



Australia Election: Labor Party's Albanese To Take Power After Morrison Concedes Defeat

Description

AUSTRALIA: Update (1230pm ET): As reported earlier, Australia's Labor Party is set to take power for the first time since 2013 after the incumbent Liberal-National coalition led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison declared defeat in Saturday's closely watched federal election.

The Labor Party, led by career politician Anthony Albanese, is on track to beat the coalition although its ability to form a majority government is uncertain. The large number of postal votes that have yet to be tallied and a strong showing by independent candidates added to the uncertainty, analysts said cited by the [South China Morning post](#).

According to Bloomberg these are the five main takeaways from Saturday's parliamentary election:

- Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese will be sworn in as Australia's 31st prime minister within days, after his party won at least 72 seats in Saturday's election
- It remains to be determined whether Albanese will be able to form a majority on his own, or need to rely on independent lawmakers to form a minority government
- Despite the victory, **Labor has won only about 32% of the primary vote, its worst result in decades and the lowest for any incoming government since World War II.** The result will likely lead to soul-searching on both sides of Australian politics.
- It was Australia's climate election, with climate-focused independents and the Green party snatching once- safe seats from the two major parties. **The Greens saw a record vote of more than 12%, the highest in its history.**
- Albanese will head to Quad meetings in Tokyo next week, where he will meet with counterparts from Japan, India and the US. Scott Morrison, who is set to hand over power, said "it was vitally important that there's a very clear understanding about the government of this country" in this meeting.

The knife-edge election heavily featured China, **with Morrison accused by detractors of using Beijing as a bogeyman during campaigning to secure support from his conservative base.** On

Saturday night, commentators suggested that tactic might have backfired, with the sizeable Chinese-Australian community likely to have swayed towards Labor in several seats seen as traditional Liberal Party safe havens.

At 10pm Hong Kong time, national broadcaster ABC projected that Labor had secured 72 seats compared to the Liberal-National coalition's 55. Labor would need to win 76 seats to form a simple-majority government in the country's 151-seat parliament. The Greens and a group of so-called "teal independents" appeared set to take 11 seats.

Albanese said in brief comments to reporters that he hoped to unite the country.

"I think people have had enough of division. What they want is to come together as a nation, and I intend to lead that," he said.

In a televised speech, Morrison said he called Albanese to offer his congratulations on Labor's victory, and that he would step down as the Liberal Party's leader.

"Tonight, I have spoken to the Leader of the Opposition, and the incoming Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and I've congratulated him on his election victory this evening," Morrison said.

"On a night like tonight, it is proper to acknowledge the functioning of our democracy. I've always believed in Australians and their judgment, and I've always been prepared to accept their verdicts," Morrison said. "And tonight, they have delivered their verdict, and I congratulate Anthony Albanese, and the Labor Party, and I wish him and his government all the very best."

Around half of Australia's 17 million registered voters chose to go to the ballot box early or applied for postal voting. Postal votes are expected to take weeks to tally.

Labor supporters were celebrating late on Saturday across the country even before Morrison's concession, after early projections showed his coalition was unlikely to pull off a win.

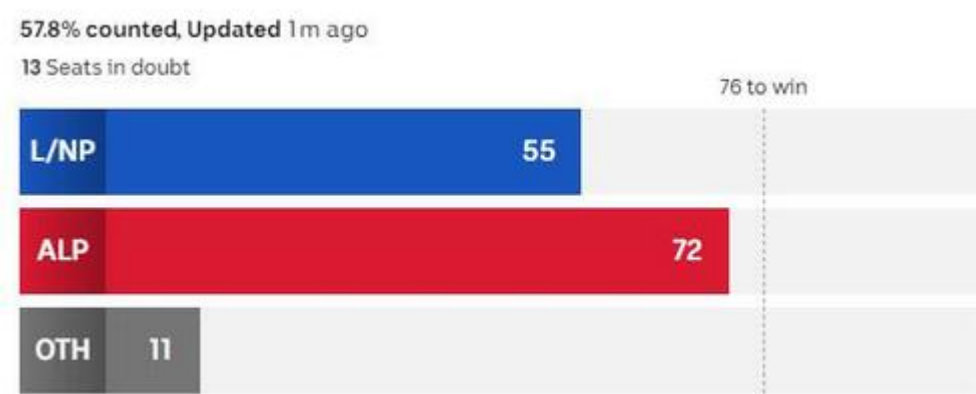
While Morrison retained his seat but Treasurer Josh Frydenberg appeared headed for defeat, having garnered under 46 per cent of votes cast compared to 54 per cent for independent candidate Monique Ryan. In marginal seats, Chinese-Australians were cheering the success of Labor candidates. In the seat of Reid in Sydney, Labor candidate Sally Sitou was leading with 55.5 per cent of votes cast compared to 44.5 per cent to incumbent Fiona Martin from the Liberal Party.

