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The Minor Parties' Campaigns

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While the return of the Turnbull government with a one-seat majority will be the defining story of the 2016 federal election for most political observers, equally important is the continued fragmentation of the Australian political landscape. Voters are deserting the major parties in increasing numbers (Green 2016). Dissatisfaction with Australian democracy, at least according to some reports (Evans, Stoker and Halupka 2016), is also rising. These conditions provide fertile ground for minor parties to work in and the 2016 federal election has shown—as the 2013 federal election also did—that there are significant opportunities for new or even re-energised players at the federal level in Australia. The long-term voting trend in both Houses, as shown in Figure 15.1, is away from the major parties. In the Senate, split-ticket voting once allowed us to explain the number of votes for minor parties and Independents (Bowler and Denmark 1993). But this is no longer sufficient. In the House, more than 20 per cent of voters gave their first preference to minor parties and Independents for the second election in a row, suggesting something significant is occurring (for more on Independents see Curtin, Chapter 16, this volume).

DOUBLE DISILLUSION

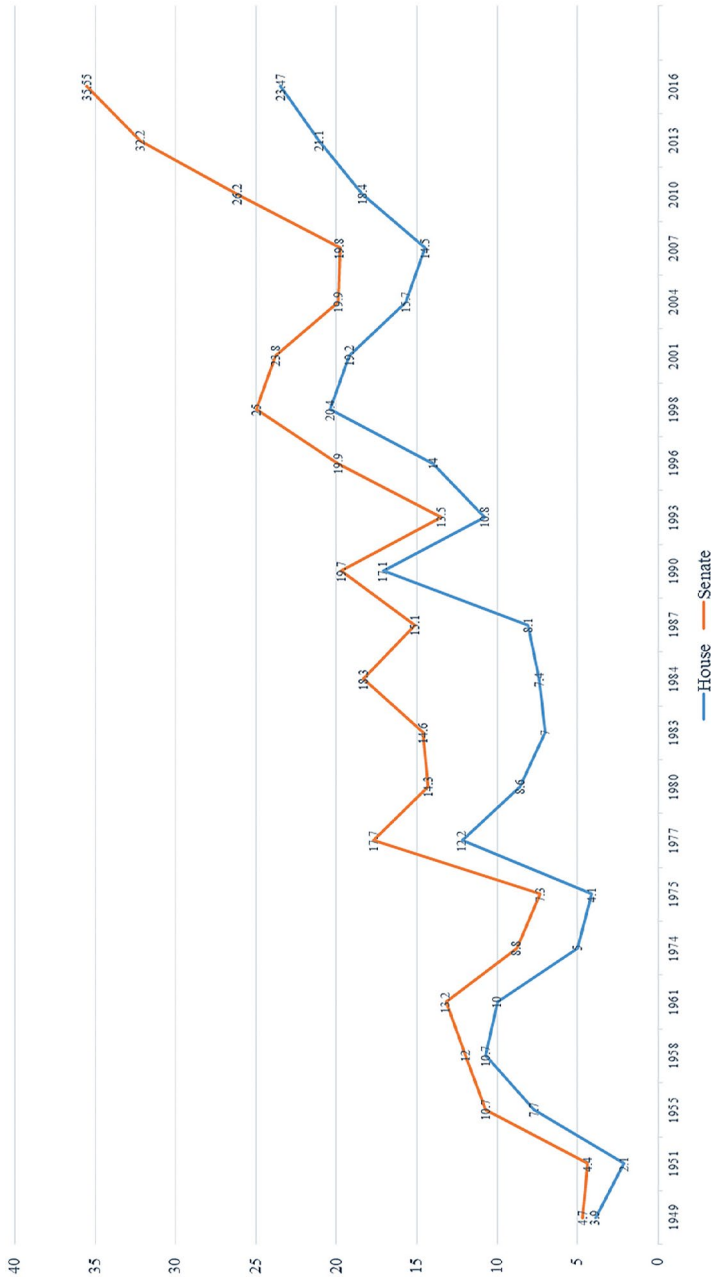


Figure 15.1. Per cent of first preference votes for minor parties and Independents

Source. Compiled by author from data kindly provided by Antony Green (2015: 400) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) (2016a).

