

Poll Position

Katharine Murphy
Political Editor, Guardian Australia

Pete Lewis
Executive Director, Essential Media

In conversation with

Ebony Bennett
Deputy Director at the Australia Institute

Ebony Bennett [00:00:03] G'day, everyone. I'm Ebony Bennett, Deputy Director at the Australia Institute and welcome to our final poll position for the year. It's our fortnightly show where all year we've taken a deep dive into the last fortnight in politics and the latest results from Guardian Essential Poll. This, as I said, is our last show for the year. So thank you so much for coming along today. I do want to begin by acknowledging that I live and work on Ngannawal and Ngambri country and pay my respects to elders past and present just to tonight that we still have one or two more webinars to finish out this year so you can head on over to Australia Institute dot org dot aew to find those. Later this week on Thursday, we're going to be talking to finish education expert Pasi Sahlberg and IAU Federal President Correna Haythorpe about improving equity in the Australian education system a decade after Gonski. That's part of a special series that we're doing with the Nordic Minister's Council called Nordic Talk. So we hope that you can come along to that. And next week we'll be talking to Katharine Murphy once again, but this time about her quarterly essay, Lone Wolf. So head on over to our website to sign up for those. Just quickly, you can type in questions for our panel today using the Q&A box, and you should be able to update other people's questions as well. A reminder to keep things civil and on topic in the chat all but you're out. And lastly, a reminder that this is a live event and it will be recorded and go up on our YouTube channel later today. And it will also become an episode of Guardians Australian Politics podcast tomorrow morning. And for those of you who are listening on the pod, you can find all the results today at Essential Report dot com dot AU. So it's the final weeks of the year and the final weeks of Parliament. The Government has just announced a deal on its legislation with the Greens and David Pocock. The legislation for the National Anti-Corruption Commission is expected to pass pretty soon. And of course we've seen the Nationals coming out to say they're going to oppose the Indigenous voice to Parliament and now that's putting some pressure on the Liberal Party for how they're going to respond to the referendum next year on energy. The Government is trying to come up with ways to soften the blow of an expected 50% increase in electricity prices coming down the pipeline. So and the Prime Minister has just got back from an overseas visit as well. So there's as always plenty happening in politics, often more than we can fit into one webinar. And to discuss all that and more, I'm delighted to introduce our regular panel today. Katharine Murphy, political editor at Guardian Australia, and

Please note this transcript is automated

Pete Lewis, executive director at Essential Media. Katharine, if I can start with you. We're kind of winding down. It's been an enormous year, including a federal election, but we're just not quite finished yet. Parliament's still going. So what's happening up there at the moment?

Katharine Murphy [00:03:09] Yeah, it's it's it's very hectic, obviously, in the final sitting week of the year. Yes. We've had two budgets this year, an election and a transition, and we're not done yet. And we've also just seen the sitting calendar for next year today, which looks pretty heavy. So anyway, that means lots of fun and games for next year. But I think as usual, you've summed up beautifully about where the various sort of issues are converging. The issues at the moment, the voice, obviously the National Party expressed a view about that yesterday, that they would oppose the concept. And it's fair to say that all hell is broken loose on that this morning. The liberals seem to still be kind of stalling and I say that actually in a complementary way. The Libs haven't been herded into a position yet on The Voice, although I note that John Howard a couple of weekends ago in The Australian gave Peter Dutton some free advice about how the Libs should oppose the concept and not give anyone a conscience vote. But anyway, that's all sort of working its way through the system. The big legislative things is it says there's a there's a deal on OIA reform and so we expect that that package will pass by the end of the week. We also expect the National Integrity Commission to pass. The debate has started on that again in the Senate as we speak. And there was a flurry last night where it looks like it looked like the Greens and the Liberals would imposed an amendment into the proposal that was unacceptable to the unacceptable to the government. That involved the the parliamentary oversight committees input into the appointment of NEC commissioners. The Greens are stepped back off that this morning. The Greens are down to supporting an amendment from David Pocock which, you know, just sort of simplified this. The Liberal amendment would have required the appointment be carried by a two thirds majority of that committee, the peacock amendment by a simple majority. Now I think of all of the amendments in the Senate, the Pocock amendment may get up if the Liberal Party supports it, and then it will be a judgement for the Government about whether or not that is acceptable when the Bill goes back down to the Parliament. If we sort of take the Attorney-General's temperature, it sounds like the Government's not intending to countenance more amendments to that. So if even if it's amended in the in the Senate, that amendment might be stripped when the bill goes back down to the House anyway. But that's all still to play out. The other big one, as you say, is energy, which has been a big issue for much of the year and certainly since the budget. The government is working through a regulatory response to try and bring some power price relief to both industrial users and households. Cabinet had a conversation about that yesterday morning. My intel from that is that the that the government is pretty confident that it can launch a price intervention for gas and and make and make a difference. The government is less confident that it can impose a wholesale price cap for coal, which is significant if you live in the east coast of Australia. I know people join us on the show from all around the country, but if you live on the east coast of Australia, most of the coal that most of the most power generation on the east coast is still coal generation. So they may need some cooperation from two states on that. Queensland and New South Wales. The Prime Minister made it clear yesterday that he will be trying to persuade premiers in and around the country to sort of get on board with the energy regulatory package. So we expect to see that, I think probably sort of in the second week of December in terms of when the rubber hit the road on that. So yeah, it's hectic as all get out as final weeks always are, and it'll be hectic until the senators and people from the reps stagger home on Saturday, I think. Which is their current plan late Saturday.

