

Aston By-Election – demographic analysis of swings

Introduction and Interpretation

Below are charts illustrating the key demographic correlations for swings to Labor in the recent Ryan and Aston by-elections. In interpreting the data, it is worth bearing in mind the following observations.

Comparison with Ryan

Compared to Ryan, in Aston Labor experienced swings against it amongst a definite ‘stereotype’. This type is characterized by families with children, buying a home and paying a mortgage of approximately \$1500-2000 a month and earning as a household between \$100,000-120,000 a year.

The Nugent Factor

The starting point for the ALP in Aston on Saturday night was the 2PP vote for 1998 adjusted for Peter Nugent’s personal vote. The ELABORATETM projections for the Aston 1998 vote showed the Labor Party candidate would have polled 49.2% had Peter Nugent not been the Liberal candidate, instead of 45.8% which was taken as the starting point for the count by the AEC. This personal vote for Nugent was, by definition, obtained from voters who would otherwise have supported Labor. (Incidentally, this can be contrasted with the personal vote obtained by the former Liberal member for Ryan, John Moore, which was –0.43% as projected by the ELABORATETM model.)

A realistic assessment of the swing in Aston must account for this personal vote being ‘redistributed’. According to the AEC, the 2PP swing to Labor across the booths on election night in the by-election was 4.25% (Source: AEC Web site). Adjusting for the natural redistribution of the Nugent-vote, the swing to Labor was closer to 1% before the counting of pre-poll, absent and postal votes. As such, the bulk of the 2PP swing can accurately be described as the re-alignment of the Nugent-vote, which considerably muddies the Aston demographic picture when compared to Ryan.

¹ ELABORATETM is a demographic model developed by Australian Development Strategies Pty Ltd.

