



***AUSTRALASIAN STUDY OF
PARLIAMENT GROUP
(Queensland Chapter)***

**A BEHIND THE SCENES REVIEW OF THE
QUEENSLAND 2009 STATE ELECTION**

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 27 APRIL 2009

Brisbane

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Mr SPEAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, as patron of the organisation, it is my pleasure to welcome each and every one of you here tonight. It is particularly good to see former members, both federal and state, here. In particular, I want to acknowledge Bill Hewitt, who was here last week for the opening; also a good mate of mine, David Jull, is here; and also the state members who have come, most of whom are new and some who are more experienced and seasoned, and they are the members for Chatsworth, Indooroopilly—who else? Have I got them all?

An audience member: Maroochydore.

Mr SPEAKER: Congratulations to them. This is a great tradition—that is, to go back and analyse the state election. In fact, in America I know it is done in campaigns and elections where they get all of the political apparatchiks who actually get behind the scenes and tell the truth as it was rather than leave it to the media who always think they know. In preparation for tonight's introduction, I was reminded of a particularly scholarly piece that was done after the 1992 election by two renowned academics—one was Dr Neal Ryan and the other one was John Mickel. In a piece that I know you have all studied out of the legislative studies of that year, I went back and had a look at the topic. It was 'The Impact of Candidates on Election Outcomes: The Evidence in Queensland'. Surprisingly enough, I found that there was great evidence that candidates made a difference!

An audience member: That's before you were one of them!

Mr SPEAKER: And now I have been one of them, I think my theory has been debunked. However, if my theory is debunked then maybe what we have to ask the panel to do tonight is explain the result in Chatsworth where there was a zero swing and yet in the neighbouring seat of Bulimba the swing, according to Antony, is around about—and I know two-party preferred and optional preferential is a difficult thing—eight per cent. So there has to be a reason in Chatsworth, and perhaps our panel tonight can discuss it. But if that is not enough, the outstanding result of the election from our point of view was the one in Toowoomba South where, against all evidence, there was a swing to the government of over five per cent. So, in other words, that scholarly piece, Paul Reynolds, of 1995 is still true 14 years later.

During the election campaign I was invited to go along to a seminar conducted by a fellow by the name of Joe Trippi, who was a campaign director for Howard Dean in the presidential election, who wrote a book—and it is a good read, one I would recommend to you, those of you who are interested in those things—called *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. It is about all of the things that people like David and I would struggle with—the role of computers in modern campaigning—because what he put together is what the Obama campaign put together. Armed with that knowledge, I said to my electorate secretary, who is with me tonight, 'Listen, all we've got to do is we've got to get with this new technology. We're going to get the email addresses of everybody in the electorate.' She said, 'What are we going to do with that?' I said, 'We'll keep a big list and we'll save on our postage bill.' So we sent out a letter and asked everybody in the electorate to send us their email. And we waited. We are still waiting. We have not got one. So what I am anxious tonight to learn from the panel is how in heaven's name do you get any, let alone one. So with that short introduction, ladies and gentlemen, let us hear it from the professor, our emeritus professor, Michael Lavarch.

Prof. LAVARCH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is sort of hard for me to quite get used to that particular expression. Colleagues, it is a pleasure to be here tonight. I will be acting as the moderator for this particular discussion. We will run it essentially in two halves naturally enough. In a moment I will be inviting each of our panellists to give an overview from their particular perspective. Following that part, we will move into a moderated question and answer session. As the Speaker intimated, it is not too long after an election that the mythology of a particular result—why something came about, how successful or unsuccessful particular campaigns and strategies were—often becomes set in concrete. It is a truism of course that victors get to write history, and I suppose that is somewhat the case also with elections. The election of Anna Bligh as Australia's first female Premier to be elected in her own right has been portrayed in the days and weeks since 21 March as a personal triumph for the Premier, a victory sealed in the last few days of frantic campaigning as the Premier criss-crossed the state and finally convinced electors to get in behind her and the Labor Party to get another victory.

The Labor campaign, which during the campaign was criticised by many in both the mainstream media and in the blogosphere as somewhat lacklustre, if not bordering on dysfunctional, immediately after the election was described by the ALP as a deliberate rope-a-dope strategy. This was apparently designed to lure the LNP into making itself the issue and to bring forward the need to spell out the inevitable question of where the money was coming from for a three per cent efficiency dividend which then turned a great focus on the wisdom of its policy which was reputed, if you believe the Labor Party side of the case, to lead to the loss of 12,000 jobs in a time of impending huge increases in unemployment. On the other side of the coin, the LNP in terms of its immediate response after the election sort of self-described both the campaign

and the result as valiant, a strong campaign but which ultimately floundered against insurmountable odds, the swing simply was too large, the number of seats to be gained too many. Even though the result was more than creditable and placed the party within very strong striking distance of 2009, it was at the end of the day really a bridge too far.

Tonight we will have the opportunity to go behind both those portrayals and test whether either is completely accurate or what level of grain of truth there is in both of those depictions. We are very fortunate in having with us three contributors who I think will be able to very much guide our discussion of the 2009 Queensland state election. Firstly, we will hear from Antony Green. Antony probably needs very little introduction to an audience of political aficionados. I think since the 1989 Queensland election, Antony has been working for the A—ABC!

(Laughter)

Prof. LAVARCH: That could be Freudian depending on your world view, but I think everyone would concede that in the case of Antony there is always a strict bipartisanship in terms of professionalism and in terms of his approach. But since 1989 Antony has been working for the ABC and certainly has become an incredibly familiar face to all Australians, particularly those who watch election night coverage. I noticed even seeing a replay of *Keating! The Musical* last night on ABC1 that, Antony, your role has been immortalised in popular culture to that extent, and those who have either seen the musical or the TV show will know what I am talking about.

After Antony addresses us, we will hear—after an appropriate flip of the coin between our two party representatives as to the order of speaking—from Paul Turner representing the LNP. Paul has been much involved with the LNP, particularly in the office of Lawrence Springborg as a former Chief of Staff to the Leader of the Opposition during those periods. Finally, we will hear from Anthony Chisholm who is the State Secretary of the Labor Party. So I will ask each to come up in turn rather than me coming back and forth like a jack-in-the-box on to the stage, but after each of our speakers have given their presentation we will move into a question and answer time, so hold your questions until all three have spoken. So I now invite Antony Green to address us.

Mr GREEN: Kerry O'Brien is still living down on election night saying that the seat of Bennelong is going to swing to the ABC. It is a peculiarity at the ABC that after every federal election you usually get at least one person writing to say, 'I heard Kerry O'Brien or I heard Andrew Ollie say "we're back" about the Labor Party.' Actually, it did happen once. It was way back in 1974 and the ABC had a broken election coverage and it crossed back to the tally room and Ken Begg was standing there looking down the barrel of a camera and the light came on to tell him he was on air and he went, 'We're back. Here at the tally room the Labor Party ...' He only said 'we're back' because the camera came on. He spent an hour in the office with Talbot Duckmanton explaining what he meant. Actually, there is an old joke about that about the Lone Ranger and Tonto on a hill surrounded by raging Apaches. The Lone Ranger turns to Tonto and says, 'It looks like we're in trouble,' and Tonto says, 'What do you mean "we", White Face?'

Anyway, a couple of weeks ago I got a phone call from a journalist after the election writing for a colour magazine down south who said, 'Isn't it radical that Queensland is the first state to elect a woman as leader?', and I disagreed. I said that I did not think it was. I said, 'Anna Bligh was born up here and Peter Beattie wasn't.' He said, 'Oh, wasn't Peter Beattie born in Queensland?' I said, 'No. He was born in Sydney and raised in the Atherton Tablelands. He was from down south.' The journalist asked if it was somewhat radical that a woman had been elected. I said, 'I'm not sure about that.' I said, 'But Queensland's a different place than it used to be. It's maybe still different from the rest of Australia, but'—my summary was—'it's not as different as it used to be.' To a large extent, I think that is true. It is still different, but not as different as it used to be. It is much more urban, particularly the south-east, than it used to be and the state is now more dominated by the south-east corner.

