

The Big Picture

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“News to use & bemuse”

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Across the news

Another week dominated by media commentary on the legitimacy (or otherwise) of the opinions of Australians as expressed in the recent election.

On an ethical and moral level, I argue that the legitimacy of political opinion is proportional to the degree to which it actually represents the diverse views of Australians.

The elephant in the room is that party dominance in government is not representative at all. It's self-evident that whichever party dominates and wins government, it can enforce its views over all others. Hence all other viewpoints may suffer as a result of government policy being designed to favour the dominant group. The only way that we can really achieve representation is to have a government that itself contains multiple different viewpoints. In the current case a majority of Liberal and Labor members plus a couple of 'independents'.

What we've been experiencing are the party disciplined views of elected 'representatives' chosen by the two political parties. The notion of 'stable' government is code for 'dominant' government.

The result of party dominance has become a group of political 'clones' whose party scripted 'views' were incoherent and failed entirely to engage with the world of real people because they were never designed by ordinary people. Instead they are self-congratulatory hype that contains no useful information. Here's the Prime Minister, a walking ad for the power of Prozac...

What I will be saying is I believe the policies that I outlined in the election campaign are good policies indeed great policies for the communities represented by the independents and by the Green in the House of Representatives.

The education policies we've outlined for parts of Australia, it is particularly regional Australia that tends to have low levels of secondary completion and low levels of qualifications beyond that, so I believe our integrated policy, my positive plan for Australia stands up well for the communities the independents represent. [ThePunch](#)

The party position is dominated by a few power brokers only interested in party power.

Enter Arbib, Bitar and their focus groups. Their technique involves targeting the least politically committed voters in key marginal seats. The Arbib-Bitar theory is that these people determine who wins government, and that their views should therefore predominate in policy-setting. In a bizarre reversal of conventional political wisdom, leadership is redefined as following such people by pandering to them. [Australian](#)

Now that the election has thrown up a party stalemate, the weaknesses of our 2 party system are being exposed, as the dominant perspective being reported moves to some combination of 4 independent MP's views.

The idea that independent voices should be able to engage with the wider community is already being attacked by mainstream media journalists with [Laurie Oakes](#) calling it a 'circus'.

Apparently the media doesn't appreciate that perhaps the population already sees politicians parroting party policy (*wow, check that alliteration*) as a circus, and that to actually hear

independents talking like normal (non-party) people might actually be refreshing. Perhaps we need more such views.

Whatever the case, the parties appear unwilling to learn much...

Some are extolling this apparent repudiation of the major parties in the election as the dawn of a new politics where old barriers are broken down. Unfortunately it will probably remain dark for a while yet.

More accurately this is the dysfunctional outcome of a political process that has become so manipulated that it has been reduced to an exercise in market segmentation. The voters' refusal to plump one way or the other is actually the result of being given effectively no deep choices - the election reduced to branding and personalities.

Voters were asked to choose between 'real Julia' and 'safe Tony'. Their repackaging succeeding only in making them even more like each other. Only the true believers within the parties themselves regard this as a genuine choice between real or distinctly different options.

To the rest, it is more akin to the difference between a Falcon and Commodore. Some will stay fiercely loyal but let's face it, most people could go either way. Both family cars do the same thing, are aimed at the same major section of the market, and both use marketing rather than core design to exaggerate their claimed advantages. It has all begun to ring so hollow. [ThePunch](#)

And when [media commentators](#) call for a re-election, what do they think we are going to do? Are we all going to change our votes and collaborate in some mysterious way to give the 'right' result to the 'right' people?

Instead of reporting the affairs of politicians, perhaps the media would do well to report on issues affecting the community.

That Was The Week That Was

Governance + spin

Politicians awarded secret pay raise [Telegraph](#)
A chance to end mindless party discipline? [SMH](#)

Food/forestry

Taxpayers should help loggers: Wilkie [TheAge](#)
Government seizes land for Gunns pipeline [Mercury](#)

Climate/water/energy/resources/environment

New Vic taxes to deal with bushfire risks [TheAge](#)

Health & education revolutions/communication/defence

Hospital with no room for dying child [SMH](#)

Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech/World

Legal system upside-down under [TheWest](#)
Rural services in the spotlight [SMH](#)
\$5 day starvation diet for Vic aged care residents [HeraldSun](#)
Jail stealing the lives of our young generation [SMH](#)
Melbourne Metro payments go up as services go down [TheAge](#)
Front car seats safest for adults in crash [TheAge](#)
Yarra monster eating Australia [TheAge](#)
Fear and loathing on Melbourne's trains [HeraldSun](#)