PUBLISHED VERSION

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Watershed: the 2022 Australian Federal Election., 2023 / Gauja, A., Sawer, M., Shappard, J. (ed./s), Ch.4, pp.59-77

Published version http://doi.org/10.22459/W.2023

Chapter - http://dx.doi.org/10.22459/W.2023.04

http://hdl.handle.net/2440/139321

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Variants of populism

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This chapter argues that analysing populist elements throws a useful light on aspects of the 2022 federal election campaign that might otherwise be neglected. These include not only Liberal Party strategy and Labor's response to it but also the strategies of minor parties and even the Teal Independents. However, the 2022 election revealed a more complex populist landscape than in the 2019 election. The previous campaign saw a clear contest between different forms of major-party populism in which both the Liberals and Labor argued they were representing the people, 'us', against an enemy constructed as 'them'. Labor depicted itself as representing ordinary people (particularly the working and middle classes) against a wealthy 'top end of town'. By contrast, Scott Morrison depicted himself as an ordinary suburban bloke whose party was representing the people against a Labor big government that would rip off and spend taxpayers' hard-earned money while ruining the economy. Both forms of populism had underlying ideological agendas. Labor was shifting away from a neoliberal-influenced form of social democracy to one that focused more on issues of class inequality. The Liberals were displaying a form of free-market populism influenced by a neoliberal opposition to big-government intrusions into the economy and citizens' lives. Meanwhile, Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON) and Clive Palmer's United Australia Party (UAP) pursued more extreme right-wing populist agendas.

Definitions of populism remain highly contested (Hunger and Paxton 2022); however, 'us' versus 'them' arguments are a regular trope in populism. For example, populism commonly mobilises the people against claimed

powerful, corrupt elites and the groups they protect. In 2022, Labor's 'small-target' strategy and emphasis on cooperating with business resulted in it no longer mobilising left-wing populism against the 'top end of town'. Rather, Labor contested right-wing populist 'us' versus 'them' rhetoric by arguing that it would bring the Australian people together for the common good. The Liberals' campaign saw more similarities with their 2019 one. They tried to mobilise a post-pandemic form of market populism that emphasised the role of 'can-do capitalism' as opposed to big-government (and strong Covid-19) restrictions that they tried to associate with Labor. The Liberals also drew on national security and anti-gender campaign forms of populism. However, their plans were undermined not only by Labor's small-target strategy but also by multiple factors to be discussed in this chapter.

Significantly, the Liberals were also challenged by a new form of populism: the largely centre-right populism of the so-called Teal Independents. The Teals promised to represent the people (in the form of local communities) against an elite, out-of-touch and corrupt federal government. Meanwhile, the populist parties of the right were more critical of the Liberals than previously. The UAP and PHON targeted (claimed) tyrannical actions by both Liberal and Labor governments during the Covid-19 pandemic, while Hanson also targeted 'woke' liberalism. The Greens had populist elements in their arguments that the major parties had corruptly sold the people out to big business polluters/emitters—a form of left-wing populism that also intersected with some of the largely centre-right populism of the Teals.

Elections are decided by multiple factors. Variants of populism can only explain limited elements of the election campaign and the parties' ideological agendas. However, it will be argued here that they did play a role. This chapter will focus on analysing the Liberal and Labor parties as the major parties of government but will also make some brief comments about the minor parties and the Teals. The Liberals' populism will be analysed in greater depth to identify some aspects that contributed to the Coalition's defeat.

The Liberals

Morrison's intended 2022 election strategy was clear by the end of 2021, as State and international borders were opened, restrictions were eased and Covid-19 was let rip. Morrison argued that the Coalition would be winding

back the big-government measures and restrictions that had been necessary earlier during the pandemic. Instead, it would rely on 'can-do capitalism' to build the economy and improve standards of living. In his words:

> 'Can do capitalism', not 'don't do Governments'. I think that's a good motto for us to follow … right across the spectrum of economic policy in this country. We've got a bit used to Governments telling us what to do over the last couple of years, I think we have to break that habit. (Morrison 2021)

It was a form of post-pandemic free-market populism (see further Sawer and Laycock 2009) designed not only to attack Labor's claimed big-government agenda on the left, but also to counter Palmer's critique of big-government attacks on freedom from the right. It built on the Coalition's successful 2019 strategy.

