

Omnibus Poll, issues and voting intention, February 2018

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*The Australian Institute for Progress exists to advance the discussion, development and implementation of public policy for Australia's future,
from its base in Brisbane. The future does not look after itself.*

Methodology

The following graphs are based on a sample which has been weighted for voting intention based on the results of the most recent Newspoll, as published in *The Australian*.

Results should be taken as indicative in that the sample is not properly randomised, but it is unlikely that groups are completely unrepresentative.

In these tables we have amalgamated the Pauline Hanson One Nation vote and the Australian Conservatives data. This is so that we have a statistically significant sample, and because both of these parties in our sample attract similar voters, with over 40% of both having voted Liberal or Liberal National previously.

The poll was conducted February 20 through to March 1, 2018 using our online panel of over 13,000 Australian voters.

Quantitative analysis was undertaken using Microsoft Excel, and responses were weighted for voting intention using the closest Newspoll. Qualitative analysis was undertaken using Leximancer.

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Executive Summary

Our latest polling shows left of centre voters being more committed and unified than right of centre voters. This is partly due to the continuation of resentment at the way Malcolm Turnbull won the Liberal Party leadership. It manifests in the very low opt-in rate of Liberal voters in this sample.

There also appears to have been some cannibalisation of the One Nation vote by the Australian Conservatives.

Belief that the country is heading in the right direction has increased marginally since the last poll, but is still negative, with a net -51% disagreeing that it was heading in the right direction last year, versus -47% this year. There has also been a drop in the popularity of Malcolm Turnbull, with falls across all groups, while Bill Shorten has marginally improved, mainly as a result of increased support amongst ALP voters.

The divide between voters is on the age-old issues: economy versus services, the battle between cosmopolitanism and nationalism seen in orderly immigration versus refugees. The refugee issue can also be interpreted as a battle between compassion (with a touch of idealism) and utility. Climate change, which can be characterised as optimism versus pessimism, also remains a defining issue on the left.

Interestingly the climate change issue appears to be getting more “personal” with “coal” appearing as a concept on its own. There appears to be a battle against coal, as part of the war on emissions, possibly as a result of controversy over Adani’s proposed Carmichael coal mine.

While both the government and the opposition have made budget pitches based on tax cuts, at the time when this poll was taken, the tax cuts that were on offer were seen as a reason to vote against the government. As personal tax cuts weren’t on the table at the time, this must have been based on the company tax cuts, and so possibly explains Pauline Hanson’s recent change of heart on that issue.

Another interesting phenomena is that the issue of refugees seems to be morphing into immigration in general. Infrastructure is a concept that is of concern to all voters and tends to sit in the middle of the Leximancer diagrams. There is a relationship between immigration and infrastructure, and while the left wing answer to it is to spend more money, the right-wing response seems to be, at least partly, to reduce the population pressure.

Which makes the need for more infrastructure at one level resonate with the refugee issue for some voters. This could be a problem for Labor in at least one of the 4 by-elections they are about to fight. Longman, just north of Brisbane, is on the Bruce Highway, which is desperately in need of upgrade, and is full of tradies and commuters, all of whom regularly use the highway. Longman is also full of the sort of demographic groups who worry about illegal immigrants. Out of the 4 by-elections where Labor is defending the seat, this is the one to watch.

While Turnbull’s popularity has dropped in this poll, he is still seen by a lot of voters on the right as the best reason to vote for the coalition. Closely aligned to him as a reason is Bill Shorten, which is bad news for the Labor leader.

Shorten is appealing for “fairness” in the tax system. While this is characterised by the government as class warfare, voters tend to interpret it as taking from the selfish to give to the needy (or perhaps the over-privileged to the underprivileged). As the needy, by definition, don’t have much, then the selfish are all to be found amongst those who do. Greens voters are more susceptible than most to this point of view, and it is fortified by what we have found out in other surveys – that many Greens voters, while earning above average, also say they are prepared to pay more tax than they do now.

So the “fairness” argument appears to have a lot of force. The weakness in the argument is the salesman who delivers the message, and the feeling that no matter who you vote for you get similar outcomes.

Shorten is viewed as an opportunist, who, while he has a united team, is too cunning. Turnbull's profile is not particularly strong, and he too is seen as being an opportunist, but with the distinction from Shorten that more people see him as trying to do the right thing. In some ways Turnbull's waffling rhetoric helps to underline this when contrasted with Shorten's text book barrage of three-word slogans.

So while some issues have moved a little, the issue landscape is essentially the same as it has been since last year. That means that while there is a strong expectation that Labor could win the next election, it is a rebuttable presumption. While Labor's domination of the narrative of fairness makes it difficult for the coalition to run on their perceived strength of economic management, there are cultural issues, like refugees, which have been submerged in debate but can make a difference if they come to the fore in an election campaign.

Thinking about Australia would you agree or disagree that the country is heading in the right direction?

	ALP	LP	Grns	PHON_ACP	Other	Total
Strongly agree	0%	3%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Agree	4%	41%	2%	6%	6%	18%
Neutral	11%	16%	5%	12%	17%	13%
Disagree	39%	27%	36%	29%	35%	33%
Strongly disagree	45%	10%	56%	49%	41%	33%
Unsure	2%	3%	0%	3%	2%	2%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total agree	4%	43%	2%	8%	6%	19%
Total disagree	84%	37%	93%	78%	76%	66%
Net agree	-80%	6%	-91%	-70%	-70%	-48%

n=1294

Thinking about your vote in the House of Representatives, which group, Labor or Coalition, would you direct your preferences to favour - that is, which would you prefer to form the government?

	ALP	LP	Grns	PHON_ACP	Other	Total
Australian Labor Party	99%	1%	100%	2%	55%	53%
Coalition	1%	99%	0%	98%	45%	47%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

n=1133

Thinking about your opinion in general of the performance of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of it?

