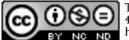Chapter Title: Introduction: Analysing the 2013 Australian federal election

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Introduction: Analysing the 2013 Australian federal election

Carol Johnson, John Wanna and Hsu-Ann Lee

Australians historically do not change governments lightly. Yet the 2013 federal election heralded a change of government—only the seventh time Australians have voted to change their national government since the Second World War. Tony Abbott, who had been Opposition Leader since 1 December 2009, became Australia's 28th Prime Minister on 18 September 2013 leading a Liberal–National Coalition with a comfortable majority in the lower house of parliament but well short of a majority in the upper house. The election result occurred after a surreal seven-and-a-half months of campaigning (actually 227 days) in which the Coalition largely held its collective nerve, while the Labor Government continued to implode through internal divisions and acrimony. To all intents and purposes the campaign was not fought principally on policy issues, but on personalities and the tarnished record of the Rudd–Gillard governments.

The result was largely a foregone conclusion (although events or major blunders could have thrown it off course). For months opinion polls indicated a comfortable Coalition victory. And three months out from polling day, betting markets predicted a Coalition win giving it the short odds of $1.25 compared to the longer odds for Labor of $3.75. Pollsters and pundits were convinced the Coalition would form the next government, as were many voters who responded to survey questions about who they expected to win the forthcoming election.

But the tectonic shift in the bigger picture of Australian voting intentions was not the only story of the 2013 election. Underneath this seismic movement were many other different stories and contradictory occurrences. Australia produced no uniform swing across the nation; regions voted differently and with various degrees of disaffection. Some sitting members unexpectedly hung on to their seats while others who were expected to hold theirs easily lost to local challengers. Labor expected to lose many of its frontbench performers in a rout, but apart from a couple of outer ministers largely kept its frontbench intact after the poll. Once again, as we discuss in subsequent chapters, voters continued to turn away from the major party blocs, preferring instead to vote for minor parties, micro parties and independents. In the Senate vote, brand new parties formed on the cusp of the election garnered support and almost unknown candidates fronting micro parties won seats in parliament due to some tactical gaming ploys. So, for an election that many predicted was a *fait accompli* for the conservatives, there were many complicating dimensions and facets that

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capture our interest and are worth exploring to explain the eventual outcome. This is the project of this book as it traverses the various aspects of the 2013 federal election.

Ideally, to fully appreciate the analysis of a specific study of a national election, readers should have some understanding of the main contours and institutional rules of the electoral system in question, and consequently the ways the system works to produce actual outcomes. Each and every electoral system has its own peculiarities and codified specifics, which can remain opaque to the specialist and lay reader alike. Many contextual conditions and formal requirements, as well as the composite electoral procedures that impose detailed rules and disciplines on participants, can be hugely influential in the intended outcomes. Systems produce effects, some intended, some unintended; whether it nurtures or circumscribes the number of political parties, or makes it harder or easier for minor parties and independents to gain representation, or allows parties to fill inopportune vacancies expediently without going back to the voters, these are all systemic institutional factors that affect outcomes; they profoundly structure the behaviour of the proximate players in the electoral process and shape our analysis as observers.

Hence, we would like to point out that while the analyses in the chapters that follow draw significantly on the relevant international literatures, there are many specific features of the Australian political system worth explaining for the benefit of those—including overseas readers—who may be less familiar with the Australian electoral system and its legislative context. It is important to recognise that the Australian political system contains a number of unique characteristics which significantly affect the outcome of elections—the 2013 federal election is no exception. We canvass these specific features initially in this introduction.

