

Primus inter Premiers:  
or, The electoral influence of  
state party leaders

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## **Abstract**

While it is now well established that Australian party leaders at the national level influence political choice in federal elections, little systematic study of the equivalent role that state premiers and opposition leaders might play has been undertaken. In the 2001 Australian Election Study (n=2010), questions were asked of a national probability sample of voters about respondent feelings towards their state premier and state opposition leader, in addition to equivalent questions about John Howard, Kim Beazley and other major political figures in federal politics. The data generated by this survey thus provide an opportunity to investigate the impact that contemporary state political leaders have on electoral choice. The analysis produces mixed results, but the paper finds that state leaders generally do have an impact on voting behaviour in state elections, although in some cases this influence is eliminated when account is taken of voter attitudes towards the federal leaders. The analysis also affords an opportunity to test the extent of crossover between state and federal politics, in terms of how much state leaders influence federal voting and vice versa. Though the results are rather scattered, the findings do indicate that some state leaders influence federal voting and that the federal leaders do influence voting in some states.

## Introduction

Writing over forty years ago in the preface to his edited work about state government and politics in Australia, Rufus Davis commented that 'So much more needs to be known' about, among other things, 'the political behaviour of the voter who consistently divides his [*sic*] party loyalty between Federal and State elections' (Davis 1960, x). In the early years of the twenty-first century it has to be said that, while those forty-odd years have seen great advances in our knowledge about political behaviour at the national level in Australia, there remains precious little significant research on the subject at the level of state politics. Notwithstanding the promise in the early work of Colin Hughes (1969) and the numerous general studies of state elections, the focus in Australia when it comes to in depth electoral behaviour research remains very much on federal politics.

This paper attempts to make a contribution to filling this void in the study of political behaviour in Australian state elections by using data from a nationwide sample survey containing some state-level variables. The paper focuses on voter attitudes towards the political party leaders in each state and on the impact these attitudes have on individual voting decisions in state (and federal) elections. Starting from the position that leadership effects on voting behaviour are now fairly well established as a feature of national elections in many countries, including Australia (for example, Bean and Kelley 1988; Bean and Mughan 1989; McAllister 1996), the analysis investigates whether this notion of leadership effects also applies in state politics. While modest in their size, leadership effects have been shown to be consistently significant in federal politics and there is little reason to assume that this phenomenon would not translate into the state political domain.

For one thing, as much if not more than at the national level, politics in the Australian states has been studded with political leaders whose individual personalities and political styles have dominated the politics of a particular era – premiers such as Don Dunstan, Neville Wran and Joh Bjelke-Petersen, to name but a few. Their prominence is reflected, among other ways, in the titles of books such as *The Dunstan Decade*, *The Wran Model* and *The Bjelke-Petersen Premiership* (Parkin and Patience 1981; Chaples, Nelson and Turner 1985; Patience 1985). Unfortunately, however, while these and other writings have clearly alluded to a powerful role for state premiers in the electoral success of their parties, the analyses tend to be speculative in nature and lacking in a foundation of direct empirical

evidence. Some authors have made more explicit claims about the electoral influence of particular party leaders in particular state elections (for example, Bennett 2001; Williams 2001a; 2001b), but the evidential basis for these claims remains relatively thin and still largely indirect.

The analysis in this paper brings direct empirical data to bear on the question of leadership effects in contemporary Australian state politics, in the form of results from survey research, which allow a number of straightforward hypotheses to be tested. The foregoing discussion suggests, for example, that, in addition to the well established finding that federal party leaders influence voting behaviour in federal elections, we might expect to find that state party leaders would influence voting decisions in state elections. Some of the literature also points to the possibility of crossover effects whereby, within the appropriate jurisdiction, state party leaders may influence voting in federal elections and conversely federal leaders may influence voting in state elections. The crossover hypothesis is usually stated in terms of state effects on federal politics (Holmes and Sharman 1977; Charnock 2001) – perhaps because federal influences on state politics are taken as given – but it is just as likely if not more so to apply in the reverse direction as well.