	ALP	LP	Grns	PHON_ACP	Other	Total
Strongly approve	1%	7%	0%	0%	2%	3%
Approve	4%	37%	1%	5%	8%	16%
Neutral	7%	19%	4%	13%	20%	13%
Disapprove	30%	28%	28%	23%	24%	28%
Strongly disapprove	58%	8%	66%	58%	45%	39%
Undecided	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total approve	5%	44%	1%	5%	10%	19%
Total disapprove	88%	35%	94%	82%	69%	67%
Net approve	-83%	9%	-93%	-76%	-59%	-48%

n=1291

Thinking about your opinion in general of the performance of Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of it?

	ALP	LP	Grns	PHON_ACP	Other	Total
Strongly approve	12%	1%	1%	4%	2%	5%
Approve	52%	1%	25%	2%	8%	23%
Neutral	25%	6%	39%	4%	23%	18%
Disapprove	9%	21%	28%	12%	25%	17%
Strongly disapprove	1%	71%	6%	78%	41%	36%
Undecided	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%	1%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total approve	63%	2%	26%	5%	10%	29%
Total disapprove	11%	92%	33%	90%	66%	53%
Net approve	53%	-89%	-8%	-85%	-56%	-24%

n=1291

Who is your preferred Prime Minister?

	ALP	LP	Grns	PHON_ACP	Other	Total
Bill Shorten	90%	0%	78%	3%	27%	45%
Malcolm Turnbull	2%	94%	4%	65%	32%	43%
U	9%	6%	18%	32%	41%	12%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

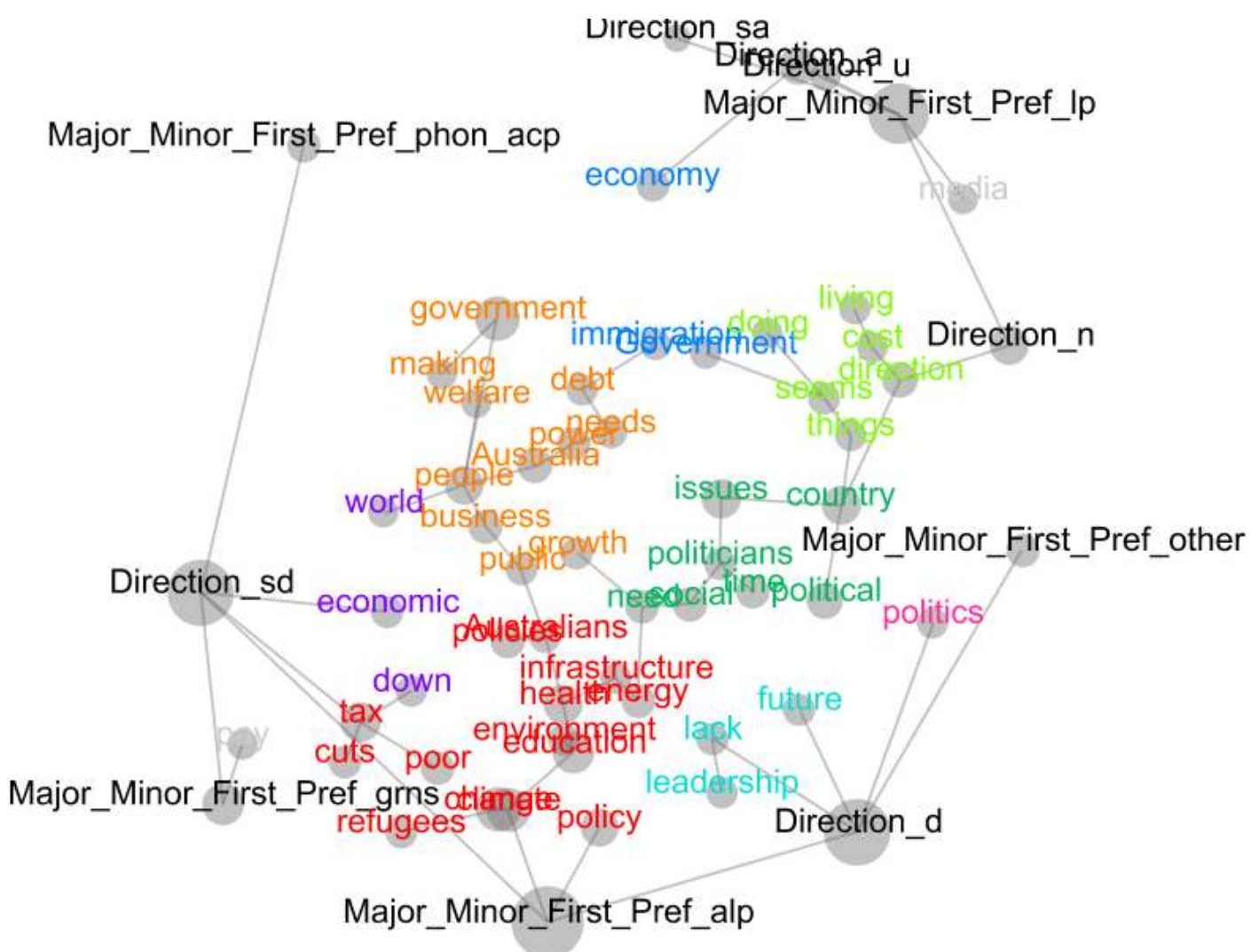
n=1088

Qualitative Analysis

Our qualitative analysis looks at the reasons given by respondents for their various judgements. The following maps are generated from the data by Leximancer and overlay the key words over the variables from the question – generally the answer to the question plus voting intentions. Words that are most closely associated will cluster together. The most frequently used words are brighter than those used less frequently.

We do not edit the verbatims and all spelling and grammatical errors are reproduced. Editing the transcripts would take away from some of the unique tone of each response. The verbatims are selected so as to give a better insight into how the individual words are being used.

Thinking about Australia would you agree or disagree that the country is heading in the right direction?