Understanding the importance of Australia's electoral system to its electoral outcomes

Australia has a long history of electoral innovation (Kelly 2012; Sawer 2001), including in regard to unusual voting systems and a reliance on independent electoral administration. Voting in the House of Representatives (the lower house in the bicameral system) uses a system of preferential voting in individual constituencies, rather than simple majority or first-past-the-post voting (plurality voting systems) or proportional representational voting. Australian voters are required to rank candidates for a particular seat by giving numbered preferences—such as numbering their ballot sequentially: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.— according to their individual preferences. In 2013 an average of eight candidates

contested each lower house seat, a new record number of candidates standing for election. Voters who do not correctly register a full set of preferences are often deemed to have made an informal vote. If a candidate receives over 50 per cent of first preference votes (a clear majority of preference 1 votes on the first count of ballot papers) they are duly elected. If no one is elected outright on the first count (i.e. no one gains 50 per cent +1), then the votes of losing candidates are re-allocated, beginning with the second preferences of the lowest scoring candidate whose preferences are transferred at full value, with this elimination process continuing until a candidate manages to exceed 50 per cent (with, of course, the least popular candidates progressively being excluded).

Hence in the Australian electoral system it is uncommon but not unknown for a candidate who comes second or third in the initial ballot to win a seat 'on preferences'—for example, see Chapter 16, where an independent candidate defeated a sitting Liberal MP in the Victorian seat of Indi. This particular aspect of Australia's preferential voting system encourages *negative voting* (against those voters most dislike) and operates to ensure that the 'least un-preferred' candidate is elected to a seat in parliament (i.e. winning candidates receive less of a positive endorsement as a prospective member than the judgment that they are the 'least worst' candidate standing for the election). It is a perverse system in the minds of many overseas observers more used to positive forms of voting expression. It is neither proportional nor straight-forwardly majoritarian, but endorses the 'least worst' candidate in the eyes of the electorate—where every subsequent preference (second, third, fourth, etc.) counts for the same value as the first preference cast if the intended candidate is eliminated.

Australian governments since the 1940s have been formed by two major party blocs, either a conservative grouping led by the Liberal Party of Australia (in 'permanent' coalition with the Nationals, a rural-based party formerly known as the Country Party, and a sprinkling of other country liberals), or somewhat less commonly by the Australian Labor Party, an amalgam of separate state divisions, rival union factions and constituency branches. Due to the preferential voting system, the voting result that is crucial for determining election outcomes is *not* the primary vote (the percentage of first preference votes a party receives)—although a low primary vote can be the first sign a party is unelectable—but rather the two-party-preferred vote (the percentage of the votes that eventually goes to Labor or the Coalition after the full distribution of preferences). Accordingly, almost exclusively the media and polling organisations focus on the latter figure and not the former, as Goot discusses in Chapter 8.

In addition, it is important for general readers to remember that voting in Australia is compulsory, in terms of both registration or enrolment and actual

voting (see further Hill 2010)—at least insofar as voters have to attend a polling booth and have their name ticked off, although some may not hand in a valid ballot paper.

The voting system for the Senate (an entirely elected upper house) is even more complicated. Because the Senate consists of 12 Senators from each of the six original states and two Senators from each of the two territories (a total of 76 Senators), a simple preferential system would not work. Crucially, unlike in the House of Representatives, more than one person needs to be elected from each geographical area. Consequently, a system of quasi-proportional representation is used, in which the voter places sequentially numbered preferences against all candidates' names (or votes for a party bloc of names—see below). Successful candidates have to gain a certain proportion of the actual votes cast (the 'quota'). The Senate quota is worked out on the basis of candidates winning a certain proportion of the overall formal vote for that jurisdiction, given the number of candidates that have to be elected (note that only half of the state-based Senators face voters in a normal half-Senate election).[1] If the required number of candidates do not attain full quotas outright, votes above the quota and votes of the least popular candidates are re-allocated according to the flow of preferences marked by the voter or party of choice. Hence, the Senate vote is partially proportional (but not exclusively because states have different proportionalities) *and* partially preferential (in that once the candidates with outright quotas are elected, the remainder of seats are allocated by preferential redistribution).

