
Watershed: The 2022 Australian Federal Election, edited by Anika Gauja, Marian Sawyer and Jill Sheppard, 2024, pp.430 RRP \$69.95, ISBN: 9781529226980.

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For more than 40 years, it has been a wonderful tradition of political scientists in Australia to produce post-election book. A volume on the 2022 election, *Watershed: The 2022 Australian Federal Election*, was released online as well as printed form in August 2023. It is truly an enjoyable book with valuable information and data. I have been editing a university textbook on the Australian politics (in Japanese). The project has nine authors including myself and it was quite a task to make them (and me) submit manuscripts in a reasonable timetable. I would like to acknowledge the efforts and hard work by editors, Anika Gauja, Marian Sawyer and Jill Sheppard to assemble 27 high-quality scholars and complete the book.

This book consists of three parts. Part 1 analyses election campaign and its context, salient issues, campaign matters and the media. Part 2 analyses actors of the election. In addition to established parties, this part has separate chapters on independents and minor parties, on the Community Independent movement and on the third-party campaigning organisations. Part 3 analyses the election results in the House of Representatives, the Senate, seat-by-seat polling results and the rise of early voting. All the chapters are of top quality, easy and enjoyable to read.

As far as I understand, this wonderful tradition of post-election books began in the 1970s.¹ Present format, online free publication as well as printed version for purchase,

¹See e.g. HR Penniman (ed) *Australia at the Polls: The National Elections of 1975*. 1977: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Howard Penniman, *The Australian national elections of 1977*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, 1979. See also Carol Johnson, John Wanna and Hse-Ann Lee, *Abbott's Gambit: The 2013 Australian Federal Election*. 2013: ANU Press, Preface.

started in 2010. This arrangement should be greatly appreciated. Considering the publishing environment in Japan, it is unthinkable and indeed enviable that not only the online edition but also the printed edition of these books are colour-printed. *Watershed* continues the series' wonderful tradition of succinct titles such as *The Greening of Australian Politics*, *The Politics of Retribution*, *Mortgage Nation*, *Double Disillusion* and *Morrison's Miracle*.² Just like *Double Disillusion* and *Morrison's Miracle*, the title is matched visually with an excellent choice of photo. While I was told that this photo was not necessarily the editors' first choice, the photo of Dr Monique Ryan MP's campaign team on the election night with their facial expression of anxiety and expectation encapsulates the mood of the election so well. The cover photo is one of the benefits to purchase printed version.

When I reviewed *Double Disillusion* six years ago, I noted the book has 690 pages with 30 chapters and weighs 1.22 kg while *The Greening of Australian Politics*, the post-election book for the 1990 election, has around 230 pages with nine chapters and weighs 280 grams. For the 2019 and 2022 post-election books, the editors seem to have made considerable effort to rein in the size of the book. *Watershed* has 19 chapters, 430 pages and weighs 885 grams. Of course, increase in volume from the 1990s is a reflection of massive changes in the Australian politics. It must be a difficult task to reduce 690 pages in 2016 down to 490 pages in 2019 to 430 pages in 2022. As each election throws up new issues, new actors and changes, new chapters have to be added. And this means some of the previous chapters need to make way for new ones. So, what changed this time?

In *Double Disillusion*, there were eight chapters on policy areas; economy, industrial relations, social issues, environment/energy, refugees, indigenous affairs, gender/sexuality and migration. These policy-related chapters were taken out from *Morrison's Miracle*. While a chapter on industrial relations survived as separate chapters on business and unions, they were removed in *Watershed*. Therefore, there is no chapter in *Watershed* on specific policy area except for gender/sexuality which

² Clive Bean, Ian McAllister and John Warhurst, *The Greening of Australian politics*, Longman Cheshire, 1990; Clive Bean, Scott Bennett, Marian Simms, John Warhurst (Eds), *The politics of retribution : the 1996 Australian federal election* St. Leonards, NSW, Australia : Allen & Unwin, 1997; M Simms, J Warhurst, R Nile, *Mortgage nation : the 2004 Australian election*, Perth: Curtin University of Technology, 2005. Anika Gauja, , *Double Disillusion : The 2016 Australian Federal Election*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2018; A Gauja, M Sawyer & M Simms, *Morrison's Miracle: The 2019 Australian Federal Election*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2020.

happened to be one of the salient issues. A chapter on States and Territories also left the scene this time. I do not think these reductions adversely affect the quality of the book. As the major feature of the 2019 election was the totally unexpected ‘Morrison’s Miracle’ victory and all the opinion polls, including exit polls, predicted wrongly, it is natural that *Morrison’s Miracle* had a chapter titled ‘National polling and other disasters’ along with ‘The perilous polling of single seats’. As the 2022 election did not deviate from polls as much as the 2019 election, the chapter on polling disaster exited.

