



Current Issues Brief
No. 10 2000–01

Western Australian Election 2001

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Glossary

Australian Democrats	Democrats
Australian Labor Party	Labor
Greens (WA)	Greens
Liberal Party	Liberal
National Party	National
Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party	One Nation

Introduction

The statistical data arising from the 2001 election will be published on becoming available.

Western Australia is often thought of as a state in which Labor has inhabited something of an electoral wilderness. This view is supported by the extensive periods of government enjoyed by the Coalition parties in the recent and intermediate past; first under the Premiership of Sir David Brand (1959–71) followed, after a three year period of Labor, by a further nine years of Coalition Government under the Premierships of Sir Charles Court (1974–82) and Ray O'Connor (1982–83). More recently Richard Court, Sir Charles' son, led Coalition Governments through two parliamentary terms (1993–2001). The Coalition parties held government for all but one of the last four decades of the twentieth century. However, this view overlooks the earlier electoral history of Western Australia in which 'Until its narrow and unexpected defeat in 1947, Labor's only failures at the polls after [1911] were when it was badly divided on the issue of military conscription for overseas service and in the immediate wake of the 1929 Wall Street Crash.'¹ From 1911 Labor governed for twenty-five of the following thirty-six years.

Since the 1970s Labor has ascribed the success of the Coalition to electoral malapportionment, an arrangement that disproportionately increases the representation of rural and regional voters.² Western Australia is the only jurisdiction in Australia to have persevered with a system of electoral malapportionment but in terms of the overall history of the lower house this arrangement cannot be said to have exclusively favoured one major party or the other. This fact is driven home by the dominance of Labor who formed government through the decade from 1983. Until recently, however, the same could not be said for the prospects of each of the major parties in successfully implementing their platforms and policies; before 1996 the upper house had always been in the control of non-Labor parties.

Whatever else can be said about Western Australian electoral arrangements, this very brief sketch shows that for the most part the party forming government has occupied office for more than a single term. In fact since 1950 there has only been one single term government, that of John Tonkin's Labor Government (1971–74). However, the 2001 election confirmed a trend among voters to direct support away from the major parties—delivering substantial power to minor parties and independents who gained 28.3 per cent of the primary vote. Despite the strong primary vote to minor parties and independents,

there is strong evidence that many voters did not follow the recommendations of these candidates in allocating preferences for Lower House seats.

This paper sets out the political landscape prior to the 2001 poll. It proceeds to explore the ways in which the major parties dealt with their minor counterparts and, obversely, the attitude towards and effectiveness of the minor parties in regards of their major counterparts. The result in Western Australia has confirmed a broader trend in Australian politics in which major parties can rely on a far smaller proportion of voters who vote because they identify with a party.

Background to the Election

The Western Australian election was one in which victory to either of the major parties would constitute an impressive achievement. On the one hand, Liberal Premier Richard Court was attempting to secure his third four-year term which would enable him to become the state's longest serving Premier passing Sir David Brand's record twelve years in office. On the other hand, Labor's Geoff Gallop required an increase of at least eleven Assembly seats to gain a parliamentary majority, a feat not achieved since the Labor victory of 1911, in which the party secured twelve additional seats under Jack Scadden to oust Frank Wilson's Liberal Government.

The magnitude of the task confronting the Australian Labor Party and the proportionate degree of security enjoyed by the Coalition parties appeared vast in terms of the numbers of seats occupied in the Legislative Assembly. This apparent advantage was greatly diminished, however, when the number of marginal seats was taken into account. The Liberal Party held twelve and Labor held five Assembly seats by a margin of seven per cent or less. With polls predicting a probable strong showing by minor parties, these seats were more vulnerable than they might otherwise have been. Premier Court recognised the closeness of the electoral situation of the parties when he observed that losing a mere 3700 votes could put the government into opposition.³ The election was set to run down to the wire.

Table 1: Party Seats and First Preference Vote in 1996 Legislative Assembly

Party	Number of Seats	% of First Preference Vote
Liberal	29	39.9
Labor	19	35.8
National	6	5.8
Democrats	0	5.1
Independent	3	7.7
Other	0	1.0

The Announcement of the Poll

Unusually, the naming of the date for the election was itself a matter of some controversy. The fourth anniversary of Court's second term fell on 14 December 2000. However, he was not required to request an election until the expiry of the Legislative Council in May 2001. The customary time to go to the polls in Western Australia is January or February because the fixed term of the Legislative Council expires in May. Court simply followed the norm in this respect. The reason that his four years had come up prematurely was because the previous election was held in December 1996. Despite this, the Opposition took advantage of the earlier than usual four year anniversary and claimed that his Government had gone beyond the four years expected of it by the electorate. On 10 January 2001 Court announced a general election would be held on 10 February for all the seats of Parliament—57 Legislative Assembly seats and 34 Legislative Council seats.

The record number of candidates standing for election increased the uncertainty of the election result. The increased numbers were the result of an increase in independent and minor party candidates, and in particular the entry of One Nation into Western Australian state politics. One Nation stood candidates for 54 of the 57 Assembly seats and 15 of the 34 seats on the Council. The high number of candidates also increased dramatically the likelihood of seats being decided on preferences.