Morrison's (2022b) election launch speech argued that Australians were 'tired of politics … and they've certainly had enough of Governments telling them how to live their lives'. He claimed that the Coalition's policies of lower taxes and less regulation for businesses would put 'you', the people, 'back in the driver's seat' (Morrison 2022c). By contrast, 'Labor wants to tell you what to do … with your own money' and, he claimed: 'We've had enough of governments telling people … where they can go and what they can do' (Morrison 2022c). Post-pandemic market populism reinforced a longstanding neoliberal emphasis on individual 'choice' (albeit before the pandemic had ended).

The Liberals also attempted to mobilise other forms of populism, including nationalist ones. They suggested that Labor would not adequately protect the Australian people from an increasingly aggressive China. Labor was depicted as not just weak but also—drawing on a common nationalist populist trope—a potentially traitorous political elite. Peter Dutton claimed that China had been trying to influence Labor's candidate selection (Hurst 2022), while Morrison called deputy Labor leader Richard Marles 'the Manchurian candidate' (ABC 2022a).

Morrison's Pentecostalism had already (Morrison 2018, 2019) made him familiar with populist campaigns against 'gender ideology' and its challenges to traditional (fixed) gender identities. These campaigns started in Europe, where they were used by far-right populist movements and elected leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). They subsequently influenced religious conservatives in the United States, with

populist Republicans especially targeting transgender issues (Sosin 2022). Morrison used his support for hand-picked anti-transgender candidate Katherine Deves (see Chapter 5, this volume) not only to try to appeal to socially conservative religious voters but also to suggest that he would protect women from a claimed influx of transgender athletes into women's sport. While not endorsing all of Deves's extreme language, Morrison did contribute to a populist scare campaign himself, including by wrongly claiming that transgender adolescents could access life-transforming surgery (Morrison 2022a).[1] Transgender Australians were depicted as a new threatening 'Other' supported by a woke elite, in a context in which questioning gender or same-sex equality was no longer as electorally acceptable in Australia as it had been in the past.[2]

Howard-era populism encouraged an ethnic identity politics of 'us' versus 'them' that had increasingly focused on a threatening Muslim Other protected by politically correct elites (George and Huynh 2009; Johnson 2004). By contrast, Morrison (2022b) affirmed that 'we understand how important faith and culture is to … local communities … Australia is the most successful multicultural, multifaith, immigration nation on earth'. He was hoping that Deves's candidature would mobilise diverse religious conservative voters, including Muslim ones, especially in the electorates of western Sydney.

Morrison also attempted to re-energise his populist personal image. Leaders' personal images have now become increasingly important in politics as a focus on candidates' personal stories combines with the use of visual communication (Arbour 2014; Barnhurst and Quinn 2012) in a context in which many voters are disengaged from conventional politics. Moffitt (2016: 51) has emphasised the important role of 'the leader as a performer of populism'. It is very different from a historical context in which male leaders' images tended to be far more authoritative, statesmanlike and overwhelmingly monochrome (for example, a conservative suit with only a tie possibly adding a spot of colour). In 2019, Morrison had reinforced his populist argument that he would protect ordinary Australians against

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1   Albanese (Albanese et al. 2022) argued that these issues were already covered by the *Sex Discrimination Act* and were the responsibility of sporting codes, although he did also add the ambiguous statement that 'girls should be able to play sport against girls and boys should be able to play sport against boys' without stating how boys and girls would be defined. Albanese had also answered a question from Joe Hildebrand (2022) about whether men could have babies with the response 'no'.
2   Though, of course, abortion and same-sex rights are still very much being targeted in the United States.

a Labor big government by rejecting his 'tall poppy' Sydney's eastern suburbs origins and instead fostering his image as an ordinary 'top bloke from the Sutherland Shire' (Blaine 2021: 7). Morrison was 'ScoMo', the likeable daggy dad from the suburbs who loved his footy and a beer (see further Johnson 2021a). The ScoMo image undercut Labor's left-populist arguments that the Liberals supported the 'top end of town'—a campaign that might have worked better against Malcom Turnbull, the wealthy former banker, than an apparent suburban dad.

Morrison favoured photo opportunities during the campaign in manufacturing facilities (preferably in a high-vis vest) as he tried to appeal to the bloke vote (see further Crabb 2022; Chapter 5, this volume). However, Morrison also displayed a confusing kaleidoscope of images in other workplaces as he desperately tried to refashion his populist ordinary Australian image. Morrison washed a woman's hair, sewed and swept a basketball court. There were also his more homely images: building a kid's cubby house, cooking curries and playing the ukulele.

