

Tasmanian Election Brief

January 2014

The Tasmanian Labor Government has been in power since 1998. Following the 2010 election, Labor entered into a minority coalition government with the Tasmanian Greens. Now led by the Hon. Lara Giddings MP, Labor is aiming to win a fifth consecutive election at the 2014 election.

Historically, Tasmanian politics has been dominated by Labor. Since 1934, non-Labor parties have only held government for 16 years. More recently, the situation has been more equal – thirteen of the non-Labor years have been since 1982.

On 16 January 2014, Premier Giddings announced that the Tasmanian election would be held on 15 March 2014. The Premier also announced that Labor had ended its power-sharing agreement with the Tasmanian Greens and that Parliament would be recalled for a special sitting.

This Election Brief provides an overview of the Tasmanian electoral system and information about the parties, their leaders and the key issues of the 2014 state election. This brief will be updated to include further information about candidates in each electorate when they are formally announced.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on forthcoming elections is available [here](#).

The Tasmanian electoral system.....	2
Current composition	3
Party Leaders	3
The 2014 election.....	5
Key election issues	5
The termination of the Labor-Greens agreement	5
Pulp mill	5
Tasmanian Forests Agreement	6
The economy.....	6
Employment.....	7
Federal Issues.....	7

The Tasmanian electoral system

Tasmania's electoral system is unique among Australian states (though the ACT uses a similar system). For the House of Assembly, the state is divided into five electoral divisions—Braddon, Bass, Dennison, Franklin and Lyons—each of which elects five representatives to the House. These divisions mirror Tasmania's Federal electorates.

A map from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission showing the electoral boundaries is available [here](#).

To elect numerous members from each division, voting is by the Hare-Clark electoral system. Voters indicate preferences for a slate of candidates—successful candidates are those achieving a vote total above the required quota (after the distribution of preferences). In essence, the top five candidates from each electorate become MPs.

Hare-Clark is not overly different from the system used for the Australian Senate; successful candidates achieve a quota of the total vote. However unlike the Senate, voters do not vote 'above the line', rather they vote for individual candidates. In the past this has equated to many popular and long-standing local members being able to corral a solid personal, rather than party, vote. As such, the retirement of sitting MPs can have an extra volatility.

Politically, the Hare-Clark system is significant because proportional allocation makes it easier for a third party to establish itself in the lower house. While on raw numbers the Tasmanian Greens have polled higher than their counterparts on the mainland, Hare-Clark has enabled the Greens to be better positioned as a significant third force in Tasmania. In 2010, The Greens achieved their highest ever state-wide vote of 21.61 per cent.

The Tasmanian Legislative Council is elected by fifteen single-member electorates using different boundaries to those of the House of Assembly. Unlike the House of Assembly, the Legislative Council is typically composed of independents.

Legislative Council elections are not held at the same time as the House of Assembly: MLCs serve six-year-terms, with two or three electorates going to the polls in May each year. In 2014, there will be elections for two Legislative Council electorates on 3 May.

Current composition

There are 25 seats in the Tasmanian lower house, the House of Assembly. To form a majority government, a party requires 13 seats.

Party	Bass	Braddon	Dennison	Franklin	Lyons	Total
Australian Labor Party	2	2	2	2	2	10
Liberal Party	2	2	2	2	2	10
Tasmanian Greens	1	1	1	1	1	5

In 2010 Labor lost four seats against a swing of 12.39 per cent, while the Liberals gained three seats and the Greens one. This produced a Parliament with no clear majority: Labor secured 10 seats, Liberal 10 and The Greens 5.

After several days of uncertainty, Labor was put back into power on 9 April by Governor Peter Underwood. On 19 April 2010, after a week of negotiations, then-Premier the Hon. David Bartlett MP secured a deal with Greens leader Nick McKim MP. The deal included Labor receiving the Greens' support on confidence in exchange for the Greens securing two cabinet positions without the obligation of full collective responsibility, enabling Greens ministers to abstain on some deliberations. However, unlike others minority governments at the Federal and state level, there was no formal minority agreement reached between the two parties.

As a result of the deal, Tasmanian Greens MPs Nick McKim and Cassy O'Connor were appointed to the ministry.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the 2010 Tasmanian state election result is available [here](#).

