Beyond the Win: Meeting Australians' Expectations and Delivering Change

A review of Labor's 2025 Federal Election campaign

December 2025

Labor

Contents

1. Introduction

Labor's victory on 3 May 2025 delivered an historic mandate built on a simple promise.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Labor set out a plan to make Australians better off by tackling cost-of-living pressures, improving housing affordability, expanding access to healthcare, and building a future-focused economy.

That plan expanded on Labor's first-term delivery, and the electorate judged that Labor was the party most capable of building Australia's future.

This trust comes with expectations. The electorate will measure success by tangible improvements in their daily lives.

Delivery is not optional; it is the cornerstone of Labor's agenda and will shape our bid for a third term.

This review explores how voters responded to Labor's campaign and why continuous engagement, visible progress, and authentic leadership will define the next three years.

It sets out lessons for governing in a fragmented political landscape where no seat is safe and every community expects results.

We evaluate the strengths of Labor's campaign so that the right lessons are taken from this year's success and applied into the future.

And whilst it was not our brief to judge our opponents' efforts, we recognise that the Liberal Party's poor campaign also contributed to the resounding result for Labor.

There was nothing inevitable about Labor's victory.

Towards the end of 2024 the Coalition opened a small lead in the published opinion polls.

The international experience of incumbency during 2024 informed the conventional wisdom that made the Coalition the favourites coming into the campaign.

Peter Dutton's strategy was simple – he asked voters whether they felt better off, safer and more secure in 2025 than they were three years ago. If the answer was no, the conclusion must be to vote for the Coalition.

That strategy failed when it came up against a superior Labor campaign that successfully framed the contest as a choice between Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton.

Prime Minister Albanese delivered an exemplary performance, combining authenticity and optimism with disciplined campaigning that resonated across the country.

In essence, rather than a retrospective referendum, Labor turned the election into a contest over which party would make Australians better off in three years' time.

This put the onus on the Liberal Party to detail their plans and present Australians with a viable alternative, and they failed this test.

The result for the Coalition was a calamity, recording their worst result in the 80-year history of the Liberal Party.

It is difficult to determine whether 2025 was an anomaly that the Liberal Party can recover from, or a further step towards a realignment that will lead to more three-cornered contests in future elections.

Regardless of which scenario develops over the remainder of the 2020s, Labor's chances of success at future elections will be best served by **maintaining Caucus unity and stability, delivering tangible improvements to people's lives** and **maintaining consistent and effective engagement with local communities.**

This focus must drive the Albanese Government throughout Labor's second term.

2. Findings

1. Labor's policy platform resonated positively with voters and reflected Labor's core values. Announcing policies early and providing localised information improved candidates' and their supporters' ability to campaign.

2. Labor's positive message was clear, persuasive and successfully linked past delivery with a positive vision for the future. Research was effectively used to refine the message and adjust as needed during the campaign.

3. Labor maintained strong message discipline throughout the campaign with an overarching framework that could effectively be tailored to different media and audiences.

4. Combining a positive theme with a disciplined negative campaign maximised Labor's ability to frame the election as a clear choice and mobilise support.

5. Labor's campaign strategy was research-driven, aligned with voter sentiment, and communicated across the Party early to enable policy development and message consistency.

6. The Coalition's campaign failed to present itself as a credible alternative government.

7. Early planning and clear governance structures strengthened Labor's campaign execution.

8. Labor allocated resources in the right places to secure a pathway to government. The result exceeded expectations at a national and local level, and Labor won seats not on its target list.

9. No seat is a safe seat but continuous community engagement throughout the term is a strong safeguard to increasing political cynicism, three-cornered contests and unexpected challenges particularly when paired with direct voter contact, local delivery and a strong presence in the local community.

10. Labor's nationally co-ordinated approach to Labor-Greens contests was effective and ensured that the unique challenge of these contests was incorporated into our election strategy and all aspects of campaign activity.

11. The crossover of Labor's House and Senate primary votes points to the growth of "tactical voting" by Labor supporters who cast a vote for independents competing with Coalition candidates in traditionally safe Coalition seats.

12. There is an opportunity for Labor to better demonstrate the importance of voting for Labor in the Senate to deliver meaningful reforms.

13. Establishing campaign headquarters (CHQ) early with leaders experienced across multiple elections boosted campaign operations. Strong senior leaders, with a dedicated focus on health and wellbeing, foster a positive and collaborative culture and a healthy office environment.

14. While the clearance of materials was effective and timely, the needs of local campaigns are morphing and increasing, particularly as media and technology continue to transform the communications and engagement landscape. Faster dissemination of more content will impact campaign operations.

15.   Target seats were effectively supported by central organisers to engage with voters via layers of different campaign activities.

16.   Labor's digital presence across all key platforms was unprecedented and content creators were empowered to swiftly create engaging content.

17.   Labor's continuous and sustained engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities remains a core strength. Labor Members of Parliament maintained direct, year-round engagement with multicultural communities, which was both respectful and inclusive.

18.   Expanded training programs significantly improved campaign capability and should be continued.

19.   Potential for membership growth is constrained by retention challenges and outdated systems, despite strong electoral results.

20.   Prepoll activity continues its steady rise with a notable shift of voter participation away from Election Day, which increased the demand on both Labor volunteers and Australian Electoral Commission staff.

21.   The Australian Electoral Commission has an ongoing role to continue investing in education about elections and voting to ensure all voters are enfranchised.

22.   Labor's volunteers proved a major asset and a factor in the overall result. Branch members, members of affiliated unions, volunteers and supporters continue to be a major electoral advantage that should continue being harnessed. All volunteers exercising their democratic right should feel safe and be protected from poor behaviour on polling booths.

23.   Labor's approach to monitoring and responding to disinformation in 2025 built on the successful approach developed in the 2022 campaign, and incorporated evidence-based best practices including selective engagement, fact-first messaging, and multilingual monitoring across diverse platforms.

3. Recommendations

Meeting Australians' expectations and delivering change

1. Labor should continue articulating a policy, political and communications strategy focused on making a material difference to people's lives and progressing Labor's core values. Early, consistent campaigning on this agenda in the lead-in to the next campaign will provide Members, candidates and campaigns with the maximum opportunity to communicate about Labor's plan.

2. Labor should maintain a clear and relentless focus on delivering its core election commitments and on the promise of building a better future for all Australians. This includes tracking and resourcing as needed to ensure the effective communication of delivery consistently throughout the term.

3. Do not take any seats for granted and sustain strong MP visibility and community engagement between elections to build Labor's standing. This should be regularly monitored by ALP National Secretariat and State and Territory Branches, and enabled through more training, clear guidance, activity reporting and accountability internally.

Campaign strategy and organisation

4. Establish Federal Campaign Committee early in the electoral cycle and consider a smaller structure with the flexibility to expand as the campaign develops.

5. Establish Campaign Headquarters (CHQ) early in the final year of the three year election cycle and ensure strategy documentation is shared appropriately to embed alignment.

Maintaining a Labor majority

6. Identify the pathway to retaining majority government and allocate resources effectively to secure that outcome.

7. Maintain Labor's record of preselecting high quality candidates with a diversity of backgrounds, and ensure candidates are given ample time to prepare for a campaign.

8. Continue integrating awareness of state- and territory-level dynamics into the federal campaign strategy.

9. Build upon the co-ordinated approach in Labor-Greens contests. Members of Parliament and candidates in these contests should maintain their positive focus on delivering and communicating real change on cost of living, housing, climate and healthcare.

10. Maintain awareness of minor parties and three-cornered contests to anticipate risks and establish campaign strategies early.

11. Provide more proactive support for candidate fundraising, including support through regular training, goal setting and monitoring.

12. Expand Labor's training programs for candidates, staff members and volunteers to support campaigns to layer activities and communications to engage with voters.

13. Track local community election commitments throughout the term and support Members of Parliament to communicate delivery milestones.

14. Ensure polling day materials advocate a vote for Labor in both the House and the Senate and continue supporting the contribution of Senators to campaigns.

Campaign Operations

15. ALP National Secretariat maintain a continuous, mixed-method research program, and stay ahead of emerging polling technologies and social listening tools.

16. Identifying key Campaign HQ staff early with a strong focus on building a positive and collaborative workplace culture. Begin succession planning and invest in training and knowledge sharing.

17. Monitor the implementation of electoral reform and ensure adequate resourcing and awareness across the Party to maintain compliance with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*.

18. Continue building Labor's digital capacity and analysing emerging trends in the digital communication landscape.

19. Continue investing in meaningful engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Building a stronger membership base

20. The National Executive and the State & Territory Branches focus on modernising the membership experience to improve member retention and grow Labor's membership base.

The conduct of elections

21. ALP National Secretariat include the resourcing requirements of prepoll in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election.

22. ALP National Secretariat commission a study examining campaign strategies to improve voter participation in low turnout and high informality electorates.

23. Polling booth captains, Members of Parliament and candidates be provided with training in de-escalation and incident reporting in case harassment continues at the next federal election.

24. ALP National Secretariat set out Labor's concerns about safety at polling booths, and the imperative that the authorities have the necessary resources and powers to enforce the law and keep voters and volunteers safe, in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election.

25. ALP National Secretariat set out Labor's concerns about the need for authorisation rules to be quickly and consistently enforced across all election participants equally, including third-party campaigns, in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election.

Emerging risks and opportunities

26. Monitor the use of artificial intelligence in future campaigns.

27. Continue building capabilities at all levels of the campaign to assess and respond to the proliferation of disinformation, relying on best practice guidance from experts in this field of work.

4. About this review

The ALP National Executive initiated a review of Labor's 2025 federal election campaign on 24 July 2025 to make recommendations on the party's political strategy and campaign development over the next three years. Lenda Oshalem, Emeline Gaske, Moksha Watts and Chris Ford were appointed to the campaign review panel.

The National Executive asked the 2025 Campaign Review to examine a number of strategic and emerging challenges facing the Party. These included the fragmentation of the Australian electorate; changes in news consumption amid a shifting media landscape; the impact of international events on our economy and social cohesion; the emergence of new challenges from minor parties and independents; and the challenges of delivery in an era of low voter trust.

Interviews were conducted with parliamentarians, party officials, contractors and staff who led key functions throughout the campaign. The review called for and received submissions from candidates, branch members and affiliates. ALP National Secretariat also conducted post-election quantitative and qualitative research.

About the Review Panel:

Chris Ford is a former State Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the ALP. Chris was Labor's campaign director on the 2022 Victorian state election campaign.

Emeline Gaske is the National Secretary of the Australian Services Union. Emeline has worked as a senior officer at the union for a decade and was previously a lawyer at Maurice Blackburn.

Lenda Oshalem is a former WA Labor official. Lenda co-chaired the 2022 ALP Federal Election campaign review and was a member of the panel that oversaw the 2019 ALP campaign review.

Moksha Watts is Principal of Yallaroi, a strategic advisory firm and an Adjunct Fellow at the University of New South Wales. She has worked in government and the private sector on climate change, energy, mining and transport policy.