Presumably, at least some of these images were intended to gel with Morrison's market populism, appealing to the manufacturing worker, tradie and small business vote. However, Morrison's focus on can-do capitalism and the government inaction that resulted also played into Labor's counterimage of Morrison, to be discussed later in this chapter, which depicted him as not taking government action when needed and shirking responsibility.

As well, Morrison's original populist image revolved around a form of protective masculinity in which he promised to be a strong male leader who would protect ordinary Australians from harm, whether that be from Labor big government or China. However, I have argued elsewhere that Morrison had repeated protective masculinity failures, including on climate change–related bushfires, the pandemic and protecting women from harm (see further Johnson 2021a: 20–23; 2021b; 2022b).

As it became clear that he had a major image problem, Morrison tried to recalibrate. He promised to be more empathetic, arguing that he had been a 'strong leader, and yes, I can be a bit of a bulldozer, and that's certainly what we've needed to get through these difficult times'. However, he pledged to move into another 'gear' as Australia went forward 'into a period of real great opportunity' (Morrison 2022c). Unfortunately for Morrison, he was to be denied that opportunity, partly because his populist leadership credentials had been seriously undermined.

Populism and the Teal Independents

As already indicated, the Liberals found themselves facing not just a challenge from Labor but also a populist challenge from the largely centre-right Teal Independents. The Teals' policies in a range of areas from gender equality to climate change were influenced more by social liberalism than neoliberalism, allowing a more active role for an ethical state (Sawer 2003) in furthering equal opportunity and ensuring social wellbeing, while still supporting a healthy private sector economy. Hence their appeal to some former Liberal voters who felt that the Liberal Party had lost its way as it became more conservative and neoliberal. Prominent Teal Allegra Spender, who defeated Liberal Dave Sharma in Wentworth, specifically acknowledged the influence of small-'l' social liberalism on her values (ABC 2022b).

While the Teals are categorised as largely centre-right here, with some Teals such as Spender and Kate Chaney coming from well-known Liberal family backgrounds, it should be noted that other Teals are somewhat more difficult to pigeonhole. For example, Monique Ryan, who defeated Liberal treasurer Josh Frydenberg in Kooyong, described herself as a small-'l' liberal but had been a Labor Party member from 2007 to 2010. She claimed her politics had changed since then (Minear 2022). The Teals also benefited from strategic Labor and Greens votes.

The Teals' appeals for greater integrity also had distinct populist elements. The Teals would reject those forms of populism that were anti-government and hostile to the role of independent experts. However, this chapter argues that while they used a variety of organisational approaches (see Chapters 14 and 15, this volume), the Teals represented a form of community-based populism that seeks to improve democratic input and trust in democratic institutions (see further Dzur and Hendriks 2018; Moffitt 2020: 94–114). The Teals argued that, unlike the political parties, they would be genuinely representing the people of their electorates against a government and party-political system that were verging on corruption due to the influence of vested interests.

For example, Monique Ryan argued:

> The establishment of an anti-corruption body is only a partial solution to restoring integrity: Australia's system of political donations and campaign finance also needs root and branch reform.

> Australia's lax federal donation laws have had a corrupting influence
> on politics and must be reformed in order to ensure a well functioning
> democracy that acts on expert advice and the wishes of the people
> rather than vested interests. (Ryan n.d.)

Similarly, Allegra Spender (n.d.) supported legislating for 'transparent, accountable government' to 'stop vested interests undermining our democracy'. Zoe Daniel (2022a), who defeated Liberal Tim Wilson in Goldstein, asserted that she was 'running on a platform that places integrity, and stamping out corruption and rorts, at the very centre of my candidacy'.

The Teals argued that their communities had not had their voices heard by the party system on issues ranging from climate change to gender equality. For example, Daniel (2022b) placed great emphasis on their movement representing their community in all its diversity against a party system that had fostered disunity and division, and she pledged to keep her community safe. Daniel stressed that 'this is your community campaign, your community movement, you are carrying me forward' (Daniel 2022b).

In short, the Teals were mobilising a community-based, largely centre-right reformulation of the populist trope of 'we the people' versus the corrupt and divisive establishment elites. While the Coalition and News Corp tried to dismiss Teal candidates as being from a privileged elite themselves (see Chapter 5, this volume), such attempts were to prove unsuccessful in key seats.