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the composition of the Tasmanian Ministry is available [here](#).

Party Leaders

Australian Labor Party

Tasmanian Premier, the Hon. Lara Giddings MP

Lara Giddings was first elected to the Tasmanian Parliament in 1996. After losing her House of Assembly seat in the electorate of Lyons in 1998, Lara was re-elected to the seat of Franklin in 2002. In March 2004 she was elevated to the front bench as Minister for Economic Development and the Arts. In April 2006 Lara became Minister for Health and Human Services.

In 2008 Lara was promoted to the position of Deputy Premier under incoming Premier Bartlett, as well as serving as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Following the resignation of Premier Bartlett in January 2011, Lara became Tasmania's 44th Premier and the first female to hold the position.

The Liberals

Will Hodgman MP

Will Hodgman was elected as a Liberal Member for Franklin in the House of Assembly in 2002 and was elected Deputy Opposition Leader by his colleagues. Following the 2006 State election, Will became Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and of the State Opposition. Will has shadowed a number of portfolios, including Treasury and Finance, Employment, Education, Energy and Community Development.

Will served Shadow Minister for Economic Development, and Tourism and the Arts under the former Labor-Greens agreement.

The Greens

The Hon Nick McKim MP

Nick McKim was first elected to the Tasmanian Parliament in 2002, representing the electorate of Franklin. In 2008 Nick became leader of the Tasmanian Greens.

Following the 2010 state election, Nick became Australia's first State Greens Minister, holding the positions of Education & Skills, Sustainable Transport, Corrections, and Consumer Protection.

Palmer United Party

Palmer United Party federal Leader, Clive Palmer MP has announced that the PUP is seeking to build on its debut in the 2013 Federal election and will contest the 2014 Tasmanian state election. At the 2013 Federal election, PUP candidate Jacqui Lambie was elected Senator for Tasmania.

Mr Palmer has announced that the Tasmanian leader of the PUP and a full list of candidates will be released in the coming week. The PUP's strongest electorates are likely to be Braddon and Lyons.

Mr Palmer's media release is available [here](#).

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the Palmer United Party is available [here](#).

The 2014 election

On 16 January 2014 Premier Giddings announced the 2014 Tasmanian House of Assembly election would be held on 15 March.

Labor has now been in power for fifteen years and has been led by four different Premiers. Added to the challenge of overcoming the inherent difficulties of long-term incumbency will be concern over the former Labor-Greens agreement, the state's economy and unemployment levels.

The Liberal Party has ruled out entering into a Coalition with The Greens, so will need to win a third seat in three electorates across the state in order to form a majority. The most vulnerable seats for the ALP and The Greens are Bass, Braddon and Lyons.

However, Federal issues such as the impact of the repeal of Carbon Pricing, the spectre of Federal government cuts and changes to the GST, as well as any associated backlash against the Abbott Federal government, may complicate the Liberals' chances of winning further seats.

Key election issues

The termination of the Labor-Greens agreement

On 16 January 2014, in response to growing internal and external dissatisfaction with the Labor-Greens arrangement, Premier Giddings announced the removal of the two Greens ministers from Cabinet and that she would be recalling Parliament to vote on legislation to secure Tasmania's pulp mill.

The early ending of the agreement between the two parties is not novel. Previous Tasmanian minority governments supported by the Greens, such as the 1989–92 Field Labor Government and the 1996–98 Rundle Liberal Government, have ended before the expiry of their respective terms.

Over the past 18 months, Labor leaders across the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia have all ruled out entering into formal alliances with the Greens in the event of hung parliaments.

Pulp mill

In November 2013, KordaMentha, the receivers of collapsed timber company Gunns, opened an expression of interest process for the company's significant hardwood and softwood plantation resources, freehold land, a pulp mill site on the Tamar Estuary and the permits for its construction.

KordaMentha has since revealed that it is currently in talks with six interested buyers. If successful, the sale of the pulp mill and mining in the Tarkine region in the state's northwest is predicted to create 3100 ongoing jobs in Tasmania. However, an action launched in the Tasmanian Supreme Court two years ago, which argues that the state government permits have lapsed because Gunns had failed to 'substantially commence' work, threatens any sale.

