



Hard days and nights: the final 147 days of the Gillard Government

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Introduction

The 2010 election produced a hung parliament, leaving Julia Gillard as caretaker Prime Minister while negotiations took place as to which party would form government. Because the ALP and the Coalition had each emerged with 72 seats in the House of Representatives, both parties needed the support of at least four other MPs in order to attain a majority in the House and form government.

In the weeks immediately following the election there was frenzied activity as both major parties sought to secure agreements with the independents and minor party MPs that would deliver the voting support on the floor of the House required for either major party to form and maintain government. Negotiations took place over 17 days, largely in the public spotlight.

Ultimately the ALP secured agreements for support from three Independents—Tony Windsor, Robert Oakeshott, and Andrew Wilkie—and the Greens MP Adam Bandt, enabling Gillard to reach the requisite 76 votes and form a minority government. Julia Gillard was duly re-appointed Prime Minister on 14 September 2010.¹

Thereafter she endured what many considered to be the toughest of political environments—a largely disillusioned electorate; a hostile, often vicious press; herself burdened by scandals of others' making and pursued by allegations of her own past misdemeanours; and relentless leadership speculation within the Labor Caucus that created an aura of instability around her government and raised the ire and anxiety of citizens.

This paper describes the key events and issues that dominated the 147 days between Gillard's National Press Club announcement in January that an election would be held 14 September 2013, and the Labor Caucus ballot on Wednesday 26 June 2013 which saw Gillard replaced as leader by Kevin Rudd, whom Gillard had herself deposed on Wednesday 24 June 2010.

1. Australian Government, [Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, no. S161, 16 September 2010](#), accessed 30 November 2010.; [Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, no. S162, 16 September 2010](#), accessed 30 November 2010.

Gillard announces date of the 2013 election

On 30 January 2013, during an address to the National Press Club entitled ‘The work of 2013’, Prime Minister Gillard announced the date of the 2013 election.² At the time, the Prime Minister was embroiled in an internal party controversy over her decision to endorse as Labor’s lead candidate for the Senate in the Northern Territory the prominent Indigenous Olympian and activist Nova Peris—to the detriment of incumbent Senator Trish Crossin.³

In her Press Club speech, the Prime Minister—having outlined her assessment of the nation’s position, and the key Labor issues and initiatives on which her government was focussed—stated her intention to ‘act so Australia’s Parliament and Government serves their full three-year term and it is clear and certain when the election will be held’.⁴ She said that she did not seek to start ‘the nation’s longest election campaign. Quite the opposite, it should be clear to all which are the days of governing and which are the days of campaigning’.⁵

Gillard’s announcement that the next Federal election would be on Saturday 14 September was the earliest a federal election date has ever been announced.⁶ Her decision had been made after consultation with a ‘few senior colleagues’.⁷

The subsequent editorial in *The Canberra Times* was fairly typical of the mainstream press comment. Describing the decision as ‘surprising, even courageous’, the editorial cited Gillard’s ‘desire to create an environment in which voters can focus on matters of significance without being distracted by petty politics’, and opined that the Coalition would be ‘under increased pressure to flesh out policies that it has, until now, enunciated only in broad brush terms’.⁸

The Prime Minister reiterated her arguments for announcing the election date in interviews following the Press Club address, saying she wanted to ‘cut out all of the silly nonsense that goes with election date speculation’ and ‘give enough notice so everyone contesting the election can put out all of their detailed and properly costed plans before election day’.⁹

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2. J Gillard (Prime Minister), ‘[The work of 2013: Address to the National Press Club, Canberra](#)’, 30 January 2013, accessed 5 February 2013.
 3. S Cullen, ‘[ALP executive backs Gillard's push for Peris](#)’, *ABC News*, 23 January 2013, website, accessed 11 February 2013.
 4. J Gillard (Prime Minister), ‘*The work of 2013: Address to the National Press Club, Canberra*’, op. cit.
 5. Ibid.
 6. The previous earliest election date announcement was in 1966 when a House of Representatives only election was announced on Thursday 11 August and held on 26 November. This was a period of three and a half months compared to this year’s period of seven and a half months. The previous earliest announcement for a half-Senate and House of Representatives election was on 25 February 1913 with the election held three months and seven days later on 31 May. [This Flagpost](#) details previous early election announcements, reactions to this year’s announcement and significant dates in the election timetable.
 7. P Lion, ‘[Ministers left out of the loop over election](#)’, *The Hobart Mercury*, 31 January 2013, p. 8, accessed 6 February 2013.
 8. ‘[PM steals march but road is long](#)’, *The Canberra Times*, editorial, 31 January 2013, p. 18, accessed 5 February 2013.
 9. J Gillard (Prime Minister), [Transcript of interview with Karl Stefanovic](#), 31 January 2013, accessed 5 February 2013.

Dissenting voices were quick to emerge from some in the business community, with a range of chief executives fearing a ‘policy paralysis’ in a government that was in ‘permanent election mode’—but it was a view not universally shared.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the idea that the campaign would be the longest in history became quickly entrenched in the public consciousness:

When Prime Minister Julia Gillard told the National Press Club that she did not want to start “the nation’s longest election campaign”, the whole room laughed. Because that’s what she had just done. She knew it, the press gallery knew it, and the public knows it.¹¹

But one observer, long-serving journalist Mungo MacCallum, offered the perspective that, while Gillard’s action was unprecedented, it was not extraordinary:

After all, what she did was effectively declare the present government to be on a fixed term, with polling day to be on a definite and predictable date – no ambushes, no surprises. This is precisely the reform that the more thoughtful sections of the media have been calling for almost since federation, a timetable which would bring a measure of certainty to what has become a fairly chaotic process.¹²

Within hours of the announcement, punters were backing the Coalition to win, and the agency Sportsbet put the Coalition as \$1.25 favourites.¹³

Implications for the Australian Public Service (APS) and others

The caretaker period between writs and polling day provides a buffer to the APS that enables the APS to draw a stronger distinction between its obligations to be responsive to ministers and the impartiality expected of public servants during an election campaign. With the election date announced by Gillard, the intervening seven months before such a buffer would be established was inevitably going to cause some difficulties—as academics Anne Tiernan and Jennifer Menzies explained in a piece in *The Canberra Times*:

The complexity which will now confront the public service ... is two-fold. Firstly, to separate requests for continuity of government business from those for information which could confer an unfair advantage during the election campaign. Public funds will continue to pay the expenses of ministers and their staff until the official campaign launch, now increasingly held towards the end of the campaign. Separating genuine campaigning activities from responding to the normal course of requests from a ministerial office will require judgment by senior officials and real mastery of their craft.¹⁴

There were, of course, some logistical benefits to be derived from knowing an election date well in advance. Staffing and leave arrangements could be better planned and legislative programs could be

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10. K Walsh, ‘[Business fears paralysis](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 31 January 2013, p. 1, accessed 5 February 2013.
 11. C Berg, ‘[If it looks and smells like a campaign, then it’s a campaign](#)’, *The Drum*, 5 February 2013, ABC website, accessed 5 February 2013.
 12. M MacCallum, ‘[Fixed term](#)’, *The Monthly*, 5 February 2013, accessed 26 July 2013.
 13. ‘[Punters flock to lay money against ALP](#)’, *The Courier-Mail*, 31 January 2013, p. 12, accessed 6 February 2013.
 14. A Tiernan and J Menzies, ‘[Election route a well-trodden minefield](#)’, *The Canberra Times*, 1 February 2013, p. 15, accessed 6 February 2013.

adjusted. As the *AFR*'s political editor Laura Tingle noted, major structural savings foreshadowed for the Budget in May were unlikely to be passed by Parliament before the writs were issued.¹⁵

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet publishes [Guidance on Caretaker Conventions](#). The guidelines are an aid and adjunct to the Caretaker Conventions—they are not the Conventions themselves, a point that was stressed by a DPMC official during an Estimates Committee hearing that addressed these matters.¹⁶ The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet ruled that the Federal Opposition could begin its consultations with the APS on 27 June 2013, three months before the expiration of Parliament.¹⁷

On the caretaker conventions more broadly, a senior DPMC official advised a Senate Estimates Committee hearing on 11 February 2013 that the caretaker provisions had not been activated because the Prime Minister had 'not yet formally announced the election. . . that will occur at the time (of) the Prime Minister advising the Governor-General she will dissolve the House of Representatives'.¹⁸

Election advertising

The [Broadcasting Services Act 1992](#) sets out the rules governing broadcasters' political coverage during election periods.¹⁹ Section 79A of the [Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983](#) contains the same definition of 'election period' as the *Broadcasting Services Act*.²⁰ These Acts could reasonably be interpreted as suggesting that the election period for the 2013 Federal election had already begun, because the proposed polling day had been publicly announced. However, on the DPMC advice cited above, the election period would not begin until the Parliament was dissolved and the writs issued.

On 12 February 2013, the Australian Communications and Media Authority—which administers the *Broadcasting Services Act*—issued a [statement](#) in response to the confusion being generated around the media's obligations:

Under the *Broadcasting Services Act*, during an 'election period' broadcasters must 'give reasonable opportunities for the broadcasting of election matter to all political parties contesting the election'. However, broadcasters are 'not [required] to broadcast any matter free of charge'. The ACMA will be administering the *Broadcasting Services Act* on the basis that an 'election

15. L Tingle, '[Bills unlikely to be passed](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 6 February 2013, p. 11, accessed 11 February 2013.

16. Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, [Estimates - Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet](#), 11 February 2013, p. 60, accessed 1 August 2013.

17. S Maher and D Crowe, '[Commercial TV tells Libs: campaign is on](#)', *The Australian*, 12 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 12 February 2013.

18. Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, *Estimates - Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet*, op. cit., p. 81, accessed 1 August 2013.

19. Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), '[Election Advertising – Frequently Asked Questions](#)', website, accessed 12 February 2013.

20. [Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983](#), section 79A (5) (b)

period' has not yet commenced. The ACMA's approach is consistent with legal advice to the Government that the election period has not yet commenced.²¹

The *Australian Financial Review* reported that ACMA officials told estimates hearings that 'their initial advice was the formal period had started but they reversed that position on advice from the government solicitor'.²² Media analyst Mark Day was highly critical of the Government's interpretation of 'election period':

[The law] is not there to be ignored or blatantly flouted if it doesn't happen to suit you. ... [The] government's decision to carry on as if the election date had not been announced seems common sense. But it is still against the law, and this is what rankles.²³

February 2013: enter the pre-campaign

The week immediately following the election date announcement proved a tumultuous one. As the Opposition Leader was giving his Press Club address, news emerged that the embattled ex-Labor MP Craig Thomson had been arrested.²⁴ Thomson—engulfed in controversy and widely considered to have wrought 'an unbelievable amount of damage on Gillard and her government'²⁵—was facing fraud charges that he vehemently rejected; charges which, if proven, could lead to imprisonment and discharge from Parliament. Thomson was entitled to continue attending Parliament and to the presumption of innocence. The Government decided that it would continue to accept Thomson's vote.²⁶ Thomson's arrest intensified a sense of despondency in Labor, contributing to a 'messy start' to the election year.²⁷

On 2 February, two senior Cabinet colleagues of Gillard's—Senate Leader Chris Evans and Attorney-General Nicola Roxon—announced their resignations. Both Senator Evans and Ms Roxon had alerted Gillard twelve months earlier to their respective decisions not to contest the 2013 election, but some nevertheless interpreted the resignations as another indication that Labor was in crisis.²⁸

The Liberals, too, encountered something of a messy start to the year with a minor brouhaha erupting over the Liberals' preselection timetable and process for the Senate seat in the Australian Capital Territory. Local ACT Liberal leader Zed Seselja had declared that he was challenging

21. Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), '[Election period](#)', statement 12 February 2013, ACMA website, accessed 13 February 2013.

22. B Holgate and others, '[Campaign not on yet, ACMA says](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 13 February 2013, p. 7, accessed 13 February 2013.

23. M Day, '[Say what Labor will. But law's the law](#)', *The Australian*, 18 February 2013, p. 24, accessed 18 February 2013.

24. M Grattan, '[Thomson charged, but Abbott less than arresting](#)', *The Canberra Times*, 1 February 2013, p.14, accessed 18 February 2013.

25. Ibid.

26. M Skulley, P Coorey and G Daley, '[Labor protects Thomson's vote](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 1 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 6 February 2013

27. Ibid. See also M Kenny, '[Surprise arrest catches Labor off guard](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 2013, accessed 6 February 2013.

28. M Kenny and J Wright, '[Roxon, Evans shock resignations prompt cabinet reshuffle](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 February 2013, accessed 23 July 2013 ; M Grattan, '[A new start that looks like chaos](#)', *Sun Herald*, 3 February 2013, p. 9, accessed 23 July 2013.

incumbent Liberal Senator Gary Humphries, and a dispute arose following allegations by Humphries' supporters that the number of pre-selectors able to vote had been 'artificially limited'.²⁹ Mr Abbott reportedly showed strong support for Humphries, calling for all eligible Liberal Party members to have a say in the preselection process.³⁰ Subsequent meetings of the ACT Liberals saw Seselja confirmed as the Liberal Senate candidate.³¹

Newspoll voting figures issued on 4 February 2013 indicated that Labor's primary vote was sitting at 32 per cent, the Coalition's at 48 per cent, with the two-party preferred vote showing Labor on 44 per cent and the Coalition on 56 per cent.³² The Greens were at nine per cent.³³ The preferred prime minister figures revealed Gillard on 41 per cent, with Abbott on 39 per cent and 20 per cent of voters uncommitted.³⁴ Of the two leaders, Gillard's dissatisfaction rating was 52 per cent, Abbott's 56 per cent.³⁵

Stories began to emerge that pressure was building within Labor to assign Kevin Rudd a more prominent role in the forthcoming election campaign.³⁶ Rudd was also questioned about speculation that he would challenge Gillard's leadership, to which he replied 'give us a break', saying his only mission was 'to stop Tony Abbott becoming prime minister'.³⁷ Speculation about a change of Labor leadership was a feature of the early months of 2013, notwithstanding Rudd's repeated statements that he would not challenge the Prime Minister.³⁸

Meanwhile, the controversial [Minerals Resource Rent Tax](#) (MRRT) was stirred again as an issue with confirmation that the tax would raise only a small fraction of the \$2 billion it was originally expected to raise in 2012–13. Some MPs had raised concerns about the interaction of the MRRT with state mining royalties and the possibility of 'plugging the royalties hole' in the MRRT.³⁹

On 18 February 2013—a date described as 'a painful landmark' for Gillard⁴⁰—the *Australian Financial Review* published [a Nielsen poll](#) that offered nothing but bad news for Labor:

- Gillard lost her lead over Abbott as preferred Prime Minister

29. N Towell, '[Seselja's Senate bid stirs disquiet](#)', *The Canberra Times*, 6 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 11 February 2013.

