THE 2007 AUSTRALIAN ELECTION: BLUE-COLLAR VOTERS, MIGRANTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Katharine Betts

The 2007 Australian Election Study shows that many blue-collar voters, the so-called Howard battlers, returned to Labor. Combined with earlier surveys it also shows that non-English-speaking-background migrants have consistently been more likely to vote Labor than the Australia-born. They were particularly likely to do so in 2007, especially if they were in blue-collar occupations. The Howard Government's Work Choices legislation probably played a role in these outcomes. However, the data also show that Labor's environmental policy also played an important part. Thirty five per cent of voters were influenced by an environmental issue during the campaign, more than were affected by any other set of issues. Concern about the environment is spread across all occupational groups, though it is rather more pronounced among professionals.

At the federal election on 24 November last year the conservative Liberal/National Party Coalition Government, led by John Howard, lost to the Labor Party led by Kevin Rudd. This brought an end to 13 years of Coalition rule under Howard. Commentators have offered various reasons for the defeat: at 68, Howard was too old to lead, or the open succession plan for Peter Costello to succeed him was too unsettling; the Government was tired and dogged by scandal (the Australian Wheat Board affair, the war in Iraq, the harshness of its asylum-seeker policy, the children overboard affair, the Haneef affair);[1] welfare reforms, such as new work rules for single parents, had alienated sections of the electorate;[2] or its new industrial relations policy—Work Choices[3]—had proved to be electoral poison.

In some cases the Government failings listed are so numerous that it can be a puzzle to understand how any one could have voted for it at all. Perhaps Labor just needed a plausible leader, one such as Kevin Rudd, a confident media performer and social conservative? With him in charge the country could be liberated from a deeply unpopular government.[4] This story has some currency, though it is hard to square with Rudd's pre-election image where, in some guises, he was presented as a younger version of Howard, or sometimes as 'John Howard lite'.[5]

Moreover, despite this narrative, Howard's approval remained quite healthy up until the election, with more voters satisfied with how he was doing his job as were dissatisfied (43 to 46 per cent satisfied from June 2007, up to 51 per cent satisfied just before the election, compared with 43 to 45 per cent dissatisfied). In contrast, on the eve of Labor Prime Minister, Paul Keating's, loss in March 1996, around 36 per cent of voters were satisfied and 56 per cent dissatisfied.[6] For Rudd to appear as a youthful Howard, agreeing with him on most policy issues, could have served the challenger well.[7] But he and his party were opposed to the deeply unpopular industrial relations policy. They also promised to sign the Kyoto Treaty, a commitment that may have positioned Labor as more genuinely concerned about global warming and the environment than the Coalition.

Howard owed much of his previous electoral success to a combination of economic prosperity, which enhanced job security, and a strong appeal to voters' sense of pride in their nation's identity.[8] This contrasted with the rather apologetic approach towards Australia's history and culture characteristic of some left-leaning intellectuals which, via multiculturalism

and aspects of Indigenous policy, had leaked across to the Labor Party's image. As Guy Rundle puts it: 'many people in cultural, policy and educational milieux feel a deep frustration with certain characteristics of Australian life'.[9] Some of them persisted in seeing Howard's positive view of Australia as inward looking xenophobia. For example, after the election one Australian actor, writer and director (Brendan Cowell), was delighted to be free of the atmosphere of racism, fear and hatred which he attributed to Howard. His relief was so great that he spent the night in the street crying and hugging people: '[It was] as if all the negativity, repression and hatred was being breathed out of the national character'.[10]

Elections are winner-take-all competitions and we often describe their outcomes in the dramatic language of rout and triumph. But most elections are won or lost by only a few per cent of votes and, in 2007, though the two-party-preferred result was strongly in Labor's favour (52.7 to 47.3 per cent), the vote on first preferences was much closer: 41.8 per cent for the Coalition versus 43.4 per cent for Labor, a difference of 1.6 per cent. In 2004, when the Coalition won, the first-preference results were 46.4 per cent to 37.6 per cent in the Coalition's favour, a difference of 8.8 per cent.