As such, on 16 January 2014 Premier Giddings announced that the Parliament would be recalled before the March 15 election to consider new legislation that removes uncertainty over the future of the project.

Tasmanian Forests Agreement

Signed by then-Prime Minister the Hon. Julia Gillard MP and Premier Giddings on 7 August 2011, the Forests Agreement (TFA) aims to provide certainty for Tasmania's forestry industry, support local jobs and communities, and protect the state's ancient forests. Under the agreement, in return for protecting half-a-million hectares of forest, some green groups agreed to end all protests and support the forestry industry.

The TFA also provides a total of \$277 million of support, including \$15.5 million from the Tasmanian Government, for the following key areas:

- \$85 million to support contractors and their families affected by the downturn in the industry, and in particular Gunns Limited's decision to exit native forest harvesting;
- \$43 million to facilitate protection of new areas of high conservation value forests; and
- \$120 million over 15 years, including an initial payment of \$20 million to identify and fund appropriate regional development projects.

The TFA was developed by and supported by key industry, union, community and environmental groups. The TFA details specific requirements for industry and affected workers contractors and communities, conservation, durability, engagement with indigenous community, institutional arrangements and support by Governments.

The Tasmanian Liberal party opposes the TFA and has announced its intention to end the agreement if elected. This policy is strongly opposed by the environmental and timber industry groups that negotiated the multi-million dollar agreement.

Although Federal Environment Minister the Hon. Greg Hunt MP has pledged in writing \$7.8 million to fund the council overseeing the TFA for another six months, the Federal government also remains committed to ending the agreement and undoing the new World Heritage Areas.

The economy

Following the Global Financial Crisis, Tasmania's key economic indicators such as employment, investment and economic growth have deteriorated relative to the national economy.

On 23 May 2013 Premier Giddings delivered the 2013–14 Tasmanian Budget, which outlined a \$200 million fall in State taxation revenue, a \$1.0 billion loss of GST and expenditure on government services exceeding \$5.0 billion. As such, the return to surplus was delayed another two years until 2016–17.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the 2013-14 Tasmanian Budget is available [here](#).

The Tasmanian Liberals' alternative *Plan for a Brighter Future* accepts all the government revenue projections and pledges to return the budget to surplus in 2015–16, one year ahead of Labor. The Liberals have announced two revenue raising measures to achieve this goal: imposing fees on criminals and increasing fines.

Savings measures to achieve an early surplus include cuts to the Tasmanian Public Service, reducing the Treasurer's reserve (which is not normally counted in the budget bottom-line) and instead reclassifying it as savings, and disbanding the Climate Action Council.

The largest savings measure will be the removal of funding allocated to the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement. The funding allocated to the TFA will be reclassified as savings, despite retaining the incoming Federal grants as income.

The Tasmanian Liberal's Plan for a Brighter Future is available [here](#).

Employment

Tasmania currently has the highest unemployment rate in the country, at 7.9 per cent, compared to a national average of 5.8 per cent.

The Labor government has committed to reducing payroll tax to over 2250 businesses in order to generate employment, has added to the Tasmanian Government Innovation and Investment Fund with an extra \$2.5 million for grants to businesses, and has pledged to provide \$11.5 million over the next two years to assist with the construction of new homes through the First Home Builders Boost.

These priorities build on the Tasmanian Labor government's work over its past term to boost employment through its Tasmanian Jobs Package, the Economic Development Plan and its regional strategies.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the Labor Government's Employment Incentive Scheme is available [here](#).

Federal Issues

Federal issues, such as the Coalition's changes to the Better Schools Plan, concerns over the continued existence of the Renewable Energy Target (Tasmania is a significant beneficiary due to Hydro Tasmania), the repeal of the SchoolKids Bonus, proposal for fees to visit a GP and hospital and anxiety over a potential changes to Tasmania's GST revenue, will also form part of the political landscape impacting on the 2014 state election. Added to this will be uncertainty over the cuts that may arise out of the National Commission of Audit.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on changes to the Better Schools Plan is available [here](#).

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the National Commission of Audit is available [here](#).