

Vote split casts doubt on Turnbull leadership

By James Massola

The final parliamentary session of the year ended in disarray for the Liberals, with the party split three ways on a Senate vote.

And the split in ranks has led to suggestions that support for Malcolm Turnbull's leadership has eroded.

As confusion reigned in the Senate, Liberals Alan Eggleston and Alan Ferguson crossed the floor, five Liberals voted as instructed and the rest, including Opposition Senate Leader Nick Minchin, abstained.

The split in Coalition ranks was compounded when Barnaby Joyce, Ron Boswell, Fiona Nash and John Williams also crossed the floor.

Mr Turnbull had instructed his senators to support the Labor Bill that established three nation-building funds.

But Coalition senators objected to the Government's plan to roll the \$2 billion "Future Fund" established by the previous government into the Government's \$26 billion funds.

The Future Fund had been established by the previous government to guarantee telecommunications services in rural and regional Australia, and was a condition of the National Party supporting the full privatisation of Telstra.

Rebellious National Party senators Fiona Nash and John Williams hosed down speculation over Mr Turnbull's leadership, as did Senator Minchin.

Senator Williams said he had "no doubt" that Senator Minchin and a majority of Liberal senators had supported the Nationals' decision to cross the floor.



RESTRAINED: Senate Leader Nick Minchin abstained.

"Look at Hansard, he said the fund was there to help rural and regional Australia," Senator Williams said.

"But I'm a National, I have no say in the leadership of the Liberal Party and I would rather not speculate on it."

And Senator Nash, who earlier in the week was stripped of her role as a shadow parliamentary secretary by Mr Turnbull, said she thought he was safe.

"I don't think he is any danger," she said.

Senator Minchin said the claim Mr Turnbull had been snubbed by his own party was "ridiculous".

He said he had supported the decision of the shadow cabinet – even though he later abstained on the vote.

Senate leader Chris Evans said the "chaotic" scenes proved some members of the Opposition were in "open rebellion" against Malcolm Turnbull.

"The Liberal Party Senate leader wasn't prepared to support Malcolm Turnbull's position and half his front bench in the Senate went with him and left the chamber," he said.

"As a result there were five Liberals who voted for their official position – five out of 36 – two crossed the floor and the rest ran."

VIP flight's a high point in an air force career

By Lynne Minion

He's been labelled Kevin 747, our globetrotting Prime Minister who racked up a travel bill of more than \$600,000 in his first six months in office, but strictly speaking, according to Squadron Leader Peter Geddes, it's Kevin 737.

"I'm not sure where the nickname came from. I guess it maybe rhymes a bit better, but the aircraft we fly is a 737."

A pilot of the RAAF executive jets, the Boeing 737 BBJs, Squadron Leader Geddes has been flying some particularly precious cargo during his 3½ years with the 34 Squadron, including two prime ministers.

But he says he has a non-partisan approach to his job in the pointy end, with no requirement for the flights to be right-leaning or left.

"It's seamless to us so it doesn't really matter who it is we're carrying down the back," Squadron Leader Geddes said.

"We try to keep the ride as smooth as we possibly can. You're at the mercy of the weather at times, but we certainly do whatever we can to keep the ride as comfortable as possible."

"All we're trying to do there is make it as pleasant an experience as we can."

The squadron contains 14 pilots who fly the two BBJs, each of which has a range of 6000 nautical miles, a capacity that gets VIPs between Sydney and Honolulu or Beijing.

They have certainly been exercising that capacity, according to the travel records released this week for the Government's first seven months in office.

Mr Rudd made six trips to 16 countries, including his 18-day intercontinental excursion in March and April to the United States, Europe, Britain and China that came at a cost to taxpayers of \$427,539.

The total price tag for his overseas



SMOOTH 737: Air force squadron leader Peter Geddes in front of one of the VIP jets at Fairbairn used to carry prime ministers and other dignitaries. Photo: ANDREW SHEARGOLD

jaunts cost taxpayers \$600,756, while international travel by all MPs totalled \$3.59 million.