30. R Peake, '[Abbott takes aim at preselection 'ambushes'](#)', *The Canberra Times*, 14 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 14 February 2013.

31. '[Seselja wins Senate battle](#)', *CityNews.com.au*, 28 March 2013, accessed 15 April 2013.

32. *Newspoll*, '[Federal voting intention and leaders' ratings](#)', 1–3 February 2013, accessed 8 October 2013.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. D Shanahan, '[Pressure on PM to revive Rudd as party asset](#)', *The Australian*, 6 February 2013, p. 4, accessed 11 February 2013. See also: S Maher and M McKenna, '[Chorus grows on using Rudd in ALP campaign](#)', *The Australian*, 6 February 2013, p. 4, accessed 11 February 2013.

37. '[Time for our politicians to get serious about policies](#)', *The Canberra Times*, editorial, 6 February 2013, p. 11, accessed 11 February 2013.

38. P Coorey, '[Gillard backers firm as Rudd camp stirs](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 15 February 2013, p. 11, accessed 15 February 2013.

39. P Coorey, '[Labor stews over fix for mining tax](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 12 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 12 February 2013.

40. G Kitney, '[Gillard defiant as oblivion beckons](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 19 February 2013, p. 5, accessed 19 February 2013.

- Rudd stretched his lead as preferred Labor leader over Gillard
- Labor's primary vote fell five percentage points to 30 per cent
- the Coalition's primary vote rose four points to 47 per cent
- on a two-party preferred basis, the Coalition led Labor 56 per cent to 44 per cent.⁴¹

There were immediate Labor leadership rumblings.⁴² On the following day, in an address to the National Press Club in Canberra, Australian Greens leader Christine Milne accused the Labor Government of several failings—most notably 'refusing to take on the mining industry'—and had thereby 'effectively ended its agreement with the Greens'.⁴³ The media declared that 'the gloves were off', with Gillard saying that the Greens were 'fundamentally a party of protest rather than a party of government'.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, controversial WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange declared his intention to stand as a Senate candidate for his new WikiLeaks Party, saying that if he were elected 'the US Department of Justice would back down from its espionage investigation in order to avoid sparking an international incident'.⁴⁵ It later emerged that former Liberal Party staffer Greg Barns would be national campaign director for the new party.⁴⁶ Election analyst Antony Green considered that Assange was 'in the mix' but only if many minor parties gave him their preferences, as his chances on first preferences were 'about nil'.⁴⁷

Constitutional lawyer and academic Anne Twomey compared Assange's nomination to that of Earl Grey—of tea fame—who was (without his consent) nominated and elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly in 1850, only to vacate his seat due to his failure to attend a sitting.⁴⁸ Twomey noted several potential problems for Assange:

- the validity of his enrolment as an elector, given his apparent absence from Australia since 2007

41. P Coorey, '[Gillard's poll support collapses](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 18 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 18 February 2013.

42. AAP, '[Rudd denies leadership whispers despite poll bump](#)', *Business Spectator*, 17 February 2013, accessed 21 February 2013.

43. C Milne (Australian Greens Leader), '[Australian democracy at the crossroads: The mining industry and the quarry past versus the people and the innovative future](#)', speech to National Press Club, Canberra, 19 February 2013, accessed 21 February 2013.

44. J Kelly and V Edwards, '[Gloves of in ALP-Greens stoush](#)', *The Australian*, 21 February 2013, p. 4, accessed 21 February 2013.

45. P Starke, '[Senate bid for freedom](#)', *The Courier-Mail*, 18 February 2013, p. 10, accessed 18 February 2013.

46. P Dorling, '[WikiLeaks names former Lib staffer to run campaign](#)', *The Age*, 2 April 2013, p. 7, accessed 12 April 2013.

47. J Swan, '[Assange's Senate chances slim even with preferences](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 April 2013, accessed 29 April 2013.

48. A Twomey, '[Senator Assange?](#)', *Constitutional Critique*, 26 April 2013, accessed 18 July 2013.

- a constitutional prohibition upon the election of a person who is ‘entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power’—in this case, the rights and privileges of Ecuador, the country that had given him asylum⁴⁹

In a speech to the Australian Business Economists on 22 February, Treasurer Wayne Swan [announced the development of legislation that would provide for a full post-election audit](#) by the Parliamentary Budget Office of all parties’ election promises and costings within 30 days of the poll’s conclusion.⁵⁰

The next day—and with the media daily reporting ICAC proceedings against former NSW state Labor MPs—senior journalist Lenore Taylor conveyed the view generally held by the Press Gallery of a ‘wildness sweeping Australian politics’, and ‘the spectre, from Labor’s point of view, of Tony Abbott gaining control of the Senate... That would leave little impediment to the Coalition undoing pretty much everything that Labor has done in the past five years’.⁵¹

Journalist Paul Kelly opined that Labor was suffering ‘a crisis of identity as a political institution’.⁵² In a similar vein, Laurie Oakes painted a grim picture of Labor’s prospects, saying that Gillard would ‘lose badly ... worse than Paul Keating’s 1996 defeat; worse even than the anti-Whitlam routs of 1975 and 1977’.⁵³ A *Newspoll* published on 26 February showed Labor’s primary support had dropped to 31 per cent, with the Coalition down one point to 47 per cent.⁵⁴ Gillard’s rating as preferred prime minister was 36 per cent, down five points.⁵⁵

March 2013

In what was described as a bid to win back Labor’s heartland, Gillard spent the first week of March in Western Sydney.⁵⁶ Gillard’s inaugural speech of the visit was framed as a five-point plan ‘centred on protecting jobs, easing cost of living pressures and boosting infrastructure’.⁵⁷

The carbon tax issue was kept bubbling by comments from Shadow Treasurer Hockey and other senior Liberals about the implications of the repeal of the carbon tax, and hints of a ‘multibillion-dollar tax and welfare plan, which would form the central pillar of [the Coalition’s] election pitch to

49. Ibid.

50. D Crowe and J Kelly, ‘[Swan sets audit trap for Coalition](#)’, *The Australian*, 22 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 22 February 2013. The amending Act—the [Parliamentary Service Amendment \(Parliamentary Budget Officer\) Act 2013](#)—provided, among other things, for a post-election report to be prepared by the PBO that sets out, for each political party, costings of all the election commitments of that party and the ‘total combined impact those election commitments would have on the Commonwealth budget sector and Commonwealth general government sector fiscal estimates for the current financial year and the following 3 financial years’.

51. L Taylor, ‘[Getting ready for an election hammering](#)’, *The Canberra Times*, 23 February 2013, p. 2, accessed 7 March 2013.

52. P Kelly, ‘[Labor locked in crisis over identity](#)’, *The Weekend Australian*, 23 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 7 March 2013.

53. L Oakes, ‘[Labor needs to plan for defeat](#)’, *The Courier-Mail*, 23 February 2013, p. 55, accessed 7 March 2013.

54. G Jones, ‘[Julia’s Indian summer ends in poll nightmare](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 2013, p. 2, accessed 7 March 2013.

55. Ibid.

56. P Coorey, ‘[PM’s bid to win back heartland](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 26 February 2013, p. 1, accessed 7 March 2013.

57. S Maher ‘[Roads pledge part of five -point pitch to voters](#)’, *The Australian*, 4 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 7 March 2013.

the outer suburbs'.⁵⁸ The Federal Coalition also found itself pondering what the consequences might be of crises that had erupted in the Liberal governments of Victoria and the Northern Territory—in the Victorian case leading to the resignation of Premier Ted Ballieu.⁵⁹

The WA state election on 9 May 2013 delivered a strong win to the Liberals—with Federal issues such as the carbon and mining taxes clearly at play in voters' minds.⁶⁰ If the patterns of the WA state election were to be repeated in the Federal election, Labor 'would be reduced to two, possibly even one' Federal seat in WA.⁶¹

Speculation rose again about Gillard's leadership, possibly involving a '[tap on the shoulder](#)' and her resignation.⁶² But a Galaxy poll published on 10 May suggested only around one-third of voters thought that the ALP should elect a new leader, and only around a quarter of those surveyed thought that Labor should replace Gillard with Rudd.⁶³ Two days later *Newspoll* put Labor 'within striking distance of winning an election' and had Gillard back in front of Abbott as preferred Prime Minister.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the *Hobart Mercury* reported an [Essential poll of 1,948 voters](#) which saw the two leaders neck-and-neck as preferred PM.⁶⁵

An [analysis of opinion polls and voting trends](#) published in *The Australian* on 13 March 2013 suggested that Labor was at risk of 'losing four and possibly six Senate seats, which would hand the balance of power to independents rather than the Greens'.⁶⁶

A referendum on the constitutional recognition of local government, which some had hoped would take place at the same time as the 2013 Federal election, received a setback with the news that the NSW and Victorian governments did not support the proposal.⁶⁷

As Parliament sat for its final March week before the Budget, the publication of another Nielsen poll added more pressure to the Prime Minister. The [research director for the poll, John Stirton, noted](#):

There have been 27 Nielsen polls since the 2010 election and this is the 27th showing the Coalition in front. ... In 40 years of Nielsen polling no opposition party has ever been in front on a two party preferred basis for every single poll in a parliamentary term.⁶⁸

58. M Kenny, '[Hockey to keep tax thresholds—but they're not carbon compo](#)', *The Age*, 6 March 2013, p. 6, accessed 7 March 2013.

59. P Coorey, '[State chaos worries Libs](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 7 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 7 March 2013.

60. D Jaensch, '[Federal issues hit home in the West](#)', *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 14 March 2013, p. 26, accessed 14 March 2013.

61. Ibid.

62. S Maiden, '[Julia might get a tap](#)', *The Sunday Herald Sun*, 10 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 1 August 2013.

63. S Maiden, '[Voters turn off the Rudd option](#)', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 10 March 2013, p. 4, accessed 12 March 2013.

64. P Hudson, '[Labor reverses poll slide](#)', *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 12 March 2013, p. 7, accessed 12 March 2013.

65. '[Abbott lifts in latest poll for PM](#)', *The Hobart Mercury*, 12 March 2013, p. 13, accessed 12 March 2013.

66. S Maher, '[Abbott on track to take Senate in own right](#)', *The Australian*, 13 March 2013, p. 2, accessed 13 March 2013.

67. P Karvelas, '[Biggest states torpedo Crean's referendum push on local councils](#)', *The Australian*, 12 March 2013, p. 2, accessed 12 March 2013.

68. J Stirton, '[Coalition scores 27 out of 27 poll wins since 2010](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 18 March 2013, p. 4, accessed 19 March 2013.

The Prime Minister responded that she would not flinch in the face of the poll and ‘dismissed any prospect of being “tapped on the shoulder” by senior ministers’.⁶⁹ In an interview with Fairfax Press, Gillard said that Kevin Rudd would play a prominent role in the election campaign, and flagged a possible return by him to the front bench after the election.⁷⁰

At the same time, many press outlets were publishing strong opinion pieces castigating the Government for [its proposed media legislation](#)—one of them claiming that Communications Minister Conroy appeared ‘obsessed with muzzling the press, punishing publishers and vetoing mergers’.⁷¹ Others, however, considered the proposed reforms as ‘media reform lite’ and that the media proprietors were grossly over-reacting to them.⁷² The person whose review helped shape Labor’s proposed media laws, Ray Finkelstein, said that the changes ‘would only be a minor imposition on press freedom’.⁷³ But the ferocity of the press’s attack on the media laws only served to heighten speculation about the diminishing likelihood of Gillard’s remaining as leader.⁷⁴

Key independent MP Tony Windsor had consistently said that if there were a leadership change he would be unlikely to support the Government.⁷⁵ Windsor himself received some incidental press attention when the National Party candidate for Windsor’s seat of New England, Richard Torbay, withdrew his nomination following revelations of Torbay’s dealings with a disgraced former NSW Labor minister Eddie Obeid—an event which prompted the declaration by prominent Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce that he would like to contest the New England seat.⁷⁶ Joyce eventually won preselection as the Nationals’ candidate.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, it was reported that Labor’s federal campaign director, George Wright, had told his party’s national executive that he was allocating campaign funding ‘on the expectation of a primary vote of 32 per cent’ at the Federal election.⁷⁸

On the final sitting day in March 2013, the political focus remained very much on the fate of Labor’s media laws, with leadership speculation continuing to provide background noise. With no compromises able to be negotiated, the Government withdrew the laws, but in an extraordinary turn of events, Labor minister and [party elder Simon Crean called a press conference](#) to say he was urging the Prime Minister to call a leadership spill and said that he backed Kevin Rudd for Prime Minister.⁷⁹

69. M Gordon, [‘I will not flinch, says defiant PM’](#), *The Age*, 18 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 19 March 2013.

70. Ibid.

71. [‘PM and Conroy stifle freedom’](#), editorial, *The Herald Sun*, 18 March 2013, p. 22, accessed 19 March 2013.

72. S Forde, [‘Media reform: hysterical attacks on weak Conroy suggestions tell the real story’](#), *The Conversation*, 13 March 2013, accessed 15 March 2013.

73. E Griffiths, [‘Crean criticises approach to media law reforms’](#), *ABC News*, 19 March 2013, accessed 19 March 2013.

74. L Tingle, [‘Mission impossible: heal Labor’](#), *Australian Financial Review*, 20 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 20 March 2013.

75. Ibid.

76. [‘Joyce eyes Windsor’s New England’](#), *The Canberra Times*, 20 March 2013, p. 2, accessed 20 March 2013.

77. [‘Joyce wins go at Windsor’](#), *The Sunday Tasmanian*, 14 April 2013, p. 10, accessed 15 April 2013.

78. P van Onselen, [‘Labor Party budgeting for a poll tsunami’](#), *The Australian*, 20 March 2013, p. 6, accessed 20 March 2013.

79. M Grattan [‘Crean fires the gun on leadership: ‘I don’t want any more games’](#)’, *The Conversation*, 21 March 2013, accessed 22 March 2013.

