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Labor’s love lost: the decline & fall of NSW & Victorian Labor 2006-11

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Context

- Incumbent Labor governments returned Victoria 2006 & NSW 2007
- Defeated in 2010-11
- Limited polling available
- Examine Labor & Greens vote in relation to social composition of electorates from 2006 Census
- NSW & Victorian Labor did (relatively) better than expected
Explaining aggregate electoral behavior

- Class: managers & professionals (PM) vs. trade, labourers & service workers
- Culture: Christians vs. non-Christians
- Incumbent MPs
- City vs. country
- City = Melbourne, Newcastle-Sydney-Wollongong
- Country = farming electorates + provincial cities & coastal regions
- 70-75% of Labor vote by electorate predictable, 45-65% of Greens
NSW & Victorian compared

- **Victoria 2006:**
  \[ \text{ALP} = 7.5 + 0.53\times\text{Non-PM} - 0.05\times\text{Non-Christian} + 5.3 \]
  \( \text{if ALP incumbent} \) - 28.4 (if Independent Incumbent) - 9.9 (if LNP incumbent) - 7.6 (if non-capital); R-Sq = 68%

- **NSW 2007:**
  \[ \text{ALP} = -35.6 + 0.86\times\text{Non-PM} + 0.42\times\text{Non-Christian} + 8.4 \]
  \( \text{if ALP incumbent} \) - 15.4 (if Independent Incumbent) - 5 (if LNP incumbent) - 11.4 (if non-capital); R-Sq = 79%

- NSW more polarized than Victoria
- More recent immigration, greater inequality?
Incumbency

- NSW ALP incumbent advantage in 2007 widely noted
- Indicates weakness of ALP where no sitting MP
- Evidence of collapse of autonomous ALP branch structure?
- Victorian LNP incumbent advantage reveals conservatives more embedded?
- Suburban Labor going way of country Labor?
- Labor’s incumbency advantage is vs. LNP not Greens
Greens

- Perceptions of NSW-Victoria divergence
- But social base of Green support almost identical
- Vic Green 2010 = 22.3 – 0.27*Non-PM + 0.248*Non-Christian – 1.4 (if ALP Incumbent) – 5.8 (if Independent incumbent) – 4.1 (if LNP incumbent) – 2.1 (if non-Melb); R-Sq = 53%
- NSW Green 2011 = 22.8 – 0.28*Non-PM + 0.19*Non-Christian + 1.5 (if ALP Incumbent) – 3 (if LNP Incumbent) – 0.29 (if rural); R-Sq = 46%
City vs. country

- Labor under performs in rural areas especially in NSW
- Not restricted to farming electorates
- Victorian provincial cities vote like Melbourne
- No specific anti-Green country vote
## Electoral predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSW 2007</th>
<th>NSW 2011</th>
<th>VIC 2006</th>
<th>VIC 2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-35.64</td>
<td>-33.04</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>13.64</td>
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<td>Non-PM</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
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<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<td>ALP Incumbent</td>
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<td>8.54</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>2.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNP Incumbent</td>
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<td>-3.90</td>
<td>-9.86</td>
<td>-13.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>-11.37</td>
<td>-8.70</td>
<td>-7.65</td>
<td>-7.02</td>
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</table>
Electorate effects

- About 75% of ALP vote explained 25% reflects local factors, other variables, political traditions?
- Electorates won depends on level & distribution of votes
- NSW 2011 25.6% ALP = 20/93 seats
- Britain 1983 27.6% Labour = 209/650
- 2001 British Columbia 21.6% New Democrats = 2/99 seats
Aberrant results

- Victoria 2006: Labor won 8 seats less than predicted
- Victoria 2011: LNP won 8 seats less than predicted
- LNP over performs in eastern suburbs, Labor in provincial cities & inner Melbourne
- NSW 2007: numbers as predicted
- NSW 2011: Labor won 8 more seats than predicted
- LNP over performs in new outer suburbs, Labor inner city, some ‘old’ outer & Newcastle, Illawarra + Monaro
Green heartlands

- Greens strongly over perform in inner-city
- Over performance changed little from 2006-07 to 2010-11
- Approaching limits?
The NSW crisis

- Party crisis recalls interwar years
- Factional upheaval, industrialists vs. politicians
- ‘McKell model’ began with reaction against 30s electoral defeat
- Postwar boom transformed politics: ‘Cahill model’ = union–friendly IR legislation + urban services
- Economic and cultural globalization transformed Sydney since 1980s
- Undercut consensual post-war labourism
The future

- 2011 NSW Labor found solace in ‘old outer’ suburbs
- 1988-91 Coalition government rebuilt Labor’s ‘base’
- Now less of a base to rebuild
- Cultural left = some immigrant communities + some professionals (at risk from Greens)
- Victorian provincial cities politically redefined in 1990s as part of Melbourne
- Victorian Labor has less solid base