Squadron Leader Geddes flew on that odyssey – "we took both of the BBJs that time and I did the leg with him from Sydney to Honolulu" – and during the recent trip to Washington, where the Prime Minister took part in the G20 summit.

As well as the Prime Minister, other dignitaries availing themselves of the aircraft include the Governor-

General, government ministers and foreign heads of state, which is why Squadron Leader Geddes sees the job as a high point of his career.

"Certainly for us, the door's always open, they're always welcome to come and say g'day," he said.

When the VIPs go down the back, they are taken care of by four military flight attendants who serve them business class quality meals and even make their beds.

"The aircraft doesn't have

dedicated beds, but the seats can be reclined and we actually carry something that's a bit like a bedroll, it's a bed we put on the top of the seat to make it a little bit more comfortable. So we'll recline a seat and then they'll make a bed..."

It's hardly as posh as Air Force One, the plane used by the president of the United States, which has facilities that liken it to a flying hotel.

But surely the BBJs offer the latest films as in-flight entertainment?

"We don't carry any," Squadron Leader Geddes said, astonishingly. Which means it's BYO DVDs. At least then the passengers can cater to their executive tastes.

"I know the previous prime minister liked to watch cricket DVDs, he was very much into cricket DVDs, but I don't know what the current one watches."

Perhaps it would be appropriate for him to choose a blockbuster such as *Australia*.

S&P agency sees 'pressure' on Australia's AAA credit rating

By David Alexander
Economics Editor

The Opposition has urged the Rudd Government to do "whatever it can" to retain Australia's AAA credit rating, saying that borrowing costs would increase with a ratings downgrade.

Yesterday ratings agency Standard

& Poor's said Australia's top rating was under "pressure" from the slowing economy, deteriorating fiscal position, contingent liabilities of the bank guarantee and the large current account deficit, and warned that retaining the AAA rating could not be taken for granted.

"With the Rudd Government planning to drive the Budget into deficit,

the loss of the AAA rating would mean an increase in the costs of borrowing for the Government," Opposition treasury spokesperson Julie Bishop said yesterday.

Australia's current credit rating is AAA with a stable outlook, and any revision might mean a move to a negative outlook or a downgrade to AA plus.

Standard & Poor's is assessing the potential liabilities to governments of bank guarantees in various countries, with the greatest liabilities coming from the most extensive guarantees.

Australian National University economist Dr Timo Henckel said Standard & Poor's may have become "a bit jittery" after recent criticisms.

"The Australian Government

doesn't have any debt, and so even if it goes into deficit for a couple of years, it will end up with a debt to GDP ratio that is comical compared to other developed countries," he said.

The NSW Government recently introduced a horror mini-budget after warnings from ratings agencies that its AAA rating was under threat.



\$100 rebate with your FREE GardenSmart service

During your ACT Government GardenSmart service a qualified horticulturist visits your home and offers practical advice for your garden about design, watering, maintenance and much more.

Sign up in December for your FREE garden advisory service PLUS a \$100 rebate on water-saving products for your garden.*

To take part or find out more call 13 22 81 or visit www.thinkwater.act.gov.au

* \$100 rebate for sign-ups in December 2008 only. Rebate normally \$50. Available only to ACT properties connected to ACTEW Corporation's water network. See website for full program conditions.

DOUBLE YOUR REBATE IN DECEMBER



think water act water



MASTERS IN INFORMATION STUDIES (online)

Specialisations in:

- LIBRARIANSHIP (Commonwealth supported places available)
- KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
- INTERNET COMMUNICATION

The course will equip you with skills you need to work as a knowledge and information professional – in libraries and other information sectors.

You'll learn about the management and use of digital information for society and discover how effective use of the internet provides organisations with a competitive advantage.

APPLY DIRECT FOR SEMESTER 1, 2009
www.canberra.edu.au/aus-future-students/apply

For more information contact Sally Burford on:

T 02 6201 5958
E sally.burford@canberra.edu.au
www.canberra.edu.au



WORK WITH THE FASTEST GROWING MINDS IN THE COUNTRY

THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA OFFERS EXTREMELY VALUABLE AND VERSATILE QUALIFICATIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING

Early childhood teaching is a rewarding and secure career. The four year UC Bachelor of Education offers two specialisations that qualify graduates to teach in a variety of educational sectors and communities.