5.   The election outcome

At the 2022 federal election, Labor won 77 of the 151 seats in the House of Representatives. The Coalition won 58 seats, and 16 crossbenchers were elected.

In April 2023 Labor's Mary Doyle gained Aston in a by-election. Subsequent by-elections in Fadden, Dunkley and Cook saw the winning party in 2022 retain each seat.

Redistributions in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia abolished Higgins in Victoria and North Sydney in NSW and created the new electorate of Bullwinkel in WA. The net impact was to reduce the size of the House of Representatives to 150 electorates.

After accounting for by-election results and the abolition of Higgins, Labor entered the 2025 election as the incumbent party in 77 out of 150 electorates, and the notional incumbent in Bullwinkel.

5.1   The national result

On 3 May 2025, Labor secured a historic second-term victory and expanded its total in the House of Representatives to 94 seats by retaining every Labor-held electorate and gaining an additional 17 seats off the Coalition and the Greens. Labor's majority in the House is its biggest since Federation and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese became the first Federal Labor leader to win back-to-back elections since the 1980s.

Labor received 34.6% of the primary vote, which was a 2.0% swing towards Labor from the 2022 election. This translated to 55.2% of the two-party-preferred vote, which was a 3.1% increase from 2022.

The Coalition's primary vote dropped 3.9% resulting in a total of 43 seats – 15 fewer than it won in 2022.

13 seats were won by the minor parties and independents, down from 16 seats in 2022. The largest change on the crossbench was the reduction in the Greens' representation from four seats to one.

Table 1: The national result

Party	Primary vote (%)	Primary swing (%)	Seats won	Net change since 2022	Two-Party-Preferred (2PP) (%)	2PP Swing (%)
Labor	34.6	+2.0	94	+17	55.2	+3.1
Coalition	31.8	-3.9	43	-15	44.8	-3.1
Greens	12.2	-0.1	1	-3		
One Nation	6.4	+1.4	-	-		
Independent	7.3	+2.0	10	-		
Others	7.7	-1.4	2	-		

5.2   State and Territory results

Labor gained seats in all six states and improved our two-party-preferred vote in every State & Territory except the Northern Territory.

The biggest statewide swings to Labor were in Tasmania, where our primary vote improved by 9.3% and our two-party-preferred vote improved by 9.0%. Labor retained Franklin and Lyons and gained Bass and Braddon, leaving the Tasmanian Liberals with no representation in the House.

Labor's biggest gains were in Queensland, where Federal Labor's recorded its best Queensland result since 2007. The ALP gained five seats from the LNP and two from the Greens to more than double our representation to twelve out of 30.

Labor's primary vote improved in every state except Western Australia, and despite the small decline in Labor's WA primary vote the party gained the seat of Moore and won the newly created seat of Bullwinkel to increase our representation in Western Australian electorates to 11 of 16.

Expectations of a difficult election in Victoria were confounded by a statewide swing to Labor of 1.5% that delivered gains from the Liberal Party in Deakin and Menzies and the Greens in Melbourne.

Despite the swing against Labor in the NT, Labor retained both Lingiari and Solomon.

Table 2: State and Territory results

State/Territory	Labor primary swing (%)	Coalition primary swing (%)	Labor 2PP swing (%)	Seats gained
NSW	+1.8	-5.0	+3.9	2
Victoria	+1.1	-0.9	+1.5	3
Queensland	+3.6	-4.7	+3.5	7
WA	-1.3	-3.2	+0.8	2
SA	+3.9	-7.1	+5.2	1
Tasmania	+9.3	-8.4	+9.0	2
ACT	+2.6	-5.3	+5.5	0
NT	-0.2	+4.4	-1.3	0

5.3   Seat results

Labor gains from the Coalition

Labor won 13 seats from the Coalition including Peter Dutton's own seat, Dickson. Labor also retained Bennelong, which had become a notionally Liberal seat following the NSW redistribution.

Table 3: Labor gains from the Coalition

Electorate	State	Labor primary swing (%)	Coalition primary swing (%)	Labor TPP swing (%)
Banks	NSW	+0.6	-5.5	+5.0
Bass	Tasmania	+11.0	-8.3	+9.4
Bennelong*	NSW	+13.3	-5.6	+9.3
Bonner	Queensland	+9.9	-9.3	+8.4
Braddon	Tasmania	+17.0	-12.4	+15.2
Deakin	Victoria	+1.9	-2.8	+2.8
Dickson	Queensland	+1.9	-7.4	+7.7
Forde	Queensland	+6.2	-6.2	+6.0
Hughes	NSW	+11.1	-3.9	+6.5
Leichhardt	Queensland	+8.9	-9.4	+9.4
Menzies	Victoria	+2.9	-0.3	+0.7
Moore	WA	+0.6	-10.4	+3.8
Petrie	Queensland	+6.4	-5.7	+5.6
Sturt	SA	+4.6	-8.8	+7.1

* Held by Labor but notionally a Liberal seat following the 2025 redistribution.

Labor also won the new electorate of Bullwinkel in Western Australia, which was notionally Labor. The Liberal and National Parties both fielded candidates.

The Nationals ran a candidate in the seat of Bendigo for the first time since 2016 and finished second. Although Labor retained the seat, its margin was reduced from 11.2% to 1.4%. Bendigo is now Labor's seventh most marginal seat.

The Greens

Labor won three seats from the Greens including Adam Bandt's electorate of Melbourne. Labor's primary vote increased significantly in all three contests, and the Greens primary vote fell in each seat. The Greens had held Melbourne since 2010 after winning the seat from Labor and won Brisbane and Griffith in 2022 from the Coalition and Labor respectively.

Table 4: Divisions won by the Greens in 2022

Electorate	State	Labor primary swing (%)	Coalition primary swing (%)	Green primary swing (%)	Result
Ryan	Queensland	+5.9	-3.9	-1.2	Greens retain
Brisbane	Queensland	+4.9	-3.4	-1.4	ALP gain
Griffith	Queensland	+5.6	-4.2	-2.9	ALP gain
Melbourne	Victoria	+5.7	+0.2	-5.3	ALP gain

Independents

In 2022, independents were a major disruption for the Liberal Party. The Liberals lost six former strongholds to these independents – Curtin, Goldstein, Kooyong, Mackellar, North Sydney and Wentworth. This was in addition to Warringah, which was lost to an independent in 2019.

In 2025 the collapse in the Liberal vote in metropolitan electorates saw independents finish second in five Labor-held seats – Watson, Franklin, Calwell, Fremantle and Bean. Each of these seats swung to Labor and away from the Liberals in two-party-preferred terms, but the final two-candidate-preferred margins against the independents were much closer.

Table 5: Labor-held seats with ALP-vs-Independent two-candidate-preferred counts

Electorate	Labor primary vote (%)	Labor primary swing (%)	Liberal primary vote (%)	Liberal primary swing (%)	Independent primary vote (%)	Labor TCP (%)
Watson	48.0	-6.1	15.2	-11.2	14.6	66.5
Franklin	39.0	+2.3	18.8	-7.9	21.7	57.8
Calwell	30.5	-14.3	15.7	-8.0	11.9	55.1
Fremantle	38.6	-5.4	18.9	-5.5	23.0	50.7
Bean	41.1	-0.7	23.0	-6.7	26.4	50.3

Independents endorsed by 'The Muslim Vote' recorded significant primary votes in Blaxland and Watson; 18.7% and 14.8% respectively. Labor retained both seats comfortably but the collapse in the Liberal vote saw the independent finish in the final two-candidate preferred count in Watson.

Five independents also ran in Calwell on a ballot paper featuring 13 candidates. Labor held the seat with a 30.5% of the primary vote, down by 14.3%. An ex-Labor independent received 11.9% of the primary vote and finished second after preferences were distributed. After a prolonged count Labor retained Calwell with a two-candidate-preferred vote against the independent of 55.1%.

Candidates funded by Climate 200 also ran in several Labor-Coalition contests, including Dickson, Gilmore, Solomon and Sturt. These candidates received a primary vote of 12.2%, 7.5%, 12.5% and 7.2% respectively. Although Labor won all four seats, the independent candidates handed out open how-to-vote cards, which splintered the anti-Coalition vote.

5.4   Senate results

Labor began the 47th Parliament with 26 Senators but entered the election campaign with 25 following the defection of Senator Payman to the crossbench. Labor won an additional three Senate positions by electing a third Senator in Victoria and South Australia and a second Senator in Queensland.

Labor's Senate primary swing increased in every state and territory except the Australian Capital Territory. As with the House of Representatives, the biggest swing was achieved in Tasmania (8.2%).

The Coalition lost five Senate positions and entered the 48th Parliament with 27 Senators. Three of these were lost to Labor, while two were lost to One Nation in New South Wales and Western Australia.

Incumbent Green Senators were re-elected in each state, and One Nation increased its number of Senators from two to four.

Independent Senators David Pocock (ACT) and Jacqui Lambie (Tasmania) were both re-elected.

The new look Senate means Labor can secure the passage of legislation with the support of either the Coalition or the Greens.

Table 6: Senate results – change in primary between 2022 and 2025

State/Territory	Labor primary swing (%)	Coalition primary swing (%)	Greens primary swing (%)
NSW	+7.2	-7.3	-0.3
Victoria	+3.2	-0.9	-1.4
Queensland	+5.8	-4.3	-1.9
WA	+1.6	-5.1	-1.4
SA	+5.8	-6.4	+1.0
Tasmania	+8.2	-8.5	+0.8
ACT	-1.6	-7.0	-2.5
NT	+2.0	+1.0	-1.2

5.5   Early voting, informality and turnout

Early voting

Prepoll opened on Tuesday 22 April 2025, 11 days before election day. The public holidays on Monday 21 April and Friday 25 April meant there were two less days of prepoll voting compared to 2022.

More than 6.7 million of enrolled voters cast their vote at prepoll representing 37.5% of the roll. This was a 5.3% increase on 2022 despite the reduced number of days. Queensland recorded the highest rate of prepoll votes (41.3%) while Tasmania recorded the lowest (25.4%). It was as high as 53.4% in the electorate of Hinkler, Queensland.

Table 7: Prepoll by State and Territory

State/Territory	Prepoll voting rate (%)
Queensland	41.3
ACT	39.2
Victoria	37.8
NSW	37.5
NT	37.3
WA	36.5
SA	29.8
Tasmania	25.4

Labor's two-party-preferred vote at prepoll was 53.0%. This was 2.2% lower than Labor's overall two-party-preferred vote in 2025 and 1.3% greater than its two-party-preferred vote at prepoll in 2022.

Informality

5.6% of votes cast were informal, which was 0.4% higher than the 2022 election. Informality has remained stable across the last five elections, within the 5-6% range. New South Wales had the highest rate of informal voting (8.0%) and was home to nine of the 10 seats with the highest rate of informal voting. This is likely due to voter confusion created by the optional preferential voting system in place at NSW State Elections. Werriwa had the highest rate of informal voting (17.2%), an increase of 7.1% from the 2022 election.

