

The Jackson Wells Federal Election Guide

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### How Kerry Sibraa sees the contest \*



Kerry Sibraa and Labor's Deputy Leader, Julia Gillard

Here we are in the Spring of 2007 and the ALP has its best chance of regaining government for a decade. There is a mood for change in the Australian electorate. Rudd is seen as a credible alternate Prime Minister and even John Howard admits his long political career is near its end.

Around the country ALP campaigners are reporting a very strong positive response to Kevin Rudd. In fact, people seem to be exercising a preference for Rudd much more than they are for the Labor Party. This anecdotal experience is reinforced in the published polls which are consistently reporting very high approval ratings for the alternate Prime Minister.

The big issue appears to be Work Choices. For instance, in the western suburbs of Sydney and on the central coast of NSW the so-called 'Howard battlers' are returning to Labor in droves. Work Choices was a massive political mistake for the conservatives.

The Senate is key here. Howard's control of the upper house has damaged him politically because the IR bill didn't get the sort of scrutiny and polishing that bills usually get.

While Rudd is a strong prospect in the House of Representatives, and he must win 16 seats in the lower house to form a government, the ALP is unlikely to get control of the Senate. In fact, the most likely outcome is that the Bob Brown led Greens will have the balance of power either on their own or with the Family First Party or with a high profile independent like SA's Nick Xenophon. The Democrats look like being wiped out and will be absent from the Australian Senate for the first time in 30 years. That's a big change.

Rudd has the potential to be a great Prime Minister. He is better prepared than most Opposition Leaders. He is experienced internationally, pro-business, has a real grasp of policy and a great understanding of Commonwealth - State relations.

As PM, he will be deeply immersed in the workings of his government. Although from a 'classic' Labor background, he will be a modern leader - not beholden to trade unions or the party's factions.

*\* Hon Kerry Sibraa AO, a former Senate President, is Special Counsel with Jackson Wells.*

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### Winning the right to form government

Australian Governments are formed by the side that commands the most seats in the 150 member lower house.

Currently there are 60 ALP members, 87 Liberal and National Party members and three independents in the House of Representatives.

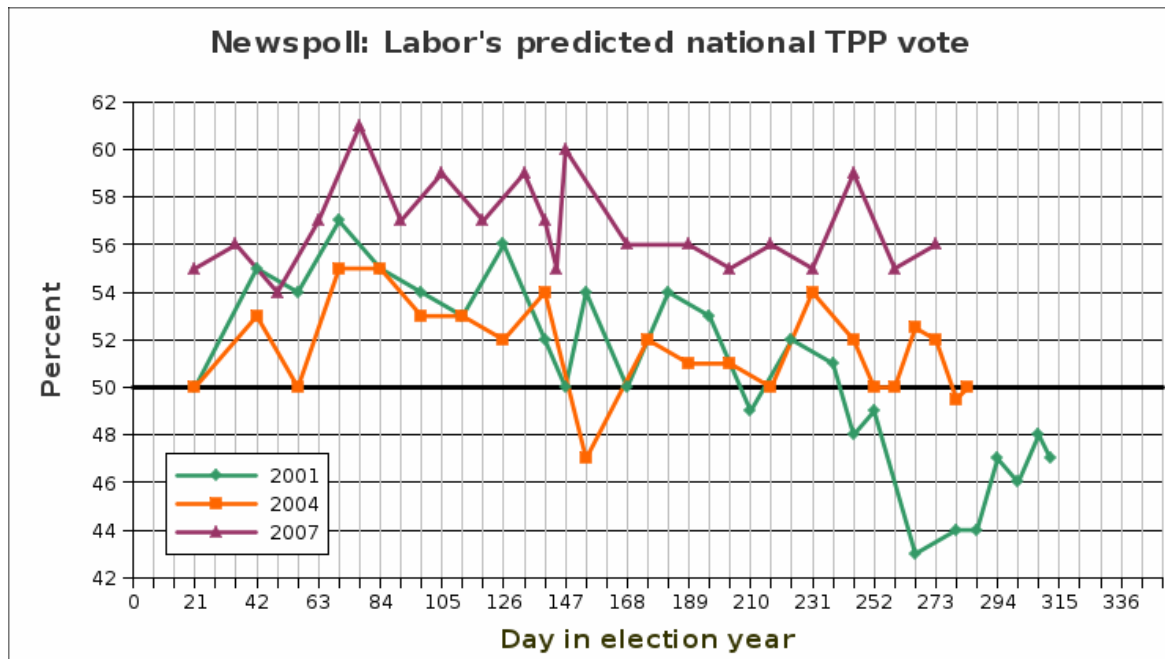
A redistribution has seen NSW lose one seat and Queensland gain an extra seat - Flynn in central Queensland, which is notionally National Party

While the redistribution did favour the ALP across the board, one of the ALP's seats, Parramatta, became notionally Liberal.

