

Labor leads Coalition in poll two weeks before NSW election

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Premier Gladys Berejiklian's hold on power is under serious threat as new polling shows the Coalition is trailing Labor 49 to 51 on a two-party preferred basis with less than two weeks until election day.

As the Liberals and Labor launch their election campaigns today in must-win seats ahead of the March 23 poll, Labor leader Michael Daley is also well ahead as preferred premier.



In the lead: Opposition Leader Michael Daley in Coogee with local candidate Marjorie O'Neill and Shadow Minister for the Environment Penelope Sharpe on Saturday.

CREDIT: STEVEN SIEWART

Exclusive polling for the *Sun Herald* puts Labor ahead 51:49 on a two-party preferred basis, although voters are still not convinced that Labor has served enough time in Opposition.

More than 48 per cent say Labor is not ready to govern while just over 43 per cent say the party is.

The UComms/ReachTel state-wide poll of 1019 voters taken on Thursday night also reveals that the Morrison government would have an impact on the voting intentions of 44 per cent of people.

The NSW election is on a knife-edge with the Coalition only needing to lose six seats before it would be plunged into minority and forced to negotiate with key crossbench MPs to form a government.

Labor needs to win at least nine seats before it would be in a position to form a minority government.

The *Sun Herald* poll comes as the Liberals launch their campaign in Sport Minister Stuart Ayres' seat of Penrith while Labor will have its launch in Revesby in East Hills.

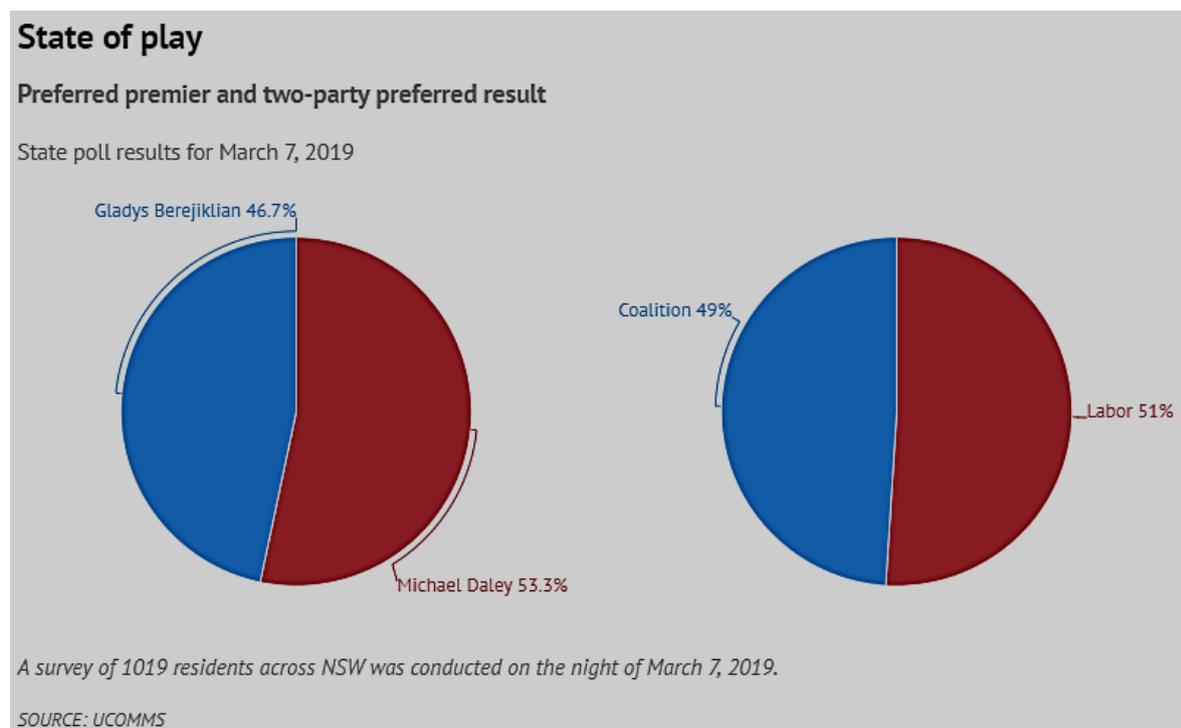
East Hills is the Liberals' most marginal seat, and Labor sees Penrith as a critical seat for it to win back. Mr Ayres won the seat from Labor in a 2010 by-election.

One of the Liberals' key commitments at its launch will be a new metro line from St Marys to the new Western Sydney Airport. It will be ready in time for the airport's opening in 2026.

A signature announcement for Labor will be a \$2.7 billion commitment to Gonski school funding.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and federal Labor leader Bill Shorten will support their respective state leaders at the launches.

A senior Liberal said Mr Morrison was "popular in NSW" and would be an asset to the Berejiklian campaign while Mr Shorten was "largely disliked in NSW."



"Voters might like Shorten in Victoria but they don't in NSW, so I'd prefer to have Morrison by our side than having Shorten if I were Labor," the source said.

The poll also asked voters about their views on Sydney stadiums, with more than 52 per cent reporting they oppose or strongly oppose public money being spent on the new Allianz stadium.

Ms Berejiklian doubled down yesterday and said it was full steam ahead with demolishing the Moore Park stadium after a temporary injunction was dismissed by the courts.

Asked whether demolition was underway this weekend, she said: “Well obviously that’s the intention ... we need to keep going, we can’t stop now, that’s the strong message I’m sending”.

She said forging ahead with plans, despite Labor’s calls for the government to halt works until the election, reflected the government’s desire to “do what’s in the best interest of NSW”.



Labor leader Daley meets local surf life savers in Coogee while campaigning on Saturday. CREDIT: STEVEN SIEWART

Mr Daley reignited the stadiums issue last week when he told 2BG broadcaster Alan Jones that he would sack him and most of the board of the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust if elected.

During Friday night’s leaders debate on ABC TV, Ms Berejiklian accused Mr Daley of changing his position after he seemingly back-tracked on his declaration that the election would be a “referendum on stadiums”.

On Saturday, Mr Daley clarified his position, saying: “For some people absolutely it will be a referendum on stadiums, but as I said, the stadiums is emblematic of everything this government does, the poor planning, the secrecy”.

In a worrying sign for the Liberals, the new poll also shows the party's primary vote has dropped since December, down to 28.7 per cent from 32.1 per cent.

Labor's primary vote is steady at 34.1 per cent.

But in good news for the Nationals, who are at most risk of losing seats, their primary vote is up.

A senior Labor source said: "Traditionally, you would want your primary vote up as high as 40 [per cent] but with so many independents now, that has changed a lot.

"But you still want every primary vote you can get because you can bank them."

The source said the Labor campaign had gathered momentum by the resurrection of stadiums as an issue. "It dragged things back into our key issues," the source said.

Pre-poll voting starts tomorrow, and as many as 30 per cent of people are expected to cast their vote in the fortnight before election day.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/labor-leads-coalition-in-poll-two-weeks-before-nsw-election-20190308-p512w7.html>