This paper tests these hypotheses using data from the 2001 Australian Election Study (AES), a national probability sample survey of 2010 voters conducted by mail immediately after the federal election held in November 2001 (Bean, Gow and McAllister 2002). The Australian Electoral Commission supplied the systematic random sample drawn from the Commonwealth electoral rolls for every state and territory. The initial mailing was timed to reach the respondents on the Monday after the election and after several follow-up mailings the response rate to the survey was 55 per cent.

## **Initial results**

The first set of results comprises descriptive information about the political leaders who feature in the analysis, that is the premier and opposition leader in each state and the prime minister and federal leader of the opposition. The key independent variables in the analysis are attitudinal ratings of each of these leaders, derived from the following survey question: ‘Again using a scale from 0 to 10, please show how much you **like** or **dislike** the party leaders. Again, if you don’t know much about them, you should give them a rating of 5.’ The scale was labelled ‘Strongly dislike’ at 0, ‘Neutral’ at 5 and ‘Strongly like’ at 10.

At the head of the list of 10 political leaders whom respondents were asked to rate were Kim Beazley, the leader of the opposition Australian Labor Party at the federal election, and John Howard, the prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party. At the end of the list respondents were asked to rate 'Your state premier' and 'Your state opposition leader'.

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for the ratings of these leaders, first at the national level, and then within each state where the subsample is large enough to allow for meaningful separate analysis. For the purposes of this analysis, the 'national' level refers to the five states which had a state Labor government in power at the time of the survey, that is New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania. Thus, in addition to the two territories, South Australia is excluded because of the technical difficulty of including in the nationwide analysis a premier and opposition leader of opposite political affiliations to the remainder. Individual subsample analyses of South Australia are included, however, while the subsample from Tasmania of 59 was too small to subject to separate analysis.

The first section of Table 1 shows the mean popularity within the national sample for the state premiers and state leaders of the opposition collectively and for the prime minister and federal opposition leader. The state premiers generally rate much higher than the opposition leaders (with an overall mean in the nationwide sample of 5.6 on the 0-10 scale, compared to 4.2), a result that is repeated in each individual state and which may partially reflect the greater opportunities that premiers have to generate positive publicity. The standard deviations show a wider range of responses to the premiers than to the opposition leaders, which is probably indicative of the premiers having higher public profiles and so fewer respondents give them the neutral rating of 5. Again, this differential is repeated in most individual states. On this basis, the federal leader of the opposition could be judged to have at least as high a profile as any state premier (the standard deviation for his rating being 2.8 compared to 2.7 for the premiers), while, not unexpectedly, the prime minister has a higher profile still. In terms of popularity, however, Beazley outscores Howard (5.8 versus 5.6), as well as the state premiers as a group. It is also worth noting that the scores for Howard and Beazley, from this less than totally complete national sample, are very similar to those in the full AES sample (Bean and McAllister 2002).

Turning now to leaders within the different states, we see that the New South Wales premier, Bob Carr, has a lower popularity rating than any other premier apart from South Australia's Rob Kerin. The Liberal leader of the opposition in New South Wales, Kerry Chikarovski, scores well behind Carr but, at 4.2, her mean rating is at a similar level to all of the other opposition leaders.

**Table 1: Popularity of state and federal party leaders**

(means on 0-10 scale)

	MEAN POPULARITY RATING	STANDARD DEVIATION
<b>Nationwide <sup>a</sup> (n=1779)</b>		
State premiers	5.6	2.7
State opposition leaders	4.2	2.2
Prime minister (John Howard, Liberal)	5.6	3.2
Federal opposition leader (Kim Beazley, Labor)	5.8	2.8
<b>New South Wales (n=666)</b>		
Premier (Bob Carr, Labor)	5.1	2.7
Opposition leader (Kerry Chikarovski, Liberal)	4.2	2.1
<b>Victoria (n=497)</b>		
Premier (Steve Bracks, Labor)	5.9	2.8
Opposition leader (Denis Napthine, Liberal)	4.0	2.2
<b>Queensland (n=358)</b>		
Premier (Peter Beattie, Labor)	6.3	2.7
Opposition leader (Mike Horan, National)	4.5	2.2
<b>South Australia (n=171)</b>		
Premier (Rob Kerin, Liberal)	5.0	2.7
Opposition leader (Michael Rann, Labor)	4.0	2.5
<b>Western Australia (n=199)</b>		
Premier (Geoff Gallop, Labor)	5.2	2.4
Opposition leader (Colin Barnett, Liberal)	4.2	2.3

