

# One Nation in Western Australia Epic fail or a huge win?

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Contrary to recent media commentary, Pauline Hanson's One Nation party continues its political rise. Examination of the Western Australian state election results shows that while One Nation's vote fell short of Senator Hanson's hopes and expectations fuelled by some opinion polls, the far-right party doubled its support in Western Australia in the seven months between the July 2016 and March 2017. Having won three Legislative Council seats, One Nation has significantly strengthened its prospects to retain a Western Australian Senate seat in the next "half" Senate election in 2018-2019. The prospect of One Nation securing the balance of power in the Australian Senate on a long-term basis should be taken quite seriously.

**Report**

**Philip Dorling**  
**24 April 2017**

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# Summary

Media commentators have described Pauline Hanson's One Nation party's performance in the March 2017 Western Australian state election as “a disaster”, an “epic fail” and “an election flop”. In contrast Senator Hanson and her party have trumpeted the election of three One Nation candidates to the Western Australian Legislative Council as “a huge result” and have complained about what they claim to be a refusal by the mainstream media to acknowledge their success.

Examination of One Nation’s electoral performance shows that Senator Hanson’s party has doubled its support in Western Australia in the seven months between the July 2016 Federal election and the March 2017 state election. With voter support rising from just over 4 per cent to more than 8 per cent, only just behind the Australian Greens, media reports of One Nation's decline have been greatly exaggerated.

With one Western Australian Senator, three state Legislative Councillors, increased personnel and administrative resources, a party office that has run a state-wide campaign and significant public funding to reimburse campaign expenditure, One Nation has significantly strengthened its prospects to retain a Western Australian Senate seat in the next normal “half” Senate election in 2018-2019. One Nation may be on track to significantly increase its Senate representation beyond 2019 and through to 2025. The prospect of One Nation securing the balance of power in the Federal Senate on a long term basis should be taken quite seriously.

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# Differing assessments of One Nation's electoral performance in Western Australia

One Nation Party leader Pauline Hanson recently took social media to complain that the media had ignored her party's success in winning three upper house seats in the Western Australian state election held on 11 March 2017. On Twitter Senator Hanson declared "Pauline Hanson's One Nation has now claimed victory in THREE seats in Western Australia. Media reports zero, reality reports THREE!"<sup>1</sup> On Facebook Hanson similarly observed "Great News!!!! One Nation have officially picked up 3 Upper House seats in the WA state election. Media won't report the success we've had, so it's up to me to blow the party's trumpet tonight. Well done to Charlie Smith, Robyn Scott and our WA leader, Colin Tincknell."<sup>2</sup>

Hanson's claim that that media had failed to report One Nation's wins in the Western Australian Legislative Council was not correct. The result had in fact been well reported by the *West Australian* newspaper, the Fairfax website [wa.today.com](http://wa.today.com), Seven West Media's [perthnow.com.au](http://perthnow.com.au), as well as by national media including the ABC and Sky News.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 Twitter @paulinehansonoz, 25 March 2017, <https://twitter.com/PaulineHansonOz/status/845403055042441216>.
  - 2 See Pauline Hanson Facebook post on 24 March 2017: [https://www.facebook.com/PaulineHansonAu/?hc\\_ref=NEWSFEED](https://www.facebook.com/PaulineHansonAu/?hc_ref=NEWSFEED).
  - 3 "One Nation wins three WA Legislative Council seats", *Western Australian*, 26 March 2017, <https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-politics/one-nation-wins-three-wa-legislative-council-seats-ng-b88426735z>, David Weber, "WA election count has two more One Nation MPs elected to Upper House", *ABC News*, 24 March 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-24/pauline-hanson-one-nation-party-has-won-two-more-seats-in-wa/8385734>, "One Nation wins three upper house seats in state election", *WAtoday*, 26 March 2017, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/one-nation-wins-three-wa-upper-house-seats-in-state-election-20170326-gv6mf1.html>, Joe Spagnolo, "Liberal Democrat Aaron Stonehouse potential kingmaker in WA's Legislative Council", *PerthNow*, 26 March 2017, <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/waelection/liberal-democrat-aaron-stonehouse-potential-kingmaker-in-wa-legislative-council/news-story/4709467adc6e66222ee1c216d7b94995>, "One Nation secures three WA upper house seats", *Sky News*, 26 March 2017, <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/politics/state/2017/03/26/one-nations-secure-three-wa-upper-house-seats.html>, and "WA Labor one seat shy of working majority", *7News (Australian Associated Press)*, 26 March 2017, <https://au.news.yahoo.com/wa/a/34800066/wa-labor-one-seat-shy-of-working-majority/#page1>.

