



BACKGROUND NOTE

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Western Australian State Election 2013

Brenton Holmes
Politics and Public Administration Section

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Introduction

This Background Note provides a narrative account of the issues, dynamics and outcomes of the 2013 Western Australian (WA) state election. It draws extensively on newspaper and electronic media coverage of the election campaign, and information and data provided by the [Western Australian Electoral Commission \(WAEC\)](#).

The 2013 WA state general election—held on 9 March 2013—was the first election to be held after legislation was proclaimed in 2011 to fix the date of state general elections as the second Saturday in March, every four years.¹ Previously, the Legislative Council had fixed four year terms, but the Legislative Assembly was elected for up to four years commencing from the date of its first meeting following a general election.

The *Electoral Amendment and Constitution Act 2011* passed through the WA Parliament in 2011 and was proclaimed on 20 December 2011. It amended the *Electoral Act 1907* and the *Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899* to enable this fixed date for state general elections in Western Australia.²

New electoral boundaries applied for the 2013 WA election. After a review in 2011, boundaries were drawn in line with local changes in elector numbers.³ Election analyst Antony Green summarised the effects of the redistribution as follows:

The most significant change between the draft and final boundaries was the undoing of a proposal to transfer Mandurah from South West region to South Metropolitan Region. In undoing this change the Commission has reverted to using the metropolitan region boundary in place since 1989. Other changes of note were redrawing Joondalup to bring it close to the boundaries it had at the 2008 election, a decision that weakens the Liberal margin in neighbouring Ocean Reef.

Based on booth results from the 2008 election, the redistribution converts the seat of Morley from marginal Liberal to marginal Labor, while North West is re-named North West Central and becomes a National seat. This change brings the seat into line with the decision of MP Vince Catania to switch from Labor to the Nationals after the 2008 election.⁴

The last state general election was held on Saturday, 6 September 2008. The next state general election is due on Saturday, 11 March 2017.

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1. WA Electoral Commission (WAEC), 'Election facts and figures', website, viewed 17 March 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/media/election-facts-and-figures>
 2. WAEC, 'Fixed election dates', website, viewed 17 March 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/media-election-facts-and-figures/fixed-election-dates>
 3. A Green, *2011 redistribution Western Australia: analysis of final electoral boundaries*, Western Australian Parliamentary Library, Election Papers Series No. 1 / 2011, October 2011, viewed 17 January 2013, [http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/intranet/libpages.nsf/WebFiles/Publications+2011+Final+boundaries+AG/\\$FILE/WA2011_Redistribution+Nov+2011.pdf](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/intranet/libpages.nsf/WebFiles/Publications+2011+Final+boundaries+AG/$FILE/WA2011_Redistribution+Nov+2011.pdf). More information is available at www.boundaries.wa.gov.au.
 4. '2011 Western Australian redistribution', *ABC News*, 'Western Australian election', website, viewed 22 January 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/guide/redistribution.htm>

Background

The WA electoral framework

The WA Parliament is a bicameral legislature. There are [59 districts for the Legislative Assembly](#), each electing one member (59 in total). There are six regions for the Legislative Council, each electing six members (36 in total).⁵

The following legislation contains the rules of conduct in elections and for political financing arrangements:

[Electoral Act 1907](#)

[Electoral Regulations 1996](#)

[Electoral \(Ballot Paper Forms\) Regulations 1990](#)

[Electoral \(Political Finance\) Regulations 1996](#)

[Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899](#)

Candidates are elected to the Legislative Assembly through full preferential voting. Proportional representation is the voting system used in the Legislative Council.

2008 state general election

The ALP had been in power in Western Australia since 2001 and during that time the Liberals had experienced instability within the party. In Antony Green's analysis predicting the outcome of the 2008 poll he had written:

In calling one of the earliest elections in West Australian history, Premier Alan Carpenter is hoping to use the Liberal Party's chronic leadership instability as a stepping stone to win a third successive election for his Labor government. A third term would be a remarkable achievement for a government that won a surprise victory in 2001, struggled to win re-election in 2005, and has since been battered by a string of ministerial resignations.⁶

Barely a month before the 2008 election, the then Opposition Leader, Liberal Troy Buswell, was replaced by his deputy—and former WA Liberals leader—[Colin Barnett](#) after a series of controversies. In particular, Buswell admitted to snapping the bra of a Labor staffer in mid-2007 and

5. WAEC, 'State elections', website, viewed 17 January 2013, http://www.waec.wa.gov.au/elections/state_elections/

6. A Green 'Election summary, 2008 Western Australian election, *ABC Elections*, website, viewed 17 January 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2008/>

sniffing the chair of a Liberal staffer after she had been sitting in his office in 2005.⁷ At the time of Barnett's re-elevation to the Liberal leadership he was contemplating retirement from politics.⁸

Labor had occupied the Treasury benches since 2001, and the 2008 state election produced a hung parliament. Neither of the main parties won a majority (that is, 30 of the 59) seats in the Legislative Assembly. The Australian Labor Party won 28 seats, the Liberal Party 24 seats, the National Party four seats, and there were three Independents elected—Janet Woollard (Alfred Cove), Elizabeth Constable (Churchlands) and John Bowler (Kalgoorlie).⁹ A total of 21 new members were elected—13 for the Liberals and eight for Labor.¹⁰ In the Legislative Council, Labor won 11 seats, Liberals 16 seats, the Nationals five and the Greens four seats (up from two in 2005). Thirteen new members were elected to the Council.¹¹

In the event, the Nationals threw their support behind the Liberals, and with the additional support of the Independents, Colin Barnett was able to form a government.¹² A key element of the Nationals' deal with the Liberals was that the new government would implement the Nationals' 'Royalties for Regions' scheme, which required that a quarter of WA's mining royalties be spent in regional communities.¹³

A by-election for the seat of Fremantle in 2009 saw WA Greens candidate Adele Carles win the traditionally Labor seat. Carles later became an Independent after revelations of an affair with Troy Buswell, but said she would vote with the Barnett Government to guarantee supply and to oppose any motion of no-confidence in the Government.¹⁴

It remained the case, though, that Barnett's hold on power was precarious. The combined Liberals and Nationals remained two seats short of a majority. Despite its lack of a majority, the Barnett Government remained stable and entered the 2013 election with a comfortable lead in the opinion polls.

7. AAP, 'Troy Buswell's controversial career', *WAtoday.com.au*, 10 December 2012, viewed 17 January 2013,

<http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/troy-buswells-controversial-career-20121210-2b515.html>

8. '2013 Western Australian Election: election preview', *ABC News*, website, viewed 17 January 2013,

<http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/guide/preview.htm>

9. WAEC, '2008 state general election details', website, viewed 17 January 2013,

http://www.waec.wa.gov.au/elections/state_elections/election_results/2008_State_General_Election/legislative_assembly_elected_members.php

10. *Ibid.*

11. WAEC, '2008 state general election details', *op. cit.*

12. 'Nationals hand WA election win to the Liberals', *ABC News*, 14 September 2008, viewed 17 January 2013,

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-09-14/nationals-hand-wa-election-win-to-the-liberals/509852>

13. The scheme funded \$1 billion of projects in the Pilbara between 2008 and 2013. See N Gerritsen, 'Pilbara promises heat up WA race', *Australian Financial Review*, 24 January 2013, p. 9, viewed 24 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2181638%22>

14. J Spagnolo, 'Premier Barnett brokers 'secret deal' with Independent MP Adele Carles', *Perth Now*, 6 November 2010, viewed 26 March 2013, <http://www.perthnow.com.au/archive/news/mp-staff-deal-hinges-on-support-carles-claims/story-e6frg14c-1225948751087>

The 2013 campaign

The state of the parties prior to the official campaign

The Barnett Government was not scheduled to enter caretaker mode until early February 2013, and the Premier had said that the campaign would not begin until after Australia Day, 26 January 2013.¹⁵ But as the new year got underway it was apparent that the parties were already moving onto an election footing:

[P]hoto-shopped pictures of candidates adorn almost every bus shelter and rubbish bin in WA and smaller campaign signs seem to be breeding in people's front yards.¹⁶

Both parties had already published major public transport plans—considered ‘a key election issue as Perth’s road and transport networks buckle’.¹⁷

Federal Labor MP and Defence Minister, Stephen Smith, declared that Colin Barnett ‘will start the state election campaign as clear favourite to win another term’ while backing Opposition Leader Mark McGowan ‘to run a close race’.¹⁸ Smith dismissed any ‘negative impact on the ALP’s chances through the unpopularity of Prime Minister Julia Gillard’ in Western Australia:

“It is quite clear that Colin Barnett starts as favourite, but I think Mark McGowan has been doing a very good job of arranging a number of positive policy proposals,” Mr Smith said.

“(Voters) are smart enough to work out this is a state poll. Do they want eight long years of Colin Barnett, and the potential for (state treasurer Troy) Buswell in the course of that eight-year period?

