

Monday, 20 November 2023

Liberal 21.6% vote (up 4.4%) in Victoria's Mulgrave State by-election is too low to indicate Victorians have changed their allegiance with Labor

By Gary Morgan, Michele Levine and Julian McCrann

The Victorian ALP won the State by-election in Mulgrave easily over the weekend after the Liberal Party candidate Courtney Mann managed to gain only a 4.4% swing on primary votes compared to last year's State Election result.

In addition, independent candidate Ian Cook gained only a small primary vote swing of 0.9% while there were also gains for several other minor party and independent candidates.

On a two-party preferred basis, the swing away from the ALP was only 4.6%. ALP candidate Eden Foster secured 56.2% of the two-party preferred vote compared to 43.8% for Independent candidate Ian Cook. A yet to be calculated preference distribution between the Liberal and ALP candidates is likely to show a similar result between the two major parties. ([The Poll Bludger](#) has estimated the two-party preferred result between the two major parties will be ALP: 56.5% cf. LIB 43.5% - a swing of only 3.7% to the Liberals).

Although Liberal Leader John Pesutto claimed on the night that the result “sent Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan a strong message” in fact the result underlined how far in front the ALP Government is.

History shows that by-elections generally provide a strong swing to the Opposition, and particularly when a popular local member – like former Premier Daniel Andrews – resigns and is replaced.

In 1999, when former Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett resigned from the seat of Burwood after losing the Victorian State Election, there was a swing of 15% against the new Liberal candidate on primary votes and a 10.4% swing against the Liberals on a two-party preferred basis – and the Liberals lost the seat of Burwood.

On this occasion, the two-party preferred swing against the ALP candidate Eden Foster was only 4.6% - less than half the swing against the Liberal Party in 1999.

The comparably strong result for the ALP Government shows the Liberal Party remains well behind and is facing further trouble as Independent Liberal Moira Deeming has announced she will soon be launching defamation proceedings against Liberal Leader John Pesutto and other members of the Liberal Party Leadership team.

Deeming, the former Liberal Party member for the Western Metropolitan Region, was expelled from the Liberal party room earlier this year after telling the leadership team she would sue them for defamation after being given a nine-month suspension from the party room for attending a ‘Let Women Speak’ protest.

As long as the Victorian Liberal Party is engaged in infighting and internal squabbling there is no chance they will close the gap on the ALP Government now led by new Premier Jacinta Allan.

The Poll Bludger analysis of the Mulgrave by-election:

<https://www.pollbludger.net/2023/11/18/mulgrave-by-election-live/>

Moira Deeming set to take Liberal Leader John Pesutto to court (November 20, 2023):

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/deeming-promises-to-take-liberal-leader-to-court-after-mediation-fails-20231120-p5el8w.html>

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