In discussing the performance and outcome of this election for the minor parties,¹ I begin by placing the result in its historical context and by considering what it can tell us about broader trends affecting Australia's minor parties. Following this, I discuss the result for two of the more successful minor parties from this election: Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON) and the Nick Xenophon Team (NXT). I consider the campaigns these parties ran as well as the ideological and organisational dimensions of each party.² I conclude by considering what the 2016 election can tell us about Australia's minor parties.

Australia's minor parties

In 2002, Ian McAllister wrote:

placed in a comparative perspective, the hallmark of Australian politics is the dominance of party. The vast majority of voters identify with, and vote for, one of the major political parties: gaining election at the federal level is next to impossible without the benefit of one of the party labels—Liberal, National or Labor; and minor parties have played little role in shaping the development of the party system (2002: 379).

Fourteen years and five federal elections later, this analysis remains only partially correct. It is certainly true that the major parties remain dominant and, in comparative terms, indicators such as party identification remain high (McAllister 2011). Yet, there is also evidence that the strength of these ties are weakening and that voters are more open to considering options beyond the major parties (Evans, Stoker and Halupka 2016; McAllister 2011).

At the national level, the 2016 result is the third federal election in a row in which the share of first preferences for minor parties and Independents in both the House and the Senate have increased. In 2013, 21.1 per cent of first preferences in the House of Representatives were directed towards minor parties and Independents (Green 2016). Results from the 2016 contest have eclipsed this figure, with 23.4 per cent of first preferences in the House being for parties and candidates beyond the major parties

1 While not discussed in this chapter, debate about what minor parties are has been dealt with elsewhere. See Kefford (2017).

2 As this is written shortly after the election, these cases should be taken as exploratory as more research and analysis is required.

(Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) 2016b). The Senate contest in 2016 was predictably unpredictable. This can be partially explained by the halving of the quota required to be elected, as well as to reforms to the Senate electoral system, which were legislated in March 2016. In total, minor parties and Independents received 35.5 per cent of first preferences in the Senate, up from 32.2 per cent in 2013.

These national-level trends are important and tell us a great deal about broader voting behaviour and the opportunities for minor parties. Nonetheless, the regional dimension cannot be overlooked. In this sense, 2016 has seen a revert to type. The minor parties that have done well have, with the exception of the Greens, generally performed well to very well in one State, while the results in the other States have been far less impressive.³ The NXT and PHON results (discussed later) are typical of this. They also support the argument put forth by Narelle Miragliotta and Campbell Sharman (2012: 590) that subnational success ‘has often been a precursor to success at the federal or national level’. The results for NXT and PHON also need to be put in some context. When they are compared with other federal elections in which minor parties have done well, such as 1977, 1998 and 2013, they are impressive but not unprecedented.

When the minor parties that contested the 2016 election are analysed, it is evident that there is a significant level of diversity. This is consistent with the findings from Dean Jaensch and David Mathieson (1998), who classified the 523 minor parties that they discovered were formed between 1910 and 1996 into 13 classes of parties. Utilising the Jaensch and Mathieson typology (1998: 27–28), I classify the 51 minor parties that contested the 2016 federal election in Table 15.1. Of these, three have won one seat each in the House of Representatives: the Greens in Melbourne, NXT in Mayo and Katter’s Australia Party (KAP) in Kennedy. While in the Senate, 20 representatives from minor parties have been elected. This includes: nine from the Greens, three from NXT, four from PHON and one each from the Jacqui Lambie Network (JLN), Derryn Hinch’s Justice Party, the Liberal Democrats and Family First. The outcome in the Senate means that the number of Senators on the crossbench has reached its highest total ever.

