

# Post-election briefing

The Hugo Group,  
October 28 and 30, 2020



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# Key themes

- A much younger Parliament
- A much more diverse Parliament
- A very large number of rookie, first term MPs
- Implications
- Government formation considerations
- Policy execution
- Cabinet



# Youth, gender, diversity



- Labour = 55% women
- Greens = 70% women
- Act = 60/40 men/women
- National = 70% men
- All parties have MPs in their 20s



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# The older voter

- The ‘red tide’ was not just tactical voting to keep the Greens at bay
- Older voters rewarded Jacinda Ardern for “keeping them safe”
- Also:
  - The elderly vote is going through a sea change
  - NZ First formed 1996
    - 70 year-olds of that era could fought in WW2
    - 70 year-olds of today could have been hippies



# Ethnicity

- Labour
  - 52% European/Pākehā
  - 23% Maori
  - 17% Pasifika
  - 6% Asian
- National
  - 91% European/Pākehā
  - Lost diversity in election night clean-out



# Rookies

- 21 new electorate MPs
- 18 new list MPs
- 39/120 seats – almost a third of Parliament is there for the first time
- 25 of these are Labour MPs
- Could be one more to come



# Implications for: Labour

- Very large caucuses can be hard to manage
- 64 or 65 MPs vs 46 last time
- Labour's majority is workable at 4 or 5, but...
- Too early to believe any new entrants will go straight to Cabinet
  - Could one or two formal or informal under-secretaries
  - E.g., Ayesha Verrall (health)/Barbara Edmonds (commerce)



# Implications for: National

- Gone from 56 to 34 or 35 MPs
- Rejuvenation efforts of previous two terms largely undone (apart from Nicola Willis)
  - Gerry Brownlee and Nick Smith have not seen the writing on the wall apparently
- Leadership speculation pointless at this stage
  - Luxon may be the obvious choice, but is too green
- Energy sector may miss Jonathan Young
  - Simon Bridges next best bet
  - Bridges claims no leadership interest (at present)





# Implications for: the Greens

- James Shaw has two big problems:
- Labour doesn't need him
- The election has strengthened Marama Davidson's hand
  - Shaw hoped for 6% or 10%-plus because in the 8% range are detractors
  - Steve Abel, ex-Greenpeace campaign manager may yet join them



# Implications for: Act

- Can David Seymour lead as well as inspire?
- Worth watching Simon Court and Nicole McKee
- Most obvious liability: Chris Baillie, #4
- Beneficiary of backlash against NZ First and National
  - NZ First gone
  - National will try to do better
- Similar result in 2023 unlikely



# Implications for: NZ First

- Unlikely ever to return to Parliament
- SFO case will blight any attempt to resuscitate
- Shane Jones is a spent force
  - NZ First is a personality cult in need of a new Winston
- Anti-Labour money will go to Act and National now
  - And to some fringe parties
- Winston Peters too old to take up a major ambassadorial posting?



# Government formation

- 2023 is the focus
- No need for a confidence and supply agreement
- In both Greens and Labour's interests to demonstrate working relationship for 2023
- My pick:
  - A 'consultation agreement' or some other previously unseen type of agreement
  - Equivalent to confidence and supply but with 'agree to disagree' clauses writ large
  - Ministers outside Cabinet for the Greens – inc Marama Davidson



# Māori Party?

- No necessity to deal with a single MP
- Māori Party is just as much ‘the enemy’ as the Greens are
- Ardern wants ‘straightforward’ arrangements
- And a Māori caucus that delivers more in the coming term
- No deal, but probably some platitudes



# Policy agenda

- Life for lobbyists less complicated with only one party to convince
- But with no 'handbrake' party to appeal to if ideas are problematic
- Ministers will be slow to unlearn the caution bred by MMP politics
- Instincts at the top of Cabinet remain centrist, cautious
- Execution capability issues unresolved



# Cabinet

- 18 of 20 posts likely to be filled
- Ardern prefers promotion into unfilled slots rather than firing
- Gone: Twyford, Salesa
- Kitchen Cabinet: Ardern, Robertson, Hipkins, Woods
- Next rank: Little, Parker, Faafoi
- Third tier: Nash, Shaw, Genter
- Up and coming: Poto Williams, Michael Wood, Deborah Russell, Duncan Webb, Jan Tinetti

