

The ACT election 2016: back to the future?

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12 pages

Overview

This resource is a summary of the outcome of the ACT election, held in October 2016.

It was an unusual election, in that it saw little movement in party support from the previous election in 2012 and no fringe parties or candidates were elected. The main issues were the construction of a tramline, the implementation of tax reform, the demolition of over one thousand houses to resolve asbestos contamination and allegations of corruption.

The ACT Election 2016: Back to the future?

The ACT election on October 15 was more of a 1950s or 1960s election. In that era little movement occurred from one election to the next. In 1967 political scientist Don Aitkin wrote, "Most Australians have a basic commitment to one or other of the major parties, and very few change their mind from one election to the other"¹.

Not so today. In the last few years Australia has experienced three one term State/Territory Governments, huge swings from election to election and the rapid rise and fall of new parties. So why was the ACT different?

The ACT election saw a swing of 0.5 per cent against the governing ALP and their partner the Greens and a 2.2 per cent swing against the opposition Liberals. As a result the ALP secured 12 seats, the Liberals 11 and the Greens 2 in a new enlarged 25 seat ACT Legislative Assembly. The ALP and Greens decided to continue their "coalition" of the past 8 years.

The Election context 2012 to 2016

- ◆ Both the ALP and the Liberals changed leaders. Liberal leader Zed Seslja left the ACT Legislative Assembly to successfully contest the Liberal preselection for the Senate. He was elected to the Senate at the 2013 Federal Election. ALP leader and Chief Minister Katie Gallagher resigned to enable her to be appointed to the Senate late in 2014; she was elected at the 2016 Federal Election
- ◆ Zed Seslja was replaced by Jeremy Hanson and Katie Gallagher by Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer, Andrew Barr
- ◆ The ACT Legislative Assembly was enlarged from 17 members to 25. The 25 were split among 5 electorates each returning 5 members: (From north to south) Yerabi, Ginninderra, Kurrajong, Murumbidgee and Brindabella. However, the voting system was not changed
- ◆ During the term the Government implemented its long term tax reform program, announced the construction of a light rail (tram) service from Gungahlin to Civic, implemented a costly program to demolish over 1,000 houses affected by asbestos (Mr Fluffy) and commenced construction of a new hospital in Belconnen
- ◆ Despite both ALP and Liberal Federal Government's cuts to the Australian Public Service the ACT Economy proved to be resilient with no great increases in unemployment over the last 4 years.
- ◆ The Liberals campaign focused on the tram and rate increases, they promised to cancel the tram project if elected and end rate increases attributable to the tax reform policy
- ◆ Negatives for the Government included a number of development issues where allegations were made of corruption (but no cases of such were listed), lack of transparency and a number of issues with land sales
- ◆ The club industry launched a strong anti ALP campaign over poker machine issues
- ◆ A number of new parties emerged: The Sex Party, Canberra Community Voters (mainly concerned about corruption and poker machines at the Casino), Sustainable Australia (population issues) and the Animal Justice Party
- ◆ The Bullet Train Party which polled well at the previous election changed its name to Like Canberra.

Election 2016 - the contestants

The 2016 election saw a record number of candidates from established and new parties.

ACT Labor - The ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party. Australia's oldest party, founded in 1890 is the most successful in the ACT both at a Federal and Territory level. Basically a social democratic centre left party. Has governed the ACT since 2001 as a minority government, usually with the support of the Greens, except for the period 2004 to 2008 when it was a majority government. It was the first party to govern the ACT in 1989 but was deposed later

that year. Regained office in 1991 and remained the government until its defeat in 1995. Best polling booth Franklin (Gungahlin) 57.14 per cent, worst Deakin (South Canberra) 22.84 per cent).

Canberra Liberals - The ACT division of the Liberal Party of Australia. Founded in 1944 but goes back to the merger of the Free Trade and Protectionist parties in 1909. A centre right conservative party. Governed the ACT in association with minor parties from 1989 to 1991 and again with the support of independents from 1995 to 2001. Best polling booth Deakin (South Canberra) 57.24 per cent, worst Turner (North Canberra) 18.54 per cent.