Table 2: Number of Candidates Standing for Legislative Assembly Seats 1993–2001

Year	Number of Candidates
1993	283
1996	232
2001	364

Table 3: Number of Candidates Standing for Legislative Council Seats 1993–2001

Year	Number of Candidates
1993	126
1996	129
2001	160

The Campaign

Court's reticence to go to the polls was presented as an attempt to distance his administration from the political fallout of a finance broking scandal in which many self-funded retirees lost their savings.⁴ The Minister for Fair Trading, Doug Shave, was portrayed as untrustworthy and Court as a weak leader because of his refusal to dismiss the Minister despite demands from within and without his party.⁵ Federal factors may also have played a part if, in fact, Court was delaying the poll. He was concerned to allow time for the public to become less hostile to the new Goods and Services Tax regime and for

the concerns of small business over the Business Activity Statement to be allayed.⁶ He may also have hoped that the high price of petrol would fall. Whether or not these factors affected Court's decision on naming an election date, the opposition used the time after December to exert pressure upon the government.

The importance of rural and regional seats was clear from the outset. Of the eleven most marginal seats held by the Liberals in which Labor ran candidates (remembering that Labor required eleven seats to gain a majority in the lower house) four seats were drawn from non-metropolitan regions. Court acknowledged the importance of non-metropolitan districts when he broke with tradition and announced the election in the regional seat of Bunbury. He used the occasion to commit \$100 million to infrastructural projects in this and the adjacent seat of Mitchell. The 2001 campaign would be won or lost in the non-metropolitan electorates.

The Coalition

Liberal Party

Richard Court led the Coalition to victory in 1993 when the electorate turned against Labor as light was shed on the opaque financial dealings of former Labor governments, popularly known as 'WA Inc'.⁷ In the 1993 election Labor lost seven Assembly seats and the electorate confirmed its disapproval of the party in 1996 when it lost a further five. Fairly or unfairly, Court's two terms were presented as a consequence of the 'WA Inc' years.⁸ The 2001 campaign was to be the first occasion on which the Court Government would have to stand on its own credentials rather than simply appealing to the memories of an electorate hostile to the past indiscretions of their opponents.

Despite this, the Liberal Party remained keen to extract further mileage out of 'WA Inc'. Their campaign began with a series of negative advertisements that referred to the 'WA Inc' years and hinted at Gallop's guilt by association as Minister Assisting the Treasurer from 1991 to 1993. However, the effectiveness of this tactic may have been blunted by the Liberal Government's own recent difficulties such as the finance broking scandal, and in the final week of the campaign a Liberal backbencher, Bob Bloffwitch, was found to have failed to declare his interest in Kingstream Steel. Bloffwitch had lobbied for the company to be permitted to construct a steel mill in his electorate of Geraldton.

Nowhere was the importance of preferences more evident than in the Liberal Party's dealings with One Nation. Early in the campaign Court maintained an ambivalence towards One Nation. For instance, he commented that the Party's policies might not be as racist as commonly thought.⁹ Court's ambivalence allowed the Liberal Party State Executive flexibility in deciding whether to place One Nation above Labor or last on their how-to-vote cards.

Despite the room left to strike a preference deal with One Nation, the Liberal State Executive followed the other parties in placing One Nation last on Liberal how-to-vote cards. Early in the campaign One Nation declared that they would target the National Party and this may have resulted in pressure upon the Liberals from their Coalition partners to place One Nation last. The Australian Democrats had also pledged to withdraw their preferences from any party exchanging preferences with One Nation. The inevitable loss of Democrat support may also have contributed to the State Executive's decision to place One Nation last.

The precarious situation of the Liberal party was apparent late in the campaign. Court acknowledged the likelihood of a low primary vote for the Liberals and the significant levels of support for the minor parties and independents when he asked voters disaffected with the Government to place Liberal candidates second. In doing so he was following Labor's successful campaign tactic employed in the 1990 election when the Hawke administration was returned after gaining 39 per cent of the primary vote.

National Party

After the 1996 election the Nationals were included in government in order to maintain the Coalition rather than out of any necessity. The Liberal Party had the numbers to form government in its own right. During the 2001 campaign the Nationals' leader, Hendy Cowan, argued that if the Liberals had to rely on the Nationals to form government, then non-metropolitan issues and interests could be given far greater prominence than they had gained in the previous Parliament.

The Nationals focused on increasing their numbers and did not stand candidates in districts where they had no chance of winning the seat. This policy was potentially damaging to Liberal prospects because National preferences had helped Liberal candidates to mount a strong challenge to Labor in the seat of Burrup and to win the seat of Ningaloo in 1996. The National's decision not to run candidates in these districts may have invited disaffected Liberal voters to support One Nation candidates and ultimately to direct their preferences to Labor.