“Or do they want Mr McGowan, who from the first moment he became leader of the opposition conducted himself as an alternative premier?”¹⁹

Meanwhile, Barnett declared that he was ‘not going to run around and play that game of pretending to be an underdog’, saying that he was a ‘realist’, that the Liberal Party ‘holds less seats than Labor’ and that ‘probably 20 seats ... could go either way’.²⁰

15. D Brown, ‘The whitened teeth and botoxed foreheads of fixed term elections’, *WAtoday.com.au*, 23 January 2013, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/the-whitened-teeth-and-botoxed-foreheads-of-fixed-term-elections-20130123-2d6f4.html>

16. Ibid.

17. N Gerritson, ‘Barnett shuns early campaign’, *Australian Financial Review*, 11 January 2013, p. 7, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2157311%22>

18. AAP, ‘Barnett the WA election favourite: Smith’, *news.com.au*, 15 January 2013, viewed 17 January 2013, <http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/national/barnett-the-wa-election-favourite-smith/story-e6frku9-1226554418791>

19. Ibid.

20. N Gerritson, ‘Barnett insists WA a close call’, *Australian Financial Review*, 15 January 2013, p. 9, viewed 18 January 2013,

Barnett, who is widely regarded in WA as a forceful personality—earning him the moniker ‘the emperor’²¹—had become strongly associated with WA’s resources boom and with the ‘massive projects ... either under way or under construction’.²² Claims by Labor that Barnett would retire during the next parliament—thereby raising the prospect of his scandal-prone Treasurer, Troy Buswell, becoming premier—were repudiated by Barnett: ‘My future, if that’s of great interest, will be an issue at the following election in 2017’.²³

A *Newspoll* taken between October and December, reported in *The Australian* newspaper on 14 January 2013, gave the WA coalition a 58-42 two-party preferred lead over Labor.²⁴ The poll also indicated 48 per cent of voters prefer Mr Barnett as premier, compared to 29 per cent for Mr McGowan.²⁵

On a two-party preferred basis, the Liberal-Nationals government’s 58 per cent rating was one per cent higher than the previous polling period.²⁶ Labor recorded its lowest two-party preferred result in a year, while support for the Greens remained unchanged on 12 per cent.²⁷

The *Newspoll* survey had ended on 16 December, ‘a week after blanket media coverage of allegations that strife-prone Treasurer Troy Buswell “dry humped” a prominent entrepreneur at a function attended by some of the state’s most influential business figures’.²⁸ The betting agency TomWaterhouse.com—the first major agency to offer odds on the election—had Labor \$4.85 outsiders to the Liberals’ \$1.10.²⁹

Notwithstanding the *Newspoll* results, one analyst outlined an approach that he considered could possibly militate against the seeming inevitability of a Barnett win:

A strategy that could work for Labor here is the one that saved the Rann government in South Australia in 2010, designed by lobbyist Bruce Hawker ... Facing an imminent and well-deserved

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query%3DId%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2164720%22>

21. J Hewett, ‘Emperor Barnett rules, OK?’, *Australian Financial Review*, 16 November 2012, AFR website, viewed 25 January 2013, http://www.afr.com/p/national/emperor_barnett_rules_ok_9fpWgFVvNOK41yVKnZu37J
22. P Taylor, ‘Labor seeks to scare voters over Troy Buswell’, *The Australian*, 14 January 2013, viewed 17 January 2013, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/opinion/labor-seeks-to-scare-voters-over-troy-buswell/story-e6frgd0x-1226553102544>
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. P Taylor and N Perpetch, ‘Colin Barnett stretches pre-poll margin: *Newspoll*’, *The Australian*, 14 January 2013, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/colin-barnett-stretches-pre-poll-margin-newspoll/story-e6frgczx-1226553167130>
27. Ibid.
28. P Taylor and N Perpetch, ‘Barnett stretches pre-poll margin’, *The Australian*, 14 January 2013, p. 1, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2164012%22>
29. D Emerson, ‘Libs open fire in poll mind games’, *Weekend West*, 5 January 2013, p. 11, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2146376%22>

defeat against ordinary opposition, Mike Rann survived a 9 per cent swing against Labor to win with just 48 per cent of the two-party preferred vote through a cunning campaign in a small number of marginal seats. ... [The] core of such a strategy here in WA would revolve around securing the low-hanging fruit in Morley, Mt Lawley and Riverton.

While marginal seat campaigns are inherently easier with the available largesse of incumbency, Labor would also need to shore up shaky positions in Albany, Balcatta and Forrestfield, which should not be beyond any half-competent political strategist. Labor's unlikely win in SA was predicated on saving four of its five most marginal seats against a big swing. Mark McGowan could still win in WA by adapting the Hawker strategy.³⁰

Because in Western Australia the Nationals and Liberals are not in an established coalition as they are at the federal level, it was theoretically possible that the Nationals could choose to support either a minority Labor or a minority Liberal government should neither main party achieve a majority of seats. This was the situation that prevailed after the 2008 election when Nationals leader Brendon Grylls made overtures and preference-swap offers to both Labor and the Liberals for support for his Royalties for Regions program.³¹

In December 2012, Labor leader Mark McGowan had categorically ruled out any arrangement to form government with the Nationals should such a possibility arise.³² Two weeks later, the Nationals said that the feeling was 'mutual', thus in Labor's view effectively committing the Liberals and Nationals to a joint ticket.³³

Early 2013 had also seen continued wrangling between the Liberal and Labor leaders over the number of televised debates to be held during the campaign. Traditionally there had only been one leaders' debate during WA election campaigns, but Labor's McGowan had been urging a three-round series of debates in the manner of the US presidential campaigns.³⁴ A debate had already been agreed for ABC television on 19 February. This was to be hosted by ABC newsreader James McHale and was to feature a panel of five journalists asking questions of the leaders.³⁵ Details of the leaders' debate appear later in this paper.

30. P Murray, 'Opinion poll figures marginally off target', *The West Australian*, 16 January 2013, p. 20, viewed 18 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2167457%22>

31. D Emerson, 'Nats rule out Labor union after election', *The West Australian*, 7 January 2013, p. 8, viewed 18 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2149670%22>

32. G Parker, 'Labor rules out Nationals tie', *The West Australian*, 26 December 2012, p. 11, viewed 18 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2127805%22>

33. Ibid.

34. G Adshead, 'Barnett rejects more TV debates before poll', *The West Australian*, 8 January 2013, p. 4, viewed 18 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2153363%22>

35. Ibid.

A debate between Treasurer Troy Buswell and the shadow treasurer, Labor's Ben Wyatt—to be hosted by the publisher of WA Business News—had also been scheduled for February 26.³⁶ The Chamber of Commerce and Industry also invited Premier Barnett, WA Nationals leader Grylls and Labor leader McGowan to a business forum during the election campaign.³⁷

In mid-January 2013, *The West Australian* newspaper announced the introduction of 'a new column called The Fact Checker', which would 'put the claims of politicians under the spotlight and compare them with the known facts'.³⁸

It is not good enough for politicians to seemingly pluck numbers out of the ether, such as Mr Barnett's claim on an FM radio show this week that about \$100 million would be lost if the proposed stadium was moved from Burswood to Subiaco. Facing questioning about his claim yesterday, Mr Barnett suggested it would be boring if he answered a random question by saying he would go back to Treasury and come back in three weeks with a report. Politicians should be able to say they don't know the answer, promise to check with the people who should know and then explain the basis of claims they make. That does not stop them, in the meantime, forcibly advocating their decisions and their policies based on correct information.³⁹

The West Australian's editor, Paul Murray, also reportedly lamented that candidates were not advertising in the newspaper because they wanted to avoid scrutiny.⁴⁰ In response, the Independent candidate for Kalamunda, Greg Ross, argued that

... advertising in *The West Australian* is cost prohibitive ... And from a marketing perspective, it's a very broad brush approach to reach the targeted electorate audience and very expensive, it makes far more sense to utilise local print media. ...

Then you have to pay in advance – you're a nobody, you don't have the luxury of 60-day accounts, so it's money up front. In the last two days, I've paid just over \$10,000 to secure space and time. Yet the local papers won't do an editorial on me, however they will give editorials to party candidates who haven't as yet advertised – the playing field is distinctly uneven and weighted against an independent.⁴¹

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36. G Parker, 'Numbers duo to spar', *The West Australian*, 15 January 2013, p. 10, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2165818%22>
 37. 'Business push for debate', *The West Australian*, 18 January 2013, p. 4, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2171115%22>
 38. Editorial, 'Facts the leaven for political pressure cooker', *The West Australian*, 17 January 2013, p. 20, viewed 18 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2169211%22>
 39. Ibid.
 40. G Ross, 'An inconvenient truth: what life is really like for an independent election candidate', *WAtoday.com.au*, 22 January 2013, website, viewed 22 January 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/opinion/an-inconvenient-truth-what-life-is-really-like-for-an-independent-election-candidate-20130121-2d3g3.html>
 41. Ibid.

The unofficial campaign intensifies

Seven weeks out from the election, with the 2013 campaign still not officially underway, a *Westpoll* of 400 voters showed that Labor's Mark McGowan had made 'no headway' in his 12 months as Labor leader.⁴² Barnett remained preferred Premier on 51 per cent, with McGowan on 35 per cent.⁴³ Public transport and congestion proved the most potent election issue 'eclips[ing] health, economic management, education and the cost of living which is falling off the radar as an issue':⁴⁴

Labor has recently switched tactics to put its Metronet public transport plan at the centre of its campaign. "Labor is not making any ground at all using their cost of living mantra," pollster Patterson Research Group said.⁴⁵

It was not long before the two major parties were trading blows over the respective costs of Labor's [Metronet](#) proposal and the Liberals' major light rail development.⁴⁶ Treasurer Buswell claimed that Metronet would cost \$6.4 billion—a figure that Labor said was 'wildly inflated'.⁴⁷ The row extended to whether Buswell's use of the public service to cost Labor's plan—a task which Labor said was 'party political'—breached public service rules.⁴⁸ Premier Barnett said 'it was appropriate for a minister to direct their department to cost any proposals they liked, but only until election writs were issued triggering the so-called 'caretaker mode''.⁴⁹

The jostle over public transport proposals and their costings proved a recurring theme during the election campaign.

