

Opinion Editorial:

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How the minor parties could cause major problems to Australia's future

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As the Major Parties battle it out ahead of the upcoming Federal Election, there is a quiet menace which is stalking the Australian community and most of us do not realise it. And if it eventuates, it could create years of increased cost of living hikes, higher unemployment, severe energy shortages and drive away much needed investment in our country.

With the polls split, Australians should be aware we are close to handing over the keys to a minority government and that will be a horrific outcome for Australians who are already suffering deeply from cost-of-living pressures.

Unlike Major Parties that have comprehensive platforms covering a wide range of issues developed by diverse groups of people who understand the complexity of our economy, the Greens, independents and teals often focus on narrow agendas without regard for the whole picture. This leads to a fragmented parliament, where achieving consensus becomes increasingly difficult. For instance, the Greens may prioritise environmental policies, while teal candidates might focus on climate action and political transparency. While these are important issues, the lack of alignment on broader economic, social, and foreign policies can hinder cohesive governance and effective legislative progress.

The Greens for example have a housing policy (as do the major parties) but only the Greens also have a core policy of no new gas fields. I wonder if they don't know that bricks are made in kilns which are almost exclusively fired by natural gas or just don't care because it hurts their narrative? In fact, there is no viable alternative for natural gas to provide a high heat source for manufacturing a litany of everyday products we take for granted so if you feel like your hip pocket has a dull ache now, it will be battered and bruised if the Greens are handed more sway in the Parliament.

And this is before we even bring in the environmental outcomes. This is the same party who want to ban the extraction of natural gas despite the Federal Government, The International Energy Agency and any credible source insisting the best way to transition renewables reliably into the grid is with natural gas as a back-up for when the sun does not shine, and the wind does not blow. And natural gas will be needed to play that role for decades yet.

This week, the Greens and a WA teal MP made it clear they would demand a minority Government cancel the extension of Woodside's North West Shelf Project – which has already generated \$40 billion in royalties and excise for Australian taxpayers and is delivering natural gas to domestic and international markets amid increasing supply shortages. This is just the start.

We do not have to look far to see the folly of abandoning achievable and realistic action for ideological motives. In 2018, the previous New Zealand Government banned offshore exploration and put obstacles in the way of investment. Instead of relying on the natural gas in its own backyard, these actions have paradoxically, now forced New Zealand to import and stockpile the higher emitting energy source of coal from Indonesia to back up renewables. The New Zealand scenario is as inevitable as it was avoidable.

Our nation works better when we have clear, decisive leadership that is capable of seeing the big picture and grasping with the inter-dependent complexity of our economy which has energy at its base. A minority government risks handing over exorbitant power to a small collection of shuttered MPs wholly concerned with their narrow agenda rather than the greater good of the nation.

For all their weaknesses, the Major Parties are duty bound to put the nation's best interests first solely by the larger weight of electorates they hold under their candidates. Independents can be constructive and helpful to Australian politics but in the current global environment we need strong, decisive leadership capable of progressing policy, cutting excessive red and green tape and delivering cost of living relief – not the deliberate obstructionism to progress extreme ideology threatened by a minority government.

Many Australians who are frustrated with their party, whether it be Labor or Liberal, are likely considering a protest vote.

But while it may be hard for some to envision voting for the opposing Major Party – akin to crossing over from the Crows to Power or Rabbitohs to Roosters for some – if you care about the future of this country those protest votes need to be directed away from any Minor Parties, teals and independents who don't hold a pragmatic, educated and wholistic strategy to make Australia a better place to live.

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