The Greens - ACT Greens, associated with the national Green party. First contested ACT elections in 1995 when they won a seat in the 7 member Molonglo electorate and another in the 5 member Ginninderra. Their best result was in 2008 when they won 4 seats, Although they supported the Liberals in 1995 they have since sided with Labor. Their leader Shane Rattenbury joined the Cabinet after the 2012 election and again in 2016. Best polling booth Dickson (North Canberra) 31.67 per cent, worst Richardson (Tuggeranong) 2.56 per cent.

Australian Sex Party ACT - Describe themselves as a progressive party concerned with marriage equality and other sexual issues, concerned about role of religion in politics. Only contested 3 electorates: Yerabi, Murrumbidgee and Brindabella. Polled best in Brindabella where they out polled the Greens.

Liberal Democrats - Believe in small government, low taxes and minimal regulation. Contested all electorates and have contested ACT elections in the past. Best polling booth Oaks Estate (North Canberra) 4.60 per cent, worst Melba (Belconnen) 0.46 per cent. *Why is Oaks Estate a hotbed of economic rationalism?*

Animal Justice Party - A one issue party established in all states to campaign for animal rights. Contested all electorates. Best polling booth Woden (Woden) 3.51 per cent, worst Oaks Estate (North Canberra) 0.0 per cent.

Like Canberra - Contested the 2012 ACT election as a one-issue party "Bullet train for Canberra" where it polled around 4 per cent. For some inexplicable reason changed its name to Like Canberra and saw its vote drop to 1.1 per cent. Campaigned for more transparency from the ACT Government, setting up of an anti corruption commission, a bullet train linking Canberra to other cities although were ambivalent about the tram. Contested every electorate. Best polling booth Oaks Estate (North Canberra) 2.3 per cent, worst Tharwa (Tuggeranong) 0.0 per cent.

Sustainable Australia ACT - a national party that focusses on limiting population growth in all parts of Australia. Contested all electorates. Best polling booth Belconnen (Belconnen) 3.51 per cent, worst Chisholm (Tuggeranong) 0.69 per cent.

Canberra Community Voters - Set up just before the election to protest the government's decision to allow the Canberra Casino to buy poker machines from clubs. Also expressed concerns about lack of transparency, dodgy deals and opposition to the tram. Lobbyist Richard Farmer was involved with the party both as an official and a candidate. He was associated with former independent members Paul Osborne and Dave Rugendyke. After the election he said the main aim of the party was to ensure a Liberal win. They only ran candidates in two electorates, Ginninderra and Kurrajong.

Community Alliance - A party formed to contest the 2008 election in protest against the government's decisions to cut expenditure, especially on schools, and the government's response to the 2003 bush fire disaster. They did not contest the 2012 election and only contested one electorate in 2016, Murrumbidgee.

Independents - They were quite a few but none were elected. Independents were important in the pre - self government era and in the first four terms of ACT self government. No

independents have been elected since 1998.

Apart from the Three main parties (ALP, Liberals and Greens) only the Sex Party polled a respectable tally, out polling the Greens in Brindabella. All the others scarcely bothered the vote counters.

Table 1 The election outcomes 2016

Party/ Electorate	Brindabella	Ginninderra	Kurrajong	Murrumbidgee	Yerabi	ACT
ALP	33.6	41.4	38.5	34.5	43.9	38.4
Liberals	41.9	32.0	31.0	42.8	35.8	36.7
Greens	5.1	9.7	18.8	10.6	7.1	10.3
Animal Justice	2.4	0.9	1.2	2.1	0.9	1.5
Sex	7.9	dns	dns	3.5	4.0	3.1
Liberal Democrat	2.5	1.2	2.2	1.6	2.7	2.1
Like Canberra/ Bullet Train	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.3	1.1
Sustainable Australia	1.5	2.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.6
Canberra Community Voters	dns	1.7	1.8	dns	dns	0.7
Community Alliance	dns	dns	dns	0.8	dns	0.2
Independents	4.2	9.7	4.4	1.4	2.9	4.4
Swing from 2012						
ALP	-1.8	0.8	-1.8	-5.2	5.2	-0.5
Liberals	-4.5	-0.5	-3.6	1.2	-3.1	-2.2
Greens	-2.2	-0.8	3.0	-0.2	-2.3	-0.5
Animal Justice	2.4	0.9	1.2	2.1	0.9	1.5
Sex	7.9			3.5	4.0	3.1
Liberal Democrat	2.5	-0.6	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
Like Canberra/ Bullet Train	na	na	na	na	na	-2.7
Sustainable Australia	1.5	2.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4
Canberra Community Voters	na	1.7	1.8	na	na	0.7
Community Alliance	na	na	na	0.8	na	0.2
Independents (1)	-6.7	-5.0	-3.7	-5.8	-8.4	-6.0

