

# Issue analysis Exit Poll Federal Election July 2, 2016

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## Analysis

The following tables are based on the responses from 670 members of our panel who completed our exit survey during the day of the election, or the following day.

This is an opt-in survey, and responses have not been randomised, nevertheless experience shows that within voting categories the responses tend not to be unrepresentative of the broader community.

The poll was conducted on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016 using our online panel of over 13,000 Australian voters. Respondents were asked to wait until they had cast their vote so that we got a response that mirrored what they actually did on the day, and which was as much as possible uncontaminated by subsequent coverage of the result in the media.

Quantitative analysis was undertaken using Microsoft Excel.

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## Methodology

We have examined three of the issues – Medicare, superannuation and the economy - which were claimed to have had a major effect in the last federal election by analysing the voting intentions of those respondents who mentioned them in any way. We asked open questions in a number of areas (see survey at the end of this report), and respondents were included in our analysis if they used these words, or derivatives of them, in any of these open questions.

We have cross-tabulated how respondents voted last election, against whether they favoured the Coalition or the ALP with their preferences this election. We have further looked at the average swing in the case of each first preference voting intention and compared it to the swing in the group who mentioned the particular issue. This gives us some basis for comparing the effect of that issue compared to all of the other issues.

Because the representation in our sample of the minor parties is quite small the results for each of them are not very reliable. So in addition we have prepared tables where we lump all of the non-Greens minor party voters together. This has the advantage of providing a larger sample, so smaller sample error, but at the cost of combining voters who lean left and right. Because this is an opt-in, rather than a random, survey, they are also present in the aggregated sample in proportions that don't necessarily represent their presence in the general community.

An alternative process would have been to conduct a separate poll asking voters to rank what issue played the biggest role in their change of vote. This has a number of problems. First we are suggesting to them that these are the issues that may have changed their mind. Second, their recollection may not actually square with their actions at the time. Third, voters make up their minds how they will vote using a number of issues, some of which are emotional, or presentational. By a reductionist approach you risk excluding the effect of these other issues.

By adopting our approach you look at what were the top of mind issues for them when making a number of judgements, not just about first preferences, but the direction in which the country is heading, issues in general, approval of the opposition leader and the prime minister, and their preferred prime minister.

## Executive Summary

We tested three issues from the last federal election campaign which were alleged to have had a significant effect on the result by looking at how respondents to our exit survey who used terms referring to these issues voted this election compared to last election, or compared to their cohort.

We found that the Medicare (or “Mediscare”) issue probably had a very small positive effect for the Coalition, and a negative effect for the ALP and that this effect was largest for non-Greens minor party voters. Compared to the average voter who voted Liberal last election there was a 1 percentage point greater chance of them voting to favour Labor this election. Conversely, those who voted Labor last election showed a 2 percentage point greater chance of them voting to favour the Coalition this election.

Greens were 3 percentage points more likely to vote Labor if they mentioned Medicare, but non-Greens minor party voters were 12 percentage points less likely to vote Labor. It seems that this tactic may have backfired. (Some confirmation of this from outside our study might be found in the Brisbane seat of Petrie, which was heavily targeted by the Labor Medicare campaign, but actually swung to the LNP).

Medicare/Mediscare was an issue across the board with around 15% of voters nominating it off the top of their head.

We found that the superannuation issues were not high in the minds of many respondents, with only 24 respondents nominating it as an issue. Most of these respondents voted Liberal in the 2013 federal election, and amongst this group there was a 9 percentage point greater tendency than average to favour Labor this election over the Liberals.

Given the extremely small sample we would be reluctant to draw much from this analysis apart from the fact that it was a niche issue affecting the voting intentions of mostly former Liberal voters. This supports, but does not prove, the anecdotal evidence that Coalition superannuation policies had an adverse effect on volunteers and donations to the Coalition.

The economy was the most important issue, and here the LNP had a small edge. 37% of our respondents mentioned it as an issue. Of those who mentioned it and voted Liberal in 2013, there was a small (1 percentage point) tendency to vote Labor this election, compared to the whole sample, but this was more than balanced by a 2 percentage point tendency in the other direction from Labor.

It increased the favourability towards the Coalition amongst non-Greens minor party voters by 9 percentage points, while it increased the favourability towards Labor from Greens voters by 3 percentage points.

So, out of these three issues, the Coalition were ahead on two with broad appeal, and behind on the one with niche appeal.

The findings also demonstrate that most voters make decisions based on a matrix of issues, many of which aren't headline.