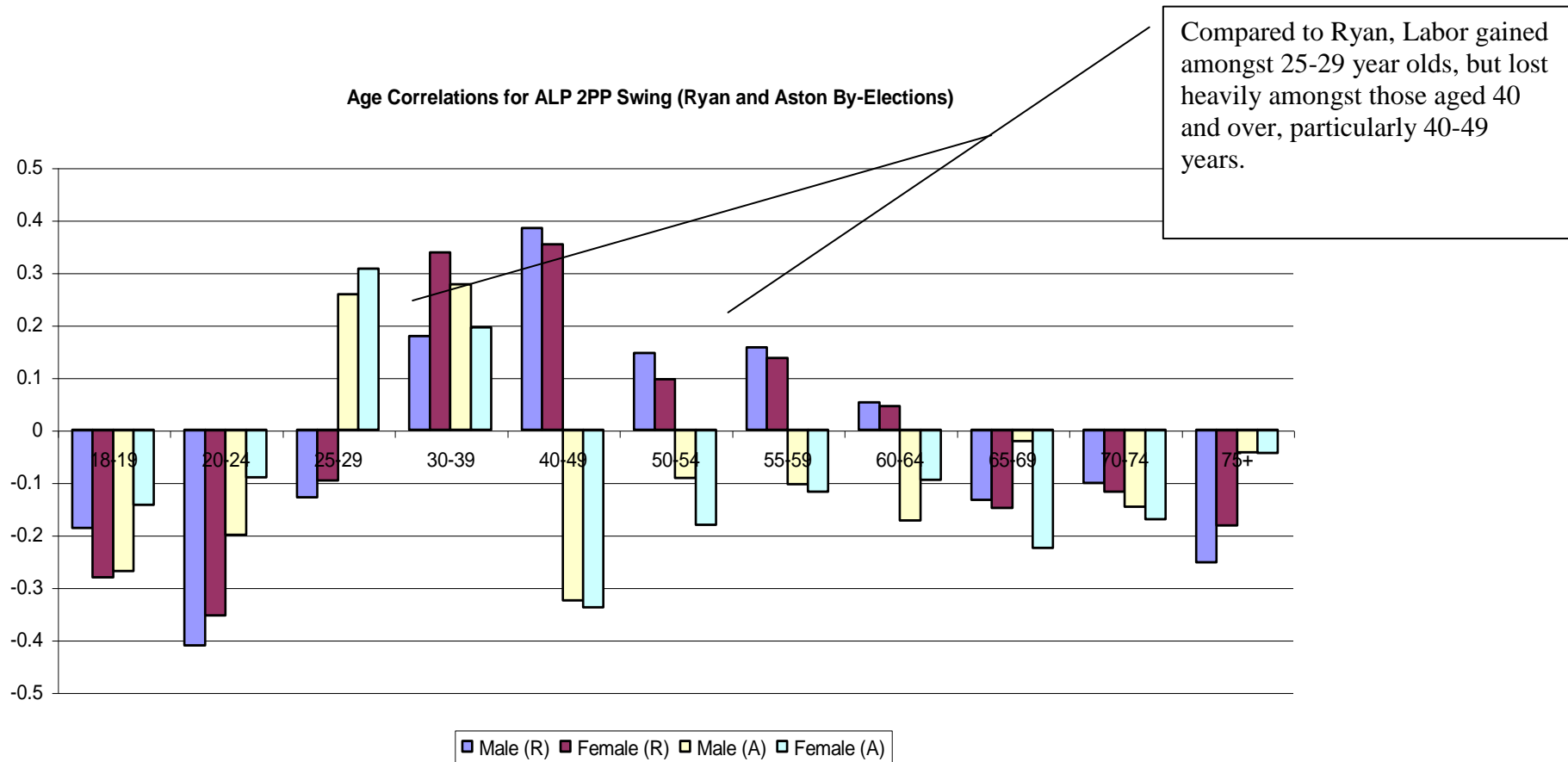
Second Preferences

There was a swing against both major parties on the primary vote. However, Labor's 2PP swing was achieved via the same percentage of preferences from 'others' as it did in 1998 – that is 56% in the by-election and 57% in 1998.

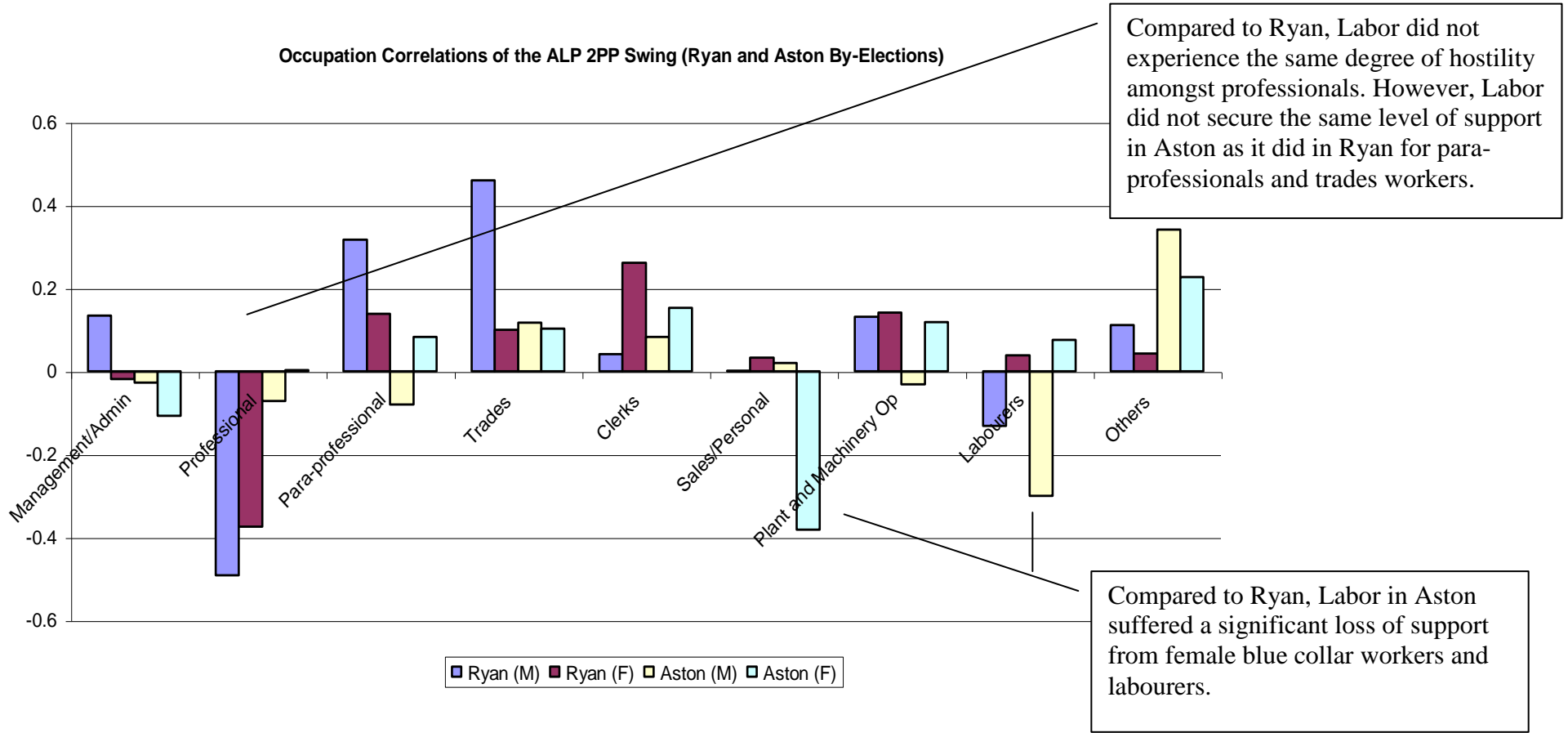
In light of this, it can be observed that Labor did not make preference deals with major 3rd parties (Democrats and Greens) prior to the by-election, suggesting that such arrangements would be needed if Labor is to maximize its chance of future electoral success. Given that the Democrats' primary vote made up around 1/3 of the 'other' primary vote, the implications for the major parties' electoral strategy are straightforward:

- Labor needs Democrats preferences to win; and
- The Coalition needs to ensure Democrats voters do not strongly preference Labor.

Age

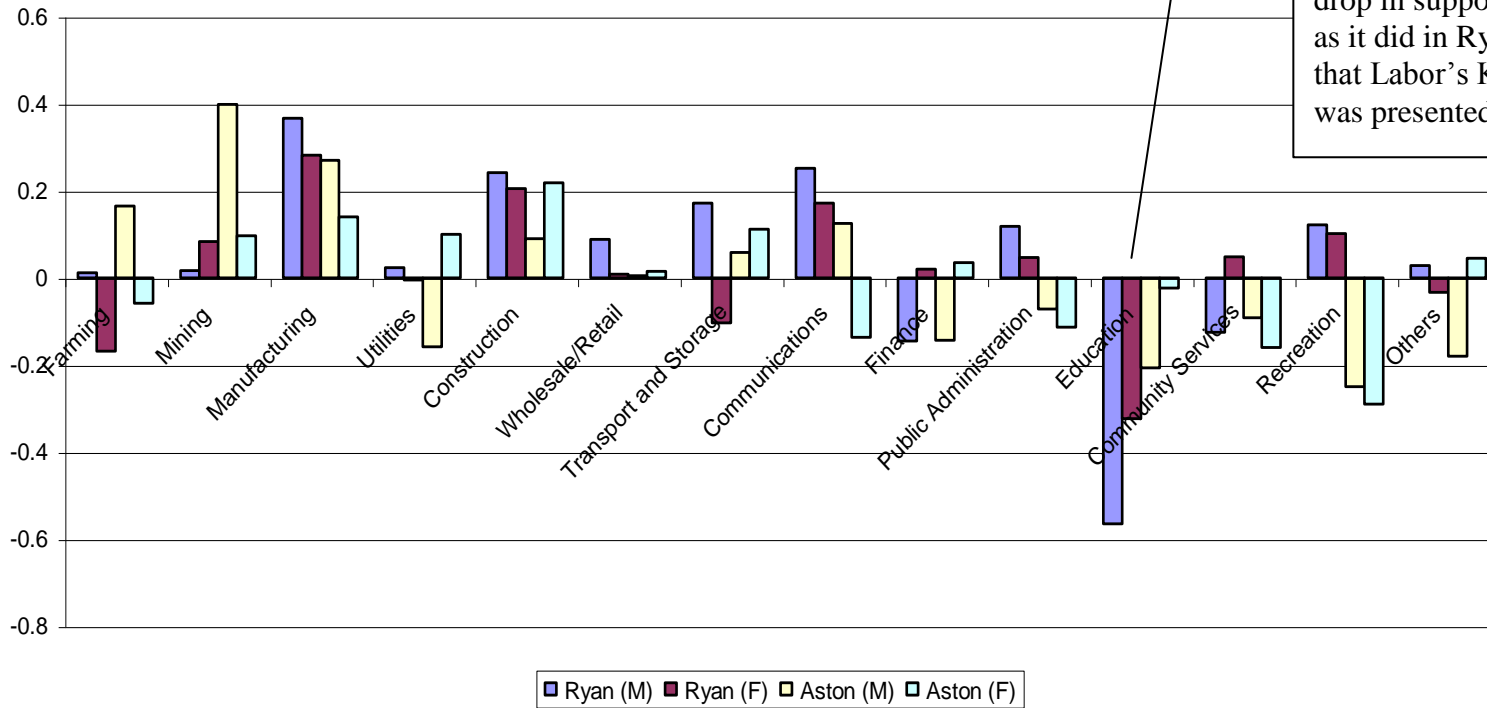


Occupation



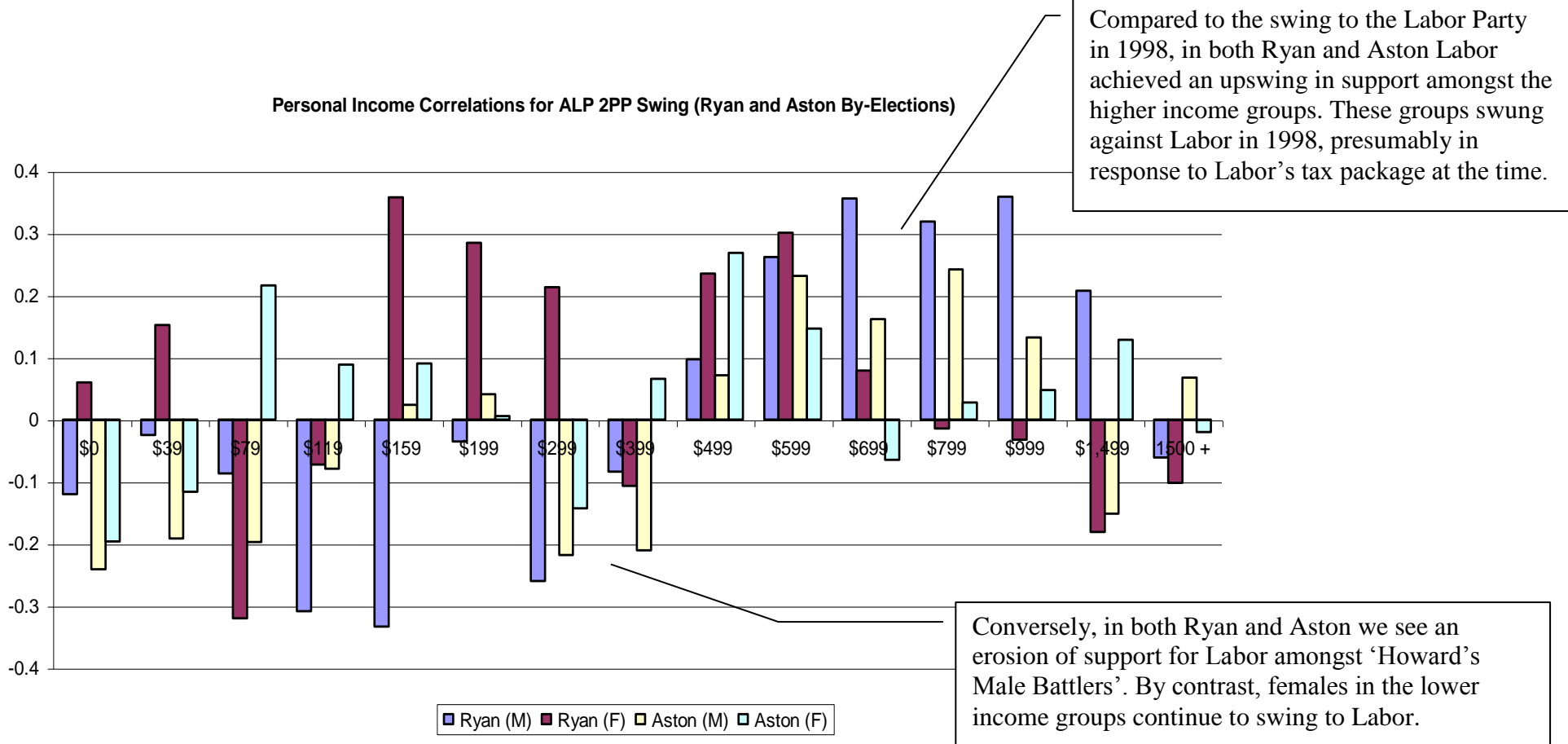
Industry of Employment

Industry of Employment Correlations of ALP 2PP Swing (Ryan and Aston By-Elections)



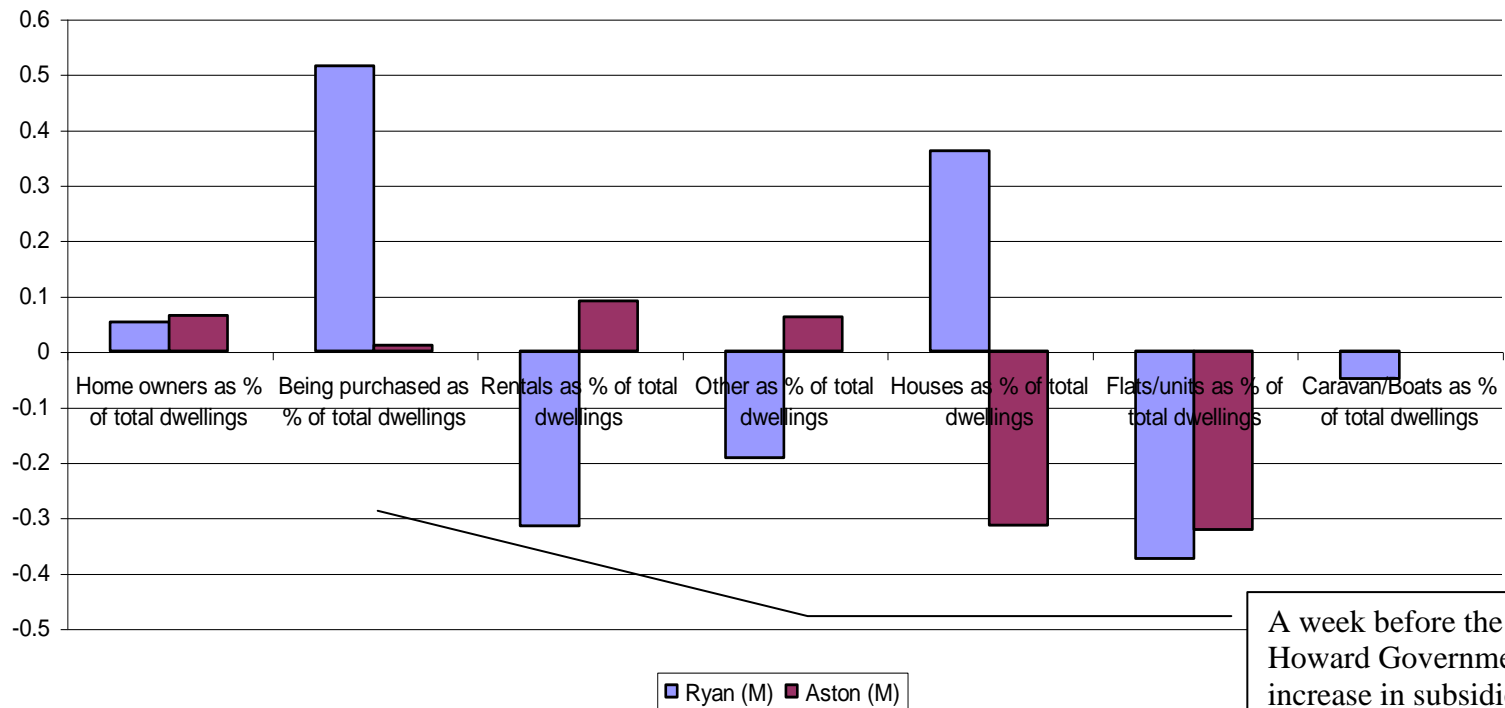
The overall pattern of support for Labor amongst industry groups in both Ryan and Aston was generally comparable. A key development in Aston was that Labor did not experience the same extremely large drop in support in the education sector as it did in Ryan. Noteworthy is the fact that Labor's Knowledge Nation report was presented prior to Aston.