Source: Elections ACT Webpage - DNS Did not stand - NA Not applicable

1. Elections ACT included parties that did not contest the 2016 election in this group

The ALP polled best in Yerabi with 43.9 per cent, a swing of 5.2 per cent. The only other seat to report a swing to the ALP was Ginninderra where the swing was 0.8 per cent. The Liberals best result was in Murrumbidgee where they achieved a swing of 1.2 per cent to obtain a vote of 42.8 per cent. The Greens' best result was in the Kurrajong with 18.8 per cent, a swing of 3.0 per cent.

The voting system in the ACT is Hare Clark with Robson rotation, the same as used in Tasmania. The new 25 member ACT Assembly is based on 5 seats with 5 members each. When the new electorates were introduced there was a widespread view that the Greens would be disadvantaged. But analysis of previous voting figures indicated that they were certain of one seat in Kurrajong with a good chance in both Ginninderra and Murrumbidgee. As it turned out they did obtain a seat in both Kurrajong and Murrumbidgee.

In Table 2 below voting is reported for Canberra's distinct community areas. North and South Canberra are both "inner city" and are part of the original Walter Burley Griffin Canberra. Belconnen, Woden, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong were all developed between the 1950s and 1980s by the former National Capital Development Commission² (NCDC). Gungahlin was developed in the 1990s largely under the control of the ACT Government.

Table 2: Voting in Canberra Communities⁽¹⁾

2012	ALP	Liberal	Greens	Motorists	Bullet Train for Canberra/ Like Canberra	Sex Party ⁽²⁾
Belconnen	41.9	31.1	10.2	7.6	3.5	dns
Gungahlin	37.3	44.4	7.3	4.1	3.7	dns
North Canberra	42.9	26.0	21.2	1.5	5.9	dns
South Canberra	38.0	42.9	11.9	1.4	4.8	dns
Tuggeranong	36.4	46.1	7.3	4.4	3.5	dns
Weston Creek	41.9	39.7	10.6	2.3	3.7	dns
Woden	42.0	38.6	11.7	1.9	3.9	dns
2016						
Belconnen	41.7	30.8	10.5	dns	1.0	1.0
Gungahlin	46.8	33.9	6.8	dns	1.2	3.9
North Canberra	42.1	22.4	24.3	dns	0.8	dns
South Canberra	32.2	42.8	11.9	dns	0.8	dns
Tuggeranong	34.8	39.9	5.9	dns	0.9	8.4
Weston Creek	35.2	42.1	12.1	dns	1.2	3.3
Woden	34.5	42.7	11.6	dns	1.3	3.1
Swing						
Belconnen	-0.2	-0.3	0.3	-7.6	-2.5	1.0
Gungahlin	9.5	-10.5	-0.5	-4.1	-2.5	3.9
North Canberra	-0.8	-3.6	3.1	-1.5	-5.1	dns
South Canberra	-5.8	0.0	0.0	-1.4	-4.0	dns
Tuggeranong	-1.6	-6.2	-1.4	-4.4	-2.6	8.4
Weston Creek	-6.7	2.4	1.5	-2.3	-2.5	3.3
Woden	-7.5	4.1	-0.1	-1.9	-2.6	3.1

Source: Elections ACT Webpage

1: Includes figures from polling booths only 2. Sex party did not stand in Ginninderra, the main electorate covering Belconnen or Kurrajong the electorate covering North and South Canberra.