The complicated Senate voting system is very beneficial for minor parties in that they can get their candidates elected with a much smaller proportion of the state-wide vote than if they were standing for the House of Representatives, where one has to win more than 50 per cent of the formal vote after preferences are distributed. Thus, Andrew Bartlett in Chapter 13 celebrates the fact that the Greens in 2013 made history in holding as many as *10* seats (of 76) in the Senate, and in becoming the first minor party to retain their lower house seat (*one* of a total of 150 seats). On the other hand, both the Palmer United Party and Katter's Australia Party polled better in the House of Representatives than in the Senate—a 'surprising' outcome, but one which secured them just one seat each in the lower house (see Chapter 17 by Tom King).

However, the system is even more complicated because the large number of candidates standing for Senate positions resulted in, from 1984 onwards, the

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1   The basic formula for determining a quota for election to the Senate is as follows:

Total number of formal votes cast

Divided by the number of candidates +1, then add one vote to qualify as a complete quota.

So, if 100,000 valid votes are cast and six senators are to be elected, then 100,000 is divided by 7, +1 vote; or an actual quota of 14,286 votes.

introduction of a system where voters could simply allocate preferences to party blocs, called 'above the line voting', rather than having to allocate preferences to each candidate 'below the line'.[2] Parties then allocate how their preferences should be distributed to other candidates—a system which has been criticised for lacking transparency and which, in the 2013 election, also led to accusations of rorting as a number of minor parties inflated their results by exchanging preferences with each other (see Antony Green's chapter for more information).

The proliferation of minor parties has been further encouraged by the relatively 'light touch' nature of Australian party regulation and electoral spending. This is particularly the case in regard to campaign funding from private sources where, as Gauja (2010: 191) points out, Australia has a relatively *laissez-faire* approach, more similar to that in the UK than Canada or New Zealand, or even the US.[3] As Gauja (2010: 166) notes:

> Unlike the regulatory regimes of comparable common law nations, there is no legislative restriction placed on the amounts that may be donated to Australian political parties or their expenditure during election campaigns.

Instead, Australian campaign regulation relies heavily on election campaign disclosure laws, which some argue have been undermined by a provision allowing anonymous donations of up to $12,400 (Gauja 2010: 166–9). Importantly, in terms of the newly formed Palmer United Party (see King's chapter), established by claimed billionaire Clive Palmer, there is also no cap on how much candidates can contribute to their (or their party's) campaigns, unlike in Canada (Parliamentary Information and Research Service 2006).

There are also relatively few barriers to registered electors standing as candidates or creating new parties, with implications for the number of micro parties and genuine independents standing (see the chapters by Jennifer Curtin and Brian Costar, as well as Tom King and Antony Green on the proliferation of micro parties). The *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Procedure) Act 2013* merely amended the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (*the *Electoral Act)* and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984 (*the *Referendum Act)* to increase the dollar amount a person nominating as a Senator had to deposit from $1,000 to $2,000, and for House of Representatives nominees from $500 to $1,000 (AEC 2013a). A political party can be registered with the

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2 The 'below the line' system often leads to votes being ruled invalid ('informal') if correct sequential numbers are not allocated to all candidates properly—for example, if there is an inadvertent doubling up or omission of some numbers.

3 For a detailed analysis of Australian electoral and financial regulations see Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia (2012); Orr (2010) and Tham, Costar and Orr (2011). For a detailed analysis of the comparative regulations covering public funding, as opposed to private funding of parties in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and US, see Gauja (2010: 144–57).

Australian Electoral Commission to participate in federal elections merely on the basis that it has a written constitution setting out the aims of the party and either at least one member who has been elected to federal parliament, or at least 500 members who are not listed in another party's application for registration (AEC 2013b).

Finally, the Australian Electoral Commission, which conducts and scrutinises Australian elections, once traditionally enjoyed a high level of trust amongst the Australian public as well as the various professionals who study election processes and outcomes. This trust was badly damaged during the 2013 election process by a series of mishaps and instances of incompetence. Some candidates publicly complained about the procedures of the AEC. Then, the AEC 'lost' some 1,370 Senate votes critical to the preference count in Western Australia when it found that they had gone missing between the original count and a recount, although poor material management systems, rather than fraud, was found to be the reason (AEC 2013c and 2013d). Despite the fact that the missing ballot papers constituted only around 0.01 per cent of total votes cast in the state, the loss of these ballots in Western Australia was unusually significant because the result was crucial to the balance of power in the Senate—specifically whether Labor could retain their second seat. Indeed, the publication date of this volume was pushed back so that the outcome could be taken into account.