I remember many years ago buying the second volume of Ross Fitzgerald's *A History of Queensland*. I have not bought the new version yet. I bought the version which I think came out in the late eighties. The thesis of the second volume was that there may have been Labor governments and coalition governments since 1915, but they actually were all conservative. They all used to bash up unionists and trample on civil liberties and they were basically all conservative. That is a gross oversummary, I think, in a sense. I have not bought the new volume, but I presume that in the last 20 years the view would be that the government up here is not quite as authoritarian as it used to be and that it is a much more urbane place than it was once upon a time. I would argue that there is probably a valid point in that.

The other thing I was just thinking, in listening to that summary, was that I rather enjoyed the 'rope-a-dope' article as well. I just thought, 'God, someone is paying back for giving the Labor Party a rough time. So they are writing up what brilliant campaigners they are.' Having spent the entire campaign saying that the Labor Party campaign was in terrible trouble—'Look at what our opinion polls are saying'—they turn around afterwards and say, 'Well, really, it was a brilliant campaign and it was "the late swing"'. I love late swings. They are always impossible to prove.

I think there are several things to say about the way the campaign worked this year. I think one of them is simply the way that the media covers an election is changing dramatically as the media has to change dramatically. If you go back and look at 19th century newspapers—and I spend a long time doing projects for state parliament and I have been ploughing through the *Sydney Morning Herald* coverages of Brisbane

election campaigns—you would have the days when they used to stand on the platform in the 1860s and 1870s and do their speeches. In the *Sydney Morning Herald*—that giant sized page—you would have a double-page coverage of a verbatim speech in six-point type of a public meeting that might have gone for three to four hours outlining their views on everything. The frustrating thing about reading those is no-one would ever actually say who they were. It is not something they automatically did, because everyone knew who these people were who were standing for election because it was a much smaller society.

Nowadays, you read an MP's website and it will tell you wondrous things about who their children are, their ages and where they go to school. There is an amazing amount of detail about who the person is now, which the candidates talk about, and you find far less of the candidate actually saying what they think and stand for. So there has actually been a huge change in the way that sort of stuff goes. But also in terms of reportage, there was a vast amount of verbatim detail. It was journal record. Newspapers have not done that since the early parts of the 20th century, and they do it less and less now, because they are competing with television and radio and the internet.

The biggest feature I thought of this election campaign was the opinion poll coverage. Nowadays, the *Courier-Mail* was leading at five o'clock the afternoon before with their opinion poll to make all the evening news bulletins to try to sell newspapers or sell something the next day—I am not quite sure what they were trying to sell. So the coverage was no longer what is in the paper the next day; it was what the polls were reporting the night before leading into what was in the detail the next day. Suddenly, the election campaign would be rewritten on the basis of the Labor Party, or the LNP, reacting to what the newspaper was reporting as their opinion poll. The newspapers were reporting news as a response to their opinion polls. It was quite strange. I cannot think of the exact wording, but I found it quite remarkable that the week of campaigning was driven by these opinion polls.

So to an extent the newspapers do not report day-to-day coverage anymore, because it is reported everywhere else. There was a time, even 15 years ago, when the leader of the party would do a full-page interview in the broadsheet *Courier-Mail* of those days, or the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The newspapers are not interested in even doing that anymore. Anything involving 500 or 600 words is unusual in a newspaper these days. So there is a huge immediacy issue which goes on with opinion polls.

I tended to look at this election campaign from a sense of history. It may sound rather strange to say this, but I do not think campaigns matter that much. Most of the time how the electorate thinks at the start of the campaign is how they will think at the end of the campaign. There are not many election campaigns that I have done—and I have covered 40-odd elections over the last 20 years—and the three elections which I can say were truly surprises were 1995 up here in Queensland, the 1991 New South Wales election where Greiner lost his majority and the 1999 election in Victoria, where Jeff Kennett lost his majority, or lost government.

All three of those were essentially because the position at the start of the campaign did change. Greiner did not manage to build the expectation that he would lose government. He went through with a presidential campaign saying, 'We are going to get back.' Kennett went through the entire election campaign abusing anybody—not allowing any of his ministers to speak to anybody in the media, not allowing his ministers to debate shadow ministers—an extraordinary campaign. It was a classic case of trying to get everyone to join the bandwagon rather than running an underdog campaign, and ever since 1999 nobody has ever painted themselves as anything other than the underdog in an election campaign. And up here in Queensland in that election everyone expected Goss to get back and it just fell down in the campaign. Things blew up.

Usually, when I do my election website I do the election summary. It is put up when the campaign starts. I rarely change it. I do not think there is much point in doing endless weekly commentary over what has happened. Most of the time there is not a lot that happens in an election campaign that really changes things. That is my view.

I thought that the result of this election was probably inevitable because of the result of the 2006 election. In 2006 the Labor Party should have lost seats. I went through my notes of the 2006 election before I came up here to give this speech. I just went through what went wrong in that term of government for Labor. There were two scandals concerning Liddy Clark while she was a minister, the second one eventually causing her to be dumped from the ministry. There were serious problems with the power supply in Brisbane during 2005 to do with arguments over whether there was enough maintenance on the power grid—cutting back trees—and as the government tried to shift the blame from that onto Energex management, we had the head of Energex commit suicide in unfortunate circumstances. Then promptly after this his successor had to resign for other criminal matters which had come up in the meantime.

So there was this huge running sore of Energex which occurred at that time. They had to recreate an Energy portfolio separate from Stephen Robertson. I do not know what his other portfolio was at that time, but they had to separate it out to try to solve a political problem. They had the Bundaberg Hospital blow-up. You had Gordon Nuttall as the health minister at the time having problems with having lied to a committee and they had to pass legislation to protect him and then his other subsequent problems. They had the resignation of Terry Mackenroth and the three by-election losses around that time—Robert Poole, his resignation, and the resignation of the Speaker, Ray Hollis. All of those problems occurred between 2004 and 2006 and yet Peter Beattie was re-elected with the same majority, won back three seats they had lost at by-elections, and the only seats they lost were a couple that were associated with the Traveston Dam. That was remarkable.

What had occurred in that time was the coalition had attempted to merge and that fell in a screaming heap when Canberra said no. Then with the campaign approaching the Liberals changed their leader suddenly at the last minute without the Nationals knowing it was going to happen and the new leader made a complete mess of the campaign. So 2006 was a massive lost opportunity for the Liberals and the Nationals for the fact that they failed to merge the year before and then during the election campaign they ran a dreadful campaign, which made the electorate consider that they were not worth electing. So somehow the Labor Party got back in 2006 with the same majority.

The problem that came from that was that Labor went into this election with that same majority and the new LNP, which ran a brilliant campaign compared to 2006—I mean, you cannot compare the two; nobody can say anything other than they ran a better campaign, but then one could say you could not run a worse campaign than 2006—so there is that. That is one thing. I think if you are looking at where the election was decided, you really have to go back and look at 2006. If you want to explain how the government got back in 2009, you have got to look at the failure of 2006. Labor won in a landslide in 2001 for obvious reasons. It won in 2004 again and then it was able to do so in 2006. It should have gone backwards and it should have gone backwards substantially in 2006. In 2009 the opposition had to come from a lot further back.

The other thing that is often overlooked is the importance of incumbency in elections and I think it is an important factor in Queensland. If you go back to the great 1974 landslide, the Labor Party lost seats and some of those seats it did not win again until 1989. Once those Liberals got elected in 1974, some of them were defeated in 1983 through preferences and the collapse of the Coalition, but by 1989 some of those Liberals finally lost their seats. It took Labor 15 years to come back from the landslide. Some of it was probably self-deserved as well as the Labor Party in the late 1970s was not a particularly lively or interesting party, but in the 1980s it started to reform itself. So in 1989 we finally saw them sweep away some of those seats from 1974 and win them back, and the reform process within the Labor Party which started in 1980 finally came to fruition at the end of the decade—of course, helped by the factor that the government of the day fell apart from that period.

You could look at that again since. Some of those members elected in 1989 have only now just finally retired. The Labor Party hung on to seats through a very long period, especially in Brisbane. There are seats held by the Labor Party in Brisbane which are now held by the Liberals at the local council level. So the Labor Party has hung on to all of those seats. You can look at 2001 as well. Labor got its members into some of those Gold Coast seats. Burleigh and Southport were always two seats which, when you look back to the early 1990s, you would say Labor could win those seats. But Labor holding Broadwater—you would never have picked that in the early 1990s, and it is still a credit to the sitting member that she has managed to hold on to that seat. They are the two things: one is the sitting member factor and the second is the failure in 2006.