3 This is even the case for PHON which won Senate seats across the country, yet the result was pronounced in QLD.

Table 15.1. Minor parties contesting the 2016 federal election

Classification	Parties
1 Postmaterial, new politics, Green	Sustainable Australia; Animal Justice Party; Australian Progressives; Australian Sex Party; Health Australia Party; The Greens; Pirate Party; Science Party; Secular Party of Australia
2 Single issues	Australian Antipaedophile Party; Australian Cyclists Party; Australian Equality Party (Marriage); Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party; Australian Recreational Fishers Party; Drug Law Reform Party; Marijuana (HEMP) Party; Non-Custodial Parents Party; Renewable Energy Party; The Arts Party; Voluntary Euthanasia Party; Consumer Rights & No-Tolls; Smokers Rights Party; Bullet Train For Australia; Outdoor Recreation Party (Stop The Greens)
3 Religious, moral, Christian/humanist	Christian Democratic Party; Citizens Electoral Council; Family First; Australian Christians
4 Local, regional	N/A
5 Idiosyncratic	N/A
6 Personality	Glenn Lazarus Team; Derryn Hinch's Justice Party; Jacqui Lambie Network; John Madigan's Manufacturing and Farming Party; Katter's Australian Party; Nick Xenophon Team; Palmer United Party (PUP); Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON)
7 Frivolous	N/A
8 Secessionist	DLP – Democratic Labour Party
9 Race, immigration/antiracism	Australia First Party; Australian Liberty Alliance; Rise Up Australia Party
10 Social base	Australian Country Party; CountryMinded; Mature Australia Party; Seniors United Party of Australia; Shooters, Fishers and Farmers; Veterans Party
11 Doctrinal	Socialist Alliance; Socialist Equality Party
12 'New Right'	Liberal Democrats (LDP)
13 Platform parties	Online Direct Democracy; VOTEFLUX.ORG

Note. A number of these were not clear cut, so I followed Jaensch and Matheson's lead on some of the classifications. I also made one change: 'unidentified' was the final class of parties in the original schema, I have replaced this with 'Platform Party'.

Source. Compiled by author.

The 2016 contest—like the 2013 contest—shows us that despite the opportunities for minor parties, it is still exceptionally difficult to achieve federal parliamentary representation. The Greens (Jackson, Chapter 13, this volume) stand alone as a minor party that has successfully developed from the grassroots. The remainder of the successful minor parties from the 2016 election have benefited due to at least one of the following: party registration rules being different for members of parliament than for

parties started outside parliament, significant name recognition and/or good fortune. KAP, JLN and NXT were all able to use the rules permitting members of parliament to register political parties without having signed up 500 members (as per the rules for those outside parliament) to create their own personal parties.⁴ PHON and Hinch's Justice Party, also personal parties, brought with them significant name recognition. For Family First, the Liberal Democrats and PHON, the halving of the Senate quotas impacted on who and how many of their candidates were elected.⁵ Meanwhile, Hinch appears to have benefited from being first on the ballot in Victoria. What can be said for Australia's minor parties, then, is that the medium-term voting trend provides opportunities. However, significant challenges remain in translating this into effective and stable constituencies that first lead to election and second to entrenchment in the Australian party system.

The return of Pauline Hanson and One Nation

While most of the media commentary about the minor parties during the campaign period was focused on how well the Greens and NXT would fare, the election aftermath was dominated by coverage of Pauline Hanson and One Nation. PHON won four Senate seats: two in Queensland (QLD), including one for the party's eponymous leader, one in New South Wales (NSW) and one in Western Australia (WA). But this is of course not Hanson's nor One Nation's first electoral breakthroughs. Hanson was first elected to the federal parliament in the House of Representatives in 1996 in the seat of Oxley. She had been preselected by the Liberal Party, but during the campaign was disendorsed as a result of her inflammatory comments in a letter she wrote to the *Queensland Times* newspaper about Indigenous Australians. In 1997, with the help of cofounders David Oldfield and David Ettridge, Hanson formed PHON.

4 There are others who used the same rules who were not re-elected. This includes Glenn Lazarus and John Madigan. For more on personal parties see Kefford and McDonnell (2016) and McDonnell (2013).

5 There has been analysis conducted that suggests PHON would have won a Senate seat in Tasmania if the electoral system had not been changed. However, this appears to be based on a logic that the government would have still called a double-dissolution election (see Cassidy 2016).