<sup>a</sup> Includes all states with a Labor government at the time of the survey, that is New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Source: *Australian Election Study, 2001 (n=2010)*

Ratings of the premiers, on the other hand, vary more widely. Although Carr, Kerin and premier of Western Australia, Geoff Gallop, all score at or just over the neutral point of 5, the Labor premier in Victoria, Steve Bracks, has a mean rating of 5.9 and the Queensland premier, Peter Beattie, scores 6.3, making him the most popular major political figure in the country at the time of the survey. Interestingly, not only is Beattie the most popular

premier, but the opposition leader in Queensland, Mike Horan of the National Party, is also the most popular – or least unpopular, to use a more accurate characterisation – leader of the opposition.

At this point, it is worth drawing the reader's attention to the subsample sizes for the different states. The small subsamples of under 200 in Western Australia and South Australia, in particular, mean that the ensuing results that emerge from the analyses for these states, and to a lesser extent for Queensland, need to be viewed cautiously and as indicative rather than definitive. Notwithstanding this and other methodological issues discussed later, the analysis in this paper is arguably a useful first attempt to model the impact of state political leaders.

## Modelling the electoral influence of state leaders

Having provided descriptive background about the relative standing of the state and federal party leaders, we move now to a sustained analysis of the electoral impact of the leaders and a test of the hypotheses outlined earlier in the paper. Before embarking on the analysis we need first to discuss various methodological details, starting with a description of the dependent variables. Voting in state elections is measured by the question: 'Which party did you vote for in the last **state** election?' Federal voting is measured by the question: 'In the Federal election for the House of Representatives on Saturday 10 November, which party did you vote for **first** in the House of Representatives?'

We should note here that there is not a perfect correspondence between the current state leaders at the time of the survey and those who led the respective parties into the previous state elections. This, together with the fact that they are described in the survey questionnaire with generic labels rather than specific names, may serve to weaken the measured impact of state leaders in the analysis. However, given that there is a tendency among survey respondents to err towards their current preference when recalling past votes (Himmelweit, Jaeger Biberian and Stockdale 1978), this may not be as serious a problem as it might initially seem.

Tables 2 to 5 report, first, the zero-order correlation between the leader rating and the vote and then results from both ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and logistic regression analyses. For the OLS analyses (and the correlations) the dependent variable includes all

votes in the state or federal election, with votes for Labor scored 0, votes for the Liberal and National coalition parties scored 1 and votes for minor parties and independent candidates scored 0.5. For the logit analyses the dependent variable is restricted to votes for the two major party groups, with Labor scored 0 and Liberal-National scored 1. The OLS and logit analyses include controls for attitudinal scales measuring key political attitudes in Australia, that is attitudes towards trade unions and attitudes towards free enterprise (Kelley 1988), plus party identification. Preliminary analyses also included ten social structural variables (sex, age, education, occupation, employment sector, trade union membership, subjective class, religious denomination, church attendance and urban-rural residence), but their addition made little difference to the effects of the variables of interest. At the same time, having so many more variables in the equation markedly increased the quantity of missing data which meant that some of the logit equations for states with the smaller subsamples could not be properly estimated, so the social structural variables were ultimately dropped.