Verbatims

We seem to have got stuck - poor leadership by the LNP (esp Turnbull); point scoring and personal interests of politicians seem more important than their constituents needs or opinions; high income earners/professionals/big business end of town are not paying their share of tax

*(commonly accepted scams like family trusts, negative gearing of investments and assets, offshoring of income and other dubious tax avoidance. issues which are not being addressed); a dirth of clear policy and action on just about anything (eg climate change, mining, infrastructure, health and education, to name just a few that are crying out for leadership and real action); a tendency to follow **USA** into very dubious and expensive conflict, war and peace keeping roles around the globe (when will we learn?);*

Undermining the potential we had to begin to address climate change and the management of the fragile environment of the world and of **Australia** which is the most important concern for us and the world. And then all the shilly shallying on all the other matters facing **Australia** - the need for proper tax reform not massive tax cuts for huge corporations that care nought for us; ensuring proper funding of education from pre-school to tertiary and the vital post secondary area of vocational education and skills training of young **Australians**; decent universal health care including medical and dental costs; care.

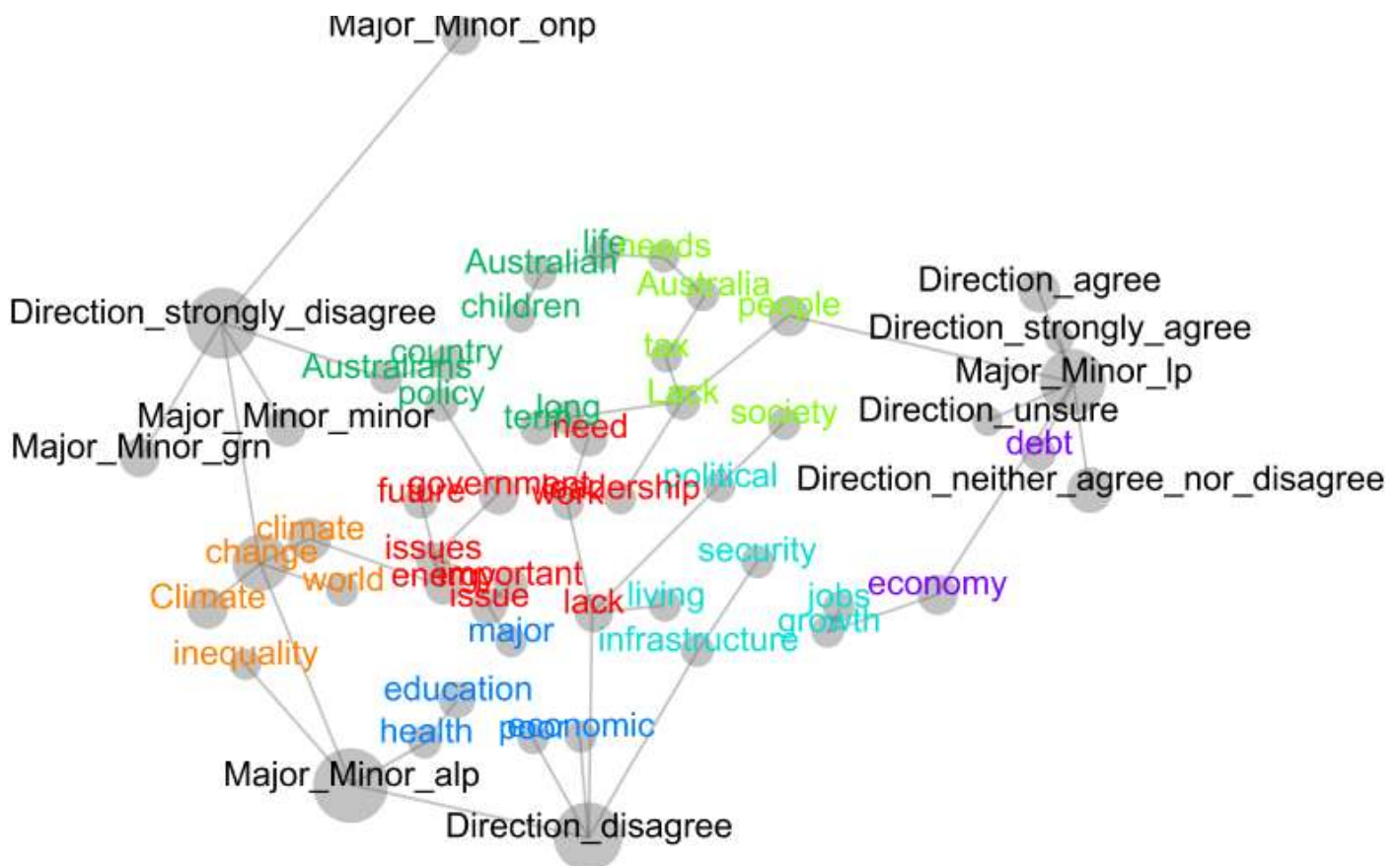
Too much debt, too many do-gooders regarding illegal entrants to **Australia**, too much emphasis on climate change, too much emphasis on sustainable energy, we no longer have a conservative party to balance views with **Shorten** and **Turnbull** both better leaders of the left wing side of politics.

- **Australians** have not had to be accountable or responsible for their mistakes and shortcomings for too long - **Social** welfare and political correctness have allowed the development of extremely irrational, unjustifiable behaviours and beliefs among the less educated, less intelligent and less selfless sects of society. - The concept of community is becoming an endangered one, people as a whole have no reason to connect with each other due to the ease of accessing all the things they 'need' (technology, social media, all the 'crutches' marketed to replace actual human interaction) which in reality only drive humans as a species further and further from the things we need to truly experience the full spectrum of the human experience.

Gov is out of touch **Immigration** is allowing the wrong people in Too many immigrants **WA** gst is unfair **Foreign** aid to indonesia should be stopped **Burqua** needs to be banned

Too much immigration Not enough investment in manufacturing **Business** taxes are too high Too much tax minimisation and evasion sanctioned often by **Liberal Govts**

Thinking about Australia again, in a short paragraph please tell us what is the most important issue facing the country?



Verbatims

I think immigration and border protection are very important and criminals should be deported immediately. Also, the economy, availability of jobs and the cost of living, especially power prices should have high priority.