The One Nation leader was no doubt stung by earlier media reporting immediately following the Western Australian election. Most political commentators focussed on One Nation's overall vote in the West Australian lower house, the Legislative Assembly; contrasting One Nation's 4.86% vote with buoyant public opinion polls that had suggested the party's support had soared from just over 4 per cent at the July 2016 federal election to as much as 11 or 13 per cent in February 2017.<sup>4</sup> There was certainly much media anticipation that the Western Australian state election would be an early test of One Nation's political momentum. Together with WA One Nation leader Colin Tincknell, Senator Hanson had herself talked up One Nation's prospects in the Western Australian election, suggesting when she first arrived to campaign in Western Australia in January 2017 that the party could win as many as six seats. She pointed to the Legislative Assembly district of Pilbara, held by WA Nations leader Brendon Grylls. Tincknell agreed the party was a strong chance in the Pilbara and elsewhere: "There's at least four or five other seats we would see as just as important as the Pilbara, especially in the [Legislative Council] Eastern Metro and country Agricultural regions; also in the South West and other areas of the Mining and Pastoral [region]. There's five or six that we think we can win, and there's five or six others that we could get close."<sup>5</sup>

One Nation in Western Australia faced considerable organisational and financial challenges in campaigning in the state election. The party was only registered in Western Australia in January 2017 and the selection of candidates was rushed. In the end One Nation contested only 37 of 59 Legislative Assembly districts.<sup>6</sup> Hanson campaigned in Western Australia with the advantage of a prominent media profile arising from her return to the Federal Parliament and status as a national party leader. However One Nation's campaign was marred by the resignation and disendorsement of several candidates as well as internal party conflict over Hanson's decision to negotiate a preference deal with the Liberal Party. In the final week of the campaign Hanson generated further controversy with comments in a ABC Interview praising Russian President Vladimir Putin and advising parents to "think twice" about vaccinating her children again because of "autism and cancer risks". She subsequently partially retracted and apologised for her incorrect claim that that there was test parents could access to evaluate vaccination safety. The legal imbroglio that resulted in the disqualification by the High Court of Western Australian One Nation Senator Rod

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<sup>4</sup> "WA Election: Newspoll suggests One Nation support surging ahead of March vote", *New Daily*, 3 February 2017, <http://thenewdaily.com.au/news/state/wa/2017/02/03/wa-election-newspoll-one-nation/>.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew O'Connor, "WA Election 2017: Pauline Hanson rolls into Perth ready to launch One Nation campaign", *ABC News*, 19 January 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-19/wa-election-pauline-hanson-in-perth-one-nation-campaign-launch/8192492>.

<sup>6</sup> In one of the 37 electorates contested by One Nation, Scarborough, One Nation candidate Margaret Dodd, resigned from the party on the day before the election, too late for ballot papers to be changed. "Margaret Dodds quits as One Nation candidate", *Sky News*, 10 March 2017, <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/politics/state/2017/03/10/margaret-dodd-quits-as-one-nation-candidate.html>.

Culleton was also unlikely to have assisted the party's state election prospects. Notwithstanding various controversies, however, Hanson repeatedly expressed confidence about One Nation prospects. Two days before the election, Hanson told the Seven Network that One Nation would “probably win three seats in the upper house and maybe a couple of seats in the lower house.” She repeated her expectation that Grylls would lose his Pilbara seat to One Nation, and also expressed confidence her party would pick up the Nationals-held seat of Kalgoorlie. 'The feeling from people is very strong. It's amazing, the support I receive going down the street,' she said.<sup>7</sup>

On election night, in the context of a landslide win for the Western Australian Labor Opposition led by Mark McGowan, it very quickly became clear that One Nation would not win any seats in the Legislative Assembly. Western Australian Nationals leader Grylls did lose his seat, but to the Labor Party rather than One Nation which fell well short of the votes required to be in the running for the seat. Similarly One Nation failed to be competitive in Kalgoorlie, coming a distant fourth after the Liberals, Labor and Nationals. One Nation's total vote across Legislative Assembly seats appeared, at first glance, to be well short of the figure anticipated by some opinion polls and only marginally better than the party's July 2016 Federal Senate vote in Western Australia.

