

Barton Deakin Brief: Tasmanian Election Analysis

26 March 2021

Overview

The Tasmanian election will be held on 1 May 2021. All 25 seats in the House of Assembly (lower house) and 3 of the 15 seats in the Legislative Council (upper house) are up for election.

The Tasmanian Liberal Party currently led by Peter Gutwein has been in government since 2014. Premier Gutwein will be contesting his first election since he became Premier after Will Hodgman's resignation on 14 January 2020. The government is currently in a minority government with only 12 of 25 seats in the House of Assembly.

Party Leaders

Peter Gutwein (Liberal Party of Australia)

- Peter Gutwein has been Premier since the former Premier Will Hodgman resigned on 14 January 2020.
- Premier Gutwein's COVID-19 response included quickly shutting the Tasmanian borders to contain the spread.
- His management of the pandemic response has been met with popular support contributing to an increase in the premier's approval rating from 39% in March 2020 to 63% in May.

Rebecca White (Australian Labor Party)

- Rebecca White has been the leader of the Tasmanian Labor party since 17 March 2017.
- Tasmanian Labor was last in government under Lara Giddings in 2014 and had been in government since 1998 with four different leaders.
- The last coalition government between Labor and the Greens ending in 2014 had Labor promise to never work with the Greens in government again.

Cassy O'Connor (Greens)

- Cassy O'Connor became the leader of the Greens in June 2015 upon the resignation of former leader Kim Booth.
- In the last Labor-Greens government from 2010 to 2014, Casey O'Connor held four portfolio positions including Minister for Human Services, Community Development, Climate Change and Aboriginal affairs.

Election Issues

COVID-19 Economic Recovery

The centrepiece of the Tasmanian government's economic recovery program is the \$5 billion infrastructure program. This was announced in the 2020-2021 budget in November and is projected to provide 6,000 jobs a year. The program includes spending on health and education infrastructure programs.

Poker Machines Reform

The poker machine reform was a key policy issue at the 2018 election and set to be legislated in the current term of government. It was postponed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed reforms included a state-wide cap on the number of machines and would also allow the pubs and clubs to own them outright which would break down the monopoly of machine owner Federal Group.

TAFE Reform

The reform to Tasmanian TAFE or TasTAFE is designed to transform the TAFE system into a government business enterprise. The Premier has stated that the proposed reforms would make the TasTAFE system more responsive to industry needs.

Labor Leader Rebecca White holds the position that spending time making the reforms will delay economic recovery and result in lower-quality training and education. Casey O'Connor, the leader of the Greens party has stated that the reforms would lead to less ministerial oversight and decrease the quality of education.

Electoral Donation Reform

The government has proposed legislation to increase the transparency of the political donation disclosure system. One major change is the disclosure of amounts between \$1000 and \$5000 and these donations would be declared every six-months.

While announcing the election, the Tasmanian Liberals have stated they will voluntarily disclose their political donations exceeding \$5,000 prior to the election and encourage other parties to do the same.

Current Composition of the Tasmanian Parliament

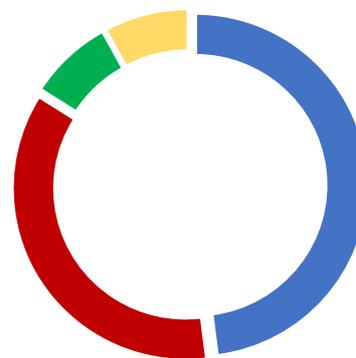
House of Assembly

The 25 seat House of Assembly is elected on the Hare-Clark voting system. The system provides a proportional representation (like the Australian Senate) using preferential voting (like the Australian House of Representatives). This system involves counting the first preference votes of each candidate against a quota which is determined by the number of valid votes against vacancies. Once a candidate reaches the quota, they are determined to be elected and their surplus votes are distributed to the continuing candidates according to preference flows. There are five districts in Tasmania and each electorate has five representatives in the Assembly.

The Gutwein Government now holds 12 seats following the defection of the former Liberal member Sue Hickey to sit as an Independent. Labor holds 9 seats. The Gutwein Government will need to gain one seat to deliver majority government. Labor requires 4 more seats to win government.

Party	Seats
Liberal	12
Labor	9
Greens	2
Independents	2

House of Assembly



■ Liberal ■ Labor ■ Greens ■ Independents

Legislative Council

The Legislative Council will have 3 of 15 seats up for election. The government is currently in a minority in the upper house with independents holding a majority of the seats. A further three seats will be up for election this year in May 2021 and two in May 2022.

Key Seats

Braddon and Clarke will be key seats in the next election. In the seat of Braddon, the Liberals won four seats in the 2014 election however only three seats in the 2018 election. Given their current high polling numbers of the primary vote, which is similar to the 2014 election, they may gain a seat in Braddon.

The seat of Clark has two independents both of which were former Liberal and Labor MPs. Both parties can win back these seats and likely that the Liberals will gain one seat in this division given their strong 52% primary polling position.

Seats (5)	Liberals	Labor	Greens	Independents
Bass	3	2	0	0
Braddon	3	2	0	0
Clark	1	1	1	2
Franklin	2	2	1	0
Lyons	3	2	0	0

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