Table 8: Divisions with the highest informality rates

Electorate	State	Informal Votes (%)
Werriwa	NSW	17.2
Watson	NSW	17.0
Fowler	NSW	14.0
Chifley	NSW	13.6
Blaxland	NSW	12.9
Riverina	NSW	11.2
Lindsay	NSW	10.9
Calwell	Victoria	10.6
McMahon	NSW	10.6
Parkes	NSW	10.1

A higher informal vote was associated with areas with higher numbers of people with a first language other than English. Longer ballot papers with more candidates also drive up the informal vote.

Turnout

Turnout was 90.8% in 2025, which was a 1.0% improvement from the 2022 election. Compared to 2019, however, it was down 1.1%.

Turnout rates are associated with similar factors to informal voting including areas with high numbers of non-English speakers, First Nations peoples, renters, and people without university degrees.

Lingiari had the lowest turnout (62.2%) followed by Durack (78.3%).

Table 9: Divisions with the lowest turnout

Electorate	State/Territory	Turnout (%)
Lingiari	NT	62.2
Durack	WA	78.3
Solomon	NT	79.2
Leichhardt	Queensland	82.3
Kennedy	Queensland	83.8
Rankin	Queensland	85.2
Blaxland	NSW	85.4
Herbert	Queensland	85.5
Moncrieff	Queensland	85.6
Watson	NSW	85.7

6.   Understanding Labor's campaign

6.1   Context

The 2025 federal election occurred against one of the most challenging backdrops for incumbent governments in modern history. Internationally, 2024 was characterised as the "graveyard of incumbents".[1] Across advanced economies, governing parties suffered historic losses in their vote share, reflecting a convergence of the impact of inflation and voter fatigue. Australia was not insulated from the mood of discontent. Labor governments in the Northern Territory and Queensland were defeated in August and October 2024 respectively, and towards the end of the year the Coalition opened a small lead in the published opinion polls.

The country entered the election year after three years dominated by cost-of-living pressures. Inflation, though easing from its peak, had left a lasting imprint on household budgets. The impact on housing costs, groceries, utilities and other regular expenses meant that the cost of living was the dominant issue across every demographic and region in the country. Whilst voters did not attribute these conditions to the policies or actions of the Labor Government, they inevitably impacted on the mood and satisfaction with the government's performance.

The Coalition sought to exploit these conditions with a simple proposition: if Australians did not feel better off, safer, and more secure than three years ago, they should vote for change. Throughout the term, Peter Dutton had adopted an oppositional approach that was modelled on Tony Abbott's methods during the last Labor Government. The Coalition opposed nearly every major initiative advanced by the Albanese Government, from cost-of-living relief and housing programs to energy policy. This approach highlighted the Coalition's reliance on broad critiques ahead of detailed alternatives. Headline proposals such as the nuclear energy policy were announced, but the rest of the Coalition's platform lacked detail. Voters were presented with a scathing critique of Labor without a clear articulation of the Coalition's alternative plans, leaving the Coalition's agenda defined more by resistance than any plan for governing.

6.2   Labor's campaign strategy

Labor's campaign strategy was designed to counter the Coalition's campaign by framing the election as a choice between two visions for Australia's future, rather than a referendum on Labor's first term. This marked a deliberate shift from Labor's 2022 campaign strategy when the focus was on generating a referendum dynamic around Scott Morrison's failure to take responsibility for mistakes and problems that happened on his watch.

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1   Burn-Murdoch, John (2024), "Democrats join 2024's graveyard of incumbents", The Financial Times, 7 Nov. 2024. https://www.ft.com/content/e8ac09ea-c300-4249-af7d-109003afb893

Labor's 2025 strategy had four key components:

- **Choice:** Position the election as a contest between Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton, not a retrospective referendum.
- **Delivery:** Highlight Labor's first-term achievements as foundations for future progress.
- **Offer:** Present a future-focused agenda addressing cost of living, housing, healthcare and education.
- **Contrast:** Emphasise the risk of Peter Dutton's cuts to essential services to fund his $600 billion nuclear plan.

The slogan "Building Australia's Future" was launched in November 2024 to anchor this narrative. Establishing the theme early ensured message discipline and familiarity among candidates and spokespeople.

> **Recommendation:** Labor should continue articulating a policy, political and communications strategy focused on making a material difference to people's lives and progressing Labor's core values. Early, consistent campaigning on this agenda in the lead-in to the next campaign will provide Members, candidates and campaigns with the maximum opportunity to communicate about Labor's plan.

6.3 Campaign organisation

The strategy was documented and communicated through the **Federal Campaign Committee** and the **Campaign Strategy Group**, which met daily during the campaign. Campaign headquarters (CHQ) in Sydney served as the operational hub, led by experienced staff with strong coordination across units. Scenario planning began in late 2024, and early establishment of CHQ allowed for effective integration of research, advertising, digital and field operations.

> **Finding:** Early planning and clear governance structures strengthened Labor's campaign execution.

> **Recommendation:** Establish Federal Campaign Committee early in the electoral cycle and consider a smaller structure with the flexibility to expand as the campaign develops.

> **Recommendation:** Establish CHQ early in the final year of the three year election cycle and ensure strategy documentation is shared appropriately to embed alignment.

Prime Minister Albanese delivered an exemplary performance, combining authenticity and optimism with disciplined campaigning that resonated across the country. Throughout the Leader's debates, rallies, community visits, interviews and daily engagement with the media, the Prime Minister outlined Labor's agenda and made the case for a renewed mandate.

CHQ and the Leader's travelling party operated as a single, highly coordinated unit throughout the campaign. The seamless integration between CHQ and the travelling party was commented on by a number of interviewees and set a new standard for campaign integration.

Announcing major policies with significant detail early meant Labor entered the campaign with a positive future offer. This gave candidates an immediate platform to campaign on, as well as time to build awareness with voters while mitigating the risk of scare campaigns against such policies.

Candidates also benefited from localised information about policy announcements to create tangible touchpoints with their communities. Delivered Medicare Urgent Care Clinics were often cited by participants in the review as an effective campaign tool because it married Labor's vision with a local brick and mortar reality.

During the campaign itself, policy development and responses were led by the Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Units at CHQ. The team worked closely with other units at CHQ including to localise policy announcements and to clear materials produced by local campaigns.

Labor volunteers who provided submissions to the review commended the policies, which motivated them to get more active in the campaign. Volunteers felt proud about Labor's vision for the next three years and found the policies concise and easy to communicate.

> **Finding:** Labor's policy platform resonated positively with voters and reflected Labor's core values. Announcing policies early and providing localised information improved candidates' and their supporters' ability to campaign.

6.4   Campaign themes

The central theme of Labor's campaign, "Building Australia's Future", projected both optimism and continuity. It linked Labor's delivery in government with a forward-looking plan and contrasted with the Coalition's cuts. The theme was reinforced through policy announcements over six months leading up to polling day.

> **Finding:** Labor's positive message was clear, persuasive and successfully linked past delivery with a positive vision for the future. Research was effectively used to refine the message and adjust as needed during the campaign.

> **Finding:** Labor maintained strong message discipline throughout the campaign with an overarching framework that could effectively be tailored to different media and audiences.

The contrast in leadership between Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton built on the "Building Australia's Future" theme. In a time of global uncertainty, Labor argued that Australia had never needed stability more. Anthony Albanese's steady, measured leadership projected reassurance, protecting the things that matter most to Australians. His authenticity and calm approach stood in stark contrast to Peter Dutton's combative style and lack of a credible plan.

Labor also deployed a highly effective contrast campaign under the banner 'He Cuts, You Pay'. This campaign complemented the positive theme by highlighting the risks posed by Peter Dutton's leadership style and policy agenda and reinforced Labor's framing of the voter choice: the world was too volatile to gamble on Peter Dutton, and only Albanese could deliver security and progress for the future.

> **Finding**: Combining a positive theme with a disciplined campaign highlighting the risks posed by Peter Dutton maximised Labor's ability to frame the election as a clear choice and mobilise support.

6.5   Labor's united team

From the Prime Minister and the Ministry through to Labor's Members of Parliament and candidates, Labor's team was united and disciplined. The stability of Cabinet throughout the term came up as a strength in research and voters responded positively to Anthony Albanese's measured and steady leadership. Remaining a united and disciplined team will be critical for Labor's continued success.

Labor's candidates at the election were committed, motivated and diligent. They represented a diversity of professional and personal backgrounds that reflect modern Australia. Labor's Federal Caucus is now a record-breaking 56% women. The research and vetting program of candidates was similarly thorough and stood up to scrutiny during the campaign.

Recommendation: Maintain Labor's record of preselecting high quality candidates with a diversity of backgrounds, and ensure candidates are given ample time to prepare for a campaign.

6.6   Greens-facing contests

Following the 2022 election Labor recognised that it had underestimated the challenge from the Greens, particularly in Queensland.

The 2022 Campaign Review recommended that "a strategy, underpinned by research, should be developed for successfully contesting three-cornered contests. Labor should actively contest the policy and political positions advocated by the Greens and dedicate resources for this purpose."

The Greens felt emboldened by the 2022 result and pursued an aggressive, obstructionist strategy throughout the term, most notably by blocking Labor's housing legislation during 2023 and 2024.

This high-profile approach to generating conflict was divisive amongst progressive voters, with many believing that the Greens had crossed a line by hindering progress rather than enhancing it.

Griffith MP Max Chandler-Mather was the most prominent driver of this strategy, and Labor's research throughout 2024 identified that frustration with Greens obstruction was particularly pronounced in Griffith and Brisbane – where Max Chandler-Mather was most prominent.

Following the Queensland state election in October 2024, where the Greens were defeated in South Brisbane, the Greens signalled a shift away from their obstructionist approach and a stronger focus on campaigning against Peter Dutton.

Labor's campaign in Greens-facing contests

Labor took a highly localised approach to campaigning in three-cornered contests.

Labor Members of Parliament and candidates made the case that Labor had made real progress on cost of living, health, and housing—and had an ambitious plan across cost of living, housing and climate that would make a real difference.

These campaigns deployed tailored messaging, localised advertising, and strong field campaigns to promote Labor's policies on housing, student debt relief, Medicare and climate action.

This marked Federal Labor's most concentrated and coordinated effort in Labor–Greens contests, acting on the recommendations made in the 2022 review.

Finding: Labor's nationally co-ordinated approach to Labor-Greens contests was effective and ensured that the unique challenge of these contests was incorporated into our election strategy and all aspects of campaign activity.

Recommendation: Build upon the co-ordinated approach in Labor-Greens contests. Members of Parliament and candidates in these contests should maintain their positive focus on delivering and communicating real change on cost of living, housing, climate and healthcare.

7. Analysing the election result

7.1 Evaluating the effectiveness of Labor's strategy

Post-election research commissioned by this Review found that Labor's positive message and policy offerings were a significant driver of the party's vote. Voters judged Labor as the party best-placed to deliver what mattered to Australians such as addressing cost of living pressures, housing affordability and healthcare access.

