

# Fairer Australia Campaign Report

October 2004



## Election results

The federal election results have disappointed the many people and organisations who worked towards a fairer Australia. In particular the outcome must cause despair for asylum seekers and Aboriginal activists and their supporters. We have to strengthen our resolve to continue this work over the coming term.

In the House of Representatives the Coalition won 85 seats (5 more than the last election) and the ALP won 57, losing 8 seats. Three have been won by independents and 4 are still undecided. There was a small swing of 0.21% away from the ALP, and 3.39% to the Liberals. The Democrats were the hardest hit, with a swing of 4.17% away from them. The Greens would have picked up some of these with a swing of 2.21%. The electorate remains polarised between an increased number of people voting for the Greens and a host of small right wing parties along with the Coalition.

The Coalition has won control of the Senate with a final tally of 39 Coalition, 28 Labor, 4 Greens, 4 Democrats and 1 Family First. The Democrats lost the three Senators (Aden Ridgeway in NSW, John Cherry in QLD and Brian Greig in WA) who were up for reelection. The Greens won two senate spots, Christine Milne will be The Greens' second Senator for Tasmania, and Rachel Siewert in WA. Family First won 1 Senate spot in Victoria. **For more information and detail visit [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au).**

## Campaign activity

The Campaign produced 14,000 leaflets and 10,500 posters. There were five posters addressing public health, public education, reconciliation and racism, government lying, jobs and union rights and one which raised all of the issues. There are approximately 1,200 posters leftover, most of them, *Vote for Public Health* and *Vote for Jobs and Union Rights*. The most popular posters were *Vote Against Fear and Division*, *Vote Against Government Lying* and *Vote for Public Education*.

Our letter-writing kits were tailored to the different areas and were widely distributed in the four electorates.

Our public meetings in Parramatta, Dobell and Paterson attracted high quality speakers, most candidates, and good to very good audience levels. The sitting Liberal Members did not attend any of the meetings.

We achieved better media impact in Dobell and Paterson than we did in Parramatta, perhaps because the election was much closer when those meetings were held. There was also more interest in the campaign from local media outside of Sydney because there were no other groups active in those areas.

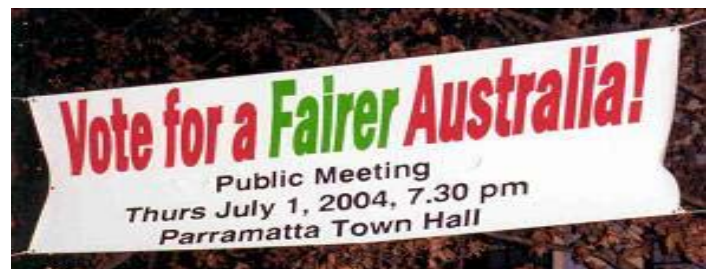
Particularly in Parramatta, but also in Dobell and Paterson, Now We The People has a higher profile and better connections to many community organisations. This is good basis for future campaign activities.

## Comment

In the aftermath of the election, there have been many comments and discussions on the Coalition's victory.

The Liberal's election campaign was highly successful, playing on people's ignorance of how the market functions, and fear of interest rate rises. However, many people who voted for the Coalition would have been voting for "the devil you know" rather than "the devil you don't" with the Coalition's election campaign successfully painting Latham as inexperienced and unreliable. Simply, there is a high level of wealth (and personal debt) in Australia that people are concerned about losing. Government lying and human rights abuses only swayed the votes of a minority of the people.

The ALP campaign stayed squarely in the territory of the economic management and security marked out by the Coalition. Government lying, refugees and other social justice issues were all largely ignored. The lack of Australian casualties and deaths meant that the war in Iraq was easily ignored by both major parties.



## The Campaign was supported and participated in by:

Action for Peace and Development in the Philippines, AID/WATCH, Australian Education Union - Tas, SA, ACT Australian Services Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union NSW, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, Barrier Industrial Council - Broken Hill, Central Coast Community Environment Network, CFMEU (Construction) NSW, EcoNetwork, Port Stephens Inc, Economic Reform Australia, Friends of Children in Detention (ChilOut), Granville Multicultural Community Centre Korean Resource Centre, Maritime Union of Australia (NSW), Mary Mackillop Institute of East Timorese Studies, Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (NSW), Migrante Phil-Australia, National Tertiary Education Union (NSW), National Union of Students, Newcastle Trades Hall Council, NSW Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, NSW Council of Social Services, NSW Labor Council, NSW Reconciliation Council, NSW Teachers Federation, Public Service Association of NSW, Public Health Association - Australia, NSW Reconciliation Council, NSW Teachers Federation, Public Service Association of NSW, Rail Tram and Bus Union, SAVE Australia, Save Medicare Alliance, SEARCH Foundation, The Edmund Rice Centre, UnitingCare ACT.NSW, Western Sydney Community Forum, Womens Electoral Lobby, Young Christian Workers.