In recent years three-cornered competitions have been a matter of dispute amongst Coalition parties in various parts of Australia.¹⁰ The Coalition agreement in Western Australia required that neither party contest seats held by members of cabinet (in 1996 this prohibition extended to all sitting members). The National Party looked to increase its presence in the Legislative Assembly at the expense of the Liberal Party by challenging in four Liberal-held seats of Geraldton, Greenough, Moore and Vasse. Court accepted the Nationals position and the Liberals stood candidates in the National-held seats of Avon, Collie, Wagin and Roe. Both parties stood candidates for Kimberley where the ex-Labor independent, Ernie Bridge, decided not to re-contest the seat. In 2001 the Nationals lost Collie and the Liberals lost Geraldton both to Labor.

Australian Labor Party

Early in the campaign much attention was focused upon Labor's policy of one-vote one-value. The issue was kept alive with comments by federal leader, Kim Beazley, who described Western Australian supporters of malapportionment as 'engaging in the greatest act of political corruption in Australia.'¹¹ Gallop argued consistently that electoral malapportionment had not guaranteed government action on regional issues and conditions. He juxtaposed the construction of an unpopular belltower in Perth with a decline in regional services to build a perception of a metro-centric disposition in the Court Government. The Nationals contesting Liberal-held seats may have increased the view that the Coalition Government had ignored non-metropolitan areas. Gallop proposed to resurrect the practice of charging ministers with responsibility for particular regions, as well as designating a minister with special responsibility for salinity, as a more effective mechanism than rural vote weighting for ensuring that rural and regional interests were on the government's agenda.

Gallop refused to consider any preference deal with One Nation, but Labor stood to gain from One Nation's policy of placing sitting members last. Labor was also able to attract the preferences of other significant minor parties, such as the Greens and the Liberals for Forests, because of their policy to cease immediately the logging of old growth forests. Labor pledged funds for re-training those in the timber industry who would lose their jobs and promised to explore increasing plantation timber production to offset the loss of jobs. Labor's policy of immediate cessation of logging old growth forests as well as the proposed compensation package provoked criticism from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and Australian Workers Union (AWU) because of Labor's lack of consultation and concerns that their members' jobs would be lost. In addition to attracting the preferences of the Greens and Liberals for Forests, criticisms by the CFMEU and AWU may have worked in Labor's favour by dispelling the appearance of a party that was hostage to sectional interests.

Major Party Policies

The major parties committed themselves to increase funding in the areas of education, health and law and order. Their policies on the environment and industrial relations were also gained public attention. The main issue arising out of the policy debates related to the cost of the programs and how they would be funded. The bidding war that erupted between the major parties may have increased the level of cynicism in an electorate that was already in a critical mood.

Table 4: Major Party Policies

Education	
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds for training teachers as literacy and numeracy specialists. • Air-conditioning in 60 government schools at cost of six million dollars. • \$100 million for computers in schools. • The provision of greater opportunities for students to attend single-sex classes in government secondary school.
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extra \$40 million for school maintenance. • After hours access to schools.
Environment	
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cessation of logging in old growth forests by 2003.
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate cessation of logging in old growth forests.
Health	
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase salary of health workers by 13.5 per cent over three years at cost of \$111 million.
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$109 million to upgrade emergency departments at metropolitan hospitals. • Funding to make available an extra 100 beds.
Industrial Relations	
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain individual workplace agreements. • Increase the role of the WA Industrial Relation Commission in determining the minimum adult wage.
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement that individual workplace contracts must not offer below minimum award conditions. • Individual workplace agreements would not be possible if there is an existing collective agreement at the workplace.
Law and Order	
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of 200 police officers over four years. • Increase in numbers of country work camps for non-violent offenders. • Public list of convicted drug dealers. • Extending the scope of three-strikes mandatory sentencing legislation.
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase police officers by 250 over four years. • Re-institute special squads covering areas such as Asian crime and sexual assault.
Petrol	
Coalition	
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of price-caps on petrol in non-metropolitan regions.
Representation	
Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the system of weighting non-metropolitan representation.
Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement one-vote one-value electoral arrangements in both chambers of Parliament. • Appointment of ministers with special responsibilities for individual regions. • Decrease the number of ministers and senior bureaucrats.

Minor Parties

Australian Democrats

The Democrats had hoped to increase their numbers in the Legislative Council from two to four seats. They did not poll as well as expected. This may have been largely a result of perceptions in the electorate that the Democrats were no longer the primary party of protest because, for instance, of the federal party's support for an amended Goods and Services Tax. The state party ran a campaign that heavily featured the images of the federal leaders, Senators Meg Lees and Natasha Stott-Despoja, as exemplifying Democrat values. It also spoke of the advantages of an upper house of review in which the party forming government did not hold the balance of power.

However, the electorate had available to it an alternative party of protest in One Nation whose spoiling tactic of placing sitting members last may have appealed far more directly to those inclined to exercise a protest vote. The impression of the Democrats as a less extreme party of protest than One Nation may have been increased by their not suggesting how voters should distribute their preferences. They threatened to direct preferences away from the parties of any candidates who did not place One Nation last on their ticket.