The Prime Minister called a leadership ballot for 4:30pm that afternoon (21 March 2013) but when nominations were called for, Gillard was the sole nominee. Rudd waited until ten minutes before the spill to announce that he would not be running.⁸⁰ It was reported that Rudd had refused the entreaties of backers to stand.⁸¹ The following day words like ‘farce’ and ‘chaos’ peppered the commentary on the day’s events.⁸²

The *Newspoll* published on 26 March saw Gillard’s preferred Prime Minister ranking fall seven points to 35 per cent, while Abbott’s rose five points to 43 per cent.⁸³ One analysis of the *Newspoll* results suggested Labor faced the loss of 15 frontbenchers, including five cabinet ministers, in a landslide defeat.⁸⁴ Another analysis of marginal seats by JWS Research suggested ‘a majority of voters in those seats would actually like to see Labor win the election, yet only a third can stomach actually voting for the government’.⁸⁵

Reports also surfaced in March about a bitter preselection stoush brewing for the seat of Gellibrand in Victoria held by retiring MP and former Attorney-General Nicola Roxon.⁸⁶ Roxon wrote to her local members urging them to support her former staffer, Katie Hall, while Victorian ALP Senator Conroy was backing his own former staffer, Telstra executive Tim Watts, for the seat.⁸⁷ In the event, Watts was preselected by a comfortable margin.⁸⁸

April 2013

As April began, possible changes to superannuation policy became the discernible topic in the general hum of political commentary and Labor continued to suffer a generally adverse reception in the media. The superannuation debate grew sufficiently clamorous to draw, on 5 April, a statement from the Government about its proposals.⁸⁹ The reforms would not affect the tax treatment of withdrawals but would ‘better target the tax exemption for earnings on superannuation assets supporting income streams by capping it to the first \$100,000 of future earnings for each individual’—indexed to the CPI.⁹⁰

80. ‘[Gillard dismisses Abbott’s early election threat](#)’, *ABC News*, 22 March 2013, website, accessed 22 March 2013.

81. M Grattan, ‘[Demoralised Labor faces bleak future](#)’, *The Conversation*, 22 March 2013, accessed 22 March 2013.

82. ‘[First tragedy, now Labor farce](#)’, editorial, *Australian Financial Review*, 22 March 2013, p. 46, accessed 22 March 2013; ‘[Chaos reigns](#)’, *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 22 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 22 March 2013.

83. S Benson, ‘[PM in race to bottom in massive poll plunge](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 March 2013, p. 1, accessed 11 April 2013.

84. B Packham, ‘[Labor facing loss of half its seats and 15 frontbenchers](#)’, *The Australian*, 27 March 2013, p. 4, accessed 12 April 2013.

85. L Tingle, ‘[Voters can’t stomach ALP](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 28 March 2013, p. 7, accessed 12 April 2013.

86. R Willingham, ‘[Preselection rumble over Labor seat](#)’, *The Age*, 27 March 2013, p. 7, accessed 1 April 2013.

87. J Gordon, ‘[Roxon joins ALP seat brawl, as Conroy goes nuclear](#)’, *The Age*, 28 March 2013, p. 11, accessed 12 April 2013.

88. J Ferguson, ‘[Faction fight looms as Conroy’s man gets up](#)’, *The Australian*, 10 April 2013, p. 7, accessed 12 April 2013.

89. Hon W Swan and Hon B Shorten, ‘[Tax treatment of earnings on superannuation assets supporting income streams](#)’, joint media release, 5 April 2013, accessed 15 April 2013.

90. *Ibid.*

Although national polling figures showed Labor's primary vote stuck at about 30 per cent, on a state-by-state basis, the picture looked a little less bleak.⁹¹ It seemed to be 'just a matter of whether the Coalition will win with a majority of 20 or more seats or just eight to 10'.⁹² But a 'cashed-up' Coalition was reported to be launching a marathon 79-day election campaign from mid-year which would target 43 Labor-held seats—a campaign described as 'a raid on Labor's heartland'.⁹³ At the same time, Abbott was telling his party that the Coalition would not be making costly election promises during the campaign.⁹⁴

The Coalition released its alternative proposal for the National Broadband Network, based on fibre-to-the-node technology—running fibre to cabinets on street corners or building basements, then switching to the existing copper telephone lines to move the data to the end-user.⁹⁵ A subsequent Fairfax Neilsen poll revealed that the Coalition's approach was considerably less favoured by consumers.⁹⁶

As the media's political reporting continued to focus on the leaders of the major parties, one commentator—a former senior Liberal staffer—reflected on Abbott's front bench, saying that Abbott must break his pledge to retain his existing shadow ministry should he win, otherwise he 'will get into trouble'.⁹⁷ Academic commentator Peter van Onselen said 'Abbott's pledge not to adjust his front bench ... will hamper the quality of a first-term Coalition government. It may even lead to early internal destabilisation as ambitious MPs quickly grow restless'.⁹⁸

It was reported that Abbott had asked Senator Barnaby Joyce to stay in the Senate until the campaign because he did not want a reshuffle if Joyce were successful in winning the lower house seat of New England.⁹⁹ On 15 April, shortly after Joyce received his party's endorsement as the candidate for New England, the ABC's Antony Green explained Joyce's situation in the following terms:

[Joyce] does not have to resign, or at least not yet [from the Senate]. However, he will need to resign once the legal election campaign is under way later this year if he wants his nomination to be accepted. ...

91. D Shanahan, '[Labor's glimmer: not a total disaster](#)', *The Australian*, 2 April 2013, p. 4, accessed 12 April 2013.

92. Ibid.

93. S Lewis, '[Abbott's cashed up and ready to woo Labor's heartland](#)', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 2013, accessed 15 April 2013.

94. L Tingle, '[Coalition talks tough](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 5 April 2013, p. 4, accessed 15 April 2013.

95. J Swan, '[Voters believe Coalition has wires crossed on broadband](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 2013, p. 10, accessed 16 April 2013.

96. Ibid.

97. N Savva, '[Abbott will need a better team](#)', *The Australian*, 4 April 2013, p. 10, accessed 15 April 2013.

98. P van Onselen, '[Abbott's silly game could cost the Coalition](#)', *Weekend Australian*, 6 July 2013, p. 20, accessed 8 July 2013.

99. M McKenna, '[Joyce likely to spark reshuffle](#)', *The Australian*, 16 April 2013, p. 6, accessed 16 April 2013.

If Joyce is not successful, he can be appointed to the Senate vacancy created by his resignation. However, Senator Joyce has ruled out this escape route.¹⁰⁰

On 15 April, the Government was greeted with news of another opinion poll slump.¹⁰¹ A Fairfax-Nielsen poll showed just 29 per cent of voters supporting Labor, down 2 percentage points, being Labor's first sub-30 per cent primary vote result since June 2012.¹⁰² With 49 per cent favouring the Coalition, this was the Coalition's equal highest primary vote since May 2012.¹⁰³ After the distribution of preferences, the Coalition would win an election with a 7 per cent nationwide swing.¹⁰⁴

One analyst, *The Age's* Michael Gordon described the Gillard Government as 'trapped in a vortex of miserable morale, low expectations and sullied credibility'.¹⁰⁵ In the *Australian Financial Review*, Geoff Kitney—commenting on the level of hostility against Gillard that he had observed among voters—said that nothing the Government is doing or planning 'is being considered on its merits. Vested interest groups are getting traction for outrageous, self-serving criticism of the government simply because it is criticism'.¹⁰⁶

The candidacy of former *Get Up!* director Simon Sheikh for an ACT Senate seat for the Greens continued to draw fire from sections of the press, who reported his alleged one-time membership of the ALP and also previous statements that he was not interested in a career in formal politics.¹⁰⁷ Controversial euthanasia advocate Dr Philip Nitschke also emerged as a Senate candidate, representing the newly formed Voluntary Euthanasia Party (VEP).¹⁰⁸

As policy issues appeared to take centre stage during the pre-Budget parliamentary break in April, the *Australian Financial Review's* Laura Tingle offered the following summary of the state of play:

[There] is a surreal quality to the debate, partly because the government keeps announcing policies that have little chance of turning up in Parliament in the five remaining sitting weeks before writs are issued for the September 14 poll. As a result, given portents suggesting Labor faces electoral annihilation, there is a tendency to not take the policies too seriously, or to get confused about where policy ends and election promises begin... But the confusion is only exacerbated by the way the Coalition has been responding.¹⁰⁹

100. A Green 'Barnaby Joyce, New England and Senate vacancies', *ABC elections: Antony Green's election blog*, 15 April 2013, accessed 16 April 2013, <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/>

101. M Kenny, '[Gillard takes another poll hit](#)', *The Canberra Times*, 15 April 2013, p. 1, accessed 15 April 2013.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. M Gordon, '[PM's comeback now consigned to history](#)', *The Age*, 15 April 2013, p. 2, accessed 15 April 2013.

106. G Kitney, '[Leadership issue still alive](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 16 April 2013, p. 7, accessed 16 April 2013.

107. C Kerr, '[Sheikh under fresh scrutiny](#)', *The Australian*, 19 April 2013, p. 4, accessed 29 April 2013.

108. B Kaye, '[Euthanasia advocate to run for Senate](#)', *Medical Observer*, 16 April 2013, p. 14, accessed 29 April 2013.

109. L Tingle, '[Libs undermine Labor's drive for new agenda](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 19 April 2013, p. 39, accessed 29 April 2013.

In mid-April the [Gonski education reforms](#) loomed large in the press, stimulated by a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 19 April.¹¹⁰ The meeting did not produce a comprehensive agreement, but rather a sense that at least some states would be likely to sign up.¹¹¹ The Prime Minister had set a 30 June deadline for states to sign up to the \$14.5 billion package over six years, under a two-for-one offer which would require the states to contribute 35 per cent (\$5.1 billion).¹¹² The Opposition Leader rejected the reforms as too expensive: 'I think we are better off fine-tuning the existing system rather than trying to turn the whole thing on its head'.¹¹³

Meanwhile, a Grattan Institute report, [Budget pressures on Australian governments](#), said that Australian government budgets were at serious risk of resulting in deficits in the next decade of around 4 per cent of GDP, or \$60 billion a year:

Budget pressures on Australian governments reveal that a combination of rising costs, large political promises from both sides of politics, likely tax shortfalls and the prospect of declining minerals prices will create "significant problems" for budgets.¹¹⁴

The issue of marriage equality returned briefly to the headlines when Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus called on Mr Abbott to allow a conscience vote by Coalition MPs before the September 14 election.¹¹⁵ Abbott reaffirmed his personal opposition to gay marriage but said the current Coalition policy opposing a conscience vote by MPs 'could be revisited after September 14'.¹¹⁶ Abbott also stoked the asylum seeker debate, unveiling a billboard at a busy Perth intersection showing the number of boat arrivals since Labor took power.¹¹⁷

The *Newspoll* published in *The Australian* on 23 April showed the Coalition on 55 per cent with Labor on 45 per cent, and high levels of voter dissatisfaction with both leaders.¹¹⁸ Applying the *Newspoll* figures to [Antony Green's Election Calculator](#) suggested that Labor would win 53 seats (down 19), the Coalition 92 seats (up 19) with five seats going to other parties or independents.¹¹⁹

Reports late in April that the Opposition Leader planned [to put a 'no confidence' motion on the Notice Paper](#) in mid-May when Parliament resumed for the Budget session prompted discussion about the electoral implications should the motion succeed:

There has never been a successful vote of no confidence against a government in the House of Representatives and it will be extremely difficult for Mr Abbott to get enough support from the

110. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, [Review of Funding for Schooling Final Report](#), December 2011, accessed 11 October 2013.

111. '[COAG fails to strike Gonski school funding deal](#)', *ABC News*, 20 April 2013, accessed 29 April 2013. and '[PM yet to educate states on deal](#)', *Sunday Territorian*, 21 April 2013, p. 5, accessed 29 April 2013.

112. *Ibid.*

113. G Jones, '[Abbott rejects Gonski reforms](#)', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 22 April 2013, p. 12, accessed 29 April 2013.

114. Grattan Institute, '[Time to face rising pressures on Australian government budgets](#)', media release, 22 April 2013, accessed 29 April 2013.

115. G Jones, '[AG push on gay union](#)', *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 2013, p. 12, accessed 29 April 2013.

116. *Ibid.*

117. N Perpetch, '[Abbott seeks asylum in billboard](#)', *The Australian*, 23 April 2013, p. 7, accessed 29 April 2013.

118. D Shanahan, '[Voters unmoved by Gonski reforms as Coalition retains big lead](#)', *The Australian*, 23 April 2013, p. 1, accessed 29 April 2013.

119. Election Calculator applied by author 23 April 2013.

cross-bench. But if it did happen, and if Mr Abbott were invited by Governor-General Quentin Bryce to form a government, his first act would be to immediately ask for an August 3 election and cast himself as “caretaker PM”.¹²⁰

Late April also saw the deadline pass for the establishment of an independent Leaders’ Debate Commission which would ‘determine the when, where and who of pre-election debates free from political interference’.¹²¹ It was part of the deal Labor had struck with crossbenchers in order to form a minority government in 2010.

May 2013

On 1 May, the Prime Minister announced that, in order to lock in an amount of funding for DisabilityCare Australia (the National Disability Insurance Scheme, NDIS) the Government would increase [the Medicare levy](#) by half a percentage point from 1 July 2014, taking the levy from 1.5 per cent of taxable income to 2 per cent.¹²² Observers were quick to point out that there was a risk that relevant legislation would not get through Parliament in the five sitting weeks that remained before the 2013 election.¹²³ Gillard had initially said she would seek a mandate for the Medicare levy increase at the September election, but later issued an ultimatum to Abbott, saying she would introduce legislation before the election if he agreed to support the levy.¹²⁴ Abbott responded that the Coalition could offer support for a ‘modest’ levy.¹²⁵

May Day also saw the publication of an open letter from a group of 40 prominent Australians calling for the [Newstart Allowance](#) to be lifted by \$50 a week.¹²⁶ The letter said that the Newstart Allowance base payment of \$35 a day had not been increased in real terms since Prime Minister Keating’s increase in 1994: ‘The rate is now so low it is unbearable to live on and has become a major barrier to supporting people into paid work’.¹²⁷

The Government’s [Defence White Paper](#) (and associated *Future Submarine Industry Skills Plan*) was released on 3 May 2013.¹²⁸ It stated that Australia would adopt a long-term goal of raising Defence spending to two per cent of gross domestic product.¹²⁹

With just over four months to go before the federal election, a national survey by Melbourne University’s Centre for Advancing Journalism showed that:

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120. P Hudson, ‘[Abbott early poll plan](#)’, *The Herald-Sun*, 26 April 2013, p. 7, accessed 1 May 2013.
 121. J Mather, ‘[PM fails to meet pledge on leaders’ debate](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 26 April 2013, p. 10, accessed 1 May 2013.
 122. J Gillard (Prime Minister), ‘[Locking in a fairer future for Australians with disability](#)’, media release, 1 May 2013, accessed 1 May 2013.
 123. D Crowe, ‘[Time running out as Labor’s bottleneck of budget promises hits \\$35bn](#)’, *The Australian*, 2 May 2013, p. 4, accessed 2 May 2013.
 124. ‘Abbott to make statement on NDIS levy call’, *ABC News*, 2 May 2013, accessed 2 May 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-02/abbott-to-make-statement-on-ndis-levy-call/4664330>
 125. E Griffiths, ‘[Abbott indicates support for ‘modest’ NDIS levy increase](#)’, *ABC News*, 2 May 2013, accessed 2 May 2013.
 126. AAP, ‘[Call to lift Newstart by \\$50](#)’, *The Age*, 1 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013.
 127. Ibid.
 128. Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Joint Media Release, ‘[Release of the 2013 Defence White Paper](#)’, 3 May 2013, accessed 3 May 2013.
 129. Ibid.