Policy announcements with high recall included reducing student debt, building more urgent care clinics, increasing bulk billing, building more housing and providing tax cuts. These policies built a concrete vision for the future that inspired voters to give the government a second term.

Labor voters also judged Prime Minister Albanese positively and described him as a team leader who is relatable, fair, pragmatic, calm and steady. He was particularly credited with promoting stability and unity compared to Peter Dutton and the Coalition.

Post-election quantitative research commissioned by ALP National Secretariat showed that increasing bulk billing and reducing the price of medicines on the PBS were Labor's most popular policies with 72% support each, followed by providing tax cuts (59% support).

The research also showed that 23% of Labor voters nominated party leadership as the most important factor in their decision. This is compared to 9% of Coalition voters. Another finding was that voters' assessment of Labor's campaign was more positive than the Liberal Party's campaign.
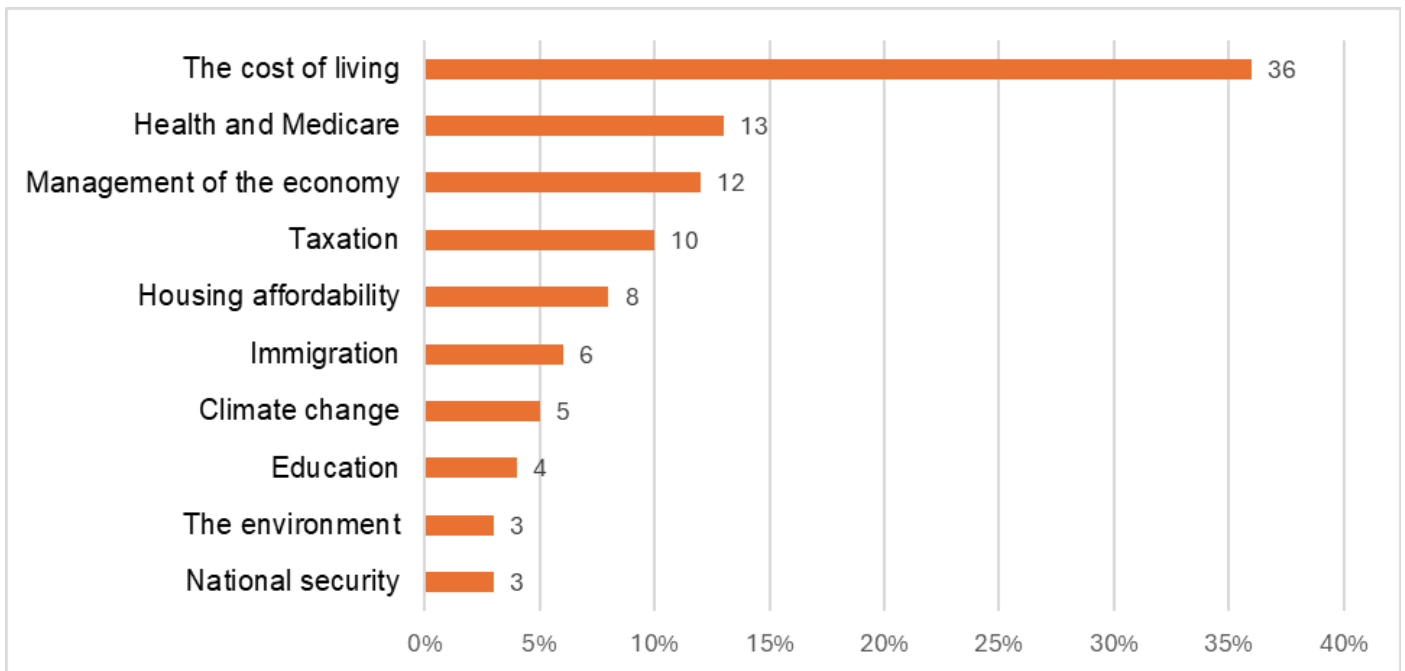
> **Finding:** Labor's campaign strategy was research-driven, aligned with voter sentiment, and communicated across the Party early to enable policy development and message consistency.

Most important election issues

The success of Labor's strategy was underlined by the Australian National University's Australian Election Study (AES), released in November 2025. The AES found that voters nominated the cost of living, health and Medicare, management of the economy, taxation and housing affordability as the five election issues they were most concerned about.[2]

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2   McAllister, I., Cameron, S., Jackman, S., Sheppard, J. (2025). Australian Election Study 2025, November 2025.

Figure 1: Most important election issue, Australian Election Study (AES)

Issue	Value
The cost of living	36
Health and Medicare	13
Management of the economy	12
Taxation	10
Housing affordability	8
Immigration	6
Climate change	5
Education	4
The environment	3
National security	3

Voters preferred Labor's policies in each of these issues to the Coalitions, which was the first time Labor has been the dominant party on economic management and taxation.

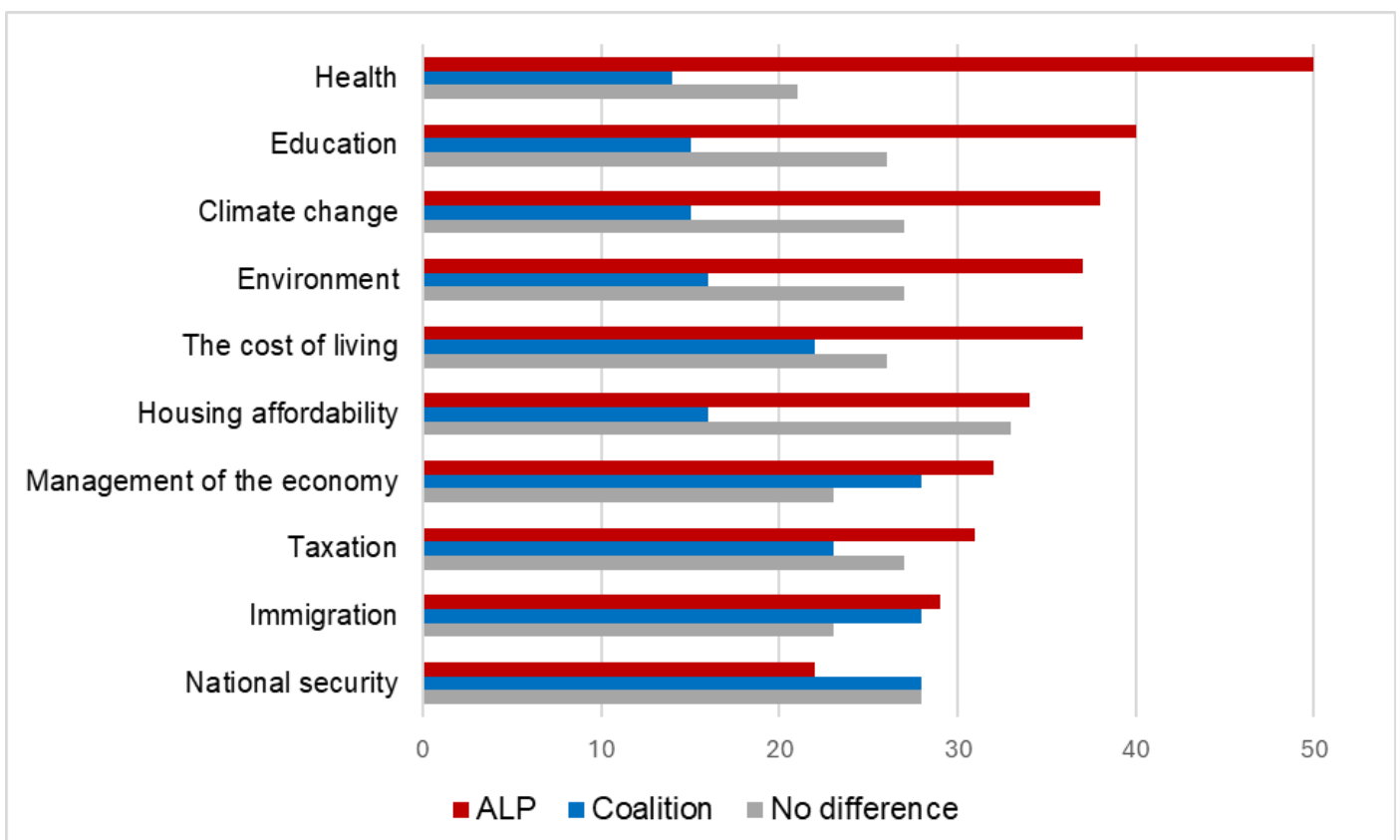**Figure 2: Party with preferred policies on each issue (AES)**