Less than a year after its formation, the party did spectacularly well in the June 1998 QLD State election, winning over 22 per cent of first preferences in the unicameral legislature and 11 seats. When the federal election was held in October later that year, however, Hanson failed in her bid for re-election after moving to the seat of Blair and the party secured only one Senate seat. Since that time, Hanson has contested every federal election except 2010. However, this has not always been for One Nation.⁶ She has also stood as an Independent or as a candidate for her short-lived Pauline's United Australia Party. In addition to these federal campaigns, Hanson has stood as a candidate in four State elections. This includes standing as an Independent in the 2003 and 2011 NSW Legislative Council elections, and the 2009 QLD State election in the seat of Beaudesert. In 2015, Hanson returned as a candidate for One Nation, contesting the QLD State election in the seat of Lockyer.

What should be evident from this is that the relationship between Hanson and others involved in the party has not always been easy. The fate of PHON as an electoral force has been largely wedded to that of Hanson and, in the nearly 20 years since its formation, most of the significant results have been achieved when Hanson has been the leader of the party. In the period after the 2001 federal election, up until the 2013 federal election when Hanson was not involved with the party, the results were modest (Ghazarian 2015: 135–59).⁷ In this period, the party was dysfunctional; splinter groups broke away, some of the remaining parliamentarians left to become Independents or joined other parties and the party was even deregistered by the AEC.

Prior to the 2016 election, PHON had little in the way of an organisational structure and limited resources. In theory, the party is said to have a branch and conference structure (PHON 2015). Candidates for the party, however, have suggested there were little if any active members. The party had a head office in Brisbane and had one paid employee (Walker 2016).⁸ The campaign the party ran was highly decentralised.

6 At the 2015 QLD State election, the party registered in QLD was called 'One Nation', the name here and in other States was subsequently changed back to Pauline Hanson's One Nation following this election.

7 In this period, Hanson resigned from the party and then, along with David Ettridge, stood trial and was sentenced to prison for fraudulently registering PHON in 1997. See Zareh Ghazarian (2015: 137–38) and Gary Johns (2006: 61–62).

8 At the time of writing, interviews had been conducted with 15 candidates from multiple States, which was part of a different project.

According to the candidates interviewed, they were given some media training, had a one-day meeting in Brisbane with the other candidates and then were left to their own devices to do what they could in their electorate. The party made it very clear to potential candidates that they were unable to provide them with financial support, and this meant they even had pay for their own corflutes. According to interviewees, the limited financial resources the party did possess came primarily from funds that Hanson had to borrow. Candidates therefore needed to self-finance their campaigns and the party website advises potential candidates that they consider ‘the cost of a decent campaign (without TV advertising) to be around \$5,000–\$10,000 per electorate’ (PHON n.d.).⁹

The organisational and financial limitations meant the campaign the party ran was hard fought but limited in scope. The party relied almost solely on social media for the sharing of videos and party-based advertising and while the majority of the candidates had social media profiles to try to engage with voters, they were basic and their use was inconsistent. All the candidates interviewed noted that they were reliant on the goodwill of members and supporters in their area as well as their friends and family to assist with local campaigning efforts. In addition to these local-level campaigns, after the writs for the election were issued on 8 May 2016, Hanson began crisscrossing the country to help boost the profile of the party’s candidates. These events were usually dubbed, ‘Meet Pauline and ...’. Most of these and the campaign launches, including those for the Senate candidates, were in regional towns. For example, the NSW Senate candidate launch was held in Quirindi, while for the Victorian candidates it was held in Bendigo. The party also set up other events to attempt to capitalise on the appeal of the Hanson story. These included a public event on 27 May 2016 in Ipswich to celebrate Hanson’s birthday and, on 29 May 2016, ‘Fish N Chips with Pauline Hanson’.¹⁰ On 3 June 2016, the party held its QLD Senate launch. The event, held at the Norman Park Bowls Club in Brisbane, generated significant media attention as police were required to remove protestors from the venue (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2016).

9 Jamie Walker (2016) suggested that an agreement had been made that candidates who reached the 4 per cent required for electoral funding would receive 85 per cent of expenses back. However, candidates interviewed said they had not been reimbursed.

10 PHON has a calendar of events on their website, from where this material is derived.

In total, Pauline Hanson's One Nation contested 15 seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate contest in all six States. While the results are not as strong as they were in 1998 (shown in Table 15.2), party support remains robust in a similar set of electorates as it did in 1998—where they received in excess of 10 per cent of first preferences in 2016, they also achieved this in 1998. In finishing in third position on first preferences in 11 of the 15 House seats the party contested, they also played a significant role in determining who was eventually elected. The average PHON voter in 1998, it has been suggested, was likely to reside in 'rural or regional areas, to be male, to be aged over 50, to be poorly educated and to have a blue-collar job' (Bean 2000; Goot and Watson 2001). By the very nature of the electorates the party chose to contest in the House, this analysis remains at least partially correct.

