

PROJECT SIX  
THE KEY SEATS

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PROJECT SIX  
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Introduction: One of the facts of political life in Australia is that swings at election time are never uniform.

Table 6.1 presented below shows that since 1961 the range of swing has typically been about five times as large as the mean swing.

Election	2PP Mean Swing	2PP Range of Swing
1961	4.6	17.6
1963	3.1	15.8
1966	4.3	30.1
1969	7.1	24.3
1972	2.5	20.4
1974	1.0	16.3
1975	7.4	16.9
1977	1.1	11.9
1980	4.2	19.3
1961-81	3.9	19.2

I also include on the following pages copies of Malcolm Mackerras's charts showing the frequency distributions of 2PP swings for all elections between 1961 and 1977.

Here the reader can clearly see the outline of standard-normal frequency distribution curves so often observed in the social sciences - albeit with the sort of deviation we find in real life from the idealistic bell-shape.

Some of the curves, such as 1963 and 1966 are flat (platykurtic)

THE RANGE OF SWING, 1961

Overall swing: 4.6% to A.L.P.

LIBERAL C.P. A.L.P.

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat before the 1961 election.

Notable Swings to Labor:

Braddon (T.) 13.1%  
 Capricornia (Q.) 12.7%  
 Cowper (N.S.W.) 12.6%  
 Leichhardt (Q.) 11.5%  
 Lilley (Q.) 11.3%

Notable Swings to Liberal - C.P.

Ballaarat (V.) 4.5%  
 McMillan (V.) 4.0%  
 Melbourne Ports (V.) 1.9%  
 Wannon (V.) 1.5%  
 Murray (V.) 0.1%