Sky News presenter and political commentator David Speers set the tone for much of the media commentary on One Nation's performance when he declared on election night that the Western Australian poll was “a disaster” for Senator Hanson.<sup>8</sup> The Seven Network's Sunrise presenter David Koch similarly called One Nation's campaign an “epic fail”.<sup>9</sup> Other reporters described One Nation's performance as “an election flop”<sup>10</sup> and an “embarrassing failure”.<sup>11</sup>

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7 “Hanson gives partial apology on vaccinations”, *Sky News*, 9 March 2017,

<http://www.skynews.com.au/news/top-stories/2017/03/09/hanson-gives-partial-apology-on-vaccinations.html#sthash.N9sXhh7T.dpuf>.

8 Benedict Brooke, “Western Australian state election 2017 results: Labor looks likely to topple the Coalition following controversial One Nation deal”, *news.com.au*, 12 March 2017,

<http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/western-australian-state-election-2017-results-labor-looks-to-topple-the-coalition-following-controversial-one-nation-deal/news-story/1cff6a9875f480af597c783cdb753fa1>.

9 Liz Burke, “Pauline Hanson points the finger over embarrassing WA defeat”, *news.com.au*, 13 March 2017, <http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/pauline-hanson-points-the-finger-over-embarrassing-wa-defeat/news-story/072e47bb41ff4ca5c3d9c0d9adb74da3>.

10 Chris O'Brien, “Does One Nation's election flop have implications for the Queensland poll”, *ABC News*, 13 March 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-13/what-does-one-nation-wa-election-flop-mean-for-qld-parties/8348846>.

11 Liz Burke, “Pauline Hanson points the finger over embarrassing WA defeat”, *news.com.au*, 13 March 2017, <http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/pauline-hanson-points-the-finger-over-embarrassing-wa-defeat/news-story/072e47bb41ff4ca5c3d9c0d9adb74da3>.

News.com.au's veteran political correspondent Malcolm Farr opined that Hanson's claim to be "the new big thing" in Australian politics had been "shredded" in Western Australia:

Senator Hanson had identified the WA election as the contest which would demonstrate her One Nation was a legitimate third party which had to be respected. Voters strongly disagreed. Rather than forcing its way into the power club, One Nation lost support as the campaign went on, and that decline accelerated during the final week when Senator Hanson arrived, apparently believing she could clinch the party's triumph. ... Nobody could say One Nation's campaign was well run, and the disastrous result simply underlines the fact the party is being run by amateurs who often don't like each other, have policy ideas which are plain loopy, and who know little or nothing about elections. The party needs the attention of political professionals, and stable candidates whose personal beliefs are more Earth-bound than some of those currently standing under the One Nation banner. And it will have to make tough evaluations of the role of Pauline Hanson herself.<sup>12</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the poll, Hanson herself appeared somewhat deflated and publicly accepted the view of many commentators that her party had been "damaged" by engaging in a preference deal with the Liberal Party, likening the unpopularity of outgoing Liberal Premier Colin Barnett to putrid milk, saying: "All I heard all day was, 'Why are sending your preferences to the Liberal party?' ... It's like when you've got milk in your fridge and it starts to go sour, that's what it was like with Colin Barnett."<sup>13</sup> Three weeks later, however, One Nation has declared its performance in winning three Legislative Council seats to be "a HUGE result!"<sup>14</sup>

All this begs the question, was the Western Australian election a step forward or backwards for One Nation? This paper examines One Nation's latest electoral performance and suggests that while the result may have fallen short of some exaggerated expectations, the party made significant electoral gains and continues on a trajectory towards greater influence on the national political stage. Claims of that One Nation has peaked, let alone is headed towards its demise, appear quite premature.

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12 Malcolm Farr, "Pauline Hanson's claim to be the new big thing in politics was shredded by the WA election", *news.com.au*, 13 March 2017, <http://www.news.com.au/national/politics/pauline-hansons-claim-to-be-the-new-big-thing-in-politics-was-shredded-by-the-wa-election/news-story/99a2eb17c303ad6938d44f9044772535>.

13 Regina Titelius and Dylan Caporn, "Pauline Hanson says Colin Barnett's sour milk spoiled her brand", *West Australian*, 12 March 2017, <https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-election-2017/pauline-hanson-says-colin-barnetts-sour-milk-spoiled-her-brand-ng-b88412664z>.

14 Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Facebook post, 25 March 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/OneNationParty/>.



# One Nation in Western Australia: July 2016 and March 2017

## One Nation's Senate performance

At the Federal election on 2 July 2016, One Nation secured 55,026 first preference votes in the Senate ballot in Western Australia – 4.03% of the total formal votes cast.<sup>15</sup>

One Nation's 2016 Western Australian Senate vote was its third highest across the Australian states; after 9.19% in Queensland and 4.10% in New South Wales.<sup>16</sup> However One Nation's 2016 Western Australian WA Senate vote was numerically still only half of that achieved by the party eighteen years earlier, and only 38.9% of that level of support taking into account the growth of the Western Australian electorate.