Ebony Bennett [00:07:27] Yeah. And yeah, it is that kind of time of year where just everything's happening all at once in an effort to clear the decks before Christmas. But how are things looking in polling terms in got an essential poll?

Peter Lewis [00:07:45] Well, we've been getting our house in order for the end of the year as well. And we've conducted our review into the federal election. And we've also put out our primary A.P. plus for the first time since the election. So if you want to share the stories, I'm happy to sort of open the kimono on that one. We shouldn't do that on. I'd say.

Katharine Murphy [00:08:07] It's got to say, is everybody ready for the close? Follows the Cuban Hour.

Peter Lewis [00:08:13] Here we go. So here we go. So the top line, there was essentials. Final call. If we recognising that that's taking the nose out as it got closer, we weren't far off one point, which is, you know, a fair a fair shake in terms of predicting the TPP result. I don't think you could say the polls failed if you go to the next slide. We did and we did on the called both of the. We over call both of the major parties. So our final primary live was 37 and the IEC it was 33 Coalition 39, 36. We underestimated some of the smaller parties. We've been reflecting on whether that was just, you know. I. You know, a statistical blip or something more fundamental as we do after every election, what we're doing. One of the anchor points in terms of our sampling without getting too geeky, has always been to have the party ID. So we asked people, regardless of who are you going to vote, which party do you feel closer to? And this was a really useful tool when it was really a two party contest because we could pick up if somebody said they were normally a liberal voter and they were looking elsewhere, normally a Labour voter and looking elsewhere, it was a good way of anchoring our vote. Now what I think has happened over the last couple of terms as more and more people go away from major parties, is that party ID is becoming more fluid. You know, it used to be that your party ID was like your footy team. You were born to it and you kept it and you might vote different ways, but it was an anchor point to make sure our sample was on on solid ground. So what Gavin and the team and John have done over the last little period is to recalibrate how we do some of those anchors. And so we're going to shift away from party ID and move more to state and previous voting intentions. So that's kind of a bit like how the engines engine's going to work under under the bonnet. But we've, you know, done what? You know, all all people that are involved in the political process should do, which is to review, reflect and revise our methodology after the election. So we feel like we can throw our latest polling out. And, you know, the other thing, if people have been with us on the journey. 2019, we made the call that we would start keeping the noise in our sample as a bit of a, you know, I, as a bit of a reaction to the horse race that just gave the false impression one side of politics was ahead or the other, or was it more than 50%, although on base numbers, even with the diagnosed latter is more than 50% cent. But the second was to to really discipline ourselves, not to sort of look at it in terms of a horse race. And so while this is interesting, we don't think it's the most interesting things we're polling. But that said, how does Labour end the year on to pay? Plus, with the diagnosis in at 51 to 43 with 6% undecided, the quite low undecideds there as well, which is interesting, it was being polled in a week where there was a state election. I don't

Please note this transcript is automated

know if I can attribute too much to that. The Greens finishing the year in a strong position up from the Federal election on 13 Labour 33. But with those 6% undecided still in the mix, Coalition not quite as bad as Victoria, but not very far above 30. And that growing base of other independents, which is obviously a movement that has probably not followed quite as well in the Victorian election as it did in the federal. But there are definitely people moving away from the major parties. You know, if you just do, if you just do the sums back on that trend line, sorry, if you go back that slide and it's basically a third, a third, a third, now the two major parties and other parties. So that's the recalibration in Australian politics that we've been, I think I'm living through over the last couple of terms and I believe Katharine might have a thing or two more to say about in her upcoming quarterly essay, which I'm looking forward to reading over the weekend.

Ebony Bennett [00:12:39] Yeah, Pete and we might come back to the Victorian election as well, but do we want to just go through these?

Peter Lewis [00:12:47] We got through a few more. Yes, this is again, we've changed the way that we write. We we monitor the performance of our leader and opposition leader like we've traditionally said, approval in performance, which I guess for a Prime Minister, an Opposition is not an actual fair race and likewise to preferred PM, we don't think it's that useful either because one is the PM, the other is not. So what we've started doing is asking people to write on a scale of 1 to 10 positive, negative about how they feel about them. So it takes it in a way. We're trying to see how the two leaders are portraying themselves to the public, but sort of I'm tethering them from the office because it creates a false anchor point as well. And as you can say, alibis in the positive 46 think he's either a seven to a ten, whatever that means to individuals is up to them. Obviously 26% in the neutral band, 4 to 6, 23% in the negatives, which is pretty low for a leader when you think that, you know, there is one side of politics that's job is to sort of make people feel negative about you. Peter Dutton Not going quite so well, 33% negative, 32% neutral, 28% positive with 8% unsure and never heard of it. So I would say I think Labour would be happy with where they are. They've got a leader who's in net positive, significantly positive territory and they've got. You know, if there was an election held, which there isn't going to be for a couple of years, they'd be in a good slot. So, you know, that doesn't seem a bit of a barometer at the moment, isn't it, the direction that they got?