As Antony Green explains in Chapter 23, the contest for the final two Western Australian Senate places was extremely close, at one point a matter of a single vote potentially determining the distribution of preferences and thus the end result. Labor and the Greens (sitting Senators Louise Pratt and Scott Ludlam, respectively), Palmer United (Zhenya Wang) and the Australian Sports Party (Wayne Dropulich) were all in the running. The initial count gave these two seats to Palmer United and the Australian Sports Party; the recount saw the Greens beat PUP to hold on to their Senate place. A new West Australian half-Senate election awarded by the High Court produced another permutation—Labor again failed to keep their second seat, the Liberals retained their three positions and both the Greens and PUP were successful, providing an interesting crossbench for the new Coalition Government to deal with.

The scandal of the 'lost votes' cost both the Federal Electoral Commissioner and the Western Australian State Manager their jobs and the AEC became the subject of an investigatory joint house parliamentary committee inquiry. The re-election in Western Australia was held in April 2014 at an additional cost of $23 million. At this re-election, the AEC once again proved lax in its administration of cast ballots, and around 75 voters had to vote for a third time.

Having set out the broad background to Australian federal elections, it is now necessary to proceed to analyse key features of the 2013 election in particular.

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Main themes explored in chapters

The overall aims of this book are to analyse the 2013 federal election and provide explanations as to why a change of government took place. We chose the title *Abbott's Gambit* because it conveys succinctly the defining strategy of the eventual winner. It evokes the atmosphere of the hung parliament of 2010–13, where the conservative opposition successfully drew its adversarial battlelines in the years leading up to the ballot. It also recognises that it was not the out-going government, but rather Abbott as the challenger who set the tone of the election and determined the agendas—no mean feat for an opposition leader. His polarising, take-no-prisoners, approach to politics was a high-stakes gamble that ultimately paid off for the Opposition Leader at his second tilt at high office. In taking this gambit Abbott faced the risk that his strategy might implode or self-destruct (*à la* Latham in 2004) or alienate constituents. The gambit not only shaped the context in which he was to fight the 2013 election, but also had significant implications beyond the election day itself in sullying the environment in which he was to commence government. His cynical gambit was certainly a cunning ploy from opposition, but paradoxically may have served to poison the well as he commences his term in government.

This book identifies the following key issues and trends that were of particular importance in this election, and that constitute key themes that will be explored in subsequent chapters:

- The effect of the Labor–Green–independent minority government and voter perceptions of dysfunctionality, serial scandals and duplicity;
- The personalisation of politics, and its relationship to leadership issues—with popularity, 'likeability', trust, image, identity and performance becoming major determinative factors for the public's voting intentions;
- The historically low opinion of politics in the electorate and declining trust in government;
- The importance of hyper-adversarialism in party politics, and concocted 'fear' or 'scare' campaigns to pander basely to a disaffected electorate;
- The decline in party identification, voter loyalties and 'habit voting', leading to greater electoral volatility among sections of the electorate and a preparedness to cast 'protest' votes for minor party candidates or independents;
- The mediatisation of politics (and trivialisation of politics) in which both traditional and new social media had influential but different roles to play;
- The superficial marketisation of politics, in which fabricated policies are developed and communicated based on forms of pre-tested market research

(and, despite the preponderance of the techniques of marketisation and 'spin', the Labor Government's inability to communicate its achievements);

- The incessant professionalisation of politics, including the growing disparity between our career political representatives and the electorate and the importing of campaigning and communication techniques from overseas;