## Average swings

On the total sample the following responses indicate how respondents voted last election, and which bloc – Labor or the Coalition – they preferred to win the election this time. By comparing the tendency to split between Coalition and the ALP to form government over the total sample with the tendency to split between Coalition and the ALP over various issues, we can infer that these issues were more or less effective on average in winning votes for one side or the other.

In terms of the major parties the breakdown appears to be relatively close to what actually happened in the election with the combined Liberal/LNP vote suffering a 2.7 percentage point decline in first preference votes, out of 39.9% of the vote at the last election. This is 8.93% of their total first preference votes last election. On our table we have 12% who voted Liberal last time voting Labor this time around, but once you adjust for the 4% of last-time Labor voters voting Liberal this time we are around the correct figure.

*Table 1 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election*

Last election													
Preference	AD	ALP	BKAP	CD	DLP	FF	Grn	Ind	LP	NP	ONP	Other	PUP
ALP	100%	96%	75%	9%	50%	8%	97%	60%	12%	13%	50%	67%	100%
Coalition	0%	4%	25%	91%	50%	92%	3%	40%	88%	88%	50%	33%	0%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

n=670

It is difficult to know how the self-reported swing amongst the minor party voters compares to what actually happened. The Greens preference for the ALP is almost certainly over-stated, as last election 16.97% of Greens voters directed preferences to the Coalition. If the percentage was of that order this time, then the balance of voters, what we call the minor party, non-Greens, voters, will have directed preferences close to 50/50 between the major parties.

*Table 2 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election grouping all non-Greens minor party voters together*

Last election				
Preference	ALP	Grn	LP	Minor
ALP	96%	97%	12%	52%
Coalition	4%	3%	88%	48%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

n=670

## Medicare

This is the table for those who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare” showing their first preference vote last election versus their final preference this election and then comparing it to the average swings across the sample. If there was a greater than average propensity to swing, then “Medicare” or “Mediscare” was a significant issue. The difference in the percentage favouring ALP or Coalition in each significant group (excluding those where the sample size was very small) in each bloc in this sample are very similar to those across all 670 respondents.

*Table 3 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election for those who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare” compared to the same indicators for the total group of respondents*

Last election							
	ALP	CD*	FF*	Grn	Ind*	LP	National*
<b>Respondents who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare”</b>							
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	94%	0%	0%	100%	25%	13%	100.00%
<b>Coalition</b>	6%	100%	100%	0%	75%	87%	0.00%
<b>Total respondents</b>							
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	96%	9%	8%	97%	60%	12%	13%
<b>Coalition</b>	4%	91%	92%	3%	40%	88%	88%
<b>Percentage point difference between total sample and those who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare”</b>							
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	-2%	-9%	-8%	3%	-35%	1%	87%
<b>Coalition</b>	2%	9%	8%	-3%	35%	-1%	-87%

n=111

\*Very small sample, so results should be treated with extreme caution.

This is the same table with minor parties aggregated.

*Table 4 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election for those who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare” compared to the same indicators for the total group of respondents grouping all non-Greens minor party voters together*

Last election				
	ALP	Grn	LP	Minor*
<b>Respondents who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare”</b>				
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	94%	100%	13%	40%
<b>Coalition</b>	6%	0%	87%	60%
<b>Total respondents</b>				
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	96%	97%	12%	52%
<b>Coalition</b>	4%	3%	88%	48%
<b>Percentage point difference between total sample and those who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare”</b>				
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	-2%	3%	1%	-12%
<b>Coalition</b>	2%	-3%	-1%	12%

n=111

To get a better idea of the strength of this issue we also looked at the percentage from each voting group that mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare”. This allows us to see how relatively important the issue was to each voting group.

*Table 5 Respondents who mentioned “Medicare” or “Mediscare” as a percentage of the total number in our survey by first preference voting intention last election.*

Party	Percentage of total sample who nominated Medicare or mediscare as an issue
ALP	18%
CD*	18%
FF*	15%
Grn	15%
Ind*	14%
LP	16%
NP*	18%
<b>Grand Total</b>	15%

n=111

\*Very small sample, so results should be treated with extreme caution.

This says that concerns about Medicare/Mediscare were broadly spread, but that there wasn’t a lot of variation between groups, and that Liberal voters at the previous election were around the average in terms of their tendency to mention it.

To sum up, there appears to have been some small effect from the Medicare/Mediscare campaign, and it was spread broadly across the sample and favoured the Coalition.



## Superannuation

This is the table for those who mentioned Superannuation. There was a clear effect, although the sample size is much smaller. So, while fewer people were interested in superannuation, more of them found it a reason to change their vote from the Coalition. However, sample size also means we have to be cautious in interpreting this. There was also a smaller number of respondents from the minor parties, Labor and the Greens. We have not done a separate table aggregating the minor party voters as it would be barely more meaningful than the separated samples. 63.7% of the sample are Liberal voters, indicating the issue was really only of interest to Liberals.