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Update (0950ET): With almost 60% of the vote counted, it appears **Anthony Albanese will return Labor from the political wilderness to government**, seizing power from the Coalition after it has been almost a decade in office.



While it **remains unclear if Labor can form a majority**, the ALP is on track to finish ahead of the Coalition and more likely to reach a minority government, the [ABC](#) has projected.



This win means Mr Albanese will replace Scott Morrison as Prime Minister, making him the 31st person to hold the nation’s top job.

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As The Epoch Times’ Aldgra Fredly detailed earlier, **Australian voters cast ballots on Saturday to decide the next prime minister**, as well as senators and members of Parliament, after a six-week election campaign that often centred on the economy and national security.



Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers said Friday that 7,000 polling stations have opened as planned, despite a 15 percent turnover of its 105,000 workforces across [Australia](#) in the past week.

“While this is extraordinary, it is a pandemic election,” Rogers said in a [statement](#), thanking those who stepped up to fill positions at polling places identified as not opening due to staff shortages.

The first polling stations will close on the country’s east coast at 6 p.m. local time (08:00 GMT). The west coast is two hours behind.

Nearly half of Australia’s 17 million electors have voted early or applied for postal votes despite loosened coronavirus restrictions. Those who tested positive for the COVID-19 will be able to access telephone voting.

Voting is compulsory for adult citizens in Australia, and failing to provide a valid reason for not voting results in a fine, which can progress to court. The fine for first-time offenders is \$20, and it climbs to \$50 for subsequent offences, according to the [electoral commission](#).

Incumbent Prime Minister [Scott Morrison](#)’s centre-right Liberal-National coalition is vying for a fourth three-year term, having held 76 of the 151 seats in the outgoing parliament. Opposition leader Anthony Albanese’s centre-left Labor Party is considered by most trusted polls as the favourite to win.



(L-R) Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, federal opposition leader Anthony Albanese. (Martin Ollman/Getty Images, AAP Image/Lukas Coch)

One possible outcome of the upcoming federal election on May 21 is a hung Parliament where no political party can achieve a majority to govern outright (a party must win 76 seats). Instead, party leaders will be forced to negotiate a coalition with another minor party or independent to cross the benchmark to win government.

A hung Parliament has only occurred once in Australia since World War II. In 2010, both the Liberal-National coalition and Labor landed 72 seats, four votes short of a majority government. It took another 17 days before Labor leader Julia Gillard won enough support from four crossbenchers (minor party or independent MPs) after striking deals with them.

Morrison's election campaign has focused on his party's economic management, urging voters to support a government that delivered "a strong economy" over "a weaker one that only makes your life harder."

He promised to lower taxes and put downward pressure on interest rates and costs of living if his government was re-elected.

Albanese pushed for Labor policies that would make child care more affordable for low-and middle-income families and improve nursing home care for the elderly, pledging to "always look after the vulnerable and the disadvantaged."

Labor also [criticized](#) the Morrison government's foreign policy credentials following the Solomon Islands-China bilateral security pact, calling the deal Australia's worst foreign policy failure in the Pacific since World War II.

At the same time, the Coalition at times aggressively called into question Labor's record with the Chinese communist regime, pointing to Chinese state-run media reports in alleging that the Labor leader was Beijing's preferred prime minister.

In the lead up to the election, Australia's domestic spy agency also revealed they had disrupted a plot by Beijing to install candidates in the election who they deemed as friendly and pliable.

"It's odd the Labor Party wouldn't say China is interfering—somehow they're saying it's Australia's fault," Morrison was quoted as saying by [Sky News Australia](#) on April 20.

"What I don't understand is when something of this significance takes place, why would you take China's side?"

Albanese then accused Morrison of making an "outrageous slur."

According to a [leaked draft](#) of the Solomons-China agreement, Beijing would be able to send police, troops, and naval ships to "protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in the Solomon Islands."

Many feared that China would use the accord to establish a military base 1,700 kilometres off the Australian coast and destabilise the Indo-Pacific, although Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare had said that this would not be the case.

by Tyler Durden

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