- 57 per cent of voters say the quality of political debate is ‘noticeably worse’ than the past, with little difference between Labor and Liberal voters
- 43 per cent say they usually take a ‘good deal’ of interest in politics, but just 36 per cent say they are now interested
- 36 per cent say they have little or no interest in this year’s federal election
- 58 per cent say the quality of federal leadership is ‘noticeably worse’ than it used to be.¹³⁰
- The media fared no better in the survey, with 73 per cent of voters ‘having little or no confidence in the press and 71 per cent having little confidence in television’.¹³¹ Another survey—by the NRMA dealing with transport issues—revealed that, of 3 900 voters in marginal NSW seats, 45 per cent remained open to changing who they would vote for in the federal election.¹³²

A front page story in *The Australian* on 6 May described something of a ‘revolt’ among some Liberal MPs over Abbott’s flagship paid parental leave scheme, with opponents arguing that the levy on business to fund the scheme was an ‘unjustifiable impost on business at a crucial time in the economic cycle’, and with Labor saying that the costs would flow through to consumers in the form of higher prices.¹³³ The main source of criticism came from Liberal backbencher Alex Hawke, who was in turn roundly criticised by one political columnist for ‘disrupting Opposition unity four months before an election’.¹³⁴

Meanwhile, stories about an ongoing spat between ACT Greens candidate Simon Sheikh and the ALP over the extent of his membership of the Labor Party continued to appear in the media.¹³⁵

On 9 May, the Government confirmed that, in association with the 14 September election, it would conduct a referendum to financially recognise local government in the Constitution.¹³⁶ There was no guarantee of bipartisanship on the matter, with some Coalition members doubting the merits of the change, and South Australian Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi declaring that he would be speaking up for the ‘No’ case.¹³⁷ It later emerged that the Government would provide \$10 million to the Australian Local Government Association to support the case for constitutional change, and only \$500,000 to the ‘No’ camp. Local Government Minister Anthony Albanese defended the decision, saying it was ‘appropriate that we had proportionate funding in accordance to the support in the

130. G Alcorn, ‘[Switched off: voters despair as poll nears](#)’, *The Canberra Times*, 6 May 2013, p. 3, accessed 6 May 2013.

131. Ibid.

132. ‘[Voters stall on election](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 2013, p. 17, accessed 7 May 2013.

133. D Crowe, ‘[Levy for parental leave to stir revolt](#)’, *The Australian*, 6 May 2013, p. 1, accessed 6 May 2013.

134. M Devine, ‘[Why Hawke’s idea is never going to fly](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 May 2013, p. 13, accessed 8 May 2013.

135. C Kerr, ‘[Stop lying about your Labor history, Dastyari tells Sheikh](#)’, *The Australian*, 8 May 2013, p. 5, accessed 8 May 2013.

136. S Maher, ‘[Referendum to protect federal-local support](#)’, *The Australian*, 9 May 2013, p. 5, accessed 9 May 2013.

137. P Coorey, ‘[Coalition split on plebiscite](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 14 May 2013, p. 6, accessed 15 May 2013.

parliament for the cases’ and that the ‘modern and modest change would protect federal funding of local services, like roads, but not affect the relationship between state and local governments’.¹³⁸

As Parliament resumed for the presentation of the Budget, the Government had 79 bills in the lower house and 26 in the upper house, with another 38 new bills that it wanted Parliament to consider.¹³⁹

Budget 2013

Treasurer Wayne Swan tabled the Budget on 14 May 2013. In his post-Budget address to the National Press Club, the Treasurer said that the Government ‘had to make some defining choices about [its] priorities’, noting that the Budget had ‘been put together in some of the most unprecedented circumstances in our nation’s post-Federation history’ with ‘the hit to revenues ...[being] the second biggest in a single year since the Great Depression, with only the GFC worse’.¹⁴⁰ The *Australian Financial Review* described the Budget as ‘without doubt a courageous and highly unorthodox election-year budget’ and one which ‘does give Labor the best chance of putting Tony Abbott on the spot about the cost of his own plans’.¹⁴¹

It was reported that the Opposition Leader was likely to introduce a special bill to legislate any Labor cuts that did not make it through Parliament before the election.¹⁴² In addition to the \$43 billion in cuts and tax rises contained in the Federal Budget that were supported by Abbott, the Opposition Leader separately announced at least another \$14 billion in savings, and deferred increases to the superannuation guarantee.¹⁴³ The Coalition also supported the \$13 billion savings Labor announced before the budget, as well as indicating a potential blocking of almost \$6 billion in spending measures contained in the Budget.¹⁴⁴

It was also reported that Labor would legislate to strengthen the powers of the [Parliamentary Budget Office](#) to force political parties to publish the cost of their election policies.¹⁴⁵ Parties, under a statutory declaration, have to provide the PBO with a list of their election commitments which the PBO would cost in its post-election report.¹⁴⁶ The changes were aimed at:

... preventing political parties from playing games with the PBO’s post-election report. They will require that the PBO prepare a list of the election commitments of each party that they

138. J Marszalek, ‘[Federal Government chips in \\$500,000 to local government referendum “no” vote](#)’, *news.com.au*, 17 June 2013, accessed 19 June 2013.

139. ‘[Backlog of bills](#)’, *The Canberra Times*, 13 May 2013, p. 4, accessed 13 May 2013.

140. W Swan (Treasurer), ‘[The strength of a nation](#)’, National Press Club post-Budget address, 15 May 2013, accessed 9 October 2013.

141. L Tingle, ‘[Treasurer’s bold retreat in face of political defeat](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 15 May 2013, p. 31, accessed 12 June 2013.

142. S Benson and T Shepherd, ‘[Abbott to bless cuts](#)’, *Adelaide Advertiser*, 16 May 2013, p. 1, accessed 16 May 2013.

143. P Coorey, ‘[Abbott backs \\$75bn in cuts](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 20 May 2013, p. 1, accessed 12 June 2013.

144. *Ibid.*

145. G Daley, ‘[Office to get power to assess policy](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 16 May 2013, p. 19, accessed 16 May 2013.

146. *Ibid.* Also see the amending Act—the [Parliamentary Service Amendment \(Parliamentary Budget Officer\) Act 2013](#)

reasonably believe would have a material impact on the budget, regardless of whether the particular party wants it done.¹⁴⁷

A post-Budget Fairfax Nielsen poll published on 20 May showed Gillard and Abbott both on 46 per cent as preferred prime minister, with the Coalition leading Labor 54-46 in the two-party vote and slated to win an election with a four per cent swing.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the Australian Electoral Commission issued [updated figures for the electoral roll](#) showing that 91.2 per cent of eligible Australians were enrolled—meaning that nearly 1.4 million Australians were ‘missing’ from the roll.¹⁴⁹ The AEC expected to add about 150 000 names to the roll in the lead-up to the election.¹⁵⁰ Recent legislation permitting the AEC to directly enrol voters through cross-checking other government data had led to 80,000 people being added to the roll and 310,000 addresses being updated.¹⁵¹ In NSW, 400,000 voters were missing, and one in eight Queenslanders were not on the roll.¹⁵²

The AEC subsequently launched an online enrolment system aimed mainly at tablet and mobile users.¹⁵³ The AEC had previously allowed people to change personal details online but had not allowed voters to join the electoral roll using the internet. Under the new system signatures could be submitted using a stylus, mouse or finger, depending on the device being used.¹⁵⁴ In another bid to target younger voters the AEC also launched a shareable enrolment app on Facebook, which linked back to the AEC registration portal.¹⁵⁵

The end of May was marked by controversy over the collapse of a legislative proposal—ostensibly previously agreed by all major parties—to put into effect a score of electoral reforms that would, among other things, increase public funding for political parties and lower the disclosure threshold for donations to \$5,000 from its current level of around \$12,000.¹⁵⁶ Describing the matter as a ‘noble idea killed by secrecy’, Tom Dusevic of the *Weekend Australian* said that the collapse of the bill spoke to ‘a failure of policy, politics and process’.¹⁵⁷

June 2013

In an opinion piece published on 1 June, journalist Laurie Oakes declared that ‘Gillard and her team have clearly abandoned all hope of surviving in office and are preparing for defeat’.¹⁵⁸ The *Newspoll*

147. Ibid.

148. M Kenny, ‘[PM’s fortunes on the rise](#)’, *The Canberra Times*, 20 May 2013, p. 1, accessed 12 June 2013.

149. ‘[Size of the electoral roll and estimated participation rate 2013](#)’, Australian Electoral Commission website, accessed 13 June 2013.

150. ‘[Million voters missing](#)’, *The Age*, 22 May 2013, p. 8, accessed 13 June 2013.

151. ‘[Hunt for “missing” voters](#)’, *Northern Territory News*, 22 May 2013, p. 2, accessed 13 June 2013.

152. Ibid.

153. ‘[Y it’s time to enrol](#)’, *The Herald Sun*, 25 June 2013, p. 16, accessed 25 June 2013.

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid.

156. ‘[Abbott’s backflip](#)’, *Northern Territory News*, 31 May 2013, p. 18, accessed 13 June 2013.

157. T Dusevic, ‘[A noble idea killed by secrecy](#)’, *The Weekend Australian*, 1 June 2013, p. 14, accessed 14 June 2013.

158. L Oakes, ‘[It is clear all hope is gone](#)’, *The Herald Sun*, 1 June 2013, p. 30, accessed 14 June 2013.

published on 4 June—a hundred days out from the election—showed a two party preferred vote of 58-42 in favour of the Coalition, and Abbott eight points ahead as preferred prime minister.¹⁵⁹

The ‘hundred days out’ milestone occasioned considerable press comment on the state of the main parties and their electoral prospects. Kevin Rudd issued a statement repeating his call to ‘unite totally’ under Gillard; Abbott said that voters faced ‘the clearest choice in a generation’; Gillard said the distinction was ‘between building and investing for the future’ and a Coalition ‘trading in fear and making people worry about the economy’.¹⁶⁰ *Crikey* headed its editorial ‘lose the dead wood, Tony’, noting that the transition from opposition to government ‘can be problematic, both for governments as a whole and for individual ministers’.¹⁶¹

The 4 June *Newspoll* poll had immediately prompted further press focus on the Labor leadership.¹⁶² As Rudd embarked on a week-long campaign blitz to shore up support in some embattled Labor electorates, there was speculation that the tour was ‘testing the waters’ for a possible Rudd return to the leadership via a ‘tap on the shoulder’ to the Prime Minister by senior Labor figures.¹⁶³ But according to political journalist Michelle Grattan ‘the hardheads among the Rudd supporters’ did not think he was likely to be reinstated before the election. ‘The caucus numbers haven’t shifted The anti-Rudd feeling rides strong’.¹⁶⁴

Earlier, the Prime Minister—having long made it consistently clear that she would not step down—had told Parliament that she remained committed to a leaders’ debate commission and that she would ‘certainly look forward to debating the Leader of the Opposition on a number of occasions’.¹⁶⁵ The press also reported that controversial former One Nation leader Pauline Hanson had finally announced that she would be a candidate for a NSW Senate seat.¹⁶⁶ According to election analyst Antony Green, Hanson would draw significant first preference votes and her preferences could be crucial in a win for a minor party candidate.¹⁶⁷

On 8 June, at the end of another tough week for Labor, the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialised that ‘Labor must reform or risk oblivion’.¹⁶⁸

On 16 June, with three jurisdictions signed up to the Gonski education reforms, the Government stepped up pressure to secure further support, releasing a school-by-school breakdown of the funding improvements for public schools in Victoria under the Gonski model.¹⁶⁹

159. P Hudson, ‘[Opinion poll points to Labor disaster](#)’, *Adelaide Advertiser*, 4 June 2013, p. 3, accessed 14 June 2013.

160. ‘[Rudd backs unity](#)’, *The Herald Sun*, 6 June 2013, p. 4, accessed 14 June 2013.

161. ‘[Crikey says: lose the dead wood, Tony](#)’, editorial, *Crikey*, 6 June 2013, accessed 14 June 2013.

162. S Benson, ‘[Desperate MPs want Rudd to save them](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 2013, p. 15, accessed 14 June 2013.

163. S Benson, ‘[Just working for a win: Rudd blitz begins](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 June 2013, p. accessed 14 June 2013.

164. M Grattan ‘[Rudd’s just here to help – again](#)’, *Weekend West*, 8 June 2013, p. 28, accessed 14 June 2013.

165. J Gillard (Prime Minister), ‘[Answer to question without notice: Leaders’ debate commission](#)’, [Questioner: R Oakeshott], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 3 June 2013, p. 50, accessed 14 June 2013.

166. N Klein, ‘[Hanson heading a red-blooded comeback](#)’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 2013, p. 8, accessed 14 June 2013.

167. H Aston, ‘[Katter, Palmer preferences could help Hanson’s return](#)’, *The Age*, 17 June 2013, p. 4, accessed 18 June 2013.

168. ‘[Labor must reform or risk oblivion](#)’, editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 2013, p. 13, accessed 14 June 2013.

169. ‘[Julia Gillard ups pressure on Victoria to sign up to Gonski education funding overhaul](#)’, *ABC News*, 17 June 2013, accessed 17 June 2013.

As Parliament resumed for the final sitting fortnight before the scheduled election, the Fairfax-Nielsen poll showed Labor's primary support fall to 29 per cent.¹⁷⁰ One analyst later extrapolated the figures to suggest that, in the Senate, such a low primary vote could mean that Labor might end up with only 25 or 26 Senate seats.¹⁷¹ Leadership tensions continued to simmer as two Labor MPs publicly urged a switch to Kevin Rudd.¹⁷² The Fairfax Nielsen poll also revealed that, in the Liberal preferred leader stakes, voters preferred Malcolm Turnbull to Tony Abbott 62 to 32.¹⁷³

One commentator dubbed the Labor leadership issue 'the Kevin and Julia merry-go-round' which had 'derailed media coverage of decent issues in favour of flimflam conjecture':

Rudd's desperate ambition to get his old job back would not have gathered pace if the media had treated it as the dull background noise it deserved. ... [The] Rudd team received the gift of almost daily coverage about challenges and growing numbers that undermined Gillard's leadership and created an entrenched picture of a government in chaos.¹⁷⁴

The role of the media in shaping the public's view of the Labor Government—and in particular of Prime Minister Gillard—had been a topic of sustained interest for commentators and pundits for much of the Gillard prime ministership. The degree of vitriol directed at the Prime Minister from various quarters had frequently been remarked upon, and had prompted questions of sexism and misogyny. Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* as MPs descended on Canberra for the final week of sittings, Geoff Kitney described recent media attacks on the Prime Minister in the following terms:

Julia Gillard is right. She is the victim of the nastiest, dirtiest, ugliest, most obscene and sustained personal attacks on an Australian prime minister any of us have witnessed... No fair-minded observer could do other than feel disgusted...¹⁷⁵

Labor's final scheduled caucus meeting before the election did not result in any action on the Labor leadership, with Gillard urging her colleagues 'to put purpose before self-interest' and 'to focus on the nation, not ourselves'.¹⁷⁶ The media, however, remained fixated on the leadership issue, with a steady stream of stories speculating about a return of Kevin Rudd.¹⁷⁷

170. ['Nielsen poll puts Labor's primary vote below 30 per cent as MPs gather for final sitting fortnight'](#), *ABC News*, 17 June 2013, accessed 17 June 2013.