- The crucial importance of competitive parties defining (or conjuring) areas of key policy difference, while neutralising others through apparent bipartisan support;

- The importance of the campaign tactics and detailed campaign preparations of the major parties, including candidate selection and targeted 'sandbagging' of vulnerable seats;

- The role of party discipline as a stultifying influence on politics and political debate, but also the rise of egotistical identities encouraging intra-party rivalries and disunity;

- The importance of political geography and changing constituency demographics, including the clashes of values and preferences (e.g. over the environment or social policies), but also the influences of gender, ethnicity, education and social class;

- The importance of 'hip-pocket' or economic motivations for voting;

- The roles and agendas of minor parties, independents/crossbenchers who have recently enjoyed much political influence; and,

- Overall, the increasing disintegration or fragmentation of the rigid two-party system and the historical left-right voting divide in Australian politics.

Several chapters emphasise the paralysing effect of minority government and voter perceptions of dysfunction and scandal. Jennifer Rayner and John Wanna point out the crucial role played by issues of agenda-setting and framing in shaping voter perceptions. Carol Johnson points out that an essential feature of the way in which Abbott mobilised emotion was firstly to evoke voters' anxiety (by depicting the previous Labor governments as characterised by uncertainty, dysfunction and chaos) and then secondly to evoke the politics of reassurance (by promising voters that a Coalition Government would be safe and dependable).

Paul Strangio and James Walter emphasise how important voters' perceptions of dysfunction were in shaping leadership issues during the initial periods of the campaign. Such leadership issues reflect a general trend towards the personalisation of politics. Claims about the relative popularity and celebrity status of Kevin Rudd compared with Julia Gillard played a major role in Labor's decision to change leaders shortly before the election. However, as Walter and Strangio point out, the combination of Rudd's poor campaigning and Abbott's low popularity led to commentators reassessing the importance of leadership

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effects in the course of the 2013 campaign. Leadership issues also intersected with issues of party discipline. Labor's internal disunity and leadership tensions undermined its campaign while Abbott's strong self-discipline and the control of tensions within the Liberal Party and Coalition contributed in no small part to the Coalition's victory. As Haydon Manning and Robert Phiddian emphasise, these issues about leadership, disunity and discipline were also reflected in the cartoonists' graphic history of the campaign, in addition to the normal hyperbole and pantomime.

Opinion poll ratings were also crucial in Labor's decision to replace Gillard as leader with the recycled Rudd. Despite the prominence given to polling in media analyses of the lead-up to the election, Murray Goot notes in his chapter that there were problems with the polls' accuracy. On the one hand, the focus on two-party-preferred results attempted to minimise the risk of predicting outcomes, particularly in a situation where Labor's primary vote was so low. The polls were less successful in accurately predicting the outcomes in marginal seats, partly because of some voter reversion and Labor's success in 'sandbagging' particular seats via successful local campaigns, as discussed in George Wright's chapter, and partly because of complex regional and demographic factors discussed in the chapters by Dean Jaensch *et al*. and by James Jupp. Many of the polls had also been conducted before a late surge in minor party support that partly reflected a disillusion with the major parties that is discussed in the chapters by Tom King and by Jennifer Curtin and Brian Costar. Simon Jackman points out in his chapter that summarising diverse opinion poll results also played a major role in influencing betting markets, which some have argued are more reliable than the polls themselves at predicting election outcomes. However, in the 2013 election these betting markets often posted misleading odds in specific seats.

Carol Johnson's chapter focuses on the importance of 'fear' and 'scare' campaigns in engaging a disaffected electorate. Drawing on international literature on the importance of the politics of emotion in election campaigning, Johnson suggests that the eliciting of emotion was not only an important strategy for engaging the electorate but also an important means by which ideological differences between the parties were evoked. For example, the Coalition could raise neo-liberal themes via fear campaigns on issues such as a claimed excessive government debt or taxes, without necessarily explicitly spelling out the ideological differences between the parties that underpinned them. Johnson argues that this partly helps to explain the lack of explicit ideological differentiation between the major parties on some issues that has been noted by other commentators in the book (see chapters by Jennifer Rayner and John Wanna and by Gwen Gray, Rob Manwaring and Lionel Orchard). In particular, as Gray, Manwaring and Orchard point out, the Coalition pursued a small target strategy on many social issues, including previously controversial ones such as health or education, in

an attempt to neutralise points of policy difference. More explicitly ideological statements by key Liberal politicians tended to be made before (Hockey 2012) or after the election (Abbott 2014) rather than during it.

