

Abbott delivers stinging rebuke to the Turnbull Government



In an address to conservative think-tank the Institute of Public Affairs, the former prime minister fired a warning shot at the direction of the Turnbull government. Picture Kym Smith

[Joe Kelly](#), [Simon Benson](#), The Australian, 2:47PM June 27, 2017

Tony Abbott has delivered a stinging rebuke to the Turnbull Government sharpening his own vision for the country and politics in Australia, promising he is “in no hurry to leave public life because we need strong liberal conservative voices now, more than ever”.

In an address delivered in Brisbane this morning, Mr Abbott urged the conservative faithful to “stay on course and fight the good fight”, and quoted former Prime Minister John Howard in saying “while compromise is necessary in politics, conviction is the foundation of success”. In an address to conservative think-tank the Institute of Public Affairs, the former prime minister fired a warning shot at the [direction of the Turnbull government](#) since the unveiling of the May budget which has been criticised by conservative commentators as being “Labor-lite.”

“The next election won’t be won by drawing closer to Labor,” Mr Abbott said. “The next election can only be won by drawing up new battlelines that give our people something to fight for; and the public something to hope for. “We can’t even look across the Tasman without a twinge of acute embarrassment”.

“We have an abundance of energy – but the world’s highest power prices; an abundance of land – and property prices to rival Hong Kong’s; some of the world’s smartest people – yet with school rankings behind Kazakhstan.”

“We need to make Australia work again – because our country, plainly, is not working as it should. We are letting ourselves down. We are not what we should be; and we know it. That’s why most of the attempted pep talks sound so hollow.

“But I can assure you: I’m in no hurry to leave public life because we need strong liberal conservative voices now, more than ever.”

Abbott’s alternative policy manifesto

Mr Abbott sharpened his alternative policy manifesto in a bid to rally conservatives around the battleground issues of energy policy, immigration levels, budget repair, Senate reform and national security.

Addressing energy policy, Mr Abbott called for a moratorium on new wind-farms, a freeze on the renewable energy target at its current level of 15 per cent and the construction of another “big coal-fired power station.” “As a party room colleague put it the other day, people who have it all worry about emissions but people doing it tough worry much more about paying their bills,” he said. “It’s the renewable energy target that’s doing the damage because subsidised unreliable and intermittent power is making base load coal and gas power uneconomic”.

Mr Abbott also said there should be a stop on further subsidised renewable power and a freeze placed on the RET while urging the government to be prepared to “go it alone” in building a coal-fired power station “as soon as possible”.

On the senate

He also called for the government to “legislate swiftly” for a referendum to be held concurrently with the next election to reform the operation of the Senate and what he labels a crisis of Australian democracy. “The Senate has become a house of rejection, not a house of review,” Mr Abbott said. “This is a recipe for gridlock, not government, and it must end if Australia is to be capable of meeting the challenges of the future.”

Mr Abbott described a Senate shake-up as the “mother of all reforms,” lamenting the need for the government to strike deals with the Greens and the twelve “unpredictable crossbenchers” to pass its agenda. He called for an amendment to section 57 of the constitution so that “legislation twice rejected in the Senate three months apart” can be put to a joint sitting of both houses without the need for a double dissolution election. “The government should legislate urgently for a referendum,” he said.

‘A slowdown on immigration’

Mr Abbott uses the speech to strengthen his call for a slowdown on immigration, arguing it would take “downward pressure off wages and upward pressure off house prices” while complementing the proposed citizenship reforms to encourage greater integration into Australian society. “It would give harder-to-assimilate recent migrants more time to integrate with the wider Australian community before many more came in,” he added. “It would reassure Australians that our country is in our own hands and is being run in our best

interests. It would complement the government's correct insistence that to become a citizen you must be able to speak the national language."

Mr Abbott argued this would add much needed product differentiation to the Coalition in its political contest against the Labor Party. "It would provoke a fierce fight with Labor — that again would just emphasis who's on Australians' side and who's not."

Budget repair

Mr Abbott also returned to the theme of budget repair, arguing that Australia has a spending problem rather than a revenue problem. He said it is possible to persuade the public to accept hard decisions. "The best way to get federal spending under control, and to end the intergenerational theft of sustained deficits is to avoid all new spending other than on national security or economic infrastructure," he says. "It can be done. In two elections 2010, 2013, the Liberal National coalition made big gains promising spending cuts, tax cuts and regulation cuts."

"As John Howard recently observed, while compromise is necessary in politics, conviction is the foundation of success."

Speaking just weeks after Coalition MPs raised concerns about Hizb ut-Tahrir, Mr Abbott also pushed for the banning of organisations that "make excuses for terrorists" to make sure that jihadis "aren't free on our streets."

The key reform identified by Mr Abbott in his speech was his call for an overhaul of the Senate, warning that it has become a "house of rejection."