**Table 1: One Nation votes in Western Australian Senate elections<sup>17</sup>**

	ONE NATION FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES	TOTAL VALID FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES	ONE NATION %
<b>1998 WA SENATE ELECTION</b>	110,294	1,064,078	10.37
<b>2001 WA SENATE ELECTION</b>	77,757	1,105,529	7.03
<b>2004 WA SENATE ELECTION</b>	27,601	1,128,155	2.45
<b>2007 WA SENATE ELECTION</b>	11,623	1,202,750	0.97
<b>2010 WA SENATE ELECTION</b>	7,610	1,234,219	0.62
<b>2013 WA SENATE ELECTION<sup>18</sup></b>	N/A <sup>19</sup>	1,310,278	N/A
<b>2014 WA SPECIAL SENATE ELECTION</b>	N/A <sup>20</sup>	1277804	N/A
<b>2016 WA SENATE ELECTION</b>	55,026	1366182	4.03

*Source: University of Western Australia Australian Politics and Elections Database*

<sup>15</sup> One Nation secured 0.52 of the quota required in the double dissolution election to secure a Senate seat in Western Australia. After the distribution of preferences One Nation's first listed candidate Rod Culleton was elected to the Senate. Culleton's election was subsequently declared invalid by the High Court in February 2017 and the second One Nation Senate One Nation candidate Peter Georgiou was subsequently elected on the basis of a recount of ballots.

<sup>16</sup> See Australian Electoral Commission statistics for the July 2017 Senate election:  
<http://results.aec.gov.au/20499/Website/SenateStateFirstPrefsByGroup-20499-WA.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Past Western Australian Senate results are taken from the Australian Electoral Commission and the University of Western Australia Australian Politics and Elections Database:  
<http://elections.uwa.edu.au/electionsearch.lasso>.

<sup>18</sup> Following the discovery during a recount of the loss of at least 1,375 ballot papers High Court sitting at the Court of Disputed Returns invalidated the result of the 2013 Western Australian Senate election and ordered a special election that was held in April 2014.

<sup>19</sup> One Nation did not contest this election in Western Australia.

<sup>20</sup> One Nation did not contest this election in Western Australia.

## **One Nation in the March 2017 Western Australian state election**

In the Western Australian state election on 11 March 2017, One Nation candidates received 65,192 of a total of 1,321,640 valid first preference votes cast in Legislative Assembly districts – 4.86% of valid votes.<sup>21</sup>

Most media commentators who dismissed One Nation's electoral performance focussed on the 4.86% figure. This was only marginally higher than One Nation's 2016 Senate vote and well below expectations based on several opinion polls prior to the state election ballot. However the commentators failed to recognise that One Nation did not run candidates in all lower house seats. The party did not contest the following twenty-two Legislative Assembly districts: Armadale, Balcatta, Bassendean, Bicton, Burns Beach, Churchlands, Cockburn, Cottesloe, Girrawheen, Hillarys, Joondalup, Kingsley, Maylands, Mirrabooka, Morley, Mount Lawley, Nedlands, Perth, South Perth, Southern River, Vasse, Victoria Park, West Swan, and Willagee.

One Nation contested 37 Legislative Assembly electorates that collectively amounted to only 58.23%, well less than two-thirds of the votes cast for the Legislative Assembly.

Across the 37 Legislative Assembly seats contested by One Nation, the party received approximately 8.47% of 769,681 valid first preference votes.

One Nation won more than 10 per cent of the first preference vote in ten electorates – the three highest being Moore, a coastal district, covering rural territory north of Perth and surrounding but not including the regional city of Geraldton, 13.03%; Mandurah, a compact district based on the coastal satellite city of Mandurah south of Perth, 12.91%; and Kalgoorlie which includes not only the town of Kalgoorlie, but the outback across central and eastern Western Australia, 12.15%. The other top ten One Nation electorates include other regional and remote districts such as Pilbara and Central Wheatbelt as well as areas on Perth's suburban fringe including Swan Hills, Forrestfield and Warnbro.

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<sup>21</sup> Western Australian electoral statistics are derived from the Western Australian Electoral Commission: <https://www.elections.wa.gov.au/elections/state/sgselection#/sg2017>.