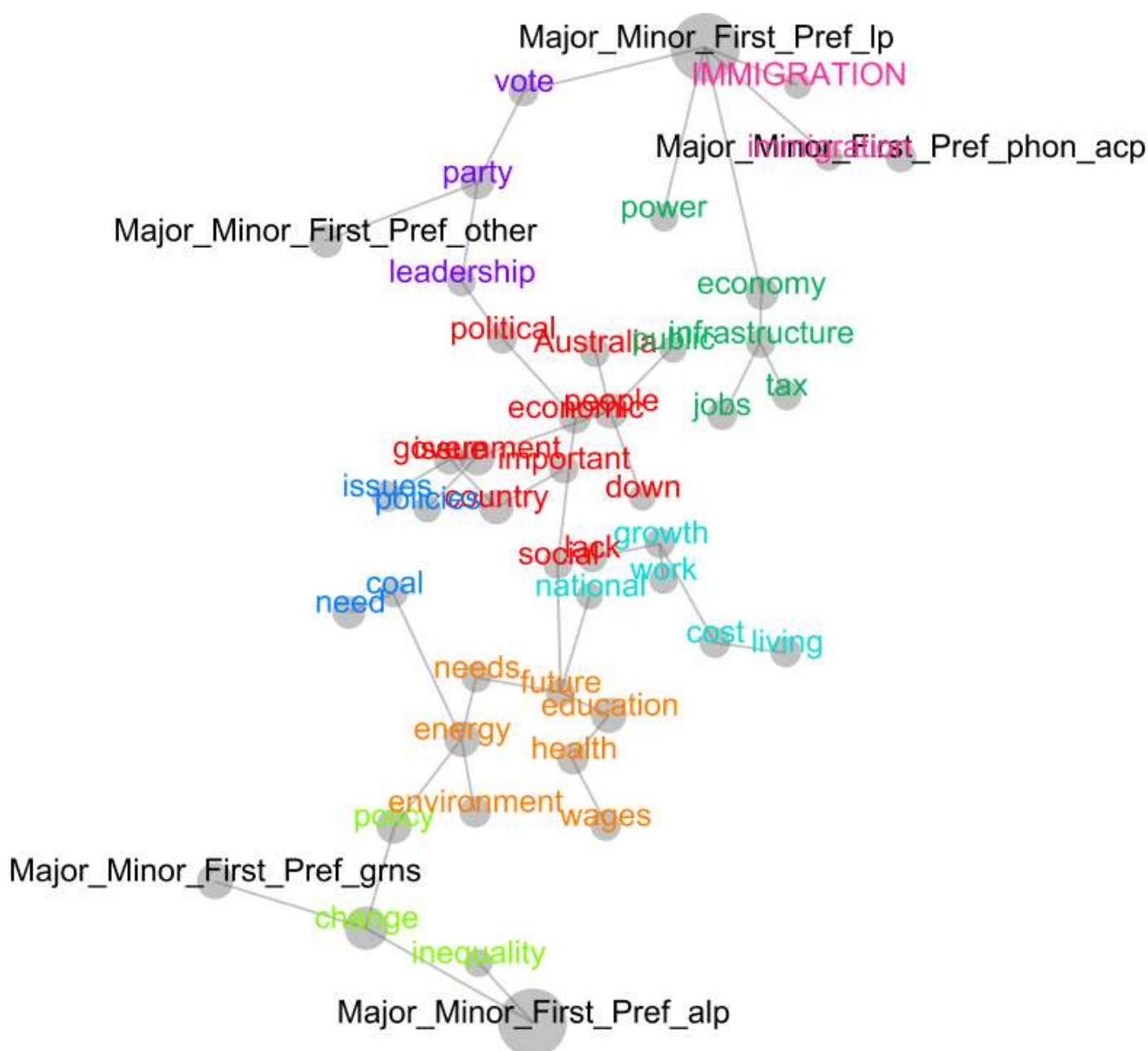
*I suspect there's a real hubris following so many years of economic growth. I think we're highly economically vulnerable due to our private and public indebtedness, and that the economic policies promoted by the likely future **Labour** government will take us backwards.*

Everything they are not dealing with. **Employment, Indigenous** health education and employment, climate change, energy sustainability, and attempt to cease demonising the marginalised of the country and become inclusive and give them hope and confidence to live a worthwhile life.

*state of the **Federal Budget**; the cost of living and energy prices caused by policy decisions relating to the scam known as "climate change"; those decisions costing the taxpayer large sums in unnecessary subsidies*

Fixing the Federation, we can never be united when **Federally** a **National** policy decision is made & it's trashed by the states Our education system is broken, we don't teach **Australian** history or values yet we spend more & more money on it. **Education** standards are falling further & further down the world ladder.

If an Australian election were to be held next weekend, in a short paragraph please tell us what issue would affect your voting intention the most.



Verbatims

Manufacturing is an employer that pays well, in order to have a future it needs price stability, our pollies are idiots, **Manufacturing** must have reliable and cost effective inputs of everything from energy to council rates. We dumbing down our population, IT may employ boffins but manufacturing employs the millions and people learn more from **OJT** than ever learn in classroom.

Reducing/eliminating the worship of the climate change god; **Cleaning** up the waste within the public service; Getting more unemployed people to work; **Tough** action on drugs; **Reduced** immigration; **Greater** spending in infrastructure ... especially public transport

A wide variety of things: - poor wage growth in a time of high company profits - high cost of energy / poor energy policy - the virtual giving away of our natural resources - lack of concern for our environment - poor taxation policy - winding back of social services - lack of responsibility by politicians - syncophantic foreign policy - our disgusting treatment of refugees