Ebony Bennett [00:14:43] Yeah. So that's kind of reasonably steady, but starting to decline. Is that just kind of the end of the. Not that they've had a honeymoon period, but the further we get away from the election and more into the nitty gritty of governing, you're conveying.

Peter Lewis [00:14:56] I think, this direction of Australia for those that are listening on the podcast. So we've been asking this every month. This is not about the government, this is about the country and straight after the change of government. Right direction 48. Wrong direction, 27. That is narrowed to 44. Right? 36. Wrong. I would read that more about the external economic circumstances, the high, you know, prices, electricity prices, rather than necessarily that that question is not linked to the performance of the government, but it does talk about the overriding, you know, circumstances before the election. We are in negative wrong track, over right track. So,

Please note this transcript is automated

you know, you don't want it to be governing when people think you're heading in the wrong direction. But also you can't control all those leaders a lot. I think the last few weeks Albo has been doing a bit to try to shift some of them.

Ebony Bennett [00:15:53] I'm not. This next question on attitudes to the way Australian media covers politics.

Peter Lewis [00:15:59] Yeah, so I did want to ask this in the context of our review. Appalling. One of my bugbears, as some of the listeners would be aware of, is that I've been calling on the press gallery to review their own performance in the last election. So I just thought we would do a bit of a situation analysis there that slips a tiny bit messy. But what we've got is 62% of people saying the media treats politics like a game. Doing those sums on the spot, 55% believe it is biased to one side, although I would note that people of all voting persuasions think the media is biased probably against them because you do read what you want to say and then lower than you'd want numbers in terms of whether people feel well-informed about federal politics and whether people believe the media covers the matter. Well, the the issues that matter to them, sorry, that slice a little bit mis configured, but do you want to just stay on that for a sec? Because on the media stuff, I do think that it's hard, isn't it? We've we've got and I'm interested in Katherine's thoughts on this because we have spoken about in the past like I reckon both the Victorian election this way and the last federal election provided false. I can cite false narratives that I did not provide. I do not believe I. A fair appraisal of what the contest was. And that was because of the way that the media has come to cover elections is kind of almost a tabloid generated day by day, little fight club with a set piece where the leader puts themselves in front of a bunch of cameras and journos who want to make a name for themselves, present company excepted. And I just wonder if the same way that we recognised after 2019 that polling wasn't doing the job that it should do. Where is the conversation about the why, the role the media should play in elections? And I know we can talk about accountability and sure, but real accountability is not about whether or not Dan's become a dictator or whether he slipped down the stairs. It's not about whether alb I can remember figures off the top of his head, and I just think that a lot. I'm not sort of throwing all the media in the one basket or anything, but I am asking the question, where is the self-reflection? Or is it just that the caravan moves on and the gallery keeps covering what comes next without taking any responsibility for its performance?

Katharine Murphy [00:18:50] So that's right. You're happy for that to go in this direction and I'm just checking back in.

Ebony Bennett [00:18:58] Yeah, no, I think I'm.

Peter Lewis [00:19:00] Sorry I've hijacked this.

Please note this transcript is automated

Ebony Bennett [00:19:01] But I think it's worthwhile reflecting on in the context of the Victorian election. Like I saw that front page with the steps and you know, you can see where they're kind of leading the audience. But if you're just reading that with a generous interpretation, what was that story about?

Katharine Murphy [00:19:19] You know, and I did by asking whether our lovely house, Deb is on board with this change or this is the Segway. It's not it's not that I'm reluctant to enter this fray because I write about this a lot. I think, look, in general terms, I think the you know, the media is much better at requiring others to be accountable than to be accountable ourselves. I think just as a general proposition, we're very focussed on our accountability role in the democracy. But if someone requires us to be accountable, that that often triggers a hostile pushback from from us. Now, one of the reasons is because journalists sort of temperamentally and professionally, are very focussed on the importance of free speech, free opinion, free discourse, and these are really important principles to uphold. So that's why some journalists get very toey about what they would regard as excessive regulation, because is sort of the difference between regulation and having a state controlled media, right? So that sort of just context. Right, for why these things can get a bit prickly. But no, I mean, I said at the time during the federal election, it gets a run in the quarterly essay, which has been which is which is now in the public domain that I think there was a dynamic in the federal campaign that was more like pub trivia than it was then about a cyber sensible accountability process. And, and obviously readers and viewers noticed it and a number of them were unhappy about it. I think the reasons why the whole sort of accountability dynamic on campaigns has become more posturing and performative would be a whole podcast or webinar in and of itself, because there are complex dynamics sitting behind that shift, some of them inside the control of our profession and some of them completely outside it. So what I'm saying is, you know, I think as a general rule, we we can be hostile when asked to be accountable. As a general rule, we're covering election campaigns less well than we did in the past. But the reasons for both of those propositions are complicated. And again, you know, one day we could do a whole webinar on this on this subject. But look, I didn't see much of the Victorian election coverage because I was out of the country for, you know, the sort of the critical bit I think in the campaign I was following Anthony Albanese around South East Asia. So I didn't see a lot of his. A colleague and friend of mine, Matthew Ricketson, who is a professor of journalism at Deakin University, wrote quite a good comment piece about this, which was published on The Guardian yesterday. If folks want to chase that up, I think it was a really nuanced bit of commentary actually about why sort of performative accountability actually creates the conditions for real accountability to be applied less well. And I think that's that's actually a very acute observation, the sort of more show and tell we do about, you know, the more sort of kind of stylised combat we do tends to promote hate rather than light. And I think what what media consumers need is is light rather than heat. But there's a whole bunch of incentives that pushes in another direction anyway. That's the short version of.