Greens (WA)

The Greens campaigned on the importance of preserving Western Australia's old growth forests. They also spoke of the need to protect prominent coastal sites from tourist developments particularly Smith's Beach in the south and Coral Bay in the north. The party may have benefited from a decline in the Democrats' vote. Although the two additional seats won by the Greens in the Legislative Council, one by Dee Margetts former Senator for Western Australia from July 1993 to June 1999, came from non-metropolitan regions and the seats lost by the Democrats were both metropolitan.

Liberals for Forests

The Liberals for Forests are a grouping specific to Western Australia. They are not so much a faction of the Liberal Party as an association who have sought the preservation of the forests in the south west. Use of the term 'Liberals' may be an attempt to distinguish the group from environmentalist groups and parties who are perceived to appeal to the Labor constituency.

The Western Australian Electoral Commission refused to register the Liberals for Forests as a political party because of the potential confusion with the Liberal Party. Liberal party spokespersons pointed out that a number of those involved in Liberals for Forests had never been members of the Liberal Party and, indeed, in terms of the 2001 election the party's constitution required that candidates direct preferences away from Liberal

candidates. The constitution requires that preferences be directed to candidates from the party with the closest policy to the Liberal for Forests. In the circumstances this meant the Greens and Labor would be preferred.

Because of the ruling by the Electoral Commission, Liberal for Forests candidates stood technically as independents and this enabled individuals to direct preferences without reference to the party's constitution. In the seat of Darling Ranges, the Liberal for Forests candidate, Frank Lindsey, split his preferences to gain the support of disaffected Liberal voters.¹² This decision may have been significant in returning Liberal John Day.

Pauline Hanson's One Nation

The 2001 election marked One Nation's first state campaign in Western Australia. As already mentioned One Nation announced that they would target the National Party and thus take advantage of the perception that the Nationals had little success in placing rural and regional issues on the government's agenda. One Nation took a seemingly more conciliatory approach to the Liberal Party when its national Vice-President, John Fischer, declared that he would prefer the return of a Liberal government because he doubted that Labor had the personnel to field a competent frontbench.¹³ One Nation also rejected Labor's policies of one-vote one-value as disenfranchising the country as well as its policy of immediate cessation of logging in old growth forests. Despite One Nation's declamations against a Labor government, its policy of suggesting that voters direct their preferences away from all sitting Members (bar four Liberal candidates) could not but be understood as disadvantaging the party it declared to be the most suited to government.

The Result

Legislative Assembly

The Legislative Assembly consists of 57 seats, 34 of which are drawn from metropolitan and 23 from non-metropolitan regions.

Table 5: Results by Party for Legislative Assembly in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Districts 1996–2001

Party	1996			2001		
	Non-Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Total	Non-Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Total
Liberal	12	17	29	9	7	16
National	6	0	6	5	0	5
Labor	3	15	18	8	24	32
Independents	2	2	4	1	3	4

The Minor Parties

Much was made of the importance to Labor's victory of One Nation's policy of directing preferences away from the sitting member. In judging the effect of voters who chose minor parties and independents as their first preference (and specifically One Nation) two considerations ought to be taken into account:

- the proportion of voters who chose to follow the preference suggestions of the candidate of their first choice, and
- the uncertainty of how voters would have behaved if One Nation or other non-major party candidates had not stood. This point refers to the level of voter dissatisfaction with the major parties. Was the level of such magnitude that voters would have protested in some other way?

It has been observed that the One Nation vote constituted approximately one-third of the overall non-major party vote and thus its 'spoiling' effect may not have been as significant as some elements in the media have claimed.¹⁴ It is reasonable to suggest, however, that voters who gave their first preference to a non-major party candidate would have sympathies with a major party constituency; that is, they would be 'natural' Labor, Liberal or National voters. Thus a Greens' or Democrats' first preference would usually fall to Labor and a One Nation to either to the Liberals or Nationals. The One Nation policy of directing preferences against sitting members regardless of voters' traditional sympathies, is likely to have interfered with this tendency.

One Nation and Greens Preferences

The impact of the minor parties on the result of the Western Australian election has been the subject of much debate in the media. Table 6 shows that while even though One Nation had targeted National Party candidates and advised voters to place sitting members last, a policy that would disadvantage Liberal candidates, the Coalition parties actually picked up a greater proportion of One Nation preferences in metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions. The statistics raise substantial doubt as to the ability of One Nation to control the preferences of its voters. In contrast, those who voted Greens were far more prepared to follow the party's how-to-vote card in allocating preferences to Labor.

The following statistics show the average percentages of how the preferences of those who voted One Nation and Greens were distributed directly after the One Nation or Green candidate left the race. The figures refer to votes for Assembly seats.