The impact that the double dissolution had on the number of Senators the party had elected is indisputable. Hence, while this is the best result at the federal level since 2001, the following factors are worthy of consideration in future analysis of the PHON result. First, this was the first federal election since 2001 in which Hanson stood as a candidate for PHON in QLD. This is clearly the State where the party is strongest.¹¹ Second, QLD is a fertile ground for parties espousing an anti-establishment, anti-major party sentiment. This is evident when the vote for minor parties and Independents in the past three elections are examined. In both houses, QLD voters frequently vote for minor parties and Independents at numbers higher than the national average. Third, while terrorism became an issue late in the election campaign with the attack in Istanbul in Turkey on 29 June 2016,¹² the salience of this and other issues that PHON focused on (such as race and immigration) requires further analysis. If the size of the vote for the other minor parties that openly espouse nationalistic and anti-migrant sentiment is any indication—and it is tiny—these issues did not appear to have a significant impact.¹³ Moreover, the electorates in

11 Indeed, in 2004, Hanson stood as an Independent for the Senate in QLD, running against the party named after her and received 37,888 first preferences while PHON received 71,043 first preferences in total in QLD. While in 2007, Hanson again contested the Senate contest in QLD, this time for her Pauline's United Australia Party, and the party won 101,461 first preferences. However, One Nation—which had changed its name—received 4,174 first preferences. The importance of Hanson to the party is underscored by these figures.

12 According to *Insentia* (2016), the terror attack became the second biggest issue covered in the media in the week 25 June to 1 July.

13 In the first period of electoral success for PHON, however, Simon Jackman (1998) showed how salient these issues were in the electorate and Rachel Gibson, Ian McAllister and Tami Swenson (2002) argued that race and immigration policies were key reasons why voters supported PHON.

which PHON performed well, PUP also did well in at the 2013 federal election. PUP's policies on refugees and Indigenous Australians, as two examples, stand in direct contrast to those of PHON (Palmer United Party 2013). Hence, there are important and currently unresolved questions in regard to what level of PHON's vote is due to the salience of their policies as opposed to the anti-major party sentiment that has been evident in Australian federal politics through multiple election cycles.

Table 15.2. One Nation results in the House of Representatives and the Senate

Electorate	% of First Preferences 2016	% of First Preferences 1998
Blair, QLD	15.5	36.8
Dobell, NSW*	8.6	9.5
Fadden, QLD	11.9	12.7
Fairfax, QLD*	9.7	18.1
Flynn, QLD	17.1	NA
Herbert, QLD*	13.5	14.4
Hinkler, QLD	19.1	19.1
Leichhardt, QLD	7.6	14.1
Longman, QLD*	9.4	18.4
Maranoa, QLD	17.8	22.9
Oxley, QLD	8.4	18.8
Paterson, NSW*	13.0	8.3
Richmond, NSW	6.2	10.2
Wide Bay, QLD	15.6	26.7
Wright, QLD	20.9	NA
Senate – QLD	9.1	14.8
Senate – NSW	4.1	9.6
Senate – WA	4.0	10.4
Senate – SA	2.9	9.7
Senate – TAS	2.5	3.8
Senate – VIC	1.8	4.1

* indicates seats which changed hands

Source. Compiled by author from AEC (2016c, 2016d) and Paul Reynolds (2000: 163).