On the basis of the mid-January *Westpoll*, *The Weekend West* editorialised that:

This election is Mr Barnett's to lose. He will have to show he is listening to voter concerns about transport, health and education, sell some financially responsible initiatives and, most importantly, avoid any canal-sized clangers.⁵⁰

The Buswell factor also remained in the public eye as it had been reported a few days earlier that Buswell's \$3 million defamation case against his former lover, Adele Carles MLA, was listed to begin

42. G Parker, 'Labor's uphill battle', *Weekend West*, 19 January 2013, p. 1, viewed 21 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2173274%22>

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. G Parker, 'Parties trade blows over Metronet costs', *The West Australian*, 23 January 2013, p. 13, viewed 23 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2180961%22>

47. D Emerson and K Bastians, 'Opposition digs deeper on Metronet costings', *The West Australian*, 24 January 2013, p. 4, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2182941%22>

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Editorial, 'Barnett must keep campaign on the rails', *Weekend West*, 19 January 2013, p. 32, viewed 21 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2173417%22>

in court three days before election day.⁵¹ Carles had won the traditionally Labor-held seat of Fremantle as a Green candidate in 2008, but she resigned from the party to become an Independent after her affair with Buswell became public knowledge in 2010.⁵² At the Greens official campaign launch, the party declared its confidence in regaining Fremantle with a Green candidate—local councillor Andrew Sullivan.⁵³

Meanwhile, some lighthearted fun on-air by McGowan earned him a journalistic rebuke:

McGowan took his campaign to the state's most marginal seat, Albany, which Labor holds by just 0.8 per cent. Appearing on the morning show on Radio West 783, McGowan was sweet-talked into dancing to viral K-Pop hit Gangnam Style, complete with mock horse-riding and choruses of "hey sexy lady". He is not the first pollie to make a dill of himself through dance. Infamous attention-seeker Kevin Rudd tried a "Ruddnam style" version of the hit on Sunrise last year. And who can forget the sight of then-treasurer Peter Costello doing the Macarena with Kerri-Anne Kennerley live on air in 1996.⁵⁴

With *Westpoll* confirming voters anxieties about infrastructure and services, the state's balance sheet was bound to remain a key election issue—especially given that, following the Government's Mid-Year Review in December 2012, debt had become 'a political millstone for the Government, with global ratings agencies warning ... that the State was racking up too much on its credit card'.⁵⁵

At the same time, a surge in iron ore prices late in 2012 had resulted in the state's finances shifting from a forecast \$187 million deficit in 2013–14 into a projected surplus fuelled by a potential \$1.5 billion in extra revenue to mid-2014.⁵⁶ In mid-January 2013, Treasurer Buswell said that he would use any increased income to stabilise the state's debt, but would also continue to pursue infrastructure projects in response to the rapid population growth arising from Western Australia's booming resources-based economy.⁵⁷ In a campaign context—and on the basis of a Deloitte Access quarterly report on the national economy showing growth reducing to more modest levels—*The West Australian* opined:

The parties have a responsibility to be restrained in their promises. The Government is already struggling to keep up with demands in health, education, police and transport as the population rises rapidly. This is hard enough even if revenue holds up, but increasingly the flow of money is

51. 'Buswell v Carles case in election week', *perthnow.com.au*, 16 January 2013, viewed 17 January 2013,

<http://www.optuszoo.com.au/news/top/perth-now/buswell-v-carles-case-in-election-week/897058>

52. N Perpetch, 'Greens eye Fremantle seat', *The Australian*, 21 January 2013, p. 4, viewed 21 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2176967%22>

53. Ibid.

54. The Prince, 'So, they stink when they dance', *Australian Financial Review*, 19 January 2013, p. 53, viewed 21 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2171795%22>

55. P Kerr, 'Buswell turns on cautious mode', *Weekend West*, 19 January 2013, p. 66, viewed 21 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2173519%22>

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

falling short of what is needed to meet those demands. The forecasts by Deloitte Access confirm that this trend is going to worsen.⁵⁸

Population growth also prompted the emergence of law and order as an election issue, with the WA Police Union ‘demanding both major parties commit to recruiting 800 extra officers over four years to keep pace with WA’s booming population’.⁵⁹ The Union claimed that WA’s population was increasing at a rate of 1 500 people a week.⁶⁰

Premier Barnett responded that ‘community safety no longer hing[ed] solely on the number of police officers on the beat, with technology and legislation playing increasing roles’.⁶¹ In 2008 the Government made a promise to recruit 350 extra officers and had added 180 during 2009–10.⁶² The President of the WA Police Union, George Tilbury, reportedly ‘threatened to take out newspaper advertisements outing MPs in marginal seats who did not support the demands’.⁶³

In what proved to be the first bid in the official election campaign’s law-and-order auction, Mark McGowan promised 500 more police officers, at least three more police stations and an expanded mounted police division.⁶⁴ Barnett, too, would later put a ‘crackdown on crime’ high on his list of election promises, saying his ‘first legislative priority would be to set minimum jail terms for adult home invaders convicted of committing serious physical or sexual assaults’.⁶⁵ McGowan would not say whether he supported mandatory minimum jail terms, saying that he supported ‘sending people to jail who break into people’s homes and commit serious offences’—to which Barnett responded that ‘this was entirely consistent with Labor’s soft approach to crime’.⁶⁶

A corollary of WA’s burgeoning population was a shortage of houses and land for residential development, especially in more remote locations such as the Pilbara. In turn this had led to

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58. Editorial, ‘Waning boom puts priorities in the spotlight’, *The West Australian*, 29 January 2013, p. 20, viewed 29 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2192795%22>
59. D Emerson, ‘800 police wanted’, *West Australian*, 22 January 2013, p. 1, viewed 22 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2179092%22>
60. Ibid.
61. D Emerson, ‘Hi-tech cops key: Barnett’, *The West Australian*, 23 January 2013, p. 12, viewed 23 January 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2180948%22>
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. B Thomas, ‘McGowan promises 500 extra officers’, *The West Australian*, 6 February 2013, p. 12, viewed 6 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2211494%22>
65. B Thomas and others, ‘Barnett puts crackdown on crime top of agenda’, *The West Australian*, 7 February 2013, p. 11, viewed 7 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2213457%22>
66. P Taylor and N Perpetch, ‘Buswell claims the credit as debt risk fades’, *The Australian*, 8 February 2013, p. 8, viewed 8 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2214990%22>

dramatic increases in rents being charged for available properties. The issue was as an early focus of the parties' attempts to woo voters.⁶⁷

On 23 January 2013, Labor announced a major funding commitment to the Pilbara, 'with the Premier taking responsibility for Regional Development in WA and the reappointment of a Minister for the Pilbara region'.⁶⁸ There would also be 'a series of further announcements for the Pilbara in the areas of law and order, cost of living, health, education, the environment and jobs ahead of the State election'.⁶⁹ The plan included establishing a Pilbara Redevelopment Authority 'to address bottlenecks in land release in towns in the Pilbara' and 'to use Royalties for Regions funding to tackle housing shortages, especially where affordability is a major problem'.⁷⁰

WA Labor said it would:

Allocate \$9 million to help Pilbara and other regional students to be able to study a full range of subject choices.

Invest \$6.5 million from Royalties for Regions in Karratha Senior High School.

Invest \$2.9 million in Hedland Senior High School.

Invest \$14 million in the South Hedland and Karratha Campuses of the Pilbara Institute.

Mr McGowan said WA Labor would also provide \$50 million for the sealing of the road between Newman and Nullagine.⁷¹

On the same day, the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) announced that it would publish a report card in suburban and regional newspapers on the responses of the four main political parties to WALGA's schedule of priorities ahead of the WA election:

Key issues covered in the initiative are clarity from the political parties on local government reform; securing pensioner and seniors' discounts on rubbish charges; introduction of a container deposit system similar to that in South Australia; funding support for grain transport infrastructure; more state funding for underground power; and action on the Swan-Canning river priority plan.⁷²

On 23 January, Antony Green published his [Election Calculator](#) for the WA election, which predicted—on the basis of the latest *WA Newspoll* indicating a 6.1 per cent swing—that the Liberals

67. A Massey and G Cordingley, 'Labor promises to free up Pilbara land supply', *The West Australian*, 23 January 2013, p. 12, viewed 23 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2180949%22>

68. M McGowan (Opposition Leader), *WA Labor outlines commitment to the Pilbara*, media release, 23 January 2013, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://walabor.org.au/news/2013/01/23/wa-labor-outlines-commitment-to-the-pilbara>

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. 'WALGA report card on WA election issues', *Local Government News*, 23 January 2013, website, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://www.lgnews.com.au/walga-report-card-wa-election-issues/>

and Nationals would win 41 seats (an increase of 13 seats), with Labor winning only 18 seats (a loss of nine).⁷³ Green predicted that Labor would regain Fremantle from Independent (former WA Greens) member Adele Carles.⁷⁴

The main election campaign begins

With Australia Day celebrations over—but with the Government still not in caretaker mode—the election campaign moved into a higher gear.⁷⁵ In what was essentially a concession that the election campaign was fully underway, Premier Barnett announced a \$70 million overhaul of two popular Perth beachfronts, and declared that ‘the state’s rental crisis will be the key cost-of-living issue in the state election campaign’.⁷⁶

Barnett confirmed that he had called a meeting of Liberal MPs to outline strict campaign rules, that reportedly included ‘not speaking to the media at all if (MPs) can avoid it during the election campaign’, and not getting ‘drawn in to a whole lot of issues out of your immediate area of responsibility or your immediate electorate’.⁷⁷

He told his MPs to disregard polls that indicated a comfortable victory, and warned that ill-discipline, by not following his rules, could be their downfall. MPs said Mr Barnett had his eyes fixed on another two terms of government for the Liberals, but feared any last-minute scandals or mistakes.⁷⁸