■ ALP ■ Coalition ■ No difference

Figure 3: Party with preferred policies on management of the economy (AES)
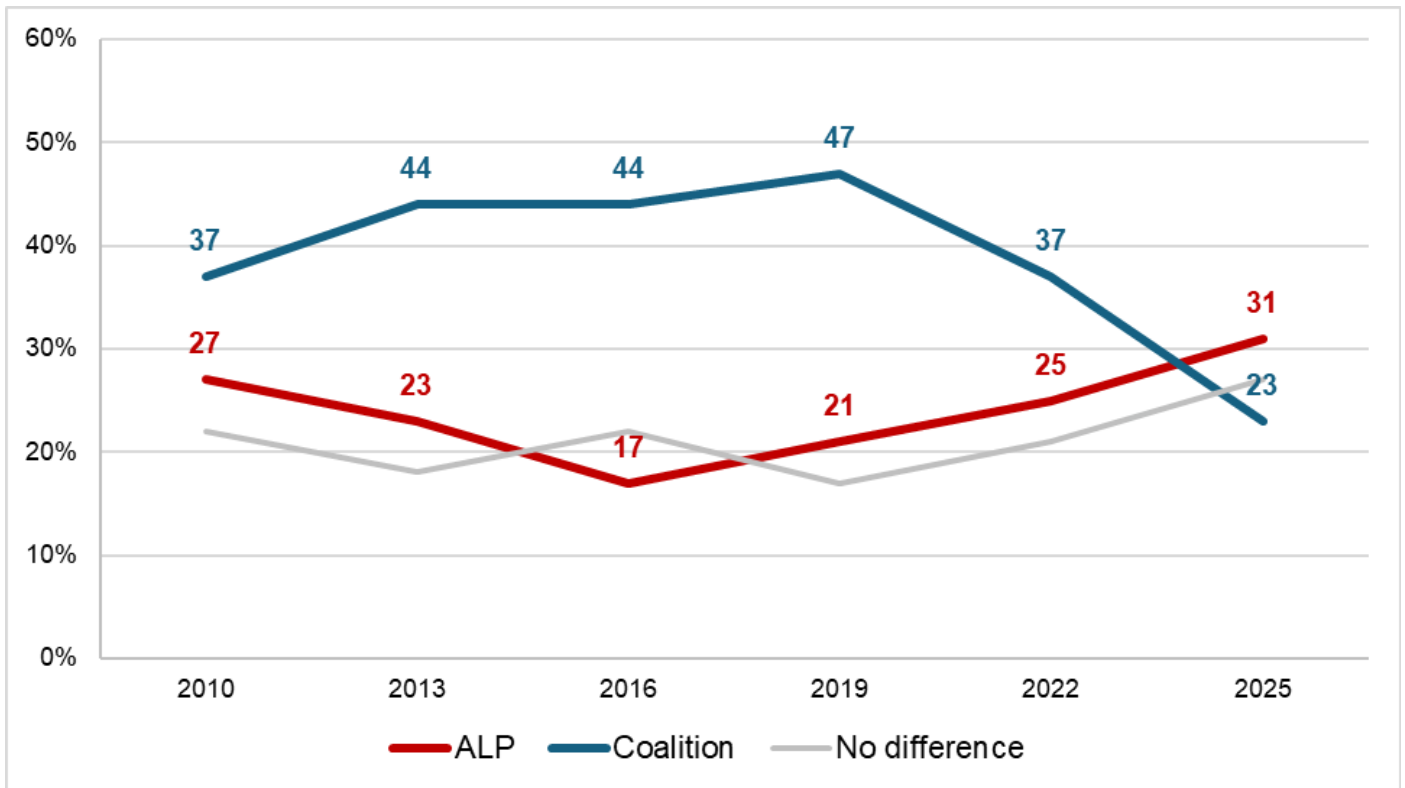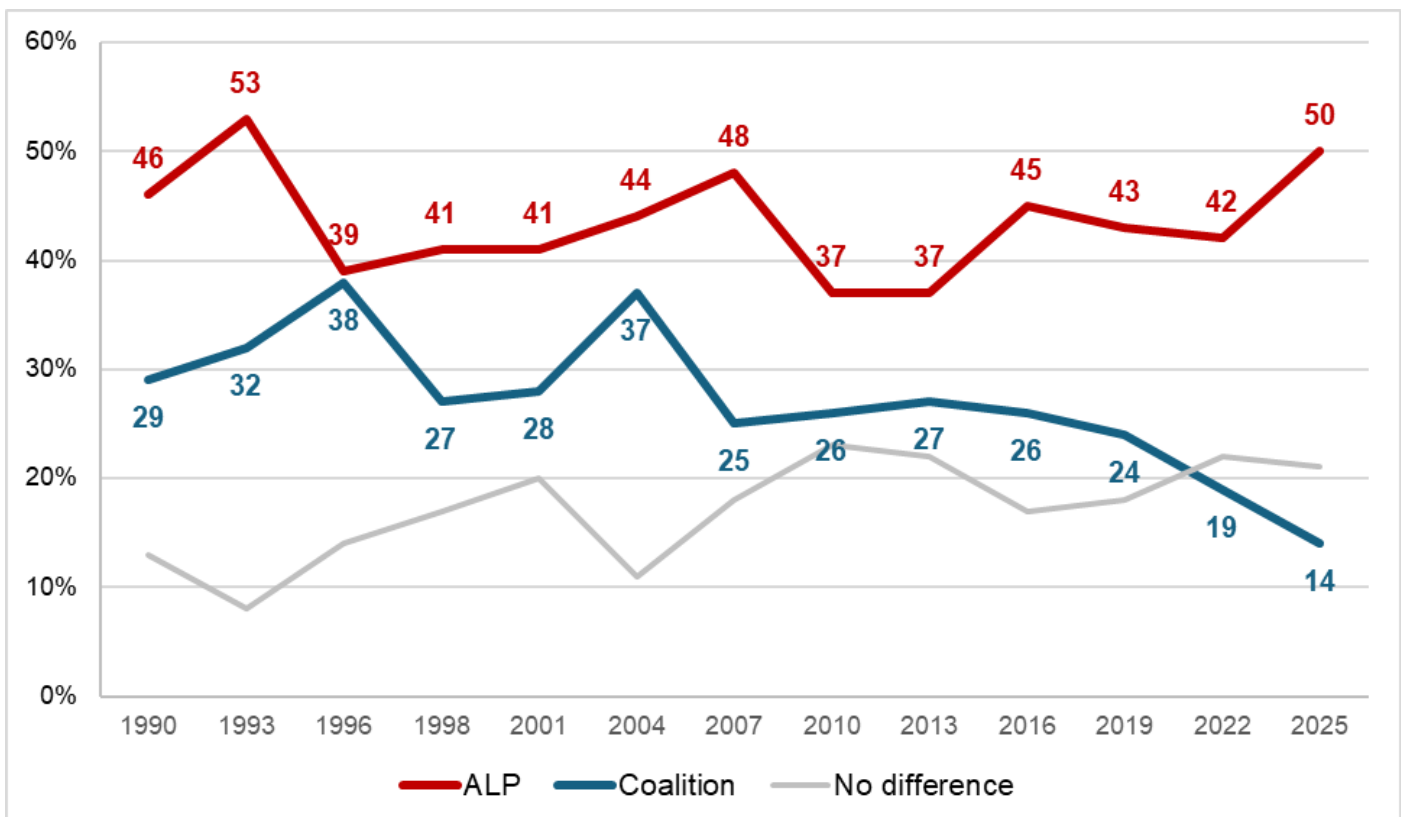

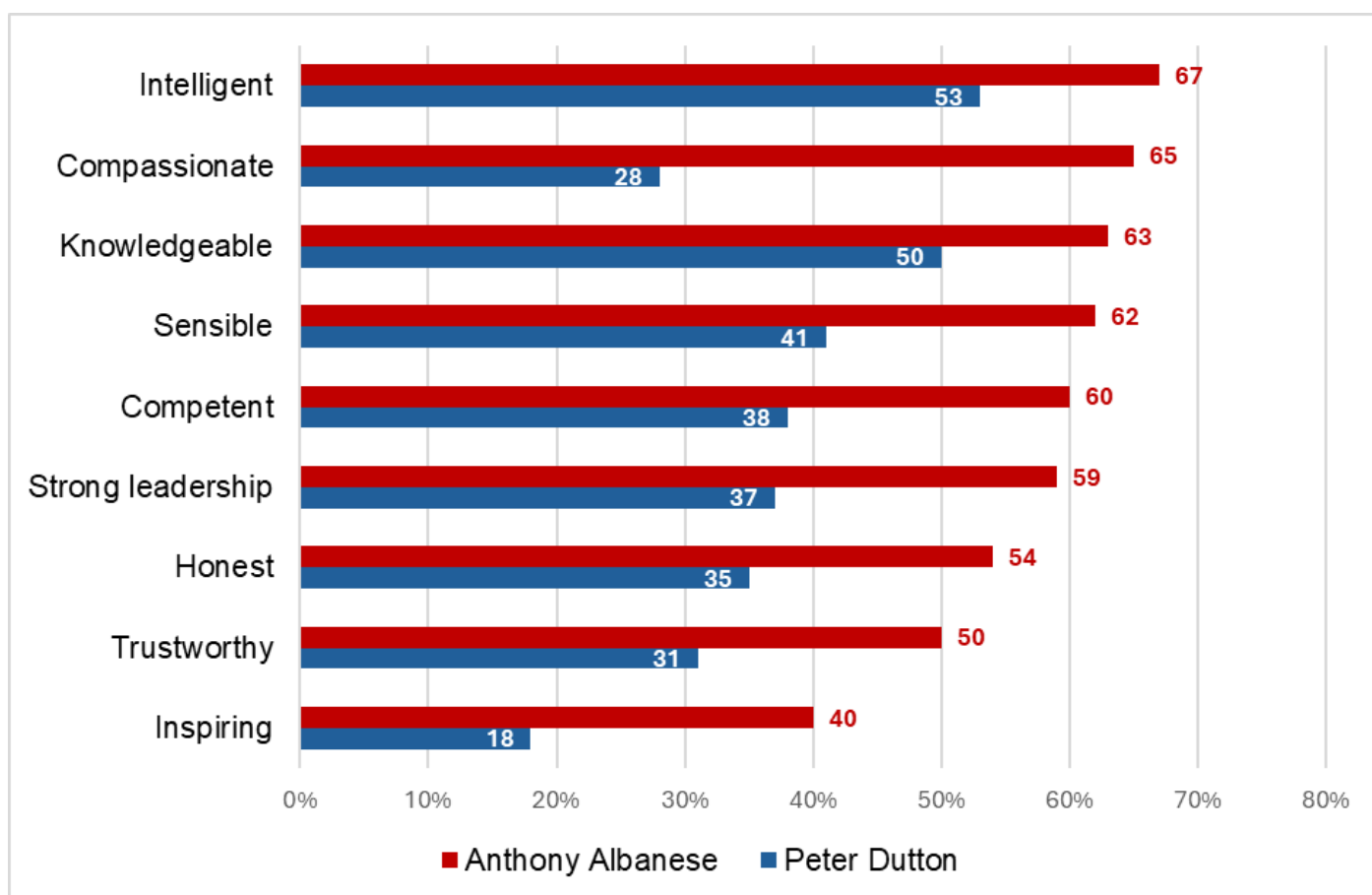**Figure 4: Party with preferred policies on health (AES)**

Leadership

Labor's dominance on leadership was also highlighted by the AES. Peter Dutton was the least popular major party leader in the 40-year history of the study. This advantage was not automatic – it was earnt by the Labor campaign and the contrast between the performance of the two leaders.

Anthony Albanese's day-to-day campaign performance was disciplined and consistent, marked by an ability to connect with voters in every setting – from debates and press conferences to local community events. Peter Dutton's campaign was marked by inconsistency and missteps, including policy backflips, poorly coordinated announcements, and a lack of message discipline.

This was born out in the AES' study of perceived leadership attributes. More than half of the AES' respondents labelled Anthony Albanese intelligent (67%), compassionate (65%), knowledgeable (63%), sensible (62%), competent (60%), a strong leader (59%), honest (54%) and trustworthy (50%).

In contrast, Peter Dutton was only rated positively by 50% of respondents on two of these measures. Albanese outperformed Dutton on all nine leader traits included in the survey.

Figure 5: Leader attributes (AES)

7.2   Barriers to voting for the Coalition

This Review's research also confirmed that voters who switched from Coalition in 2022 to Labor in 2025 pointed to Peter Dutton's leadership as a major barrier to supporting the Coalition. Voters had an unfavourable opinion of the Opposition Leader and felt that his rhetoric was negative, arrogant and aggressive.

Post-election research showed voters felt that the Coalition was out of touch, ran a poor campaign and did not offer meaningful solutions to Australia's key challenges.

There was also strong opposition to the Coalition's nuclear energy policy with criticisms about the cost and the long delivery timelines. Voters also disliked the Coalition's working from home policy due to their personal experience of the benefits.

Both of these policies contributed to voters labelling the Coalition's campaign as disorganised, disunified and making up policy on the run. Voters felt that there was a lack of detail about nuclear energy, while the Coalition's flip-flop on working from home made voters question if the party was up to the job.