The test now for the new Liberal National Party is can they go forward in the future. If Labor is going to lose the next election, then Labor has to start losing seats in Brisbane to the Liberal National Party. The swing was about four to 4½ per cent, depending on how you measure it, and of all the seats under that margin they did not pick up Chatsworth. To answer John's question, my view is that the LNP got the swing—the big swing—the last time for the reason they had a sitting member. I always had Chatsworth marked down as a seat to watch. If there is going to be a swing, if it falls to the LNP, it is only going to just fall. You are not going to see another six or seven per cent in that seat that got a huge swing of about 10 per cent the last time. So there are specific circumstances and I cannot really comment on the specifics of that seat because it was a bit of surprise it did not swing, but it also was not a surprise.

The other one was Whitsunday, which was always down for me as to whether she would do better in those areas of Mackay which were transferred under Mirani, and that was always a possibility. Then of the seats beyond that which the LNP did win, one was Redlands. Clearly, Labor had lost that seat in past elections. It was always a seat which was on the edge of Brisbane—a tough one for Labor to hold. The other was Coomera, which did not have a sitting member and had a vast majority, which I always thought was rather doubtful as well. So the pendulum worked: two seats the LNP missed and two they gained. They got a swing.

The question is: will they be able to improve in the future? To do that, the question is: now they have got a leader from the south-east, can they improve their performance in the south-east, and particularly Brisbane? The Liberals have shown they can win the Brisbane City Council. The question is: can they now transfer that? They have shown that they can win seats in Brisbane at the federal level. The question is: can they do it at the state level? That will determine how the future goes.

But at this election, as I said, we can dissect things. I think the key features to me are that the media coverage was another revolution, and will be wherever the media is going. In 10 years time, I cannot believe that the newspapers will be leading stories the way they do now. At this stage, the radio stations in the morning still look at the morning newspaper to decide their agenda for the day. I cannot believe in 10 years time that that is still going to be the case. So it will be interesting to see where the media coverage goes in the future. But I have never seen so many opinion polls done in a state election campaign. I understand the *Australian* as the national newspaper paid for part of those polls, but there were still quite a remarkable number of polls in the election campaign.

Of course, the only thing that I did think that affected the election was at the start of the campaign there were a lot of people who thought Labor was going to win, or presumed Labor was going to win. By the end of the campaign, that number had fallen. The only change in the opinion polls through the entire campaign was that the number of people who thought Labor was going to win had fallen substantially, and I am sure the Labor Party loved that response from the opinion polls because that is what Wayne Goss ran into a problem of—trying to convince the electorate he could lose.

The other thing is this sense of history that it is difficult to defeat sitting members. The LNP has formed as a new joint party. We will see whether it has a future or not. I think its first outing was creditable. It was certainly a darn sight better than the previous campaign. But as I always like to say, the National Party has struggled since 1989 because of its success in the 1980s. It made Queensland more urban by encouraging people to move up from down south and it undermined the justification for having a rural party govern the state, but also its success in completely demolishing the Liberal Party in the 1980s is what made the Liberal Party weak. If the Liberal Party became a small, faction-ridden clique, it was because of what the National Party did to it and it is now rather peculiar. The cycle turns and the National Party has now got to try to actually improve the standing of the old Liberal Party part of the party. It had to merge, take over, or rebuild to try to actually breathe life back into a party that 20 years ago it systematically tried to destroy. So they are some of the funny turning circles.

In 2009 let us not think about where we will be in 2012. I am sure the world may yet be a very different place in 2012, given people have been asking me, 'How is the next federal election going to go?' I tell them, 'You tell me how the economy is going to go.' So 2012 may be a different matter again—or 2013, as there are rumours of a four-year term that I talked about. I think it will be interesting to see where the LNP goes, how it functions as a new joint party. It is now out of the election environment but, really, I think this election campaign was predetermined by 2006. It just left too big a hurdle for the LNP to get over. I think it performed creditably. They performed better than 2006, but the hurdle was still too big. Thank you.

Mr TURNER: I think Professor Lavarch and Antony Green have done my speech. Just a disclaimer up-front. I worked for Lawrence for 14 months as Chief of Staff leading into the election. I no longer work for the opposition. So Fiona and Scott, let me put it up-front now: anything I say does not represent any policy existing in the opposition or that of the new leader. Let me talk about the election.

As far as the LNP is concerned, there were some key challenges that have been outlined. I think the No. 1 challenge was not just the number of seats, which was 21, that we needed to win but the margins in those seats. I think where 2006 particularly hurt us was that those margins had not come back. The last time I worked in politics was back in 1992 to 1998. I could not tell a journalist after the 1992 state election that that was actually a really good election for the coalition at the time, even though we did not win a single seat, because in 1992 we managed to halve or significantly reduce a hell of a lot of the margins that the Labor Party held those seats by. That was what allowed us then to run a protest campaign in 1995 and win a lot of those seats. This time around we did not have that luxury. We were 21 seats down and we needed an 8.3 per cent swing. I have distinct memories of Antony depressing me three days out from the election. I was fairly anxious at the time anyway. I listened to him on the radio saying that he had only ever covered one election where there had been more than an eight per cent swing before. I thought, 'Thanks, mate!' So we had a lot of work to do.

However, the principal thing really was that we almost ran two campaigns in the last 12 months. The first one was to merge the parties. For anyone who has ever been involved in M&As in the corporate world, it will be said by some, 'Hang on, the Liberal Party and National Party have been in coalition; how hard can it be to bring those two organisations together?' Let me tell you—and there are a couple in this room who know—it was extraordinarily difficult. It was a really big job. It almost fell over half a dozen times and it felt like an election. It went for months. Fiona, in particular, was one of those who was actively involved in making sure it got through. It was a really hard job. Bringing those two organisations together eight months out, as it turned out—we thought at the time it might be about three months out—from an election was extraordinarily difficult. That was our first challenge.

We had to get these two parties together, merge them and get the organisations right. That led to some issues in regard to preselections, for example. We made a point, and I think it was the right one, to let preselections flow, for example, so that the organisation was not to be involved in preselections in any way—I am seeing smiles from Scotty—and to let the new merged local branches sort it out for themselves. That was largely so that we did not get the blow-ups of National Party run organisations stepping in and picking their favourite Liberal Party candidate, or whatever, in seats. There were a lot of reasons why we had to do that. That is an example of how deep the merger went. When it came down to the very basic decisions of actually running the preselections for candidates, every one of them had to be stepped out and done in the most transparent way possible so that no-one could perceive that there had been any attempted takeover of that process. Those are the sorts of things that we went through.

In the context of that, we believed that we were a competitive force. I think it is fair to say now, after the election, that at no time in my involvement, at any time internally or externally, did I ever see a poll saying that the LNP would win the election—not one. Even with the 51-49 per cent polls, the published ones, we were not going to win on 51-49. The expectation issue that I was a beneficiary of in 1995 was not so good for us this time. I think a few of us believed that it did not hurt for us to have—I am going to use that terrible *West Wing* word; every time you say it, you regret it—momentum going into an election. We

needed to have some momentum going into that election because we were a new party. If we were seen as complete duds going in, we had a problem. Being ahead in the polls was not a bad thing; not moving from that moment on in the published polls was a bad thing. We did not move from that 49-51 and, as Antony has said, the media fixated on it. I had journalists four days out from the election saying, 'You guys are over the line', and there was nothing I could do to convince them otherwise. So these guys did a good job of making sure that they were still the underdogs.

An audience member: Rope-a-dope.

Mr TURNER: Rope-a-dope. I will not go there yet.

An audience member: I'll either say it before the (inaudible) or afterwards.