Palmer's United Australia Party

At the same time as the Liberals were being challenged by a largely centre-right populist movement, they were also being challenged by more far-right populist forces, particularly Clive Palmer's spectacularly well-funded UAP. The UAP campaigned on a libertarian right agenda, promising it would protect the Australian people against claimed tyrannical major-party politicians, foreign control and economic disaster. Palmer (2022e) pledged that the UAP would 'save Australia' while ensuring 'freedom forever'.

The UAP argued that neither of the major parties could be trusted after the pandemic restrictions that included lockdowns and vaccine mandates. Craig Kelly, the party's leader, argued that both major parties would lock down Australians again after the election. Consequently, the UAP would bring in a bill of rights that would ban lockdowns, ensure Australians could

access the medical treatment of their choice and ensure freedom of speech (Kelly 2022b). The UAP (2022a; Kelly 2022b; Palmer 2022a, 2022e) claimed that the Australian Government was already compiling a database from mass biometric surveillance and facial recognition, ominously named 'the capability', which would be used by major-party governments to oppress opponents.

Palmer also claimed that Australia was facing a major economic 'catastrophe' due to the massive debt run up by the elite 'political class' of the major parties both before and after the pandemic. He asserted that 'weak politicians' had failed to protect Australian resources from being pillaged by Asian countries when they could have generated revenue via a 15 per cent export licence fee on iron ore, which could have been used to pay off the government debt and improve health, education and aged care services (Palmer 2022b; Kelly 2022b). In addition, the UAP claimed that the high interest rates resulting from government debt would see vast numbers of Australians losing their homes, so it pledged to cap home interest rates at 3 per cent for five years (UAP 2022b). Otherwise, Palmer (2022e) claimed there would be a dystopian future in which 60–80 per cent of mortgages would fail and Australians would become 'economic slaves in their own country'. By contrast, Kelly (2022b) claimed that the UAP would improve standards of living, increase incomes and end the cost-of-living crisis.

Palmer appealed to nationalistic forms of populism in which the UAP promised to defend against various foreign threats from which local political elites had failed to protect ordinary Australians. The UAP denounced the investment of Australian superannuation overseas: 'Just like when John Curtin in World War 2 brought the troops back to save Australia, the United Australia Party will bring back a Trillion Dollars of Australian Super back [*sic*] to Australia to save Australia' (Kelly 2022a). Meanwhile, Palmer (2022c) alleged that Chinese state-owned companies were 'seeking control over hundreds of square kilometres of Western Australian land' (Palmer 2022d). A final election-day advertisement (UAP 2022d) proclaimed: 'Stop Liberals and Labor transferring all our health assets and hospitals to the Chinese controlled WHO [World Health Organization] at the World Health Assembly in Geneva this May.' The UAP was evoking an established nationalist populist trope, suggesting elite politicians were traitorous.

While the UAP won only a single Senate seat and MP Craig Kelly, a former Liberal, lost his seat in the lower house, the party arguably had an impact that went beyond its own candidates' success or preference distribution.

In the 2019 election, Palmer's massive election spend had targeted Labor leader Bill Shorten. In 2022, the UAP (2022c) produced regular full-page newspaper advertisements prominently displaying personal criticisms of Scott Morrison by Barnaby Joyce and Liberal senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, with Joyce accusing Morrison of being a 'hypocrite and a liar' and Fierravanti-Wells calling him 'an autocrat and a bully who has no moral compass'.

The Liberals were therefore in the unfortunate position of facing both a well-funded centre-right populist campaign from the Teals and a well-funded far-right campaign from the UAP. They also faced a far-right populist campaign from One Nation.

Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON)

PHON also sought to attract votes from anti-vaxxers and lockdown opponents, with the unvaccinated Hanson testing positive for Covid-19 shortly before election day. However, PHON also drew on more traditional identarian radical right politics, as it had throughout Hanson's career (Betz and Johnson 2004), albeit updated to incorporate contemporary US right-wing discourse around 'wokeness' and critical race theory. Hanson (2022a) argued that Australian schoolchildren were being 'taught critical race theory so they feel guilt and shame for being white'. She opposed an Indigenous voice to parliament on the grounds it would undermine racial equality by giving Aboriginal Australians more than one vote (Hanson 2022a). PHON aimed to particularly target so-called woke Liberal parliamentarians, claiming: 'For too long conservative Australian values have been undermined by woke, lefty-Liberals … This is why I am targeting the woke Liberals in five of the 151 lower house seats' (Hanson 2022b).