Personal Income



Accommodation Status

Accommodation Correlations for ALP 2PP Swings (Ryan and Aston By-Elections)



A week before the Ryan by-election the Howard Government announced an increase in subsidies for new home buyers, which coincided with considerable loss of support for the Coalition from the very large group of homebuyers and taxpayers who would be footing the bill. This appears to have dissipated in Aston.

Education Qualifications

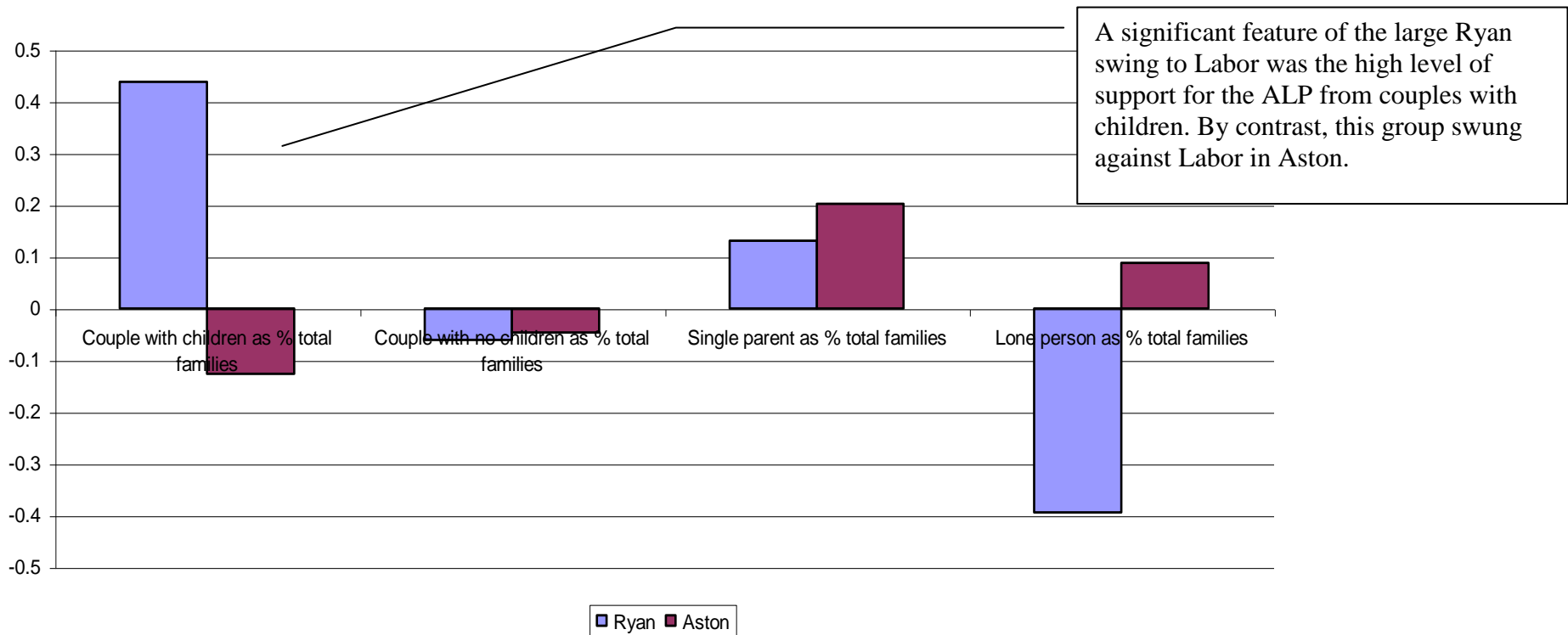
Education Correlations for ALP 2PP Swings (Ryan and Aston By-Elections)



Swings to and from Labor amongst different education qualifications groups were similar in both Ryan and Aston. The Aston correlations appear to be weaker.