**Table 2: One Nation votes in Western Australian Legislative Assembly Districts**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>One Nation first preference votes</b>	<b>Total valid votes cast in district</b>	<b>One Nation %</b>
MOORE	2,762	21,195	13.03
MANDURAH	3,008	23,295	12.91
KALGOORLIE	1,846	15,197	12.15
WARNBRO	2,721	22,799	11.93
CENTRAL WHEATBELT	2,571	22,293	11.53
PILBARA	1,606	14,144	11.35
MURRAY-WELLINGTON	2,652	23,525	11.27
NORTH WEST CENTRAL	818	7,291	11.22
SWAN HILLS	3,011	27,442	10.97
FORRESTFIELD	2,244	22,353	10.04
WANNEROO	2,288	23,344	9.80
GERALDTON	1,979	20,974	9.44
KWINANA	1,968	20,940	9.40
DAWESVILLE	2,311	24,765	9.33
BUNBURY	2,050	23,029	8.90
BUTLER	2,131	23,966	8.89
DARLING RANGE	2,313	26,519	8.72
ROCKINGHAM	1,915	22,054	8.68
COLLIE-PRESTON	2,069	24,751	8.36
KIMBERLEY	952	11,719	8.12
ROE	1,792	22,484	7.97
MIDLAND	1,915	24,303	7.88
THORNIE	1,747	22,768	7.67
BALDIVIS	1,854	25,012	7.41
KALAMUNDA	1,691	23,373	7.23
WARREN-BLACKWOOD	1,641	23,572	6.96
ALBANY	1,624	23,586	6.89
JANDAKOT	1,681	25,163	6.68

CANNINGTON	1,372	20,871	6.57
BELMONT	1,397	21,450	6.51
CARINE	1,231	24,111	5.11
RIVERTON	1,086	22,251	4.88
BATEMAN	1,032	22,569	4.57
FREMANTLE	1,004	23,458	4.28
SCARBOROUGH <sup>22</sup>	910	22,733	4.00

Source: Western Australian Electoral Commission.

One Nation contested all six of Western Australia's six-member Legislative Council districts.

Across the six districts, One Nation secured 110,480 of a total of 1,344,675 valid first preference votes – approximately 8.19%. This result placed One Nation slightly behind the Australian Greens (116,041 votes, 8.60%) but well ahead of the Western Australian National Party (59,776 votes, 4.43%).

Three One Nation Legislative Councillors were elected. The party came very close to the election of a fourth.

**Table 3: One Nation votes in Western Australian Legislative Council Districts**

DISTRICT	ONE NATION FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES	TOTAL VALID VOTES CAST IN DISTRICT	ONE NATION %	ONE NATION CANDIDATE ELECTED (ONE NATION QUOTA)
MINING AND PASTORAL	6754	50564	13.35	Robin Scott (0.96 of quota)
AGRICULTURAL	10282	90637	11.34	Unsuccessful (0.82 of quota)
SOUTH EAST	20635	199499	10.34	Colin Tincknell (0.74 of quota)
EAST METROPOLITAN	26874	344852	7.79	Charles Smith (0.56 of a quota)
SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN	24256	357242	6.79	Unsuccessful (0.49 of quota)

<sup>22</sup> "Margaret Dodds quits as One Nation candidate", *Sky News*, 10 March 2017, <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/politics/state/2017/03/10/margaret-dodd-quits-as-one-nation-candidate.html>.

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN	21677	343361	6.31	Unsuccessful (0.45 of quota)
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Source: *Western Australian Electoral Commission*.

Examination of results from individual polling places by ABC election analyst Antony Green shows One Nation's highest Legislative Council vote, 31.4% was recorded at Kambalda Primary School in Kalgoorlie, in the Mining and Pastoral District. Of the 33 polling places to record a One Nation vote of 15% or higher: 19 were in the Mining and Pastoral District; 11 were in the Agricultural District; two were in the South West District and one in the Eastern Metropolitan District.<sup>23</sup>

Green suggests that the preference deal between the Liberal Party and One Nation “delivered little for the Liberal Party other than limit damage that might have occurred had One Nation followed its previous tactic of directing preferences against sitting members.” Green further suggests that in metropolitan seats contested by One Nation, approximately half of the party's support in Perth came from the Liberal Party, and the remaining half from other parties.<sup>24</sup>

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23 Antony Green, “WA election: Highest Legislative Council results for One and the Greens”, *Antony Green’s Election Blog*, 16 March 2017, <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2017/03/wa-election-highest-one-nation-and-green-polling-place-results-in-legislative-council.html>.