Mr TURNER: Rope-a-dope is rubbish; we all know that. We went into the campaign needing eight and a half per cent, needing 21 seats. One of the issues that has not been spoken about much, but which the Labor Party played on very well during the campaign—and I mean that as a compliment—is the recession. The recession definitely damaged the chances of the LNP. That sounds bizarre, I know, but it did. Firstly, it cut our spending opportunities. As an opposition, as we have just seen, the government can virtually go 26 or 27 days without making a promise. But as an opposition you really have to stand up and say something every day, otherwise you face serious issues. So we had to come up with the spending issue, hence rope-a-dope.

Secondly, the recession I think anchored a lot of the voters who had voted for Campbell Newman or John Howard but had voted Labor on a state basis. It brought them back, if they had ever left, and solidified that vote. I think that was a challenge for us going forward. Despite what Antony says, I think that was a challenge that Labor countered and built on well during the campaign through the jobs attack. I think that was something that we did not counter well enough during the campaign.

They were the challenges going in: big swing, needed lots of seats. We consequently had to run a marginal seat campaign that had 25 seats in it, which is just nuts. Let me tell you, it is very hard to do. We needed to win 21 of them, and there are always a couple of outsiders who get up and a couple of the ones that you think you are going to win you do not. So it was a lot of seats to try to run marginal seat campaigns in.

During the campaign the other issue we had was a branding issue. Because we were new and because we had been so appalling in 2006 and beaten fairly handily in the previous two elections—and others in the party organisation, again I put out the disclaimer, may disagree with this comment—we had to probably be more positive in our television advertising than I would have liked. We had to brand the party. We had to brand Lawrence. We had to say that we stood for something. We had to say that we had policies. Labor did not have to do any of that. They did not have to waste money on that. They did do a couple so that they could tell the media they had positive ads, but largely they left them alone. They used negative advertising very effectively and a hell of a lot of TARPs, especially in the last week leading to the blackout, whereas we mainly were 60-40 for the two weeks positive to negative, and then that switched around in the last couple of weeks leading into the blackout. For an opposition, that is a pretty high ratio of positive ads. I think it hurt us, not because we did not have to do it—we did have to do some branding—but at the end of the day, and others may argue, negative advertising works in politics and anyone who says differently has not been paying attention.

During the campaign they played the Hawker Britton 101 Labor campaign, play the man not the ball, which worked for almost everywhere else except for the Northern Territory and Western Australia recently. So we were aware that that was going to happen. They went against Lawrence very, very hard. For the first three weeks it did not really hurt him or us, but there was an accumulative effect and then I think there was a very damaging ad run in the last couple of nights leading in, which I think just secured it. I say 'secured it' from the fact that at no time had we won in the polls.

However, I do disagree with Antony—and I am going to play to the other Anthony here because of the late swing and the rope-a-dope and everything—but I do believe that there was a movement in the last four days. I think it was only a couple of per cent, but I think it was possibly the difference between minority government and what they have ended up with. I think that happened in the last few days. We felt it and we could not counter it. Whether it is the 30 seats in three days or the very effective advertising in the two days leading into the blackout, or the almost unprecedented non-traditional advertising methods like walking up to people in shopping centres and saying, 'Do you have a kid in school? Lawrence Springborg is going to sack your teacher', which happened right across Brisbane. Those sorts of campaign techniques worked very well. So that is something for the LNP to at look at going forward. In three years' time they are going to have to counter those sorts of tactics.

The end result, I am going to say, is not a bad one for the LNP. Like Antony said after the 2006 election, we are really now positioned the way we were after the 1992 state election where we are 11 seats from winning government, Labor needs to lose seven seats to lose majority and most of the Independents are conservative, although that does not guarantee anything; I have been done down that road before. But there is a general belief that the LNP is in a hell of a lot better position than it has been for 14 years. The margins are the key. There are now 18 marginal Labor seats.

Interestingly, there is always the post-election wrap up: 'Lawrence Springborg, ex-Nat, couldn't win in South-East Queensland, that's why they lost.' Bullshit. We lost in North Queensland. We did not get Barron River, we did not get Mulgrave, we did not get get Townsville, we did not get Whitsunday and that was because of the jobs campaign—the jobs campaign, the advertising of jobs, hitting those areas because they were losing their jobs. It did not hit South-East Queensland because people were not losing their jobs down here yet, but it hit up there. They are the seats that we lost. With the exception of Chatsworth we won virtually every seat we expected to win in South-East Queensland. We hoped to win a few more, but we won every one that we expected to win or we would expect to win except for the local candidate who polled extraordinarily well and did a very good job.

That is where the LNP suffered. It did not win the seats that it expected. The job ads bit in the north more than our polling was telling us and we did not win the seats that we should have won up there. The seats that would have either put Labor into a minority situation or put us a lot closer were the seats I just mentioned: Mulgrave, Barron River, Townsville was in play at one stage, Whitsunday, and I am forgetting one—

An audience member: You should have won Mirani and those sorts of seats more comfortably.

Mr TURNER: Yes, that is right. The key for me was that it was a good result for the LNP. As a debut party eight months from being formed, it was an incredible result when you consider where they started and how much work had to be done even to be prepared for an election. The fact that it was an 88-seat campaign by the party, which neither of the parties had run before, I think was something that should be lauded. It was a big step forward for conservative politics in Queensland.

Therefore, overall the result was great. There was a couple of per cent lost that probably the LNP should have got, but we needed everything to go right to win government. We needed everything to go right. Lots of things did, some did not. Particularly in North and Central Queensland, we did not get enough of a swing or win seats that we were expected to win. Overall I think for the party organisation, the expectations were very high, definitely too high, and therefore there was a great degree of disappointment on the night amongst our side. But I think in retrospect the LNP is extremely well positioned. There are some lessons to be learned, particularly in regard to advertising. One would hope that in three years' time no-one is even talking about what the LNP's antecedents are. It will be set in stone and they will not have to spend money on branding a new party. They will be able to spend that attacking the disastrous record of the last three years of the Labor Party in 2012. Thanks very much.

Mr CHISHOLM: Thanks, Paul. One thing Antony neglected to mention when talking about electricity is the fantastic job our minister did at the time. He also happens to be the Speaker. I have to let him know that having completed year 12 in 1995, I cannot recall that book featuring highly on our curriculum. I got a late call up for tonight. I replaced Andrew Fraser who is preparing the state budget so I thought, given that is his priority, it must be a tough crowd here tonight.

I have done a bit of an overview of our preparations and how we got to where we did before the start of the campaign. Then I have actually broken it down and will talk through how I saw things looking back and rewriting history—like Paul said we were doing; he is not doing a bad job himself. I will talk through how I saw each week of the campaign and the advertising we ran at that time. I certainly disagree with Antony in terms of the impact of the campaign and how that does change votes. I will give a specific example of that at the end.

Winning a fifth term: setting the scene. Antony glossed over the fact of a female Premier trying to win an election being a significant challenge. He did touch on the fact that Labor premiers in Queensland basically since day one have always been conservative males. I think that does apply to Peter Beattie and Wayne Goss. That was a significant challenge in terms of the election campaign.

One of the key decisions we took when Anna first became Premier was that she would spend a day each week outside of Brisbane. When we talk about the result in regional Queensland, sure the jobs message was important but those sorts of things do not just happen in 27 days. There has been a concerted effort for 18 months to spend a lot of time in regional Queensland. That has a real impact.

If we look at the press clippings, when the Premier goes to somewhere like Rockhampton she should be front page the day she gets there. You would phone ahead and say, 'The Premier is on her way; isn't that great?' After she leaves she will get another two or three days in the local press talking about what she has done. When you think about the impact that had in regional Queensland, added to the community cabinet process, what I found from our research was that the Premier was actually more popular in Central and Northern Queensland than she was in the south-east corner. That certainly was significant in terms of the election result.

Obviously the time factor was a challenge—that is, aiming for our fifth term, being in power for 11 consecutive years and 18 of the last 20 years. Every punter out there could find a gripe against the government given how long we have been in government.

In terms of calling an early election, the political wisdom out of Western Australia was that you would be mad to call an early election. I have spent a fair bit of time studying the Western Australian election. I think that there was a lot more to it than that. It certainly was a factor in terms of our campaign. We thought the media would focus on that early in the election and it could become a bit of a metaphor. I think we did well in terms of how we handled that. I think it would be against political wisdom to call an election three days after your credit rating has been downgraded but that was what we did.