Ebony Bennett [00:23:09] And that's a great way to think about it, to like light shining a light on what's happening, not hate, even just the conflict and the. Yeah, yeah. It's a great way of, of putting it. I have just put a link for people wanting to buy Kathryn's quarterly essay in the chat. We've got a supporter discount for Australia Institute supporters, so you can find that and all of that today. And good to hear that you kind of touch on it in there. I haven't read it yet, but I will before next week.

Ebony Bennett [00:23:38] Kind of. Pat You've picked up with, you know, your report card on how you met with the federal election like post elections. And the end of the year is kind of when we do do that review of how the year kind of has gone and what we have to let.

Peter Lewis [00:23:52] The major parties about doing their reviews. I don't know if they'll be released publicly or not, but.

Katharine Murphy [00:23:57] Today reviews look, just just quickly again are not to detain us. So I think the Liberal Party executive is being briefed this week on the sort of main thrust of where that will end up. I don't think they've said one way or another about whether or not they intend to release the review. But I would I assume they will release some more part of it perhaps between now and the end of the year in terms of labour, because it sort of it's been less relevant in my mind. I don't actually know whether with the Labour plans to do the same. Obviously they had a very big review after 2019 and that was released publicly. So yeah, not sure actually what they what their plans are.

Ebony Bennett [00:24:42] Before we kind of come back to the end of the year in federal politics, I did just want to take a little bit more time on the Victorian election and just ask you both, I guess, the big lessons out of that, because that's two elections now where the Coalition, I mean obviously Labour won government in both of those, but to me the big story was kind of the tanking of the coalition and how big of a problem that is going forward. As you said, Katharine, that's probably the more interesting one for people as 2019 was for Labour. If I can start with you, Katharine, what did you take out of that election result in Victoria?

Katharine Murphy [00:25:24] Yeah, well look, as you say, there's been two very bad election results for the Liberal Party. The National Party survived both context contests in better nick than their Liberal partners. I think the Liberal Party as a genuine problem in, in sort of inner metropolitan Australia, the Liberal Party is in danger of becoming a regional based party and the reasons for that I think have been articulated by a number of Liberals that the party needs to sort of get, you know, get back in touch with its original sort of philosophical underpinnings rather than being dazzled by transient culture war. So that's that's a real thing. I do think there was one interesting inflexion point between the two contests. If I could just hang a tiny lantern over that. Obviously, the Teal candidates did not do as well in Victoria as they did federally, and there's a bunch of reasons for that there. There are spending caps in Victoria, for example, that don't exist federally. There's been some debate about candidates, respective candidates in the in the contest, which I'm not fully across because I don't really know the Victorian people. So there's this, those things. But also while the Liberal Party performed very poorly in the Victorian election, the Liberal Party did, or on current indications, hold some key territory in terms of just the teal battlegrounds, if I can express it in those terms, certainly there's been a lot of discussion about, you know, an imminent comeback for Josh Frydenberg based on the Victorian election result, because if you sort of look at the state seats that sit in his electorate of Kooyong, are the heartland. Liberal seats or the Liberal areas in that electorate

Please note this transcript is automated

actually held for the Liberal Party in Victoria, whereas obviously that didn't happen federally. Now I'm speculating because obviously I'm not close enough to the Victorian contest to understand the dynamics in detail. But I just note for this audience, which is very, very interested in these things, that the State Liberal Party in Victoria has a much better climate policy than the Federal Liberal Party took to the last election and certainly since the change of Labour to Peter Dutton, who has actually regressed their position from Scott Morrison's position on climate. So I wonder to what extent the Liberal and National Parties and both of them in Victoria having a better climate policy than their federal counterparts. To what extent that made a difference in some of those contests. But in a general sense, the Liberal Party is the Liberal Party has a huge task to work out how it's going to position itself. And I guess my fear for them is that the sort of definitional process that they'll need to embark upon in this term of government will be heavily influenced by their current representation. And a number of sort of the city moderates were wiped out in the federal election, the last federal election. So you just sort of got to think about this. If you're if you're a group of people sitting around thinking, whoa, what do we do now? Right. If the if your current sort of representation in the parliament is less diverse than it has been in the past, you will have a less diverse conversation than you otherwise would have had. But anyway, that's that's definitely another one of those watch this space things for, you know, how they respond to these two elections, both the federal one and the Victorian one.

Ebony Bennett [00:29:14] Yeah. Pete, did you have any lessons.