Table 6: One Nation and Green Preferences to Labor and Coalition Parties 2001

	% of Preferences
One Nation	
Preferences to Labor in metropolitan districts	32.0
Preferences to Labor in non-metropolitan districts	41.2
Total average	36.6
<hr/>	
Preferences to Liberal in metropolitan districts	34.3
Preferences to Liberal in non-metropolitan districts	44.0
Preferences to National	45.8
Total average	41.4
<hr/>	
Greens	
Preferences to Labor in metropolitan districts	56.5
Preferences to Labor in non-metropolitan districts	36.8
Total average	46.6
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Preferences to Liberal in metropolitan districts	26.0
Preferences to Liberal in non-metropolitan districts	17.6
Preferences to National	23.8
Total average	22.5

Democrats

The Democrats' primary vote fell from 5.1 per cent in the 1996 election to 2.6 per cent in the 2001 election. Senator Lees qualified claims that the party had been dealt a significant blow by arguing that the 1996 levels of support were well above the support in 1993 of 2.3 per cent and, in fact the 2001 result indicated a return to the status quo.¹⁵ Lees' qualification is worthy of note, however given the increased levels of support for other minor parties, the levels of support for Democrat candidates in both the Assembly and the Council was disappointing.

Electorates of Interest

I have highlighted those electorates in which One Nation and/or Green preferences appear to have played a major role in determining the outcome of the poll, as well as those contests in which specific issues are likely to have influenced the result.

References to the distribution of One Nation and Green preferences indicate the percentage of votes that flowed to the Labor, Liberal or National candidate immediately the One Nation or Green candidate was eliminated.

Albany

Kevin Prince, Minister for Police and Emergency Services had been the Member for Albany since 1993. The seat had been Liberal since 1974. Prince won the seat in the 1996

election capturing 57.9 per cent of the primary vote, but in 2001 he won only 33 per cent. Labor's candidate, Peter Watson, won 31.6 per cent and collectively the minor parties and independents won 35.3 per cent of the primary vote. One reason for the large reduction in Prince's primary vote may have been his being forced to defend himself in the Supreme Court against allegations that the negligence of a law firm in which he was a partner had contributed to the loss of \$60 000 from a deceased estate.

Although Prince won the largest number of primary votes he was defeated by the Labor candidate, John Watson, with the aid of 58 per cent of One Nation preferences and 27 per cent of Green preferences. Prince received 39.4 per cent of One Nation preferences and 10 per cent of Green preferences.

Alfred Cove

Doug Shave, the Minister for Fair Trading had held the metropolitan blue ribbon Liberal seat of Alfred Cove by a margin of 19.3 per cent. However, Shave entered the election under the cloud of the finance broking scandal. Independent Denise Brailey challenged him directly on his handling of the scandal. Liberal for Forests candidate, Janet Woollard, was also a prominent anti-Shave campaigner.

Shave obtained 32.8 per cent of the primary vote as opposed to 40.2 per cent achieved by the 'anti-Shave alliance'. Woollard won the seat on preferences from Brailey and the Greens candidate Liz Peake. Labor did not run a candidate so as to increase the independent vote with disaffected Liberal voters.

Avon

The non-metropolitan seat of Avon promised to deliver one of the shock decisions of the election after a pre-election poll run by local newspaper *The Avon Valley Advocate* showing support for the One Nation candidate, Ken Collins, running at 46 per cent. National Party incumbent, Max Trenorden, had held the seat since 1986. Trenorden faced a further challenge from independent, Peter Morton, who campaigned against a government decision to begin a Naltrexone heroin treatment clinic in Northam, one of the principal towns in the seat. Morton received 24 per cent support in *The Advocate's* poll.

Trenorden gained 24.9 per cent of the primary vote and defeated a strong Labor challenge from Phil Shearer who gained 23.9 per cent. Trenorden won by gaining the lion's share of Liberal distributed preferences and also received 42.2 per cent of the One Nation candidate's distributed preferences. Despite standing against an incumbent National, the primary target of One Nation's protest vote, Shearer only gained 53.3 per cent of their re-distributed preferences.

Ballajura

Liberal, Rhonda Parker, won the most marginal seat of the 1996 election by 44 votes (0.2 per cent) after preferences. Her outspokenness against One Nation guaranteed that the party directed preferences away from her. Labor's John D'Orazio, who was beaten by Parker in the 1996 campaign, gained 47.1 per cent of the primary vote and Parker 38.5 per cent. The seat was won convincingly by D'Orazio who received 53.3 per cent of the Greens' and 52.7 per cent of One Nation's later preferences. Parker received 27.9 per cent and 42.8 per cent of the respective preference re-distributions.

Bunbury

Despite the Liberal pledge of a \$100 million package allocated to develop infrastructure in Bunbury and the adjoining seat of Mitchell (compared with the Labor pledge of \$13 million), Bunbury continued its reputation as a litmus test for the election result. Since 1974 Bunbury has elected a member who belonged to the winning party. Labor candidate Tony Dean won the seat despite an expected backlash because of his party's policy to stop the logging of old growth forests. The loss of support caused by Labor's anti-logging old growth forests may have been balanced by the proximity of Bunbury to Perth. Voters from the non-metropolitan district could see very clearly the disparity between city and country petrol prices. The Liberal incumbent, Ian Osborne, actually gained a higher primary vote with 36.2 per cent as opposed to Dean's 34.7 per cent but lost the seat on One Nation and Green preferences.