For the purposes of the multivariate analyses, the key independent variables – the leader popularity ratings – have been divided by 10 so that they now run from a low of 0 to a high of 1, which means that the unstandardised regression coefficients (ignoring the decimal point) can be interpreted as percentage differences in the likelihood of voting for the Liberal-Nationals versus the Labor Party between those at the top and bottom of the leader attitude scales. Rather than overwhelm the reader with figures that are tangential to the focus of the paper, only the coefficients for the party leader variables are presented in the tables. Coefficients preceded by a negative sign indicate that positive attitudes towards a leader coincide with a greater likelihood of voting Labor rather than Liberal-National.

The investigation begins at the national level before moving to state by state analyses. At the national level we consider the effects of both state and federal leaders in both state and federal elections. Table 2 contains the results. We might first note that in the nationwide sample the zero-order correlations are of considerable magnitude for all state and federal leaders with respect to elections at both the state and federal level. This pattern of sizeable zero-order associations between attitudes towards the party leaders and the vote is also evident in almost all cases within individual states in the tables that follow. At the national level, for both state and federal leaders the correlations are only marginally larger within the appropriate arena than they are in the alternative jurisdiction. In other words, the correlation between attitudes towards state leaders and the federal vote is not much weaker than the correlation between attitudes towards state leaders and the state vote, an observation that serves to underline the fact that in Australian politics there is a good deal of alignment between state and federal politics (the correlation between state and federal

vote in the current data set is .76). Note that the correlations for the federal leaders, however, are larger than for the state leaders, in state as well as in federal elections.

**Table 2: Effects of state and federal leaders on voting in state and federal elections:**

**Results at the national level <sup>a</sup>**

	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATION	UNSTANDARDISED OLS COEFFICIENT	STANDARDISED OLS COEFFICIENT	LOGIT COEFFICIENT
<b>State elections</b>				
<i>(Federal leaders excluded):</i>				
Premier	-.40	-.22**	-.13	-2.62**
State opposition leader	.29	.15**	.07	2.03**
<i>(Federal leaders included):</i>				
Premier	-.40	-.18**	-.10	-2.67**
State opposition leader	.29	.11**	.05	1.76**
Prime Minister	.59	.19**	.13	2.36**
Federal opposition leader	-.47	-.14**	-.09	-1.67**
<b>Federal elections</b>				
Premier	-.37	-.05	-.03	-1.41*
State opposition leader	.26	-.04	-.02	-1.13
Prime minister	.64	.29**	.21	5.56**
Federal opposition leader	-.52	-.23**	-.14	-3.76**

<sup>a</sup> Results are for the five states with Labor governments listed in the footnote to Table 1. OLS and logistic regression equations control for political attitudes and party identification. See text for further details.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

*Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n=2010).*

Much more important, though, is what effects remain for political leaders after other factors known to have a significant influence on the vote – such as political attitudes and party identification – have been partialled out. Focusing initially on state elections, Table 2 provides results which address this question. At first we examine the effects of the state leaders with the federal leaders excluded from the equation. Both the OLS and logit results suggest that both the state premiers and opposition leaders have significant

electoral impacts in state elections. It is more realistic, however, to allow for the potential impact of the federal leaders in state politics and thus the second part of the table shows the impact of the state leaders with the federal leaders included in the analysis. The effects for the state leaders are somewhat weaker with the federal leaders included, suggesting that state leaders do live to some extent in the shadow of federal politicians, but the effects of the state leaders remain clearly significant. The effects of the federal leaders themselves are not small by comparison and, if anything, the impact of the federal leaders in the state political arena may be greater than that of the state leaders. Even so, when the states are viewed collectively as in Table 2, the hypothesis that state party leaders will influence voting in state elections is clearly supported.

When we switch the focus to the federal level, we see a different pattern. The impact of the federal leaders is clear and strong while there is little or no impact for the state leaders (there is a small impact recorded for state premiers in the logit analysis of the two-party vote). Thus at the national level, although the crossover hypothesis is supported for federal leaders in state politics, it is not supported in any significant measure in terms of the notion that state leaders might influence federal election voting. It is nonetheless conceivable, that in particular states, some state leaders may influence the federal vote, a possibility that we explore further on.

