

## Lib ads offer election clue

### Party fundraising raises speculation about early Federal poll



LANAI SCARR

Picking when an election will be held is sometimes like entering the lottery.

It's a game of chance that could change at a moment's notice.

Often it is only a core group who knows the exact moment a prime minister will go to Government House to ask the governor-general to dissolve Parliament.

Sometimes it all happens very quickly, at other times it is plotted out for days.

The nation's politicians left Canberra last Thursday for a six-week winter break. They won't return until August for four weeks of sittings which could be the last for the 46th Parliament.

For months there has been speculation of an early election.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has batted it off, saying he's a "full term" and that it is his intention to have an election next year.

But astute political watchers will know that the language has not been such that it can't allow wriggle room.

"I'm a full term — elections are too hard to win," Morrison told his MPs last year.

The earliest date for a standard half-Senate election is August 7 and the last date is May 21, 2022, according to the Parliamentary Library.

Morrison has been seeding all his public language to suggest that the election will be next year, after a Federal Budget.

But the Liberal Party has been doing curious things that suggest it could be this year.

Earlier this month, Liberal Party director Andrew Hirst — a former Tony Abbott staffer — sent out an email to all supporters saying the party needed to build its election fund.

"We need to build our fighting fund, so we can have the Government's back," he

said in the email. "Friend, can we count on your support with an end-of-financial-year donation to our fighting fund?"

In the email, Hirst said the election would be next year.

But it raised eyebrows, particularly the language.

Next, election-style ads appeared in newspapers.

In WA, these labelled Anthony Albanese as "no friend of WA".

And one today even has embattled minister Linda Reynolds alongside Morrison spruiking the Coalition's record in WA.

The cynical part of me thought that perhaps the ramp-up in ads was due to the Labor shadow cabinet supposed to have been in town this week.

Perhaps the Liberal Party in WA felt they needed to keep up the heat to ensure that Labor did not get all the air time.

But then I was told of a

billboard outside Brisbane. An attack-style billboard like those you would see during an election campaign.

An election this year in October would not only mean the pressure was off the Government with regards to international borders and the vaccine rollout, but it would also avoid having to make a firm commitment on 2050 emissions prior to going to the polls.

The United Nations COP26 Climate Conference is in November and the Prime Minister has committed to making a decision on net zero emissions by 2050 by then.

It would also avoid another bushfire season which is always going to go badly for the Prime Minister.

And it would stymie the Labor Party's fundraising efforts. One senior Labor Party source said though

some end of financial year fundraising was normal it did appear curious that so much election-style advertising was appearing from the Coalition.

"We have only got one chance to spend our money and the Government has the luxury of knowing when they will call the election," the source said.

It's understood Labor lost a lot of donations after its last election disaster and is short of cash compared with the Liberal Party.

The other wild card is Clive Palmer. The man most West Australians hate the most could very well pour millions of advertising dollars into the election and then in essence do the Coalition's job for them.

"It's easier for the Coalition to spend money now because Clive Palmer will just bail them out later," one source said.

But senior Liberals say just because advertising is being rolled out it does not signal a change from the Prime Minister's election-next-year mantra.

"We're in the last 12 months of a Government, it's normal to be heading into election mode," a source said.

Like winning the lottery, no one really knows if they have the winning ticket until the numbers drop.

There is no doubt a strategy and groundwork is being put in place for a possible election this year by way of early advertising. But I don't think any final decision has been made. An October option is on the table, a May election is on the table.

It will be a bitter fight. Labor is going to be desperately attempting to pull off a miracle win.

The question is, will a string of election-style early advertisements help, or not.

Lanai Scarr is The West's Federal Political Editor



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## Eyes & body language can help read masked-up emotions

There was a time when, unless you were a healthcare worker, most of us associated the wearing of face masks with a masquerade party or fancy dress ball.

Not today, of course, because face masks have exploded into our lives as a much-needed accessory to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Familiarity often brings with it a much-needed sense of comfort.

However, in the case of mask wearing it seems that familiarity has bred contempt.

No matter how often we mask up, we simply cannot get used to it.

And it is not simply because of the low-grade smothering



GARY MARTIN

sensation, muffled inaudible conversations or the feeling your facial skin is being slowly whittled down by a piece of 40 to 60-grit sandpaper.

Although we embrace mask wearing and adhere to public health advice, masked life feels very strange. We have become accustomed to seeing only a slice of each other's face — between the hairline and the bridge of the nose — when we encounter them in the street, supermarket or workplace.

And getting a message across

accurately while all masked up can be a challenge.

The lower half of the face provides us with a massive amount of information about how someone is feeling at any point in time.

Covering up confuses our ability to distinguish disgust from anger, agitation from enlightenment and concern from indifference.

Just stop and think how often we use our smile to defuse an awkward situation. We must resort to other means to gain insights into what is really being said — our eyes. A direct gaze into your eyes means you have a person's attention.

Rapidly blinking can indicate stress, larger pupils might

signal engagement, evasive eye contact might be a sign of shame, winking is sometimes an offer of support but can also be a form of flirting and, of course, tears tell of sadness, regret or fear.

Reading the eyes in conjunction with hand gestures and other body movements (think: slumping in a chair, hands on hips, crossed arms) and being attuned to the tone in someone's voice can reveal much about a person's emotions.

A smile, for example, does not need to be seen.

It can be heard in the way a person alters their voice tone and might be accompanied by dilated pupils or direct eye

contact. And a combination of a tilted head, narrow eyes, shrug and furrowed brow can make someone a candidate for confusion.

In a sea of masks, our focus on these elements of communication will be increasingly important.

Become more focused on reading someone's eyes, note their tone of voice and body language.

And keep in mind the health benefits of a face mask will always outweigh any temporary disruption to our non-verbal communication.

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