Campaigns and Coalitions:

The Australian 2013 Election

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Abstract

This article provides an analysis of the 2013 Australian federal election－examining the campaign and its consequences, which continue to highlight the distinctive nature of majoritarian government in Australia. We consider two main questions: how competitive was the election campaign, and has the changing composition of parliament created a new political stability? Situating the Coalition's victory in the context of the previous minority government (2010–2013), we examine the main campaign issues and events, media polling and election results, the new parliamentary parties elected, the first Abbott ministry and the Liberal-National dynamic, and the emerging legislative dynamics of the new Australian Senate.

Theories of stable government suggest (Lijphart 2001) liberal democracy and majoritarianism have traditionally been strong political and rhetorical traditions in Australia, favouring stable majority governments. Theories of representative government imply that competitive elections are necessary for the performance of democracy (Norris 2014). However, the everyday realities of governing have seen a stronger role played by the Senate in determining policy agendas, as well as the emergence and consolidation of minor parties, such as The Australian Greens. While Australia is still thought of as a two party system, like the USA, it is now moving closer to a UK-style three party system, with the additional revolving door of micro parties. The role of the Senate in Australia as a legislative House of Review is much stronger than in the similar Westminster countries, UK and Canada. It uses proportional representation and state-based representation to elect members, rather than the single electorate representation used in the House of Representatives. This is important to understand because as of election 2013 we have seen new 'crossbenchers' in the Senate emerge as a potent but unpredictable political force.

After three years of minority ALP government (2010–2013), the 2013 election result provided a majority government for the Liberal/National parties. In this article we analyse the 2013 federal election campaign and its consequences, focusing on two main questions: first, whether the election campaign was based on a genuine contest, and second, whether the change in government has led

to a new political stability. We examine these issues by briefly situating the election in the context of the Gillard minority government 2010–2013, analysing the main campaign issues and events, as well as media polling and election results. We explain the changing composition of the Australian parliament in light of the election results, analyse the new parliamentary parties elected, the first Abbott ministry and the emerging legislative dynamics of the new Australian Senate.

The Gillard Minority Government 2010–2013

The previous federal election (held on 21 August, 2010) produced a result by which neither the ALP or the Liberal National Coalition, with 72 seats each in the House of Representatives, could govern outright. Although hung parliaments are common in the Australian state parliaments (see for example, Griffith 2010; Horne 2010), as the first federal hung parliament since 1940, this presented an unusual situation that was to influence the dynamics of parliamentary and electoral politics for the next three years. As Australian parliaments are typically characterised by high rates of party discipline with all party parliamentarians almost always voting as one bloc (Kam 2009: 8), gaining legislative majorities profoundly influences the passage of legislation within the parliament.

Six crossbenchers held the balance of power in the House of Representatives. Four of these parliamentarians – Greens' member Adam Bandt and Independents Andrew Wilkie, Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott – declared their support for Labor on confidence and supply. Two other crossbenchers – Independent Bob Katter and Tony Crook (West Australian National Party) – declared their support for the Coalition on confidence and supply. With the support of the former four crossbenchers, Gillard was able to form a minority government, but as this support extended only to confidence and supply, negotiation with each of these parliamentarians was necessary to secure the passage of legislation. The Gillard government signed a formal agreement with the Greens to secure cooperation, which enabled Greens' Leader Bob Brown and Adam Bandt to meet with Gillard on a regular basis to work on the legislative agenda (Gillard et al. 2010).

From 2010 to 2013, negotiation and consensus decision-making were extremely important in the Australian parliament. In this scenario, a closer – albeit sometimes troubled – relationship emerged between the ALP and the Greens. This climate of decision-making led to what might be described as parliamentary successes for the Gillard government, but also brought with it several policy failures. Obtaining rare support from the Liberal/National opposition, the Gillard government was able to legislate for a National Disability Insurance Scheme in 2013. The minority government also oversaw the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) – a scheme to ensure high speed Internet access throughout Australia.[1] With the support of the Australian Greens, the Gillard Labor

government was able to legislate to introduce a fixed price on carbon pollution (effective from 1 July 2012) as a first step in moving towards an emissions trading scheme to address climate change. For some, however, this was seen as a broken election promise — Gillard had previously stated that no tax would be imposed on carbon. The Gillard minority government legislated for a tax on mining companies — the Minerals Resource Rent Tax. Both these policies attracted criticism from Industry and the opposition.[2]

Australia's policy towards refugees and asylum seekers was problematic for the Gillard government (see, for example, Grewcock 2010). The governments policy plan 'The Malaysia solution', which was to see asylum seekers sent to Malaysia in return for the resettlement of processed refugees, was declared invalid by the High Court.[3] The Government was subsequently unable to secure the support of the Greens and the Opposition in making legislative amendments that would allow this policy to be re-instated.