Belconnen is covered by the electorates of Ginninderra (mostly) and Yerabi, Gungahlin is all in Yerabi, North and South Canberra are in Kurrajong, Woden and Weston Creek are in Murrumbidgee and Tuggeranong is covered by Murrumbidgee and Brindabella.

Voting patterns by community displayed more variation than at the ACT and electorate levels.

Gungahlin - The ALP did best in Gungahlin with 46.8 per cent, achieving a swing of 9.5 per cent. In the previous election in 2012 it was one of the ALP's poorer areas being out polled by the Liberals (44.4 per cent to 37.3 per cent), the swing against the Liberals being 10.5 per cent. The reason cited by many is large support for the tram which is to service the area. However, the area has achieved considerable growth since the last election so that demographic changes may also be a factor.

Belconnen - Both ALP and Liberals suffered small swings against them. The Motorist party which gained 7.6 per cent of the vote in 2012 did not stand in 2016. Their votes did not go to either ALP or Liberal but seem to have gone to ungrouped candidates.

North Canberra - The Greens improved their position by 3.1 per cent and the Liberals declined by 3.6 per cent. This result possibly due to pro-tram sentiment as parts of North Canberra will be serviced by the tram.

South Canberra - The ALP suffered an adverse swing of 5.8 per cent but the Liberals were not the beneficiaries.

Tuggeranong - The Liberals' best community in 2012 with 46.1 per cent but saw an adverse swing of 6.2 per cent in 2016. They still did better than the ALP and it was the best area for the Sex party with 8.4 per cent. In 2012 the whole of Tuggeranong was in the Brindabella electorate, Liberal candidates included the leader Zed Seslja and the Deputy leader Brendan Smyth. In 2016 both of these were no longer candidates³. The Hare Clark system is very sensitive to candidate's profiles. In Brindabella the Liberals endorsed Mark Parton, a former radio presenter⁴. He was elected.

Weston Creek - A large swing against the ALP (6.7 per cent) and a moderate swing to the Liberals of 2.4 per cent. The Greens improved by 1.5 per cent and the Sex party received 3.3 per cent of the vote. Again candidate profile may have played a part. The Liberal leader Jeremy Hanson was a candidate along with Giulia Jones a sitting member. Whereas, the ALP candidates were all newcomers with a lower profile.

Woden - The ALP had a setback in this community with a swing of -7.5 per cent, the Liberals achieved their best swing of 4.1 per cent. This may be one area where Labor lost votes directly to the Liberals. As Woden is in the same electorate as Weston Creek, candidate profile may also have been a factor. Also the Liberal anti-tram and rates campaign may have resonated here more than elsewhere.

Each community was also subject to demographic changes. These can impact on voting patterns. The most recent demographic data is from the 2011 census, now 5 years out of date. Data from the 2016 Census will be available from April 2017⁵.

The 2016 election in historical context

Local elections have been held in the ACT since at least 1930 for a variety of local bodies. The earliest data from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) for ACT local elections is for the Advisory Council election of 1967. Data for elections before then are hard to find, even in the AEC. Since the inception of responsible government in 1989 there have been nine elections. Details of these are reported in Table 3.

In the first ACT self government election in 1989 the major party (ALP and Liberals) share of the vote was only 37.70 per cent, it peaked at 81.65 per cent in 2004 when the ALP won a majority. In 2008 the share dipped substantially when the Greens, Australian Motorists Party,

Community Alliance and Independents shared a lot of votes. However, in 2012 the majors recovered to obtain 77.78 per cent, the second highest for the years covered.

In 2016 the share of votes obtained by the ALP and Liberals declined slightly to 75.1 per cent but that was still way above the average of 65.33 per cent.

The average share for the major parties is 65.33 per cent, meaning that around 35 per cent of ACT residents are not committed to a major party.