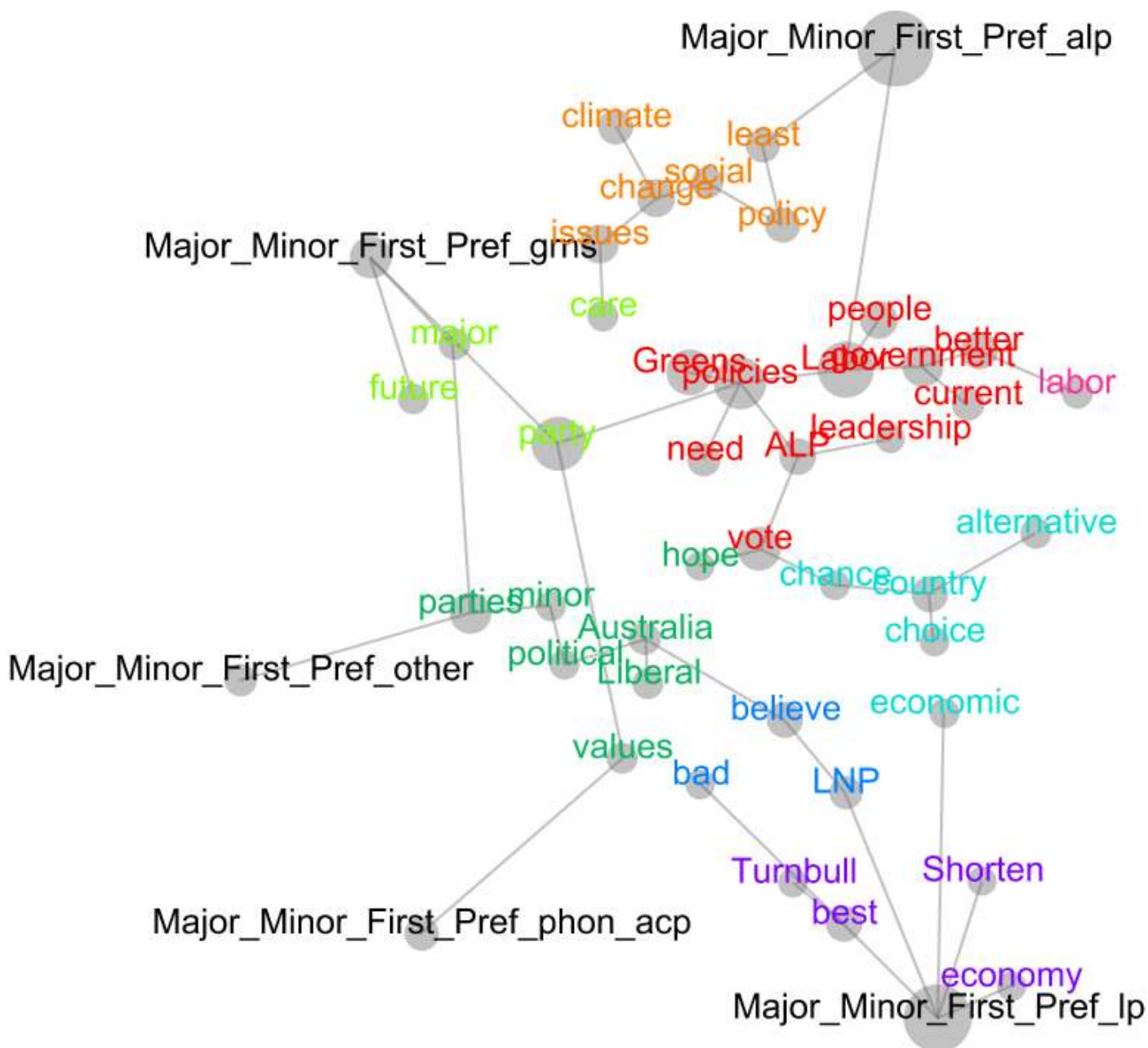
i run a small business No one talks for me or is interested in what problems i face I have grown it to employ about 25 people but there has been little growth over the past few years and government red tape, decisions and general society all make it harder all policies of the labour party are focused on helping unions and demonising business they are an anti business party this is at a state and federal. level The greens are socialists and are anti business both propose increased taxation which is an extreme disincentive to bother even trying to set up or continue to run a small business

Issues *as below education health environment salaries to be paid in accordance with job's social worth. eg. child care and nursing home staff need to be paid at least double current wages*

A promise of jobs growth through manufacturing locally. Too much going overseas.

Immigration, *infrastructure, social fragmentation, stress, economic stagnation*

If an Australian election were to be held next weekend, which of the following parties would receive your first preference?



Verbatims

*We need to get back to some moral leadership - respect for everyone (not just the wealthy), basic leadership in policy priorities: fair tax system (no cheats); open and equitable access to health, education, and public services and utilities (even if that means buying back some of the **Public** asserts that have been sold off previously); access to an affordable legal system (right if basic redress for. all citizens, not just the rich); rapidly/urgently increase the level of immigration (needed to fund the rapidly growing number of baby boomer retirees); care for the environment/with balanced economic management of resources and national interests; get out of expensive and immoral foreign wars and conflicts (and pretending we are the **USA Deputy Sheriff**) and increase foreign aid levels to 1% of **GDP**.*

*The **Liberals** even though is poorly lead by a left leaning **PM** is the only hope for **Australia** to have some decent economic policies and is not pushing for a sway of more social agenda issues to be forced on the nation. I think the **Liberal Party** does have a problem right now but can rebuild and get back to the **Howard** / **Costello** effective government with the right people leading it.*

*The **Greens** are really the ones whose policies I admire but until they and labor decide to co-operate, there is a great danger of splitting the labor vote as happened with the **DLP**, and so keeping the present incompetents in power forever. I would like to see the **Labor** leadership making braver, firmer statements about coal mines and the funding of private schools.*