Maintaining the support of the Greens and the Independents proved difficult. Greens' leader Bob Brown ended his weekly meetings with the Prime Minister in January 2012 in a dispute over Tasmanian forestry. At this time Independent Andrew Wilkie also withdrew his support for the Gillard government, citing broken promises over reforms to the regulation of gambling. By February 2013, the Greens had officially ended the formal alliance with Labor: the new Greens Leader Christine Milne argued that the government was not doing enough to tax the resource and minerals industry and that the major parties had become 'indentured servants' of billionaire mining magnates (Kenny 2013).

The climate of hostility and tension that was present in the parliament during Gillard's leadership is perhaps best exemplified by the speech Julia Gillard delivered in the House of Representatives in October 2012. In what is known as the 'Misogyny Speech', Gillard accused Tony Abbott of sexism and misogyny and highlighted the everyday prejudice that women in public office face (see, for example, Wright and Holland 2014; Summers 2013). The speech attracted worldwide attention, particularly in social media, and received strong positive commentary from overseas news sources, although reaction to the speech in Australia was more mixed.

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1） Following the election, the Coalition has commissioned a strategic review of the NBN scheme and established a Senate Select Committee on the National Broadband Network, which will issue its final report before the last sitting day of the 44th Parliament.

2） As discussed below, both of these policies have been recently repealed by the government.

3） *Plaintiff M 70/2011 and Plaintiff M 106/2011 v Minister for Immigration and Citizenship* (2011) 244 CLR 144.

Gillard's Prime Ministership was consistently destabilized from within the ALP by Kevin Rudd's supporters who remained resentful of her leadership. While extensive detailing of the leadership tussles between the two are beyond the scope of this analysis, they did colour the chances of both the ALP government achieving stability and also its prospective fortunes at the 2013 election. There were three leadership spills during Gillard's tenure: a February 2012 leader ballot which Gillard won overwhelmingly 71: Rudd 31; and after this time Rudd relinquished his post as Foreign Affairs Minister and returned to the back bench. In January 2013 Gillard took the very unusual step of setting an election date for September of that year. Most Prime Ministers only provide 6−8 weeks' notice of an election. After consistent negative opinion polling (Holmes 2014) and continual infighting Gillard tried to force Rudd's hand for the leadership again in March 2013, but he refused to stand. Major ministerial reshuffles in the Government continued throughout mid-2013, including demotions of those actively and publicly promoting the return of Rudd. In late June an actual leadership spill did happen and Gillard lost with 45 caucus votes to Rudd's 57. Gillard announced that she would leave parliament at the 2013 election; furthermore six other senior ministers also stepped down from the cabinet as they were unable to work with Kevin Rudd. At the time of Gillard's defeat Newspoll released two party preferred polling with the LNP on 57% to ALP 43% (a significant decline from 50% at 2010 election); and Abbott leading Gillard as preferred PM 45% to 33% (Shanahan 2013).

On August 4 Rudd announced that the election would be held on September 7, leading to a five week election campaign.

Campaign Issues

There were five main issues focused on by both major parties during the campaign: the economy, asylum seekers, education, NBN and leadership. From early on Tony Abbott and shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey started to focus on problems and a downturn in the economy (Evans and Mitchell 2013). Traditionally in Australian politics economic matters favour the Coalition, as long-term polling has shown that voters consider the Liberal party, in particular, to be the safer pair of hands. While the carbon tax was an environmental climate change measure it was reframed successfully by the Coalition to be an economic measure and getting rid of the carbon tax − as sound economic policy − became a feature of their campaign. The ALP's traditional perceived advantage has been in education, health and the environment (Bean and McAllister 2014). These perceptions of policy issue management are relatively static over time and are called upon by either party to buttress their campaigns. However this particular campaign focused on just two issues: the economy and leadership, predominantly the instability of the ALP government.

Vote Compass was one of the more interesting innovations of the 2013 campaign. An interactive online electoral literacy application, users responded to a series of public policy propositions, and were then presented with an analysis of how their views compared with the positions of each of the political parties in a given election campaign. Vote Compass was motivated by a desire to stimulate voter engagement in the election campaign, spread awareness of the public policy positions adopted by parties, increase accountability of politicians to their platforms, and prompt government to be more responsive to public opinion. Originating in Canada, it was used for the first time in the 2013 Australian election, and hosted and heavily promoted by the ABC. Vote Compass provided users with a personalized, immediate, and easy-to-understand assessment outlining how their individual opinions on policy issues situated them within a two-dimensional ideological space and their closeness to political parties. By the end of the campaign a significant 1.4 million Australians had completed the Vote Compass online survey.

The ABC released the first batch of data from Vote Compass, based on over 500,000 responses in its first week of operation, to show that:

- the economy was by far the most important election issue for Australian voters
- the issue of asylum seekers was a clear but distant second, and ahead of health, climate change and education (Vote Compass 8/8/13).