The Coalition made missteps throughout the campaign and many of its policies were announced late. Voters felt they had been 'kept waiting' by the Coalition's campaign, which undermined the Coalition's claims of being a credible alternative government.

The quantitative research also found that voters' assessed that the Coalition's campaign was more negative than Labor's campaign.

> **Finding:** The Coalition failed to present itself as a credible alternative government.

7.3   Labor's path to a majority

Labor's achievement in retaining every Labor-held seat and making comprehensive gains is a testament to the quality of Labor's candidates, its selection of target seats, and the local campaigns executed in those target seats.

The variation in results across States and Territories over the last two federal elections also demonstrates the significance of state-based factors which the Labor campaign closely tracked and responded to. The party should expect this trend to continue in the lead-up to the next election.

In addition to success in its target seats, Labor also made gains further up the pendulum in electorates that were not part of the national target seat list, driven by strong grassroots campaigns led by local candidates and branches.

> **Finding:** Labor allocated resources in the right places to secure a pathway to government. The result exceeded expectations at a national and local level, and Labor won seats not on its target list.

> **Recommendation:** Identify the pathway to retaining a majority government and allocate resources effectively to secure that outcome.

> **Recommendation:** Continue integrating awareness of state- and territory-level dynamics into the federal campaign strategy.

7.4   Whose votes changed between 2022 and 2025?

Analysis of the election result commissioned by this Review found that:

- Labor performed particularly well in culturally diverse areas with high concentrations of people with university degrees. Urban seats with these characteristics continued to move towards Labor, building on earlier swings to Labor in 2019 and 2022.

- Labor experienced significant, positive two-party-preferred swings in neighbourhoods with high mortgage ownership. This contributed to Labor making up ground in many traditional outer suburban and regional marginal seats where our vote did not improve in 2022. This was particularly true in middle ring to outer Brisbane, the Hunter region, and northern Tasmania, where Labor experienced significant swings in seats with lower to middle incomes, less cultural diversity, and fewer people with university degrees.

- Areas with larger numbers of people who work from home recorded stronger primary vote swings to Labor. Examples include Bennelong, the coastal areas of Dobell and Robertson, and the Southern Highlands component of Whitlam.

- Labor's campaign efforts had a significant impact. Levels of direct voter contact (DVC) and Labor's ad spend correlated positively with swings to Labor's in the two-party-preferred contest with the Coalition and increases in Labor's primary vote in Labor-Greens contests.

Separate analysis of ANU survey data conducted by Professor Simon Jackman found that rather than wedging Labor, the Coalition's focus on the Voice referendum during the federal election may have backfired significantly. Liberal-leaning voters who recalled voting "Yes" in the 2023 referendum were three times more likely to switch to Labor during the campaign than Liberal-leaning voters who recalled voting "No".[3]

Understanding incumbency effects

Labor Members of Parliament elected in the 2022 election experienced significant primary and two-party-preferred swings towards them. This suggests that new Labor incumbents experienced a positive 'sophomore' effect.

On average, sophomore Members of Parliament who replaced a retiring Labor incumbent at the 2022 election experienced an extra 1% two-party-preferred swing this time around. This effect was doubled to 2% for sophomore Members of Parliament who defeated a Coalition incumbent in 2022.

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3   S. Jackman (2026), 'Turnaround', in M. Sawyer, J. Sheppard, J. Warhurst (eds), Landslide. ANU Press, publication forthcoming.

7.5   The Liberal Party's metropolitan crisis continues

The 2025 result deepened the structural realignment that began in 2022, leaving the Liberal Party in its weakest position since its formation. Voters in what were once metropolitan Liberal strongholds have continued to abandon the Liberal Party, and the Liberals have now lost most of their inner- and middle-urban seats.

After losing power in 2007, the Liberals still held 33 seats out of 87 classified by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) as metropolitan. Today they hold only nine out of 88. In the capital cities, the Liberals only hold two seats in greater Brisbane, one in Melbourne, one in Perth, and none in Adelaide, Hobart, Darwin or Canberra.

Table 10: Seats held by AEC Classification

	2007			2013			2025		
	ALP	**Coalition**	**Other**	**ALP**	**Coalition**	**Other**	**ALP**	**Coalition**	**Other**
Inner metro	29	13		22	20	2	35	2	6
Outer metro	25	20		19	24		35	7	3
Provincial	16	5		9	12		15	9	
Rural	13	27	2	5	34	3	9	25	4
Total	**83**	**65**	**2**	**55**	**90**	**5**	**94**	**43**	**13**

7.6   Contests with the Greens

As outlined earlier in this report, for the first time Labor had a dedicated national focus on Labor-Greens contests. The party tailored resourcing, capacity and capability development to strengthen its campaign efforts in these seats throughout the term and the campaign.

The Greens early decision to pursue a high-conflict, low-compromise approach to dealing with the Labor Government during the term frustrated voters who wanted progress, not obstruction.

The Greens would do well to recognise that their own voters actually want Labor Governments to succeed. Progressive voters backed Labor because they wanted to see real reform delivered – on housing, on climate, on healthcare – and did not want to risk a Liberal Government.

The Greens strategy throughout the term prioritised what the Greens perceived to be their political interests rather than focusing on real change.

In hindsight, the Greens approach over the last term neither benefited them politically nor delivered for those they represent.

Labor's post-election research showed that the prominence of local Labor campaigns, particularly through direct voter contact in Labor-Greens contests, was even more effective than Labor-Coalition contests. When Labor's volunteers canvassed an additional 1% of an electorate, it translated to a 0.15% swing away from the Greens.

7.7   Three cornered contests

As noted earlier in our report, the collapse in the Liberal Party primary accelerated the growth of three-cornered contests in seats that have previously been conventional major party contests.

Even in a federal election, campaigns can be won and lost on local issues and the visible presence and active engagement of local representatives. There is no such thing as a safe seat and campaigns must be attuned to the likelihood of three-cornered contests regardless of where they currently sit on the 2025 post-election pendulum.

Voters reward incumbents who maintain visible and consistent local engagement throughout the electoral cycle. Sustained communication between Members of Parliament and their communities reinforces voters' trust and mitigates electoral volatility.
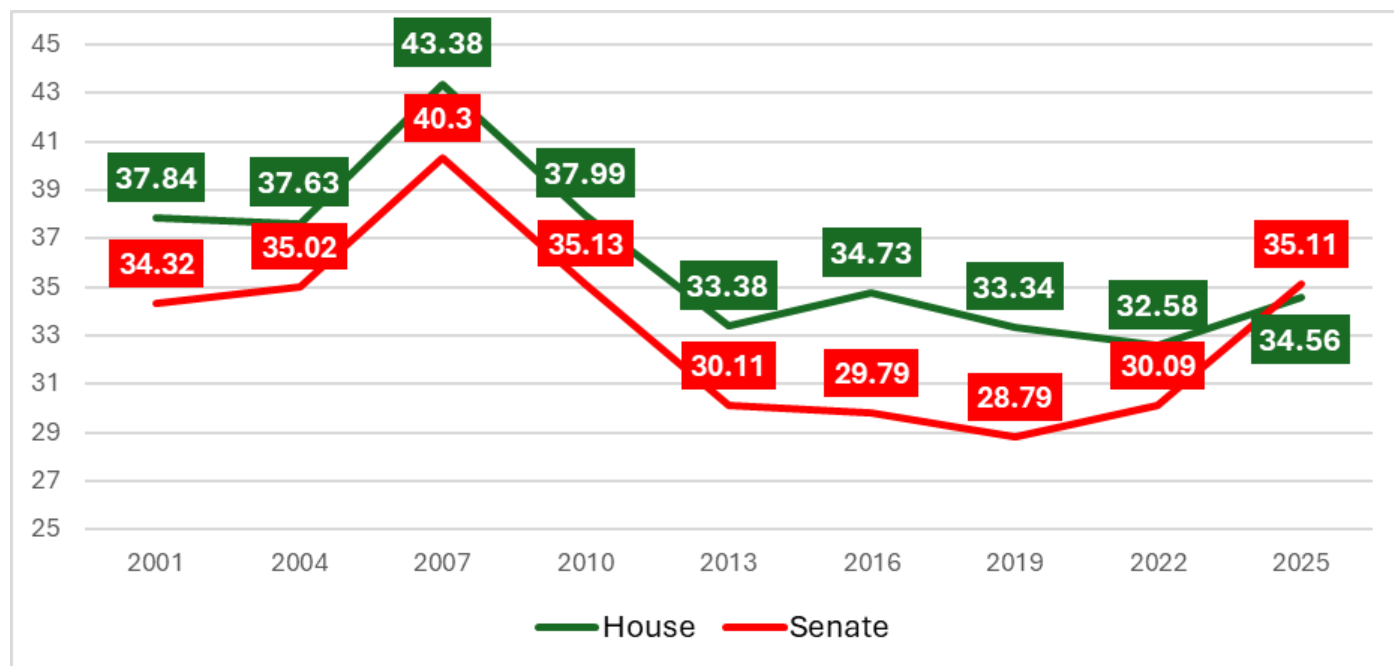
The significant swing towards the Nationals in Bendigo bucked the country-wide trend against the Coalition. This may be explained by the Nationals' candidate splitting from the Coalition's campaign and effectively running as an independent with a strong focus on his personal story and local issues. This demonstrates that a strong local campaign can perform well regardless of how the candidate's party performs nationally.

Recommendation: Maintain awareness of minor parties and three-cornered contests to anticipate risks and establish campaign strategies early.

7.8   The Senate result

Labor's primary vote in the Senate (35.1%) was higher than the House (34.6%) for the first time since 1946. Post-election data analysis identified that this gap was largely driven "tactical voting" by Labor supporters who voted for independent incumbents or challengers in the House, and Labor in the Senate.

Figure 6: Labor's primary vote in the House & Senate since 2001

There were 14 electorates where Labor performed between 10% and 22% better in the Senate than in the House. All were contested by well-resourced independents.

Table 11: Divisions with a Senate-House primary vote differential above 10%

State	Electorate	Labor Senate Primary %	Labor House Primary %	Senate House difference
NSW	Warringah	36.7	14.3	22.4
NSW	Wentworth	32.9	12.9	20.0
NSW	Mackellar	31.7	11.9	19.9
VIC	Kooyong	29.6	11.8	17.7
VIC	Indi	25.7	8.1	17.6
VIC	Goldstein	30.7	13.5	17.2
NSW	Bradfield	36.7	20.1	16.6
TAS	Clark	36.0	20.1	16.0
NSW	Calare	26.1	10.4	15.6
NSW	Cowper	27.0	11.5	15.5
WA	Curtin	29.2	14.6	14.6
VIC	Wannon	24.9	10.4	14.5
SA	Mayo	32.5	21.4	11.1
NSW	Fowler	48.5	37.6	10.8

Across these fourteen electorates there were 496,187 votes cast for independents, 3.2% of all primary votes cast nationally.

Finding: The crossover of Labor's House and Senate primary votes points to the growth of "tactical voting" by Labor supporters who cast a vote for independents competing with Coalition candidates in traditionally safe Coalition seats.