A couple of other decisions which I took were that we went with a new advertising team this campaign. From my point of view, I think that in senior campaign roles you have a certain amount of shelf life. Our previous advertisers had been with us since 1998 so I decided to go in a new direction and use the team that worked on the Kevin O'Connell federal campaign which I think was successful. For the first time in modern Queensland Labor politics our campaign budget was significantly less than it was for previous campaigns. That presented a substantial challenge for us.

Week 1 of the campaign: one of the consequences of calling an early election is the fact that the focus immediately goes on the government. You call an early election so the commentators are out there saying, 'They have gone early; this is risky.' It meant the focus went on the government. That was the challenge we faced in the first week of the campaign. It was really important that we did a lot of research work in the lead-up to the election to ensure that we got our strategy and message right. We knew that once we called the election the focus would go on us and we would have to work really hard to implement our positive message on each day of the campaign.

There was also in week 1 what we thought was—and it turned out to be true—a ticking time bomb. That involved the costings and funding of the LNP. By the end of the first week that had become an issue. Lawrence Springborg had promised about \$2 billion in the first week of the campaign. He was very scant on the detail as to where that money was coming from. Through the media we put substantial pressure on the LNP to explain from where they would fund that money. They folded and said that by Thursday of the second week they would announce where that money was coming from.

Week 2 of the campaign: we were growing really confident that our jobs positive message was a real positive for us. The problem we found was that it was tough to replicate that each day of the campaign in terms of what the Premier does. Obviously she has to be out there still talking about health, still talking about education and still talking about the other challenges, so it was really tough to prosecute that positive jobs message.

In terms of our TV advertising, whilst we did have a fairly low TARP-age level in terms of weight that week, we did manage to have our positive jobs ad on as well. That really backed up Anna's ability to get out there and talk about the other key issues in the election but still run our positive jobs message at the same time.

What we saw towards the end of week 2 was Lawrence Springborg's announcement of \$1 billion in cuts from the Public Service. What we had been talking about for months up until that time was that punching the LNP was like punching jelly because they did not really have any policies or outline what they stood for. It was really hard to actually say what the consequences would be of electing the LNP and electing Lawrence Springborg. That \$1 billion in cuts and subsequent job losses really provided us with the consequence. We were able to hammer that. We knew that when people walked into the polling booth they actually knew there was a consequence of electing Lawrence Springborg. He was trying to skate through without actually having much policy on the bone and without people actually having anything to be antsy about. So that \$1 billion and the job losses was fundamental to our strategy; there is no doubt about that.

Week 3 of the campaign: we saw that our jobs positive message was really starting to resonate and this was being reflected in our research. We were really happy with this. The other thing we saw through week 3, which was quite unusual, was that Anna's ratings as preferred Premier but also her leadership ratings were actually on a steady climb through the first 15 days of the campaign. That again was encouraging for us.

What we did not bank on was the *MV Pacific Adventurer* hitting our shores and spilling oil. This basically put us back to day one of the campaign where the focus was immediately back on the government's record. This was a significant challenge again. It just made us more determined to stick to our message. One of the key ingredients in terms of our advertising was the Obama world leaders ad. That was not just a vain thing from me to say that I authorised an ad by Barack Obama. It really went to the doubts about electing Lawrence Springborg. The other thing it did in terms of that week of the campaign is that it actually became a bit of a water cooler or talking point from what I picked up anecdotally from people. They were saying, 'Have you seen that ad? Can you believe he is so counter to what the rest of the world is doing?' I am really confident that that ad laid the seed work for these doubts about electing Lawrence Springborg as leader.

We built on that with the 'whingeing Wendy' ads, the lady in the kitchen, and also the 'whingeing Steve' ads, the construction worker. This really related back to the hip pocket and people out there in the community. What we picked up through our research is that people really prick up their ears when you talk about construction jobs. People know the flow-on effect that has in the community.

We also saw during week 3 that there were doubts as people started to size up the LNP as an alternative government. Doubts were really starting to emerge about the team as well. This ran a real counter for us. The great thing for us was the performance of Paul Lucas and Andrew Fraser during the campaign. They went from strength to strength. They were pretty faultless in terms of their performance. This became a really good counter for us in terms of the performance of those two compared to the senior members of the LNP.

Week 4 of the campaign: the oil slick was really starting to not only wash through Moreton Bay but also wash through the minds of voters. The McArdle ad assisted with this in terms of providing a circuit-breaker. It really shook things up again for a night. The focus really moved off the oil slick and went on to that issue for a while. It then enabled us to get back on to our jobs message.

Anna continued to strengthen again through the last week of the campaign. The damage that the Obama ad did in terms of Lawrence's rating continued as we went through the blizzard of beep that we have called the last four days in terms of TV advertising. We had decided that we would do 30 seats in three days, which is what Anna did for the last three days of the campaign. I think what voters saw out of this was her determination and hunger to be Premier for another three years. Whilst there is a bit of cynicism out there about the impact that that had, I think it was perfect for the times. People were having doubts about Lawrence Springborg but saw her hunger and determination to get out there and blitz the state of Queensland over the last three days. That was another significant thing.

There were a couple of other things that I think worked really well. In the blackout period from Wednesday night we had a really heavy online buy in terms of our internet advertising. This is something that I did during the 2007 federal campaign. I have a fair knowledge of its potential. I think what we did with our online advertising was significant. It was a specific campaign; it had a really targeted message that was separate to what was running on TV and it was aimed at appealing to the undecided voters over the last two days.

In the last 24 hours we did robo calls—that is, automated calls to people. I had a fair bit of experience with these. I really changed the way we did it. Previously it had been messages from politicians which we had a bit of a negative response to. I tried some different people this time. One was a message from Dr David Wood, a well-known paediatrician, about the northside children's hospital, which I think worked significantly well for us. We also had 30 to 50 women. We had a nurse who talked about her concerns about \$1 billion in cuts and what that would mean for the community.

We tried something different in the robo calls. I think they worked significantly well. I suppose the key measure I have for them is that we barely got a complaint about them. Generally speaking, there is a bit of nervousness from MPs about robo calls, but the fact that we barely got a complaint shows that they work well.

One of the other things which I think worked well for us during the campaign was the incumbency factor and our local seats. Obviously now we have a lot of MPs who have been in key seats since the landslide in 2001. The local campaigns from people like Barbara Stone were fantastic. In Central Queensland, Paul Hoolihan has really gone from strength to strength in Keppel. Local campaigns from local MPs were significant. I think that that is what kept the swing down towards the end.

I have some overviews in terms of the election campaign. A significant thing was Anna Bligh's rating building during the campaign. It is pretty unique for that to happen. The ratings for Lawrence Springborg were actually worse at the end of this campaign than they were during the Liberal-National campaign of 2006. That is a significant factor considering the campaign from the LNP was a lot better this time. I think it shows the power of our advertising, which really worked. It went to the consequences and the danger of that \$1 billion in cuts and 12,000 job losses. That really worked for us in terms of going to the consequences of electing him. Finally, in terms of strategy and message, I think the fundamental strength of our campaign is that we did not deviate from day one to day 27. I think that held us in good stead come election day.

I have some observations, lessons and potential discussion topics. Whilst we did lose 11 seats all up, based on the pendulum which was a redistributed one, only six MPs actually lost. I think that shows you the power of incumbency. We lost a number of seats that were notionally Labor or seats of retiring members. There are now 18 seats under five per cent. Five of those were actually seats we handed over to a new candidate and we held on, including Chatsworth with Steve Kilburn. I think that we suffered a bigger swing in some of those seats than we normally would have.

The Brisbane and Gold Coast swing was bigger this time. That was because of the Flegg inflation of 2006. A good example is the fact that in Bulimba the swing was nine per cent. The swing in Chatsworth was zero per cent.

In terms of the Whitsunday result, whilst Jan did do well in the Mackay part that she picked up, if you look at her result the swing was pretty uniform across every booth in the electorate. That shows you not only the hard work of Jan Jarratt but also the growth that is happening in a seat like Whitsunday which I think is for the Labor Party. The best example is Dawson in the 2007 federal campaign.

