from Liberal Party members angry at their lack of voting power and the dominance of factions. For example, party member and conservative legal academic David Flint complained to the ABC that ‘Menziez would be horrified if he knew that potential members of Parliament were not being chosen on merit, but were being chosen because of their allegiance to a factional powerbroker’ (Duffy and Kleinig 2016). In Hughes, MP Craig Kelly was also under threat from local councillor Kent Johns. Although Johns ultimately decided not to run, reportedly due to intervention from Turnbull (Trembath 2016), the dispute was played out in the media, with talkback radio host Alan Jones at one point praising Kelly on air and warning Johns that ‘if you put your head up, there’ll be a hell of a story that’ll be told about you’ (Jones, quoted in Nicholls and Robertson 2016).

While it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much electoral damage these disputes did to the party, it is clearly not the kind of publicity it was looking for in the lead-up to the election. It also has further consequences in that it undermines the force of the longstanding Liberal criticism of Labor for being controlled by factional powerbrokers and wracked with internal instability. The experience of 2016 therefore suggests that reform to preselection processes may have a pragmatic electoral rationale, as well as a democratic one.

1 Although Hughes initially offered to swap positions with Fierravanti-Wells, the situation was complicated by Turnbull’s decision to call a double dissolution, which would see a full Senate rather than a half-Senate election, and a deal with the Nationals on the joint Senate ticket, which saw Hughes and Fierravanti-Wells fighting over the fourth and difficult-to-win sixth positions on the ticket, rather than first and second (Robertson 2016). The NSW State executive ultimately stepped in to give the fourth position to Senator Fierravanti-Wells, reportedly after the intervention of Turnbull (Tarasov 2016).

A further problem highlighted by the election is the under representation of women among Liberal MPs. The 2016 election produced the worst outcome in 25 years with the number of female Liberal MPs in parliament reduced to 18 out of 84 (Norman 2016). This is not surprising given that women generally missed out on preselection for the safe Liberal seats that became available in 2016. Six experienced Liberal MPs in safe seats—Philip Ruddock, Bishop, Ian Macfarlane, Sharman Stone, Bruce Billson and Robb—retired at the 2016 election and, in all six cases, a male candidate was preselected by the Liberals to replace them. Such a high degree of under-representation is normally a good indication that there are underlying structural barriers to the preselection of women (see Phillips 2004). It also came within months of a 2015 report presented to the Federal Executive that called for 50 per cent of Liberal MPs to be women by 2025 (Tomazin 2015). The fact the party went backwards in 2016 shows how far it has to go to meet this target. Perhaps recognising this, the Federal Executive signed off on a ‘gender diversity reform program’ in the wake of the election. Although a number of women within the party welcomed this development, it remains unclear whether it will be enough to meet the target. The extent of the problem in 2016 suggests that more far-reaching reforms such as the introduction of quotas for preselected candidates may be needed, as Stone has proposed (Greene 2014).

A further problem highlighted by the 2016 election campaign is the Liberal Party’s weak capacity to engage in effective grassroots campaigning. This kind of concern has deep roots in the history of the non-Labor side of politics, and fed into the formation of the Liberal Party itself. Party founder Robert Menzies felt that Labor’s mass party structure gave it an advantage when it came to election campaigning because it could mobilise its membership base and affiliated unions to provide the ‘boots on the ground’ needed to engage in the locally oriented activities that were characteristic of campaigning during the pre-television era (Brett 2003). The structure of the Liberal Party was thus designed to mimic some features of Labor’s mass party structure, including a large rank-and-file membership base with an ongoing involvement in the party’s activities. However, in recent decades, party membership has declined in both major parties to the point that they now have ‘a mass party model of organisation without the “mass” of members required to give it vitality and legitimacy’ (Errington 2015: 17).