POLITICAL CONSTITUENCIES

The Coalition had been in power for a long time and, despite the popularity of its leader, had accumulated enemies and its share of policy failures. Nonetheless, Labor's victory in 2007 was not assured. Commentators have long recognised that the party suffers from a divided constituency: one part consisting of some new-class professionals oriented towards internationalism and uneasily connected to the other part, a more patriotically inclined working class.[11] Former Labor leader, Mark Latham, refers to it as: 'our split constituency problem—the inner city trendies versus the outer suburban pragmatists'.[12]

Professionals are an expanding group: 13 per cent of the labour force in 1991 and 20 per cent in 2008.[13] But this uncomfortable alliance of a soft left intelligentsia with less affluent blue-collar workers, a group slowly eroding as the economy shifts away from manufacturing to services, was always in danger of being out-voted. Ranged against it were small business people searching for material security, together with ever growing numbers of semi-professionals and white-collar workers, some of them well off, others not, but most aspiring for upward mobility for their children.

If the electorate is seen in terms of groups with different economic interests, Labor's base looks weak. It is also true that less affluent voters, attached to their nation and dependent on it, were open to Howard's positive nationalism, as indeed were a range of patriotically inclined voters across the socio-economic spectrum. Thus cultural divisions centred on love of country versus cosmopolitanism can also help explain electoral outcomes. Here divisions are marked more by habits of the mind than economics.

But these habits connect with economic status. For example, well educated professionals can function comfortably in a globalising economy, afford extensive travel and cultivate networks overseas, while those less skilled are limited to local labour markets. On the other hand, the old Australia-born working class has been steadily augmented over the past decades by non-English-speaking-background (NESB) immigrants who, on some aspects of cultural diversity, may have something in common with the professionally qualified Labor supporters. Thus the blue-collar workers who started voting for the Coalition in 1996 could have been disproportionately native-born.

The themes of prosperity and thus job security, together with national identity, have helped explain the Coalition's past electoral victories. But in 2007, in the midst of a prolonged drought and growing anxiety about climate change, a third theme—the environment—may have introduced a new factor which was also strong enough to affect outcomes.

National identity was not an issue in the 2007 election. But how well do questions of job security—thrown into relief by the experiment with Work Choices—and the environment explain the result?

Labor's first-preference vote in 2004 had been its worst since 1949, and its two-party-preferred vote (47.3 per cent) the worst since 1996. Birrell, Healy and Allan concluded that Labor was rapidly being reduced to a small base. This consisted of new-class professionals linked to a working-class that increasingly consisted of non-English-speaking-background (NESB) migrants.[14] Before the 1996 election Labor's Senator Bolkus had optimistically predicted that: 'At the end of the day, if everything else fails the migrant vote will carry us. We are confidant of that'.[15] His confidence was misplaced; while many migrants did vote Labor there were not enough of them. Indeed, electoral strategies that depend on some professionals backed by a migrant vote are inadequate.

While immigration has been running strongly, mostly from NESB countries,[16] such migrants still make up only 16 per cent of the population and many are not yet citizens.[17] Besides, it is hardly a viable strategy for a party to depend on continually importing its electoral base. Nonetheless we can add a third question to the list: does the ethnic vote which held up for Labor in 2004 still play a part?

It is plausible to argue that the Work Choices legislation would have been likely to prompt blue-collar workers to vote Labor. In fact, some writers, drawing on internal party research, have suggested that many Howard battlers did indeed return to Labor.[18] But there has been little discussion of the role of NESB voters.[19] Instead cheerful talk of a 'Ruddslide'[20] has made is seem as if a large section of the community, fed up with Work Choices and keen to move beyond the politics of 'negativity, repression and hatred', had shifted its allegiance to Labor in one relatively homogeneous block. But is this so?

However, in all the media commentary on Rudd's 2007 victory there has been little talk of the role of the environment, though

Table 1: Actual vote in the House of Representatives and vote in the AES, 2004 and 2007, per cent

Vote in House of Reps	Actual 2004	AES 2004	Actual 2007	AES 2007
Labor	37.6	37	43.4	45
Coalition	46.4	51	41.8	43
Greens	7.2	8	7.8	8
Other	8.8	4	7.1	4
Total	100.0	100	100.0	100

Sources: Australian Electoral Commission <http://www.aec.gov.au> and the AES, 2004 and 2007, see Appendix 1.

most acknowledge the flow of Greens voters' second preferences to Labor.[21] Did it have an effect and, if so, were some groups of voters more likely to be have been influenced than others?