Peter Lewis [00:29:16] From your look? I'm up here in Sydney on Gadigal land, so I. I wasn't close to it. One observation from the cheap seats, though, is that. I reckon one of the things that. Albanese's done federally has been to take a lot of anger out of politics in general. So a lot of what drives the momentum of the federal election was anger at Scott Morrison. And I think a lot of what drove the tail success was anger at an individual and obviously individuals always an abstraction that they're an embodiment of a bunch of policies, but also the way the individual carries on. And I think we can underestimate how much the mood around politics has changed, how I saw what was going on in Victoria and the Libs almost trying to run Dan Andrews and Scott Morrison as the bad leader. We need to get out and the anger was it just wasn't in the room. And like I said, my friends in Victoria, even progressive friends would say, gee, it's got too far with state control. And I think that there is a little bit of a kernel of truth, but it's not an angry centre that could drive a change of government. And if I look at what? The situation is up here in New South Wales where there's a state election in March. Again, I think it will be a challenge for Labour, while a lot of the portents are good for a change of government. The iron is not there and in a way that's really good unless you're trying to dislodge a government. Like I quite like the absence of anger in our political discourse at the moment. But if it's not there, the way of winning a campaign against a government that has all the advantages of incumbency is much harder. So we'll see how the New South Wales Labour Party goes up here. But I do think that was probably the other false flag in this election that people just saw it as a natural follow on of getting rid of Morrison that get rid of incumbent state governments.

Ebony Bennett [00:31:31] I'm doing after two and a half years of doing this. But never mind. And I've got a couple of questions from our questions from the audience here. But just to start off with a

Please note this transcript is automated

couple of them on the Nationals Party and one is asking what do you think is behind the Nationals gains in Victoria? And another one, Katharine, is asking specifically about the Nationals announcement that they're going to oppose voice. And what is the kind of motivation behind this is is the nature of the question I guess.

Katharine Murphy [00:32:06] Yeah. Okay, well that's in Victoria. I'm not entirely qualified to make a judgement about that, so I might just defer on the basis of just not having enough information in terms of the the federal the voice decision. Look, I think obviously Jacinta Price, who is a new representative who came in at the federal election, sits in the Nationals party room. She has some very strong views, negative views about the voice and I think that that's a factor. I think in both in the Liberal and National Parties there is a very strong cohort of MPs who will not accept this proposition. Whatever the model, doesn't matter if it's symbolic or whether it's substantive. That has been a long. Settled feature of this debate. It's one of the reasons why this debate about recognition has gone on for more than a decade is because there is a hard group in both the Liberal and National parties who will not countenance constitutional change, whether with a minimalist or maximalist. So that's a sort of resting predisposition. I think there is some speculation around some of the in the Indigenous leadership that that that basically this has been a push by the Queensland Nationals or elements of the Queensland Nationals. I think the base, the National Party base is sort of whipped up by precursor campaigns, by some think tanks sort of are opposed. And I'm talking about party members, I'm not talking about regional Australians, I'm talking about the minority of people who are members of political parties. So I think there is there is a view around the Indigenous leadership that this is sort of bubbled up to Queensland, that Jacinta Price has sort of been the forward offence on say no to the voice in terms of the nets and for whatever reason the Nets have basically thought it necessary to articulate their position now. And obviously at one level it's ridiculous given that we don't really have you know, we've got we've got the sentences that the Prime Minister proposes to add to the Constitution, but the referendum is at a very nice stage. We're not actually going to be in full tilt referendum territory until the next financial year. Why? The Nats have had to come out and and say this with such strength at this point in time suggests to me that there's that there is a base pressure issue on the leader and that's I think why we've seen this early articulation of the Nationals position on this. Noel Pearson he's obviously a key driver, mover and shaker in The Voice and the Olaru statement made some observations about this on Radio National this morning, which I'm sure people on the pod and the webinar will be will be interested to go and listen back to if you've not heard that interview, that's that you can download that on the website. He was obviously very critical of of this decision at this point in time. And obviously, too, in terms of internal coalition dynamics, which I think are also possibly part of the story here. I think we have seen David Littleproud as Nationals leader, acting very much as a Nationals leader rather than the sort of sometimes master servant relationship of the Liberal and National Parties in Coalition. I think we've seen on a number of occasions since the election Littleproud taking a Nationals position, whether or not that suited Peter Dutton. Yeah, we've seen that in small ways and now we're seeing it in a big way. So I suspect that's also part of the story.

Ebony Bennett [00:36:46] Yeah. Anything you want to add to that?