Those targeted included Bridget Archer in Bass, Tim Wilson in Goldstein, Trent Zimmerman in North Sydney and James Stevens in Sturt, as well as Independent Helen Haines in Indi. Hanson claimed:

> [L]eft-leaning Liberals aren't giving conservative Australian voters much reason to hope their party will act differently to Labor on issues such as immigration, the housing crisis, religious freedom, critical race theory, gender reassignment, trans women competing in women's sports and climate change. (Hanson 2022b)

Hanson also aimed to gain support from Nationals voters unhappy at the supposed left turn of the Liberals.

However, Haines and Archer retained their seats, while Zimmerman and Wilson lost to Teal Independents. In fact, Hanson came close to losing her own Senate seat, defeating a conservative rather than a woke Liberal senator (Amanda Stoker) in the process.

The Greens

While the Liberals faced centre-right populist challenges from the Teals and far-right challenges from the UAP and PHON, both they and Labor faced a left-wing populist challenge (see further Moffitt 2020: 50–70, 94–113) from the Greens.

There were clear elements of 'us' versus 'them' populism in the Greens' pledge to 'tax the billionaires & big corporations, and provide the things we all need for a better life' (The Greens 2022a). The Greens' policies included a treaty with Indigenous Australians, having 100 per cent renewable energy replace coal and gas, including dental and improved mental health funding in Medicare funding, providing free education and scrapping student debt, providing affordable housing and well-paid and secure jobs and ending 'all forms of discrimination' (The Greens 2022a).

The Greens (2022b) pledged to provide 'politics for people, not corporations and billionaires', claiming:

> People have lost confidence in politicians. There's [*sic*] too many dirty donations, dodgy deals, a revolving door between politicians and big corporations, and no Independent Commission Against Corruption.
>
> Big corporations and billionaires have too much power over politicians. Liberal & Labor take millions in donations from big corporations and billionaires, they will never put people first.
>
> Strengthening our democracy benefits everyone. We will stamp out corruption and cap the influence of big corporations and billionaires to ensure politics works for everyone, not just the rich and powerful. (The Greens 2022b)

In short, the Greens' program included a pitch of the left's populist 'us', the people, versus 'them', the wealthy corrupt elites, with wealthy carbon polluters particularly, but not exclusively, in their sights. Interestingly, the Greens attracted not only voters normally on the left but also some former Liberal voters who might otherwise have voted Teal Independent in seats where Teals were standing. As a result, the Greens succeeded in winning Brisbane and Ryan in Queensland from the Liberal National Party and Griffith in Queensland from Labor.

Labor moves away from left populism

Anthony Albanese signalled that he would be moving away from Labor's populist targeting of the 'top end of town' soon after Labor's 2019 election defeat. He argued: 'The language used was terrible … [U]nions and employers have a common interest. Successful businesses are a precondition for employing more workers' (quoted in Benson et al. 2019). The new shadow treasurer, Jim Chalmers, expressed similar reservations (ABC 2019). In the campaign, Albanese made a conscious effort to avoid the 'us' versus 'them' style of arguments that are a hallmark of populism. Instead, he drew on a long-term Labor ideological tradition (Johnson 1989) of stressing the harmony of interests between various groups in Australian society. These included capital and labour who, it was argued, had a common interest in a healthy economy that would generate good-quality jobs.

Consequently, Albanese (2022c) pledged to move away from the 'conflict fatigue' that he argued the Australian people felt 'to bring people together'. That included bringing business and labour together to tackle the cost-of-living crisis:

> Because bringing business and unions together at the enterprise bargaining table, with productivity gains as a focal point, is how we increase both profits and wages without adding inflationary pressure. This is the fundamental economic challenge right now, and we must view government, business, unions and employees as partners in tackling it. (Albanese 2022c)

Albanese was drawing on the legacy of Bob Hawke, albeit without acknowledging that Hawke's success in wooing business was partly due to substituting a 'social wage' of government benefits for wage increases, which eventually resulted in not just wage restraint but also real wage cuts (Johnson 1989: 98–102). Nonetheless, Albanese (2022c) pledged his government's

basic principle would be 'no-one held back, no-one left behind'. In other words, Labor would support aspiration, including that of businesspeople, but also welfare for the most disadvantaged and better pay for low-paid workers, including the many women working in the care economy.