Returning to the state vote, Table 3 reports the results of detailed analyses conducted on a state by state basis. The first half of the table again excludes the federal party leaders from the equations, to allow us first to examine the impact of the state leaders in the absence of any influence their federal colleagues may bring. Under these conditions, in all but Western Australia, one or other of the state leaders records a significant effect. In New South Wales, both do, although perhaps surprisingly the leader of the opposition, Chikarovski, has a stronger impact than the premier, Carr. Both Victorian leaders also have significant effects in the logit equation. The largest effect is for the premier of Queensland, Beattie. In South Australia, attitudes towards the leader of the opposition, Michael Rann, are significant whereas attitudes towards the premier, Kerin, are not. It is also generally worth noting that some of the coefficients that do not reach significance in these small state subsamples are nonetheless of a non-trivial size.

**Table 3: Effects of state leaders on voting in state elections <sup>a</sup>**

	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATION	UNSTANDARDISED OLS COEFFICIENT	STANDARDISED OLS COEFFICIENT	LOGIT COEFFICIENT
<i>(Federal leaders excluded):</i>				
<b>New South Wales</b>				
Bob Carr	-.31	-.14**	-.08	-2.24**
Kerry Chikarovski	.27	.24**	.11	3.47**
<b>Victoria</b>				
Steve Bracks	-.45	-.23**	-.13	-2.39**
Denis Napthine	.38	.14	.07	2.61*
<b>Queensland</b>				
Peter Beattie	-.51	-.32**	-.19	-5.08**
Mike Horan	.30	.06	.03	.51
<b>South Australia</b>				
Rob Kerin	.44	-.04	-.03	.95
Michael Rann	-.51	-.19*	-.10	-5.05*
<b>Western Australia</b>				
Geoff Gallup	-.30	-.16	-.08	-1.23
Colin Barnett	.13	.05	.02	-.35
<i>(Federal leaders included):</i>				
<b>New South Wales</b>				
Bob Carr	-.31	-.09	-.04	-2.21**
Kerry Chikarovski	.27	.23**	.10	3.72**
<b>Victoria</b>				
Steve Bracks	-.45	-.20**	-.12	-2.58**
Denis Napthine	.38	.06	.03	1.82
<b>Queensland</b>				
Peter Beattie	-.51	-.29**	-.17	-5.51**
Mike Horan	.30	-.06	-.00	-.53
<b>South Australia</b>				
Rob Kerin	.44	-.09	-.05	-.83
Michael Rann	-.51	-.14	-.08	-5.00
<b>Western Australia</b>				
Geoff Gallup	-.30	-.14	-.07	-2.04
Colin Barnett	.13	.02	.01	-.37

<sup>a</sup> OLS and logistic regression equations control for political attitudes and party identification. See text for further details. \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n=2010)

As we would anticipate from the national level analysis, when attitudes towards the federal leaders are included in the equations in the second half of Table 3, the state leader effects are generally reduced. For example, once the electoral presence of Howard and Beazley is taken into account, Carr's impact on state voting in New South Wales is reduced to insignificance in the OLS analysis. Chikarovski's effect, however, remains clear and strong in both equations. The Victorian and Queensland premiers, Bracks and Beattie, also retain strong and significant effects even with the federal leaders in the equation, while opposition leader Rann's impact in South Australia disappears.

Beattie, it would appear, is not only the most popular state party leader (at least at the time of the 2001 AES) but also the one with the strongest electoral impact. The unstandardised regression coefficient for Beattie indicates that, even taking account of the political shadow cast by the prime minister and federal leader of the opposition, voters who rate Beattie most highly are some 29 per cent more likely to vote for the Labor Party in Queensland (as opposed to the National or Liberal parties) than those who dislike Beattie most strongly. Given his high level of popularity, this means that Beattie's personal appeal confers a considerable electoral advantage upon his party, although, in terms of the percentage of the vote, the extent of that advantage may be less than many commentators would assume. One reasonable way of calculating that advantage is to subtract the neutral point on the leadership rating scale of .5 from Beattie's mean of .63 and multiply that difference by the regression coefficient of -.29. This calculation suggests that Labor's advantage in Queensland state politics from Beattie's personal standing is about 3.8 per cent of the vote. When contrasted with the totality of the vote, this may seem fairly small, but in the context of leadership effects generally, this is a considerable figure (see, for example, Bean and Kelley 1988, on leadership effects in the 1987 federal election).