PHON has long been cited as one of the classic cases of the populist radical right. The three key ingredients of populist radical-right ideology according to Mudde (2012, 2016) are nativism, authoritarianism and populism. The policies that PHON emphasised during the campaign were consistent with both their own traditions and that of radical-right populists more broadly. This included policies on immigration, refugees, Halal certification and Islam. In classic populist terms, the sovereignty of the 'people' was also asserted. This came in the form of 'Citizens Initiated Referenda'. In outlining the policy, the party criticises what it sees as the failings of representative democracy and suggests that what is needed is a 'mechanism to democratically pursue those issues [sic] to produce an outcome of legislative change that is actually the will of the people' (PHON 2016d).¹⁴

The party's policy on Islam, which received significant media attention during and following the election, calls for 'an inquiry or Royal Commission to determine if Islam is a religion or political ideology' (PHON 2016c). The policy also calls for the prevention of 'further Muslim Immigration and the intake of Muslim refugees', a ban on 'the Burqa and Niquab [sic] in public places' and 'surveillance cameras to be installed in all Mosques and schools' (PHON 2016c). In light of this rhetoric, it is worth considering the religious composition of the electorates PHON contested in 2016. Here, the evidence is revealing. Of the 15 House of Representatives electorates in which the party stood candidates, each had small to very small Muslim populations. According to the 2011 Census data, the seat of Oxley had the largest Muslim population of the 15, coming in 45th of the 150 electorates in the House. While 10 of the electorates PHON contested were in the bottom third for size of the Muslim population, Richmond, Fisher, Wide Bay and Paterson were all in the bottom 10 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011).

The centrality of Islam in the rhetoric of PHON during the 2016 election campaign should be seen as part of the evolution of who the 'other' is since the party's first period of electoral success. Writing shortly after the party emerged, Geoff Stokes (2000: 26) said that there were 'two kinds of "other": those categorised as oppressor or enemy, and those who by their very existence are represented as cultural or criminal threats to the Australian way of life'. While the latter group was formerly Indigenous

14 This seems to fit with Cas Mudde's (2015) argument that populism is 'an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism'.

Australians and Asian migrants,¹⁵ it has now become Muslim. Hence, while the ‘other’ may have changed, nativism remains one of the keys to unpacking the ideology of PHON. The ‘oppressor’, in contrast, remains political and economic elites who, for PHON, have been acting in their own self interest. PHON’s (2016b) economic and tax policy, for example, suggests that that party will ‘bring back federalism and restore Australia’s constitution so that our economy is run for the benefit of Australians, instead of the United Nations and unaccountable foreign bodies’. The party’s climate change policy calls for, among other things, the abolition of the Renewable Energy Target as:

climate change has and will continue to be used as a political agenda by politicians and self-interest groups or individuals for their own gain. We cannot allow scare mongering by people such as Tim Flannery, who make outlandish statements and are not held accountable (PHON 2016e).

Anti-elitism, which Barry Hindess and Marian Sawer said was ‘at the heart of Pauline Hanson’s political appeal in the mid to late 1990s’ (2004: 1), therefore also remains unmistakably central to the party’s discourse.

The election of four PHON Senators will provide institutional and financial resources that the party could use to institutionalise themselves. The \$1.6 million the AEC has paid out to the party in election funding will also help (Doran 2016). In the party’s first period of success, it was tightly controlled and a common complaint from parliamentarians and the party members was that they had no capacity to make meaningful contributions (Ghazarian 2015: 134–35). Nicole Bolleyer has shown that parties dominated by political entrepreneurs can be transformed into a ‘fully institutionalized, self-standing organization’ (2013: 214). However, this is dependent on the choices party elites make. For such a transformation to occur, a significant shift in approach from Hanson and other party elites would be required.

15 The party’s opposition to policies that they perceive as favouring Indigenous Australians still remain. For example, the party website has a list of ‘aims’, which includes ‘to abolish divisive and discriminatory policies, such as those related to Aboriginal and Multicultural Affairs’ (PHON 2016a).

The rise of the Nick Xenophon Team

While in the election aftermath, PHON may have been the minor party dominating the headlines, the impact that NXT will have on the 45th Parliament as a result of the success they achieved at this election is indisputable. NXT secured three Senate seats in South Australia (SA) and the seat of Mayo, also in SA, in the House of Representatives. In doing so, NXT has positioned itself as a force to be reckoned with in a parliament where the numbers in both houses place them in a strong negotiating position. The threat NXT posed in the 2016 election is evident when the scale of the campaign the major parties ran against the party are considered. Senior federal politicians from both the ALP and the Liberal Party publicly outlined their opposition to the party and one high-profile interviewee from NXT suggested that a million dollars had been spent by the major parties on negative advertising targeting NXT in SA (Starick 2016).¹⁶