In terms of Chatsworth and the reason for the zero per cent swing there, apart from the great local candidate and former firefighter in Steve Kilburn, I think Antony is right. The other example to go with that is Cleveland. When Darryl Briskey retired in 2006, we suffered a swing of about nine per cent. At this campaign we suffered a swing of less than one per cent. So I think that just adds evidence to what happened in Chatsworth.

Some things which I think are worthwhile following maybe for the discussion are the internet, which I think Anna used effectively during the campaign, but also the growth in online advertising which I think will build at each election. I also have a problem with published polling. I think the newspapers focus too much

on it and use that as a story. Also, if I had a dollar for every time I spoke to a journalist over the last six months saying, 'State-wide polls in Queensland are not accurate. They haven't been since probably 1995,' and I think that is probably assumed in terms of published polls. I touched before on the regional Queensland issue.

In terms of how votes can change during the campaign, I think the key issue is the under-30 vote. What we saw were real fluctuations in the under-30 vote. What we picked up on originally was their concern about the economy and job losses. What I picked up is that under 30s have been the people who have suffered job losses as the economy downturns more than any other age group. The issue like the oil spill really shook up that age group as well. So I think there is a lot of volatility in terms of election campaigns. We worked hard through our internet advertising but also our phone messages to work that under-30 group back, which is a traditional strength for Labor. But there is a lot of volatility there. That is an overview of the campaign and I look forward to the panel discussion.

Prof. LAVARCH: Thank you very much, Paul and Anthony. I will start by asking a couple of questions and then we will get the audience involved. I will start with Anthony Chisholm. Anthony, Paul indicated that he did not see a poll either public or internal which at any point indicated that the LNP would actually win. Was that the same in terms of where the Labor Party was at? Certainly there seemed to be some sense in very late newspaper reports and some degree of leaking that it was pretty close at some point in that last period. Was it ever really likely—really likely—that Labor was going to lose?

Mr CHISHOLM: I always enjoy seeing leaked research from seats that we have never actually polled, because it is always interesting. The short answer is no. But it is quite difficult to judge because what you do in terms of your election research is you poll a certain number of seats every night or every second night of the campaign which you try to spread out amongst Queensland, but it is really hard to have a seat in every area. So you can never be absolutely categorical that we are not going to lose the election. Based on our internal research it was very unlikely for us to lose, but there were enough patchy results in terms of our research that means that you are worried. 'If those demographics replicate over there, then perhaps you are in trouble.'

The interesting thing in the research is polling two seats side by side you have very differing responses. I think that is one of the things which makes me campaign against state-wide polls as being accurate. It just shows you that there can be such variation in the seats side by side. Who would know what is happening in a seat like Keppel, Townsville or Cairns based on that result?

Prof. LAVARCH: I have another one for you, Anthony, before I ask Paul a question. You referred to some of the challenges which were thrown up by calling an early election, and you referred to Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the message that needed to be crafted. I know it is a call for the Premier, not for you, but given those challenges why go early?

Mr CHISHOLM: The Premier generally thought it was in the best interests of Queensland to get the uncertainty of calling the election out of the road.

Prof. LAVARCH: Okay. We are sticking with the party line on that.

Mr CHISHOLM: Unlike Paul, I am still secretary.

Prof. LAVARCH: Paul, you can give me a straightforward and honest answer. You took the view that this notion that Lawrence Springborg was unelectable in South-East Queensland and the fact that he came from the National Party really should not have been a great factor. That does not necessarily seem to have been the view shared by the parliamentary party. There was certainly enough noise immediately after the election and the lead-up to John-Paul Langbroek being elected that it was desirable that the next leader be a South-East Queensland Liberal. Is there some advantage going forward that the new leader is from the south-east and is formerly a Liberal?

Mr TURNER: Look, the fact of the matter is that on a personal level I always thought that Lawrence would be the last former National to lead the LNP. I thought that because of all the reasons that Anthony has mentioned about changing demographics. Having said that, though, I think it is too easy to brand 'former Liberal' and 'former National'. Fiona holds the seat of Maroochydore. That is a South-East Queensland seat. My belief was that it was most likely that the next leader of the LNP would always be from the former Liberal Party. I think that was the general belief of those who ran. If Lawrence had won the election, I still think that would have been the case. It would have been 12 years down the line but it would have been the case. I do not think anyone is surprised, certainly within the LNP.

If you lose an election there are always people who will have their reasons why and we all have our reasons why. I think Anthony made a really valid point in regard to what happened to Lawrence's personal approval polling. If you looked at his poll after the formation of the LNP, he went nothing but up, right until the election. There was a decision made based on polling by our side not to attack Anna Bligh personally. I have heard all the reasons why having a female leader and female Premier is terrible, and how hard it is and it is the first time. It is crap. Having a female leader was fantastic because all our polling said 'you cannot go her personally'. 'If you go her personally, with a big six foot tall Lawrence beating up a little woman, it is terrible. It is bad; don't do it.' It looks bad. If it was Peter Beattie, they could beat the crap out of each other. Nobody would care. They would prefer it! So that was a problem for us. It was a problem for us in crafting the message. We wrote ads. I wrote a couple of corks— they were unprintable—that you could have run against Anna Bligh. It would have cost us 10 per cent.

They did not have that problem. They could play the man, as they did to Debnam in New South Wales, as Hawker Britton 101. You can say it is different but it ain't. They play the man, not the ball. We released a policy every day. We released policies beforehand. We know that because we had to cut a billion bucks out of the budget to fund all the bastards. So we know we had policies. It wasn't that we did not have any policies. It wasn't that we had any issues over internal infighting or any of that. The basic fact is that for 27 days, or for 24 of them, they were able to run virtually unimpeded direct attack ads on Lawrence. Surprise, surprise, his personal approval rating came down. We were not able to do the same thing and they are not going to be able to do it in 2012 either.

What we probably should have done is gone a lot harder. It is always easy to say this. I was on the campaign committee, and do not for a moment think I am absolving myself from any responsibility because I am not. But you are mad if you do not look back afterwards and see what you could have possibly done differently. We could have gone a lot harder on things like Nuttall and Patel and that sort of stuff. We went on her record as a minister and how poor it was and we probably should have gone a lot harder on Beattie's record. We played into their hands a bit by not dragging up the dirt of the last three or four years and running it harder at them. I think that was a mistake.

Mr CHISHOLM: In terms of the negative advertising on Springborg, yes, it was negative; yes, it was effective, but he gave us the ammunition. If you did not want us to run those campaigns—

Mr TURNER: Are we in recession? I did not think we were.

Mr CHISHOLM: It certainly worked with the punters anyway.

Prof. LAVARCH: Ladies and gentlemen, I open it up to the floor. Can you just say your name as you ask a question.

Mr MUIR: I formed the impression that the opposition had deliberately presented a small target position. I would be interested to hear about the pros and cons of presenting as a small target. I am assuming that was a deliberate policy. Does that create a problem, particularly on the political stage where you are relatively unknown as a new product? Is it a sensible thing to do to be a small target when you are trying to be elected to government?

Mr TURNER: I will be perfectly honest with you: the time leading into Christmas, when we were allegedly very cunningly—and I did not disabuse journalists when they asked me—being a small target, quite frankly we were trying to put the organisation together and develop a policy platform that the two former parties could live with. We had to do some housekeeping. We had to do some serious housekeeping, so we played the political level but we did not come out with a lot of policy pre-Christmas.

The other reason we did not come out with a lot of policy—I think this is my fourth election, admittedly I was out for a decade and boy they have changed a lot—is that we did not know when the election was going to be held. One of the most idiotic things to do is release big policies prior to Christmas potentially 10 months out from when the election is going to be held. No-one remembers what they are the next day, let alone after Christmas. So we were in a situation where we did have some policies. What we did have we did not release because it was pre-Christmas and we thought they would be blown.

Secondly, we were doing a lot of work behind the scenes to get the policy process in place and to get those things bedded down and funding issues done. Did we run a small target? Well, we looked like we were running a small target, but it was not necessarily the case. We were just waiting till after Christmas.

