

## Election 2017: the body count mounts

The **Green Party is facing the potential to poll below 5%** on Sept 23 and not be represented in the next Parliament. Green MPs were relieved to have fallen only 4.7 percentage points to 8.3% support in tonight's Newshub Reid Research poll. The first to be reported and taken in the days immediately after Jacinda Ardern's accession to the Labour Party leadership last Tuesday, the poll shows **NZ First took a big hit too**, down 3.8 points to 9.2% as **voters swung back strongly to Labour**, up 9 points to 33.1%.

**National is steady-ish but unspectacular** at just under 44.5% in Reid's poll. Earlier in the week, John Key was picking exactly this bounce for Labour and also picked the big leadership bounce for Ardern, who jumped 17.6 points as preferred to PM to 26.3%, just behind Bill English on 27.7%.

## Shades of 2005

Both National and Labour MPs are comparing the electoral conditions created by "the Jacinda effect" to the 2005 general election. The leadership dynamics differ. John Key only replaced Don Brash after Brash ran Labour close in 2005.

But the outcome is the same: **Labour loses this election but**, finally with the right leader and people sick of the other lot, **wins in 2020**. Key, an immediately popular leader whose polling numbers bounced very much as Ardern's are now when he took the reins, won the 2008 election and the rest is history.

Under Jacinda Ardern, **Labour appears to be restoring its vote in the way National did in 2005 after the 2002 election disaster** when then Opposition leader Bill English took National to a low point of 22% on election day: one percentage point lower than Andrew Little's fatal polling. Ardern has not only galvanised former and new activists and injected funds. She's also put a spring in wavering Labour voters' step, as evidenced by the flow back to Labour from both the Greens and NZ First.

The **problem for Labour remains that switching votes on the centre-left doesn't necessarily grow the centre-left vote**. It likes the leverage 33%-plus would give it with weaker coalition partners, but they're so weak at the moment that a clear path to majority isn't clear on the left. It is on the right, although **National is worried about losing liberal urban women**, especially in Auckland – voters who went for Key in 2008 and are tempted by Ardern, who has shown aplomb in her first week on the job.

So far, National looks unaffected and The Opportunities Party maintains its 2% support. TOP appeared to have momentum before Ardern's takeover and to be shaping as a long-odds potential 5%/6 MP coalition alternative to NZ First for National. That arithmetic doesn't work with Labour, which needs more than 6 seats to build a majority. However, at 33%, **Labour is in striking distance of the informal metric that 35% support**, not seen since the Clark era, **guarantees Labour serious leverage to lead a coalition govt.**

The enormous scrutiny on both Labour and Metiria Turei is starving other parties of media oxygen. Winston Peters, usually a surefire headline generator when motivated, continues to pursue the Todd Barclay case, but the media has largely moved on. TOP continues to attract controversy and large crowds in locations and Wellington. It's having trouble cracking Auckland.

## This is it now for the Greens

Don't expect Kennedy Graham or Dave Clendon to rejoin the Greens caucus, although Graham may entertain hopes of a return. The party has scored a huge own-goal and is worried its polling will sink further, though a sub-5% result must be unlikely. They will want to see numbers from polling this week to get a feel for the impact of the Turei saga. **Whatever the legitimacy of Turei's telling her story, the political tactic has backfired disastrously**. The Green Party has lost three MPs in two days. Few will notice Dave Clendon's absence, but **Kennedy Graham had mana across the Parliament** on cross-party climate change initiatives. 