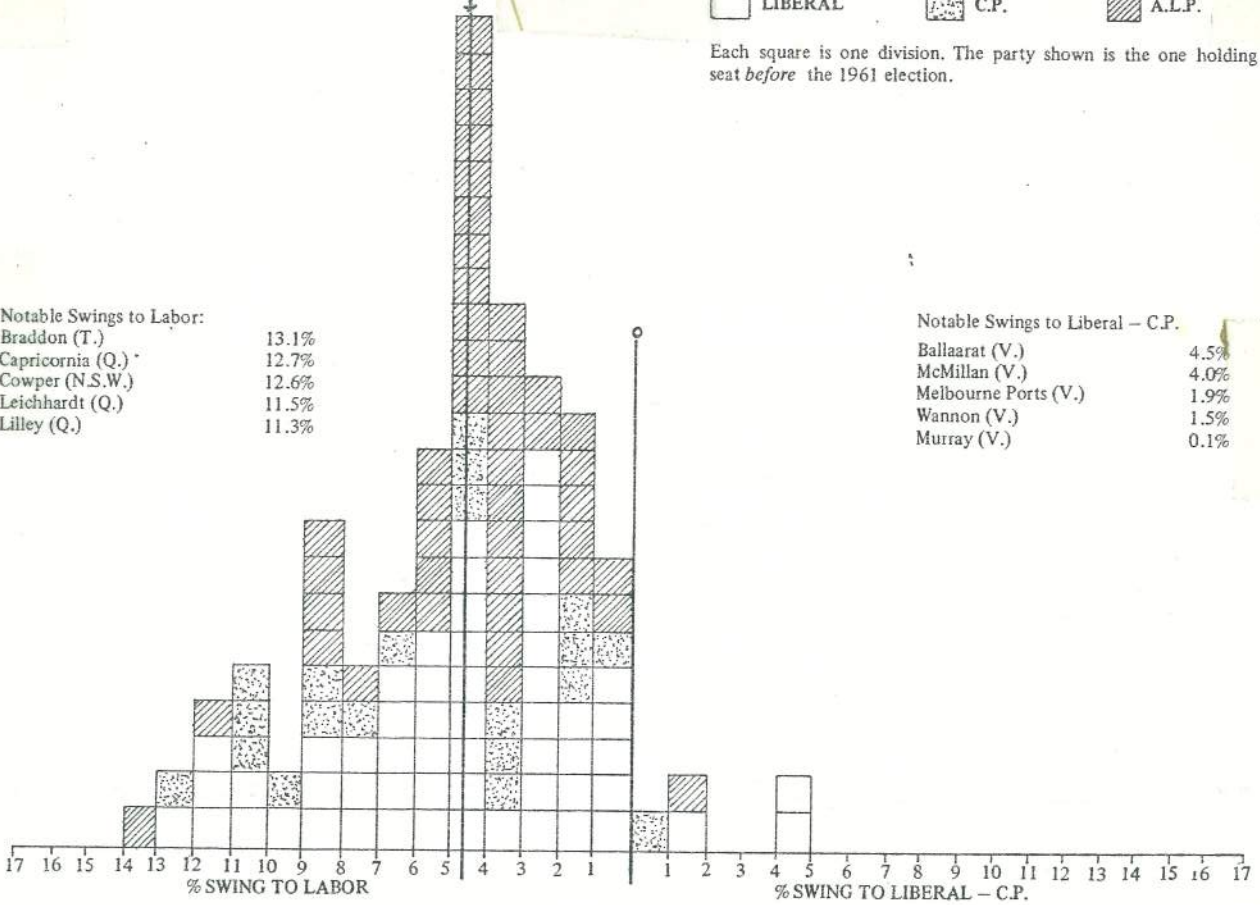


Fig. 6.1

THE RANGE OF SWING, 1963

LIBERAL C.P. A.L.P.

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat before the 1963 election.

Overall swing: 3.1% to Lib. - C.P.

Notable Swings to Labor:

Oxley (Q.) 5.1%  
 Capricornia (Q.) 4.6%  
 Franklin (T.) 3.8%  
 Swan (W.A.) 3.4%  
 Perth (W.A.) 3.3%

Notable Swings to Liberal - C.P.

Bennelong (N.S.W.) 10.7%  
 Watson (N.S.W.) 9.2%  
 Leichhardt (Q.) 9.2%  
 North Sydney (N.S.W.) 8.5%  
 Darling Downs (Q.) 8.5%