BIRTH TO EIGHT YEARS: Students graduate with two qualifications, allowing them to work in childcare, preschool and primary schools around Australia. No HECS debt is incurred for one year of study.

THREE TO EIGHT YEARS: The focus is on early childhood and inclusive education, qualifying students to work in preschool and primary school sectors.

Professional Practice Both specialisations include internships in either preschool or primary school settings providing students with on the job experience.

DIRECT APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Careen Leslie
Early Childhood Course Convener
University of Canberra
T 02 6201 5224
E careen.leslie@canberra.edu.au
www.canberra.edu.au/courses

HAYS
Sales & Marketing

FEMA Award Winners 2008
Recruitment Firm of the Year
Best Candidate Care by a Recruitment Firm
Recruiter of the Year

Sales Manager

Dynamic industry
Exciting client base
Excellent remuneration (package negotiable)

Our client is a leader in the development and supply of specialised products to the sporting industry. It works with a range of professional sporting organisations and requires an outgoing sales professional to join its team.

To be successful in this role, applicants must have:

- A tertiary science/human biology qualification
- Sales experience
- Willingness to travel interstate

In addition to the above criteria, applicants with experience in pharmaceutical selling will also be considered.

In this unique and challenging opportunity, you will play an integral role in the ongoing and extensive growth and success of this highly dynamic company. In return for your technical and sales expertise you will be rewarded with a generous base + commission package and will be joining a company with excellent opportunities for career progression.

Please contact Matthew Dadley
T 02 6112 7690
E matthew.dadley@hays.com.au

Specialist Recruitment hays.com.au choose from 15000 specialist jobs

HAYS
Legal

FEMA Award Winners 2008
Recruitment Firm of the Year
Best Candidate Care by a Recruitment Firm
Recruiter of the Year

Family Law Specialist

Modern boutique firm
Excellent remuneration and conditions
Respect for individuality

Our client is a high quality boutique law firm looking for a specialist Family Lawyer to join its expanding team. In spacious new premises with room to grow you will be joining one of the most respected and professional family law practices in Canberra

It is looking for someone who:

- Has extensive family law experience
- Believes in negotiation and mediation over court options
- Is a proven biller with evidence of their ability to network and sell themselves, and
- Has a passion for their work

You will be provided with a competitive and negotiable salary, genuine work/life balance where you manage your own work load and a supportive mentoring environment where senior lawyers are always available to assist.

This is the type of modern boutique law firm that you will enjoy being a part of. Do not miss this opportunity.

Please contact Elizabeth Baldwin
T 02 6112 7651
E elizabeth.baldwin@hays.com.au

Specialist Recruitment hays.com.au choose from 15000 specialist jobs

HAYS
Accountancy & Finance

FEMA Award Winners 2008
Recruitment Firm of the Year
Best Candidate Care by a Recruitment Firm
Recruiter of the Year

Central Agency Roles

A variety of professional opportunities exist working for a small, dynamic department. You will play a leading role in promoting accountability and transparency in the delivery of services to the community and the management of resources.

Financial/Policy Analysts x2 (up to \$84,777 + super)

Analyse the financial performance of agencies and programs, review and provide advice on budget and policy issues and prepare high level briefings, submissions and correspondence

Financial Analyst - Assets (up to \$84,777 + super)

Analyse and report on whole-of-government financial performance and assist in the development of whole-of-government asset management policies and practices.

Manager (up to \$104,583 + super)

Qualified Accountant with government experience working in a small team of professionals preparing and analysing whole-of-government financial statements, budget documentation and reports to external agencies.

Executive Officer (up to \$104,583 + super)

Responsible for overseeing the executive unit, divisional workflow management and quality assurance and implementing training and professional development.

Please contact Louisa Hart
T 02 6257 6344
E louisa.hart@hays.com.au

Specialist Recruitment hays.com.au choose from 15000 specialist jobs