## Results in the targeted electorates

**Parramatta** The ALP candidate Julie Owens won the seat with a two party swing of 1.92% from the sitting Liberal Member Ross Cameron. Owens scored 41.55% of the primary vote, to Cameron's 44.09% and was pushed over the line by Greens preferences. The Greens had a 2.21% swing, with 5.3% of the primary vote. 9.06% of the primary vote went to the mostly right wing small/micro parties such as Non-Custodial Parents, Liberals for Forests, One Nation, Family First and Fred Nile's Christian Democrats. Their preferences appear to have been split evenly between ALP and the Liberals. The Democrats suffered a 2.35% swing against them and scored only 1.06% of the vote.

**Low** The sitting ALP Member won this seat with 42.89% of the primary vote and the Liberals on 42.73%. There was a 1.88% swing away from the ALP. The Greens won 9.24% of the vote with a 5.04% swing. The Democrats got only 1.99% of the vote, with a 3.19% swing against them. Liberals for Forests, Christian Democrats and One Nation scored the final 3.82% of the primary vote.

**Dobell** The Liberal sitting Member Ken Ticehurst held this seat comfortably with 49.51% of the primary vote, with a 5.58% swing, and the ALP on only 36.35%. The Greens won 5.03% of the vote with a swing of 2.08%, and the Democrats had a 3.35% swing against them to get only 0.86%. Liberals for Forests, the Outdoor Recreation Party, Family First, Citizens Electoral Council, One Nation and three independents won 8.24% of the primary vote.

**Paterson** The Liberal sitting Member Bob Baldwin won outright with 51.99% of the primary vote, and a huge swing of 12.08%. The ALP candidate won 36.05% of the primary vote, with a 4.7% swing against her, and 43% after preference distribution. The Greens won 4.16% with a small swing of 1.44%. The 7 right wing minor parties and independents got 7.07% of the primaries. The Democrats scored 0.73%, a 1.84% swing against them.

In the two party preferred vote in Paterson and Dobell there was a swing of 5.5% to the Liberals, 3.5% higher than the national swing. Some suggested reasons for the results being so dismal in Paterson and Dobell were: the sitting Liberal Members were seen as good local members, their faces well known. The Liberals spent a huge amount of money on the campaign in these seats compared to the ALP. There is also a lot of new housing developments in these areas, where it seems people voted with their mortgages in mind.

The success in Parramatta was partly due to Ross Cameron's admission of marital infidelity, and the fact that as well as the Fairer Australia campaign, there were a range of organisations and unions who campaigned hard in Parramatta. There were no such other activities in Paterson and Dobell.

## Where to for the Fairer Australia campaign?

Despite the results, people felt that the campaign had a positive impact and had been worthwhile. The networks built up in the three electorates were a testimony to this, and provide the opportunity for ongoing work in these areas.

We must expect a swag of destructive legislation and divisive tactics from the government in the next three years, to which the social justice, environment and labour movements will have to respond strongly.

There will be many defensive campaigns, particularly in the areas of public health, public education and industrial relations. We also need to continue developing and promoting positive alternatives to Howard's vision.

Participants in these movements and struggles will need to work on coalition building in order to defeat legislation that will not be able to be stopped by the Senate. **The next Now We the People Conference in 2005, Melbourne, is one way that we can work on cross movement and coalition building.**

Some participants in the campaign have identified grass roots political education as a priority for the movement over the next few years.

It is difficult to predict what impact the re-election of Bush, or election of Kerry will have. Either way it is likely that the global impact of the US will not change, particularly on issues of trade and the war in Iraq, and that Australia's relationship with the US will still be a high priority for our movements.

### Your feedback and comment on the campaign and future directions are required!

1. What did you think about
  - the campaign posters and fliers?
  - the letter writing kits?
  - the public meetings?
2. What do you think are the main issues that we will need to address in the next term of the new Howard Government?
3. What do you think are some of the important issues that the 2005 Now We The People conference should deal with?

Please send your responses to:  
Email - [info@nowwethepeople.org](mailto:info@nowwethepeople.org)  
Mail - PO Box K910, Haymarket, NSW 1240  
Fax - 02 9211 1407

For more information about the campaign and the Now We The People project visit

**[www.nowwethepeople.org](http://www.nowwethepeople.org)**