The 2007 Australian Electoral Study (AES)[22] is now available for analysis and this allows us to try to answer the questions sketched above. The survey is a unique source of information about Australian voters but, of its nature, it can only offer broad brush answers to questions about election outcomes. More detailed answers will depend on careful analyses of individual electorates. Nonetheless, the AES is a valuable point of departure and, as it has been conducted regularly since the 1987 election, it also provides a time series.

THE SURVEY DATA

The survey is based on a large, self-completed questionnaire posted to a random sample of voters right after the election. While those who respond tend to be slightly biased towards older, more educated people from English-speaking backgrounds, this does not invalidate comparisons of different groups with the sample. Moreover, data on voting in 2007 mirror those of the actual election fairly closely (while those for 2004 overstate the vote for the Coalition and understate the vote for 'other' minor parties).

To what degree did anxiety about industrial relations reform, affect the vote in 2007? Tables 2 and 3 can help with an answer by showing the vote in 2007 and 2004 by occupation.[23]

Table 2: Vote in House of Representatives by occupation, 2007, per cent

	White collar					Blue collar			
Vote in House of Reps	Managers and administrators	Professionals	Associate professionals	Advanced and intermediate clerical, service and sales workers	Tradespersons and related workers	Intermediate production and transport	Elementary clerical, sales and service	Labourers and related workers	Total
Labor	130	44	40	45	51	*60	48	*64	45
Greens	6	*16	7	6	4	8	6	*1	8
Labor plus Greens#	*36	60	47	51	56	*69	54	66	53
Coalition	*60	36	51	45	42	26	42	31	43
Other	4	4	3	4	3	6	4	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	210	388	231	292	144	108	104	87	1764

Source: AES 2007, see Appendix 1.

Notes: Occupation is current occupation, or former occupation for the retired or unemployed. People who voted informal in 2007 or did not vote (n=109) are excluded. Those who have never held an occupation or whose occupation is inadequately described or missing but who voted (n=200) are included in the total but not shown separately. The occupation data on the original file were coded to the new ANZSCO schema. They have been recoded here back to the old ASCO schema for comparative purposes. See endnote 23.

In the 2007 AES 72.0 per cent of Greens voters gave their second preference to Labor.

* Difference between the sub-group and the total is significant at the .05 level.

When Table 2 is compared with Table 3 it is clear that Labor's vote increased across all occupational groups between 2004 and 2007 but that the increase is most marked among blue-collar workers, especially among intermediate production and transport workers. Here the share of the vote for Labor expanded by 21 percentage points and that for Labor plus Greens by 25 percentage points. There was also a strong increase in the Labor share of the vote among elementary clerical, sales and service workers,[24] and labourers and related workers. These results show that many lower white-collar and blue-collar workers who had voted for the Coalition in the past returned to Labor in 2007. The harsh dose of economic neoliberalism fed to them by the workplace reforms could well have produced this effect. But the comparison also shows a strong jump in the Labor plus Greens vote among professionals (and among associate professionals, though a majority of the latter still voted for the Coalition in 2007). Professionals as a group have included many vocal critics of the Howard Government but, in 2004, 46 per cent of them had voted for it. In 2007 that proportion shrank by 10 per cent while the combined Labor/Greens vote jumped by the same amount. Was this just the effect of Work Choices? Or was some other factor involved?

Table 4 shows changes in voting patterns between 2004 and 2007 in relation to issues that voters thought important in the

Table 3: Vote in House of Representatives by occupation, 2004, per cent

	White collar				Blue collar				
Vote in House of Reps	Managers and administrators	Professionals	Associate professionals	Advanced and intermediate clerical, service and sales workers	Tradespersons and related workers	Intermediate production and transport	Elementary clerical, sales and service	Labourers and related workers	Total
Labor	*26	36	*26	39	43	39	37	*52	37
Greens	7	14	8	5	7	5	12	*3	8
Labor plus Greens#	*33	50	*34	45	49	44	48	55	45
Coalition	*63	46	*62	50	48	52	48	39	51
Other	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	6	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	183	337	181	292	120	98	126	98	1625

Source: AES 2004, see Appendix 1.

Notes: Occupation is current occupation, or former occupation for those retired or unemployed. People who voted informal or did not vote or who are missing on vote (n=144) are excluded. People who have never held an occupation, or whose occupation is inadequately described or missing but who voted (n=190) are included in the total but not shown separately.