Please note this transcript is automated

Peter Lewis [00:36:48] Look, I dug out some numbers for one of Katherine's colleagues, Carla Wahlquist. I don't want to steal her scoop, but we just looked at some of the regional breakdowns on Voice from August. The last time we polled. Support for voice at this point in rural areas is 5743 in favour and in provincial areas 66 to 34 in favour. Amongst Coalition voters, it's 53, 47 in favour. So this is not a call the National Party is making to reflect the will of the people it represents. It is a political calculation that it can create a sense of relevance by being that the the point, the place where the outliers who want to not listen and accept the invitation from First Nations people to have a voice enshrined in the Constitution will gravitate around. And I reckon what's going on here also is if it's not the Nats, it's going to be Pauline Hanson because she's the first one that's put her hand up. So there's a little bit of brand differentiation between One Nation and the National Party going on here, but it is not a cost. Neutral decision. This pushes them to the outskirts, the back blocks of mainstream Australia very, very quickly and it is a massive call. The other thing that's interesting is if you think about the voice at the moment, there's the vast majority of people who would say there's been a process. First Nations people have come up with a model. They've made the invitation. We'll say yes, thank you for engaging. We would love a way that we can make better policy. And there's two there's two sides to the argument. One is that it's not going to do anything, which is kind of more a progressive argument, that it's just performative. And the other one, which says that it's setting up a special case for one race, the Nationals are arguing both cases at once like it's not a they've got a coherent reason to vote no that just decided that we're going to be the no people and the no people aren't going to be the outlines of One Nation. They're going to be the outliers at the National Party. So massive call. I think the way that the campaign's handling it more in sadness than in I got that a major party could be so tone deaf is the right way to play it and to open the door for them to re re-evaluate. If we get to the position where you know, you've got 70% of regional Australia that's going to voice with the National Party, really stand in the way. I don't know. It's early days, it's Katharine said.

Katharine Murphy [00:39:28] Well, I think just very quickly, I just think Pete's point there about One Nation is actually really important because Pauline Hanson has been publicly goading Peter Dutton on this, on this point and obviously the National Party's has got sort of competition coming from both their right and left flank. We say in issues like this, we've seen it in climate change where the National Party is not representative of their communities. And as I said before, this is a base issue. This is not an issue of who the National Party is representing. This is a sort of like, you know, an articulation on the part of of the various values. So it's a it's a it's a cultural thing, right? So it's sort of yeah, it'll be interesting to see how they sort of try and thread that needle. But I do think Hanson's is significant factors as well. Yeah.

Ebony Bennett [00:40:25] I'm pate, I've got a couple of questions in here about Twitter and the implosion thereof and where you think all that is headed if everyone's migrating to Mastodon or what's happening on that front in the tech space. And I guess I only ask because I feel like in Australia a lot of the political discourse happens on Twitter. Journalists are they're politicians of charities where a lot of engagement happens. It's kind of it is part of our public square, for better or worse. Privately owned now by Elon Musk.

Please note this transcript is automated

Peter Lewis [00:40:59] Well, up to seven days ago when I put Donald Trump on, I withdrew the ban. I followed one of the one of the Twitter handles that I've always respected a lot, tweeted God who deactivated their account. And I followed God on Twitter. So I'm deactivated for 31 days. And I must say it's been a refreshing break. Not trying to think that every bad joke needs to be shared with with the world. I've been looking at Mastodon, which is it? Quite a complex thing to set up. There's another one code post which looks really interesting that it's got a 120,000 person waiting list, so there's no obvious place to go. But I'm kind of decompressing for a month just to reflect and you know, Without Burning Platforms podcast that we run through the Centre for Responsible Technology, we have been thinking through how do you build an entity that is not just a ubiquitous open field, like do you need mass platforms or should we be more focussed on building community? So one of the things we're thinking through at the moment is where would we like to build a community around people who like talking about tech issues, maybe not in 140 characters. Do we move back to discussion boards? Are there are they better ways of building that sense of engagement than just everyone jumping on the one platform and trying to build massive lists? Now I've only got five and a half followers. Katherine's right. She's much bigger. So the cost for her following God of the the dumpster, it's going to be a lot higher. But I just think that. Once you've got an owner who seems dedicated to breaking all the rules and norms and getting rid of all their staff, I just don't feel good being there at the moment, so I'm just having a break.

Ebony Bennett [00:42:49] Katherine, I'm not sure if you want to weigh in on that or I can move to the next question quickly.

Katharine Murphy [00:42:54] It's yeah, I'm sort of one of those sort of slow moving car crashes, sort of airlines. But I've sort of seen it coming at us then, and I haven't really had time to really sort of absorb what was going on. I did at one point when I was overseas with the Prime Minister, I did. It was a day where in the G20 media centre in Bali there was a lot of conversation amongst journalists about whether Twitter would fall over that day, whether or not it would would be would continue to function because of the exodus. And I did, I think, say to my followers, you know, look, if it all falls over, it's been you know, it's been swayed. So it's somewhere else.

Peter Lewis [00:43:39] But you're more Moses than God. Like you need to take your people with you somewhere.

Katharine Murphy [00:43:46] I love this idea about following God. I mean God to be so pleased if I followed it. But anyway. But. But anyway, I do love that idea. Now, look, I've made any decisions about this yet. Not. Not because I'm sort of, you know, confused about the fundamentals, but I just haven't had time to focus on it. So I do remain on Twitter at this point in time. And and we'll we'll sort of see how it goes. It is it is a difficult sort of space to replicate because it is I mean, as I said, Twitter is a hub for well, not only, you know, political discussion in Australia, it's a hub for political discussion around the world, which is sort of why Donald Trump focussed on it. So so what's the word forensically, I guess in terms of, you know, the audience or the platform that it gave him? It also in the olden times were less it does this less well now was the fastest news aggregator

Please note this transcript is automated

anywhere, breaking news aggregator anywhere, which is part of the reason a lot of journalists are on the platform, because it basically brings you, you know, a very, very real time feed of breaking news all around the world. So, you know what comes afterwards? Well, I don't know. I mean, who knows? I don't know. But anyway, obviously, I will use the Christmas period to reflect on on where where one should be in the social space. But yeah, I just haven't had the bandwidth to work out whether I should or shouldn't be there at this point.