Although the need for a strong party membership base declined somewhat with the emergence of television, which became the focal point for modern campaigning, the 2016 campaign illustrated that having a strong ‘ground game’ has renewed importance in a digital age. The emergence of digital media has enabled parties to gather more sophisticated data on voters using social media analytics. Key voting groups can then be targeted more accurately through online advertising and direct contact with party volunteers. Coordinating and engaging in this kind of direct contact requires an extensive field operation with party volunteers to run the ‘ground game’ and contact voters directly through phone calls and door knocking. At the 2016 election, Labor had around 15,000 volunteers who reportedly had 1.6 million ‘contacts’ with voters during the campaign (Murphy 2016; see also Manwaring, Chapter 11, this volume). In addition, the union movement ran a separate and extensive field operation, as did *GetUp!* (see Halpin and Fraussen, Chapter 17, this volume; Vromen, Chapter 18, this volume). Comparable figures are not available for the Liberal Party, but reports suggest that it was unable to match these numbers and that ‘[c]onservatives are ... trailing badly ... when it comes to large-scale, rapid, mobile grassroots campaigning, which, of course, can be the difference between winning and losing’ (Murphy 2016). Robb’s review of the 2016 Liberal campaign reportedly echoed these concerns (Murphy 2017), while Nutt (2016) has also argued that the Liberals are at an organisational disadvantage:

In terms of field campaigns, the Labor Party and the unions and groups like *GetUp!* have enormous resources at their disposal. They are able to build resources, aggregate resources, have a full-time campaign resources staff and personnel, have systems, have equipment to impact the vote during campaigns and prior to campaigns. So they are professionalising themselves all the time and the Liberal Party needs also to professionalise itself further.

Nutt also called for Australian business to build its capacity to campaign on policy issues both during and outside the official election period. Considering the capacity of the mining industry and pubs and clubs to organise effectively against a number of major policies put forward by the Gillard Labor government (see Bell and Hindmoor 2014; Panichi 2014), Nutt may be underestimating the existing campaigning power of business. Nonetheless, he is right that there are currently no right-wing organisations in Australia that have the capacity to organise the sort of grassroots campaigns that the union movement and *GetUp!* have run

in recent years. In light of this, it would not be surprising if Australian conservatives attempt to strengthen their capacity to engage in grassroots campaigning over the next few years.

Overall, the 2016 election highlighted some significant organisational problems for the Liberal Party. Although organisational reforms are available that could help the party effectively address the problem of factional control and the under-representation of women, these reforms are likely to be opposed by factional powerbrokers whose influence would be weakened. Those pushing for reform are only likely to overcome this internal resistance when these organisational problems become clear barriers to electoral success (see, more generally, Barry 2015). Given that the Turnbull government was returned to office—albeit with a reduced majority—it seems unlikely that the problems will be viewed as urgent enough to warrant the major reforms required to properly address them. The exception here might be the call for the Liberal Party and other conservative organisations to build a stronger capacity for grassroots campaigning as this would not challenge the power of factional powerbrokers, at least in the short term. This would also be in keeping with the longer-term trend whereby successful campaign innovations by one of the major parties are quickly copied by the other (see Mills 2014: 265).

Leadership, ideology and the party system

Although he did not face any immediate challenge to his leadership in the aftermath of the election, Turnbull's position was weakened by the closeness of the result. In the days following the election, a number of MPs were openly critical of the Liberal campaign, with WA Senator David Johnston describing it as 'shocking' and stating that 'we are light years away from relating to people at the moment' (quoted in Burrell 2016). Others (anonymously) criticised Turnbull more directly, stating that he had 'no authority' (quoted in Coorey 2016). Matters have been further complicated by former prime minister Abbott's continuing presence in the party room. Although the chances of Abbott making a comeback seem remote, his comments to the media since the election have been an ongoing source of distraction for the government (e.g. Anderson 2017).

The election result also left the government in a difficult parliamentary position. The slim nature of the government's lower house majority means that Turnbull is vulnerable to threats from Liberal MPs to cross the floor, or simply abstain from voting for contentious pieces of legislation. The Nationals may also decide to flex their muscles on policy questions, particularly given that they have increased their parliamentary representation—albeit by one seat. In the aftermath of the election, they succeeded in using their improved position to secure an extra position in Cabinet (Kelly 2016), and this is just one indication of the complexities posed for Coalition politics.