Collie

The National Party's Hilda Turnbull had held Collie since 1989. In the 1996 election she gained 59.3 per cent of the primary vote in a two-party race. In the 2001 campaign Labor candidate Mick Murray won 34.7 per cent of the primary vote compared with Turnbull's 24.4 per cent. The Liberals also ran a candidate who polled 15.8 per cent of the primary vote. One Nation polled 15.1 per cent of the primary vote and their first and later preferences were almost equally distributed between Labor (48.9 per cent) and the Nationals (47.6 per cent). The Greens candidate who polled seven per cent of the primary vote distributed preferences with 51.5 per cent going to Labor and 28 per cent going to Coalition candidates. Labor eventually won the seat by 34 votes.

Darling Range

John Day, Minister for Health, narrowly avoided losing the seat he had won in 1996 with 54.9 per cent of the primary vote. Day's prospects were compromised by industrial action by the Nurses Federation to focus public attention on under-staffing of hospital wards. Late in the campaign Day distributed how-to-vote cards placing One Nation above Labor. Day explained the cards as an oversight at the proofreading stage. Day won 36.1 per cent of the

primary vote compared with Labor's 31.5 per cent and gained 22 per cent of One Nation distributed preferences compared with 16.7 per cent gained by Labor. Day retained the seat by a margin of fewer than 200 votes.

Dawesville

One Nation preferences may have helped incumbent Liberal, Arthur Marshall, retain the seat despite a strong challenge from the Labor candidate, John Hughes. Marshall's primary vote fell from 50 per cent in 1996 to 41.3 per cent in 2001 and Hughes increased his primary vote from 33.1 per cent to 36.3 per cent. One Nation gained 12.7 per cent of the primary vote and 54.8 per cent of these were distributed to Marshall.

Geraldton

Liberal incumbent Bob Bloffwitch was involved in a scandal when he was discovered to have failed to declare 84 000 shares worth about \$15 000 in Kingstream Steel, a corporation that had proposed a \$1.6 billion steel mill in his electorate.¹⁶ Bloffwitch secured 24.4 per cent of the primary vote but was closely pushed by Labor candidate, Shane Hill, with 26.8 per cent. One Nation won 21 per cent of the primary vote and 56.8 per cent of their preferences were distributed to Labor and 39.4 per cent to Liberal. Hill won the seat from Bloffwitch by a margin of 8.1 per cent.

Joondalup

Labor launched its campaign in this outer suburban seat. The Liberal candidate, Chris Baker, held the seat by a 5.5 per cent margin and made headlines by claiming that a future Labor government would liberalise anti-drug laws. Baker was also an outspoken critic of One Nation. The Labor candidate, Tony O'Gorman, won 37.6 per cent of the primary vote compared with Baker's 39.1 per cent. The re-distribution of 67 per cent of Green preferences to O'Gorman gave him victory compared with the 31.1 per cent to Baker.

Kalgoorlie

Kalgoorlie defied the swing against the Coalition being lost by incumbent Labor candidate Megan Anwyl. The Liberals won the seat for the first time in 2001. Furthermore, Kalgoorlie was the only seat to be lost by Labor in the 2001 election. Liberal candidate, Matt Birney, required a 4.4 per cent swing to win. He secured 38.83 per cent of the primary vote compared with Anwyl's 38.91 per cent. After the re-distribution of preferences Birney won the seat by 2.16 per cent.

Birney campaigned against Anwyl with the support of ex-federal Labor Member for Kalgoorlie Graeme Campbell. He highlighted her support for the Commonwealth Senate's

veto of Native Title agreements and Labor's one-vote one-value policy. These issues may have aided Birney's campaign and were responsible for him receiving One Nation support on its how-to-vote cards. On the distribution of One Nation preferences, Birney took 56.7 per cent compared to Anwyl's 40.6 per cent.

While issues such as Native Title and electoral distribution might be expected to play a part in campaigns for mining seats such as Kalgoorlie, it should be noted that Labor retained the seat of Eyre that surrounds Kalgoorlie. The Labor candidate for Eyre, John Bowler, won 42.4 per cent of the primary vote and the Liberal candidate, Laurie Ayers, won 25.9 per cent.

Kimberley

Ernie Bridge, the first Aboriginal member of the Western Australian Parliament, held the seat of Kimberley for twenty years before breaking from the Labor Party and becoming an independent in 2000. He announced that he would not stand for the seat that he held by a margin of 11.5 per cent at the 2001 election. Liberal candidate, Lyn Page, was given a possible chance of winning the seat because of the uncertain level of Bridge's personal following as distinct from the level of loyalty to the Labor Party in the electorate. A further factor was the entry of Derby-West Kimberley Mayor, Peter McCumstie, a popular local figure, who ran as the National's candidate. One Nation directed preferences to Page and she picked up 42.1 per cent compared with Labor's Carol Martin who gained 22.4 per cent. Martin gained 42.23 per cent of the primary vote compared with Page's 16.17 per cent and McCumstie's 15.98 per cent. Martin won the seat easily to become the first Aboriginal woman elected to the Western Australian Parliament.