Unions WA launched print, online and television advertisements condemning the Barnett Government’s ‘failure to prioritise’, its substantial increases in gas and electricity charges, and criticising Barnett’s focus on glamour projects.⁷⁹

Labor posted four election videos on Youtube.⁸⁰ At Labor’s campaign launch on 28 January, McGowan described the election as ‘a referendum on priorities’.⁸¹

73. ‘Western Australian election: Antony Green’s election calculator’, *ABC News*, website, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/calculator/?mode=overall&overall=-6.1&pe=0&nm=0&retiringmps=false&kimb=nat&alfr=lib&chur=lib&frem=alp&kalg=nat&pilb=nat>

74. Ibid.

75. G Adshead and G Parker, ‘Leaders fire gun on race to power’, *The Weekend West*, 26 January 2013, p. 1, viewed 29 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2187076%22>

76. P Taylor, ‘Rental crisis key election issue’, *The Australian*, 28 January 2013, p. 2, viewed 29 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2192900%22>

77. ‘Premier Colin Barnett admits warning MPs’, *perthnow.com.au*, 28 January 2013, website, viewed 30 January 2013, <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/premier-denies-gag-order-during-election/story-e6frg13u-1226563554053>

78. Ibid.

79. E Moulton, ‘Unions’ \$1m ad attack’, *The Sunday Times*, 27 January 2013, p. 14, viewed 30 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2195122%22>

80. Viewed 29 January 2013 at <http://www.youtube.com/user/WALaborLeader>

Mr McGowan said relieving cost of living pressures, congestion on freeways and expanding industries outside mining, such as tourism, manufacturing, science, universities and hospitality, were key planks of Labor's campaign. He also pledged to focus on health and "fix the (hospital) waitlist", literacy and numeracy in education and community safety through more police officers and stations. In reiterating his pitch as an everyday man, he said Premier Colin Barnett was arrogant and out of touch and that his priorities and his instincts are all wrong.⁸²

A press release issued by McGowan, claiming that under the Barnett Government each WA household had 'copped increases in State Government fees and charges of more than \$1100 a year', was declared 'false' by *The West Australian's* Fact Checker team. Fact Checker stated that the \$1 135 increase was:

... spread over four years and applies only to the average household. Deviations from the "standard representative household" would produce a lower—or higher—figure.⁸³

The state's housing rental crisis remained a focus early in the campaign. Average rents in Perth were \$460 per week, rising to \$2 500 in Port Hedland. People applying for a tenancy have to pay the estate agent a 'rental option fee' — equivalent to a week's rent—that covers the cost of checking references. The fee is credited as rent if the applicant wins the tenancy, is refunded in full if the applicant is not awarded the tenancy, and is forfeited by the applicant if the applicant is awarded the tenancy but rejects it to rent elsewhere.⁸⁴ McGowan had pledged to abolish the rental option fee to make house-hunting more affordable for lower and middle-income families, but he was mocked by the Liberals who argued that the fee was already set to drop to a flat \$50 from April 1 under changes to Residential Tenancies Act regulations.⁸⁵

The possible presence of federal party leaders in the WA election campaign was also a matter for occasional media speculation, with early reports that Prime Minister Gillard would not travel to WA until mid-March, and that Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott might appear with Premier Barnett at the formal Liberal launch.⁸⁶ Reportedly several Liberal MPs urged Barnett to 'have as little contact with Mr Abbott as possible before the poll, warning that he is almost as unpopular as Ms Gillard in some Liberal seats'.⁸⁷

81. B Thomas, 'Labor launches its 'priorities referendum'', *The West Australian*, 29 January 2013, p. 6, viewed 29 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2192752%22>

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. D Emerson, 'Minister rubbishes Labor's vow on rent fee', *The West Australian*, 28 January 2013, p. 7, viewed 29 January 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2191166%22>

85. Ibid.

86. N Butterly and B Thomas, 'Gillard to avoid McGowan during poll', *The West Australian*, 30 January 2013, website thewest.com.au, viewed 30 January 2013, <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/16011881/gillard-to-avoid-mcgowan-during-poll/>

87. Ibid.

Barnett introduced the question of GST reform into local discussion of Federal matters, saying that he would withhold WA Liberal state funds from the Federal Liberals' election campaign if Abbott did not support GST reform.⁸⁸ The issue took on new significance when Prime Minister Gillard announced on 30 January that the 2013 Federal election would be held on 14 September. It was subsequently reported that Mr Abbott was 'cautious' in responding to Barnett's comments, saying he 'expected the Premier to fight for his state'.⁸⁹ But Liberal frontbencher Christopher Pyne was insistent that the Coalition 'had no plans to change division of the GST'.⁹⁰ WA Liberal Party officials were reported as saying that, notwithstanding Barnett's threats to withhold funding for the Federal campaign, the state branch was already contributing federally, 'often 50-50 and probably equates to tens of thousands of dollars this financial year'.⁹¹

On 6 February 2013, the election writs were formally issued, the Government entered caretaker mode, and the WA Electoral Commission was finalising its poll logistics.⁹²

The opinion polls were saying 'Mr Barnett is Black Caviar to opposition leader Mark McGowan's Black Beauty - with the Liberal Party at odds of \$1.10 to win, compared to Labor's \$4.85 with the bookmakers'.⁹³ But senior political analyst Peter van Onselen considered that the Barnett Government could not take victory for granted.⁹⁴ He noted that Labor need only four more seats to secure a majority, and argued that the traditionally Labor seats of Morley and Fremantle could well return to the ALP fold—leaving only two more required for victory.⁹⁵

Labor's difficulty, however, will be holding on to the seats it already has, especially in regional WA. The Nationals' Royalties for Regions program has delivered billions of dollars for regional parts of the state. The Nationals hope to pick up a handful of new seats because of it, especially in the state's north. Seats such as the Pilbara, now held by Labor, into which Nationals leader Brendon Grylls has bravely moved in a bid to enlarge his partyroom. If that happens, Labor will

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88. 'Barnett threatens Abbott over GST reform', *WAtoday.com.au*, 29 January 2013, website, viewed 30 January 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/barnett-threatens-abbott-over-gst-reform-20130129-2disj.html>
 89. M Dunckley, 'Premiers buy into campaign', *Australian Financial Review*, 31 January 2013, p. 12, viewed 4 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2197700%22>
 90. Ibid.
 91. J Barrett, 'Empty threat aside, WA backs Abbott', *Australian Financial Review*, 5 February 2013, p. 8, viewed 5 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2208396%22>
 92. A brief account of the logistics of the state election appears at Appendix 3.
 93. AAP, 'Play fighting over as WA election campaign begins', *WAtoday.com.au*, 6 February 2013, website, viewed 6 February 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/play-fighting-over-as-wa-election-campaign-begins-20130206-2dy1y.html>
 94. P van Onselen, 'Result not such a done deal yet', *The Australian*, 7 February 2013, p. 8, viewed 7 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query%3DId%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2213194%22>
 95. Ibid.

surely lose, but Barnett wouldn't be entirely happy with the result. He would like to govern in his own right, not be reliant on a Nationals party that refuses to enter into a formal coalition.⁹⁶

On the day that the writs were issued, voluntary euthanasia surfaced as an election issue by way of a newspaper story a few days earlier which had recounted the struggle of a sufferer of multiple sclerosis who took her own life.⁹⁷ McGowan had supported a conscience vote on the issue; Barnett did not support a legal system of euthanasia, saying he supported 'decisions about the care of the terminally ill being left to the doctors and the family'.⁹⁸ In a radio interview a few days later, McGowan said that if a 'reasonable piece of [voluntary euthanasia] legislation didn't come forward' that he would introduce one.⁹⁹

With transport remaining very much a live election issue, McGowan announced on 6 February that—should he become Premier—he would resign if, in his first term, the Metronet rail spur he promised was not built.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, the ANZ Banking Group placed the state's AAA credit rating on 'negative outlook', saying that 'the benefits of WA's resources-supported economy were not flowing to the budget bottom line at an equivalent pace even though conditions had improved recently'.¹⁰¹ The ANZ's move was a warning to both parties to be mindful of the cost of their major election promises, and the need to identify savings to fund them.¹⁰²

One month to go

On 9 February 2013, *Newspoll* revealed a boost in Labor's primary vote of five per cent since the previous poll (October–December 2012).¹⁰³ The two-party preferred vote saw Labor on 43 per cent and the Liberals/Nationals on 57 per cent.¹⁰⁴ On the question of preferred premier, McGowan had gained 11 points and Barnett had lost four—with the result that Barnett now led McGowan by only four points.¹⁰⁵ A majority of voters (59 per cent) believed the Liberals/Nationals would win the election, while only a quarter believed that Labor would win.¹⁰⁶ The *Newspoll* showed that the

96. Ibid.

97. K Emery and others, 'MPs ignoring voters' wishes on euthanasia', *The West Australian*, 6 February 2013, p. 9, viewed 6 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2211475%22>

98. Ibid.

99. 'Right-to-die Bill backed', *The West Australian*, 7 February 2013, p. 11, viewed 7 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2213455%22>

100. 'Quit promise on Metronet', *The West Australian*, p. 11, viewed 7 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2213456%22>

101. N Gerritsen and J Barrett, 'Two-party largesse under cloud', *Australian Financial Review*, 7 February 2013, p. 11, viewed 7 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2212157%22>

102. Ibid.

103. P Taylor, 'Labor rise fails to dent Barnett', *The Weekend Australian*, 9 February 2013, p. 1, viewed 11 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2217774%22>

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

Greens' primary vote had slumped from 12 per cent to 8 per cent, with support for other minor parties also dropping.¹⁰⁷

