



At Least The British Have A Choice

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There has already been much debate about British Labour's election [manifesto](#) commitment to re-nationalise the UK's energy, rail, water and postage networks as well as Conservative [promises](#) to increase the minimum wage, introduce new protections for workers in the 'gig economy' and support the domestic shale gas industry.

Are Labor's plans a retreat to the 1970's or a preview of the developed world's future? Is Theresa May a 'Red Tory' excising Thatcherism or a politician determined to claim the sensible centre? Is there a role for the state in setting wages or running trains, and should the voting age stay at 18 or be cut to 16?

While opinions on the left and right differ about the merit of different proposals, Brexit means that decisions on the big issues around the economy, energy, transport and employment will continue to be made by British citizens and that the considered policy positions put by parties in their manifestos have real consequences.



British taxpayers will no longer need to worry about the Franco-German axis or the north-south divide. Or having to comply with the edicts of the European Commission, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or the decisions of the token European Parliament.

Laws passed at Westminster will apply to the whole land, and if people don't like them they can lobby their government to change them. If they won't change them then they can change the government.

This deepening of distinctions between the two major UK political parties in part reflects the repatriation of political powers back home post-Brexit. It is a hallmark of accountability and responsible government and the sign of a healthy democracy.

The contrast with Australia, where centralisation and accountability are headed in the opposite direction, is particularly acute.

The ability of a duly-elected Australian Government to implement its election promises and be judged at the following election is increasingly being thwarted by vested interest in the Senate, from the Opposition, to the Greens and populist independents.

The ability of state governments to run their own economies, education, health, and transport systems is compromised by the over \$100 billion a year of tied and untied federal grants, competing federal ministries and bureaucracies and the politically distorted repatriation of GST revenue.

However, it is the lack of real difference between the Coalition and ALP on economic and social policy and the role of government, that is most responsible for increasing disillusionment in domestic politics.

In 2010 the Labor Government attempted to plug a hole in the budget deficit by singling out a small number of companies in one industry to pay a newly invented tax. In 2017, the Coalition is trying to plug a hole in the budget deficit by singling out a small number of companies in one industry to pay a newly invented tax.

Both parties appear committed to the Human Rights Commission, Fair Work Act, National Broadband Network, and increasing federal involvement in health, education, transport, energy, planning and the environment.

The Rudd Labor Government's main foreign policy priority was to pursue a temporary seat on the UN Security Council. Even though that target was achieved and the two year term successfully completed, the Turnbull Government's main foreign policy priority is to again pursue a temporary seat on the UN Security Council.

Even Labor's 2015 commitment to use the superannuation system to raise billions in extra revenue was matched and exceeded by the Coalition in its 2016 budget.



That the difference between the two parties on education is Gonski I vs Gonski II, on banking governance a royal commission vs a tribunal, and on energy policy a 23 per cent vs 50 per cent renewables target is just not good enough. Only on immigration are the Coalition and ALP poles apart.

Whether or not on 8 June British Labour is given the opportunity to [transform people's lives](#) or the Tories are chosen to provide what they describe as [true conservatism](#), Brexit ensures that the British people will own their decision and hold their politicians accountable for their policies.

Given that the growth of bureaucracy and lack of political accountability go hand in hand, the Turnbull Government should pursue its own form of Brexit, Bexit, in the form of a 'bureaucracy exit.'

Acknowledging that it is OK, even desirable, for the major parties to differ on policy would be a good start.

But setting a limit to the size of government, clearly defining stand-alone federal, state and local responsibilities, and leaving the rest to the private sector would do so much more.

No Commonwealth Grants Commission, no handballing between different levels of government, and accepting that it isn't the role of Canberra to impose social and economic uniformity on different individuals, businesses and communities would be an Australian Bexit well worth voting for.

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