Similarly, Albanese (2022c) pledged to 'end the climate wars', stressing that both the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and various business groups supported Labor's approach. A Labor government would also foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by grasping 'the opportunity for healing and truth and reconciliation offered by the Uluru Statement from the Heart' (Albanese 2022c). Overall, Labor urged Australians to '[v]ote for hope and optimism over fear and division. Vote Labor, so together, we can build a … better future for all Australians' (Albanese 2022b). In contrast to Morrison, Albanese (2022c) argued that government had a crucial and positive role to play in creating that future. It was an argument that also appealed to those who believed government had played a positive role in protecting and supporting Australians during the pandemic.

Albanese projected a personal image that was compatible with Labor's approach. His life story of growing up in social housing with a disabled single mother was used as evidence of his ability to empathise with the disadvantaged and to recognise the role government could play in improving their lives, while the fact that he had bettered himself by going to university and becoming leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) provided evidence of his support for aspiration (Albanese 2022a). 'Albo' would be a kind, caring and compassionate leader. It was a more caring and compassionate image that Bob Hawke and Kevin Rudd (Johnson 2021a: 12, 15) had also fostered to defeat conservative governments, as had more recent overseas leaders such as Joe Biden and Jacinda Ardern (Johnson 2022a). Consequently, while Albanese did sometimes wear a high-vis vest like Morrison, he tended to favour photo opportunities with workers in the health or caring professions (Crabb 2022). Williams (2022) has characterised the leadership image contest as being between conservative 'daggy dads' and caring 'state daddies', with Albanese's image designed to appeal more to the female than the male gaze.

By contrast, Labor depicted Morrison as uncaring, unempathetic and out of touch, thereby undermining his image as a strong leader who would look after Australians. He was also depicted as incompetent and shirking responsibility (Albanese 2022c). Morrison's multiple attempts to change his

image were made fun of, with Queensland Labor's (2022) website stating: 'Scott Morrison will pretend to do everyone else's job but he won't do his own.' Or, as Chalmers (2022) put it, if Morrison were re-elected, one would see a second decade of 'calamities and cosplay when we need calm and competence'.

Labor's attacks on Morrison were aided by his own missteps—for example, holidaying and stating he did not hold a hose during the bushfires, delays on sourcing Covid-19 vaccines and rapid antigen tests and his repeated failures to empathise with women. As already mentioned, these also caused problems for Morrison's own image of protective masculinity. Furthermore, Labor was ready to exploit the issue, already alluded to, that Morrison's market populism contributed to government inaction (see further Johnson 2022b), thereby reinforcing Labor's criticisms of him. Paul Erickson (2022), national secretary of the ALP, identified one of the factors leading to the Liberal's defeat as 'a pathological refusal to take responsibility for anything which comes from their small government mindset'.

The Liberals attempted to respond to Albanese's kinder, softer image by depicting him as a weak leader, who would produce a weak economy (LPA 2022). In short, as with accusations about China, they tried to question Albanese's masculinity. However, Albanese shored up his own masculine image, not only emphasising Labor's economic and national security credibility but also countering Morrison's bulldozer metaphor by arguing that while a bulldozer 'wrecks things … I'm a builder' (Butler 2022). Meanwhile, the populist image of ScoMo, the likeable ordinary bloke who loved a beer and the footy, that had been so successful in 2019 was no longer working. Indeed, depicting oneself as an ordinary bloke had lost part of its raison d'être now that Labor was no longer targeting the Liberals' close relationship with the 'top end of town'. Morrison was attempting a populist campaign but without a successful populist leadership image and against an opponent who had shifted the goalposts.

Conclusion

The Liberal's attempts to mobilise market populism against Labor were unsuccessful this time around. Labor moved to neutralise such campaigns via a small-target strategy, while countering 'us' versus 'them' arguments with an emphasis on bringing Australians together. At the same time, the Coalition faced centre-right, far-right and left-populist campaigns against it

by minor parties and Independents. Meanwhile, Morrison's image, far from reinforcing the Liberal's populist appeal as it had in 2019, was turned into a negative. It was a perfect storm for the Coalition.

Labor's move away from left populism could have reassured some less left-wing voters concerned about how Labor would manage its relationship with business and the private sector economy. Nonetheless, in moving away from its own 2019 version of left populism, Labor risked vacating fertile ground to the Greens (and possibly in future to the Teals), particularly in some progressive inner-city seats. Furthermore, it is noticeable that the issue of climate change is playing a key role in both centre-right and left populism. Labor's electorally cautious climate change policies could make it harder to counter Teals' and Greens' campaigns mobilising the people against political elites accused of selling out to big business carbon emitters. Populism, in its various forms, seems likely to continue to play a role in Australian elections.

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