Commenting on the *Newspoll* figures, election analyst Antony Green suggested that Labor 'could be reduced to as few as 18 seats'.¹⁰⁸ Labor could, in Green's view, lose 'a string of marginal seats, especially outside of Perth'.¹⁰⁹ He also suggested that 'the failure of Labor's vote to follow the track of its leader's rating will be bad news for Labor's hopes in the campaign'.¹¹⁰

Analyst Peter van Onselen highlighted the strategic challenges facing McGowan in the light of the *Newspoll* results:

McGowan must now decide: does he play it safe during the campaign in the hope of eking out a respectable loss, which may not see him vilified in the aftermath? Or does he look to use his popularity to improve Labor's fortunes, perhaps by adopting a risky strategy such as challenging the unpopular policies emanating out of Canberra? The latter option would pit him against a prime minister as well as a premier, thus elevating the WA state campaign to national significance.¹¹¹

In the wake of the 9 February *Newspoll*, the media reported that McGowan said that he was 'against a carbon tax but in favour of an emissions trading scheme', and said he would 'support the mining tax only if Western Australia got back the exact share it put in'.¹¹²

On 12 February 2013, *The Australian* published *Newspoll* results which scored the Liberals/Nationals ahead of Labor in seven out of ten major issues of interest to electors, including health and education—a reversal since the 2008 state election.¹¹³ The following day, Antony Green blogged that the WA Greens were 'unlikely to repeat its by-election victory in the lower house seat of Fremantle, and with the WA Legislative Council elected in full at each state election, the seats of all four Green Legislative Councillors will be at risk come polling day on March 9'.¹¹⁴ He said:

107. Ibid..

108. 'Western Australian election – first *Newspoll* published', *Antony Green's Election Blog*, 9 February 2013, ABC Elections website, viewed 11 February 2013, <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2013/02/western-australian-election-first-newspoll-published.html>

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid.

111. P van Onselen, 'McGowan's lot: sit tight, hope for the least worst', *The Weekend Australian*, 9 February 2013, p. 2, viewed 11 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2217779%22>

112. P Taylor, 'WA Labor shies away from PM', *The Australian*, 11 February 2013, p. 1, viewed 11 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2221483%22>

113. P Taylor, 'ALP no longer seen as best choice for health, schools', *The Australian*, 12 February 2013, p. 6, viewed 12 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2223845%22>

114. A Green, '2013 WA Election - Green prospects and analysis of the Legislative Council', *Antony Green's Election Blog*, 13 February 2013, viewed 20 February 2013, <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2013/02/2013-wa-election-green-prospects-and-analysis-of-the-legislative-council.html>

The last WA election 2008 took place in a brief glory period for the Greens in September and October 2008. The party polled a record vote in both houses at the WA election on 6 September 2008. ...

Now those record results are being reviewed by the public. Last September the Greens suffered significant reversals at the NSW local government elections, with swings of 5-15% in its stronger inner-Sydney councils. Last October the Greens polled only 10.7% in the ACT election, in line with the party's long term level of support but down by 4.9% since 2008. The Greens lost three of their four seats, but retained the balance of power with one member.

Now the last Western Australian election result faces review. The first *Newspoll* of the campaign, taken in the first week of February, revealed Labor's vote static since 2008, but the Greens down to 8%, in line with the party's longer term support in the state, but down by around 4% from both the 2008 result and the last *Newspoll* at the end of 2012. ...

It is not only the decline in first preference support that could hurt the Greens in Western Australia. Another risk is if the WA Liberal Party joins its Victorian brethren and reverses its traditional policy of placing the Greens ahead of Labor on preference recommendations and on upper house group ticket votes. In 2008 the Greens relied on preferences from the Liberal Party, and surprisingly from Family First, to win two of their four Legislative Council seats.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, disputes over costings associated with major transport initiatives proposed by the opposing parties continued to surface.¹¹⁶ *The West Australian* editorialised that Labor should submit its Metronet proposal to Treasury for scrutiny, notwithstanding the party's lack of trust in Treasurer Buswell, noting that the head of Treasury Department had publicly 'stake[d] his career on the ability of his department to do its job without political interference'.¹¹⁷ Labor—which had costed Metronet at \$3.8 billion—called on Liberal candidates 'to correct election pamphlets it said wrongly claimed Treasury had independently costed the [Labor] opposition's promise at \$6.4bn'.¹¹⁸

On 15 February 2013—in what was described as McGowan's 'biggest play yet in the state election campaign'—the Labor leader said he would axe key Barnett Government projects such as the [Burswood Stadium](#), [MAX light-rail](#) and [Oakajee](#) port projects to pay for his Metronet transport plan.¹¹⁹ The subsequent editorial in *The West Australian* made the following assessment:

115. Ibid.

116. J Barret and N Gerritsen, 'WA Labor sought own costings before uproar', *Australian Financial Review*, 14 February 2013, p. 4, viewed 14 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2227127%22>

117. Editorial, 'Labor needs to submit its rail plan for scrutiny', *The West Australian*, 14 February 2013, p. 18, viewed 14 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2228734%22>

118. N Perpetch and P Taylor, 'Labor to return public services', *The Australian*, 14 February 2013, p. 8, viewed 14 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2228446%22>

119. G Parker, 'Labor wields axe to fund rail', *The West Australian*, 15 February 2013, p. 1, viewed 15 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2230750%22>

If there was any doubt that public transport is the key battleground of this State election, Opposition Leader Mark McGowan erased it yesterday by revealing how he would find the money to pay for Labor's ambitious Metronet suburban rail plan. ...

Basically he is banking on the public's hunger for more and better public transport, and concern about the associated issue of congestion on metropolitan roads ...

Perth people have voted with their feet in their support for public transport in recent years, with a huge rise in patronage of trains and buses. There is no sign of this diminishing.

Metronet has tapped into this appetite... The coloured lines on Labor's Metronet map make it easy for voters, many of them in marginal electorates, to see how they could have easier access to rail transport. ...

And it is clear that there is still considerable support for keeping football in its traditional home of Subiaco. ...

Mr McGowan deserves some credit for refusing to play it safe as many Opposition leaders are inclined to do. With Labor well behind in the polls, he needed to produce something substantial to achieve the rare feat of upsetting a first-term government. Mr McGowan will not die wondering if he should have been bolder in his approach. Whether enough voters will embrace his plan is another matter but Mr McGowan has shaken up the election campaign, offering a clear point of difference between the main parties, and that can only be a good thing.¹²⁰

McGowan, who claimed that Metronet would 'create almost 4000 jobs in construction and supply'¹²¹, also agreed to have Metronet costed by Treasury, and asked Treasurer Buswell to do likewise for the Government's MAX light rail and airport rail projects.¹²² For his part, Premier Barnett said that borrowings 'and future budget surpluses would be used to pay for the Liberals' public transport election promises a \$1.8bn Perth light rail project and a \$1.9bn airport rail line'.¹²³ He ruled out spending cuts.¹²⁴ Meanwhile another transport issue, the scheduled closure of the grain freight lines known as Tier 3, appeared to be a potentially major issue that was being overlooked in the election campaign.¹²⁵

120. Editorial, 'Labor leader's bold move puts it all on the line', *The West Australian*, 15 February 2013, p. 20, viewed 15 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2230858%22>

121. P Lampathakis, 'Jobs from Metronet', *The Sunday Times*, 17 February 2013, viewed 18 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2236577%22>

122. G Parker, 'ALP fuels train game', *The West Australian*, 18 February 2013, p. 6, viewed 18 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2238657%22>

123. Barnett quoted in N Perpetch, 'Barnett's rail plans built on debt', *The Australian*, 19 February 2013, viewed 19 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2240648%22>

124. Ibid.

125. B Thompson, 'Tier 3 may derail WA election', *The West Australian*, 19 February 2013, p. 2, viewed 19 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2240838%22>

When nominations closed on 15 February, 291 candidates had nominated for the Legislative Assembly and 165 for the Legislative Council.¹²⁶ For the Assembly, the Liberals, Labor and Greens had candidates running in every seat.¹²⁷ (See detailed summary [here](#).¹²⁸ The official candidate lists are available [here](#).¹²⁹)

Three weeks to go

Three weeks out from polling day, election analyst Malcolm Mackerras set out his expectations—a victory for the Barnett Government—with a likely Legislative Assembly result being 27 Liberals and seven Nationals (or 28 Liberals and six Nationals) and 25 Labor, with no Independents.¹³⁰ In the Legislative Council, Mackerras said he would not be surprised if the result were ‘16 Liberals, 11 Labor, four Greens, four Nationals and one independent, he being a former National’.¹³¹ He also expected Nationals leader Brendon Grylls to wrest Pilbara from Labor, whose current member Tom Stephens had announced his retirement.¹³² Grylls needed a 7.2 per cent swing towards him in order to beat Labor’s Kelly Howlett, Port Hedland’s mayor.¹³³

The Liberals formal campaign launch took place on Sunday 17 February in the presence of Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott. *ABC News* described the event in the following terms :

The Opposition Leader says Mr Barnett’s win at the last state election gave Liberals across the country hope. He says he has learned a lot from Mr Barnett, describing his government as a model he hopes to repeat in Canberra.

Mr Abbott described Western Australia as the powerhouse of the nation and says every Australian owes a debt to the state. He also took a dig at Julia Gillard’s absence from Labor’s state election campaign, saying he was pleased to be the only federal leader welcome in Western Australia.

126. ‘Summary of Candidates and Parties’, *ABC News*, ‘WA votes’, viewed 20 February 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/guide/candidatessummary.htm>

127. Ibid.

128. ‘Candidates A–Z’, *ABC News: WA votes*, viewed 18 March 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/guide/candidateindex.htm>

129. WAEC, ‘Candidate lists’, WAEC website, viewed 18 March 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/candidates-and-parties/candidate-lists>

130. M Mackerras, ‘The good, bad and dreadful’, *The Weekend Australian*, 16 February 2013, viewed 18 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2233973%22>

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid.