Table 3: Votes of Major parties in ACT Local Elections since 1967

Election	ALP	Liberal	ALP-Lib	ALP+Lib	ALP swing	Lib Swing
ACT Advisory Council - 8 seats						
1967	37.50	25.00	12.50	62.50		
1970	30.40	13.50	16.90	43.90	-7.10	-11.50
ACT Legislative Assembly - 18 seats						
1974	24.20	33.60	-9.40	57.80	-6.20	20.10
ACT House of Assembly - 18 seats						
1979	41.50	21.20	20.30	62.70	17.30	-12.40
1982	41.00	25.80	15.20	66.80	-0.50	4.60
ACT self Government Legislative Assembly for the ACT - 17 seats						
1989	22.80	14.90	7.90	37.70	-18.20	-10.90
1992	39.90	29.00	10.90	68.90	17.10	14.10
1995	31.63	40.48	-8.85	72.11	-8.27	11.48
1998	27.61	37.83	-10.22	65.44	-4.02	-2.65
2001	41.70	31.60	10.10	73.30	14.09	-6.23
2004	46.84	34.81	12.03	81.65	5.12	3.17
2008	37.39	31.59	6.00	68.98	-9.45	-3.32
2012	38.88	38.90	-0.02	77.78	1.49	7.31
Legislative Assembly of 25 seats						
2016	38.40	36.70	1.70	75.10	-0.50	-2.20
Average	35.70	29.64	6.10	65.33	7.81*	7.85*

Source: Elections ACT, Australian Electoral Commission and the Canberra Times

*sign ignored

The two major parties have tended to increase their share of votes since self government in 1989. Given that there was a record number of candidates and new parties in 2016 it is surprising that, despite reported disillusionment with politics within Australia and around the world, the two traditional parties have maintained support in the ACT. The Greens, also a major party, have consistently scored around 10 per cent since their debut in 1995.

It was the tram what did it

So in a world of Brexits, Trump and one-term governments why has the ACT shown such political stability? The ACT ALP has now won five elections since 2001. The only other Australian jurisdiction to do this is South Australia⁶.

Prior to the election the light rail project (tram) appeared to be the most contentious issue.

Some observers claimed that the election would be a referendum on it. From the feature and letters pages of the 'Canberra Times' there were almost endless negative comments about the project. Some were from former senior officers of the ACT Government. Anecdotal evidence from conversations also suggested that the project was not popular.

The ALP promised to build a light rail system from Gungahlin to Civic at the 2012 election, a promise that was disputed but found to be correct by the ABC's fact check program⁷.

The Liberals claimed that the ALP had no mandate for the project and promised to abandon it if elected, even repudiating any contracts the government would enter into. Such action would involve penalties, estimated to be \$300m by the Chief minister Andrew Barr.

The Liberal argument was that the project was expensive and unnecessary, buses could do the job cheaper as well as serving all parts of Canberra, not just Gungahlin.

A group "Can the tram" was set up to oppose the project. Another group "I love light rail" supported it. Both used social media to promote their cause.

A poll conducted by the trade unions⁸ found 38.8 per cent supported light rail, 46.3 per cent were opposed and 14.9 per cent were undecided. However, that poll also reported the that if an ACT election were held today 37.4 per cent of respondents favoured Labor and 32.2 per cent the Liberals. Opposition to the tram did not seem to be reflected in voting intention.

According to ACT Government-commissioned research, conducted in August 2014, 55 per cent supported the project. In July/August 2015 another poll⁹, conducted by Unions ACT, found that 55 per cent of Canberrans were strongly in favour of the tram project with 27 per cent strongly opposed.

The Liberal's opposition could be seen as opportunistic, but in the light of these outcomes, they may have displayed a commitment to a policy stance not based on populism¹⁰.

Tram projects in Adelaide and the Gold Coast have proved to be successful and a tram line (in 2016) is being built in Sydney.

In the election the swing to Labor in Gungahlin (where the tram is to go) was substantial, 9.5 per cent. The swing against the Liberals was 10.5 per cent .

The reason could be explained by demographic changes as Gungahlin is a growth area. Focussing on the Palmerston polling booth may clarify the voting changes. Palmerston is the oldest and most established suburb of Gungahlin. Therefore, demographic factors would be minimised.