Xenophon brought considerable name recognition to his party as a result of the decade he spent in the South Australian Legislative Council. According to Haydon Manning (2007: 8), when Xenophon was elected to the Senate in 2007, he made 'history as the first South Australian elected to the Senate as an Independent. With ... a remarkable 14.8 per cent first preference vote which equated to 1.03 quotas'. As Xenophon's six-year term in the Senate came to an end in 2013, he decided to form his own party. He argued, 'the current federal laws are stacked against Independents running for the Senate, which is why there have only been a handful of independent senators in 112 years' (Australian Associated Press (AAP) 2013). Registered with the AEC on 1 July that year, The Nick Xenophon Group, as it was then called, contested the South Australian Senate election with Xenophon and one other candidate, Stirling Griff, and the party received 24.8 per cent of first preferences (AEC 2013). Yet, despite this strong showing, the party was able to win only one Senate seat, with the preference deals of the other parties seen as a key reason for why the party failed to secure a second Senate quota.

16 The opposition from both major parties can partially be explained by NXT's decision to run open tickets and not to encourage its supporters to preference one over the other.

The 2016 campaign can therefore be seen as a breakthrough election for NXT. As is evident from Table 15.3, NXT stood candidates in 18 seats in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, the party had 14 candidates across the country. In both houses, the primary focus of the party was in SA where the party had candidates in each of the 11 House of Representatives seats and also had four Senate candidates including the party's eponymous leader, Nick Xenophon. In the South Australian Senate contest, the party won 21.7 per cent of first preferences with Xenophon, Griff and Skye Kakoschke-Moore elected. The party also received 21.2 per cent of first preferences in the House of Representatives across the whole of SA (AEC 2016a). Results outside SA were less impressive and, in many lower house seats in other States, the NXT candidate was running against a high-profile opponent. The Senate result in the other States followed this trajectory.

Table 15.3. The Nick Xenophon Team results in the House of Representatives and the Senate

Electorate	% of First Preferences
Adelaide, SA	12.8
Barker, SA	29.0
Boothby, SA	20.6
Calare, NSW	5.4
Grey, SA	27.7
Groom, QLD	7.6
Higgins, Vic	2.2
Hindmarsh, SA	15.0
Kingston, SA	17.2
Lindsay, NSW	2.0
Macarthur, NSW	3.6
Makin, SA	16.6
Mayo, SA	34.8
Moreton, QLD	4.7
Port Adelaide, SA	18.7
Sturt, SA	21.1
Wakefield, SA	20.4
Warringah, NSW	6.3
Senate – QLD	2.0
Senate – NSW	1.7
Senate – WA	2.1

Electorate	% of First Preferences
Senate – SA	21.7
Senate – TAS	1.5
Senate – VIC	1.5

Source. Compiled by author from AEC (2016c, 2016d).

Xenophon, who is well-known for his use of stunts to generate media exposure, had suggested during the campaign that NXT had a ‘dental floss budget’ with which to campaign (Anderson 2015). Like PHON, they had one full-time salaried staff member to manage candidate-related issues. Also, like PHON, candidates were required to fundraise or self-finance, and would then be reimbursed depending on the election results. According to one high-profile interviewee, the party spent an estimated \$200,000 outside SA. In addition to this, individual candidates interviewed outlined how they had spent thousands of dollars on local campaigning. In this regard, one candidate disclosed how they had spent \$30,000 on their campaign, while another estimated that for them it was closer to \$50,000.

In contrast to a number of other minor parties, NXT put their candidates through a rigorous preselection process. Starting with 450 applications initially, the party whittled the numbers down to 90 from which they formed Electoral Advisory Committees (EACs) in a number of States (Starick 2015; candidate interviews). With input from Xenophon and Griff, the EACs assisted in selecting candidates in each of the States, and eventually 32 candidates from across Australia were selected (NXT n.d.; candidate interviews). With candidate selection completed and the EAC in place, planning for the campaign began for most candidates by the end of 2015. From March 2016, the party was coordinating multiple ‘Meet Nick and the Candidate’ events each week in SA. The candidates outside SA were told that Xenophon would make multiple visits to each of the other States in the lead-up to, and during, the actual campaign. They were also advised that while they could contact the head office in Adelaide for support, and they had weekly phone hook-ups, their campaigns were still largely up to them.¹⁷ According to those interviewed, this meant that candidates, and the EACs supporting them, were meant to work out

¹⁷ At the time of writing, 17 semi-structured interviews had been conducted with candidates from multiple States as part of a different project. All interviews were conducted on the condition of anonymity.

a way to utilise and engage the members and supporters to help with campaigning. Unsurprisingly, for most of the candidates from outside SA, this challenge was immense as the number of active EAC members declined and they had little help from supporters.