Ebony Bennett [00:45:21] Yeah, I tried to sign up for Mastodon and all got a bit complicated and I gave up a lot and stay on Twitter and make appear image. But Katharine, want to ask you for the last Poll Position you were away with the prime minister travelling overseas. We know that he had a side meeting with the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping. But what else emerged from from that trip?

Katharine Murphy [00:45:46] It was such a fascinating trip. Well, I thought it would be good. I thought it would be interesting just because of the sort of the number of issues, both regionally, globally and domestically, that would sort of intersect during that summit season. But it was actually more sort of interesting and revelatory than I expected. I think obviously the the sort of stabilisation of the China relationship was Australia's objective going in and the Prime Minister achieved the first steps in that, although you know how on earth you keep that relationship on track is, you know, maybe God said he's left to Asia, maybe God could help us with, you know, understanding how one stabilises a relationship with an authoritarian dictatorship. But they did go on.

Peter Lewis [00:46:37] I think they.

Katharine Murphy [00:46:39] All go there and ask it. But but no, it may now be a bit flip. And obviously, you know, it doesn't one meeting doesn't solve all the irritants and problems in the relationship. And also, you know, the sort of the fascinating thing really was China's decision during the summit season to sort of to to re-engage at some level with the world mostly positively in terms of the Biden meetings and certainly debating with their own prime minister and negatively in the case of Justin Trudeau, I'm sure a lot of people will have seen that video that emerged of the confrontation they had on the sidelines beyond China. I just think, you know, lots of my critical kind of take away from it was actually optimistic now. And and I have known one another for a long time, I think and Pete are well aware that I'm a natural pessimist. However, what the best thing for me from my vantage point during summit season was watching the world trying to work, and we did see that across a number of levels in those different summits. We saw ASEAN countries, you know, try and try and place some pressure on a military junta in Myanmar. But we did see that in Indonesia in an ASEAN context. We saw a certain amount of positioning, you know, for rules and norms. We saw the world at large rallying for Ukraine and their continuing difficulties repelling an illegal invasion. We saw there was a truly hairy moment at the G20 where there was a missile misadventure that in Poland that killed a couple of civilians. Where Joe Biden literally convened a scratch meeting of the G-7 on the sidelines of the G20. And for a couple of hours, we we really didn't know whether we were in an Article five NATO's scenario where that conflict was going to escalate into a full blown confrontation. Extraordinary few hours to witness at close range. Fortunately, it didn't land that way.

Please note this transcript is automated

Fortunately, more information surfaced that the missile that landed on the Polish farmhouse was actually caused by an interception by a Ukrainian defence system. But that was honestly one of the more extraordinary couple of hours I've witnessed. And it was amazing to be there. So, yes, my sort of positive take out of summit season was watching the world trying to work. So in the spirit of the last show and Christmas and everything else, look, there's some positivity from Katharine Murphy with some good.

Peter Lewis [00:49:32] Ebony. We did have a few slides on China. I don't know if you want to go back to them because it just sort of reinforces that, I think influence of China on different. So the right hand column here is the latest number that you can see that from 2019 through to 2022 being dropped through the pandemic on issues like culture, trade, defence and Australia's politics, but stabilising somewhat. If you go to the next one, influenced the US compared to the influence of Australia. Again, the positivity like obviously we see ourselves much more positively aligned with America than China. Unsurprising, but go to the next one and there's a degree of optimism 46 to 9 saying things will get better rather than get worse with the change of government. And then the last one, which is really interesting to me in the particularly with respect to the way the coalition plays things and it's been one we've had before. The vast majority, 54%, want to see opportunities to rebuild relations. Only 13% are looking for a more confrontational approach 12% status quo, 21% unsure. And I think they really interesting anchor points in understanding the way that our Prime Minister's dealing with China and the way that it's all playing out in the region at the moment.

Ebony Bennett [00:50:58] Yeah. There's certainly a lot to take away from it and it has I think changed the way Australians think about that relationship as well. Because I, you know, I do recall that at certain times when trade was going really well with China, there was a whole bunch of people and politicians who really didn't seem to give two hoots about China's human rights record. And now we see a lot more attention on that kind of stuff. But I think that's been a function of the other ructions and disruptions in that in that relationship. But it is a huge one. So it does make sense that a.

Katharine Murphy [00:51:36] Lot of the.

Ebony Bennett [00:51:37] Country would be wanting to see more positive steps happening there. And that was yeah, really amazing reflection. Katharine, I can't imagine what it would be like there where you're wondering whether or not things are about to heat up very unfortunately in Ukraine there, but yet so often thinking about those things in terms of terms of just a talkfest, but something like that would make you realise how much actually is at stake there.