Although the government's aim in calling a double dissolution was to clear out the micro parties from the Senate, the composition of the new chamber has also created challenges for the government. With only 30 Coalition Senators elected, it needs to win the support of an additional nine Senators to get its legislation through. On matters where they do not have the support of the opposition, this means the government must negotiate with the 20 crossbenchers. This includes two crossbenchers—David Leyonhjelm and Jacqui Lambie—who were targets of the Senate electoral reforms that the government pushed through prior to the double dissolution, and nine Greens Senators who are ideologically opposed to key aspects of the government's legislative agenda. The composition of the Senate has not prevented the government passing some key policies since the election, such as the industrial relations changes that were the formal trigger for the double dissolution, or company tax cuts (Coorey 2017). However, it has also run into difficulties with other major pieces of legislation, such as changes to citizenship laws (Gothe-Snape 2017) and higher education funding (Karp 2017).

The Liberals may also be confronting a more fundamental challenge in the next few years because the election results point to a possible fragmentation of the right-wing vote in Australia. The rise of PHON in the late 1990s created major electoral problems for the Liberal Party, particularly in Queensland, and it contributed to the near defeat of the Howard government at the 1998 election. The implosion of the party, combined with the Howard government's shift to the right on refugee policy and emphasis on security in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, helped the Coalition win back these voters. Although PHON's support in 2016 was well short of its peak in the late 1990s, it received over 9 per cent of the first preference Senate vote in Queensland and, across the country, four Senators, including Hanson herself, were elected in

2016. With rising support for anti-Muslim/anti-immigration parties in Europe and the US, there must be a real risk that PHON's support will grow, eating into the Coalition's conservative base. This is a further reason why Turnbull is likely to find it difficult to move the Liberals in a less conservative ideological direction.

The success of the NXT in South Australia (SA) represents a different kind of threat to the Liberals. Xenophon's blend of populist centrism was appealing enough to win just over 21 per cent of the lower house first preference vote in SA, to pick up the Liberal seat of Mayo, and to go close to winning Grey. This suggests that Xenophon is likely to remain a lower house threat to the Liberals in SA, and that it needs to be wary of taking moderate voters for granted.

In all, the 2016 federal election has drawn attention to the ideological divisions confronting the Liberal Party. If it moves in an overly conservative direction on social issues, it risks alienating moderate supporters in States such as SA, where the NXT exists to sweep up their votes, and elements of its base in Victoria and NSW. However, if it adopts a more moderate position, it risks further alienating conservative voters who are being lured by PHON and, to a lesser extent, former Liberal senator Cory Bernardi's new Australian Conservatives party. It is too soon to reach any definitive judgements, but it seems possible that the increasing polarisation of the electorate on social issues is re-opening cracks in the party system, and the Liberals may soon be facing the kind of difficult ideological balancing act that Labor has dealt with since the rise of the Greens.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the Liberal Party's 2016 election campaign, examining its strengths and weaknesses, drawing broader conclusions about the organisational health of the party, and examining the implications of the election for Turnbull's leadership and the party's ideological direction. I argued that some of the criticisms of the Liberal campaign in 2016 were overstated given the difficult context in which the campaign took place. However, there were major weaknesses, most notably the failure to put forward major policies to substantiate the focus on jobs and growth and address voters' underlying sense of economic insecurity. I also argued that the 2016 campaign illustrated some significant problems with the organisational health of the Liberal Party, particularly with regard to

factional control of preselections, the under-representation of women, and a weak capacity to engage in grassroots campaigning. The election result also left the government in a difficult parliamentary position and weakened Turnbull's leadership. Lastly, I argued that the resurgence of PHON and the emergence of NXT in SA points to a possible fracturing of the centre-right vote, leading to the possibility that the 2016 election will come to be viewed as a turning point in the development of the Australian party system.

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