There were notable partisan differences, however, in identification of key issues of concern to voters. Both Liberal and National party partisans were nearly three times more likely than ALP partisans to name the economy as their most important issue, and ten times more likely than Greens identifiers. The economy was also the top ranked issue for ALP identifiers, but only by 17% of those polled (as opposed to 50% of Liberal identifiers); and it was closely followed by health, asylum seekers, education and broadband. Green identifiers were most concerned about climate change, asylum seekers and education (Vote Compass 8/8/13).

Leadership is an increasingly complex variable in election campaigns. It has been argued that personalization processes led by broadcast and online media have meant leaders now carry even more weight in election campaigns than ever before. Thus leaders and their electoral likeability can potentially mean more for winning a campaign than the policy programs different parties are offering (see McAllister 2007). In the 2013 election leadership was indeed a complex proposition. The ALP had reverted to Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister and leader just over two months before, so the campaign needed to differentiate his leadership from that of Julia Gillard. Tony Abbott had been leader for a longer period and had only narrowly lost the Prime Ministership after the 2010

election when his negotiations for a minority government with the Independents faltered. Vote Compass results released early in the election campaign demonstrated that the Australian electorate did not strongly favour one leader over the other, and in fact they seemed to hold both in high disdain. On a scale of 0 to 10 both leaders scored 3.5 for trust, and on competence Rudd was rated 4.2, marginally higher than Abbott on 3.9. Partisan differences in these perceptions was predictable, but it was also found that young people (aged 18–34) routinely favoured Rudd over Abbott on both factors, and older people (over 55) trusted Abbott more than Rudd. No other demographic factors used in the poll showed differences in perception of the leaders, with the exception of women trusting Christine Milne, leader of the Australian Greens, much more than either Rudd or Abbott, suggesting there was a residual concern from women about the replacement of Gillard by Rudd. One other factor that ought to have worked in Rudd's favour in a compulsory voting context was that he was consistently more highly rated over Abbott by those with little or no interest in politics (Vote Compass 12/8/13). While this factor did not win the campaign for Rudd by any means it does suggest that his attempt to run a grassroots, shopping centre visiting, campaign that included taking 'selfie' photos with the general public and young people, to some extent worked in his favour to show he was a 'man of the people', despite the derision by some of the political elite and the media (see Tadros 2013).

Main Campaign Events

The campaign itself was uninspiring and the media tended to focus on campaign events and looked for problems: such as mistakes by new candidates, wooden leaders trying to communicate in grassroots campaigns, and the uninspiring formal leader debates. It was rarer that substantive policies were focused on or leaders were pushed to announce their economic costings of new policies, instead it was a rhetorical and often artificial debate about who was better able to handle the economy. Part of this artificial debate even ended up with the Coalition refusing to trust figures released by Treasury and opting to do their own costings with the Parliamentary Budget Office. These figures weren't released until Week 4 of campaign (see Martin 2013). The handling of the economy theme continued into the first debate between Prime Minister and Opposition Leader at the National Press Club on 11 August. Issues raised by the journalists in attendance included: aged care, climate change, asylum seekers, and same sex marriage was also discussed. All were issues that the leaders had (to a degree) differing positions on. Despite being a significant part of federal spending, health was not really on the agenda in any debates. Vote Compass (12/8/13) found that neither leader won this debate: of those who watched, 40% said Abbott won, 35% said Rudd and 25% were undecided. The demographics and social divisions mentioned above that shaped leadership perceptions also broadly shaped perception of who won the debate: partisan allegiances

divided predictably; older people were more likely to say Abbott won, and the younger said Rudd; voters in Queensland, South Australia, Northern Territory and WA also favoured Abbott much more; and those with a good deal of interest in politics also largely favoured Abbott over Rudd in the debate.

A second leaders' debate in the style of a community forum was held in Brisbane on 21 August, and a third on 28 August at Rooty Hill in Sydney's western suburbs which was like a town hall debate with 100 undecided voters asking questions on economic management, Labor's leadership, education funding, paid parental leave, dental care, aged care, election promises, disability care, underemployment, environmental safeguards, foreign ownership of agricultural land, trade and superannuation (Holmes 2014). While in 2013 the debates did not change the overall result of the election, and they rarely change the vote of partisan actors, only those who are undecided (Senior 2008); they are an important innovation in of themselves, with few other countries experimenting with the format from election to election as Australia has, such as the use of televised Town Hall meetings with undecided voters that were used in 2010 and 2013 (Younane Brookes 2011).

There were occasional exceptions to a largely centrally managed and predictable election campaign. One notable gaffe of the campaign occurred when, in a Channel Ten television interview, the Liberal candidate for the NSW swing seat of Greenway, Jaymes Diaz, could not articulate any of the six points by which the Coalition had declared it would 'stop the boats' of asylum seekers seeking refuge in Australia. The video of the embarrassing interview quickly went viral (see McKenny 2013), and the ALP thus retained this marginal seat.