Katharine Murphy [00:52:02] Yeah, no, it was it was it was genuinely amazing and obviously always filled with the most profound relief, obviously when we weren't escalating in that direction. But it was yeah, it's quite something because it's sort of the whole backdrop to summit season. Of course, they are two trailing talk fests that are populated by a whole lot of interest groups as well as leaders. I can understand why people might be fatigued with the whole demonstration of that, but it was,

Please note this transcript is automated

you know, the fascinating thing journalistically, you know, when you when you do summit season is that you are briefly enclosed in in spaces with people who literally determine the trajectory of the world that we live in. And and sometimes there are crisis points that enable you to see that statecraft playing out in real time. And and yet it was certainly one of those occasions.

Ebony Bennett [00:53:06] When nearly out of time that. Katharine, I did just want to ask you, I guess, about climate change and energy just to finish us up, because we're about to go into our third La Nina Summer Live, already experiencing floods again. The war in Ukraine is causing electricity prices to go up on coal and gas, which is helping with the cost of living crunch. But there's a lot of interactions, I guess, between climate and energy and electricity. How much do you think the government is using this cost of living crisis to help drive forward its climate agenda? Or are they still kind of still quite separate where the government is coming from?

Katharine Murphy [00:53:51] Well, no, no. I think you're you are as as you always are if you are acute in making that point. I think there is a cross side, obviously, between the the transition agenda that the government has in terms of the transition to low emissions and the cost of living crunch that we're living at at the moment. The danger politically that the government is is weathering by sort of tying the two narratives together. The story of the transition with the story of cheaper energy options is because we see Peter Dutton attempting sort of to apply a rate box of the Tony Abbott carbon price strategy where you basically you you pull climate action out of the the necessary science fact basket and you put it in the bill. We can't afford basket where it's just all too hard, it'll cost too much, it's too disruptive and the lights will go off and everybody will have to mortgage their homes in order to pay their power bills. So I think the Labour Party, having been to this rodeo once or twice before, is is at pains to sort of pull those two stories together in terms of what they're talking about, in part because obviously cost of living is easy when when you get high, sort of when you get acute cost of living pressure, that is always the most difficult environment to political environment, I mean, to achieve steps forward to deal with the climate crisis. So I think the two are inextricably linked in terms of looking ahead at what sort of going to happen though Chris Bowen has had an incredibly busy year legislating a target, legislating the tax cut for revenues. There's a whole big body of work being done on the safeguard mechanism, which I think we'll see a government response. Between now and Christmas will. And that's that's quite substantial and important. I think the first sort of step in that safeguard transformation will say in the Parliament this week, I think some legislation will be introduced, giving effect to accrediting mechanism which allowed wallpaper waste, but that's quite an important element of it. I think we'll see that this week. Also this week we will see the first statement on the climate, but by Chris Bowen, I think. Don't hold me to this. I think from memory it's on Thursday that will basically involve two elements. It's obviously Chris Bowen reporting to Parliament on progress, but also there'll be some research from the Climate Change Authority about how we're tracking on our climate goals, which is one of the things associated with the Targets commitment earlier in the year. So I think all of those things come together on Thursday. Please don't say if I'm wrong because there's a lot in my head at the moment. But I think I think that's what we expect, that we'll see that on Thursday. So that'll be interesting as well.

Please note this transcript is automated

Ebony Bennett [00:57:00] Yeah. And as you said, we've got the the NACC, bill. There's lots of other things happening. But that one in particular, people have been waiting to see what the government would come up with there. So a lot of beady eyes anticipating that response. I'm afraid that's all we've got time for today. We are going to have to wrap up. Don't forget, this will go up on the Australia Institute's YouTube page later today. It will become the Guardian's Australian Politics podcast tomorrow. So you can cheat in there if for whatever reason, you need to listen back to something that we've said today. And don't forget to head on over to Essential for a deep dive into all those poll results. And of course Katherine and Peter's analysis is on Guardian Australia today, so I recommend that you check both of those out. One last reminder before we speak to Katherine next week that there is a supporter discount available for Australia Institute supporters on the new quarterly essay that Katherine has written, Lone Wolf. And you can join us next Tuesday when we're going to talk to Katherine about the essay in More Depth. But thank you so much for being with us all this year. We really appreciate you coming along for this ride every fortnight. I can't even remember how the year started out, to be honest, but I don't think you're at war with Ukraine. When we said there was a war in Ukraine when we started, that has been an incredibly big year. Thank you to Katherine and to Pate and for all of you, for all your time this year.

Katharine Murphy [00:58:29] I have.

Peter Lewis [00:58:29] Been here. Before we go, can we thank you as well for running the ship of state through the year? It's been great fun. Can I also just jump into that little adds? We are contemplating doing an evening zoom over drinks with the final essential report and we'll let people know if we go ahead with that. And also if you're in Melbourne on December 13, we're going to be doing a drinks in the Trades Hall for Centre for Responsible Technology. So if you're interested in any of those, we'll find a way off Twitter or getting in touch with you.

Ebony Bennett [00:58:59] And thanks very much, everyone. And yes, still a couple of more webinars to go, but signing off for pole position and we hope to see you again next year. And yeah, thanks very much, everyone. Enjoy these last couple of days of sitting and we'll see you when we see you. Take care out there.