When asked to describe the party in ideological terms, Xenophon says it is in the 'political centre' (Grattan 2016). This positioning also extended to the advertising the party used with one piece suggesting that the party wanted to 'break the duopoly' of the major parties. When the policies of NXT are analysed, what can be said is that they are largely protectionist in nature, with a heavy emphasis on Australian manufacturing and government intervention into markets. There is also a strong emphasis on infrastructure, improving education and health outcomes, and acting on predatory gambling and poker machines. On social issues the party is, for the most part, socially progressive. Support for same-sex marriage and constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians are examples of this. The obvious historical comparison with NXT is the Democrats. Both parties have tried to position themselves as centrists, performed well in SA and broad policy comparisons can be made with their socially liberal, economically protectionist and interventionist range of policy measures (Sugita 1997). The ideological profile of NXT is, therefore, certainly not as incoherent as that of PUP (Kefford and McDonnell 2016), but neither is it as clear cut as the Greens or PHON.

The inevitable problem for NXT in both organisational and electoral terms is that the party is seen first and foremost as an advocate for the interests of South Australians. This view appears to have some basis when the party constitution is examined (NXT 2014). John Warhurst (2016) noted prior to the election that the Australian federal system has never really generated a successful State-based regional party compared to Canada, as even those parties that have been strong in one State 'have also had wider national aspirations and representation right from the beginning'. NXT has the potential to break the mould in this respect. Xenophon has previously indicated that he would field candidates in the South Australian Legislative Council elections in 2018 and would consider whether the party would also contest the House of Assembly (Wills 2016). Based on the outcome of the federal election, it appears the next logical step for NXT is to entrench themselves further in their stronghold of SA by running candidates in both houses in the next State election. While the 2016 election can, therefore, be seen as a success for

NXT, the challenges for the party are still significant. Not the least of these will be how the party will fare in the next federal election when Xenophon is not expected to be a candidate.

Conclusion

The nationwide results of the 2016 federal election will be seen as evidence that the grounds are fertile for new or existing minor parties in Australia. This is for good reason. The evidence certainly shows a trend away from the major parties in the medium term and evidence of relatively new or resurgent minor parties winning seats in both the House and the Senate. This is certainly significant. Nonetheless, the challenges for minor parties in Australia cannot be understated. In particular, questions remain about the capacity of those minor parties that have been able to achieve parliamentary representation to institutionalise. Angelo Panebianco articulated the challenge that new parties face when they move from a phase 'in which organizational identity is *manifest* (the objectives being explicit and coherent), to a phase in which the organizational ideology is *latent* (the objectives being vague, implicit, and contradictory)' (1988: 18–19). The goals of parties such as NXT and PHON were to turn Xenophon and Hanson's personal popularity and name recognition into something larger than themselves. What are the objectives now they have achieved this aim? Successfully managing this transition will require party elites to clarify what the objectives of the party are, and to think about ways to include candidates, members and supporters in party decision-making. If this cannot be achieved, these parties may replicate the fate of PUP, which faded as quickly as it rose due to party organisation mismanagement.

The 2016 federal election is clearly significant for Australia's minor parties. It is the first election fought under a new Senate electoral system since 1984. However, the government's decision to use the triggers available to it to call a double dissolution means that the impact of these changes are yet to be fully understood. As the minor parties can no longer use the group-voting tickets to their advantage, it would appear likely that the number of parties contesting federal elections in the future are likely to shrink. Indeed, as noted in Table 15.1, there are a number of similar minor parties who may need to consider merging to improve

their competitiveness. Ultimately, the 2016 federal election suggests that Australia's minor parties can be cautiously optimistic about their future prospects.

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