Mitchell

In spite of the Labor victory in Bunbury the Liberal candidate for the adjoining seat of Mitchell, Daniel Barron-Sullivan, maintained his 48 per cent primary vote against the state-wide trend. Barron-Sullivan ran a strong campaign on regional issues and drew attention to the possibility of Mitchell's being broken up as a result of Labor's one-vote one-value policy. Geoff Gallop congratulated him on a strong campaign.

Nedlands

The seat of Nedlands had been held by a member of the Court family for the past 37 years. The main challenge to Court came from Liberals for Forests candidate, high profile fashion designer Liz Davenport, who directed her supporters to preference Labor. Court held the seat by a margin of 14.9 per cent, however, Davenport gained the support of the Labor and Greens candidates. Court attracted 49.2 per cent of the primary vote and held Nedlands easily by a margin of 9.6 per cent. Davenport may have gained greater success

had she directed preferences to Court thus opening the possibility of attracting any protest vote.

Ningaloo

Rod Sweetman, the incumbent Liberal candidate, only held Ningaloo by 119 votes or 0.7 per cent. Sweetman gained 38.2 per cent of the primary vote compared with Labor candidate, Samantha Ogden's 33.3 per cent. The One Nation candidate John Cope won 15.8 per cent of the primary vote and, between them, the Democrats, Greens and an independent candidate won 12.6 per cent. Despite One Nation directing preferences away from Sweetman, the Liberal gained 51 per cent of One Nation's re-distributed vote.

Sweetman was disadvantaged by the decision of the Nationals to run a candidate. In the 1996 election National preferences had helped Sweetman win the seat. Despite the Nationals decision and One Nation's hostility to the Liberal sitting member, like Kalgoorlie, Ningaloo defied the state-wide trend as Sweetman increased his margin to 4.5 per cent.

Pilbara

Larry Graham ran as an Independent after being disendorsed by the ALP following a factional dispute. The seat had been held by Labor for 18 years and represented by Graham for 12 of these. Graham made no preference deal with Labor deciding instead to split preferences on a double sided how to vote card. Labor ran a candidate against Graham but Graham polled a resounding 65.9 per cent of the primary vote and won with 67.6 per cent of the vote after distribution of preferences.

Yokine

Labor required a 3.3 per cent swing against the sitting Liberal member, Minister for Water Resources Kim Hames. High-profile candidate, Bob Kucera, a former Assistant Commissioner of Police stood for the seat. Kucera was touted as a future minister and even a future leader of the Labor Party. Hames focused on grassroots issues claiming that the high profile Kucera would have little time for his electorate. Kucera gained 36.2 per cent of the first preference vote compared with Hames' 38.2 per cent. Kucera consolidated his lead receiving 62 per cent of the Greens preferences on the final distribution and won the seat.

Legislative Council

The 34 seats on the Legislative Council are drawn from six regions by proportional representation. Collectively the three non-metropolitan and three metropolitan regions return

17 members each. Each region returns either five or seven members. The Western Australian Legislative Council is the only upper house in Australia to be elected in its entirety; there are no half-Council elections.

Table 7: Results by Party for Legislative Council in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Districts 1996–2001

Party	1996			2001		
	Non-Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Total	Non-Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Total
Liberal	7	7	14	5	7	12
National	3	0	3	1	0	1
Labor	4	6	10	5	8	13
Greens	1	2	3	3	2	5
Democrats	0	2	2	0	0	0
One Nation	0	0	0	3	0	3

Implications

Western Australia was the first poll in a busy electoral year with Queensland following a week later, and the governments of the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth and South Australia all required or likely to go to the polls within the year. It is commonly held that state elections are primarily concerned with state issues and the Western Australian election was in this respect unexceptional. The campaigns were fought over bread and butter issues like financial management and the provision of services such as health, education and law and order. The logging of old growth forests was also an important electoral issue that had an impact upon the direction of preferences from the Greens and the Liberal for Forests and ultimately contributed in a significant way to the demise of the Coalition Government. Furthermore, Court faced the commonly acknowledged difficulty of gaining a third term in office. However, there are a number of areas that contain Federal implications. The Western Australian election may also serve as an indication of more general electoral trends in Australia.

Minor Parties

One of the most significant features of the Western Australian election was the performance of minor parties and independents. The Greens were impressive in increasing the percentage of their vote from 5.5 per cent in 1996 to 7.3 per cent in 2001 and their representation in the upper house from three to five seats. The Democrats suffered the greatest losses of the minor parties losing two seats and seeing their vote drop from 6.6 per cent in 1996 to 2.6 per cent in 2001. The high levels of support for the minor parties and independents indicated an electorate that wished to express its displeasure with any parties seen as responsible for government. While there was a swing against the Liberals of 8.8 per cent, Labor only picked up 1.8 per cent of this vote. However, the reticence of

voters, particularly those who supported One Nation with their primary vote, to follow the recommended distribution of preferences made the election result far more uncertain than in previous years. The result in Western Australia has confirmed a broader trend in Australian politics, that is the reduction of the core vote to major parties.¹⁷ This trend can be tracked with reference to the decline in the primary vote gained by the two major parties.

