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Reader poll gives Rudd big win

Sid Marris, Online political editor | *October 16, 2007*

KEVIN Rudd has begun the 2007 election heading for an overwhelming victory, according to The Australian's online readers.

The Australian/CoreData's poll of voting intentions for the November 24 election has Labor at its strongest position in the modern era with a primary vote of 53.9 per cent.

Such a result would be bigger than at any of the most notable elections in living memory when governments changed hand – Gough Whitlam in 1972, Malcolm Fraser in 1975, Bob Hawke in 1983, and John Howard in 1996.

The Coalition faced a greater annihilation than even John Howard might have feared with only 30.9 per cent of voters signalling at the beginning of the campaign they will vote for the conservatives.

The voluntary, unweighted poll of 11,739 readers started on Monday morning after John Howard called the election, with most of the responses since the Coalition's tax policy was released.

It suggests a record low 31 per cent would vote for the Coalition.

The most recent Newspoll on Monday, which uses statistical techniques to get a representative sample from 1200 respondents, had Labor at 48 per cent.

The last time Newspoll had Labor at 53 per cent primary vote was under Bob Hawke, a month before the 1987 election. That figure dropped to 45 per cent by election day, with John Howard in his first tilt getting a similar percentage but losing out on preferences.

Strategists on both sides expect the polling to narrow during the campaign. The Coalition in particular believes its \$34 billion tax package will resonate with the electorate and give it some much needed momentum.

Malcolm Fraser secured a 53 per cent primary vote after the sacking of Gough Whitlam's Government in 1975.

Bob Hawke's victory from Opposition in 1983 saw a 4 per cent national swing – the same as now required by Kevin Rudd – but Labor only received a 49.5 per cent primary at that poll. (A four per cent swing against Labor in Tasmanian, during the Franklin Dams dispute, undermined the Labor swing.)

If the trends were to continue the Greens would have cause to expect their numbers in the Senate, and the potential balance of power, to rise from four at present, with 12.8 per cent of readers saying the left-wing environmental party would secure readers primary vote.

The Democrats are facing obliteration, with only 1.1 per cent of the vote, though in a tight contest with the right preferences deal, their support might be enough to see one senator sneak home.

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