Media also played a crucial role in engaging the electorate, reflecting an increasing mediatisation of politics. Wayne Errington points out that the traditional media did still play an important role in the campaign as, indeed, frequent accusations of media bias against the Murdoch press revealed. However, Peter John Chen argues that social media was not only important as a key site of election commentary, but that it also became an essential technique of campaigning and a key site of electoral practices, with parties often drawing on the experience of equivalent parties overseas.

Party election strategies are also being driven by another aspect of communication, characterised by the marketisation of politics, in which policies are developed and communicated based on forms of market research. Sally Young analyses how parties are still using traditional television advertising as well as new forms of information technology. Above all, campaign advertising and communication strategies are now focusing on using market research and targeting particular sets of voters. Nicholas Reece continues this theme, pointing out the role that market research is increasingly playing in *shaping*, not just selling, policy. Such communication and marketing strategies, and their influence on election policy, reflect an increasing professionalisation of politics, which includes the buying-in of overseas expertise (as Young's, Chen's and Reece's chapters all emphasise). Yet this professionalisation has also contributed to a growing disparity between our political representatives and the electorate, which can fuel the electorate's disaffection, noted throughout this volume.

The analysis of how policy was sold also illustrates the crucial importance of the winning parties defining areas of policy difference, while neutralising others. This is a point emphasised in Gwen Gray's, Rob Manwaring's and Lionel Orchard's analysis of social policy in the 2013 election, where some issues such as health and education were effectively neutralised by either downplaying their importance or declaring bipartisan support. Gender was another social issue that the parties handled carefully during the campaign. Kirsty McLaren and Marian Sawer argue that, in the aftermath of Gillard's misogyny speech, both Abbott and Rudd attempted to minimise gender as an issue during the 2013 election. Nonetheless, gender remained a significant factor in terms of the campaign's masculine undertones. Furthermore, women's continuing under-representation (including the presence of only one woman in Abbott's original cabinet) and the marginalising of women's policy compared with previous years indicate that Australian politics is still male dominated—perhaps reflecting the nature of Australian society. Meanwhile, James Jupp's chapter notes the (largely unsuccessful) attempts by the Liberal Party to win over ethnic voters via the

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selection of candidates from appropriate ethnic backgrounds. He also notes the major parties attempts to out-do each other in terms of introducing tough asylum seeker policies.

Labor's relatively late leadership change meant that Rudd had difficulty capitalising on social policy initiatives that were associated with the Gillard Government. Labor struggled to counter the Liberals' handling of economic policy issues, in which the Coalition became the owners of stable and sound economic management, while Labor was stuck with the image of being the fiscally irresponsible party that had persistently presided over rising debt levels while continuing to announce unfunded future liabilities (and these issues of budgetary management also had major implications for the fear campaigns analysed by Johnson). Given the crucial importance of economic and fiscal debates in the 2013 election, it was considered necessary to provide a detailed analysis of economic issues in a separate chapter (see the chapter by John Wanna). Moreover, Nick Economou argues that the politics of climate change also continued to be a major economic issue in terms of the carbon tax, even after Gillard was removed from office. Indeed, other environmental issues tended to be downplayed compared with climate change and the imposition of the associated carbon tax—a policy shift by Labor that was often painted as an expedient act of duplicity. Given that it 'universalised' the cost of a key environmental policy, the carbon tax may even have played a major role in Labor's defeat. It also allowed Abbott to maintain that his government would honour its commitments—an undertaking that has since proved difficult for the conservatives to uphold.