Table 8: Decline in Major Party Support

Year	% of Primary Vote Gained by Major Parties
2001	68
1996	76
1993	81
1989	85
1986	94

Rural and Regional Backlash

Between them the Coalition parties lost five non-metropolitan seats to Labor and won the Mining and Pastoral region seat of Kalgoorlie from Labor. The feared rural and regional backlash against the Coalition parties was possibly ameliorated by Labor's policies of immediate cessation of logging in old growth forests and the introduction of one-vote one-value to cancel the weighting of non-metropolitan votes.

Gallop's pledge to re-introduce price capping of country petrol, diesel and LPG clearly appealed to country voters in a manner that Court's attempts to distance his administration from petrol prices, declaring it a federal matter, did not. Evidence drawn from the Western Australian election result suggests that electors required state government action on the issue of high petrol prices, regardless of whether or not they held this agency responsible or not.

A second event that may have contributed to the downfall of the Court Government was the unfortunate proximity of the election date to the return of the second Business Activity Statement. Once again, these matters did not fall within the parameters of state politics, however, voters may have used the election to send a message of their dissatisfaction to the federal government.

Conclusion

The Western Australian election of 2001 was notable in consolidating a trend in electoral support for minor parties and independents, and it set the scene for the entry of One Nation into Western Australian state politics. The election saw the routing of a Coalition Government seeking a third term in office. Labor won a record number of districts and five Liberal ministers lost their seats. The results have provoked much debate concerning

the impact of minor parties and independents upon the outcome. These once minor players are exhibiting a new level of willingness to use preferential voting arrangements to influence the policies of the major parties. The election showed that while One Nation was more successful in attracting primary votes than other minor parties, the party was unable to control the subsequent distributions of these preferences. The Greens emerged as a more vigorous force in state politics than they had been by radically influencing Labor's environmental policy. Minor parties also consolidated their hold on the balance of power in the upper house in which the Greens and One Nation were particularly successful.

While state issues figure as the primary concerns in state electoral campaigns, electors have shown that they are not averse to expressing their displeasure on issues for which state governments are not responsible. Furthermore, electors appear willing to express their dissatisfaction whether, as in the case of fuel prices, the state government is able to mitigate, or, in the case of the Business Activity Statement, where it is relatively powerless. While voters are prepared to use minor parties and independents to register their dissatisfaction, voters were not able to undermine completely the stability guaranteed by the major parties through the use of preferences.

Endnotes

1. David Black, 'Factionalism and Stability, 1911–1947', in D. Black, ed., *The House on the Hill: A History of the Parliament of Western Australia 1832–1990*, Parliament of Western Australia, Perth, 1991, p. 97.
2. Harry Phillips, 'The Modern Parliament 1965–1989', in *Ibid.*, pp. 190–1. Phillips observes that from the mid 1960s Labor Parliamentarians questioned which seats ought to be classified as metropolitan and which as non-metropolitan, but accepted electoral malapportionment in principle. For the increasing momentum behind Labor's critique of electoral malapportionment through the 1970s see *ibid.*, pp. 217–7.
3. *Australian*, 31 July 2000.
4. *Australian*, 27 December 2000.
5. *Australian*, 30 June 2000.
6. *The Australian Financial Review*, 5 June 2000 and *The West Australian*, 14 June 2000.
7. For instance, see Bruce Stone, 'Taking "WA Inc" Seriously: An Analysis of the Idea and its Application to West Australian Politics', *Australasian Journal of Public Administration*, 56 (1), March, 1997, pp. 71–81.
8. *The Australian Financial Review*, 5 June 2000.
9. *Australian*, 25 October 2000 and *The West Australian*, 20 January 2001.
10. See Scott Bennett and Gerard Newman, 'Victorian Election 1999', Department of the Parliamentary Library, *Research Paper no. 19*, 1999–2000, pp. 25–6 and their 'New South

- Wales Election 1999', Department of the Parliamentary Library, *Research Paper no. 22*, 1998–99, pp. 14–5.
11. *The West Australian*, 25 January 2001. The issue continued before the public with an editorial in *The West Australian* against weighting of rural and regional votes. Published 31 January 2001.
 12. *The West Australian*, 24 January 2001.
 13. *The West Australian*, 23 January 2001.
 14. Professor John Warhurst in *The Canberra Times*, 16 February 2001.
 15. 7.30 Report, 27 February 2001.
 16. Editorial in *The West Australian*, 6 February 2001.
 17. For more on this trend see Scott Bennett, 'The Decline in Support for the Major Parties and the Prospect of Minority Government', Department of the Parliamentary Library, *Research Paper no. 10* 1998–99.