To form government in its own right the ALP has to win 16 seats (as well as retain Parramatta). On a two party preferred basis (TPP) that requires a swing of 5% and a 52.3% share of the TPP vote. This is, in fact, slightly less than the result achieved when the ALP won under Whitlam in 1972, 52.7%, and under Hawke in 1983, 53.2%. It is also less than result Howard himself secured in 1996 (53.6%).

Still 16 seats and a 5% swing is a lot in the context of your typical Australian election.

The chart below was taken from the indispensable Oz Politics <http://www.ozpolitics.info/>



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### The key coalition battleground seats

ALP polling is reporting swings of 10 percent and even more in some seats. There will be surprises on election night but, if the ALP wins, most of the gains will come from this list.

1. Kingston SA (southern suburbs) 0.1<sup>1</sup> - Long-time marginal and almost certain ALP gain
2. Bonner Qld (outer suburbs) 0.5 - Won't hold against any sort of pro-ALP swing
3. Wakefield SA (outer suburbs) 0.7 - Vulnerable after inclusion of industrial town Elizabeth
4. Makin SA (north-eastern suburbs) 0.9 - A classic mortgage belt seat
5. Parramatta NSW (western suburbs) 0.9 - Despite redistribution, Owens will retain for ALP
6. Braddon Tas (north-west of the State) 1.1 - Govt bought a hospital to save this seat
7. Hasluck WA (eastern suburbs) 1.8 - Govt will hope WA swims against the eastern tide
8. Stirling WA (northern suburbs) 2.1 - ALP candidate Tinley said to be a campaign star
9. Wentworth NSW (eastern suburbs) 2.5 - Turnbull will have a tough fight
10. Bass Tas (north of the State) 2.6 - Watch for impact of the pulp mill controversy
11. Moreton Qld (inner suburbs) 2.8 - AFP enquiry survivor Gary Hardgrave is under pressure
12. Solomon NT (Darwin) 2.8 - Indigenous issues could play a major part
13. Lindsay NSW (outer western suburbs) 2.9 - Jackie Kelly's exit gives ALP a real chance
14. Eden-Monaro NSW (south coast) 3.3 - Colonel Mike Kelly, Iraq war opponent, is running for the ALP but Liberal Party has hopes Gary Nairn can defend it
15. Bennelong NSW (north shore/inner west) 4.2 - PM vs McKew, the most publicised contest
16. Dobell NSW (central coast) 4.8 - ALP polling very strongly in this region
17. Deakin Vic (eastern suburbs) 5.0 - Last time the Scoresby Tollway issue helped the Libs
18. McMillan Vic (east of the State) 5.0 - Sitting member has been defeated at 5 of the last 6 elections
19. Corangamite Vic (west of the State) 5.3 - Older than the PM, Stewart McArthur is running again.
20. Boothby SA (southern suburbs) 5.4 - ALP running columnist and football wife, Nicole Cornes
21. Page NSW (north coast) 5.5 - ALP polling suggests this seat could be vulnerable
22. Blair Qld (Brisbane valley) 5.7 - Includes Ipswich and made marginal by redistribution
23. La Trobe Vic (outer suburbs) 5.8 - Another 'scoresby' seat, will be closer tussle this time
24. Paterson NSW (Hunter Valley) 6.1 - ALP polling suggests it could win this seat
25. Herbert Qld (Townsville) 6.2 - ALP candidate is a high profile local entrepreneur

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<sup>1</sup> Percentage TPP swing needed for ALP to win seat

## The Senate will enter a new ‘green’ era?

### How the Senate is elected

The current Senate continues until 30 June 2008. The Coalition will have a majority until then no matter what happens. Of the Senate’s 76 members, 40 are retiring (up for re-election) - six from each State and two from each Territory. The Senate is elected by proportional representation - a quota is 100 divided by the number to be elected plus one.

Preferences are critical. In 2004, Fielding from Family First was elected with 0.16 of a quota on primary votes because all the other parties directed their preferences to him.

Senators	Coalition	ALP	Greens	Australian Democrats	Family First
Retiring	20	14	2	4	0
Continuing	19	14	2	0	1

### Observations

Without detailed polling, which won’t become available until further into the campaign, it is difficult to predict who might win the crucial sixth seat in each state.

This election will mark the end of the Australian Democrats as a force in national politics.

Bob Brown is up for re-election in Tasmania and is certain to get back in. After 30 June next year he could be one of the most powerful people in Australian politics.

### Likely outcome

The most likely outcome is that the **Greens gain the balance of power**. This will happen if the Greens win the 6th position in more than one State and/or other minor parties win a 6th position. In this scenario the ALP will pick up 18 or 19 seats for a total of 32 or 33; the Coalition will have 34 or 35 in the new Senate and the Greens have up to 6 positions and Family First 1 or 2. There is an outside chance that the Senate could be deadlocked if the coalition can hang on in key states or secure the support of Family First and / or other conservative independents.