*Table 6 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election for those who mentioned "Super" compared to the same indicators for the total group of respondents*

Last election					
	ALP	BKAP*	Grn	Ind*	LP
Respondents who mentioned "Super"					
Australian Labor Party	100%	100%	50%	50%	21%
Coalition	0%	0%	50%	50%	79%
Total respondents					
Australian Labor Party	96%	75%	97%	60%	12%
Coalition	4%	25%	3%	40%	88%
Percentage point difference between total sample and those how mentioned "super"					
Australian Labor Party	4%	-25%	-47%	10%	9%
Coalition	-4%	25%	47%	-10%	-9%

n=24

\*Very small sample, so results should be treated with extreme caution.

To get a better idea of the strength of this issue we also looked at the percentage from each voting group that mentioned "superannuation". This allows us to see how relatively important the issue was to each voting group.

*Table 7 Respondents who mentioned "Super" as a percentage of the total number in our survey by first preference voting intention last election.*

Party	Percentage of total sample who nominated superannuation as an issue
ALP	1%
BKAP*	25%
Grn	1%
Ind*	8%
LP	7%
Total	3%

n=24

\*Very small sample, so results should be treated with extreme caution.

Disregarding the BKAP and Independent statistics, which are too small to have any significance, it seems that Liberals are around 7 times more likely than either ALP or Greens voters to mention superannuation, but it is still at a very low level.

So this was an issue for a very small number of voters who were disproportionately Liberal and disproportionately likely to swing, but given the very small constituency to which it appealed, this is unlikely to have had a significant effect on the result.

Liberal candidates apparently reported a high degree of concern from party supporters as a result of the Liberals' position on superannuation, manifesting itself through a reluctance of supporters to volunteer or donate. While this report cannot prove that was the case, these findings are certainly consistent with it.

## Economy

This is the table for those who mentioned words derived from “econ”, being “economy” and “economic”. This was the largest group of respondents, indicating that the economy was the central most important issue for most people. On this issue the Coalition has a clear advantage. And when the minor party voters are consolidated, it is clear that they have an advantage with them as well, as seen in the second table.

*Table 8 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election for those who mentioned “Econ...” compared to the same indicators for the total group of respondents*

Last election										
	ALP	BKAP*	CD*	DLP*	FF*	Grn	Ind*	LP	NP*	PUP*
<b>Respondents who mentioned “Econ...”</b>										
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	96%	100%	14%	0%	0%	94%	40%	15%	0%	100%
<b>Coalition</b>	4%	0%	85%	100%	100%	6%	60%	85%	100%	0%
<b>Total respondents</b>										
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	96%	75%	9%	50%	8%	97%	60%	12%	13%	100%
<b>Coalition</b>	4%	25%	91%	50%	92%	3%	40%	88%	88%	0%
<b>Percentage point difference between total sample and those who mentioned “Econ...”</b>										
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	0%	25%	-5%	50%	8%	3%	-20%	-3%	-13%	0%
<b>Coalition</b>	0%	-25%	5%	-50%	-8%	-3%	20%	3%	13%	0%

n=260

\*Very small sample, so results should be treated with extreme caution.

*Table 9 First preference voting intention last election against final preference this election for those who mentioned “Econ...” compared to the same indicators for the total group of respondents grouping all non-Greens minor party voters together*

Last election				
	ALP	Grn	LP	Minor
<b>Respondents who mentioned “Econ”</b>				
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	96%	94%	15%	43%
<b>Coalition</b>	4%	6%	85%	57%
<b>Total respondents</b>				
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	96%	97%	12%	52%
<b>Coalition</b>	4%	3%	88%	48%
<b>Percentage point difference between total sample and those nominating Medicare as an issue</b>				
<b>Australian Labor Party</b>	-2%	3%	-3%	-9%
<b>Coalition</b>	2%	-3%	-1%	9%

n=260

This final table shows the percentages for each group who mentioned the economy. On average it was just over a third, but was as much as 44% amongst Liberals.

<b>Party</b>	<b>Percentage of total sample who nominated "econ" as an issue</b>
<b>ALP</b>	35%
<b>BKAP*</b>	25%
<b>CD*</b>	64%
<b>DLP*</b>	50%
<b>FF*</b>	38%
<b>Grn</b>	32%
<b>Ind*</b>	33%
<b>LP</b>	44%
<b>NP*</b>	27%
<b>PUP*</b>	67%
<b>Total</b>	37%

n=260

\*Very small sample, so results should be treated with extreme caution.