133. P Taylor, ‘Grylls set for all-or-nothing Pilbara fight’, *The Weekend Australian*, 16 February 2013, p. 8, viewed 18 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2233889%22>

“I do challenge the Prime Minister - come west, Prime Minister, come west,” he said. “Don’t be shy of coming to Western Australia, do justify the carbon tax, justify the mining tax, because the first person it appears you have to persuade is your very own state leader [McGowan].”¹³⁴

The leaders’ debate

A televised debate between Barnett and McGowan, scheduled for 19 February 2013, was the only head-to-head contest Barnett agreed to take part in throughout the campaign.¹³⁵ The format provided that each leader would make a three minute opening statement with a coin-toss determining who would speak first, before responding to questions from a panel of journalists.¹³⁶ It was reported that Labor was preparing for a ‘negative attack’ from Barnett that was likely to focus on McGowan’s position on Federal Labor policies such as the mining and carbon taxes.¹³⁷ As the television debate loomed, sportsbet.com.au said punters had decided the election proper ‘will be a no contest’:

The WA Liberals have been backed into \$1.02, with Labor ballooning out to \$10. Since the market was opened, sportsbet.com.au says money has come in at a staggering 19 to 1 in favour of the Liberals to remain in power.¹³⁸

But in an editorial ahead of the debate, *The West Australian* opined that the debate represented ‘a potential game-changer for both sides’:¹³⁹

Experienced political observers will say that elections aren’t won by a leader’s performance in the debate but they can be lost. The 2005 debate will be remembered for the surprise commitment by Mr Barnett, then Opposition leader, to build a canal to take water from the Kimberley to Perth, a promise that soon foundered on the issue of costings, and may have cost him any chance of victory. With just one leaders’ debate in the campaign, it is difficult to recover from any setback.¹⁴⁰

134. ‘Abbott hopes to model his government on Barnett’s’, *ABC News*, 17 February 2013, viewed 18 February 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-02-17/abbott-hopes-to-model-himself-on-barnett/4523814>

135. AAP, ‘Writs to be issued in WA election’, *perthnow.com.au*, website, viewed 6 February 2013, <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/writs-to-be-issued-in-wa-election/story-e6fmg13u-1226571679146>

136. ‘Leaders to lock horns’, *The West Australian*, 19 February 2013, p. 10, viewed 19 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2240915%22>

137. G Parker and B Thomas, ‘McGowan ready for Barnett barbs’, *The West Australian*, 18 February 2013, p. 8, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2238671%22>

138. ‘Bookies say WA election will be no contest’, *WAtoday.com.au*, 18 February 2013, viewed 18 February 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/state-election-2013/bookies-say-wa-election-will-be-no-contest-20130218-2emms.html>

139. Editorial, ‘Debate a chance to press leaders on key issues’, *The West Australian*, 19 February 2013, viewed 19 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2240939%22>

140. Ibid.

The lead-up to the debate was somewhat overshadowed by a strike by nurses in pursuit of a 20 per cent pay increase over three years.¹⁴¹ There was also consternation arising from blog comments made by Energy Minister Peter Collier's former chief of staff Darren Brown, who referred to 'a very clear line from the Premier's office ... that privatisation of the [Western Power electricity] utility was a second term project' for the Barnett Government.¹⁴² Barnett flatly denied any such proposal.¹⁴³

The leaders' debate proceeded on schedule, but reportedly lacked 'bite'.¹⁴⁴ It ended in 'a tame draw'.¹⁴⁵ *The Australian* described McGowan's performance as 'strong' and Barnett's as 'measured'.¹⁴⁶ A minor controversy was stirred when Liberal Senator Mathias Cormann accused the ABC of bias arising from the fact that McGowan addressed the camera face-on while Barnett appeared more side-on.¹⁴⁷ Barnett dismissed the suggestion of bias, saying that he chose to look at the panellist asking the question rather than at the camera assigned to him.¹⁴⁸

The West Australian editorialised that 'the whole idea of a leaders' debate is stale and desperately needs a shake-up':¹⁴⁹

People don't tune in to the debates to be subjected to the same old party political lines, with the rehearsed slogans that they see in the paid TV advertising. They want to be informed about the real views and policies of the contenders to help them make an informed decision. Voters would welcome the chance to see the people who want their support challenged and forced to think on their feet. ...

... [U]npredictability is precisely what is needed if the event is to engage people. The fact that the biggest topic of conversation after the debate was whether or not Mr Barnett was disadvantaged

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141. N Perpetch, 'Minister accuses nurses of acting irresponsibly in closure of beds', *The Australian*, 20 February 2013, p. 6, viewed 20 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2242805%22>
142. R Spooner, 'Former energy staffer stands by privatisation claim', *WAtoday.com.au*, 21 February 2013, website, viewed 21 February 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/state-election-2013/former-energy-staffer-stands-by-privatisation-claim-20130220-2erx.html>
143. Ibid.
144. D Emerson and B Thomas, 'TV debate lacks bite as leaders look rehearsed', *The West Australian*, 20 February 2013, p. 4, viewed 20 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2243036%22>
145. G Parker, 'It's a toss-up', *The West Australian*, 20 February 2013, p. 1, viewed 20 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2242994%22>
146. P Taylor and N Perpetch, 'Barnett builds return on growth', *The Australian*, 20 February 2013, p. 6, viewed 20 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2242812%22>
147. G Parker, 'The eyes have it in TV debate', *The West Australian*, 21 February 2013, p. 4, viewed 21 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2245373%22>
148. N Perpetch and P Taylor, 'Camera-shy Barnett backs ABC', *The Australian*, 21 February 2013, p. 6, viewed 21 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2245161%22>
149. 'Voters want to see leaders in real debate', editorial, *The West Australian*, 21 February 2013, viewed 21 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2245441%22>

because he did not talk directly to the camera shows how the actual content failed to excite any interest.

... The debate could provide a defining moment in the campaign. At the moment it is little more than a stage-managed footnote.¹⁵⁰

The ensuing few days saw continual skirmishing over the future of the controversial [Elizabeth Quay](#) waterfront development, with claims that McGowan had reversed his views on the merits of the proposal, and was now advocating a smaller alternative.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, the financial press kept drawing attention to the costs of the election pledges being made by both parties, and the risks to WA's credit rating as debt-to-revenue ratios showed no signs of abating.¹⁵²

Two weeks to go

The proposed strike by nurses, which had already caused bed closures, was resolved by a 'last-minute deal' involving in-principle agreement for a 14 per cent pay rise over three years—which the Barnett Government said it would sign off on if re-elected.¹⁵³ At the same time, a Galaxy poll showed that the Liberals and Nationals had a 56–44 lead over Labor on a two-party preferred basis, and that the Liberals could win as many as six seats from Labor, and possibly two from Independents.¹⁵⁴ Such an outcome 'could give the Liberals enough of the 59 available seats to govern in their own right and avoid doing another deal with the WA Nationals'.¹⁵⁵

The Galaxy poll also showed that McGowan's popularity had risen: 'On the question of preferred premier, Mr Barnett leads him by a slim margin of 49-43'.¹⁵⁶ But it remained the case that while voters regarded McGowan as 'a viable alternative premier ... on the issues that count voters just aren't ready to hand him control of the state'.¹⁵⁷

150. Ibid.

151. D Emerson, 'Leaders , promises take centre stage', *The Weekend West*, 23 February 2013, p. 60, viewed 25 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2250571%22>

152. J Barrett and N Gerritsen, 'Rich state binges on debt', *Australian Financial Review*, 23 February 2013, p. 2, viewed 25 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2248249%22>

153. P Taylor, 'Barnett signs last-minute deal to give nurses pay rise', *The Australian*, 25 February 2013, p. 2, viewed 25 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2252660%22>

154. Ibid.

155. G Adshead, '\$1m ad blitz fails to boost Labor vote', *The West Australian*, 25 February 2013, viewed 25 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2252924%22>

156. Editorial, 'Underdog performs well but not well enough', *The Sunday Times*, 24 February 2013, p. 50, viewed 27 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2255642%22>

157. P van Onselen, 'Economy the key for voters', *The Sunday Times*, 24 February 2013, p. 4, viewed 27 February 2013,

<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2255555%22>

As the week drew to a close, costings of all parties' public transport proposals continued to animate the campaign.¹⁵⁸

The final week

Labor began its final week with a rally that included launching a campaign to recapture the former Labor seat of Fremantle which it lost to Greens—later independent—MP Adele Carles in a by-election in 2009.¹⁵⁹ McGowan also claimed that the Liberals would sell state assets to repay debt and that Barnett would hand over power to his Treasurer, Troy Buswell.¹⁶⁰ The Nationals' leader Brendon Grylls looked set to 'pull off a spectacular victory in the Pilbara'.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Liberals launched a final-week 'blitz' targeting the Labor-held seats of Forrestfield, Joondalup, Balcatta and Albany.¹⁶²

Barnett was sufficiently annoyed by the suggestions of a handover to Buswell and by speculation concerning his own health that he rang *The West Australian* newspaper declaring 'he was in good health, scoffing at observations from his side of the political divide that his left eye appeared to droop during the leaders' televised debate last month':¹⁶³

"I haven't had a sick day in the last two years to my memory. And I've worked every day of the campaign, that's another one (rumour) going around". ... Mr Barnett pledged he would serve a full term and said his successor would be chosen by the party. He said there "never was any deal" to hand power to Mr Buswell.¹⁶⁴