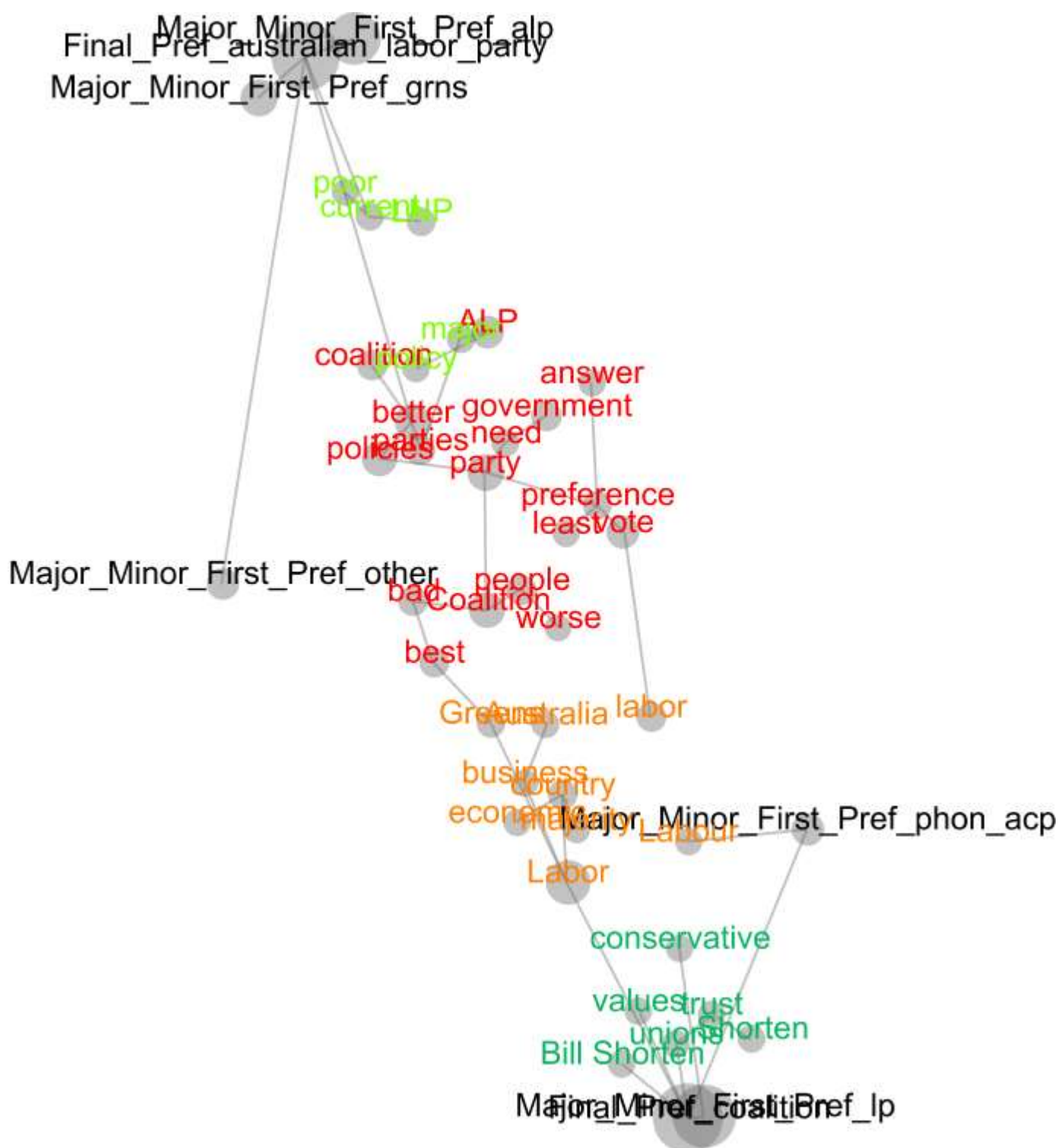
*While I would like to vote **Greens** I also believe it's better to invest a vote into a major party that can form government, in this case **Labor** - I would find myself a bit torn, but would probably go green knowing the preference would go to labor in my electorate.*

***Everyone** who nominates on an election ballot should be considered but that notwithstanding the last three positions would be reserved for **Liberal**, the **Greens** and **Labor**, in any order. The liberals are the better economic managers **Labor** is without credibility or morals while **Shorten** is there and the **Greens** have taken over from the **Democrats** as the keepers of the fairies in the bottom of the garden.*

***Refer** to my answers above. **Whilst** I do not believe the **ALP** is perfect and I am not a great fan of **Bill Shorten** (whom I think belongs to the right-wing faction of the **ALP**), just about anyone could manage this country better than the inept, weak and ineffective **Turnbull** whose government is in absolute chaos.*

I don't this the current government understands 'ordinary' people that is wage earners. The impression they give is that they live in the past and care more about the profits of businesses and not at all about how people are living - forgetting that it is people who buy the goods and services those companies need to seel to make the profits.

Thinking about your vote in the House of Representatives, which group, Labor or Coalition, would you direct your preferences to favour - that is, which would you prefer to form the government?



Verbatims

*I do not trust **Labor** as a party, mainly because of its relationship with unions, which do not represent the majority of workers, but have power in the **ALP**. I do not trust **Shorten**, as he is fickle and insincere and will do or say anything to be **Prime Minister**.*

I have watched the current government act like obnoxious school children, showing no attention to voters needs; fixated on spending our taxes on their pet projects, on punishing the poor, the unemployed who spend their days seeking work, asylum seekers who do what we would all do if trapped in the hell holes they try to escape from. It seems that the wealthier the individual politician the more vindictive her or she is in cutting back on any help they need.

Unfortunately, it is 'the best of a bad lot' in terms of getting a seat in the **House of Reps**. Although I am committed to **Greens** type policies, the reality is that at the ballot box in our electorate we get only a choice of the two major parties.

