



Donald Trump Vote Was All About Voters Having A Different Choice

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Last Wednesday afternoon, just as it was becoming clear Donald Trump would win the US presidential election Aaron Patrick, senior writer at this paper reported on an insight he had gained from an unnamed minister in the Turnbull government.

When asked about whether there were any lessons for Australia from what had just happened in the United States the minister “denied there were any significant implications for the Coalition from Trump’s popularity”.

Coalition MPs who hope to keep their seats at the next federal election should start to get worried if that unnamed minister is advising Malcolm Turnbull on political strategy.

Yes, Donald Trump himself won’t be on the ballot in Australia. But variations of what he represents will be. Trump’s position on trade bears the most resemblance to the Greens. Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young issued a media release the day after the US election endorsing Trump’s policy against the Trans-Pacific-Partnership Agreement. And of course Trump’s stance



on immigration has similarities to Pauline Hanson's One Nation party.

### Outside the consensus

Trump's campaign was run firmly outside of the prevailing consensus of both the Republican and Democratic parties – and yet he won. Whether or not the Greens are outside the consensus of the Australian political class is debatable. They're probably not. But One Nation certainly is.

If anyone thinks Donald Trump can't happen in Australia they're wrong. They're forgetting the Palmer United Party in 2014 had three senators in the commonwealth Parliament, and MPs in both the Northern Territory and Queensland Parliaments. To compare Trump to Palmer is unfair to Trump. For one thing Palmer never had a policy of cutting the top rate of personal income tax to 33 per cent.

The minister Patrick was talking to went on to say: "There is a larger anti-Trump vote. It was a Republican base that reacted against their establishment. Then in a fractured country it split along racial and educational lines. Australia is simply a better country."

A simple reading of the electoral math proves this statement wrong. It was traditional Democrats, not Republicans that got Trump elected in states like Michigan and Pennsylvania. The one point of the minister's analysis that's correct is that no party's "establishment" can afford to take their "base" for granted. Clinton took her presumed working-class "base" for granted and the result was large proportions of that base either voting for Trump or not bothering to turn up.

Here in Australia, Liberals have to understand that their "base" doesn't like higher taxes. The ALP have a different problem. It has to work out who its base is – which explains why Labor's primary vote sits at historical lows.

The idea that Australia is now somehow a "better country" than the US because Donald Trump won the election is simply a left-wing trope. As more than one commentator has pointed out – the country that last week elected Donald Trump president also elected, not once but twice – a black man whose middle name is Hussein.

### Ludicrous suggestion

The suggestion from both Labor and the Greens that because someone they don't like is now president Australia should reconsider its alliance with the US is ludicrous. That something like this could be suggested before Trump is even sworn in reveals just how tenuous the commitment of Labor and the Greens is to our most important alliance.

Maybe the minister who Patrick spoke to also thinks there's no lessons for Australia from the Brexit decision, or the weekend's Orange byelection in New South Wales.

Despite what the minister believes, or chooses to believe, the implications of the Trump phenomenon for Australia and indeed for all democracies, are massive.



Obviously there are many differences between the US and Australia, but the American presidential election revealed, in stark terms, the sort of economic and cultural fault lines in both countries.

Donald Trump becoming president is what happens when people are given a choice that is different from the choice they're normally offered at elections.

Before the election it was said that Trump was the only Republican candidate who could lose to Clinton. Now, following the result, there's an argument that actually the opposite is true – Trump was the only Republican who could have won.

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