Finding: There is an opportunity for Labor to better demonstrate the importance of voting for Labor in the Senate to deliver meaningful reforms.

Recommendation: Ensure polling day materials advocate a vote for Labor in both the House and the Senate and continue supporting the contribution of Senators to campaigns.

7.9   Early Voting, Informality and Turnout

Many Labor Members of Parliament and campaign staff noted that voting queues were far longer and the voting process markedly less smooth at prepoll stations than on election day.

This review also notes that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election will examine the suitability and potential reform of measures to ensure universal voter access, including polling booth availability and location, early voting, remote polling, and postal voting arrangements.

Finding: Prepoll activity continues its steady rise with a notable shift of voter participation away from Election Day, which increased the demand on both Labor volunteers and Australian Electoral Commission staff.

Finding: The Australian Electoral Commission has an ongoing role to continue investing in education about elections and voting to ensure all voters are enfranchised.

Recommendation: ALP National Secretariat commission a study examining campaign strategies to improve voter participation in low turnout and high informality electorates.

Recommendation: ALP National Secretariat include the resourcing requirements of prepoll in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election.

8. Expectations this term

8.1 Labor's approach to governing

Labor's victory at the 2025 election came down to one, simple thing: people want their lives to get better over the next three years, and in May 2025, they trusted Anthony Albanese and Labor to be their partners in that task.

For Labor, this task of improving people's everyday lives has two parts: doing what we said we would do by delivering on the commitments we made both in our first term and during the election, and demonstrating we are prepared to reform the systems and structures that determine whether Australians can get ahead or are left behind.

Delivery is not optional; it is the foundation upon which Labor's bid for a third term rests. By the end of the 48th Parliament, Labor will be judged on its delivery of its key election commitments including cost of living, housing, healthcare, education and local infrastructure. The electorate's expectations will build throughout the second term and voters will need to feel a change in their personal circumstances.

This focus on delivery will make a meaningful difference to people's lives and build the trust needed to ask the electorate for a third term. Establishing Labor as the long-term party of government - for the first time since the 1980s and 90s - requires not just winning elections but delivering on them. One-term governments promise reform; long-term governments deliver it.

Delivering tangible cost of living measures throughout the first term strengthened the resonance of Labor's cost of living commitments at the 2025 election. Building Medicare Urgent Care Clinics that were operational before the election was pivotal to committing to build more.

The electorate has seen that Labor can execute. The question we can expect them to ask in the lead up to 2028 is whether Labor can execute at scale.

Voters will also want the government to continue identifying solutions to make their lives better. Months on from the election, this is still centred around the cost of living, housing and healthcare. Labor was rewarded at the election for staying in touch with the needs of everyday people and it will be important to continue listening to the electorate and matching their expectations of a good government.

Labor will also be expected to continue building its credentials for addressing climate change. This not only means reducing emissions on a stable pathway to net zero by 2050 but also communicating the opportunities of the transition and supporting the communities most affected. The groundwork for a Future Made In Australia was laid in Labor's first term and there is potential to build on this suite of policies and capitalise on the new jobs offered by a decarbonised economy. To fulfil this agenda, as well as address Australian's more immediate concerns about cost of living, Labor must double down on our agenda to overcome the decade of delay and denial we inherited and secure the transition to cheaper, cleaner and more reliable energy.

Recommendation: Labor should maintain a clear and relentless focus on delivering its core election commitments and on the promise of building a better future for all Australians. This includes tracking and resourcing as needed to ensure the effective communication of delivery consistently throughout the term.

8.2 Continuous community engagement

Outcomes are only part of the picture. Delivery needs regular communication with the electorate on milestones and challenges along the way. Showing tangible progress on the key pillars of Labor's election campaign will be a clear marker of success especially if Labor clearly explains what these policy achievements mean for people day to day.

As contests become more localised, and if the Coalition's primary vote stays low, every seat is susceptible to well-resourced challengers. This includes independents campaigning against the influence of the major parties, Coalition candidates splitting from the national message and running a hyper-local campaign, and candidates mobilising a community of interest around a single issue.

Although the national contest will remain important, the modern political landscape is making federal elections look more and more like 150 by-elections with unique local dynamics. Without a sustained local campaign and visible delivery, any seat – including those considered safe – can become vulnerable to a three-cornered contest triggered by a candidate exploiting a sudden shift in community sentiment.

A key takeaway throughout the review was the importance of strong local campaigns between elections. The most effective safeguard against community-based challengers is consistent, respectful and locally led engagement embedded within ongoing campaign structures. There is no longer such a thing as a safe seat and maintaining government depends on sustained community engagement.

It means that Labor Members of Parliament must engage with their communities throughout the entire term and maintain a strong presence between elections. The local delivery of Labor's commitments will be key to building trust with constituents, but these achievements must be clearly communicated.

Local government projects and support for local community groups provide growing communities with the infrastructure they need to thrive. When government delivers local infrastructure upgrades, this gives Members of Parliament tangible deliverables to communicate to their communities. This includes local community election commitments, the delivery of which should be tracked during the term.

Labor and its politicians need to be in the content business. Prime Minister Albanese and other senior leaders featured in many great videos that were engaging, warm and authentic. This is an area Labor must continue to scale up, with appropriate resources and expertise.

Voters responded positively when they saw a visible effort from Members of Parliament and candidates. This includes door knocking, proactive digital engagement and a strong physical presence at local events and public transport, retail and recreational hubs. It suggests that there is no single activity best for community engagement and communications must instead be layered.

New Members of Parliament interviewed by the review panel were particularly interested in learning more about community engagement, the changing communications landscape and what is expected of them as an elected representative. There is a desire to better understand best practice and benchmarks, and to receive more guidance to ensure they are effectively representing their communities. Many expressed appreciation for experienced Labor Members of Parliament who had shared advice and provided examples of community engagement.

It will also be important for Members of Parliament to continuously fundraise throughout the term to support these activities and maintain a strong presence. Some Members spoke about finding fundraising difficult, competing for support over other campaigns or having limited experience of fundraising.

Finding: No seat is a safe seat but continuous community engagement throughout the term is a strong safeguard to increasing political cynicism, three-cornered contests and unexpected challenges particularly when paired with direct voter contact, local delivery and a strong presence in the local community.

Recommendation: Do not take any seats for granted and sustain strong MP visibility and community engagement between elections to build Labor's standing. This should be regularly monitored by ALP National Secretariat and State and Territory Branches, and enabled through more training, clear guidance, activity reporting and accountability internally.

Recommendation: Provide more proactive support for candidate fundraising, including support through regular training, goal setting and monitoring.

Recommendation: Track local community election commitments throughout the term and support Members of Parliament to communicate delivery milestones.

9. Campaign operations

9.1 Campaign headquarters (CHQ)

Labor's operational success in 2025 rested on early planning, disciplined execution, and adaptability to a rapidly evolving media and electoral environment.

In the pre-campaign period, collaboration between the FPLP Leadership, the Prime Minister's office and the Secretariat built strong foundations and a shared understanding of the campaign strategy. This laid the groundwork for the seamless integration of CHQ and the Leader's travelling party into a single unit that maintained its focus during the formal campaign period.

Within CHQ, the integration of research, advertising, digital innovation, and grassroots mobilisation created a strong campaign that delivered on the ground around the country. Looking ahead, the key lessons are clear: maintain early establishment of CHQ, invest in creative and digital capacity, strengthen local engagement, and embed research-driven decision-making across all levels of the campaign.

The campaign machinery was driven effectively by National Secretary Paul Erickson and Assistant National Secretary Jennifer Light. The review panel received consistent feedback about their leadership and the quality of relationships and engagement across all arms of the campaign. There was a high degree of respect and recognition of the critical role played over the term by the national officials and the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff Tim Gartrell, who also brings a wealth of experience to his role.

Finding: Establishing CHQ early with leaders experienced across multiple elections boosted campaign operations. Strong senior leaders, with a dedicated focus on health and wellbeing, foster a positive and collaborative culture and a healthy office environment.

Finding: While the clearance of materials was effective and timely, the needs of local campaigns are morphing and increasing, particularly as media and technology continue to transform the communications and engagement landscape. Faster dissemination of more content will impact campaign operations.

Recommendation: Identifying key Campaign HQ staff early with a strong focus on building a positive and collaborative workplace culture. Begin succession planning and invest in training and knowledge sharing.

Recommendation: Monitor the implementation of electoral reform and ensure adequate resourcing and awareness across the Party to maintain compliance with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*.

9.2 Research

A robust research program underpinned every aspect of the campaign. ALP National Secretariat maintained continuous tracking of community sentiment throughout the term, ramping up in the final 12 months. Insights were shared regularly across campaign units, enabling agile adjustments to communications and strategy. Communications, framing and engagement were consistently research-informed, and the research program's accuracy was confirmed by the election result.

Labor's research program benefitted from the experience of multiple providers who had been engaged over an extended period, including some who have worked with Labor over multiple election cycles. The program included a variety of methods across different geographies. This allowed for greater monitoring of trends and identification of issues for concern.

9.3   Target Seats

The Target Seats Unit operated as the interface between local campaigns, State and Territory Branches and CHQ. It ensured that candidates and campaigners in target seats were supported to reach and persuade voters as part of Labor's mission to win majority government.

The Target Seats Unit distilled national strategy and messaging to local campaigns, supporting local campaigns to develop communications, cleared materials, rolled out direct voter contact program and provided training to local campaigns.

The Unit worked closely with all teams at CHQ to localise content, information and approach for local campaigns, including policy advisers, program and scheduling, media advisers, and digital, research and advertising teams.

Labor's post-election research found that direct voter contact was associated with a higher Labor primary vote and a stronger two-party-preferred swing. Our evaluation also found that door conversations were more effective than phone conversations, and conversations closer to the election were also more effective. This research also confirmed existing literature suggesting that recency bias is an important factor when it comes to direct voter contact.

Finding: Target seats were effectively supported by central organisers to engage with voters via layers of different campaign activities.

Recommendation: Upgrade Labor's training programs for candidates, staff members and volunteers to support campaigns to layer activities and communications to engage with voters.

9.3   Digital

The CHQ Digital Unit was responsible for Labor's social media channels, online fundraising and web presence. Labor's 2025 digital strategy was developed over the course of 2024, incorporating lessons from the 2022 election, recent State & Territory elections, and the 2023 Voice referendum.

Labor's digital strategy recognised that a campaign can embrace a diversity of formats, messages and content strategies that operate within an overarching framework, as long as the strategic proposition is clear.

The campaign empowered the digital team with resources and a streamlined content approval process to enable agile, high-volume content production, and to stay relevant across audiences and platforms.

This approach delivered significant reach and reinforced Labor's presence in spaces where voters were seeking information about the election, but future success will depend on scaling production capacity and maintaining vigilance against disinformation.

Finding: Labor's digital presence across all key platforms was unprecedented and content creators were empowered to swiftly create engaging content.