On election eve, editorial opinion in both the state and national press endorsed a return of the Barnett Government, tempered by widespread acknowledgement that Labor's Mark McGowan had performed well in the campaign and positioned his party well for the future.¹⁶⁵

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158. G Parker and G Adshead, 'True costs give both sides a headache', *The Weekend West*, 2 March 2013, p. 3, viewed 7 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2267324%22>
159. N Perpitch, 'McGowan channels Churchill', *The Australian*, 4 March 2013, p. 6, viewed 7 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2272443%22>
160. N Gerritsen, 'ALP says Libs will sell assets', *Australian Financial Review*, 5 March 2013, p. 9, viewed 7 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2273643%22>
161. J Spagnolo, 'Poll puts Pilbara in Grylls' grasp', *The Sunday Times*, 3 March 2013, p. 6, viewed 7 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2270511%22>
162. J Spagnolo, 'Late Lib blitz on key seats', *The Sunday Times*, 3 March 2013, p. 6, viewed 7 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2270510%22>
163. D Emerson and G Parker, 'I'm not sick', *The West Australian*, 6 March 2013, p. 1, viewed 7 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2277376%22>
164. Ibid.
165. For example, see editorials in *The Australian*, 8 March 2013, p. 11, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2281899%22> and *The West Australian*, 8 March 2013, p. 22, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2282174%22>

The outcome

Words like ‘emphatic’¹⁶⁶, and ‘resounding vote of confidence’¹⁶⁷ peppered the reports of the WA election outcome as the Liberals surged to a win in their own right, leaving Labor to contemplate another four or more years out of office in the West and the prospect of a major defeat in the 2013 Federal election:

The Sky News exit poll, conducted by *Newspoll*, asked voters about the issues that determined their vote as they left polling booths. Problems in the federal government was the second most important issue voters identified. This is unusual in Australian politics, where the public is good at differentiating between tiers of government. It speaks to federal Labor’s problems. Indeed it speaks to the likely size of the defeat federal Labor will face in September unless something changes.¹⁶⁸

The result was also notable in that no Independents were elected to the Assembly—notwithstanding that 33 candidates stood as Independents. Elizabeth Constable, the long-standing Independent member for Churchlands—and longest serving female MP—retired from politics.¹⁶⁹ Janet Woollard—a Liberal-leaning Independent for Alfred Cove—was defeated. Adele Carles—the former Green who had become Independent for Fremantle—was defeated. John Bowler, the incumbent—formerly Labor—Independent member for Kalgoorlie did not contest his seat.

Legislative Assembly

A two-party preferred swing of 6.6 per cent gave the Liberals enough seats to govern in their own right, but ‘sensibly [Barnett] ... opted to continue his partnership with the Nationals’, who increased their representation in the Assembly from four seats to six.¹⁷⁰ On the final Legislative Assembly figures, the Liberals achieved a swing of 8.7 per cent to win 31 of the 59 seats in the Legislative Assembly, with the Nationals winning seven seats and Labor 21—with no seats going to Greens nor to independents.¹⁷¹ The following table shows the comparative positions of the main parties after both the 2008 and 2013 elections:

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166. G Parker, ‘Lib surge surprises Barnett’, *The West Australian*, 11 March 2013, p. 5, viewed 12 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2290096%22>
 167. ‘Barnett gets vote of confidence, now must deliver’, editorial, *The West Australian*, 11 March 2013, p. 20, viewed 12 March 2013,
 168. P van Onselen, ‘PM’s toxic team proved lethal for McGowan’, *The Australian*, 11 March 2013, p. 6, viewed 12 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2289866%22>
 169. ‘Elizabeth Constable to be awarded Honorary Doctorate’, *University News (WA)*, 7 March 2013, viewed 8 March 2013, <http://www.news.uwa.edu.au/201303075462/events/elizabeth-constable-be-awarded-honorary-doctorate>
 170. ‘WA voters sentence brand Labor to the wilderness’, editorial, *The Australian*, 11 March 2013, p. 13, viewed 12 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2289911%22>
 171. ‘WA Votes’, *ABC News*, website viewed 20 March 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/>

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2008 ELECTION	Men	Women	Prior to 2013 election		2013 ELECTION	Men	Women
			Men	Women			
Liberals 24	22	2	22	2	Liberals 31	27	4
Labor 28	21	7	20	6	Labor 21	14	7
Nationals 4	4	0	5	0	Nationals 7	5	2
Greens 0	0	0			Greens 0	0	0
Indep't 3	1	2	1	3	Independent 0	0	0

Source: Western Australian Electoral Commission, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/media-election-facts-and-figures/2008-election-facts-and-figures> and <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013/la/party>

On early figures, it had been predicted that the Barnett Government (as a Liberal/Nationals alliance) would win 40 of the 59 Assembly seats.¹⁷² At 8:50pm on election night Mark McGowan conceded defeat.¹⁷³ Two hours later the Liberals looked to have defeated the sitting Labor members in Alfred Cove, Balcatta, Churchlands, Collie-Preston, Forrestfield, Joondalup, Perth and Warren-Blackwood.¹⁷⁴ Labor reclaimed Fremantle from the Greens-turned-Independent Adele Carles.¹⁷⁵ It seemed on election night that Labor might emerge with 20 seats, and the Liberals/Nationals 39.¹⁷⁶

Two days after the election, Electoral Commissioner Warwick Gately said he had 'never seen such a tight contest as in the Kimberley, where the Nationals, Liberals, Greens and Labor were separated by just a few hundred votes'.¹⁷⁷ Labor eventually proved victorious, with Josie Farrer beating her closest rival, the Liberals' Jenny Bloom, by 106 votes.¹⁷⁸ The contest also proved especially tight in Collie-Preston, where Labor ultimately retained the seat by just 56 votes.¹⁷⁹ Midland also went to Labor by a margin of just 24 votes.¹⁸⁰ Nationals' leader Brendon Grylls wrested Pilbara from Labor, formerly held by retiring Labor MP Tom Stephens.¹⁸¹

172. 'How the West was won: Landslide for Liberals', *ABC News: WA votes*, 10 March 2013, ABC website, viewed 12 March 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-09/wa-election-2013-live-coverage/4563048>

173. Ibid.

174. Ibid.

175. Ibid.

176. Ibid.

177. N Gerritsen, 'Frontbench delay as seats too close to call', *Australian Financial Review*, 12 March 2013, p. 6, viewed 12 March 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2290787%22>

178. WAEC, 'Kimberley District Results', WAEC website, viewed 11 April 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013/la/KIM>

179. WA Electoral Commission, 'Collie-Preston district results', viewed 26 March 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013/la/COP>

180. WA Electoral Commission, 'Midland district results', viewed 26 March 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013/la/MID>

181. WAEC, 'Pilbara District Results', viewed 11 April 2013, <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013/la/PIL>

Legislative Council

Of the 36 Legislative Council seats, the Liberals won 17 seats, the Nationals won five, Labor retained its 11 seats, the WA Greens dropped from four to two seats and the Shooters and Fishers Party won one seat.¹⁸² *Crikey's* Charles Richardson described as 'a travesty' the fact that in the Legislative Council the Greens received more than half as many votes again as the Nationals but won only 40 per cent as many seats.¹⁸³ The decline in the overall Green vote was consistent with what had happened in polls in other states.¹⁸⁴ In the Legislative Council, Family First failed to gain a seat, the Shooters and Fishers won one seat and the Nationals won five seats.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

2008	Men	Women	Prior to 2013 election		2013	Men	Women
			Men	Women			
Liberals 16	11	5	11	5	Liberals 17	12	5
Labor 11	5	6	4	7	Labor 11	3	8
Nationals 5	3	2	3	2	Nationals 5	4	1
Greens 4	1	3	1	3	Greens 2	1	1
					Shooters and Fishers 1	1	0

Source: WA Electoral Commission :

http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/documents/sg2008/2008_SGE_Legislative_Council.pdf and <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013/lc/party>

The 2013 election was the first time ever that six women have been elected at the same election for the same Legislative Council region—East Metropolitan.

Full details of the results for each seat in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council are available on the WAEC website at <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/results/sg2013>. The ABC's website 'WA Votes' <http://www.abc.net.au/elections/wa/2013/> also contains a comprehensive array of information about the 2013 election.

The next WA state general election is due on Saturday, 11 March 2017.

Conclusion

The Liberals' victory in Western Australia continued the recent spate of elections producing Liberal governments—Queensland 2012, New South Wales 2011, Northern Territory 2012. The size of the win also reinforced the message coming from opinion polls that Labor was generally out of favour.

182. C Richardson, 'Western Australian election wraps up', *Crikey*, 20 March 2013, viewed 21 March 2013, <http://blogs.crikey.com.au/worldisnotenough/2013/03/20/western-australian-election-wraps-up/>

183. Ibid.

184. Ibid.

Following the 9 March election result, the Liberals no longer had to rely on the Nationals in order to form government. Barnett revealed a 17 strong ministry that included five new faces.¹⁸⁵ Nationals leader Brendon Grylls retained his portfolios of Regional Development and Lands, and added Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development. Other Nationals to win a ministry were Terry Redman (Minister for Training and Workforce Development; Water; Forestry) and Terry Waldron (Minister for Sport and Recreation; Racing and Gaming).¹⁸⁶

On 10 April 2013 Barnett announced wide-ranging changes to WA Government agencies.¹⁸⁷ Reforms included a new Department of Local Government and Communities, a new stand-alone Department of Lands and, as foreshadowed during the election campaign, a new Office for Science was established within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC).¹⁸⁸

The 39th Parliament was officially opened by the Governor of Western Australia (His Excellency Malcolm McCusker) on 11 April 2013.