The early election issue is another matter I want to touch on. If Anna had gone in September, as there was a lot of talk, to try to capitalise on us not getting the merger up or it falling over, then assuming we were not a complete basket case and she went early just to capitalise on the fact that we are still putting all the Lego blocks together, I think an early election would have been an issue. People try to compare this to Western Australia. Western Australia was a year out. It was a different calendar year and I think that is the key. The fact that it was six months out, our polling was just saying that sure people were annoyed by it but it was not an issue. It was not going to change a single vote. That is why we made a fuss of it, as you are meant to do on the first day, and then we moved on.

Sorry to deflect, but the small target thing was the product of a few issues, but we did not release a lot of policy prior to Christmas. We probably should have been more active after the merger but we were just really busy trying to get everything bedded down and to make sure we did not go out half-cocked with something that was going to cause us a problem in the new party. We made sure we had the bedrock right before we went out and we basically gave ourselves until Christmas to do that.

Mr MENSFORTH: One of the things I noticed in the booth campaigns was the failure of people who bothered to take a candidate ticket from either party. It seems to me that about 50 per cent were not taking anything. That seemed to me to reflect quite a bit of anger in the electorate generally; that is, that some wanted to vote for Lawrence and could not, and they did not want to vote for Anna but had to. I am wondering, with reflection, what happened in Beaudesert, where 22 per cent of the vote was for One Nation. Is there a lot of anger out there? Have you really sown the seeds for a kickback in 2012?

Mr GREEN: I do not think there was 22 per cent for One Nation; it was 22 per cent for Pauline Hanson, and I think that is a key difference.

Mr CHISHOLM: In terms of anger at the ballot box, I think there is always anger at the ballot box and that is because we make people turn up there. I think that is the fundamental reason that people do get angry. I picked up from talking to some of our people handing out that they did think that it probably was a little bit higher than normal in terms of people not taking how-to-vote cards. I get the sense that that is probably growing at each election anyway, in terms of people sort of walking in there and being a bit offended by being accosted by it. But I certainly would not think it was particular at this election.

Mr TURNER: I would agree with that. We had the same thing from our booths—that there was a low take-up compared to other years, but I think people had made a decision. I think that is the other issue—they had made a decision. You would like to think as an opposition that it is because they are angry at the government, but in this case it was not.

Mr CHISHOLM: I should point out that the rope-a-dope strategy was really targeted at people not to take a how-to-vote card.

Mr Reynolds: I would just like to make a couple of observations post election. It is interesting, I think, to reflect that this is the largest intake of new members in the Queensland parliament without a change of government in recent times. The corollary of that looks to me, from a preliminary analysis, that both parties are now becoming increasingly symmetrical. The demographic difference between the two parties has narrowed considerably so that the majority of new members seem to be tertiary educated, from professional backgrounds and also from the younger age cohort. I think that will have some impact on the quality of parliamentary behaviour perhaps. I think this was captured by the debate on the opening day of parliament.

Mr Pyke: If you will forgive a bit of double dipping here, I want to comment on the not taking of the how-to-vote cards virtually before asking a question. It seems to me that people who march in and do not take either how-to-vote card—it could be because an increasing number realise that the party names are going to be on the ballot paper. Some of them even know who the candidates are before they turn up at the polling booth. I have not taken a how-to-vote card in years and I know by being here I am marking myself out as being more politically obsessed than average. I did observe at the federal election one particular group of people who came stomping in like something out of a sci-fi movie at about 3.30 in the afternoon all wearing their visibility jackets fresh off the building sites not taking either side's how-to-vote card. They were angry with one particular party and they were there to do a job on John Howard. So not taking either how-to-vote card may mean you are angry with both parties. It may mean that you have already made up your mind who you are angry with and you are going to punish them.

But the question I was going to ask, Paul—I hear what you say about the stronger Labor performance in the north indicating the theory that Lawrence was unelectable in the city does not get a lot of support from the results and yet there was the factor that his approval was going down progressively from week to week. It seems to me that the ALP must have thought there was some evidence of the fact that he was unelectable in the city, because you, Anthony, kept on running that same picture of him with his finger pointed above his head as if he had just scratched it, or he was just about to scratch it, looking particularly puzzled about something on a full page with one of his dopier quotes on the opposite page. So were you getting feedback which indicated that that strategy was working? The second question: have you paid 100 grand to the person who took that photograph?

Mr CHISHOLM: He did get a bonus. I suppose the thing I will say about Lawrence Springborg—and the person I am comparing him to I really like and I know him well, that is Kim Beazley, but I think at the end of the day, people did not think Kim Beazley was up to the job of being Prime Minister of Australia. I completely disagree with that. I think he would have been great, but I do not disagree with it when it comes to Lawrence Springborg, and I certainly think that that view is out there in the community and that is the one thing—one significant thing—that the LNP did not turn around.

Mr TURNER: I disagree. I think if you look at his personal approval during the merger, through the merger and the success of that, it was only going up. Had we managed to sustain that, I think these guys know that several months out we were probably in a better position than we ended up in—with him at least. People are still trying to figure out whether we actually got this merger up, but his personal approval was stronger then by the time we got to the election. I think that comes from an effective campaign during the election to make him look like an idiot. I am not saying it is not a justifiable tactic—it is—and they did it very well. But he is not, and he would have been great.

Mr CHISHOLM: The other thing is that six months from an election people do not have to make a judgement on whether he should be Premier or not, but they do during the campaign, and that is what they did.

AN AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can I just ask question of Antony Green. We have spoken a little bit about the impact of public opinion polls and the way in which both the *Australian* and particularly the *Courier-Mail* use the polls. There was then a fair bit of debate after the election as to how accurate the polls were—maybe not so much in their absolute. That last Newspoll, I think, really was certainly within the margin of error of where the primary votes ended up, but both Galaxy and the *Australian*—the Newspoll—published regional swings to the extent where they were predicting at least a 10 per cent swing in Brisbane, which did not turn out quite to be what the result was. I would just be interested in your comment as to how you thought the two polls actually performed.

Mr GREEN: In terms of overall figures, the final Newspoll was relatively accurate. The Galaxy was within the margin of error, but still they would have preferred to have been closer. They always prefer to be closer. But both of them indicated a huge swing in the south-east and they were completely wrong in that number. It is clear that the newspaper stories were being written on the basis that there was a big swing in the south-east corner and all of that final coverage was based on that occurring, and it did not occur. It was interesting, I thought, just to watch some of the other figures. Nothing happened in the campaign. I think the first poll was 50-50 and then the rest—

Mr TURNER: I think pre-campaign it was 50-50 but every one during the campaign, up until the last week, was 51-49.

Mr GREEN: Yes, but everyone was saying, 'There's a trend', and when people say there is a trend, when they write it in newspapers or when they use 'trend' as a common term, they usually mean it is going up or it is going down. That is the way they use the word 'trend'. There was a trend, but it was not going anywhere; it was flat. I mean, nothing happened. The polls did not move. I must admit I had not paid a lot of attention to the leadership. It was interesting, I thought, through last year the Labor Party was well ahead but Anna Bligh's poll ratings were not nearly as good as Peter Beattie's ever were. I thought it was interesting that the Labor Party was having to spend a lot of attention to make sure that that rating improved and it did improve during the campaign. I was not aware how Lawrence's had fallen, because I must admit that when I look at opinion polls in terms of picking the winner, you look at the votes. They are always going to tell you a lot more. The attitudes to leadership and who is going to win might tell you a bit about where you want to direct your campaign, but there was not much change from poll to poll in the election campaign.

When Anna headed off up north on the Thursday, my first reaction was, 'That's a great strategy. Dominate coverage up north.' I said to somebody on the day before the election, 'It's really important, the north. If Labor can hold all of those seats in the north, it is really going to be tough for the LNP to win, because they have got to win so many seats in the south-east.' They said, 'No, no, it is going to be decided in the south-east,' and I was thinking, 'I'd worry about Barron River and Townsville and all of those seats', and I think in the end that campaign strategy of going north—and what fascinated me was the number of journalists who said, 'This is a new strategy. It is dramatic.' I said, 'It might be new here, but if you watch the last stage of British election campaigning, they go from one end of the country to the other in a helicopter.' It is extraordinary. If you go to America they still have whistlestops on election day. They still fly around the country doing that. So it is common overseas. It might not be a common tactic here. I thought it was a great strategy, because it got the Premier two or three days out from the election—they do not cover the news every day in regional areas—going up there before the newspaper comes out on the weekend. So I thought it was a great strategy and it got her also away from the oil down in the south-east, which was also probably a good strategy at the time.