I feel a bit sad and disappointed about this omission because a chapter on voting or electoral behaviour is no longer included. Analysis on voting behaviour based on the Australian Election Study (AES) had long been the main feature of the post-election book. I recall that in the 1990s almost the entire book was based on the analysis of the AES data. The reason for the absence of the AES data or analysis from *Watershed* is probably because it had already been published in December 2022 by Sarah Cameron, Ian McAllister, Simon Jackman and Jill Sheppard.³ The paper by Cameron et al, especially on socio-demographic influences, was fascinating. It would have been excellent if this publication were reproduced as an appendix to the online edition, if not in the printed version, of *Watershed*.

I read *Watershed* twice, for the first time when it was published and for the second time to write this review. When I read, I seek answers to the following questions.

- What were the distinctive features of this election?
- Why was this election regarded as a ‘watershed’?
- How sustainable are these changes? Did the 2022 election show the arrival or just the harbinger of electoral realignment of the Australian party system?

The 2022 election was conducted under the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic. Fittingly, the book is bookended by Michael Maley’s comprehensive information and deep insight into the Australian Electoral Commission’s administrative arrangement⁴ and Ferran Martinez i Coma and Rodney Smith’s resourceful analysis on the ‘rise and rise’

³ Sarah Cameron, Ian McAllister, Simon Jackman and Jill Sheppard. 2022. *The 2022 Australian Federal Election: Results from the Australian Election Study*. Canberra: The Australian National University. <<https://australianelectionstudy.org/publications/>>.

⁴ Michael Maley, ‘Administrative issues in a time of Covid’ in Anika Gauja, Marian Sawyer and Jill Sheppard, *Watershed: The 2022 Australian Federal Election*, 2024: ANU Press, Chapter 2 pp. 23-36.

of early voting.⁵ Less than half of the voters voted at the polling place on the polling day. It seems to me that the prediction of large pre-poll voting might have prompted the ALP to carry out its campaign launch earlier than usual. The authors also note that most of the pre-poll votes were cast inside the last five days of the campaign. It is interesting to see if this “rise and rise” of early voting continues beyond the obvious influence of the pandemic.

The first part of the book, in seven chapters, offers an excellent narrative of Australian politics between 2019 and 2022. In the third chapter, A.J. Brown provides us comprehensive account of integrity, which was one of the most salient issues.⁶ In the fifth chapter, another salient issue, treatment of women is capably covered by Blair Williams and Marian Sawyer.⁷ The chapter discusses gender diversity of candidates as well as that of the 47th Parliament, campaign discourse and each party’s policy. It is an excellent chapter. It would have been more insightful if some of the gender-based voting behaviour published in Cameron et al⁸ were included. Chapters on the media and visual images illustrate how the media landscape has changed recently. The seventh chapter on the media coverage now describes not only traditional (legacy) and non-traditional online media but also campaigns via social media. A chapter on visual images used to deal only with cartoons (which I think are Australia’s hidden national treasures): now it includes analysis on TikTok ‘videos, memes, etcetera’.⁹

On the second question about this election as a ‘watershed’ moment, I think there are three elements which make the term ‘watershed’ appropriate. The 2022 election resulted in a change of government, for the seventh time in half a century (if the 1975 election is counted as one). More significantly, the share of votes for the two major parties declined to near record low. As a consequence, 16 crossbench members were elected. And in a further 11 seats, the final contest was non-traditional, that is not a

⁵ Ferran Martinez i Coma and Rodney Smith ‘The rise and rise of early voting’, in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 19 pp. 413- 432.