171. S Benson, ['Abbott coup in the Senate'](#), *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 June 2013, p. 5, accessed 21 June 2013.

172. 'Nielsen poll puts Labor's primary vote below 30 per cent as MPs gather for final sitting fortnight', *ABC News*, op. cit.

173. Ibid.

174. K Walsh, ['Media spins the Rudd-Gillard merry-go-round'](#), *The Drum*, 14 June 2013, accessed 17 June 2013.

175. G Kitney, ['Gillard's martyrdom may damage her cause'](#), *Australian Financial Review*, 15 June 2013, p. 55, accessed 17 June 2013.

176. P Coorey, ['Rival camps lack appetite to test support'](#), *Australian Financial Review*, 19 June 2013, p. 4, accessed 19 June 2013.

177. For example, D Shanahan ['Rudd's date with destiny looms'](#), *The Australian*, 20 June 2013, p. 1, accessed 20 June 2013; A Probyn, ['Rudd side holding the line ... for now'](#), *The West Australian*, 20 June 2013, p. 6, accessed 20 June 2013; P Coorey, ['Combat: Rudd should put up or back off'](#), *Australian Financial Review*, 20 June 2013, p. 4, accessed 20 June 2013.

The [Press Gallery's Mid-Winter Ball](#) provided a brief respite from the harsh politicking of the chamber and occasioned strong praise from one observer for Gillard's 'stylish and witty performance' at the event:

The Prime Minister's speech without notes was a mini tour de force, good-naturedly poking fun at her detractors and their double standards (and herself) in modulated tones, and closing with a declaration that she'll be back. ...

It was a side of Gillard the voters don't often see, offering a stark contrast to grabs of a monotone Prime Minister shouting white noise at her baying opponents on the nightly news. Aside from the sense of humour, it underscored other Gillard strengths: composure under pressure, resilience and courage.¹⁷⁸

On the last day of parliament's penultimate sitting week the Australian Workers Union, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees and the ACTU jointly issued a formal declaration of support for the Prime Minister.¹⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the Opposition released [The Coalition's 2030 Vision for Developing Northern Australia](#)—its third major election policy, following workplace relations and broadband policies released earlier in the year.¹⁸⁰ The paper outlined a range of potential opportunities for development in the north, but no specific plan was promulgated. Instead, the Coalition committed to producing a white paper within 12 months if they won government.¹⁸¹

As the final sitting week began, a *Newspoll* showed the Coalition had opened up a 19-point lead over Labor on the primary vote, 48-29.¹⁸² The annual Lowy Institute poll on Australians' attitudes to the world found voters believed a Coalition government would do a better job than Labor on the economy, foreign investment, asylum seekers, the US alliance and national security, with Labor leading on only two key issues: managing the relationship with China and responding to the challenges of climate change.¹⁸³

On 24 June—the third anniversary of Gillard's controversial ascendancy to the prime ministership—a published analysis by Gillard supporters of recent poll history claimed that 'Kevin Rudd's three-stage siege on the Labor leadership has cost the party direct political support and could destroy it for a generation':

The figures ... show Labor's standing with voters has headed south immediately following the last two raids on the top job by Mr Rudd and his backers.

It shows Labor trailed by just four points with 48 per cent of the two party preferred vote to the Coalition's 52 per cent in *Newspoll's* March 10 survey. However, this gap quadrupled to 16

178. M Gordon, '[Labor's agony will go on, no one knows for how long](#)', *The Saturday Age*, 22 June 2013, p. 21, accessed 24 June 2013.

179. AAP, '[Unions put faith in PM over Rudd](#)', *Hobart Mercury*, 21 June 2013, p. 4, accessed 21 June 2013.

180. M Kenny, '[Abbott sees north as next frontier](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 2013, p. 8, accessed 21 June 2013.

181. Ibid.

182. A Tillett, '[PM's poor polls turn up heat on Labor MPs](#)', *The West Australian*, 24 June 2013, p. 1, accessed 26 June 2013.

183. D Flitton, '[Most voters say Coalition best on economy, security](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 2013, p. 6, accessed 24 June 2013.

percentage points in the *Newspoll* taken just after the March 21 leadership crisis in which Mr Rudd forced a spill, but then failed to stand.

In the corresponding Fairfax Nielsen poll, Labor's deficit blew out from eight points to 14 points across the two polls taken before and after the March 2013 no-show. In February last year, Labor's poll deficit also more than doubled from six points before the ballot—which Ms Gillard won easily by almost two to one—to 14 points in the month after the contest, according to the Fairfax Nielsen poll.¹⁸⁴

Another poll of just over 1000 people, conducted by Essential Research, asked what people thought of fourteen major legislative reforms made by the Labor government in the past few years. Respondents were 'pretty happy' with thirteen of them and 'even the one that was considered a dud, the carbon tax, continue[d] its creeping rehabilitation with voters'.¹⁸⁵ Labor was sitting on an election-losing two party preferred result of 45-55 in the Coalition's favour, with Labor's primary support at 34 per cent to the Coalition's 47 per cent, with the Greens on 8 per cent.¹⁸⁶

As MPs and Senators returned for the final sitting week, the media remained awash with speculation about the likelihood of a final Labor leadership showdown before the week was out.¹⁸⁷

Under a [government motion](#) debated in the Senate with Greens support on the first sitting day, the Senate resolved to sit until midnight on Thursday June 27 and during the day on Friday June 28 to deal with 53 pieces of mostly uncontroversial legislation—taking the total number of laws passed by the Gillard Government to over 600.¹⁸⁸ Bills set down for debate included the school funding reforms, aged-care reform, changes to Newstart Allowance rules, recognition for local government in the Constitution, and major reforms to the Australia Council.

The Government and the Greens both accused the Coalition of employing 'filibustering tactics ... like calling for spurious divisions and trying to suspend standing orders by talking inconsequentially as the chamber clock ticks down'.¹⁸⁹

A poll of 3,903 voters commissioned by the *Australian Financial Review* and ECG Advisory Solutions on the weekend before the final sitting found that, of the 47 seats Labor held by a margin of 12 per cent or less, the Coalition led on a two-party preferred basis by 51.7 per cent to 48.3 per cent—a nationwide two-party swing against Labor since 2010 of 7.6 per cent—enough to cost it seven of the eight seats held by 12 per cent or less.¹⁹⁰

184. M Kenny, '[Rudd to blame for Labor disaster, says Gillard poll review](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 2013, p. 3, accessed 24 June 2013.

185. C Alexander '[Essential: whatever PM's problems are, they're not about policy](#)', *Crikey*, 24 June 2013, accessed 24 June 2013.

186. *Ibid.*

187. For example, D Atkins, '[Leadership call waiting](#)', *The Courier-Mail*, 24 June 2013, p. 6, accessed 24 June 2013; S Maher and J Kelly, '[Rudd forces keep powder dry](#)', *The Australian*, 24 June 2013, p. 1, accessed 24 June 2013; '[Will she, won't she](#)', editorial, *The Herald Sun*, 24 June 2013, p. 28, accessed 24 June 2013.

188. A Cook, '[The final countdown: Parliament's pre-election laundry list](#)', *Crikey*, 24 June 2013, accessed 24 June 2013.

189. *Ibid.* Note: Bills still on the Notice Paper at the conclusion of the Parliament automatically lapse.

190. P Coorey, '[Election rout to halve Labor seats](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 25 June 2013, p. 1, accessed 25 June 2013.

By mid-week there had been no signs of leadership tensions abating and word had spread that a petition was being circulated among Labor MPs to bring on a Caucus vote.

Gillard deposed on 26 June 2013

‘Rudd wins the game of thrones’ said the headline.¹⁹¹ ‘Rudd’s revenge’ and ‘The Rudd resurrection’ proclaimed others.¹⁹²

On the afternoon of Wednesday 26 June, with leadership speculation at fever pitch, the Prime Minister had announced that the Labor Caucus would meet at 7pm to resolve the issue once and for all. It should be a condition of the ballot, said Gillard, that whoever lost should retire from Parliament. Her prospects received a blow when erstwhile supporter Bill Shorten announced that he was switching his allegiance to Rudd:

Bill Shorten’s deathknock (though not entirely unexpected) announcement that he was switching sides was important and symbolic—and also involved going back on his word. Only a few hours before the ballot his spokeswoman said he hadn’t changed position.

Shorten’s subdued mood was a massive contrast to three years ago when he helped mastermind, from a Canberra restaurant, the coup against Rudd.¹⁹³

Gillard lost the ballot, receiving 45 votes to Rudd’s 57.¹⁹⁴ Six cabinet ministers immediately quit the frontbench—Wayne Swan, Greg Combet, Stephen Conroy, Peter Garrett, Craig Emerson and Joe Ludwig.¹⁹⁵ The Labor MPs who announced their retirement at the 2013 election included front-benchers Combet, Garrett and Emerson, along with Defence Minister Stephen Smith—and Gillard herself.¹⁹⁶ Anthony Albanese was elected Deputy Leader, along with a new Senate leadership combination—Penny Wong (Leader) and Jacinta Collins (Deputy Leader).¹⁹⁷ The following day, Thursday 27 June, at 9.30am Kevin Rudd was sworn in as Prime Minister, along with Anthony Albanese as Deputy Prime Minister and Chris Bowen as Treasurer.

The media cited pollsters’ views that the switch to Rudd ‘might give Labor a lift, particularly in Queensland, but was unlikely to avert electoral oblivion’.¹⁹⁸ It had been widely reported that the Coalition had already assembled ‘a mountain of ammunition provided by the Labor Party, to launch

191. M Grattan, ‘[Rudd wins the game of thrones](#)’, *The Conversation*, 26 June 2013, accessed 27 June 2013.

192. ‘[Rudd’s revenge](#)’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 2013; ‘[The Rudd resurrection](#)’, *The Australian*, 27 June 2013, p. 1.

193. M Grattan, ‘Rudd wins the game of thrones’, op. cit.

194. Ibid.

195. Ibid.

196. ‘[Retiring MPs](#)’, *Antony Green’s Election Guide: Federal Election 2013*, ABC News website, accessed 17 July 2013.

197. Ibid.

198. M Dunckley and E Tadros, ‘[Pollsters say Kevin '07 can't be messiah again](#)’, *Australian Financial Review*, 27 June 2013, p. 9, accessed 27 June 2013.

a blitzkrieg against Rudd'.¹⁹⁹ Senior journalist Laura Tingle described the task facing Rudd as 'immense', saying he had to:

... unite Labor; overcome any electoral blowback from his unrelenting campaign against Gillard...; stabilise the Parliament; transform Labor's policy platform; imbue a sense of stability and competence ... and make Labor a viable option for the next poll.²⁰⁰

Suddenly the next election was 'no longer a matter of Tony Abbott just turning up', said *The Land* journalist Peter Austin, giving voice to the general agreement among the commentariat that the re-emergence of Kevin Rudd heralded a decisive switch in Labor's political fortunes.²⁰¹ There was now 'a real contest taking shape—one in which policy differences, not just personalities, will come into play'.²⁰² However, the betting agencies Betfair and Sportsbet still pointed to a landslide victory for the Coalition, with a statistical analysis of electorate-level Sportsbet odds done for *AFR Weekend* showing that Rudd's return 'was only likely to save seven seats to have a probable total of 56 seats, compared with the Coalition's probable 88 seats'.²⁰³

After the fall

Since the death of Joseph Lyons in 1939, 17 people have served as prime minister of Australia. John Howard is alone in having arrived in office and also left office at the hands of the voters. Fifteen prime ministers have either been put into the job by their party or have left office outside of an election. The remaining one, Rudd, is back in office and ... may ... ultimately [be] sacked by the public.²⁰⁴

In 2010 Julia Gillard had found herself as Prime Minister in a hung Parliament, and thereafter endured what many considered to be the toughest of political environments. But for all Labor's dramas there were key observers who contended that Gillard had governed well and achieved major reforms. Independent MP Tony Windsor, in his valedictory speech on 26 June 2013, reminded the chamber that the 43rd Parliament was 'not an easy parliament' and that 'in a lot of ways a lot of very negative strategy has been used'.²⁰⁵ In an interview on the ABC's *Insiders* Windsor said:

There will be a lot of things written and people will make judgments and Julia Gillard was the right person for this particular parliament. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind about that ... [S]he did the job very well.²⁰⁶

During his press conference on his retirement Windsor observed that 'people had said "Nothing will be achieved in a hung parliament ... you'll never get anything done." The reverse has happened.

199. G Kitney, '[Rudd returns to face tough challenge of a Coalition blitzkrieg](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 27 June 2013, p. 7, accessed 27 June 2013.

200. L Tingle, '[Huge task for recycled leader](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 27 June 2013, p. 1, accessed 27 June 2013.

201. P Austin, '[Rudd evens the score](#)', *The Land*, 4 July 2013, p. 19, accessed 8 July 2013.

202. Ibid.

203. E Tados, '[Punters keep in mind a Coalition landslide](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 10 July 2013, p. 6, accessed 10 July 2013.

204. J Lelliott, '[Election a rare path to The Lodge](#)', *The Courier-Mail*, 29 July 2013, p. 18, accessed 29 July 2013.

205. T Windsor, '[Valedictory](#)', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 26 June 2013, p. 67, accessed 12 July 2013.

206. T Windsor quoted on ABC Television program *Insiders*, [transcript of interview](#), 30 June 2013, accessed 12 July 2013.

There are very significant issues, Gonski, NDIS, and many others'.²⁰⁷ Windsor continued that theme in an interview on the ABC's *Lateline* program.²⁰⁸

During Rob Oakeshott's valedictory speech, the independent Member for Lyne—who had had frequent dealings with Gillard in the lead-up to, and during, the hung parliament—praised her work and her character:

We shook hands at the start of this parliament, we looked each other in the eye and we said, "We want it to run full term; we want supply and confidence to be delivered; we want to get some things done for regional Australia; we want a reform agenda through the parliament; and we want to lift parliamentary standards and committee work to improve." We have done it.²⁰⁹

Three weeks after Gillard's loss to Rudd, political analyst Malcolm Mackerras wrote a heart-felt article titled 'Why I admire Julia Gillard' in which he said:

Actually I felt a certain sense of relief for her when she was dismissed by the Labor caucus. Her admirers can now insist that she was never kicked out of office by the Australian people. I have no admiration for the two men who now compete for her former job. Both deserve to lose and I shall certainly feel no sympathy for he who does lose.²¹⁰

Mackerras's one criticism of Gillard was that 'there was no evidence that, at the time, she ever dissented from any of the poor decisions made by the Rudd Government'.²¹¹ Given the conventions of cabinet solidarity this is hardly surprising.