Table 5 Voting at Palmerston* polling booth: ACT and Federal elections

	ALP	Liberal	Difference
Federal House of Representatives seat of Fenner-July 2016	45.7	34.9	10.8
Federal Senate-July 2016	41.0	33.1	7.9
ACT Yerabi-October 2016	48.1	31.8	16.3
ACT Ginninderra-October 2012	36.5	38.3	-1.8

Source: Elections ACT and Australian Electoral Commission

*Palmerston was in the Ginninderra electorate in 2012 but moved to Yerabi in 2016

It is clear that in the 2016 ACT election the ALP vote was much higher than that of 2012 and the 2016 Federal election. The tram project was not an issue in 2012 and not a direct issue in the Federal Election¹¹.

In past elections Gungahlin was one of the Liberals stronger communities. In 2012 the Liberals received 44.4 per cent to Labor's 37.3 per cent. The 2016 vote was enough to ensure that Labor got three seats in Yerabi which together with three in Ginninderra enabled them to obtain 12 seats overall, thus enabling them to form government with the support of the two Green members.

It is instructive to observe that a lot of loud protest does not always reflect majority opinion. A lot of smoke does not always mean a lot of fire.

Corflutes. Corflutes, Corflutes

With the Hare Clark electoral system the voter has a greater role in selecting candidates. They not only have to choose a party or independent but also need to select a candidate for a first preference vote.

Table 6: Top 40 Candidates

	Candidate	Votes	Elected	Party	Leader/Minister	Incumbent
1	Jeremy Hanson	11,224	*	Lib	*	*
2	Andrew Barr	10,398	*	ALP	*	*
3	Meegan Fitzharris	7,790	*	ALP	*	*
4	Alister Coe	7,259	*	Lib	*	*
5	Shane Rattenbury	6,307	*	Green	*	*
6	Andrew Wall	5,614	*	Lib		*
7	Mark Parton	4,962	*	Lib		
8	Michael Petterson	4,817	*	ALP		
9	Yvette Berry	4,770	*	ALP	*	*
10	Chris Steel	4,575	*	ALP		
11	Elizabeth Lee	4,429	*	Lib		
12	Bec Cody	4,373	*	ALP		
13	Vicki Dunne	4,251	*	Lib	*	*
14	Nicole Lawder	4,166	*	Lib		*
15	Mick Gentleman	3,964	*	ALP	*	*
16	Gordon Ramsey	3,934	*	ALP		
17	Tara Cheyne	3,875	*	ALP		
18	James Mulligan	3,872	*	Lib		
19	Joy Burch	3,838	*	ALP		*
20	Steve Doszpot	3,834	*	Lib		*
21	Suzanne Orr	3,726	*	ALP		
22	Giulia Jones	3,594	*	Lib		*
23	Chris Bourke	3,551		ALP	*	*
24	Peter Hosking	3,530		Lib		
25	Kym Fischer	3,364		ALP		
26	Jan Newman	3,260		ALP		
27	Caroline LeCouteur	3,248	*	Green		
28	Jason Hinder	3,206		ALP		*
29	Paul Sweeney	3,202		Lib		
30	Ed Cocks	3,195		Lib		
31	Elizabeth Kikkert	3,158	*	Lib		
32	Jacob Vadakkedathu	3,146		Lib		
33	Indra EsGuerra	3,036		Green		

34	Gupta Deepak-Raj	2,973		ALP	
35	Anjie Drake	2,940		ALP	
36	Denise Fisher	2,802		Lib	
37	Rachel Stehphen Smith	2,782	*	ALP	
38	Amanda Lynch	2,658		Lib	
39	Kim Huynh	2,365		Ind	
40	Veronica Wensing	2,332		Green	
41	Josh Ceramandis	2,249		ALP	
42	Steven Bailey	2,071		Sex	