Other features of the campaign included the emergence of new parties and candidates, in particular mining millionaire Clive Palmer. The Palmer United Party announced major policies in week 4 of the campaign that included:

- massive increases to health and education spending, and plans to raise pensions
- support for free trade, abolishing the fringe benefits tax, repealing and refunding the carbon tax and merging the country's three biggest car-makers
- a review of refugee policy (including closing detention centres)
- plans to 'turbocharge' the national economy (see Hurst 2013).

The Palmer United Party subsequently emerged as a new force in Australian politics, with three new senators, as is detailed below. Other new parties to emerge during the 2013 election campaign include the Wikileaks party with Julian Assange standing unsuccessfully for the Senate in Victoria;

and Bob Katter's Australia Party, and while Katter retained his own seat of Kennedy in Far North Queensland, they did not win any other new seats in the Senate or House of Representatives.

Media and Campaign Polling

Throughout the election campaign it was clear that a strongly partisan media was playing an active political role trying to influence the election outcome. News Limited newspapers, such as the Daily Telegraph in Sydney, Herald Sun in Melbourne and Courier-Mail in Brisbane, frequently ran front pages urging the electorate to vote for Tony Abbott and the Coalition. These papers have a long history of advocating that citizens vote for their chosen party during election campaigns, and in fact have backed different parties over time (Tiffen 2014). However, in light of scandals emerging in the UK of the active political role of the media it did seem especially overt this time. Most of the headlines used in News Limited's campaign were an attack on Kevin Rudd and included:

- On day 1 of the campaign *the Daily Telegraph* had: 'Now you finally have the chance to kick this mob out' (August 5, 2013)
- the *Courier-Mail* after the first debate with a picture of Rudd: 'Does this guy ever shut up' ‒ a quote attributed to Tony Abbott (August 12)
- And other front pages that compared Rudd, and his Ministers, to the hapless Nazis in the 1960 s television show Hogan's Heroes, to a bank robber, and a Maoist dictator
- Most other headlines mainly questioned his economic credentials such as the *Daily Telegraph's* 'The price of Labor', the *Herald Sun* stating 'It's a Ruddy mess' and the *Courier-Mail* with 'Doesn't Add up'.

Opinion poll results did not change a great deal during the election campaign with all predicting a win by the Coalition, most hovered around Labor on 46% to the Coalition's 54% for the two party preferred figure (Muller 2013). From early in the campaign betting markets gave the ALP almost no chance of winning, by the late stages of the campaign CentreBet had the ALP on $12 to win to the Coalition $1.06, with a probability of 92% that they would win (Jackman 2013). Thus the potential for an ALP win did not change substantively with reintroduction of Rudd over Gillard, but some argue that the loss was not as great to ALP held seats, such as in Western Sydney, as it may have been (Packham and Shanahan 2013).

Election Results

As the polling above shows, the Coalition's win was more or less a foregone conclusion, they

achieved a commanding win in 90 of the House of Representatives seats, up from the 72 they had in the 2010–2013 parliamentary term. However, the results in the Senate were more surprising and they will have an effect on the new government's capacity to create real policy change. Nearly 13 million votes were cast, and the final two party preferred figures were: 46.5% ALP to 53.5% for the Coalition. The overall swing was −3.6% from the ALP Government. Table 1 below shows how the parties performed at the election in both the House of Representatives and in the half–Senate election. There is evidence in these results that Coalition voters were those most likely to use a split ticket vote. That is, 45% voted for the Coalition in the lower house, but were less likely to also do so in the Senate, as only 38% did.

Table 1   Party results in the Australian 2013 election

	HoR Seats (n = 150)	% of total vote	Senate Seats (n = 40)	% of total vote
ALP	55	33%	12	30%
Liberal*	81	41%	12	38%#
National	9	4%	5	n/a
Greens	1	9%	4	9%
Palmer United Party	1	6%	3	5%
Katter Australia Party	1	1%	0	1%
Independents	2	1%	0	n/a
Family First	0	1%	1	1%
Others**	0	4%	3	7%

Source: adapted from Australian Electoral Commission Election 2013 Results.
*includes Liberal–National Party in Queensland and Country Liberals in NT
**Others includes Nick Xenophon Group, Australian Motoring Enthusiasts Party, Liberal Democrat Party
#includes shared lists of both Coalition parties

There were differences between states in the two party preferred figures: the largest majority for the Coalition was in Western Australia with 58%, and Queensland on 57%. The ALP maintained their majority in Victoria, Tasmania, and the ACT, however there are only 300,000 voters in each of the last two regions. Despite the ALP maintaining a majority vote for the ALP, there was still a swing of −9%. The smallest swing against the federal government was −1% in the Northern Territory.