*I think on balance **Labor** do the most good for the most number of people. The **Coalition** do a huge amount of good for the fortunate few and a huge amount of damage to the vulnerable few and leave the middle of **Australia** no better or worse*

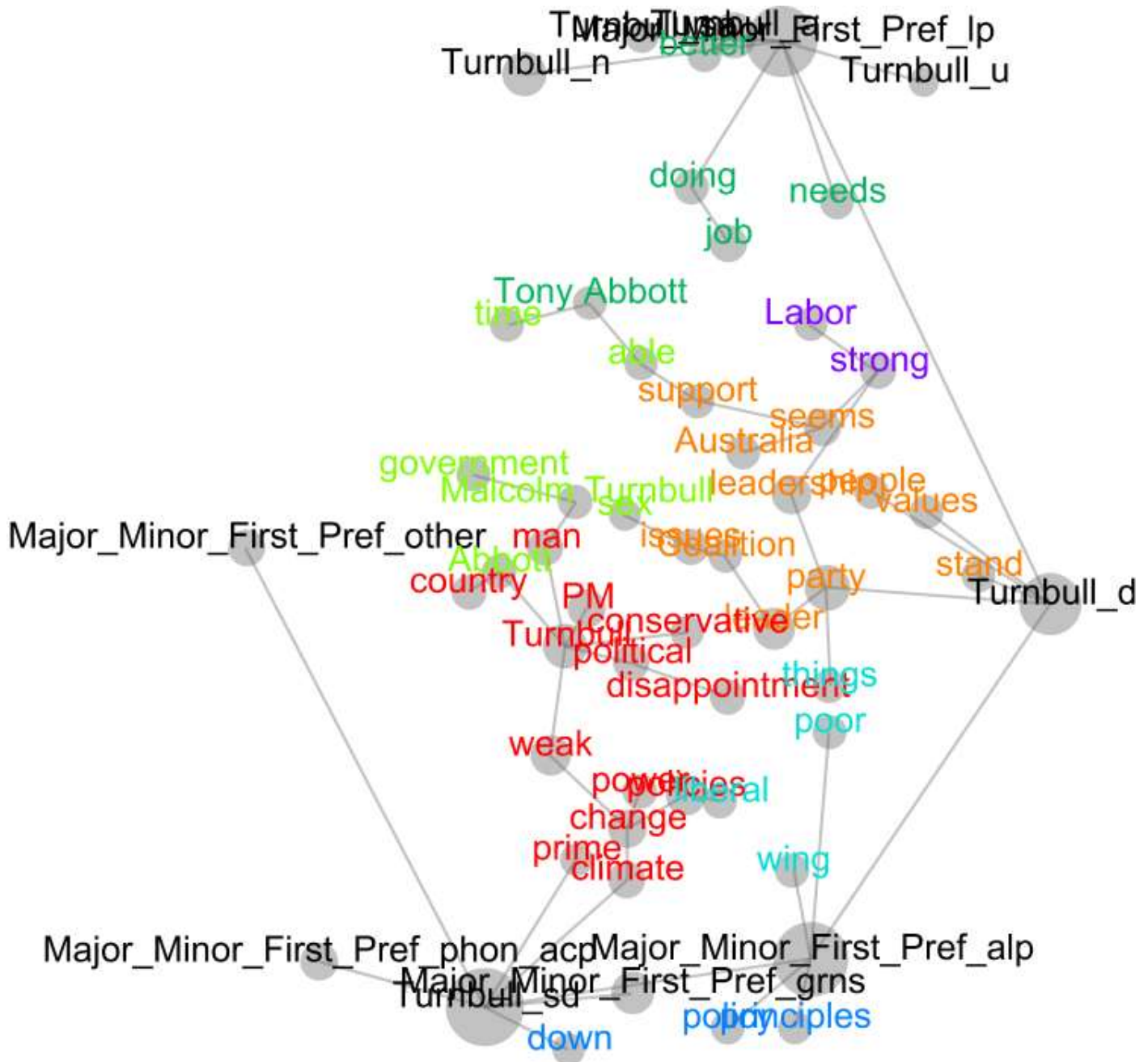
*I don't want to endorse either major part with even a lower order preference. I'm considering the notion that we may need an **ALP** government (much as I expect to despise it) so that the notionally "right wing" party can rebuild in opposition.*

*The minor parties are single issue entities led by career politicians with egos who have no capacity to run a budget or a nation - so they are no. The **Labour** party are incapable of running government without driving the country into debt - no to them.*

Labor supports the most unproductive and ignorant members of our society. Its attitude towards capitalism is unsustainable at best and ludicrous at best - its policies about social development and the betterment of our society simply marginalise as many groups as possible for the furtherment of the most insignificant causes.

*I prefer the **Australian Conservatives** or the **Australian Liberty Alliance** and I am angry at both the **LNP** and **ALP**. If I preference **LNP**, they won't get any better and will take my vote for granted.*

Thinking about Malcolm Turnbull as Prime Minister, how strongly do you approve or disapprove of the job that he is doing?



Verbatims

any sense of **Malcolm Turnbull** as a man of conviction has completely evaporated. It feels like he got the big job he's always wanted but now doesn't have the negotiation skill or strategic sensibility necessary to do the job - I do understand the issues around managing the right wing of the **Coalition** but he could have used some of the political capital he began with to make a difference.

*When the **LNP** dumped the swaggering, misogynistic, homophobic, xenophobic climate-change-denying idiot, **Tony Abbott**, I think everyone was very pleased and hoped that the moderate small "L" **Liberal, Malcolm Turnbull** (who once cheered on the **Republican** movement and supported sensible action against climate change) would improve the catastrophic damage and repair our damaged international reputation wrought by the incompetent. fool, **Abbott**.*

***Turnbull** is a weak politician, May be an intelligent and capable man but should never have been elected by the **Liberal Party** to lead the parliamentary party. He has lost support of liberals throughout the country and is likely to lose government to an opportunistic opposition.*

***Despite** my huge disappointment in what he has delivered compared to the promise he showed when selected to succeed **Tony Abbott**, he is actually steering us through a mess quite often not of his making. His understanding of where **Australia** sits amongst other global powers is realistic and he's been able to maintain a string relationship with the US despite the politically-correct **Trump-bashing** that the media seems to enjoy.*

***Malcolm 'Mal-function' Turnbull** has displayed no moral courage or resilience in the face of recent social issues which held no importance in the big picture of **Australia's** society. He relies on his orations and charisma to gain support, however when confronted with an actual opportunity to create change and support **Australian** society, he has taken the 'easy' way out, which is already proving to be causing more problems and rifts in our culture.*

***Knifed Tony Abbott**; signed up to the **Paris Climate Change** agreement; continued the climate change hoax policies; didn't kill **18C** to allow us free speech.*

*I found out his full aristocratic name: **Malcolm William Shorten Richard Di Natalie Turnbull**.*

Given that there have been allegations of similar behaviour concerning **Mr Shorten** then the **Labor Party's** attacks on **Joyce** suggest vendetta rather than any interest in public policy. While recent political activity has the opposition leader always being a naysayer **Mr Shorten** will ostensibly agree with a government proposal before reneging citing unforeseen difficulties.