[1] In the 2004 AES 77.4 per cent of Greens voters gave their second preference to Labor.

[2] Difference between the sub-group and the total is significant at the .05 level.

campaign. Respondents were offered 14 issues to chose from and could nominate the most important and the second most important. Some only nominated one issue but, as Table 4 contains multiple responses, it is based on total responses not total voters. For comparative purposes summary data from 2004 area also included.

Table 4 shows that, overall in 2007, industrial relations on its own rated second as an important election issue (after health and Medicare). But the list of possible issues also contained three environmental ones: the environment, global warming, and water management. Responses saying that either the environment and/or global warming were important issues in the campaign have been combined to show the overall significance of the environment in voters' minds. People who nominated water management were less likely to nominate one of the other green issues as their second choice and so their responses have been analysed separately. Nonetheless, if the three green responses are combined, 25 per cent of respondents said that a green issue had been important to them in the campaign, a block that dwarfs all other issues (such as health and Medicare) or the combined economic issues of tax and interest rates (16 per cent). Though the comparison with 2004 is not

Table 4: Most important and second most important issue for respondents during the election campaign by whether changed vote between 2004 and 2007, per cent

	Liberal in 2004 and 2007	All voters switching to Liberal	Labor in 2004 and 2007	All voters switching to Labor	All other voters	Total sample 2007	Total sample 2004#
Health and Medicare	17	20	20	21	16	19	26
Environment and global warming	**8	14	20	21	**25	17	##7
Industrial relations	*9	3	*19	14	9	12.2	3
Education	*9	8	*15	13	12	12.1	16
Taxation	*14	6	7	7	7	9	14
Management of water	*13	8	4	5	9	8	na
Interest rates	*10	9	5	6	4	7	9
Other (n=6 in 2007, 4 in 2004)	19	32	11	12	18	16	22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	#97
Total responses	1115	65	896	516	505	3551	3323

Sources: 2004 AES and 2007 AES, see Appendix 1.

Notes: Respondents could give two answers, consequently this table is based on responses not respondents.

* Difference between sub-group and the total for 2007 is significant at the 0.05 level

** Difference between sub-group and the total for 2007 is significant at the 0.01 level

\# Respondents were offered 14 options in 2007 and only 12 in 2004. The issue of refugees and asylum seekers was one of the twelve in 2004 (and accounted for 3.3% of responses) but was not offered in 2007.

Environment and global warming were offered as two separate issues in 2007. They have been combined here: individually environment accounted for 9.0 per cent of responses and global warming for 8.2 per cent. In 2004 only the environment was offered; global warming was not on the list, nor was water management nor treatment of Aborigines (not shown separately here).

Table 5: Groups of pairs of issues respondents thought important to them in the election campaign by occupation, 2007, per cent

Vote in House of Reps	Managers and administrators	Professionals	Associate professionals	Advanced and intermediate clerical, service and sales workers	Tradespersons and related workers	Elementary clerical, sales and service	Intermediate production and transport workers and labourers and related workers	Total
All pairs with green first and/or second	28	36	31	30	29	25	26	30
Social first and second, or first and other (not green) second	22	22	23	26	19	35	26	24
Economic first and second, or first and other (not green) second	18	15	20	15	13	11	9	15
IR first and other (not green) second	13	12	10	9	18	12	18	12
Water management first, other (not green) second	9	3	3	6	4	3	4	5
Minor issue first other second	7	10	12	10	11	12	8	10
Missing on both issues	3	2	0	4	5	4	8	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	216	404	242	312	158	110	205	1873

Source: 2007 AES, see Appendix 1.

Notes: Green is environment and global warming; Social is health and Medicare plus education; Economic is tax and interest rates; IR is industrial relations. All rows include data where there is no second issue, that is where the voter did not nominate a second issue.
None of the differences by occupation are statistically significant.

entirely valid as there was only one green option on the questionnaire ('the environment') to nominate then instead of the three offered in 2007, this is nonetheless a big increase in the proportion nominating a green issue. (In 2007, 9.0 per cent nominated 'the environment', as one of the three issues, as opposed to 6.7 per cent in 2004.)