Previous volumes in the election series have analysed regional voting trends primarily on a state-by-state basis. However, increasingly demographic and regional divides cross state and territory boundaries, and cannot be easily confined to these jurisdictional entities. Indeed, Geoff Robinson's chapter delivers a particularly interesting account of the changing role of regional factors in Australian political history and the implications for today. Consequently, rather than devoting separate chapters to analysing the results and electoral effects in each state and territory, the current volume aims to analyse voting trends by way of categories such as swing states and non-swing states (to assist in determining where was the outcome decided); mortgage-belt voting; rural-urban voting; voting according to demographics of age, gender, ethnicity, education and socio-economic status. A number of contributors to this volume have engaged in the analysis of regional factors, under the oversight of Dean Jaensch, with Narelle Miragliotta and Rae Wear also contributing essential insights. The study concludes that there were relatively similar patterns of party support in rural clusters, provincial city clusters and metropolitan clusters. The existence of such clusters emphasises the importance of facts that are not confined to—and

indeed often cross—state boundaries. While results in New South Wales played a key role in determining the election outcome, Labor did not suffer the massive losses expected by some in western Sydney. Those findings are confirmed by other chapters. For example, James Jupp has undertaken a detailed study of voting across 'ethnic' electorates, pointing out that Labor largely retained the 'ethnic' vote, and this helps to explain the western Sydney result. Similarly, Curtin and Costar's chapter emphasises the degree to which rural constituencies can feel alienated by major party campaigns, and can view viable independents as an alternative, as the result in the electorate of Indi demonstrated in the 2013 election.

Antony Green's chapter provides a detailed analysis of the voting outcome. Green notes that, while Labor did not do as poorly as predicted by some commentators and polls, particularly those which came out prior to the change back to Rudd, it did obtain an exceptionally low first preference vote. Meanwhile support for independents and minor parties reached record highs (the latter assisted by weaknesses in Australia's electoral system). Clive Bean and Ian McAllister's chapter throws further light on the election outcome by providing a detailed analysis of the findings of the Australian Electoral Survey (AES), including comparisons with key findings in previous elections. The AES explores the political attitudes of those with a certain interest in Australian politics and provides survey data on the range of information sources on which these people base their opinions and voting intentions.

The 2013 volume includes not only the academic assessments outlined above but also the insider analyses offered by key party players themselves, namely chapters by Brian Loughnane, Federal Director of the Liberal Party; George Wright, National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party and Andrew Bartlett, Convenor of the Queensland Greens and an experienced political campaigner who was previously a Queensland Senator for the Australian Democrats. The contributions from Loughnane, Wright and Bartlett provide expert practitioner insights into the parties' own thinking and campaign strategies and will be further discussed in the final chapter.

Conclusion

As this brief overview of the campaign suggests, the 2013 election outcome was influenced by a wide range of factors—many contextual and deep-seated in nature, but some more proximate and transitory in their immediate impacts. It was fairly clear months before the election was called that Labor would lose the election and Abbott would win; but the change of leadership from Gillard to Rudd, the campaign dynamics and differential regional volatility, as well as

the continued rise of minor and micro parties, all contributed to the final result. Abbott's strategy of running a tightly controlled campaign in which Labor was constructed as an internecine and dysfunctional rabble and the Coalition as the only united team on the political stage able to form a mature adult government, clearly played a major role in bringing about a change of government. It was a message that helped to regenerate an opposition into an alternative government and one that certainly appealed to sections of a disaffected electorate. Nevertheless a sizeable proportion of the electorate (over one-fifth in the House vote and almost one-third in the Senate) voted for parties or candidates other than the two major political party blocs, or voted informally. This reflects a degree of disillusionment with the established parties and contributed towards the lower primary vote swing gained by the Liberal–Nationals (around +1.5 per cent, and only 3.61 per cent in two-party-preferred terms). These are issues that will be returned to in the final chapter of this volume.

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