Shorten is a classic 'machine man' - that is a pragmatist. But he does seem to believe in the public interest, and he does at least look at surveys to see where the community is heading, while rejecting views that are clearly at odds with **Australia's** best interests.

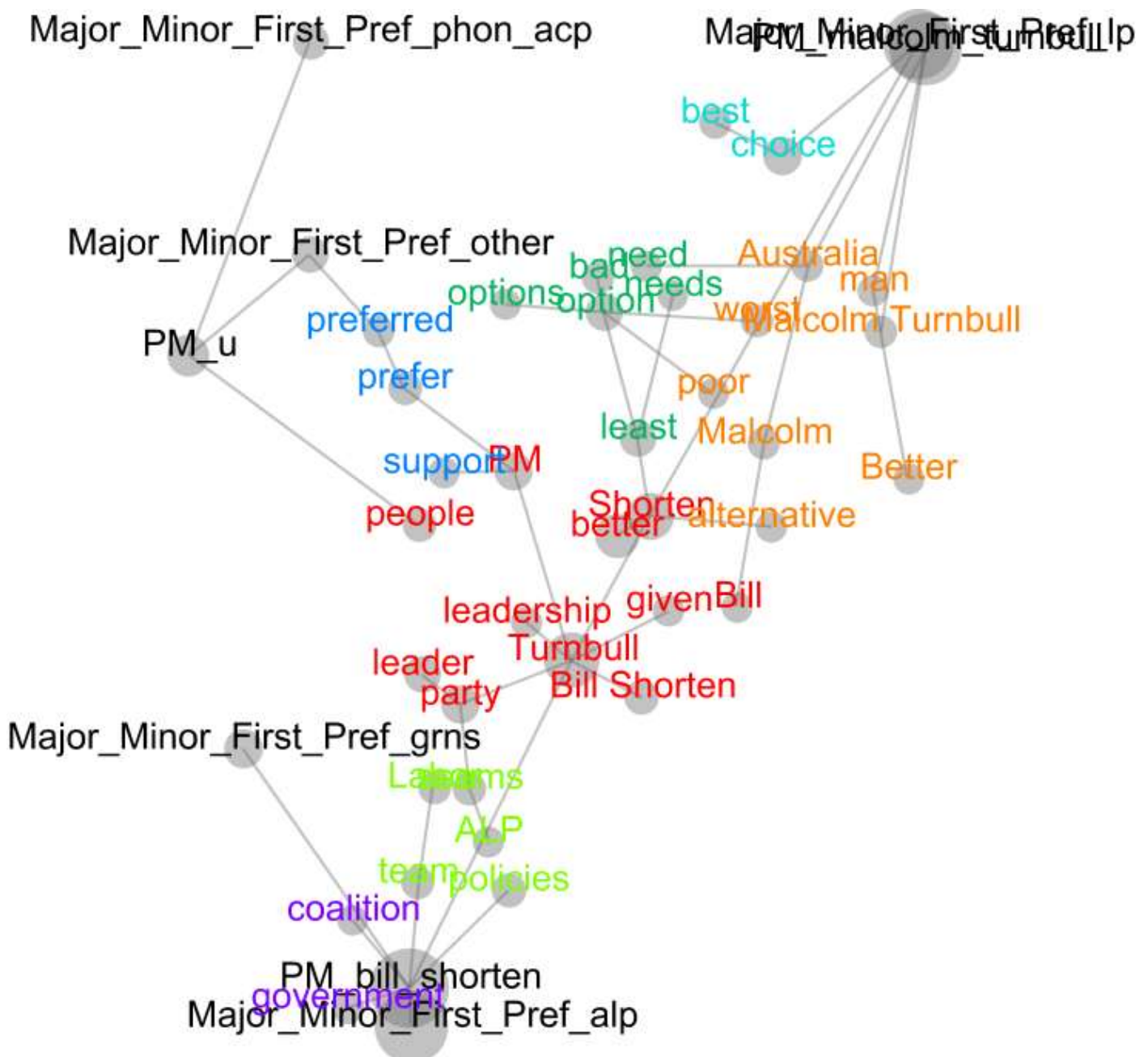
Shorten is no messiah but he has united the party behind him and maintained a consistent policy direction. **Labor** looks like a government in waiting while the government looks like an opposition that has lost the plot.

Bill Shorten is a terrible person and an even more dreadful politician. There is no way in the world anyone with a kind heart and sound mind can support his ravings and rantings, he is an absolute waste of time and the sooner his 'career' is over the better.

Because everything that comes out of the **Labor Party** is either a downright lie, made up to make their opposition look bad. And they have bullies on the polling booths.

I don't know much about him, just that he is from the party that introduced the **NBN** and always wants to give more to "health" and "education".

Who is your preferred Prime Minister?



Verbatims

I believe that **Shorten** would be a competent prime minister, and there is a great depth of talent in the **ALP**. **People** vote for a government, not a prime minister, and i believe that the **Labor** team would do a much better job than the current government.

Neither leader seems willing to be bold lest they lose in the polls and cannot recover. A preferred prime minister is often a former one who is not afraid to speak their mind.

Even when the government says it is going to do things which are **Labour** party policy **Bill Shorten** rejects these things. This makes him seem unwilling to do what is best for the country.

Turnbull is a man of principle trying to manage the internal crap of the **Coalition**. **Shorten** would tell you the sky is red if he thought it would get him a 'zinger' for the news and a few votes - perfect example of a carter political with no principles other than the desire for power.

I may not be happy with **Turnbull** but I still think he is more reliable and better than **Shorten**