The Senate vote was widely dispersed in this election with 32% of the vote not going to the major parties. The largest minor party, The Greens, found their vote declined from a high in 2010 of 13% to 9%. Instead other micro parties and the new Palmer United Party were the success story of the 2013 election. PUP won three Senate spots in Tasmania, Queensland, and Western Australia; Nick Xenophon kept his spot in South Australia (the only minor party candidate to win a full Senate quota); and new Senators were elected for Family First in South Australia; the Liberal Democrats

in NSW; and the Australian Motoring Enthusiasts in Victoria. As often occurs in upper house elections the role of complex preference exchanges between parties was crucial to winning Senate positions. Some won with only about 2% of the primary vote, others even less, for example Ricky Muir from the Motoring Enthusiasts Party became a Senator even though he only won 0.5% of the vote in Victoria. This occurs in Australia as a result of a system with no minimum threshold for election and ticket voting－only 5% of Australian voters allocate their own preferences through below the line votes. This election outcome prompted an inquiry, and is the subject of potential reform after the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters released a report in early 2014.

The call for Senate voting reform was exacerbated by the historic revote for the Senate in Western Australia. The initial count of the Senate vote in Western Australia gave the last two Senate seats to Palmer United Party (PUP) candidate Zhenya Dio Wang and the ALP candidate, sitting Senator Louise Pratt. However, the closeness of the result－14 votes separated two minor parties at an important point in the count－was challenged by defeated candidates sitting Senator Scott Ludlam (Australian Greens) and Wayne Dropulich (Australian Sports Party). On 2 October, the Australian Electoral Commission deferred the formal announcement of the six successful candidates. On 10 October, Ed Killesteyn, the AEC Commissioner, ordered a recount of Western Australian Senate ballot papers where electors had marked their ballot above-the-line; this was the largest recount (nearly 1.3 million ballot papers) since the AEC was established in 1984 but there were about 1400 ballots missing. This was a scandal in Australian electoral history. The AEC Commissioner resigned in the fallout, and a new WA Senate election was eventually called for April 5, 2014, still providing enough time for the Western Australian Senators to take up their seats in July 2014. The new Senate election led to the 5th and 6th Senate spots being won by the Greens and by PUP.

The Composition of the 44th Parliament of Australia

The results of the 2013 election brought significant changes to the composition of the parliament and executive government. As outlined at the beginning of this article, we suggest that the outcome of the 2013 general election can only really be understood in the context of the Gillard minority government that preceded it－in particular, the parliamentary alliances that were formed and the climate of instability and adversarial politics that characterised the House of Representatives during this period. The 2013 election results altered this dynamic by shifting the main arena of legislative contestation from the House of Representatives to the Senate, where a number of smaller, newly elected political parties now hold the balance of power. Despite the Coalition's commanding majority in the lower house, the government's bold legislative agenda－exemplified by a budget that was described as a 'world of pain' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 13 May 2014, p.1)－has

highlighted the potential for internal ructions within the Liberal and National parties and the fragility of their legislative partnerships, which have relied upon trading policy preferences and legislative concessions rather than forging ideological alliances.

The 2013 federal election results held important consequences for the Australian parliament in three key respects: they provided a significant intake of new parliamentarians, created a clear legislative majority for the government in the House of Representatives, but also saw the election of several new political parties to the Senate – preventing the new government from securing an outright majority in that House.

Due to the large number of retirements of sitting parliamentarians (25 – the largest ever at one election) and the defeat of 17 sitting MPs in the House of Representatives, the 44th Parliament of Australia saw the largest total turnover of parliamentarians since the 2007 federal election (Lumb 2013) when the ALP and Kevin Rudd were swept to power. Overall, 37 new members entered the House of Representatives (25%) and 14 new Senators entered the Senate on July 1, 2014. Following the 2013 election, the number of women in the House of Representatives rose slightly from 37 to 39. However, the number in the Senate declined from 30 to 29. Overall, the number of women in Parliament has risen from only 67 to 68 (30%), showing that unequal gender representation remains a significant problem in Australian parliamentary politics (Sawer et al. 2009: 119–121). Nevertheless, the 2013 election brought two significant achievements for women in parliament: Nova Peris (ALP Senator for the Northern Territory) was the first Indigenous woman elected to Parliament and Cathy McGowan was the first female Independent elected to Parliament in the Victorian seat of Indi.

In contrast to the hung parliament faced by the former Gillard government after the 2010 election, Tony Abbott's Coalition government secured a clear legislative majority in the House of Representatives. This includes the Liberal Party of Australia (58 seats), the Nationals (10 seats) and the Liberal National Party (an amalgamation of the Liberals and Nationals which only exists in Queensland) with 22 seats.

However, the situation is more complicated in the Senate. Of the 40 senators up for re-election in 2013, seven did not contest the election and seven were defeated. The 14 new senators elected in 2013 constitute 18% of the Senate, which equals the highest previous intake (from the 2007 election). As at 1 July 2014, the government holds 33 seats and the ALP holds 25 (of a total of 76). The remainder of the Senate seats are held by the Greens (10), Independent Nick Xenophon, and several small parties: the Democratic Labor Party, the Australian Motoring Enthusiasts Party,

Family First, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Palmer United Party (three seats). Therefore, the government requires the support of at least six non-Coalition Senators to pass legislation through the parliament. The pattern of legislative alliance seen in the first two months of the new Senate (July-August 2014) is discussed in greater detail below.