The publication of the book [*The stalking of Julia Gillard: How the media and Team Rudd contrived to bring down the Prime Minister*](#)—was based on a diary kept by journalist Kerry-Anne Walsh—gave further insights into the dynamics of Gillard's replacement by Rudd. Walsh contended that there was the complicity of a group Press Gallery journalists in every move made by 'Team Rudd', as well as 'serious reporting mistakes, gross errors of judgements, biased commentary and empowering of Team Rudd's agenda'.²¹² Referring to the two leadership ballots—one with Rudd a contender and one in which he did not challenge—Walsh argued the following:

When the house of cards collapsed – twice – those journalists remained at their desks. And they all pull handsome salaries; they are paid more than a backbencher in many cases, and among the upper echelons as much as ministers. But while ministers are forced into abject *mea culpas* and apologies for mistakes, we in the fourth estate simply waltz on to the next project without acknowledging our errors.²¹³

207. T Windsor MP, [extract from press conference](#), 26 June 2013, accessed 15 July 2013.

208. T Windsor MP, [Address to the media - Independent MP, Tony Windsor MP announcing his retirement](#), 26 June 2013, accessed 12 July 2013, http://parlview.aph.gov.au/mediaPlayer.php?videoID=198820&operation_mode=emms#.

209. R Oakeshott, 'Valedictory', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 27 June 2013, p. 7255, accessed 24 July 2013.

210. M Mackerras, [Why I admire Julia Gillard](#), *switzer.com.au*, 18 July 2013, accessed 18 July 2013.

211. Ibid.

212. Kerry-Anne Walsh, *How the media and Team Rudd contrived to bring down the Prime Minister*, Allen & Unwin, 2013.

213. Ibid.

Denis Muller is a Senior Research Fellow at Melbourne University's Centre for Advancing Journalism. He, too, [expressed concern](#) at what he saw as egregious ethical lapses in the media's reporting on the Gillard saga:

The media's role in the demise of Julia Gillard as prime minister was complex. Part of it was a consequence of the media just doing its job. But part of it also was the result of ethical failures. These included crude abuse and incitement to hatred on commercial radio talkback, while among other mainstream media the failure of impartiality, failure of contextual accuracy, and the willingness to exploit rather than challenge debased public discourse.²¹⁴

The prominent analyst Anne Summers [interviewed Gillard at length](#) on 10 June 2013.²¹⁵ In the interview Gillard said that she had 'never been someone who's judged themselves by the media headlines' and that her 'reaction to the pressure is to push back, not go under'.²¹⁶ Gillard's misogyny speech, said Summers, 'delighted and energised women everywhere', but at the same time 'gave lethal ammunition to those who would prefer women to be either absent or silently compliant in public life'.²¹⁷

Some months after Gillard's caucus defeat, and with the 2013 election campaign in full swing, election analyst Antony Green interrogated data from the ABC's *Vote Compass* tool to inquire further into the part that gender played in how people's voting patterns and intentions were shaped. Green's interest had been piqued by a special analysis of *Newspoll* looking at the shift in gender voting with the change in leadership—which saw Labor's vote among men rise 7 per cent from 28 per cent to 35 per cent.²¹⁸ Before the change, a Fairfax Nielsen poll had highlighted a slump in Labor support among male voters.²¹⁹

The *Vote Compass* results revealed that there was 'a vast gender difference in respondent attitudes to the change in leadership, but it was the shift in attitude among male voters that was more important to Labor's poll recovery than the reaction of female voters'.²²⁰

In summary it is clear that in changing leader, Labor received ... overwhelming backing from male voters ... [What] is clearly shown in the *Vote Compass* data, is that it is the reaction among male voters to Julia Gillard's demise that has played an important part in Labor's poll recovery...

Whether Labor's problems were caused by sexism in the electorate, sexism by Ms Gillard's opponents, sexism in the media, or missteps by Ms Gillard herself, clearly Labor couldn't allow the impasse on the leadership to persist. ... But Labor is still polling better than before the

214. D Muller, '[Ethical lapses by journalists contributed to Gillard's demise](#)', *The Conversation*, 28 June 2013, accessed 29 July 2013.

215. A Summers, '[The Prime Ministership according to Julia Gillard](#)', *Anne Summers Reports*, Number 3, July 2013, pp. 15–27, accessed 27 July 2013.

216. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

217. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

218. A Green, '[Vote Compass data confirms Labor had 'bloke problem' under Julia Gillard](#)', *ABC News*, 15 August 2013, accessed 20 August 2013.

219. *Ibid.*

220. *Ibid.*

leadership change, and the *Vote Compass* data reveals that the story is not about Tony Abbot and female voters, but male voter attitudes to Julia Gillard.²²¹

In an interview for *The Monthly* published in August, Gillard reiterated her view that some of the attacks on her prime ministership were because of her gender, and that if she had been black, the attacks would not have been tolerated. Referring to the notorious ‘ditch the witch’ slogans, Gillard said:

If I was the first indigenous prime minister, and Abbott had gone out and stood next to a sign that said, ‘Ditch the black bastard’, I reckon that would be the end of a political career ... And it’s not less because it’s gender. But it’s been treated as less.²²²

She insisted that she was ‘trying her best to get the Government back on track right up to the day she challenged Mr Rudd in 2010’, and was spurred into action only after a press article revealed that Rudd had ‘sent out his numbers men because he did not believe Ms Gillard was loyal’.²²³

Nicholas Reece—a Public Policy Fellow at the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne—was for 18 months Gillard’s director of strategy. On 1 July 2013 he had penned a piece saying that Julia Gillard, as PM, was ‘good humoured, warm, smart, dignified and down to earth’, and he asked ‘what went wrong?’.²²⁴

Reece said that Gillard ran a ‘disciplined, professional office’ and that courtesy was shown to staff, MPs, public servants and stakeholders; that she had a quick mind and could master a brief at lightning speed; that she was a genuinely affectionate person who had a quick wit that could be deployed to lift the spirits of those around her.²²⁵

The cruellest irony of Julia Gillard’s political career must surely be the chasm that existed between public perceptions of the first female prime minister and the views of those who worked with her closely. To those who knew her at a personal level, as I did, she was regarded as warm, good-humoured, dignified, hard-working and courageous.

But as pollsters and shock jocks regularly reminded us, among much of the population she was viewed as a godless, childless, unmarried, lying, backstabbing witch. To understand this brutal disjuncture, a balanced appraisal is needed of Gillard’s ability as a politician and her period as prime minister.²²⁶

Reece declared her to be ‘probably the most normal, down-to-earth person to have served as prime minister of Australia in the modern era’.²²⁷

221. Ibid.

222. C Hooper, ‘[On the road with Julia Gillard; Sketches of a prime minister in her final months](#)’, *The Monthly*, August 2013, accessed 27 July 2013.

223. ‘[Gillard: I was loyal to the end](#)’, *Courier Mail*, 27 July 2013, p. 4, accessed 29 July 2013.

224. N Reece, ‘[Secret softie: the cold truth is Gillard's warmth couldn't be conveyed to voters](#)’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 2013, accessed 31 July 2013.

225. Ibid.

226. Ibid.

227. Ibid.

Notwithstanding such endorsements from those who knew her well—and a broader public recognition that sexism was indeed in play—there remained those who believed that Gillard’s shortcomings as a public political communicator were her real Achilles’ heel :

The final undoing of Gillard was not, I believe, due to misogyny, but rather to her inability to articulate a clear vision of where she wanted to lead Australia. Her tragedy was that many of the pieces were there in the actual policies she pursued, but she never found a narrative that weaved them together.

Gillard has much of which to be proud, but she never communicated the personal warmth and commitment that one sees in her face-to-face. Yes, this is a greater challenge for a woman, particularly perhaps for a woman on the political left who faces the implacable belief of conservatives that they have the right to govern.²²⁸

It seems likely that these matters—along with the many controversies that emerged during Gillard’s time in office—will become increasingly a topic for analysis and debate as journalists and academics examine the Gillard legacy and probe her downfall, and as the politics of the 43rd Parliament are further reflected upon by the public.

In her final address to the media after losing the leadership, Julia Gillard said, among other things:

In the years in which I have served as Prime Minister, predominantly I have faced a minority Parliament and I have also faced internal division within my political party. It has not been an easy environment to work in. But I am pleased that in this environment, which wasn’t easy, I have prevailed to ensure that this country is made stronger and smarter and fairer for the future. I am very proud of what this Government has achieved, which will endure for the long term.²²⁹

She went on to list the reforms of which she was most proud and to praise her cabinet colleagues and the members of the Australian Defence Force. She then turned to the issue that had become something of a *cause célèbre* during her incumbency—the role of gender in politics:

I want to say a few remarks about being the first woman to serve in this position... I have been a little bit bemused by those colleagues in the newspapers who have admitted that I have suffered more pressure as a result of my gender than other prime ministers in the past, but then concluded that it had zero effect on my political position or the political position of the Labor Party.

It doesn’t explain everything, it doesn’t explain nothing, it explains some things.

And it is for the nation to think in a sophisticated way about those shades of grey.

What I am absolutely confident of is it will be easier for the next woman and the woman after that and the woman after that, and I’m proud of that.²³⁰

228. D Altman, ‘[Rudd’s return marks the victory of opportunist politics](#)’, *The Conversation*, 27 June 2013, accessed 6 August 2013.

229. ‘[Julia Gillard bows out](#)’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 2013, accessed 12 July 2013.

230. *Ibid.*

The ABC's chief online political reporter Annabel Crabb offered perhaps the shrewdest analysis of Labor's fortunes immediately post-Gillard. She wrote, on 12 July 2013, following Rudd's address to the National Press Club:

Twenty-six Caucus members changed their votes between last year's leadership vote and this year's. Their thoughts are their own, of course, but as a group their reasoning was fairly clear; disaster lay ahead with Julia Gillard, so best pop Kevin back in, to save the furniture.

One wonders what they might have been thinking as they watched their recycled Prime Minister at the National Press Club yesterday. Because if it hadn't already dawned on them ... it must have been fairly clear by the time Mr Rudd concluded things ... Kevin is not here to save the furniture. Kevin is here to be Prime Minister. And it might take a while...

Kevin Rudd is, in thought, word and deed, the most remarkable leader the Labor Party has had this century. And the weirdest thing, after all this time, is that his colleagues still underestimate him so comprehensively.

In 2010, they thought he'd go away and lick his wounds in private. In 2013, they thought he'd pop off to an election and gallantly offset the worst of their projected downswing.

Wrong, wrong, wrong.

Grandiose, ambitious, confident—this Prime Minister is not about saving the furniture.

He is the furniture.²³¹

The 2013 election

The Coalition had a decisive win in the House of Representatives, with a two party preferred vote of 53.41 per cent to Labor's 46.59 per cent—a two-party swing of 3.61 per cent.²³² Labor's primary vote fell to 33.38 per cent, its [lowest in over 100 years](#).²³³ The Coalition won 90 seats, Labor 55 seats, with the remainder going to small parties (3) and independents (2).²³⁴ The Senate proved to be an interesting contest, with small parties winning six of the seats. The Coalition won 17 seats, Labor won 13 seats and the Greens three seats, with one independent returned.²³⁵

Julia Gillard kept a very low profile during the election campaign and did not contest her seat of Lalor—won for Labor by Joanne Ryan despite a 9.96 per cent two party preferred swing against the ALP in that seat.²³⁶ Kevin Rudd won his seat of Griffith with a two party preferred swing against Labor of 5.45 per cent.²³⁷

231. A Crabb, '[The remarkable Rudd has a plan to stay](#)', ABC, *The Drum*, 12 July 2013, accessed 12 July 2013.

232. AEC, '[The official 2013 federal election results](#)', accessed 10 October 2013.

233. Ibid. See also [Australian politics and elections database](#), accessed 9 October 2013.

234. Ibid.

235. AEC, 'Virtual Tally Room', [Senate party representation](#), accessed 9 October 2013.

236. AEC, 'Virtual Tally Room', [Victorian Division of Lalor](#), accessed 9 October 2013.

237. AEC, 'Virtual Tally Room', [Queensland Division of Griffith](#), accessed 9 October 2013.

A last word

After the election Julia Gillard made her first major public appearance at a packed event held at the Sydney Opera House—[Julia Gillard: In conversation with Anne Summers](#). Tickets for the event were reportedly sold out within hours.²³⁸

In August 2013, Penguin published *Take your best shot*, written by Gillard's erstwhile biographer Jacqueline Kent.²³⁹ In its closing pages Kent offered the following assessment:

While some commentators considered that in toppling Julia Gillard Kevin Rudd had resumed his rightful place—and when he took over the prime ministership again he certainly behaved as if he had—others contrasted his approach to that of his predecessor, not always to his advantage. Gillard's legislative achievements had been extraordinary, it was agreed, but she seemed unable to explain them convincingly and with authority: Rudd often failed to carry out policy and governance, but was always very good at speaking to the public and explaining what he was doing.

Perhaps this is the difference between policy and politics.²⁴⁰

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238. H Ewart, '[Gender dominates Julia Gillard's first post-election appearance](#)', ABC 7:30, transcript, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 30 September 2013, accessed 10 October 2013. Video and audio versions of the event are available at <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/bigideas/stories/2013/09/26/3856772.htm>
239. The book's title refers to Gillard's remarks when she announced the leadership June 2013 ALP leadership ballot: 'I have determined that there will be a ballot for the leadership and deputy leadership of the Labor Party at 4.30pm. In the meantime, [take your best shot](#)'. Penguin Books had previously published Kent's biography of Gillard, [The making of Julia Gillard: Prime Minister](#).
240. J Kent, *Take your best shot: the prime ministership of Julia Gillard*, Penguin Specials, 2013, p. 122.

