



## The Teal Party

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Earlier this month, Liberal MP for Wentworth David Sharma said “working with my colleagues, I’ve been able to achieve some important goals, including a commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050.”

This, and a vague reference to “new policy measures to accelerate our transition to a lower carbon pathway” were the only policy achievements Sharma could name.

There is no question that Sharma is a talented and gifted politician who is genuine in his stated desire to make Australia a better country.

But it is interesting to note that net zero by 2050 was Labor policy in the lead up to the 2019 election. The fact that it is now the Coalition’s policy is due to political pressure exerted by the left-leaning ‘teal’ independents that Sharma claims have little influence.



There is no doubt that the ‘Voices for’ groups and the Climate 200 party have had a significant influence over debate in our country, especially on the issue of climate policy.

They will probably push the primary vote in inner-city Liberal-held seats such as Wentworth, Kooyong, and Goldstein further down. In the 2019 election, for example, both Sharma in Wentworth and Josh Frydenberg in Kooyong already had a first preference vote below 50 per cent.

These seats will never go Green or Labor because the wealthy constituents are afraid of what would happen to their back-pocket. But a sensible sounding, fiscally conservative and climate conscious ‘independent’ is a very attractive proposition for some.

The effect of this will be to force the inner-city Liberals further to the left in an attempt to feed the crocodile which will inevitably eat them anyway.

By bankrolling typically already well-off left-leaning independents in affluent inner-city Liberal-held seats, the climate lobby groups have essentially forced the Coalition to adopt a policy that was a Greens fantasy only a decade ago.

From “axe the tax” to a “plan for net zero” in just eight years.

Sharma’s central pitch to voters in his electorate is this that he can achieve more through working within the Coalition than a left-leaning independent can achieve on their own or in concert with a small number of other like-minded independents.

What Sharma fails to recognise is that his admission that his only success is in implementing net zero shows the opposite point to the one he intended to make: that the way to achieve change in Australia today is to be a small vocal minority with well-funded backers, not through the major parties.

If inner-city Liberals weren’t feeling the electoral heat from the climate independents Morrison would be spending more time in Gladstone and less in Glasgow.

The same is true on the other side.

A recent survey by the Redbridge Group found the United Australia Party was polling at around 20% in the western Sydney seats of Banks, Lindsay, and Macquarie. A similar survey in Victoria found that almost 40% of those polled said they were undecided or would vote for a minor party at the state election in November next year.

Yes having Clive Palmer bankroll in the tens of millions is necessary for the rise of the UAP. But it isn’t sufficient. Money without message is ineffective. Hence Palmer’s failure to pick up any seats in the 2019 election.

But the UAP lead candidate and former Liberal Craig Kelly has a message on lockdowns and



mandates that appeals to anywhere from a quarter to a third of voters who don't believe the major parties speak for them or their values.

Whether Kelly can maintain the rage until polling day remains to be seen. As does his and Palmer's capacity to receive enough first-preference votes to capture any lower house seats.

What we do know is that it's only because of the growing vote for UAP and One Nation in Queensland that Scott Morrison finally took a stronger stand against vaccine mandates and lockdowns. In other words, the minor parties to the right of the Coalition have already had an impact on public debate (although as yet no discernible impact on public policy outcomes).

What we also know is that the views expressed by Palmer, Kelly, and Pauline Hanson could not be freely expressed from within the Coalition. Kelly himself was kicked out of the Liberal party for advocating treatments for Covid considered too unconventional. While North Queensland Coalition MP George Christensen was condemned by the entire federal parliament, including his own party, for saying lockdowns don't work.

And those brave and courageous Coalition Senators that have spoken out, like Senator Alex Antic of South Australia and Senators Matt Canavan and Gerard Renick of Queensland, have done so knowing that a promotion to the front bench won't be coming anytime soon.

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