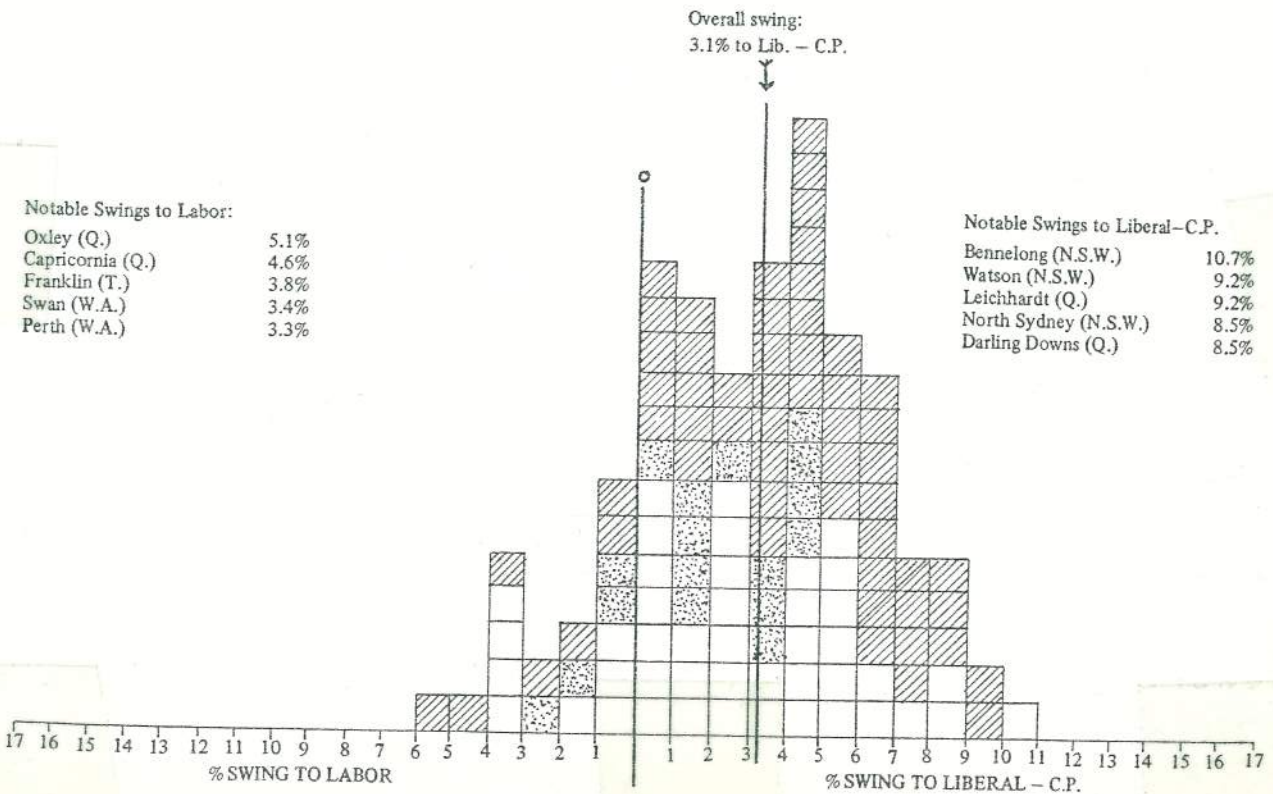


Fig. 6.2

THE RANGE OF SWING, 1966

LIBERAL C.P. A.L.P.

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat before the 1966 election. (Batman and Dawson shown as Labor - held).

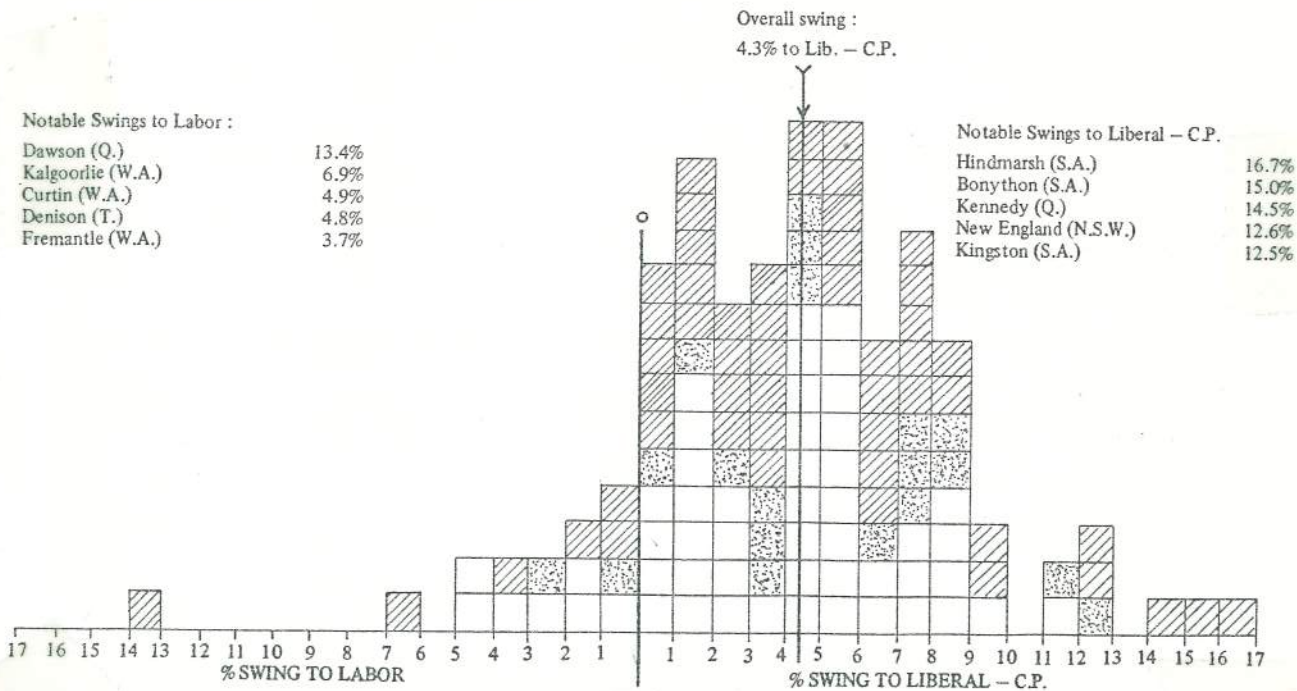


Figure 6.3

THE RANGE OF SWING, 1969

Overall swing : 7.1% to A.L.P.

LIBERAL C.P. A.L.P.

Each square is one division. A heavy black dot indicates that the division underwent a major change in the 1968 redistribution or was a new seat. The party shown is the one holding the seat before the 1969 election except for new seats and Hughes, Lalor, Batman and Warringah which are shown according to the party which won them in 1969. By "major change" is meant physical change as defined in pages 17-28 of *The 1968 Federal Redistribution* by Malcolm Mackerras.