The environment and global warming combined were key concerns for respondents switching to Labor in 2007, and were also key for the respondents grouped in Table 4 as 'all other voters', a category which includes Greens voters. Other questions show that 53 per cent of respondents thought Labor was closer to their views on the environment as opposed to 18 per cent who thought the Coalition closer to their views, and that 53 per cent thought Labor closer to their views on global warming versus 16 per cent for the Coalition. (While there were 65 responses from people switching to Liberal this only represented 53 voters; of the sub group who chose the environment and or global warming as their first or second issue—six people, accounting for nine responses—four actually said Labor was closer to their position and the other two the Coalition. Clearly the numbers here are too small to generalise from.)

Health and Medicare were also important for people switching to Labor. Here other questions show that 47 per cent thought Labor closer to their views and 24 per cent the Coalition. Industrial relations was also key, both for those who were established Labor voters and for people who switched to Labor. On this topic 50 per cent said Labor was closer to their views and 31 per cent the Coalition. Thus the environment and global warming were not only important for many people, they also gave a clearer advantage to Labor than did the other two top issues.

It is not surprising, then, that the environment and global warming were not very important for people who continued to vote Liberal; water management, by contrast, was the second most important issue for this group. (Respondents could only nominate two issues as being important to them in the campaign. This means that respondents who had already singled out the environment and global warming would have been unable to add water management too, so the fact that it seems of less importance to non-Liberal voters may not be meaningful.)

Table 5 arranges the two issues voters found important to them in the campaign into pairs so that the unit of analysis is now one person, not one response. All pairs of issues which include either the environment or global warming (or both) are set out in the first row, with both termed 'green issues'. This first row shows that, while professionals were more likely to nominate green issues as important to them in the campaign, one or both of them were important to around 30 per cent of all voters. (None of the differences by occupation in Table 5 are statistically significant.) Responses for the other sets of pairs of issues are partly deflated by the fact that, if one of the pair is a green issue, it has been included in the first row. But the table does also demonstrate the continuing importance of health and Medicare plus education (the two 'social' issues) for all voters, and it also shows that industrial relations were more important to tradespeople, intermediate production and transport workers, and labourers than to other occupational groups. If water management is added to the green list, Table 5 shows that 35 per cent of voters found at least one environmental issue important to them in the campaign.

Small numbers preclude more specific analyses of those switching to Labor by issues that were important to them and occupation. Nonetheless, the overall

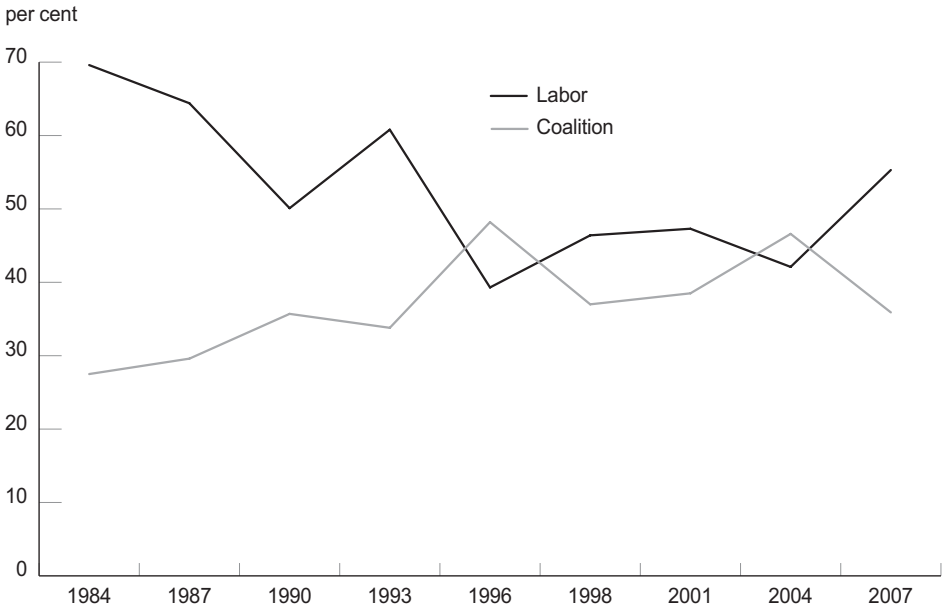
picture in Tables 4 and 5 is consistent with the hypothesis that many voters, especially blue-collar voters, either stayed with Labor or turned to it because of their dislike of the new industrial relations policy, whereas others chose Labor, or the Greens, because of environmental issues. It is also consistent with the hypothesis that professionals were rather more likely to be swayed by green issues than were members of other occupational groups.

