

Poll underscores crisis of Australia's two-party system, rise of One Nation

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Polling published by the *Australian* yesterday has underscored an historic crisis of the official two-party system, of Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition, that has been in place and politically-led the capitalist order for the past 80 years or more.

As with all polling, the data undoubtedly has its limitations. It is, however, a quarterly analysis collating and cross-referencing the results of four Newspolls conducted between January 12 and March 26, meaning that the figures have some longer term significance than a one-off poll.

The data shows a continuing plunge in support for the Liberal-National Coalition, which has been in a meltdown particularly since its disastrous loss in the May, 2025 federal election. But it also reveals growing disaffection with Labor, whose primary vote was already nearing record lows at that election of just 34 percent. And the data confirms the rise of the far-right One Nation, which is capitalising on widespread social discontent.

The latter of the polls encompass the period since the US launched its utterly criminal war on Iran, which has been fully supported by the Labor government. As a consequence of the war, fuel prices have surged to record levels, with some analyses indicating that families are spending up to \$60 more on petrol per week.

Given the timing of the polls, the full impact thus far of the petrol price surge may not have been entirely reflected in them, and further increases are likely which will only deepen the anger. The immediate crisis builds on years' of a cost-of-living surge inflicted by governments, above all led by Labor, on the working class. Wage rises have scarcely kept pace with the understated official inflation rate, which, having increased earlier this year, is tipped to reach over 5 or 6 percent by the end of 2026.

The situation is producing intense social anger, most strikingly revealed in the poll in the decline in Labor's support.

The consolidated polling has One Nation, at 30 percent of the primary vote, leading both Labor (27 percent) and the Liberal National Party (23) percent in the north-eastern state of Queensland.

That is the only state in which One Nation is ahead of both Labor and the Coalition parties. But even still, it is potentially unprecedented in modern polling for a "third" party to be ahead of the two parties of government in any state poll. Other "minor" parties that have at times capitalised on discontent with the two-party set-up, such as the now-defunct Democrats, the Greens and One Nation in its first, 1990s iteration, have never come close to such a polling result.

Labor's support fell sharply in the three-month period covered by the polling in other states too. In New South Wales, the country's most populous state, it declined from 37 percent to 31 percent, and in Victoria, the second-largest by population, from 35 to 32 percent. In both those areas, Labor is also in office at the state level, where it is implementing austerity measures, such as real wage cuts for public sector workers, job reductions and pro-developer housing policies amid an affordability crisis, including the destruction of public housing.

But the polls showed a sharp hostility to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who is doubtless identified most directly with the refusal of the federal government to take any substantial action to address the cost-of-living crisis.

Albanese, at the same time, has increased annual military spending to record levels of close to \$60 billion, has supported Israel's assault in Gaza and the war on Iran, and has presided over a major assault on democratic rights principally targeting a mass movement against the genocide.

The *Australian* reported that "Dissatisfaction with Mr Albanese's performance as prime minister has spiked across all age groups, genders, states, education backgrounds, wage classes, homeowners and renters."

The polling has underlined the existential character of the Coalition's crisis. As the WSWS has previously analysed, its 2025 election result was not an aberration. The Liberals, the urban component of the Coalition, received their lowest vote since their founding in 1944 and retained just nine of 88 metropolitan seats across the country.

That was an expression of a collapse in the sizeable middle-class of the post-World War II period, which had formed the base of the Liberals, after decades of social polarisation. It had already been reflected in the emergence of "Teal" independent candidates, who took traditionally Liberal seats on the basis of a pitch to affluent layers of the upper middle-class, and in a deepening factional warfare between "moderate" and more hard-right elements.

Since the May election, those ructions have only deepened, expressed in a federal leadership change and two breakups of the Coalition, both of which were patched up but only tenuously.

The poll underscored the realities that are intensifying the pressure on the Coalition. The *Australian* described the Coalition's primary vote as expressed in the polls as its worst ever. In NSW it is at just 18 percent and in Victoria 22 percent.

The Coalition's status as the second party of Australian capitalist rule is now questionable. It was outpolled in every single state bar Victoria by One Nation. And some 35 percent of people who voted for the Coalition at the 2025 federal election, have now swung behind the right-wing outfit.

While elements of the Coalition are seeking to compete with One Nation, by calling for a more populist and Trumpian pitch, that hardly seems likely to resolve its increasingly intractable crisis. Such a shift would only further alienate "moderate" Liberals, strengthening the hand of the Teals.

The Coalition's competition with One Nation risks ceding further supporters to that party, by depriving it of any point of distinction. And in any event, the Coalition, as an establishment party par excellence, simply cannot make the phony anti-establishment pitch that One Nation as a "third" party is able to.

The substantial turn to One Nation among former Coalition voters points to a refashioning of right-wing politics amid the crisis of the Liberals and the Nationals. That has also been expressed in the defection of Coalition leaders, such as Barnaby Joyce to One Nation, and in reports of several Coalition branches shifting to One

Nation.

But the polling indicates that One Nation is picking up support by appealing to anger over the social crisis. Its share of the primary vote among those with no tertiary qualifications is at 34 percent and 30 percent among those with technical or trade qualifications, in front of Labor for both demographics.

That tallies with the results of the South Australian election last month.

A right-wing pro-business Labor government retained office, thanks to a collapse in the Liberal vote, which was just 16 percent of the primary. Labor's vote, however, declined in key working-class areas, particularly Adelaide's northern suburbs that were decimated by the Labor and union-enforced shutdown of the car industry. One Nation received roughly 22 percent of the primary and polled well in those areas, with its campaign centering on the cost-of-living crisis and the identity of Labor and the Coalition, which it dubs the "uniparty."

One Nation, supported and funded by the wealthiest person in Australia, Gina Rinehart who has led the support for Trump and the MAGA movement in Australia, is a frothingly anti-immigrant and right-wing party that defends capitalism and is hostile to the working class. The ability of such an outfit to pitch to widespread discontent is above all an indictment of Labor and the unions.

Both are thoroughly corporatised entities that abandoned any connection to the working class decades ago, instead inflicting decades of cuts to jobs, wages and social conditions in the interests of the corporations. At the same time, Labor, founded on the racist program of "White Australia," has spearheaded a persecution of refugees and immigrants and a promotion of militarist nationalism that One Nation taps into.

Under conditions of a crisis of capitalism globally and immense social tensions, the two-party system is in breakdown and there is an immense social vacuum. To prevent it being filled by the far-right, it is necessary to build a socialist movement of the working class, against Labor, the entire political establishment and their capitalist program of war and austerity.



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