Mr TURNER: Just on newspapers, I am a former newspaper journalist. So I have a soft spot for them. The *Gold Coast Bulletin*, for example, ran a pretty strong one-sided campaign against us over that part of the state. I do not think it changed a single vote. I do not think it changed a single vote. Anthony may have a different view, but we won three seats out of the four we were hoping to win. As I said, Peta-Kaye was always—on our polling, anyway—one of the most popular local candidates in the state, or one of the local sitting members in the state. I just think for myself it is interesting. I have worked for regional dailies. They used to be extraordinarily, I thought in the past, powerful in those regions. Yet that campaign by the *Gold Coast Bulletin* did nothing. I expect to get a call from Bob Gordon and never work again in this state. I do not know what to make of it, but I just think it is interesting.

Mr GREEN: I remember getting a phone call from a journalist in Toowoomba a couple of days before the election and very patiently having to explain to them why all the interest is in Toowoomba North rather than in any other seat. They said, 'Why do you say Condamine is a safe seat?' In this case, there were some other issues, but I said, 'Because it is a safe seat. It is always a safe seat. There are not many Labor voters there.' 'Don't they change them?' We all have to deal with really dumb reporters.

AN AUDIENCE MEMBER: One thing that has not really been covered in any great detail is the loss of the AAA credit rating and the release of the economic statement just before the campaign. My understanding of the polls—with Galaxy in particular—was that the LNP had a surge at the time of the merger, but they had drifted off. My recollection was that they surfed back after the loss of the AAA credit rating and that could have explained the five per cent swing at the start of the campaign, which then plateaued. There is also some qualitative polling in the Newspoll which showed the LNP in front of Labor in terms of managing the budget. So I would just like to know your comments on the impact of the AAA credit rating loss on the early stages of the campaign at least.

Mr TURNER: I think it was of benefit to us earlier on, mainly because I think—as Antony said—it put the focus on the government. We were able to do that for a few days. There was the no-policy day, because we came up with 1,000 cops in the morning and they had to deduct their 600 cops. That gave us a bit of fun for a day as well. But, look, the problem, I think, and I have not seen anything specifically to back this up, what happened was both through effective advertising and our need to find funding, if you can come up with a better one than cutting costs—raising taxes and borrowing more, we could not do that one because it is sort of half of our attack on the government—we had to do something if we were going to

fund any promises. We were always, despite being forced out—it was a Tuesday, by the way, and we had a booking for it—we were always going to have to come out with a way of funding our promises. I think that did allow the government to jump on that and turn that around. So that took away the benefit we got out of the AAA, I think, and they were effectively able to turn that against us in regard to using the jobs message.

My belief was that the recession over the course of the election helped Labor in the fact that, at the end of the day, they did not really like either of us much. I think most of the polls said that there was a core constituency that was supportive, but the ones that we all want really did not like either of us much but at the end of the day they were going to stick to the devil they knew. Times are tough, and that is what they did, whereas before the election—maybe late in the previous year—they might have taken a punt on us. By the time we got to election day, for a variety of reasons—some of which was effective advertising, I think—they were not, or enough of them were not willing to take that punt, because times are tough and they will stick with the devil they know. I think that was particularly the case up north.

Mr CHISHOLM: In terms of the credit rating, obviously people would prefer that we had a AAA-plus credit rating, but once you actually explain to them, 'This is why, because it is about our \$117 billion program and it is about 50,000 jobs,' then people know. They are able to understand why such a decision would be taken and why it is important that we really keep the building program going at the moment. So it is one of those things that is on its own. It is problematic, but once you actually get into the detail and you have got the ability to explain why, people would be a lot more confident.

Mr GREEN: I think the state that has not lost its AAA credit rating is New South Wales, but it cannot manage to build anything. I am always amazed to come up here and there are these big roadworks going on. It became an issue.

Mr CHISHOLM: By the end of the year, there might not be many states who have not lost it as well.

Mr GREEN: Yes, that is true. I was just surprised it happened so quickly up here.

AN AUDIENCE MEMBER: Nobody has mentioned the Greens. I am interested in the way in which the preferential system is likely to work in the future in terms of how the Greens should go about campaigning in the future.

Mr GREEN: I think one problem that the Greens suffer is they are still in shock at the 1995 election result. They sort of went soft on Labor on preferences. They never got their upper house out of the National Party and they did not get the Cape York national park because of the change of government. There are a whole lot of things there that the Greens have struggled to resolve what they want to do, because there is no upper house to get elected to. So if you are going to get a vote for the Greens, what are you going to do? I think that is the difficulty they have continued to suffer.

About 2½ weeks before the election I told a Liberal friend of mine—Lawrence had gone up to Mount Isa about a uranium policy then—I said, 'That was really dumb.' He said, 'Uranium is not as important as it was' and I said, 'No, but it will give the Greens their out on the Traveston Dam promise where they said they would not direct preferences to Labor unless they bury the Traveston Dam' and within a week, 'Uranium! Yes! No, we will do this.' What are they going to do? Do they really want to bring down a Labor government? That is their problem.

Mr TURNER: I do not think the Greens were ever going to preference us.

Mr GREEN: I do not think they would have. They may have exhausted and then said they were not going to direct them to Labor. I always thought they were after a wriggle-out.

Mr TURNER: They had a deal with Indooroopilly and to get the deal they had to give preferences. It is as simple as that. Anthony does not have to comment, because he is the state secretary. There was a deal so that—

Mr GREEN: Uranium allowed it to not look as grubby as that.

Mr TURNER: Sure, but there was a deal and that was it and it was always going to be. I think the Greens problem is—and you have alluded to it—that they are not an independent party; they are a wing of the Labor Party in Queensland and until they get their shit together and run as an independent party, they will always be irrelevant.

AN AUDIENCE MEMBER: Now, Anthony, tell me some facts about where Greens voters' preferences actually go rather than where they are recommended to go.

Mr TURNER: I think they definitely won Labor—

Mr CHISHOLM: North Brisbane—two seats.

Mr TURNER: Two seats.

Mr CHISHOLM: Everton.

Mr TURNER: Everton was definitely won with the Greens preferences and Barron River was another one.

Mr CHISHOLM: I am sorry, Chatsworth and Barron River—two.

Mr TURNER: Everton, definitely.

Mr CHISHOLM: No, we won the primary.

Mr GREEN: It does matter. Optional preferential voting does matter. But in the end, if you look at 1995, one of the reasons Labor lost that election was because a couple of people like Warren Pitt and Ken Davies had the Greens totally offside locally. It was a failure of Greens preferences in a couple of seats up north which cost Labor those seats. Since then, no-one has ever made that mistake and the Greens, where it is needed, directed preferences. I do not think Aspley was on the list.

Mr CHISHOLM: It was.

Mr GREEN: Did you get preferences

Mr CHISHOLM: Yes, we did.

Mr GREEN: I cannot remember. But there were a couple of seats, I know. Yes, that is it.

Mr TURNER: Hervey Bay was another one.

Mr GREEN: At federal elections, they will follow Labor 70 per cent with no effort and as the green vote rises, the percentage of preferences to Labor goes upwards. That always happens under compulsory preferential voting. Under optional preferential voting, it is much more important to keep the Greens onside in key seats, but in the end—

Mr CHISHOLM: I have not had a good look at the analysis in terms of the green preferences yet, but one of the things I am keen to look at following the Brisbane City Council campaign was that Greens preferred to the LNP in Morningside and they preferred to Labor in Holland Park—two neighbouring council wards—and we got a bigger preference flow where they preferred against us in Morningside, where our sitting councillor is a really good, hardworking local who has really good environmental credentials on her own. So I think that that shows you that there is an element of the green vote that will actually be informed and actually look at the better candidate. I think that that is reflected in terms of the result and that is what I am keen to see in terms of the state election if it has been similar to that as well.

Prof. LAVARCH: Ladies and gentlemen, I am conscious of the time, so I am going to bring it to an end. I am sure we will be able to have a cup of tea and a drink and maybe carry on the discussion. Can I ask you to join with me thanking Antony, Paul and Anthony for their contributions this evening.