

Australian Labor PM now as unpopular as his hated Liberal-National predecessor

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The collapse of support for the Australian Labor government, and the associated crisis of the political establishment as a whole, reached a new milestone this week, even as measured in a pale and distorted form by media polls.

Newspoll, published by the Murdoch media's *Australian* on Monday, showed that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's disapproval rating rose three points to 54 percent. That is the highest level of dissatisfaction in his performance since Labor barely scraped into office in the May 2022 federal election.

Albanese's approval rating fell two points to 41 percent, with 5 percent uncommitted. His personal numbers were exactly the same as his widely-reviled Liberal-National Coalition predecessor Scott Morrison's before the 2022 election.

At that election, much of the Morrison-led Coalition's voting base imploded, allowing Labor to form a slim majority government despite Labor's vote falling to a near-100 year low of 32.5 percent.

According to the *Australian*, Labor's disastrous electoral fortunes were likely to be only mitigated by the equal unpopularity of opposition leader Peter Dutton, a key Morrison minister who took over the Coalition leadership after its 2022 debacle. Both Albanese and Dutton had negative approval ratings of minus 13.

Offered only a false choice, limited to Albanese and Dutton, as to who would be a "better prime minister," the poll's respondents' preference for Albanese fell a point to 45 percent, also the lowest level since the 2022 election. Dutton lost two points to 37 percent. Voters who were uncommitted rose to a high of 18 percent, reflecting a deepening dissatisfaction.

The poll's overall results again showed that neither Labor nor the Coalition had enough support to form a majority in the House of Representatives. If an election were held now—and Albanese must call one by May—the

outcome would almost certainly be an unstable hung parliament. A minority government would have to depend on the votes of the Greens and/or various independents under conditions of mounting political discontent.

Nor were there any appreciable gains by other parties or independents within the political establishment. Senator Pauline Hanson's far-right One Nation lifted a point to 7 percent, with no change for the Greens on 12 percent. Other parties and independents remained unchanged at 11 percent. This points to a broader political impasse.

An *Australian* editorial again voiced the growing alarm in the ruling class about the prospect of a fragile minority government. It lamented: "The bad news for Peter Dutton is that voters are not convinced the Coalition would do a better job on the economy, with less than a quarter of voters believing inflation would be lower under the Coalition. Most voters, 41 percent, believe neither side would be doing a better job than the other."

Newspoll takes only a small sample of the population, "with 1,263 voters throughout Australia interviewed online." That represents a tiny fraction of the 17,806,361 currently enrolled voters. Nevertheless, this pattern has set in, according to all the media polls since early November, which was when Albanese first fell into negative territory in Newspoll.

In media interviews, Albanese tried to dismiss his deepening unpopularity, saying "polls come and go." He even boasted that his government had never trailed the Coalition in a Newspoll. "I'm at the same level as Peter Dutton in Newspoll today," he told Perth radio station 6PR, as if that were an achievement!

Efforts are being made in the corporate media to blame the population for plunging toward a minority government. Sky News political editor Andrew Clennell declared: "If the poll says a pox on both houses, guess what you end up with; a hung parliament."

In reality, the polls, like the mainstream media outlets

that devise them, seek to bury the real driving factors—worsening living conditions, deepening social inequality and the total bipartisan Labor-Coalition support for the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, the US-NATO war against Russia and the massive AUKUS military spending in preparation for war against China.

It is no accident that Albanese's approval ratings first began to decline in the polls last November. That followed his government's support for the previous month's launching of the Israeli genocide and the overwhelming defeat of the October 14 constitutional referendum to establish an indigenous Voice assembly at the heart of the political establishment.

Albanese had staked his political reputation heavily on the Voice. He hoped to put a progressive gloss on Labor's program of war and austerity, while integrating an elite pro-capitalist indigenous layer into this very same agenda. The proposal was strongly rejected in working-class areas, where few people believed it would, as Labor claimed, improve the conditions of ordinary indigenous people, especially under conditions of a barbaric slaughter of Palestinians and deteriorating living and social conditions for all working people.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data last week indicated that working-class living standards are continuing to fall under Labor, despite its token "cost-of-living" electricity rebates and income tax cuts which primarily benefit the wealthiest households.

Inflation-adjusted household disposable incomes dropped by 8 percent in the two years to March, the largest decline in real incomes among the 20 measured OECD economies, the *Australian Financial Review* reported.

That decline would be even greater for working-class households, which are hit the hardest by punishing home mortgage repayments or rents and still-soaring costs of essential items.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics index for living costs for employee households rose by 6.2 percent to June 30, far above the latest official monthly inflation rate of 3.5 percent. All these results further expose the fraud of Labor's 2022 election slogan of "a better future."

Labor's landslide defeat in the August 24 election in the Northern Territory has raised the prospect of Albanese's government opening the door to the return of a Coalition-led government nationally.

Labor's response to the developing political crisis has been to shift even further to the right, forming a virtual

partnership with the Coalition to meet every major policy demand of the corporate elite. This has included:

- Attacking building workers' wages, conditions and basic democratic rights by imposing state control, via a government-appointed "administrator," over the construction division of the Construction Forestry Manufacturing and Energy Union (CFMEU).

- Pushing through legislation to inflict deep cuts to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) as a spearhead of wider austerity measures in public health, education and housing.

- Aligning with Dutton's call for a complete ban on visas for Palestinian refugees trying to flee the Gaza genocide by rejecting the majority of applications and relying on the Israeli and Egyptian regimes to shut Gaza's borders so that no refugees can escape.

- Slashing the number of international students as part of wider cuts to immigration, endeavouring to scapegoat students and immigrants for the housing and social crisis and whipping up anti-foreigner sentiment, as happens in wartime.

- Offering to cut a deal with the Coalition and the mining giants to abandon Labor's election promise to establish an Environment Protection Agency with powers to vet proposed new projects.

Continuing anti-war demonstrations against Labor's support for the Gaza genocide and last week's large rallies by construction workers against Labor's CFMEU assault are indications of deepening political opposition among workers and youth to Labor's militarist and corporate agenda.

This outrage, by itself, cannot alter the course of the existing political and economic order. To halt the drive to war and the accompanying attack on social and democratic rights, the hostility must turn in a socialist direction, seeking to overturn the underlying capitalist profit system itself.



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