Appendix 1: Chronology of Julia Gillard

- 1961 Julia Gillard is born in Wales.
- 1966 Migrates to Adelaide with her family.
- 1987 Starts working as a lawyer.
- 1995 Becomes chief of staff to Victorian opposition leader John Brumby.
- 1998 Elected in the seat of Lalor in Victoria.
- 2001 Promoted to Opposition population and immigration spokesperson.
- 2003 In December becomes Manager of Opposition Business.
- 2006 In December elected Deputy Leader of the Opposition.
- 2007 In November Kevin Rudd leads Labor to victory against John Howard and Gillard becomes Deputy Prime Minister. As education minister she oversees the Rudd Government's 'education revolution' and as Labor's workplace relations minister she dismantles Workchoices.
-

2010

- Jun 24 Gillard becomes Australia's 27th Prime Minister—the first woman to lead the country. She is elected unopposed when Rudd decides not to contest a ballot. She vows to resolve three big issues hurting Labor: the mining tax, carbon price and asylum seekers.
- Jun 25 Deputy PM Swan flies to Canada to represent Australia at the G20 summit, replacing Rudd.
- Jun 28 Gillard announces a limited cabinet reshuffle, with Simon Crean taking over her portfolios of education, employment and workplace relations and Stephen Smith taking over trade. She asks Rudd to take time off but offers him a frontbench position should the Government be returned after the election.
- Jun 29 Rudd farewells The Lodge before flying home to Brisbane.
- Jul 2 Gillard announces new resources tax arrangements, scrapping the 40 per cent resource super profits tax and instead implementing a minerals resource rent tax at a rate of 30 per cent. The arrival of another asylum seeker boat puts pressure on the Gillard Government's border protection credentials.
- Jul 5 The Government announces its response to the Cooper Review into superannuation—MySuper and SuperStream.

- Jul 6 Gillard announces plans for a regional processing centre for asylum seekers in East Timor. She is later criticised for by-passing her East Timorese counterpart and speaking first to President Jose Ramos-Horta.
- Jul 8 Gillard emphatically rules out any kind of carbon price before 2012.
- Jul 12 Labor's popularity slips but the party maintains an election-winning lead over the Coalition in opinion polls.
- Jul 15 Gillard makes first address as PM to National Press Club, but is ambushed by questions that Rudd, at their meeting before he was rolled, had offered a deal to stand aside if his popularity did not improve by October.
- Jul 17 Gillard announces August 21 federal election.
- Jul 23 Gillard announces a 150-person citizens' assembly will decide the fate of Labor's plans for an emissions trading scheme.
- Jul 27 Labor rocked by a cabinet leak suggesting Gillard opposed a paid parental leave scheme and was concerned about pension increases while deputy PM.
- Aug 2 Gillard vows to unveil "the real Julia" after a tough first fortnight of the campaign.
- Aug 7 Gillard holds an awkward meeting with Rudd who agrees to campaign for Labor—but not alongside the PM.
- Aug 16 Gillard declares on national TV that: "There will be no carbon tax under the Government I lead."
- Aug 17 Gillard rules out carbon tax if Labor re-elected.
- Aug 21 Federal election results in both parties being tied on 72 seats a-piece. Gillard starts negotiating with the crossbench MPs to secure a minority Government.
- Sep 1 Greens back Labor.
- Sep 2 Independent Andrew Wilkie settles deal with Labor on pokies reform.
- Sep 7 After 17 days of tough talks independent MPs Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott agree to back Gillard to stay on as Prime Minister. She had already won the support of Greens MP Adam Bandt and Tasmania's Andrew Wilkie.
- Sep 11 Gillard names Rudd as foreign affairs minister in her new cabinet.
- Sep 23 Opposition Leader Tony Abbott says the fact Labor is pushing ahead with a plan to put a price on carbon means Gillard's Government is based on a lie.

- Oct 2 Gillard visits Afghanistan during first overseas trip as PM.
 - Oct 8 Murray Darling Basin Authority puts out guide to plan. Irrigators take to the streets and burn plan.
 - Dec 15 Around 50 asylum seekers drown off Christmas Island when their boat smashes onto rocks. Gillard says it's "a truly horrific event, a terrible human tragedy".
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2011

- Jan Natural disasters hit Queensland and Victoria; hurting national economy.
- Jan 28 New Murray Darling chief appointed; Government signals fresh approach.
- Feb 24 Gillard announces carbon tax.
- Mar 9 Gillard becomes just the third Australian leader to address the United States Congress. She says for her generation the defining image of America was the moon landing: 'I'll always remember thinking that day - Americans can do anything.'
- Apr Polls show coalition 10 points ahead of Labor.
- May 7 Gillard announces Australia and Malaysia are finalising a deal to swap asylum seekers "to break the people smugglers' business model". At the same time she announces a regional processing centre is unlikely to be built in East Timor.
- Aug 2 Gillard finally gets the states and territories to sign up to the \$20 billion health reform agreement initiated by Rudd but critics say the plan is so watered down it will not end the blame game.
- Aug 31 High Court rules Gillard's Malaysia deal unlawful.
- Sep 22 Parliament starts debating draft laws aimed at restoring the Government's power to send asylum seekers to third countries following Labor's High Court loss. Gillard later declines to put the legislation to a vote after admitting she does not have the numbers.
- Oct 12 Gillard and Rudd embrace on the floor of Parliament after the lower house passes the carbon tax. It will later pass through the Senate with the support of the Greens.
- Oct 13 Gillard concedes her Government cannot implement its controversial Malaysia deal and says it will revert to onshore processing of asylum seekers who arrive by boat.
- Nov 23 Gillard secures the passage of her revised minerals resource rent tax (MRRT) through the lower house following a marathon sitting.

- Dec 2 Gillard's opening address at the ALP national conference lists the achievements of Labor's past prime ministers—but Rudd is omitted from the list, sparking claims she 'airbrushed' him from history.
 - Dec 3 The ALP national conference votes in favour of allowing parliamentarians a conscience vote on same-sex marriage even though Gillard remains opposed to such unions.
 - Dec 12 Gillard reshuffles her cabinet but is criticised for promoting Bill Shorten—one of the so-called "faceless men" who helped her topple Rudd in mid-2010.
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2012

- Jan 21 Gillard abandons her commitment to introduce new anti-pokie laws and as a result independent MP Andrew Wilkie revokes his agreement to support her minority Government.
- Feb 13 Gillard appears on ABC TV's Four Corners and is confronted with the suggestion her staff were preparing a speech two weeks before she toppled Rudd in 2010. The program also suggests she had seen polling about her popularity compared with Rudd.
- Feb 15 After two failed attempts, the Government finally secures enough support to get legislation through the parliament to means test the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate. Labor says it is a victory for 'fairness and equity'.
- Feb 18 YouTube video of Kevin Rudd swearing repeatedly as PM. Rudd says in a late-night interview before flying to Mexico he will not challenge Gillard.
- Feb 20 Former Labor leader Simon Crean slams Rudd saying if he can't be a team player 'he should exit the team or challenge'.
- Feb 22 Labor frontbencher Simon Crean again criticises Rudd for not being a team player and calls on him to quit the side or challenge. Rudd resigns as foreign minister during a dramatic early-morning media conference in Washington DC and says he is returning home to consider his future. Treasurer Wayne Swan releases a statement accusing Rudd of self-interest, saying he was the party's biggest beneficiary, then its biggest critic, but never a loyal or selfless example of its values and objectives.
- Feb 23 Julia Gillard calls leadership ballot for the morning of Monday February 27 and says that Rudd as prime minister had chaotic and difficult work patterns. 'If against my expectation I do not receive the support of my colleagues then I will go to backbench and I will renounce any further ambition for the Labor leadership',

Gillard says—adding that she expects Rudd to give the same undertaking. She says she is the one who gets things done. Attorney-General Nicola Roxon says ‘Kevin is not the messiah’ and it would not be good for the country to have him back as prime minister because he is very difficult to work with. Immigration Minister Chris Bowen urges Rudd to run for the federal Labor leadership, saying it is the best thing for Labor and the nation. Frontbencher Robert McClelland says he will support Rudd because he is best equipped to win the next election.

- Feb 24 Rudd arrives back in Australia and holds a media conference at Brisbane airport. He declares at a later media conference he will challenge Gillard for the leadership, saying he can save Labor. Resources Minister Martin Ferguson comes out in support of Rudd. Environment Minister Tony Burke says he would expect Rudd to sack him if he returns as prime minister but does not expect that he will win. Gillard pitches to caucus that the party’s leadership is about who gets things done.
- Feb 25 Gillard says Labor will be a united front after Monday. She refuses to accept the resignation as manager of Government business of her long-time friend and transport minister Anthony Albanese, who threw his support behind the Rudd camp.
- Feb 26 An emotional Anthony Albanese declares his support for Rudd. Says he offered to quit as leader of the House for the Government but Gillard rejected the offer. Rudd gives a long interview to Laurie Oakes on the Nine Network before going to church ahead of returning to Canberra. Gillard attends the Western Bulldogs family day in Footscray, gives a succinct doorstep before flying back to Canberra. School Education Minister Peter Garrett declares he will not serve under Rudd if he wins the leadership ballot. Martin Ferguson concedes Rudd does not have the numbers to win but says he is dismayed that a majority of MPs in marginal seats would stick with Gillard because ‘you can’t achieve anything in opposition’.
- Feb 27 Labor MPs vote 71–31 to retain Gillard as leader.
- Mar 2 Gillard drafts former NSW premier Bob Carr to fill a casual Senate vacancy and replace Rudd as foreign minister.
- Apr 3 Fair Work Australia (FWA) completes the Health Services Union (HSU) national office investigation. Finds 181 alleged contraventions of workplace laws and union rules. Labor MP and former HSU official Craig Thomson named.
- Apr 22 Peter Slipper stands aside as Speaker pending the outcome of a criminal investigation into his Cabcharge use. The day before he also denies claims he sexually harassed staffer James Hunter Ashby.
- Apr 23 Gillard defends her political judgment in proposing Slipper for Speaker.

- Apr 29 Gillard announces Thomson has quit ALP to sit on the crossbench as an independent. PM asks Slipper to extend his time away from the post of Speaker until allegations surrounding the use of taxpayer-funded taxi vouchers and sexual harassment are resolved. Deputy Speaker Anna Burke becomes Acting Speaker.
- May 7 FWA releases HSU national office investigation report. Finds Craig Thomson spent around \$500,000 of union funds on escorts, cash withdrawals, meals and electioneering.
- May 16 First stage of carbon tax compensation sent to people's bank accounts.
- Jul 1 Carbon pricing regime starts, along with the minerals resource rent tax.
- Aug 13 Houston report on asylum seeker policy released. Offshore processing to restart.
- Aug 17 Work starts on reopening processing centres on Nauru and PNG's Manus Island.
- Aug 23 Gillard holds hour long press conference to defend herself over unproven allegations about her legal work for two Australian Workers' Union officials in the 1990s.
- Aug 26 ALP loses NT election. Gillard does not appear on the campaign trail.
- Sep 3 Gillard challenges states to come up with the \$6.5 billion a year needed to implement the Gonski school funding reforms.
- Sep 8 Gillard's father dies while she is in Russia for an APEC summit.
- Oct 10 Gillard makes 'sexism and misogyny' speech in parliament in an attack on Abbott, who had accused the prime minister of hypocrisy for supporting Slipper.
- Oct 18 Australia wins a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council.
- Oct 28 Gillard releases Asian Century white paper.
- Nov 12 Gillard announces a royal commission to investigate the responses of religious, state and community groups to acts and allegations of child sexual abuse.
- Nov 26 Gillard gives second lengthy media conference on AWU allegations.

2013

- Jan 7 Gillard hails the great spirit of 'Australian mateship' as she tours bushfire-hit southern Tasmania.

- Jan 11 Gillard announces that NSW Supreme Court judge Peter McClellan has been appointed to head a royal commission into child sexual abuse.
- Jan 17 Gillard visits NSW town of Coonabarabran where she says destructive bushfires have turned the area into a 'moonscape'.
- Jan 22 Gillard announces her 'captain's pick' of Nova Peris as a Senate candidate in the Northern Territory, sparking a bitter row in the ALP over the dumping of Senator Trish Crossin.
- Jan 29 Former federal attorney-general Robert McClelland announces he will retire from politics at the next federal election. McClelland was dumped from the front bench by Gillard after he supported Rudd in the 2012 leadership challenge.
- Jan 30 Gillard uses a National Press Club address to announce that the federal election will be held on Saturday, September 14.
- Jan 31 Craig Thomson arrested by NSW Police over 149 fraud charges related to his time as national secretary of the HSU.
- Feb 2 Gillard announces reshuffle after resignations of senior ministers Nicola Roxon and Chris Evans.
- Feb 8 Wayne Swan announces the Government's mining tax has only raised \$126 million in its first six months.
- Feb 18 A Herald-Nielsen poll shows Labor's primary vote has plummeted to 30 per cent and the Coalition is leading on a two-party preferred vote of 56–44, sparking fresh leadership speculation and renewed criticism of Gillard.
- Feb 19 Greens leader Christine Milne says she has told Gillard she believes Labor has walked away from their post-election agreement.
- Feb 20 Gillard dismisses Christine Milne with a 'thanks, righto' after the Greens Leader told her she would end her minor party's alliance with the Government.
- Feb 22 Senior Liberal MP Malcolm Turnbull says Labor is tearing itself apart over the guilt it feels for knifing former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. A poll of Queensland voters shows the return of Kevin Rudd to the federal Labor leadership would propel the Government to victory.
- Feb 25 'With Joan Child's passing, Australia has lost one of its pioneering female political leaders and I have lost a role model', Ms Gillard says following the death of Joan Child, the first female Speaker of the Federal Parliament, who died at the age of 91.

The Gillard Government appoints Megan Mitchell as Australia's first National Children's Commissioner, to sit within the Australian Human Rights Commission.

- Feb 27 Long-time western Sydney MP Laurie Ferguson says Gillard is not responsible for Labor's poor polling, saying it was time for the party to decide whether it was serious about unity or whether it would tolerate people undermining it.
- Feb 28 Gillard says she feels misunderstood by the media.
- Mar 2 Gillard begins a five-day blitz of Western Sydney to reconnect with the Labor heartland and salvage support in once-safe seats as polls suggest Labor will lose the area in the federal election.
- Mar 21 Julia Gillard apologises to victims of forced adoption practices during the 1950s to the 1970s. Senior cabinet minister Simon Crean calls for Gillard to call a leadership spill but Kevin Rudd does not stand and Crean is sacked. Chief Whip Joel Fitzgibbon and his deputies Ed Husic and Janelle Saffin resign, along with Minister for Resources and Energy Martin Ferguson, Human Services Minister Senator Kim Carr, Tertiary Education Minister Chris Bowen and parliamentary secretary Richard Marles. Four of the Government's controversial new media laws are withdrawn.
- Apr 5 Gillard departs for China accompanied by the most senior Australian political delegation to ever visit the Asian nation to promote trade and economic interests and share with the Chinese leadership perspectives on global and regional economic and security issues.
- Apr 8 Gillard says Margaret Thatcher, who died at age 87, created history in the United Kingdom with her strong leadership.
- Apr 14 Gillard announces the Gonski education reforms to lift schools funding by \$14.5 billion over six years, provided the states agree. Around \$2.3 billion will be stripped from universities to pay for the reforms.
- Apr 19 None of the states and territories sign up to the federal Government's schools funding plan at a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting.
- Apr 23 NSW becomes the first state to sign up to the Gonski education reforms.
- Apr 29 Gillard announces tax revenue will shrink by \$12 billion by the end of June.
- May 1 Gillard says the average worker will from 1 July pay an extra \$1 a day in Medicare levies to support the federal Government's National Disability Insurance Scheme—a move supported by the Coalition.
- May 11 All states and territories except WA sign on to the NDIS.

