

# Record One Nation polling underscores crisis of Australia's two-party system

Oscar Grenfell  
10 June 2026

Three polls over the past week have placed the primary vote of One Nation above that of the Labor Party.

One Nation's primary has exceeded that of the Liberal-National Coalition for months, not only in the polls, but also in the South Australian state election. This is the first time, however, that any national measure has indicated that the far-right party is ahead of Labor, which is in government federally and in the majority of states and territories.

Polls are variable and they come and go, generally to be forgotten and often to be refuted in election results. The three polls, moreover, are all based on a small sample of respondents. The lead of One Nation over Labor is 1–2 percent, depending on which of them one consults.

The results nevertheless have a certain objective significance. Firstly, they are a marker of a historic crisis of the entire two-party system that has overseen capitalist rule over decades and decades. Secondly, they reflect a push by the ruling elite to shift official politics even further to the right, in line with an agenda of war and austerity, and are being invoked to further that campaign.

The speed with which the crisis of the parliamentary establishment is intensifying is indicated by the change in One Nation's primary vote in the span of little more than a year.

In the May 2025 federal election, One Nation received just 6.4 percent of lower house votes across the country. The latest of the three recent polls, the results of which were released by the *Australian* on Monday, placed One Nation at 31 percent of the primary, ahead of Labor at 30 percent and the Coalition at 18 percent.

One Nation's relative rise has substantially tracked and reflected the existential crisis of the Coalition, and particularly its urban component, the Liberal Party. It was nearly wiped out in the 2025 election, retaining just nine of 88 metropolitan seats across the country, on the back of its lowest primary vote since the party was formed in 1944.

The period since has only seen a deepening of that crisis, with a catastrophic result in last April's South Australian election and the by-election loss to One Nation last month of Farrer, a conservative seat that had always been held by the Coalition.

The Coalition's meltdown cannot be ascribed to the various factional conflicts that continue to dominate it and threaten to tear it asunder. They are an expression of the reality that the broad middle-class base of traditional conservative politics has been eviscerated over decades of social polarisation. Internationally, old

conservative parties are in crisis and are threatened with displacement by right-wing populist and even fascistic outfits, such as Reform in the UK and Trump in the US.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has insisted, however, that this is not solely a crisis of the Coalition, but of the two-party system, including Labor. That is borne out in the polling results, with Labor's primary at its lowest level in history. After decades of imposing the dictates of the corporate and financial elite, Labor's erstwhile mass base of support in the working class no longer exists.

The latest polls were conducted in the wake of the May budget.

Labor boosted military spending to record levels, in line with its role in US-led wars globally, including the criminal onslaught against Iran, and above all, the advanced preparations for a catastrophic war against China. At the same time, it is imposing \$63.8 billion in cuts to social spending, including a massive assault on disability services, explicitly aimed at kicking hundreds of thousands of vulnerable disabled people off any support. Amid soaring inflation resulting from the Iran war and deepening a years-long cost-of-living crisis, Labor rejected calls for any relief measures whatsoever.

That has intensified a deepening and explosive social anger. Each of the polls showed mass hostility to the two-party setup, centring on the cost-of-living. The Newspann reported by the *Australian* found that almost 70 percent of respondents agreed that "Australian politics is overdue for a big shake-up" and that "the people who built this mess aren't going to fix it."

If One Nation has benefited from such oppositional sentiments, it is because the path for it has been cleared by the political and media establishment. In the first instance, One Nation has received vast media coverage, including when it was polling far less than it is currently, and far in excess of any other "third" party.

That is a deliberate attempt by the corporate elite to divert discontent into the reactionary channel of a demonisation of immigrants, One Nation's stock in trade.

At the same time, One Nation has based its agitation on the promotion of nationalism and xenophobia by the major parties. Labor and Coalition governments, over the course of decades, have set benchmarks for the global persecution of refugees and immigrants, which have been cited as a model to be emulated by far-right governments internationally.

In revealing remarks to the *Australian*, leading One Nation MP Barnaby Joyce, who defected from the Coalition last year, likened

widespread discontent to a “political bomb.” In a tasteless metaphor, he stated that “Bondi lit the fuse” for that bomb to go off, expressed in the growth of One Nation’s support.