Source: Elections ACT

In a single member system once they choose the party voters have to vote for the candidate chosen by that party. Also in most proportional systems they can vote for a party list but the party chooses the order of candidates on that list¹². In an election campaign with Hare Clark Robson Rotation there are effectively two campaigns running simultaneously. A party campaign that implores voters to vote for party X and a campaign at electorate level where candidates canvass votes for themselves. In the ACT parties do not advocate for candidate Y but leave it up to the voter. These electorate level campaigns are often more lively than the overall campaign. Voters tend to opt for candidates with high profiles. In Table 6 the top 5 vote getters were all leaders as well as incumbents. Of the top 10 7 were incumbent and 6 in leadership positions. Being a leader or an incumbent provides greater opportunity for exposure and profile. A candidate who is not incumbent can get elected if they have a profile in another field. Number 7 (Mark Parton) was a radio presenter and number 16 (Gordon Ramsey) was a high profile church leader and shared the name of a celebrity chef.

While parties have the funds to buy advertising on media individual candidates usually do not. They rely on the old standbys of raffles, donations, trivia nights etc. Consequently the only publicity media available are letterbox drops, door knocking, social media and corflutes¹³. A lot of corflutes were deployed in the 2016 elections and quite a few residents were upset by their proliferation on Canberra road verges. But for a lesser-known candidate they are an important way to get their name out there.

Electorate campaigns are like State of Origin rugby league, mate against mate. It is not unusual for incumbents to be defeated by candidates from their own party. In this election Chris Bourke, an incumbent and a Minister, was not reelected but replaced by another ALP candidate.

Candidates generally conduct positive campaigns highlighting their capacity to represent the voter. They will stress their achievements as incumbents or, if not, their involvement in the community. Candidates seldom make negative comments about their opponents, especially those of their party. Also a candidate's factional alliance is rarely alluded to; although, sometimes such alliances are common knowledge. It is not clear if it has any impact on voting.

From Table 6 the top 22 vote-getters were elected. The quota was around 8,000, only the respective party leaders Andrew Barr and Jeremy Hanson achieved a quota. All the others needed preferences to get to quota. However, first preference votes are vital. A candidate with a low first preference vote will rarely succeed.

Conclusions

The relatively easy return of the ALP/Green ACT Government surprised many. Pundits predicted a Liberal win. The tram, rate increases, development issues and a feeling of "It's Time" probably influenced this view.

It was extremely unusual that no polls were taken by the major polling companies over the four-year term. Even the Northern Territory had some polls. At least the ACT Government could get on with the job without being distracted by polls. The Canberra Times who had in the past commissioned polls did not do so this time. Sample surveys are a complex and technical

process, hence expensive. Newspapers are now financially stretched and are less inclined to sponsor them. But polls were taken by the parties and others¹⁴.

The union poll, taken in May 2015, reported party support at: ALP 37.4 per cent and Liberal 32.2 per cent, despite finding that the tram was opposed by 46.3 per cent and supported by 38.8 per cent. Another poll¹⁵, conducted by the Canberra Community Voters Party in September 2016, reported party support at: ALP 39 per cent, Liberals 37 per cent. A quite accurate prediction of the outcome.

Furthermore, the Federal election in July saw the ALP obtain a slight swing. Their Senate vote increased from 34.4 per cent in 2013 to 37.9 per cent in 2016. An unpopular State/Territory Government often rebounds on their party's Federal vote.

Given these facts the pundits¹⁶, may have misread the possibilities.

If the ACT Labor/Greens government lasts the full term Labor will have been in office 19 years by 2020. Long-term governments are not unusual in Australia. All states (except Western Australia) and the Northern Territory have experienced long-term government by one party for 25 years or more. But not so much in recent times.

It was claimed that the ALP's superior campaigning at the local level was the reason for their success. Such campaigning may have stabilised the ALP vote in Belconnen, North Canberra and Tuggeranong. They kept their 3 seats in Ginninderra which together with the 3 in Yerabi (where Labor obtained a sizable swing to it) put them in pole position.