Having considered the impact of state leaders within their own political domains, Table 4 turns our attention to the first of the two crossover hypotheses, that state leaders may influence voting in federal elections. The results are rather mixed and generally tend not to support the hypothesis. Beattie's strong effect in state politics, for example, disappears completely at the federal level, as does the effect for Chikarovski in New South Wales. Indeed, of the state party leaders only Bracks in Victoria records a significant effect, in the appropriate direction, on voting in the 2001 federal election (the significant effect for the Queensland opposition leader, Horan, in the OLS analysis has the sign reversed from the direction the effect could be expected to take). In the two states with the smallest subsamples, not even the federal leader effects are all significantly different from zero.

**Table 4: Effects of state and federal leaders on voting in federal elections within states <sup>a</sup>**

	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATION	UNSTANDARDISE D OLS COEFFICIENT	STANDARDISE D OLS COEFFICIENT	LOGIT COEFFICIENT
<b>New South Wales</b>				
Bob Carr	-.30	-.01	-.01	-.61
Kerry Chikarovski	.21	.02	.01	.07
John Howard	.64	.25**	.18	4.11**
Kim Beazley	-.50	-.24**	-.15	-3.92**
<b>Victoria</b>				
Steve Bracks	-.47	-.16**	-.09	-3.95**
Denis Napthine	.34	-.08	-.04	-1.47
John Howard	.66	.34**	.24	8.88**
Kim Beazley	-.55	-.22**	-.13	-3.69*
<b>Queensland</b>				
Peter Beattie	-.41	-.00	-.00	-1.32
Mike Horan	.33	-.13*	-.06	-4.40
John Howard	.70	.38**	.27	-10.50**
Kim Beazley	-.51	-.14*	-.09	-3.50
<b>South Australia</b>				
Rob Kerin	.43	-.16	-.10	-.66
Michael Rann	-.45	-.00	.00	.36
John Howard	.76	.37**	.28	9.56*
Kim Beazley	-.50	-.09	-.06	-7.55*
<b>Western Australia</b>				
Geoff Gallup	-.29	-.03	-.02	-1.69
Colin Barnett	.09	-.03	-.01	-3.98
John Howard	.54	.16	.11	4.13*
Kim Beazley	-.48	-.21*	-.13	-3.36*

<sup>a</sup> OLS and logistic regression equations control for political attitudes and party identification. See text for further details.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 ( $n=2010$ ).

**Table 5: Effects of federal leaders on voting in state elections <sup>a</sup>**

	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATION	UNSTANDARDISED OLS COEFFICIENT	STANDARDISED OLS COEFFICIENT	LOGIT COEFFICIENT
<b>New South Wales</b>				
John Howard	.58	.16**	.11	1.96**
Kim Beazley	-.47	-.23**	-.14	-2.68**
<b>Victoria</b>				
John Howard	.62	.21**	.14	3.16**
Kim Beazley	-.47	-.06	-.03	-.08
<b>Queensland</b>				
John Howard	.56	.18*	.12	3.48*
Kim Beazley	-.50	-.09	-.06	-3.14**
<b>South Australia</b>				
John Howard	.72	.20*	.14	4.15
Kim Beazley	-.52	-.10	-.07	-1.31
<b>Western Australia</b>				
John Howard	.57	.30**	.19	2.65
Kim Beazley	-.44	-.13	-.08	-.62

<sup>a</sup> OLS and logistic regression equations control for political attitudes and party identification. See text for further details.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

