

Labor cruises to victory in a landslide But will it bring about change?

by Bob Dooley

While the election has been won by Labor with a 7% swing statewide after 12 years in opposition, the final composition of both Houses of Parliament may not be known until mid-April.

A quarter of all electors voted before election day, including half a million postal votes, and these late-counted votes traditionally favour conservatives.

A week after the election, there remains some 27% of votes still to count in the Lower House; none-the-less currently the Coalition has only 32 out of the 93 seats, many with slim margins, and Labor is holding 46 of the 47 seats needed to govern in its own right.

With The Greens returned in the three seats they formerly held, and four new left-leaning independents, there is no doubt Labor can form a government, and new Premier Chris McMinn was sworn in on 28th March.

The Greens will have their work cut out for them though,



Lismore voters swamp the pre-poll booth amongst the empty shops in Molesworth Street. Photo: Chibo Mertineit

particularly on climate policy, with incoming Environment Minister Penny Sharpe telling the media there would be no cancellation of the Pilliga gas development, and refusing to rule out new coal and gas.

There are eight large coal and gas

development proposals in NSW to be considered this year, estimated by Lock the Gate analysis to release 1.5 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases over their operational lifespan.

In the Upper House, election analysts suggest the balance

of power will be held by The Greens together with the Legalise Cannabis Party, which will further bolster the influence of progressives in the new Parliament.

The election result has been characterised as a win for grassroots concerns, particularly in

urban seats where there were more pronounced swings to Labor than in the regions.

However, Tim Hollo of The Green Institute says it is unlikely that the new government will legislate to address grassroots concerns: swiftly transition to renewables, phase out fossil fuels, raise welfare above the poverty line, increase taxes on the wealthy, make housing a basic human right, properly fund schools and healthcare, further regulate gambling, or end native forest logging.

Hollo said, "Labor doesn't have the impetus to do any of this. The voices of powerful corporations and wealthy people drown out the voices of the masses."

"The fact that literally all these transformational reforms have massive public support means nothing."

➡ See more election coverage on page 11, including Janelle Saffin's list of promised funding for the Lismore electorate.

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