⁶ A. J. Brown, ‘The integrity election: Public trust and the promise of change’ in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 19 pp. 413- 432, Chapter 3 pp. 39-57.

⁷ Blair Williams and Marian Sawyer, ‘High-vis and hard hats versus the care economy’ in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 5 pp. 79-99.

⁸ Cameron et al, *The 2022 Australian Federal Election*.

⁹ Andrea Carson and Simon Jackman, ‘Media coverage of the campaign and the electorate’s responses’ in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 7, pp. 121-144.

contest between the Labor and the Coalition. As the authors note in various chapters in the second part of the book, the election was not necessarily a resounding victory for Anthony Albanese. The ALP managed to win 77 out of 151 seats. The Coalition, with only 58 seats, was the clear loser. The winners are sixteen crossbenchers, four Greens, one Centre Alliance, one Katter's Australia Party and ten Independents.

Just like *Double Disillusion* and *Morrison's Miracle*, *Watershed* has two chapters on minor parties and independent candidates.¹⁰ However, there is a subtle but noticeable change. Previously, minor parties (by Glenn Kefford) and independents (by Jennifer Curtin in *Double Disillusion*, Curtin and Sheppard in *Morrison's Miracle*) had separate chapters. This time, Sheppard writes a combined chapter on independents and minor parties.¹¹ Carolyn Hendriks and Richard Reid write a chapter on Community Independents.¹² This demarcation makes sense. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the 2022 election was the growth of the 'Voice For' movements and the Community Independents. Hendriks and Reid trace the trajectory of the movement from Cathy McGowan's Indi campaign in 2013 (most notably the Get-Elected national online convention in February 2021, in which I participated) and explain various types of the 'Voice For' organisations in their origins, organisational modus operandi, approach to election, selection or non-selection of candidates and mode of campaign. I think it is important for Hendriks and Reid to use the more inclusive term 'Community Independents' rather than more publicly familiar but metropolitan-limited 'Teals'.

Perhaps, one of the difficult tasks for the authors was to define and demarcate which candidates should be discussed in Chapter 13 or Chapter 14. Chapter 13 refers to Bob Katter, Dai Le, David Pocock, Rebekha Sharkie and Andrew Wilkie as 'outside the 'Voice For' and Teal movements' and discuss them there rather than in Chapter 14 (it must be an error that Sharkie was omitted from the analysis).¹³ However, Climate 200 nominated Pocock, Sharkie and Wilkie as its candidates¹⁴ and the Climate 200 list

¹⁰ Lucien Leon and Richard Scully 'Talking pictures (and cartoons, videos, memes, etcetera)' in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 5, pp. 145- 177.

¹¹ Jill Sheppard 'Independents and minor parties' in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 13, pp. 259-278.

¹² Carolyn Hendriks and Richard Reid 'The rise and impact of Australia's movement for Community Independents' in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 14, pp. 279-303.

¹³ Jill Sheppard 'Independents and minor parties' in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 13, p. 266.

¹⁴ Climate 200 Website, '2022 Election'. Accessed at <https://www.climate200.com.au/2022-election>.

mostly overlaps with Cathy McGowan's Community Independent candidates. As Chapter 14¹⁵ (in my view) correctly includes candidates from the 'Voices For' movement but outside Climate 200 such as Penny Ackery and Susie Holt or Rob Priestly (he was neither from the 'Voice For' nor Climate 200 candidate but supported by Cathy McGowan), I wonder if Pocock, Sharkie and Wilkie should have been dealt in Chapter 14. In addition, Dai Le is neither from the 'Voice For' movement nor supported by Climate 200 and she openly dissociated herself from the 'Teals'. Nevertheless, she is also a (small c) community Independent and on many occasions in the parliament works with other Community Independents.

Reading this book again now, within less than a year from next election, provides me new perspectives on many issues confronting the Australian politics. Editors of this wonderful book are bold and courageous enough to title this as *Watershed* without a question mark (or an exclamation mark). It is my personal wish that the 2022 was truly the 'watershed' moment and Australia's party system has been irreversibly realigned. We will have to wait and see what will happen at the election next year.

¹⁵ Carolyn Hendriks and Richard Reid 'The rise and impact of Australia's movement for Community Independents' in Gauja et al, *Watershed*, Chapter 14, pp. 289.