- May 14 The Budget is released, showing that the mining tax is expected to raise only \$200 million in its first 12 months and \$700 million in its second year. Meanwhile, the cost of asylum seekers blows out by \$3 billion.
- May 14 The Gillard Government pledges more than \$400 million for the royal commission into child sexual abuse.
- May 16 The groundbreaking DisabilityCare Australia scheme to go ahead on July 1 after Parliament passes laws to raise the Medicare levy by 0.5 per cent to help pay for the scheme. It will provide better care for Australians with severe physical and mental disabilities.
- May 21 Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd insists his change of heart to support gay marriage is about his 'personal journey' and not a political point-scoring exercise.
- May 23 Gillard says the Government will help 1200 Ford workers facing unemployment by 2016 to find new jobs.
- May 24 Gillard says arrogance within the Liberal Party about its prospects of winning the federal election is getting 'out of control', as Opposition Leader Tony Abbott says in a radio interview he had already thought about his election night victory speech.
- May 27 Gillard says she will serve a full term in the next parliament.
- Jun 3 Queensland Premier Campbell Newman sends Gillard a letter saying it is unlikely his state will sign up to the Gonski education reforms.
- Jun 4 Some Labor MPs admit they fear the worst as a round of opinion polls show the Gillard Government heading for a landslide defeat at the September 14 election.
- Jun 6 Rudd says federal Labor has a strong case for re-election and should not be 'hauling up the white flag', pointing out Australia's low interest rates, unemployment and debt levels.
- Jun 11 Gillard says abortion will become the 'political plaything' of male politicians if the Coalition wins the election; makes joke about 'men in blue ties' running the country.
- Jun 12 Gillard says menu prepared by a restaurant owner whose restaurant hosted a Liberal Party fundraiser is part of a 'pattern of behaviour'. The menu included a dish described as 'Julia Gillard Kentucky Fried Quail - Small Breasts, Huge Thighs'.
- Jun 13 Perth shock jock Howard Sattler suspended after cringe-worthy interview with Gillard in which he asks if her partner Tim Mathieson is gay.

- Jun 18 Labor caucus meeting in Canberra. Gillard tells MPs to put ‘purpose before self-interest’.
- Jun 19 ACTU tells Labor MPs to ‘get behind’ Gillard and go united to the election.
- Jun 20 ACTU, AWU, SDAEA unions express support for Gillard.
- Jun 21 Senior minister Gary Gray tells Rudd to put up or shut up. Bill Shorten denies he will shift his support from Gillard to Rudd.
- Jun 23 Cabinet minister Stephen Conroy says if Rudd wants a spill he should call it, adding that Gillard ‘won’t budge’.
- Jun 24 Gillard says leadership was settled in March.
- Jun 25 Labor caucus meeting in Canberra. Rudd does not attend. Gillard quizzed on Labor’s re-election strategy.
- Jun 26 Gillard calls leadership spill and caucus meeting for 7pm. Rudd agrees to run. Both commit to leaving federal politics if they are unsuccessful. Gillard loses, 45–57 votes.

Source: Chronology prepared by Rob Lundie, Senior Researcher, Parliamentary Library, Australia

Appendix 2: Chronology of leadership battles between Rudd and Gillard

2006

Dec 4 Kevin Rudd becomes Labor leader, with Julia Gillard as his deputy, after defeating Kim Beazley in a leadership ballot.

2007

Nov 24 Rudd becomes the 26th Prime Minister of Australia with Julia Gillard as his deputy after defeating John Howard.

2010

Jun 24 Gillard becomes Australia's first female Prime Minister when Rudd steps down after losing the support of the majority of caucus.

Sep 11 Rudd becomes foreign minister in Gillard's new cabinet following the August election.

2011

Apr 8 Rudd rejects suggestions he is on the comeback trail, saying there is no faint prospect of him regaining the prime ministership.

2012

Feb 22 Amid leadership speculation, Rudd holds a press conference in Washington DC to announce his resignation as foreign minister and returns to Australia.

Feb 27 Rudd loses a leadership ballot to Gillard 71–31 votes, and vows to support the PM. Rudd goes to the backbench.

2013

Mar 21 Senior frontbencher Simon Crean calls on Gillard to spill leadership positions, says Rudd should stand. Gillard announces 4.30pm caucus ballot but Rudd declines to stand.

Jun 26 Renewed speculation that Rudd will challenge peaks with reports that Rudd backers have gathered the names of at least 55 MPs who are prepared to support him in a leadership ballot. Gillard loses caucus vote, 45–57.

Source: Chronology prepared by Rob Lundie, Senior Researcher, Parliamentary Library, Australia

Appendix 3: Opinion polls Jan 2012 – June 2013

Poll End Date	Source	Voting Intention	COALITION	ALP	Two Party Preferred	COALITION (2PP)	LABOR (2PP)	PM Satisfaction	SATISFIED (PM)	DISSATISFIED (PM)	Preferred PM	PRIME MINISTER (PPM)	OPPOSITION LEADER (PI)
23-Jun-13	Newspoll		48	29		57	43		28	62		33	45
02-Jun-13	Newspoll		49	30		58	42		28	62		35	43
19-May-13	Newspoll		46	31		56	44		31	59		39	40
19-May-13	Nielsen		44	32		54	46		40	56		46	46
05-May-13	Newspoll		47	31		56	44		29	61		37	42
21-Apr-13	Newspoll		46	32		55	45		30	60		35	40
13-Apr-13	Nielsen		49	29		57	43		37	59		42	50
07-Apr-13	Newspoll		48	32		55	45		28	62		37	40
24-Mar-13	Newspoll		50	30		58	42		26	65		35	43
16-Mar-13	Nielsen		47	31		56	44		38	58		43	49
10-Mar-13	Newspoll		44	34		52	48		32	57		42	38
24-Feb-13	Newspoll		47	31		55	45		30	58		36	40
16-Feb-13	Nielsen		47	30		52	48		40	56		45	49
03-Feb-13	Newspoll		48	32		56	44		36	52		41	39
13-Jan-13	Newspoll		44	38		51	49		38	49		45	33
15-Dec-12	Nielsen		43	35		53	47		46	50		50	40
09-Dec-12	Newspoll		46	32		54	46		36	52		43	34
25-Nov-12	Newspoll		43	36		51	49		37	52		46	33
17-Nov-12	Nielsen		45	34		52	48		47	48		51	42
11-Nov-12	Newspoll		43	36		51	49		37	52		46	32
28-Oct-12	Newspoll		41	36		50	50		35	51		45	34
20-Oct-12	Nielsen		43	34		53	47		47	48		50	40
07-Oct-12	Newspoll		45	33		54	46		36	50		43	33
16-Sep-12	Newspoll		41	36		50	50		36	52		46	32
15-Sep-12	Nielsen		45	34		54	46		42	53		47	44
02-Sep-12	Newspoll		46	33		55	45		31	57		39	38
25-Aug-12	Nielsen		45	32		56	44		39	57		46	45
19-Aug-12	Newspoll		45	35		53	47		27	60		38	38
05-Aug-12	Newspoll		45	33		54	46		29	59		36	38
28-Jul-12	Nielsen		47	30		58	42		37	58		43	48
22-Jul-12	Newspoll		46	28		56	44		29	62		36	40
08-Jul-12	Newspoll		48	31		56	44		27	61		36	39
30-Jun-12	Nielsen		48	28		57	43		35	60		42	46
24-Jun-12	Newspoll		46	30		55	45		30	59		39	38
10-Jun-12	Newspoll		44	31		54	46		32	58		42	38
02-Jun-12	Nielsen		48	26		58	42		36	60		44	46
27-May-12	Newspoll		46	32		54	46		30	60		40	37
13-May-12	Newspoll		45	30		55	45		27	63		36	40
10-May-12	Nielsen		49	28		58	42		35	60		42	50
29-Apr-12	Newspoll		51	27		59	41		28	63		36	41
15-Apr-12	Newspoll		48	29		56	44		28	62		39	41
31-Mar-12	Nielsen		47	27		57	43		35	60		42	50
25-Mar-12	Newspoll		47	28		57	43		31	58		40	37
11-Mar-12	Newspoll		43	31		53	47		28	62		39	37
26-Feb-12	Newspoll		45	35		53	47		26	64		36	38
23-Feb-12	Nielsen		44	34		53	47		36	59		45	48
12-Feb-12	Newspoll		46	32		55	45		32	57		37	40
02-Feb-12	Nielsen		45	33		53	47		36	60		46	47
29-Jan-12	Newspoll		45	30		54	46		33	55		40	37

Source: *Newspoll, AC Nielsen Poll* viewed at http://libiis1/Library_Services/opinionpolls/index.htm

Appendix 4: Opinion polls Feb 2011 – Dec 2011

Poll End Date	Source	Voting Intention	COALITION	ALP	Two Party Preferred	COALITION (2PP)	LABOR (2PP)	PM Satisfaction	SATISFIED (PM)	DISSATISFIED (PM)	Preferred PM	PRIME MINISTER (PPM)	OPPOSITION LEADER (PP)
10-Dec-11	Nielsen		49	29		57	43		40	55		48	46
04-Dec-11	Newspoll		44	31		54	46		36	56		43	36
20-Nov-11	Newspoll		48	30		57	43		34	55		40	35
12-Nov-11	Nielsen		45	30		55	45		35	58		42	46
06-Nov-11	Newspoll		44	32		53	47		30	60		39	40
23-Oct-11	Newspoll		45	29		54	46		31	61		36	39
15-Oct-11	Nielsen		48	30		57	43		39	57		45	45
09-Oct-11	Newspoll		49	29		57	43		28	60		35	40
18-Sep-11	Newspoll		48	26		58	42		27	61		35	40
10-Sep-11	Nielsen		48	27		58	42		33	62		44	48
04-Sep-11	Newspoll		50	27		59	41		23	68		34	43
21-Aug-11	Newspoll		47	27		57	43		29	61		38	39
13-Aug-11	Nielsen		48	28		58	42		32	62		40	48
07-Aug-11	Newspoll		47	29		56	44		33	58		39	40
24-Jul-11	Newspoll		47	29		56	44		32	59		40	41
16-Jul-11	Nielsen		51	26		61	39		38	57		44	47
10-Jul-11	Newspoll		49	27		58	42		30	59		38	43
26-Jun-11	Newspoll		46	30		55	45		28	62		39	40
16-Jun-11	Nielsen		49	27		59	41		34	62		40	51
12-Jun-11	Newspoll		46	31		55	45		30	55		41	38
29-May-11	Newspoll		44	34		52	48		35	54		44	37
15-May-11	Newspoll		46	33		54	46		34	55		42	38
14-May-11	Nielsen		47	31		56	44		37	59		46	46
10-May-11	Nielsen		49	28		56	44		43	52		47	44
01-May-11	Newspoll		44	33		53	47		38	49		45	36
16-Apr-11	Nielsen		47	31		54	46		45	50		50	42
03-Apr-11	Newspoll		45	32		55	45		39	49		46	37
20-Mar-11	Newspoll		40	36		49	51		40	47		50	31
12-Mar-11	Nielsen		45	33		54	46		47	47		51	42
06-Mar-11	Newspoll		45	30		54	46		39	51		45	36
20-Feb-11	Newspoll		41	36		50	50		50	39		53	31
12-Feb-11	Nielsen		46	32		51	49		52	43		51	41
06-Feb-11	Newspoll		44	32		52	48		45	42		48	35

Source: *Newspoll, AC Nielsen Poll* viewed at http://libiis1/Library_Services/opinionpolls/index.htm

Appendix 5: Opinion polls June 2010 – Dec 2010

Poll End Date	Source	Voting Intention	COALITION	ALP	Two Party Preferred	COALITION (2PP)	LABOR (2PP)	PM Satisfaction	SATISFIED (PM)	DISSATISFIED (PM)	Preferred PM	PRIME MINISTER (PPM)	OPPOSITION LEADER (PP)
10-Dec-11	Nielsen		49	29		57	43		40	55		48	46
04-Dec-11	Newspoll		44	31		54	46		36	56		43	36
20-Nov-11	Newspoll		48	30		57	43		34	55		40	35
12-Nov-11	Nielsen		45	30		55	45		35	58		42	46
06-Nov-11	Newspoll		44	32		53	47		30	60		39	40
23-Oct-11	Newspoll		45	29		54	46		31	61		36	39
15-Oct-11	Nielsen		48	30		57	43		39	57		45	45
09-Oct-11	Newspoll		49	29		57	43		28	60		35	40
18-Sep-11	Newspoll		48	26		58	42		27	61		35	40
10-Sep-11	Nielsen		48	27		58	42		33	62		44	48
04-Sep-11	Newspoll		50	27		59	41		23	68		34	43
21-Aug-11	Newspoll		47	27		57	43		29	61		38	39
13-Aug-11	Nielsen		48	28		58	42		32	62		40	48
07-Aug-11	Newspoll		47	29		56	44		33	58		39	40
24-Jul-11	Newspoll		47	29		56	44		32	59		40	41
16-Jul-11	Nielsen		51	26		61	39		38	57		44	47
10-Jul-11	Newspoll		49	27		58	42		30	59		38	43
26-Jun-11	Newspoll		46	30		55	45		28	62		39	40
16-Jun-11	Nielsen		49	27		59	41		34	62		40	51
12-Jun-11	Newspoll		46	31		55	45		30	55		41	38
29-May-11	Newspoll		44	34		52	48		35	54		44	37
15-May-11	Newspoll		46	33		54	46		34	55		42	38
14-May-11	Nielsen		47	31		56	44		37	59		46	46
10-May-11	Nielsen		49	28		56	44		43	52		47	44
01-May-11	Newspoll		44	33		53	47		38	49		45	36
16-Apr-11	Nielsen		47	31		54	46		45	50		50	42
03-Apr-11	Newspoll		45	32		55	45		39	49		46	37
20-Mar-11	Newspoll		40	36		49	51		40	47		50	31
12-Mar-11	Nielsen		45	33		54	46		47	47		51	42
06-Mar-11	Newspoll		45	30		54	46		39	51		45	36
20-Feb-11	Newspoll		41	36		50	50		50	39		53	31
12-Feb-11	Nielsen		46	32		51	49		52	43		51	41
06-Feb-11	Newspoll		44	32		52	48		45	42		48	35

Source: Newspoll, AC Nielsen Poll viewed at http://libiis1/Library_Services/opinionpolls/index.htm

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