Whatever their motives, the overall data show that many blue-collar workers returned to Labor in 2007. Figure 1 charts the changes in the blue-collar Labor vote from 1984 to 2007, from nearly 70 per cent in 1984 to a low of 39 per cent in 1996. Indeed in both 1996 and 2004 more blue-collar workers voted for the Coalition than for Labor. The Australian Labor Party was founded to protect the interests of workers. But the voting pattern in Figure 1 suggests that blue-collar workers have had doubts about its capacity, or interest, in doing this in recent years. But despite the doldrum years of 1996 to 2004, in 2007 the blue-collar vote for Labor (at 55 per cent) was closer to the level of the late 1980s (64 per cent in 1987) than it had been for some time.

However, as Table 6 shows, the less skilled sections of the blue-collar labour force also include a disproportionate share of NESB immigrants, a factor which may have also contributed to Labor's vote in 2007. But after many years of migrant recruitment focusing on skills, NESB voters are also represented in healthy proportions among professionals and associate professionals (though less so among managers and administrators).

The 2004 election result bore out Bolkus's claim Labor could rely on the NESB migrant vote; it was just not large

Figure 1: The blue-collar vote, 1984 to 2007



Source: AES surveys 1987 to 2007 (1984 data are as remembered in 1987), see Appendix 1.

enough to carry the day. Table 7 shows that, in 2007, NESB migrants still strongly favoured the Labor Party, and Figure 2 shows that they have consistently been more likely to vote Labor than Australia-born voters. (Migrants born in English-speaking countries, not represented in Figure 2, vote in a similar pattern to the Australia-born.) Table 8 controls for type of occupation and shows that, while the preference for Labor is apparent among white-collar NESB workers, it is particularly strong among the blue-collar group.

Tables 7 and 8 show that NESB voters are much more pro-Labor than the rest of the sample, a tendency that is particularly strong among NESB blue-collar voters. Birthplace makes such a pronounced difference that Table 7 has the Coalition as winning more first-preference votes than Labor from both the Australia-born and the MESB-born. (When the data are confined to the Australia-born of Australia-born parents, the 2007 AES has the Coalition as winning, not just on first preferences, but on the two-party-preferred voted as well.)[25] Figure 2 demonstrates that the NESB vote for Labor has been higher than that of the Australia-born over the last 20 years. Indeed, while the NESB Labor vote has been above 50 per cent for most of the period (except for 1996 and 2004) the Australia-born Labor vote was below 40 per cent from 1996 to 2004, and only edged up to 43 per cent in 2007.

Table 6: Birthplace by occupation, 2007, per cent

Vote in House of Reps	Managers and administrators	Professionals	Associate professionals	Advanced and intermediate clerical, service and sales workers	Tradespersons and related workers	Elementary clerical, sales and service	Intermediate production and transport workers and labourers and related workers	Total
Australia	79	71	74	77	71	78	68	72
MESB countries	11	13	11	11	15	9	9	11
NESB countries	*8	14	14	11	13	11	*22	14
Missing	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	216	404	242	312	158	110	205	1873

Source: 2007 AES, see Appendix 1.

Note: MESB countries are main English-speaking countries; NESB countries are non-English-speaking-background countries.

[1] Difference between sub-group and the total for 2007 is significant at the .05 level.

CONCLUSION

At the broad-brush level the AES tells us that blue-collar voters and NESB migrants gave Labor strong support in 2007. Many of Howard's battlers returned to Labor. In answer to the first of the three questions posed above: the Coalition's industrial relations policy does seem to have played a part in this. And in answer to the third question: the ethnic vote not only held up for Labor, as Figure 2 shows, it increased. NESB voters are stalwart Labor supporters, especially among blue-collar workers.

What about the second question about

Table 7: Vote in House of Representatives by birthplace, 2007, per cent

Vote in House of Reps	Australia	MESB	NESB	Total
Labor	43	44	**58	45
Greens	9	7	6	8
Labor plus Greens	52	51	*64	53
Coalition	44	45	*33	43
Other	4	4	2	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Total N	1286	197	248	1731

Source: 2007 AES, see Appendix 1.