Maybe, just maybe, the voters were happy with the government. The government has been centrist with a touch of Blairism¹⁷ in its earlier period. It has a good record in:

- ◆ Human rights issues
- ◆ Successful recovery after the 2003 bush fire disaster
- ◆ Dealing with asbestos contamination in dwellings
- ◆ Taxation reform
- ◆ Emissions reduction
- ◆ Water security
- ◆ the performance of the economy

And a perception that it is prepared to "have a go".

Since 2008 the ALP has governed with the support of the Greens. From 2008 to 2012 they sided with the ALP but were not part of the Government, although one of their members was Speaker. In the term between 2012 and 2016 one Green joined cabinet, an arrangement that is to be continued. It is possibly one of the most successful "Red-Green"¹⁸ coalitions in the world.

The expensive intervention by the club industry over poker machines in the Casino failed to have an impact. Consequently, governments may feel more emboldened to deal with issues in this space.

Of course the Liberals took a pounding from the media. They were accused of being too conservative and needed to lift their game. Actually they did quite well, their vote was above their long term average and higher than that in most Senate elections. Plus they offered an alternative.

Finally, Canberrans may be reaching a point where they feel comfortable with self government. It was strenuously opposed in the past. A 1978 referendum saw a self government proposal heavily defeated and the first Legislative Assembly contained four anti-self government members. Some older Canberrans still pine for the good old days of the Department of the Interior¹⁹ and the NCDC. In 2016 voters went to the polls accepting that Canberra's destiny now rests with them.

1. The Phlegmatic Electorate Meanjin Quarterly, v.26, no.1, Mar 1967, p.104
2. The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) was established in the mid 1950s by the Menzies Liberal Government to develop Canberra. It had total control of planning and developing new urban infrastructure. It was abolished in 1989 prior to ACT self government and replaced by the National Capital Authority which only has jurisdiction over the Parliamentary Triangle and certain other designated areas. Planning for the rest of Canberra is the responsibility of the ACT Government.
3. Brendan Smyth resigned from the Assembly prior to the election to take up a government post.
4. Breakfast presenter on Mix 106.3 and 2CC.
5. When it becomes available this section will be updated.
6. ALP elected in 2002 and been returned 2006, 2010 and 2014.
7. Canberra ABC Fact Check 7/2/2016.
8. A May 28 automated poll of 1446 territory residents commissioned by peak body Unions ACT asked respondents if they supported or opposed a light rail system. Reported in the Canberra times June 19 2015.
9. Reported in Canberra Times September 16 2015, this poll was an online poll with 1,014 in the sample.
10. Despite all the cynicism about politics, parties sometimes do stand on principle.
11. Anecdotal evidence from ALP candidates for Yerabi suggest that the tram was a popular project in the Gungahlin are.
12. In the Senate system the voter can vote for their choice of candidate but most do not. The order of candidates is the same on all ballot papers, while Hare Clark ballot papers have different orders depending upon the permutations involved with Robson Rotation, thus minimising the "donkey vote".
13. A pleated plastic weather durable sign of about 1 square metre that can be placed on road verges containing promotional material, popular with political candidates.
14. I was polled by Oz Panel for at least 12 months before the election by SMS. The questions were quite simple: would I vote ALP or Liberal and who would be better Chief Minister Hanson or Barr. I do not know for who it being done. Oz Panel is a part of Morgan Gallup.
15. Details of this poll can be found on the CCV Website.
16. I was no exception, with the fuss about the tram, rates and developers, I too thought the ALP may find it hard, but the Federal Election vote did seem to suggest that the ALP would survive.
17. Political attitudes associated with Tony Blair (Prime Minister of the UK from 1997 to 2007), these were an emphasis on social inclusion, human rights and equal opportunity, However Tony Blair was also influenced by the Hawke/Keating ALP governments.

18. Red-Green refers to coalitions between traditional social democratic parties and green parties. In Tasmania the ALP has governed with Greens but these have been problematic and the Tasmanian ALP has often pledged not to enter into such arrangements. In 2010 the Greens agreed to support the Gillard ALP Government but withdrew in 2013. Germany has also seen such arrangements at federal and state levels.

19. A Federal Government Department that administered Canberra prior to self government in 1989, it was renamed the Department of the Capital Territory in 1972.