

Deadlock Possibility Comments (Result not yet known): Robert Menzies, Prime Minister (LP)

DECEMBER 9, 1961

“I do not agree that the Government is out. At worst, I think it will be a 61-61 deadlock.

If the Government is beaten it will get out. If there is a deadlock it will not hand over to the Labor Party, as Mr Calwell has suggested.

The Government will face Parliament, which make or unmake governments.

Cabinet will meet in Canberra on Tuesday.

I feel rather like King Charles, being an unconscionable time a-dying.

It would be a pity if the Minister for Trade, Mr McEwen, could not represent Australia at talks in London. But it will be impossible if the House is deadlocked and the parties are preparing for another election.

Under the system of voting, no Government will have a Senate majority for all the time.

From 1949 until 1951 I had a minority in the Senate, and we got out of that with a double dissolution.

I have a long established practice of not making statements on the results of elections until they are reasonably clear, and in a normal election they would have been reasonably clear by now.

It would be foolish to say I was not surprised by the result.

So is Mr Calwell, and so are you. We are all surprised.

It was reasonable to assume that after 12 years and with the arguments that had gone on with the economic policy there would be some Government losses.

That was to be expected, and we expected it.

But the odd thing about this election is that in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria the movement of votes has been no more than you would expect after a Government has been in office 12 years.

I don't know yet the final result in Kalgoorlie or Stirling, but Kalgoorlie was one of those miracle wins in 1958, in a Labor stronghold. But if Mr Brown is defeated – which he does not concede yet – it would be by a narrow margin, and similarly, Mr Cash in Stirling.

In Western Australia the changes are merely fractional. The same applies in South Australia and in Victoria.

On a big swing against the Government, who would have thought we would have held Maribyrnong?. Yet Maribyrnong is held, we believe.

In Tasmania, there was no change. So in four States out of six, the movement in the vote has been no more than one might have expected.

In New South Wales, where the Government's economic policies were, I think, more violently resented than in other States, there were a couple of marginal seats.

I admit I am very concerned about the position of Mr Osborne in Evans.

Let's face up to it. The losses or prospective losses in NSW are greater than I would have expected.

But the key State has been Queensland. The Queensland vote is not to be explained on the basis of a little lag at the end of a 12-year term.

Nor is it to be explained on the basis of economic policies.

But undoubtedly in Queensland the electors had come to believe, I think quite wrongly, that Queensland had had a poor deal in the treatment of the States by the Commonwealth.

I don't want to argue about that, though I think I may find myself having to, in the months to come.

I think there was a wide misunderstanding about that, but no doubt on polling day and for weeks and weeks before, Queensland perhaps felt a neglected State.

Nothing else could explain this overwhelming turn of votes.

I am sorry about Mr Hulme and Dr Cameron, who did such splendid service but were both held responsible for what was said to be the neglect of Queensland.

In the result, I don't yet know what will happen. Maybe 50/50. Maybe a very fine majority.

If we are out we are out. I am not saying we are out. I don't think we are out.

If we are, the people have given me their confidence for a long, long time, and therefore I have no personal grievance. None at all.

I would think that the worst was fifty-fifty, or to be more precise, 61-61.

I suppose that by the end of the week we will know what the results are.

I feel rather like King Charles, being an unconscionable time a-dying.

I have been consulting my Ministers and members – those of us who are the surviving members – about meeting me in Canberra by Tuesday of next week.”

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