Notes: Excludes informal/didn't vote and missing on vote (n=109); missing on birthplace but not on vote (n=33) are included in the total but not shown separately.
See notes to Table 6 for explanations of MESB and NESB.
[1] Difference between the sub-group and the total is significant at the .05 level.
[2] Difference between the sub-group and the total is significant at the .01 level.

Table 8: Vote in House of Representatives, by birthplace and white collar/blue collar, 2007, per cent

Vote in House of Reps	White collar Australia	White collar MESB	White collar NESB	Blue collar Australia	Blue collar MESB	Blue collar NESB	Total
Labor	40	42	49	*53	47	*67	45
Greens	10	8	10	5	7	*3	8
Labor plus Greens	49	50	59	59	53	*70	53
Coalition	47	47	39	38	40	*26	43
Other	4	3	2	3	7	4	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N	876	138	141	337	52	77	1764

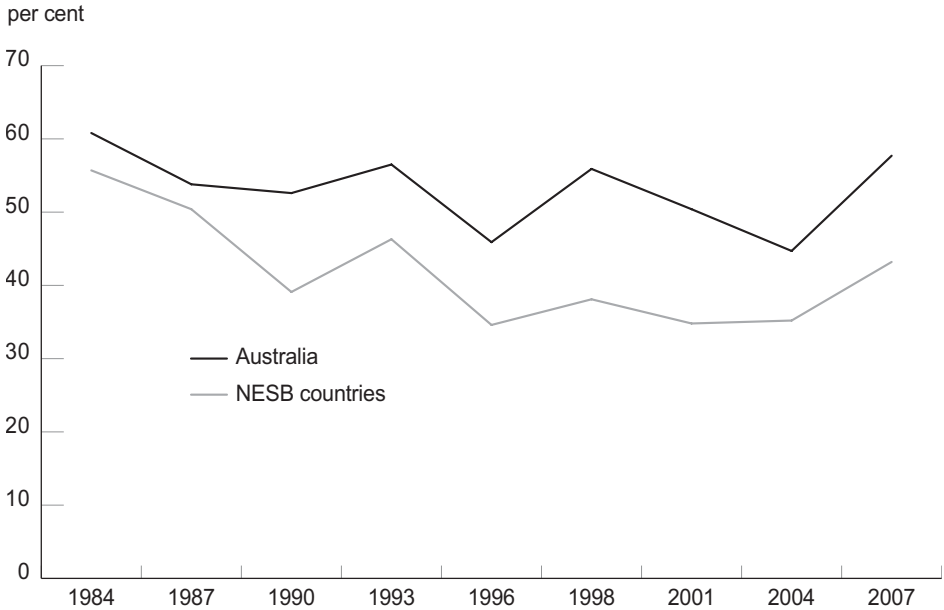
Source: AES 2007, see Appendix 1.

Notes: Voted informal and missing on vote (n=109) excluded, missing on birth place and/or occupation are not shown separately but are included in the total.
See notes to Table 6 for explanations of MESB and NESB.
[1] Difference between the sub-group and the total is significant at the .05 level.

the role of the environment in the election? The data suggest that questions of environmental policy are exerting a new and powerful influence on the electorate. Professionals are rather more likely to be moved by environmental issues than are others, but environmental policy affects occupational groups.

With its unfortunate adventure with Work Choices the Coalition lost many of its blue-collar supporters. But its apparent reluctance to tackle global warming and come to grips with other environmental problems appear to have also lost it votes across the board.

Figure 2: The Labor vote by birthplace, 1984 to 2007



Sources: AES 1987 to 2007 (1984 data are as remembered in 1987), see Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: The Australian Election Studies 1987 to 2007

All respondents are voters drawn from the electoral rolls. All of the data files were obtained from the Australian Social Science Data Archives at the Australian National University: <http://assda.anu.edu.au>. The authors of these files are not responsible for my interpretation of their work.