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185. C Barnett, 'A new Cabinet for a new Government', media release, 20 March 2013, viewed 11 April 2013, <http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/pages/StatementDetails.aspx?listName=StatementsBarnett&StatId=7263>
186. The Nationals (WA), 'The state parliamentary party', website, Nationals (WA) website, viewed 11 April 2013, <http://www.nationalswa.com/TheTeam/StateMembersofParliament.aspx>
187. C Barnett, 'Changes to machinery of Government', media release, 10 April 2013, viewed 11 April 2013, <http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/pages/StatementDetails.aspx?listName=StatementsBarnett&StatId=7284>
188. Ibid.

Appendix 1: 2013 WA state election timeline

The 38th Parliament of Western Australia was prorogued on 14 December 2012 at 5pm. The timeline for the 2013 election for the 39th Parliament was as follows:

Wednesday, 6 February 2013	Issue of Writs
Thursday, 7 February 2013	Nominations open
	Applications for postal voting commence
Thursday, 14 February 2013	Party nominations close (12 noon)
	Close of Rolls (6:00pm)
Friday, 15 February 2013	Close of Nominations (12 noon)
	Draw for Ballot Paper positions
Monday, 18 February 2013	Voting tickets lodged (12 noon)
Wednesday, 20 February 2013	Early voting commences
Saturday, 23 February 2013	Mobile Polling commences
Wednesday, 6 March 2013	Applications for postal voting close (6:00pm)
	Processing of early votes commences
Friday, 8 March 2013	Early voting (in person) closes (6:00pm)
Saturday, 9 March 2013	Polling day
Thursday, 14 March 2013	Final day for receipt of postal votes (9:00am)
Monday, 6 May 2013	Return of Writs due

Source: <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/media-election-facts-and-figures/election-timeline>

Appendix 2: Table of current registered parties

The WA Electoral Commission currently has seven registered political parties in Western Australia:

Registered Name	Ballot Paper Abbreviation
Australian Christians (WA)	Australian Christians
Australian Labor Party (Western Australian Branch)	WA Labor
Family First Party WA	Family First
National Party of Australia (WA) Inc	THE NATIONALS
Shooters and Fishers Party (WA) Inc	Shooters and Fishers
The Greens (WA) Inc	The Greens (WA)
The Liberal Party of Australia (Western Australian Division) Inc	Liberal Party

Legislation for the registration of political parties is contained in Part IIIA of the [Electoral Act 1907](#).

Political parties are eligible for registration if they have at least 500 members who are electors and have a constitution that specifies as one of its objects or activities the promotion of the election to the Parliament of the State of a candidate or endorsed candidates. Members may include members of related parties when one is part of the other or both are parts of the same political party.

Source: <http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/candidates-and-parties/registered-political-parties-wa>

Appendix 3: Poll logistics

With the election campaign in full swing, the WA Electoral Commission (WAEC) geared up for the logistical challenges of the poll. Anticipating a 30 per cent increase in postal votes, the Electoral Commission created the largest counting centre in West Australian history with an area of 7600 square metres prepared in the inner Perth suburb of Northbridge.¹⁸⁹

WAEC technicians installed nine kilometres of data, telephone and electrical lines throughout the centre to service 200 computers feeding tally information to the commission's central server system. The Commission predicted a total of 350,000 declaration votes, including postal, absent and provisional ballots - an increase of 30 per cent from the 2008 poll.¹⁹⁰

In total, 6.4 million ballot papers were printed to cover ordinary and absent vote lodgment. The 794 polling places operating on election day—employing more than 7600 casual staff—included 85 remote locations, six major mine sites and 242 special institutions such as retirement homes.¹⁹¹

When applications to enrol on the WA electoral roll closed at 6:00pm on Thursday 14 February 2013, the WAEC estimated that around 200 000 eligible citizens had not done so.¹⁹² The WAEC also reminded voters to fill in their ballot papers correctly, noting that in the 2008 election, informal votes could have swung the results in 12 Lower House seats and 'changed the face of the state government':

"That's 20 per cent of Legislative Assembly seats, which I think would shock many West Australians," [Electoral Commissioner] Gately said.

More than 61,000 voters did not adhere to the requirements - the equivalent of three electoral districts. "Having made the effort to turn out, these electors thereafter had no influence over the election outcome," Mr Gately said.¹⁹³

Teams of electoral officers prepared to start polling in Aboriginal communities two weeks ahead of the state election. Staff travelled by four-wheel-drive to dozens of remote communities and out-stations, covering thousands of kilometres by charter plane and four-wheel-drive.¹⁹⁴

189. AAP, 'Postal votes rise in WA election', *news.com.au*, 7 February 2013, website, viewed 1 February 2013, <http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/national/postal-votes-rise-in-wa-state-election/story-e6frku9-1226572828129>

190. Ibid.

191. Ibid.

192. 'Enrol to vote in WA election before 6pm', *WAtoday.com.au*, 14 February 2013, viewed 14 February 2013, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/state-election-2013/enrol-to-vote-in-wa-election-before-6pm-20130214-2eeoi.html>

193. Ibid.

194. 'Electoral teams head out to remote polling centres', *ABC News*, 18 February 2013, ABC website, viewed 18 February 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-02-18/electoral-teams-head-out-to-remote-polling-centres/4524898>

The WAEC also went to considerable pains to maximise voter turnout and limit the number of informal votes. From February 25, each of the 1,419,475 people enrolled to vote in the state election were sent an EasyVote card telling each voter what electorate and upper house region they were in, as well as their nearest polling place and how to fill out their ballot so that it is counted.¹⁹⁵

A tear off slip on the mail-out, included the voter's name, making it easier for polling place staff to find people on the electoral roll.¹⁹⁶ The Electoral Commission also operated an SMS reminder service and a mobile phone scanning code that people could use to find their nearest polling place.¹⁹⁷

During the 2009 Western Australian referendum 6,763 votes were cast at booths in Perth's domestic airport terminals and the WAEC expected an increase in numbers in 2013. Ahead of the 2013 WA election seven mine site polling booths and six airport booths had already been set up for FIFO voters.¹⁹⁸

195. E Wynne, 'Electoral Commission mass mail-out reminds voters to number every box', *720 ABC Perth*, 20 February 2013, website, viewed 26 February 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/02/20/3694716.htm>

196. Ibid.

197. Ibid.

198. G Ditchburn, 'Western Australia election: FIFO vote', *The Conversation*, 7 March 2013, viewed 8 March 2013, http://theconversation.edu.au/western-australia-election-fifo-vote-12623?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest+from+The+Conversation+for+8+March+2013&utm_content=Latest+from+The+Conversation+for+8+March+2013+CID_e64b778585840c45e02b5a1998cf9969&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Western%20Australia%20election%20FIFO%20vote

Appendix 4: Social media and the 2013 election

Notwithstanding the seemingly obligatory application of social media to contemporary electioneering strategies, it appeared that few WA candidates were actively exploiting digital communication opportunities—although the main parties all had a presence on Facebook and Twitter. A few days before the official commencement of the election campaign it was reported—incorrectly—by the community-oriented website *West Australia 2013 Vote* that Premier Barnett did not have a Twitter account. The report continued:

It has been rumoured that Liberal party members have been discouraged from using twitter media in the WA 2013 election. It is possible that past election gaffs have made an ultra-cautious approach and the infamous canal from the Northwest to Perth [is] still in advisors minds.

A further indication of the government being out of touch in regard to social media may be the appearance that they had to be dragged yelling and screaming to get FESA [Fire and Emergency Services] on twitter. Another possible scenario is that his current advisors with mainstream media backgrounds are still coming to understand social media and non-mainstream media that cannot be controlled.

On twitter participation we labelled McGowan a lightweight, however Barnet comes up blank¹⁹⁹.

In fact, Premier Barnett had a personal Twitter account—*@PremierBarnett*—and in mid-January 2013 he had 2 681 followers. The number grew during the campaign.²⁰⁰ The Twitter account *@colinbarnettMLA* had 129 followers, but no tweets emanated from this account during the campaign.

The *West Australia 2013* website claimed that during January 2013, Labor's Mark McGowan—*@MarkMcGowanMP*—'had 12 tweets, and none to a community member. December was not much better with all tweets to people, other than other politicians, being to the main stream media, not to community members'.²⁰¹

By February 2013, McGowan had 1 579 followers on Twitter and had issued 338 tweets.²⁰²

The *Australian Financial Review*, drawing on statistics from the #wapoll Twitter hashtag, reported that Labor candidates were outnumbering their Liberal counterparts two to one on Twitter.²⁰³ All but two of the shadow cabinet were active on Twitter.²⁰⁴

199. 'No social in Barnett', *West Australia 2013 vote*, website, 22 January 2013, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://wa2013.vote-wars.info/news/386-no-social-in-barnett-2013>. The reference to FESA concerns the use of Twitter for Fire and Emergency Services alerts.

200. *@PremierBarnett*, viewed 12 February 2013, <https://twitter.com/PremierBarnett>

201. 'McGowan a light weight on Twitter', *West Australia 2013 vote*, website, 22 January 2013, viewed 24 January 2013, <http://wa2013.vote-wars.info/news/384-mcgowan-a-light-weight-on-twitter-2103>

202. *@MarkMcGowanMP*, viewed 12 February 2013, <https://twitter.com/MarkMcGowanMP>

By the time the election had arrived, [McGowan](#) had 1 927 followers on Twitter and had posted 354 tweets, while [Barnett](#) had 2 998 followers and had posted 871 tweets.

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203. N Gerritsen, 'WA Labor tweets ahead of the competition', *Australian Financial Review*, 27 February 2013, p. 11, viewed 27 February 2013, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2F2258589%22>
204. Ibid.