*Source: Australian Election Study, 2001 (n=2010).*

The final part of the analysis involves consideration of the second crossover hypothesis, that federal leaders may influence voting in state elections. Table 5 presents data for the effects of federal leaders on state voting, by state (these coefficients are derived from the same equations that produced the effects for state leaders recorded in the bottom half of Table 3). While the picture at the national level, as shown in Table 2, indicated a clear effect for the federal leaders on state politics, this picture is not fully reinforced when the data are examined on a state by state basis. Howard records a significant impact in all states in the OLS equations and in three of the five in the logit analyses (the exceptions being South Australia and Western Australia). Attitudes to Beazley, however, are significant only in New South Wales and Queensland (in the logit equation). A joint inspection of Table 5 and the bottom half of Table 3 suggests that in some states – Victoria and Queensland – either the federal or state leader of each party has an impact, but not both. The evidence for a federal leader crossover effect would appear to be stronger than

for a state leader crossover effect, but the results of the analysis depict federal effects at the state level that are certainly less than universal. The evidence before us also suggests that the prime minister may exert a stronger influence on state politics than the leader of the federal opposition.

## Conclusion

There are a number of reasons why this paper must be seen less as a definitive account and more as a tentative first step in the analysis of the electoral effects of state party leaders. As emphasised throughout the analysis, the sizes of the subsamples from several of the states are smaller than desirable and as a result it is only the two or three most populous states whose results we can be reasonably confident about. The occasional aberrant results thrown up by the statistical analysis reinforce this caveat. Furthermore, the measurement of key variables would ideally be further refined, with questions asked about specific leaders in each state by name, rather than with a generic label, and with a more direct alignment between the leadership rating items and the voting questions in terms of timing.

Nonetheless, the findings point to clear evidence of state political party leaders having an electoral influence at the state level. In particular, prominent premiers, such as Peter Beattie in Queensland and Steve Bracks in Victoria, have significant and substantial effects on voting in state elections, even when the influence of the leaders of the major federal political parties are controlled for. So too does the leader of the opposition in New South Wales, Kerry Chikarovski, although the premier in that state, Bob Carr, is overshadowed in terms of electoral impact by the federal leaders as well as by Chikarovski. In other states, like South Australia and Western Australia, there is less evidence of leadership effects, but the smaller subsample sizes for these states make it difficult to reach definitive conclusions.

Examined closely, the results provide mixed support for the three hypotheses outlined at the beginning of the paper, namely that state party leaders influence voting in state elections, that state party leaders influence voting in federal elections and that federal leaders influence voting in state elections. For the first hypothesis, as the discussion in the paragraph above indicates, the effects are not as consistent across all leaders in all states as perhaps may have been anticipated. It is, however, quite conceivable that more adequate sample sizes would reveal significant leader effects in all states. With respect to the second

and third hypotheses, although the argument about crossover effects in Australian politics is commonly framed in terms of state effects on federal politics, it manifests itself more strongly and more coherently in federal effects on state politics, although the results as they stand do not provide universal support for the notion of consistent crossover effects in either arena.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the relative size of such leadership effects as we have identified. As we have come to expect from research on the influence of leadership in federal elections, even where the effects are statistically significant the electoral impact of leaders is always relatively modest. Compared to a factor like party identification, leadership images and the responses they provoke among voters add to the explanation of electoral behaviour more at the margins than at the core. The example given in the paper of the overall effect of a popular and highly salient leader like Peter Beattie illustrates this point well. And while it may be a surprise to some that Beattie is worth less than 4 per cent of the vote to his party, the value of this effect is seen in perspective when we consider how elections can be won and lost at the margins. In a political system where large party effects frequently cancel each other out and elections are often won very narrowly, leadership effects, while modest in absolute size, can and do come into their own at times as the difference between winning and losing.

In terms of the paper's contribution to the wider literature, these findings add to the corpus of evidence on the influence of party leaders on voting behaviour by providing confirmation of leader effects at the subnational level within a parliamentary political system. This is further evidence that the personal style and characteristics of the individuals who lead political parties are electorally important irrespective of the political arena in which they are vying for power.

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