Abbott's Ministry and New Factionalism

The first Abbott ministry was announced on 16 September as the team that would 'scrap the carbon tax, end the waste, stop the boats, build the roads of the twenty first century and deliver the strong, dynamic economy that we need' (Abbott 2013). The composition of the ministry immediately sparked criticism on two grounds: first, of 20 ministers in the inner ministry, only one (Julie Bishop) was a woman. In Kevin Rudd's Labor government, women had occupied six of the 20 positions. Second, Abbott had made a public commitment to keep the same team that he had used in his shadow ministry while in opposition. This quickly led commentators to point out, that with so many new parliamentarians coming into the parliament, the quality of the ministry may not have been as good as it could have been, and may even lead to internal de-stabilisation as ambitious parliamentarians quickly become anxious for a place in the ministry (see for example, Dunlop 2013; van Onselen 2014).

Abbott described his ministry as 'back to basics' government. While the previous Rudd ministers shared 34 separate portfolios, in the Abbott government this was reduced to 20. Looking at the differences in these portfolios provides some insight into the different issue priorities of each of the governments, and where government resources should be allocated. For example, gone are the portfolios of: Higher Education, Disability Reform, Climate Change, Resources and Energy, Mental Health and Ageing, the Status of Women, and Housing and Homelessness. Sport has been elevated to the Cabinet outer ministry and Agriculture and Regional Development have been given greater weight amongst the different portfolios. Changes to other portfolio areas reflect some of the key policy differences between the Labor Party and the Coalition: for example, Workplace Relations is now Employment; Innovation, Industry, Science and Research is now simply Industry; and Immigration, Multiculturalism and Citizenship is now Immigration and Border Protection.

Abbott has also referred to his Cabinet as 'experienced' and one of stability. Senior ministers in the first Abbott ministry include Julie Bishop (Foreign Affairs), Eric Abetz (Employment), George Brandis (Attorney General), Joe Hockey (Treasurer) and Christopher Pyne (Education). All of these ministers previously held positions in the Howard Cabinet. Members of the National Party hold three positions: Warren Truss (Leader of the National Party) as Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development; Barnaby Joyce as Minister for Agriculture and Nigel Scullion as Minister for Indigenous Affairs. This is two fewer than the Nationals had in the last Howard government.

While the Liberal and National Parties have governed in coalition through the majority of their histories, there have always been tensions in this relationship that revolve around the role of the state in the protection of agriculture and key industries. As an agrarian party, the Nationals have always advocated greater support to farming and rural industries that has on occasion conflicted with the Liberal Party's push for deregulation and smaller government (Botterill and Cockfield 2009). This tension has continued into the Abbott government. In December 2013 the National Party achieved a significant policy win over the Liberals regarding the sale of GrainCorp, an Australian company responsible for the acquisition, shipping and sale of grains such as wheat and barley overseas. While the National Party opposed the sale, the Liberal Party supported the sale of GrainCorp and it was approved by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Disagreement between the Coalition partners was on public display throughout November 2013 and at one stage the National's Minister for Agriculture was rumoured to have threatened resignation if the sale were approved (Costar, forthcoming). In the end, Treasurer Joe Hockey (with whom the final decision rested) declined to approve the sale because it would be 'contrary to the national interest' (Ireland and Robbins 2013). Although the majority of financial journalists, former Howard government ministers and even the US State Department, roundly condemned the decision as protectionist, farmer groups and the National Party were overjoyed. Despite the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology within the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister and his Treasurer were not prepared to disturb the coalition on such an iconic National Party issue as wheat.

Although the Liberal Party does not have the same institutionalised factions as the ALP, there have always been two groups within it: the 'wets' (moderates) and the 'dries' (conservatives) (Brett 2014). It is clear that Tony Abbott sits within this conservative tradition (continuing the work and thinking of Howard), however senior ministers such as Hockey, Pyne, Brandis, Turnbull and Bishop and Morrison have previously been placed in the moderate camp. Yet recent policy performance indicates that there actually is little to separate these two groups (for example, Turnbull's economic reformism, Hockey's fiscal conservatism and Morrison's hard stance on asylum seekers). It has been argued that factional divides within the party are now based more on the region from which MPs are from (Victoria battling NSW for the heart and soul of the party) and generational change (van Onselsen 2011). So we see a number of potential lines of division within the new Abbott government: younger parliamentarians seeking to move away from the practices and policies of the Howard era; and the traditional divide between moderate and

conservative, which may open up again if Tony Abbott takes the party further down the conservative path. For example, in April 2014 Attorney General George Brandis proposed changes to the anti-discrimination laws to make it lawful to publicly insult someone on the basis of race. This proposed legislation drew widespread criticism from the public and from large sections of the Coalition, including Ministers Joe Jockey and Malcolm Turnbull, as well as a group of 'rebel' backbenchers of diverse ethnic backgrounds or representing constituencies with diverse ethnic populations. The legislative proposal was eventually dumped by Prime Minister Abbott in a 'leadership call' in order to preserve 'national unity' (Aston 2014).