24 Antony Green, “Initial Analysis of preferences at the 2017 Western Australian election”, *Antony Green’s Election Blog*: 22 March 2017, <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2017/03/initial-analysis-of-preferences-at-the-2017-western-australian-election.html>.

# Doubling One Nation's vote

Arguably the most significant figures for One Nation in Western Australia are given in the following table.

**Table 3: One Nation votes: July 2016 and March 2017**

	ONE NATION FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES	TOTAL VALID VOTES	ONE NATION %
<b>WA SENATE ELECTION – JULY 2016</b>	55026	1366182	4.03
<b>WA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION (ALL DISTRICTS)</b>	65192	1321640	4.86
<b>WA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION, MARCH 2017 (37 DISTRICTS CONTESTED BY ONE NATION)</b>	65192	769681	8.47
<b>WA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTION, MARCH 2017 (ALL DISTRICTS)</b>	110480	1344675	8.19

*Sources: Australian Electoral Commission and Western Australian Electoral Commission.*

In the Western Australian state election One Nation's average support across the 37 Legislative Assembly seats it contested – 8.47% – is close to its average support across Legislative Council districts – 8.19%. This strongly suggests that One Nation's overall support is between 8 and 8.5%.

Approximately 45,300 people who voted for One Nation in the Legislative Council (40.1% of total One Nation support) voted for another party or did not cast a valid vote for their Legislative Assembly seat.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The total number of valid volts cast in the more complex upper house ballot was 23,000 more than the total for lower house seats.

One Nation failed to secure enough support to be competitive in any lower house seats. It still ranked far behind the Labor Party, Liberal Party, Australian Greens and indeed behind the National Party in the Legislative Assembly vote.

In the Legislative Council ballot, however, One Nation surpassed the WA Nations by a large margin (8.19% compared to 4.43%) and was only narrowly beaten by the Greens (8.60% compared to 8.19%).

Most significantly, comparison of One Nation's July 2016 Senate result and the vote for Western Australia's upper house in March 2017 suggests that the party doubled its support over a period of just seven months.

Although One Nation's performance may have fallen short of some expectations, including those of Senator Hanson, a doubling of support and the election of three new parliamentary representatives (compared to zero representation previously) can hardly be described as a "disaster" or an "epic fail".

On the contrary the One Nation has achieved significant growth of its support base, not only in mining and agricultural regions but also in Perth's outer metropolitan fringe.

Although Senator Hanson and her party may have had a campaign characterised by significant internal conflict and controversy, especially in the final week before the ballot, there is little evidence to show that this had a significant impact on the growth of One Nation's overall support.

# One Nation in the new Western Australian Parliament

One Nation now has three representatives in Western Australia's Legislative Council. WA One Nation leader Colin Tincknell secured a South West district seat. Robin David Scott won a seat in the Mining and Pastoral region. Charles Smith secured an East Metropolitan seat.

Aside from Labor's landslide victory in the Legislative Assembly, there was significant change in the composition of the Legislative Council. The Greens won four Legislative Council seats, an increase of two since the previous election, while the Nationals lost one seat to finish with four positions. The Liberals were the biggest losers in the upper house as their seat count fell from 17 to nine while Labor picked up three seats to finish with 14. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers and Liberal Democrats both won a single seat in the Agriculture and South Metropolitan regions respectively. With Labor and the Greens one seat short of a majority, One Nation together with the Liberal Democrat, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers member and Nationals will occupy positions of influence, able to offer support for some Labor legislation in exchange for concessions in relation to their interests and priorities. The new Labor Government will have unavoidably have to deal with One Nation in the essentially transactional process of state lawmaking.<sup>26</sup>

Western Australian One Nation leader Tincknell is virtually unknown outside Western Australia and little known within the state. A former "cultural diversity specialist" with mining companies Newcrest and Cameco, Tincknell was employed to engage with indigenous communities in the Pilbara, the northern Goldfields and the Central Desert region. Tincknell says his political views have shifted from the left to the right over time, but he still "very big on the working class". In some respects he appears to be an example of the movement of some "blue-collar" Labor supporters towards One Nation. "I was a Labor voter when I was a young guy," he observed in pre-election interview. "My dad was a carpenter, my mum was a nurse. They were our values. ... My journey sort of moved me a little bit further to the middle. Pauline was considered to be way on the right with a couple of her immigration views. I never saw that in Pauline. I saw her middle view. I saw her defending small business, working people and pensioners." Tincknell claims to be "a moderate" in the middle of the political spectrum: "I'd like to think the Labor movement will move back to where Bob Hawke and Keating had it for a period of time. And maybe One Nation and Labor wouldn't have many differences, but it's not there yet. The Liberal Party for me have gone too