Recommendation: Continue building Labor's digital capacity and analysing emerging trends in the digital communication landscape.

9.4   Community engagement

Labor's engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities remained a core strength. A dedicated team produced in-language content, bilingual videos, and community-specific advertising, complemented by sustained outreach by Members of Parliament throughout the term. This approach reinforced Labor's inclusive message and mitigated risks posed by disinformation and divisive rhetoric.

Engagement was not limited to CALD communities; the Party invested in building relationships across diverse constituencies, recognising that authenticity and visibility are critical in an era of declining trust. Future campaigns will need to deepen these efforts, ensuring that engagement is continuous and supported by clear systems for tracking local community election commitments.

Research confirmed that the voting patterns within CALD communities were often driven by substantially the same issues as the broader population – cost of living, housing and healthcare. Delivering real, tangible improvements to people's living circumstances, along with consistent and respectful engagement with CALD communities of interest, will remain integral to winning and retaining support in 2028.

Conversely, since the election, much has been made in the mainstream media and on social platforms about the rise of One Nation and anti-immigration sentiment. However, electoral data and research indicates that such narratives have limited traction among the majority of Australian voters.

Finding: Labor's continuous and sustained engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities remains a core strength. Labor Members of Parliament maintained direct, year-round engagement with multicultural communities, which was both respectful and inclusive.

Recommendation: Maintain Labor's investment in meaningful engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

9.5   Building a stronger membership base

Labor's grassroots strength remains a cornerstone of our electoral success. Branch members and volunteers continue to play a critical role in our local campaigns, driving community engagement and organising.

Investment in training since the 2022 Campaign Review – through the appointment of a national training organiser and expanded programs – proved highly effective in building campaign skills and supporting local organising efforts. This infrastructure should be maintained and strengthened for future campaigns.

Despite these operational gains, a review of Labor's membership commissioned for the National Executive following the election has confirmed that membership growth has not kept pace with Labor's electoral success.

Whilst Labor's 2025 campaign recruited more volunteers than any previous campaign, the Party's branch membership is not growing due to high levels of membership attrition. Retention, rather than recruitment, is the primary challenge.

National initiatives during the 2025 campaign, such as the "*This Is What We Do*" creative campaign and online engagement events, demonstrated Labor's continued potential to attract supporters and build a stronger relationship between the leadership and the membership.

Labor must take this historic opportunity to take advantage of our electoral success and build a stronger, more engaged membership base.

> **Finding:** Expanded training programs significantly improved campaign capability and should be continued.

> **Finding:** Potential for membership growth is constrained by retention challenges and outdated systems, despite strong electoral results.

> **Recommendation:** The National Executive and the State & Territory Branches focus on modernising the membership experience to improve member retention and grow Labor's membership base.

10. The conduct of elections

10.1 Polling booths

As was reported throughout the election campaign, the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church mobilised thousands of members to volunteer for the Liberal Party at booths during prepoll and on election day. More than two dozen of these volunteers were sometimes sighted at a single booth, outnumbering the volunteers of all the other candidates and bombarding voters with information and leaflets.

A common experience of Labor volunteers who provided a submission to the review was aggressive behaviour from volunteers in Liberal shirts at polling booths during prepoll and on election day. Labor volunteers felt unsafe, were intimidated and were unsure if they will be comfortable volunteering their time at a polling booth again.

This behaviour was also reported by Members of Parliament who participated in the review. Candidates were harassed by volunteers wearing Liberal shirts and were, in some cases, blocked from talking with voters.

The poor behaviour by some volunteers in Liberal shirts at polling booths reportedly had a negative response among voters. Voters themselves felt harassed by intimidatory behaviour and alienated by odd slogans when they were handed materials.

Submission and interviews noted that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has limited powers to meaningfully address concerns about the safety and wellbeing of volunteers and voters at polling booths. For example, the Commission cannot fine people for antisocial behaviour or ask them to move on.

The review panel notes that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters's inquiry into the 2025 federal election includes a reference on the "purported increase in incidents of aggressive conduct, deliberate obstruction, and intimidating behaviour towards voters, political participants, volunteers, and AEC officials.

> **Finding:** Labor's volunteers proved a major asset and a factor in the overall result. Branch members, members of affiliated unions, volunteers and supporters continue to be a major electoral advantage that should continue to be harnessed. All volunteers exercising their democratic right should feel safe and be protected from poor behaviour on polling booths.

> **Recommendation:** Polling booth captains, Members of Parliament and candidates should be provided with training in de-escalation and incident reporting in case harassment continues at the next federal election.

> **Recommendation:** ALP National Secretariat set out Labor's concerns about safety at polling booths, and the imperative that the authorities have the necessary resources and powers to enforce the law and keep voters and volunteers safe, in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election.

10.2 Third party activity

Third party campaigns were executed by a range of organisations in the lead up to and during the election period. This includes groups aligned to existing political parties, commercial interests with advocacy goals, and social and environmental organisations.

Conservative-aligned forces in particular increased their use of well-funded, negative campaigns targeting Labor and other opponents. This was also noted by many Labor Members of Parliament, candidates, campaign staff and volunteers, who saw an increase in local election materials with anti-Labor messages produced by third parties.

For future elections, a real risk lies in the dilution of campaign resources and increased competition for media placement. This highlights the need for stronger coordination and smarter coalition-building across progressive movements.

Some third-party campaign materials contained disinformation as well as fake images produced by artificial intelligence. It was also common for the materials to be incorrectly authorised or not authorised at all.

Labor reported these materials to the Australian Electoral Commission both centrally and at polling booths, but the practice continued right up to polling day. This enforcement problem will only compound over the coming years as digital advertising continues to proliferate and highly tailored, AI-driven content permeates campaigns.

The review panel notes that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters's inquiry into the 2025 federal election includes a reference on the suitability of the current authorisation framework and requirements, having regard to the evolution of communication methods and technology.

Recommendation: ALP National Secretariat set out Labor's concerns about the need for authorisation rules to be quickly and consistently enforced across all election participants equally, including third-party campaigns, in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' inquiry into the 2025 federal election.

11. Emerging risks and opportunities

The 2025 Federal Election was the first Australian campaign conducted in the era of widely accessible artificial intelligence tools. The scale and sophistication of their use was relatively limited, but the next Federal Election may represent a step change where these tools and strategies become more deeply embedded, widespread and influential in shaping the broader information environment.

11.1 Artificial Intelligence

Campaign Operations

The 2025 election was the first since the mainstream popularisation of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. AI use at CHQ was largely ad hoc by campaign staff who were already familiar with available tools or were curious about experimenting with platforms to save time or increase output.

In all cases AI required human oversight and was used to supplement not replace. This was also captured in internal policies that guided use. Labor's approach to AI adoption was cautious, human-supervised and appropriate.

AI was also used by Labor's opponents to spread disinformation. This included unlabelled AI-generated videos and images for posters and online content. There is also a risk that AI will be used to interfere with elections in the future.

As use of AI in workplaces becomes more commonplace, all parties and campaigns will need to train staff on the capabilities, risks and limits. Campaigns will require clear protocols for acceptable use of AI tools, whether for analysis, content generation, or workflow management.

> **Recommendation:** Monitor the use of artificial intelligence in future campaigns.

Electoral Integrity

The emerging trend is for bad faith actors to use subtle, cumulative tactics such as spreading misleading information widely and exploiting vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure. As AI-powered techniques and cross-border disinformation evolve, Australian vigilance and investment in election integrity and community resilience will be needed to counter known and rapidly emerging risks.

International evidence shows that AI fundamentally lowers the cost and increases the scale of disinformation operations. Increasingly, people cannot tell authentic from manufactured information. There is a key shift is from easily detectable viral content to thousands of slightly different versions of the same message that are much harder to detect.

The sheer volume fosters fatigue and mistrust as many choose to switch off from news and politics. Coupled with the shift away from mainstream media over the past decade, this further deteriorates the ability of Members of Parliament and Senators to reach their constituencies effectively.

There were several isolated incidents of AI-generated disinformation during the 2025 campaign. While the Australian Electoral Commission detected some instances, its enforcement capabilities remain limited.

This is an emerging field of work and there are many local and international experts with suggested countermeasures, such as platform regulation, rapid response, legal frameworks and transparency requirements, for governments and institutions to consider and adopt.

The review panel notes that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters's inquiry into the 2025 federal election includes references examining ongoing threats of interference in our electoral system, both foreign and domestic, and the suitability of the current authorisation framework and requirements.

11.2 Disinformation

Campaigns

Monitoring of disinformation online via social listening tools was done effectively throughout the campaign. CHQ was able to identify what disinformation was being spread, who was sharing it, and whether it was gaining traction.

Labor had a cross-functional approach that assessed risks and planned early, was adaptable and attuned to issues in many languages, monitored a range of channels and platforms and was able to respond as needed.

Labor's approach and response to disinformation was initiated in the 2022 election and refined throughout the term, informed by research, digital insights monitoring, a review of campaign experience in the 2023 Referendum, and Australian and global evidence of what works to combat disinformation.

While there is some capability to identify and respond to disinformation, further training for Members of Parliament, candidates and campaign teams will continue to build resilience to this risk and ensure Labor continues to be well-placed to respond should it need to.

More broadly, sensible electoral and policy reforms will go a long way to contain disinformation, building societal resilience through media literacy, critical thinking skills and civic education is also critical.

In looking at these issues, the review panel has drawn on international evidence and limited Australian evidence of the spread and impact of disinformation. There is scope to better understand the Australian-specific context and also to develop effective solutions.

> **Finding:** Labor's approach to monitoring and responding to disinformation in 2025 built on the approach developed in the 2022 campaign, and incorporated evidence-based best practices including selective engagement, fact-first messaging, and multilingual monitoring across diverse platforms.

> **Recommendation:** Continue building capabilities at all levels of the campaign to assess and respond to the proliferation of disinformation, relying on best practice guidance from experts in this field of work.

12. Acknowledgements

The Campaign Review panel extends its congratulations to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Parliamentary Labor team on Labor's historic win. The Prime Minister has earned the trust of the Australian people.

We also wish to again recognise the efforts of National Secretary Paul Erickson and Assistant National Secretary Jennifer Light in steering their second successful campaign. Paul and Jen's leadership received widespread praise throughout this review.

In the same vein, we express our thanks to National President Wayne Swan and every member of the Federal Campaign Committee for their combined work in coordinating the campaign.

Our gratitude also goes to all staff who contributed at Campaign Headquarters, the National Secretariat, and within the travelling party for their dedication during the campaign.

Acknowledgment is due to the State & Territory Branches of the Party and Labor's 2025 candidates – both those elected and those who fought valiantly but were not successful this time.

We also thank the team who supported this Review. The panel particularly wishes to highlight the contributions of Ben Latham, Monique Earsman, Bernie Shaw, Nadia Montague, Johanna Kerin, Jack Sticklen, and Zach Alexopoulos.

Finally, we appreciate the National Executive granting us the opportunity to undertake this important project.