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### A new generation ALP caucus

A strong showing by Labor will change the look of its caucus and probably its front bench, if not immediately then certainly over time. And some old-timers like Kim Beazley and Carmen Lawrence have retired. Here are some likely new members to watch.

Candidate	Seat	Background
Mark Arbib	Senate (NSW)	NSW ALP State Secretary
Mike Bailey	North Sydney (NSW)	Former ABC weatherman & commercial radio talkback host
George Colbran	Herbert (Qld)	Owens a string of McDonalds franchises in Townsville and Ingham
Greg Combet	Charlton (NSW)	ACTU Secretary
Bob Debus	Macquarie (NSW)	NSW Cabinet Minister
Mark Dreyfus QC	Isaacs (Vic)	Involved in prominent cases including stolen generation litigation
Gary Gray	Brand (WA)	Former ALP National Secretary & Woodside lobbyist
Colonel Mike Kelly	Eden-Monaro (NSW)	Former military officer and strong critic of government's Iraq policy
Richard Marles	Corio (Vic)	ACTU OHS officer
Maxine McKew	Bennelong (NSW)	Journalist ABC / Bulletin
George Newhouse	Wentworth (NSW)	Lawyer Solon/Rau cases & Mayor of Waverly
Bill Shorten	Maribyrnong (Vic)	AWU National Secretary, ALP National Executive, MBA Melbourne Business School
Major Peter Tinley AM	Stirling (WA)	Former SAS officer and now owner of start-up manufacturing business

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### The historical context

- If he wins, Kevin Rudd will become the eleventh Labor Prime Minister of Australia, the fourth from Queensland and the 26<sup>th</sup> PM overall.
- If the ALP is elected, Julia Gillard will become Australia's first female Deputy Prime Minister.
- Frank Forde was the last Queenslander to be Prime Minister - for 8 days in 1945 after the death of John Curtin. He holds the record for being the shortest serving PM.
- Forde was also the last Australian PM to hold a seat outside NSW and Victoria.
- There have been two other Queensland PMs - Arthur Fadden (Country Party) and Andrew Fisher (ALP).
- So far, Bill Hayden is the only Queenslander not to make a successful transition from Opposition Leader to PM.
- Bob Hawke is the longest serving ALP Prime Minister (8 years, 9 months, 10 days); well short of Robert Menzies' record of 16 years continuously and 18 years in total.
- Stanley Melbourne Bruce is the only Australian PM to lose his seat at a Federal election. The election was brought on because the Parliament failed to pass his Maritime Industries Bill, designed to do away with the Conciliation and Arbitration Court and return arbitration powers to the States.
- Just 18 of the 150 lower house seats are named after women.
- John Gorton is the most recent Prime Minister to have a seat named after him.
- At 31 January 2007, there were 13 199 152 enrolled electors.
- The first man to replace a defeated PM has never led that party back into office in the post WW2 period. Evatt, Snedden, Hayden, Peacock and Beazley are all members of this inglorious club. Costello would not want to join them.

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## Key websites

The Internet will play a big role in this campaign and will also provide a rich source of information.

**Australian Electoral Commission** - A must for election night with its live feeds from the tallyroom. It's so good that the AEC tried to do away with the tallyroom altogether. <http://www.aec.gov.au/>

**ABC Unleashed** - One of the media outlets to spring up offering a broader range of election opinion. <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/>

**Anthony Green** - Excellent election analyst - <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/federal/2007/>

**Corporate Engagement** - JWM personnel will continue to provide comments and insights right up to election day and beyond. <http://trevorcook.typepad.com>

**Andrew Bartlett** - <http://andrewbartlett.com/blog/> - still Australia's only 'real' politician blogger.

**Google Election Site** - <http://www.google.com.au/election2007> Includes news on each electorate and YouTube 'channels' for each party

**Oz Politics** - <http://www.ozpolitics.info/> One of a handful of excellent psephologist sites. A fantastic resource on polls and other stats. Other seriously analytical sites include <http://www.pollbludger.com/> and <http://www.mumble.com.au/>

**YouDecide07** - A "citizen journalism" project involving QUT, SBS, On Line Opinion, The Brisbane Institute and Cisco Systems. <http://youdecide2007.org/>

## Party sites

[www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au)  
[www.labor.com.au](http://www.labor.com.au)  
[www.nationals.org.au](http://www.nationals.org.au)  
[www.greens.org.au](http://www.greens.org.au)  
[www.democrats.org.au](http://www.democrats.org.au)  
[www.familyfirst.org.au](http://www.familyfirst.org.au)  
[www.kevin07.com.au](http://www.kevin07.com.au)

## Media sites

<http://www.federalelection.com.au/>  
<http://blogs.news.com.au/news/blogocracy/>  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/tag/federal-election-2007/>