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26 "One Nation wins three upper house seats in state election", *WAtoday*, 26 March 2017, <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/one-nation-wins-three-wa-upper-house-seats-in-state-election-20170326-gv6mf1.html>



far to the right at times. That might sound amazing coming from a person that's in One Nation. But see I don't have the media view or leftist view of One Nation."<sup>27</sup>

Although at first glance an unlikely choice by Senator Hanson to serve as her party's Western Australian leader, Tincknell has expressed strong support for One Nation's policies on border protection, multiculturalism and Australia's Muslim communities. During the election campaign Tincknell stood by One Nation's Pilbara candidate David Archibald who had written in a 2015 *Quadrant* essay that single mothers "are women too lazy to attract and hold a mate, undoing the work of possibly three million years of evolutionary pressure". Archibald's essay was certainly at odds with Tincknell's previous outlook as a cultural diversity specialist. The introduction to the essay, titled "Lifestyle Choices? Here's a few more" reads: "Why focus only on the cost of supporting Aboriginal communities in godforsaken locations when so many other Australians have their impractical and expensive preferences richly subsidised. Be they single mums or "disabled" Islamist firebrands, should the much-taxed rest of us pay for them?"<sup>28</sup> In response Tincknell demonstrated a fairly permissive approach to the diversity of opinion within One Nation. He said Archibald was "a bit naughty" and probably should not have made the comments, but he believed politicians shouldn't be "too politically correct". The essay was "a bit tongue in cheek. ... It's not the end of David."<sup>29</sup>

Tincknell's LinkedIn profile suggests he intends to focus on "local policies" linked to his South East Region electorate including issues relating to small business, agriculture and forestry enterprises, salinity in its groundwater, as well as roads, rail and other infrastructure.<sup>30</sup>

Charles Smith, One Nation's new Legislative Councillor for the East Metropolitan district, is a former police officer who specialised in domestic violence and child protection work. According to the One Nation website "Charles is very supportive of the police and view good order as the basis of a good society. Much work needs to be done to help the police do their job and provide all the equipment they need, and he fully supports the [Western Australian] police union's call for 1000 more police and also calls to reform how Magistrates sentence offenders." Police work in Kalgoorlie-Boulder has also given him what One Nation describes as "real life insights into

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27 John Flint, "What One Nation's Colin Tincknell really stands for", *PerthNow*, 20 February 2017, <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/waelection/wa-election-2017-what-one-nations-colin-tincknell-really-stands-for/news-story/2a0af73ce604fac984f72f0cf0d7d4b1>.

28 David Archibald, "Lifestyle choices? Here's a few more", *Quadrant Online*, 13 March 2015, <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/qed/2015/03/lifestyle-choices-heres/>.

29 "WA One Nation candidate David Archibald naughty for lazy single mums essay", *The Australian*, 31 January 2017, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/state-politics/wa-one-nation-candidate-david-archibald-naughty-for-lazy-single-mums-essay/news-story/b2a779582890ec2a652b521701e47ab5>.

30 Colin Tincknell LinkedIn profile, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/colin-tincknell-31ba8034/>.

Aboriginal affairs, crime and anti-social behaviour.” Smith has also worked for the Western Australian Department of Mines and Petroleum.<sup>31</sup>

Elected to represent the Mining and Pastoral region, Robin Scott is a One Nation political veteran. He ran for the Federal seat of Kalgoorlie for One Nation in 2001 and 2004, drawing 8.60% and 2.63% of the vote respectively.<sup>32</sup> One Nation's website profile of Scott is curiously lacking in any biographical detail, merely stating that “Robin is fed up with the way every day Australians are being treated by successive failed Liberal and Labor party governments. Robin brings experience from a wide range of employment into his campaign that he believes will help him fight for the 'real' issues of today that current politicians aren't listening to.”<sup>33</sup> The *Kimberly Echo* newspaper briefly reported that Scott was born in Scotland before his family immigrated when he was about 16 years old and that he has worked “in the mining industry and electrical contracting in the Mid-West.”<sup>34</sup>

All three of One Nation’s new representatives have experience in working in or with Western Australia’s mining industry.

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31 One Nation candidate profile: Charles Smith, <http://www.onenation.com.au/candidates/wa/charlessmith>.

32 Josh Chiat, “One Nation set to unveil candidate”, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 January 2017, <https://thewest.com.au/news/kalgoorlie-miner/one-nation-set-to-unveil-candidate-ng-b88349825z>.