New Political Parties in the 44th Parliament

The September 2012 election saw three new political parties elected to the parliament: the Palmer United Party (both in the House of Representatives and the Senate), and the Liberal Democratic Party and the Motoring Enthusiasts Party in the Senate. The latter two political parties did not run active election campaigns.

The most successful of the new parties was the Palmer United Party, which was formed by billionaire Clive Palmer in April 2013. Like Palmer himself, the party's policies could be described as erratic. Although the Abbott government has found some common ground with Palmer United, negotiating the party's support for the repeal of the carbon and mining taxes, it has struggled to reach consensus on other issues such as higher education reform and university deregulation, and welfare reform (AAP 2014).

Comparatively less is known about the representatives from the Liberal Democratic Party and the Motoring Enthusiasts Party- who are now key to the Abbott government in securing the passage of legislation in the Senate. As detailed above, each of these micro-parties gained entry to the Senate with less than 1% of the popular vote. The Liberal Democratic party benefitted from its position in the top left hand corner of the NSW Senate ballot paper as well as confusion with the Liberal Party. The party believes in social libertarianism, a free market economy and small government but the elected representative－David Leyonhjelm－sparked controversy with his views that the public should be allowed to carry guns. Leyonhjelm is not, however, a political novice. As a student he was a member of Young Labor, before joining the ALP, then the Liberal Party, then the Shooters and Fishers Party before taking over the leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party in 2006. Leyonhjelm has been described as 'ultra-dry' on economic issues but with progressive positions on social issues－such as voluntary euthanasia, legalising marijuana and legislating for gay marriage (Snow 2014).

Motoring Enthusiasts Party Senator Ricky Muir has been described as an atypical parliamentarian and a 'man of the people'. Muir, a former timber industry worker from Victoria who is not university educated and has experienced periods of unemployment, did not rise through the ranks of political parties on his way to a career in parliamentary politics (Roskam 2014). While the Motoring Enthusiasts Party has developed policy on a number of core motoring issues, including road safety, driver training, vehicle modification and maintenance, as well as off-road driving, it has no guiding policy on areas beyond this. The Party's website reveals its specific approach to evaluating legislation in the Senate:

> 'Our role in the Senate will primarily be to review proposed legislation, which is passed in the lower house. This legislation will be based on the policies of the party which introduced it. In this respect it is not necessary for us to have our own set of policies but rather we have criteria by which we will assess legislation and test it against our own core values and position on various issues' (AMEP 2014).

The Party's core values − including smaller government, lower taxation, robust national security, the best possible education regardless of wealth, mateship and family − offer only a limited sense of the legislative agenda that Muir might pursue. In October 2013, a memorandum of understanding was reached between the Motoring Enthusiasts Party and the Palmer United Party to vote as a bloc in the Senate, unless this is contrary to the policies and principles. With a record number of Senators sitting in the crossbench, including these new and untested political parties, the Abbott government will need to negotiate and trade over specific issues with these parties in order to push through its legislative agenda.

Dynamics of the Parliamentary Contest:
The First Two Months of the New Senate

Given that the Coalition holds a comfortable majority in the House of Representatives, the Senate is now the focal point for legislative contests in the parliament. As Bach has noted, 'the legislative process in Canberra is inescapably a process of coalition building. The government can depend on its disciplined majority to pass legislation in the House, but it must construct a coalition that extends beyond, even if not far beyond, its own party ' (Bach 2003: 157−8). Ganghof (2014: 659) argues that in this sense the Australian system of representative government is distinctive as two independent chambers produce a parliament that promises to achieve 'the best of all worlds' − majoritarian and proportional democracy, and stable cabinets and flexible legislative coalitions.

In the new Senate, the government's most likely source of support is the smaller parties. Based on the ideological values and policy statements of all of the parties represented in the Senate, we might expect that the Abbott government should find alliances in the social conservatism of Family First and the Democratic Labor Party parliamentarian, John Madigan. It also seems probable that the government will win the support of the Liberal Democratic Party, the Motoring Enthusiasts and the Palmer United Party, but through a process of legislative negotiation and trading policy concessions. Despite the strained relationship between the Greens and Labor during the period of minority government, given their broad ideological and policy similarities, we would expect these two parties to vote together in opposition against the Coalition in the Senate, along with Independent Nick Xenophon.