1987: I. McAllister and A. Mughan, Australian Election Survey, 1987 [computer file], Data collected by A. Ascui, Canberra, Roger Jones, Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archives (ASSDA), The Australian National University (ANU), 1987	N = 1825, response rate 62.8% (based on 2905 mailouts that were in scope)
1990: I. McAllister, R. Jones, E. Papadakis, D. Gow, Australian election study, 1990 [computer file], Canberra, ASSDA, ANU, 1990	N = 2037, response rate 58.5% (based on 3482 mailouts that were in scope)
1993: R. Jones, Australian Election Study, 1993 [computer file]. Canberra, ASSDA, ANU, 1993	N = 3023, response rate 62.8 % (based on 4813 mailouts that were in scope)
1996: R. Jones, I. McAllister, D. Gow, Australian Election Study, 1996 [computer file] Canberra, ASSDA, ANU, 1996	N = 1795, response rate 61.8% (based on 2905 mailouts that were in scope)
1998: Bean, Clive et al. Australian Election Study, 1998 [computer file], Canberra, ASSDA, ANU, 1998	N = 1897, response rate 57.7% (based on 3289 mailouts that were in scope)
2001: Clive Bean, David Gow and Ian McAllister, Australian Election Study, Canberra, ASSDA, ANU, 2002.	N = 2010, response rate 55.4% (based on 3631 mailouts that were in scope)
2004: Clive Bean et al., Australian Election Study, 2004, [computer file], Canberra, Clive Bean, David Gow and Ian McAllister, 2005.	N = 1769, response rate 44.5% (based on 3975 mailouts that were in scope)
2007: Bean, C. et al., Australian Election Study, 2007. [Computer file], Canberra, Clive Bean, David Gow and Ian McAllister, 2008.	N = 1873, response rate 40.2% (based on 4663 mailouts that were in scope)

References

1 See for example J. Brett, 'Exit right: the unravelling of John Howard', *Quarterly Essay*, vol. 28, no. 2007, pp. 2–4.

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15 Quoted in V. Kyriakopoulos, 'Chasing the multicultural rainbow', *The Bulletin*, vol. no. 1995, October 17, pp. 14–15

16 See *Population Flows: Immigration Aspects 2006–07 edition*, Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, 2008, Figure 1–20, p. 10.

17 The Immigration Department estimates 23.9 per cent overseas born at the 2006 census of whom around one third were born in the UK or New Zealand. See ibid., p. 8. The raw census figures contain a large proportion with birth place undefined or not stated. At the 2006 census 70.8 per cent were Australia-born, 7.9 per cent MESB born, 10.8 per cent NESB born, 10.3 per cent born in other countries (undefined) or not stated. Country of birth of persons, 2006 Census, *Basic Community Profile Series*, ABS, Catalogue no. 2001.0.

18 See D. Shanahan, 'We lost Howard battlers, Libs told', *The Australian*, 13 December 2007, p. 5.

19 This is possibly because the scale of the two-party preferred swing meant that a number of electorates not obviously heavily ethnic fell to the new government. See for example, Megalogenis, 2007, op. cit.

20 See M. Schubert, 'A rumble, then a Ruddslide', *The Age*, 25 November 2007, p. 3.

21 In the 2007 Australian Election Survey 72 per cent of voters who gave their first preference to the Greens gave their second preference to Labor.

22 See Appendix 1 for details of this and the other AES studies referred to here. See also I. McAllister and J. Clark, *Trends in Australian Public Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study, 1987–2007*, Australian Social Science Data Archives, Canberra, 2008 <http://assda.anu.edu.au/aestrends.pdf>.

23 Occupations are coded in the original AES 2007 data file according to the new ANZSCO system introduced by the ABS in 2006. For comparative purposes they have been recoded here back into the former ASCO system using *ANZSCO—Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, First Edition, Correspondence tables, ASCO Second Edition to ANZSCO First Edition to NZSCO 1999*, Occupation level, ABS Catalogue No. 1220.0.

24 Elementary clerical, sales and service workers include security officers and guards, service station attendants, checkout operators, housekeepers and laundry workers as well as general sales assistants, filing clerks, hospitality workers and so on. Some of these occupations might be considered white-collar but most workers in this general category are on low incomes and have little autonomy in the workplace. In the 2007 AES their household income was very similar to that of intermediate production and transport workers, and labourers and related workers.

25 Among the Australia-born of Australia-born parents 46 per cent gave their first preference to the Coalition and 42 per cent to Labor. When second preferences are taken into account the two-party-preferred vote among this group (as recalled by respondents to the AES) was 49.1 per cent Coalition, 48.7 per cent Labor, 2.2 per cent 'not sure'.