Family Status

Family Status Correlations for ALP 2PP Swings (Ryan and Aston By-Elections)



Family Income

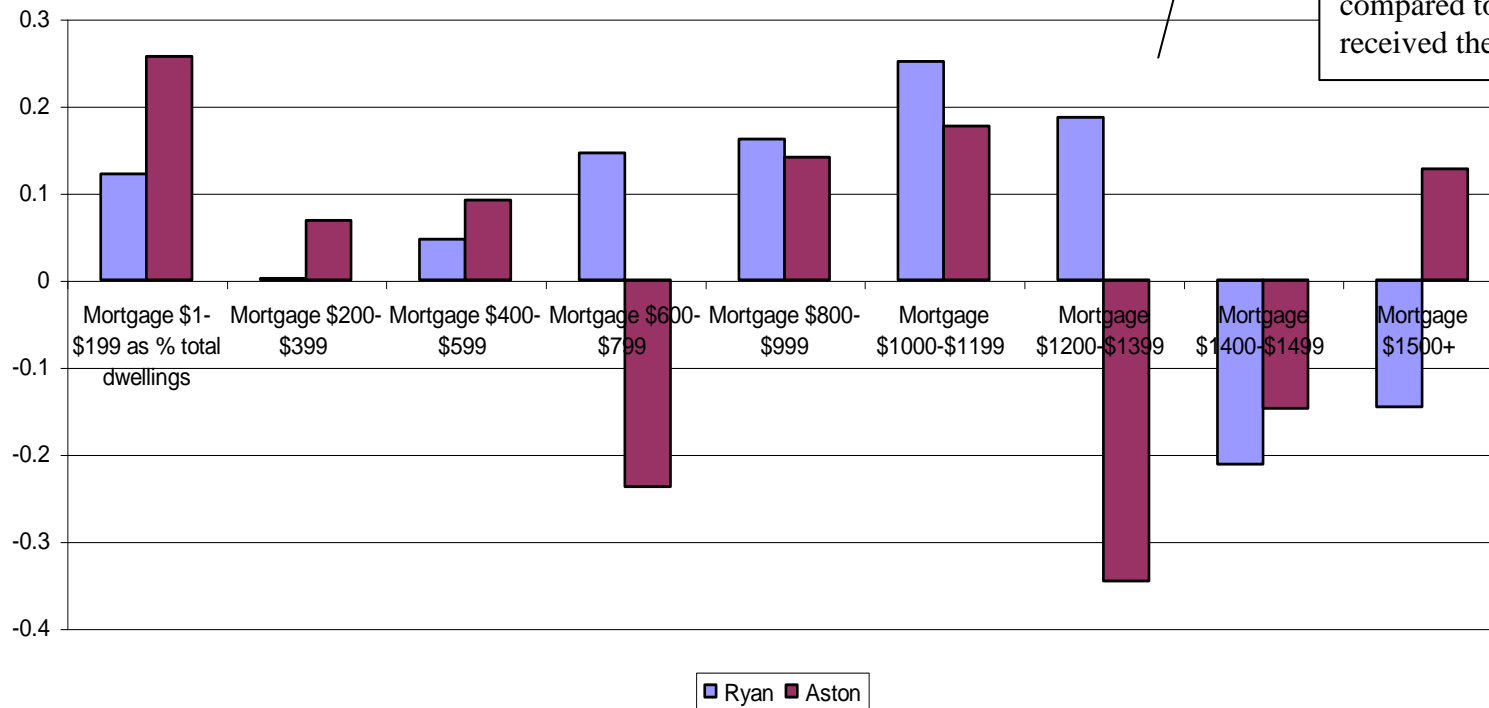
Family Income Correlations for ALP 2PP Swings (Ryan and Aston By-Elections)

The swing to Labor in Ryan (shown in blue) was heavily concentrated amongst families earning more than \$50,000 per year as at the 1996 census. This group did not swing to Labor in Aston.



Mortgage Payments

Mortgage Correlations of ALP 2PP Swings (Ryan and Aston By-Elections)



Those paying a mortgage of between \$1200-1500 per month (in 1996) in Aston did not support Labor. A significant change is evident amongst those paying between \$1200-1399 when compared to Ryan where Labor received their support.