An analysis of voting trends in the new Senate largely substantiates these expectations. Table 2 presents data on the voting patterns of all minor parties in Senate divisions called between 7 August 2014 and 3 September 2014. Not all decisions taken in the Senate are necessarily based on formal votes (divisions) and many divisions relate to procedural rather than substantive legislative matters. However, despite these caveats, an analysis of division voting is useful in highlighting broad trends of legislative behaviour and coalition building (Bach 2003). During the first two months of the new Senate a total of 99 divisions were called. In one quarter of these divisions the Coalition and the ALP adopted the same position, which largely rendered the minor party vote irrelevant as the government had the numbers to secure the outcome of the vote with the support of the ALP. However, in 75% of divisions the major parties were divided and the minor party vote came into play.

Table 2   Senate Divisions (July–September 2014): Percentage of times a minor party voted with the Government

	All Divisions	Divisions where the Coalition and ALP vote split	Divisions where the Coalition and ALP voted the same way
Family First	94%	94%	96%
Liberal Democratic Party	89%	87%	96%
Democratic Labor Party	61%	57%	72%
Palmer United Party	60%	58%	67%
Motoring Enthusiasts Party	54%	49%	68%
Nick Xenophon (Independent)	36%	24%	71%
Greens	2%	1%	4%

Source: adapted from Journals of the Senate, Parliament of Australia.

Table 2 shows the number of times that each of the minor parties voted with the government (as a percentage that party's total vote in divisions). Percentages are reported in three categories: for all divisions, for divisions where the vote of the two major parties was split, and for divisions whether there was major party consensus.

The data highlights that the Coalition found strong support in the votes of the Family First and Liberal Democratic Party Senators, who voted in its favour in almost every Division. Support from the Democratic Labor Party, Palmer United and the Motoring Enthusiasts was more mixed − these three parties voted with the government in roughly half of the Divisions where the major party vote was split. Finally, as expected, Xenophon and the Greens took a contrary stance to the government in the majority of Senate votes. The Greens, in particular, voted with the government in only 1% of the divisions where the major party vote was split.

Examining the key pieces of legislation that passed through the Senate in its first two months reveals some of the compromises that were reached in order to secure the support of the minor party senators. In July 2014 the Coalition introduced legislation to honour one of its key election promises to repeal the tax on carbon emissions imposed by the previous ALP government. The Palmer United Party had originally agreed to support the repeal, but withdrew this support at the last minute arguing that the proposed legislation did not guarantee savings for consumers. Consequently, the first iteration of the legislation was voted down in the Senate in a debate and process described as 'chaotic' (Taylor and Hurst 2014). However, with amendments orchestrated by Clive Palmer designed to ostensibly secure greater consumer protections through tougher compliance mechanisms for companies, the legislation was subsequently passed with the votes of all minor parties except the Greens who stood opposed to the legislation. Later in August the Palmer United Party and the Motoring Enthusiasts Party were able to secure a significant increase in funding for roads infrastructure with the passage of the *Land Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill.*

A similar deal was struck between the Palmer United Senators and the government to secure their support for the repeal of the mining tax in September 2014. The Party agreed to repeal the tax in return for keeping (until the next election) three programs that the government had originally wanted to abolish in its May budget − the school kids' bonus, the low-income superannuation contribution and the income support bonus, as well delaying an increase of the government's across the board contribution to superannuation until 2025. Each of these legislative negotiations highlights the pragmatic compromise struck between the Coalition and the two minor parties most important to its coalition of support: Palmer United and the Motoring Enthusiasts.

The only piece of legislation which all minor parties in the Senate have voted together to oppose concerned amendments to the Qantas Sale Act, allowing foreign investment in the airline. Palmer United and the Greens, for example, both opposed the legislation on the basis that the national carrier should remain in Australian hands (PUP 2014; Bandt 2014). Despite minor party opposition, the legislation passed through the Senate when the Coalition and the ALP agreed to cap foreign ownership at 49%.

Conclusion

At the outset of this article we posed two key questions relating to the 2013 Australian federal election. First, was the election campaign a genuine contest between the competing parties? And second, did the change in government lead to a new political stability? Our answer to both these questions is 'no'. In large part, the outcome of the election and the contest itself was conditioned by three years of political instability and minority government that preceded it. Plagued by leadership unrest, infighting and an acrimonious parliamentary environment, the electoral fortunes of the ALP were decided before the election was called. The two most important issues of leadership and the economy advantaged the Coalition, as did the partisan reporting of the News Limited Press. The final results and Coalition victory confirmed public opinion polling that was reasonably consistent throughout the campaign.

The election did, however, elect a number of new small parties to the Australian Senate − the Palmer United Party, the Motoring Enthusiasts Party and the Liberal Democratic Party − which all now share the balance of power with the Greens and several other minor parties. Despite the government's majority in the lower house, the first two months of the new Senate indicate that the government will need to continue its policy negotiations to secure the passage of legislation through this chamber. As our analysis shows, thus far the Palmer United Party and the Motoring Enthusiasts have shown their willingness to support the government in return for legislative concessions. However, given the erratic and vague policy positions of these parties it is unclear whether this support will continue into the future.

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