That was a reference to the December 14 terrorist attack at Sydney’s Bondi Beach, in which two Islamic State-inspired gunmen opened fire on a Jewish Hanukkah celebration, killing fifteen people. It is true, as Joyce indicated, that it was in the wake of that atrocity that One Nation’s polling, which had already been rising, substantially surged.

In the first instance, the immense political impact of the attack only raises further questions about how the gunmen were able to perpetrate it, under conditions where at least one of them had been on the radar as a potential terrorist.

The Labor government, the Coalition and the media falsely blamed mass opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza, intensifying a hysterical demonisation of popular anti-war sentiment. Labor instituted sweeping attacks on democratic rights, including hate speech laws federally and a provision to ban political parties or organisations, while its state administration in New South Wales sought to criminalise protests altogether. One Nation was only the most explicit and aggressive in seeking to capitalise on the attack.

Having paved the way for One Nation, the major parties are increasingly adapting to it in a race to the right. Labor leaders have repeatedly emphasised that they are already carrying out sweeping cuts to immigration, particularly targeting international students.

Liberal leader Angus Taylor has declared that a Coalition government would carry out “one of the largest cuts” to migration in history. Last month, the Liberals elected former Prime Minister Tony Abbott as their national president. He immediately unfurled a right-populist flag, declaring that he would lead a “people’s revolt.”

The polling has intensified debates within ruling circles. While they have helped to promote One Nation and its leader Pauline Hanson, the *Australian* and the *Australian Financial Review* have published a stream of worried comments, warning that One Nation threatens to blow up the two-party system and to further destabilise capitalist rule.

Hanson, such commentary has noted, has only ever been a populist demagogue. One Nation has virtually no costed policies, and its leading figures, including Joyce and Hanson, have given contradictory statements to the media on a host of policy areas.

At this stage, it appears that the dominant sections of the ruling elite would far prefer the shift to the right to find its primary expression through the two-party system, epitomised by Abbott’s reemergence.

Other voices of the establishment, however, have warned that One Nation cannot be wished away. Former Liberal premier of Victoria Jeff Kennett has called on the Coalition to do a preference deal with One Nation in the lead-up to November’s election in that state. Some federal Coalition figures, such as Nationals MP Bridget McKenzie, have raised their openness to a preference sharing arrangement or even a coalition with One Nation.

One Nation is being heavily promoted by a minority layer of the Australian capitalist class itself. That includes the country’s richest individual, mining magnate Gina Rinehart, but also others,

including several prominent businesspeople who have publicly declared they are shifting their allegiances, and their cash, from the Liberals to One Nation.

To the extent that it has outlined policies, One Nation’s program directly and crudely expresses the demands of these sections of business. It calls for a full commitment by governments to the fossil fuel industry, an end to any pretence of addressing climate change and a further gutting of regulations covering mining, property construction and other business areas. Hanson has also raised the demand for a massive increase in military spending, from the current 2 percent of GDP to 5 percent, a call that Rinehart has also issued, as have individuals close to the Trump administration.

Whether Rinehart and other elite figures stick with Hanson, they are using One Nation as something of a battering ram to pressure the Labor government and the Coalition to intensify the agenda of austerity, war and a further transfer of wealth from working people to the oligarchs.

In that context, One Nation’s ability to pitch to social discontent is a marker of the utter bankruptcy of the official parties, above all Labor, the Greens that collaborate with it and the thoroughly corporatised union bureaucracy. Only in a context where none of those forces offer the working class anything could Hanson, flying around in the private jet of a multi-billionaire, be able to posture over the cost-of-living and the crises in health and education.

The media, moreover, to the extent that it challenges Hanson on policy, does so almost entirely from the standpoint of whether One Nation would be capable of forming a “responsible” government, i.e., one that would adequately serve the interests of the corporate elite. The fact that One Nation has literally no policies to address the housing and cost-of-living crisis is almost never raised.

The discontent that is roiling the two-party system will increasingly find expression in struggles of the working class. Such struggles will only go forward if they are based on a rebellion against the union bureaucracy and a direct political fight against the Labor governments, which are implementing the program of austerity, not only federally but in the majority of the states.

Such an independent movement of the working class, charting the way forward and cutting the ground from beneath the feet of the right-wing demagogues, must be explicitly socialist, directed against a capitalist system that is hurtling to barbarism, and internationalist, implacably opposing all attempts to divide the working class along the lines of race and nationalism and defending its most vulnerable sections, including immigrants and refugees.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**