33 One Nation candidate profile, Robin Scott, <https://thewest.com.au/news/kalgoorlie-miner/one-nation-set-to-unveil-candidate-ng-b88349825z>.

34 “Who you are voting for in the upper house”, *Kimberley Echo*, 11 March 2017, <https://thewest.com.au/news/the-kimberley-echo/who-youre-voting-for-in-the-upper-house-ng-b88406062z>.

# National implications: One Nation in the Senate

One Nation is still a minor party. In Western Australia its overall support is similar to the Australian Greens. One Nation's total vote in the March 2017 Legislative Council ballot – 110480 first preference votes, 8.19% – suggests that the party's support is close to but not yet equal to the level it enjoyed in 1998. Allowing for the growth in the size of the Western Australian state electorate, One Nation's current support is still approximately 20% less than its peak nearly two decades ago. Nor are all One Nation voters necessarily locked into the party. 40% of people who voted for One Nation in the upper house voted for another party or did not cast a valid vote for their Legislative Assembly seat

Overall, however, One Nation has unquestionably enjoyed considerable success in doubling its Western Australian support over some seven months. In this regard it should be noted that Senator Hanson is a well-known political figure with rather less novelty than other recent and ephemeral entrants into federal politics – for example Clive Palmer and the Palmer United Party.

One Nation's election performance in Western Australia is not without national significance. One Nation now has a stronger political machine in Western Australia. The party is registered with an office that has supported a state-wide political campaign. Having polled above 4 per cent in all of the upper and lower house seats it contested, the party and its candidates are eligible to claim up to approximately \$320,000 in public funding to reimburse campaign expenses.<sup>35</sup> One Nation now has four parliamentary offices in Western Australia (one Senator's office and three Legislative Councillors' offices) with staff, administrative resources and travel entitlements. As a consequence One Nation in Western Australia will be much better placed to campaign in the next federal election that, except for the possibility of another double dissolution, must be held between August 2018 and May 2019 for half of State Senators and on or before 2 November 2019 for the House of Representatives and Territory Senators.

The apparent doubling of One Nation's support in Western Australia should if continued, or increased, place the party in a much more competitive position to win a Senate seat in the state in an normal (half) Senate election for six Senators in each state. The current Western Australian One Nation Senator, Peter Geogiou, was elected for a three year term in the 2016 double dissolution and will face the polls again in

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<sup>35</sup> Media reports appear to have underestimated the amount of public funding available to reimburse One Nation candidates and the party. Daylan Caporn, "Pauline Hanson's One Nation gets taxpayer windfall after WA election", *West Australian*, 16 March 2017, <https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-election-2017/poll-windfall-for-hanson-ng-b88416016z>.

2018-2019. For a normal election Senators need to achieve a "quota" of one-seventh of the overall vote or 14.29 per cent (a much higher figure than the double-dissolution "quota" of one-thirteenth of the share or 7.69 per cent.). If One Nation were to match its state election performance of between 8.19 and 8.47 per cent, the party would be well within striking distance of retaining on preferences a Western Australian Senate seat for full six year term – that is until 2025. Recent national opinion polls show One Nation polling consistently at approximately 10 per cent.<sup>36</sup>

Irrespective of One Nation's performance in other states, this would ensure a One Nation presence of at least two Senators in the Senate after 2019. (Senator Hanson was elected in 2016 to a full six-year term until 30 June 2022.) In the event that One Nation's support increases in other states, notably in Queensland and New South Wales but also elsewhere, the party could anticipate Senate representation of five and possibly six or seven Senators between 2019 and 2025.

On the basis of current trends One Nation will still be a "minor party" in the foreseeable future, but one with significant representation in the Federal Senate and state upper houses, potentially holding the balance of power in the Senate and in other jurisdictions. The next electoral test for One Nation will be in Queensland, the party's strongest support base, where it will face the challenge of breaking into a unicameral parliament elected from single member constituencies with full preferential voting.<sup>37</sup>

Far from being a "disaster" or a "flop", One Nation's Western Australian electoral performance may prove a harbinger to the party's long-term presence on the national political stage with consequent impacts on public policy across the board.

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<sup>36</sup> "Newspoll: Labor gains ground against Coalition", *The Australian*, 2 April 2017, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/newspoll/newspoll-labor-gains-ground-against-coalition/news-story/ea2f0e137364713c87fc32c5489f3d3e>.

<sup>37</sup> One Nation currently has one member in the Queensland Parliament, former Liberal National Party MP for the seat of Buderim, Steve Dickson, who defected to One Nation in January 2017.