Notable Swings to Labor :

Riverina (N.S.W.)	16.8%
Kingston (S.A.)	15.8%
A.C.T.	15.8%
Bonython (S.A.)	15.5%
Canning (W.A.)	15.0%

Notable Swings to Liberal - C.P. :

Northern Territory	7.5%
Bass (T.)	3.9%
Kennedy (Q.)	3.3%
Melbourne (V.)	2.4%
Herbert (Q.)	1.7%

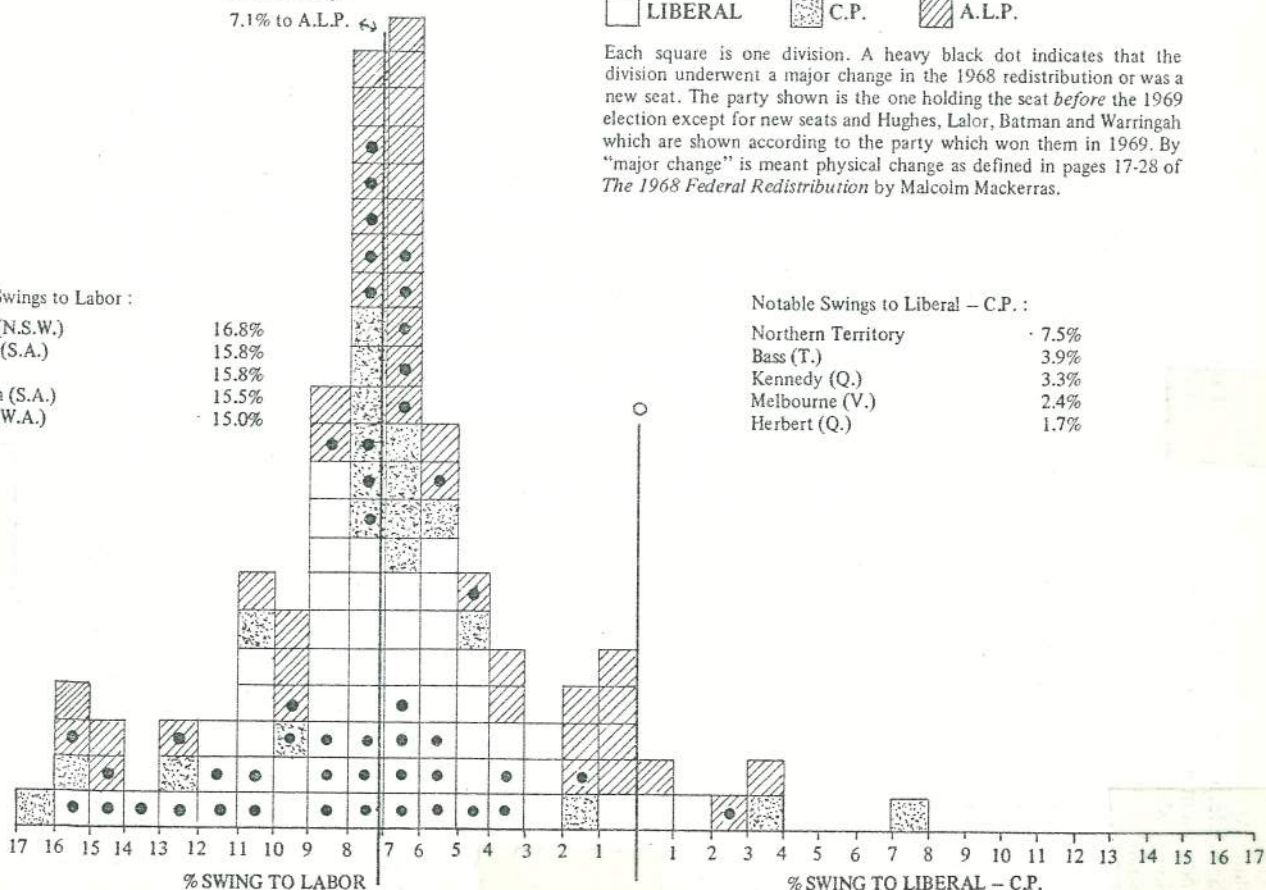


Figure 6.4



THE RANGE OF SWING, 1972

LIBERAL C.P. A.L.P.

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat *before* the 1972 election.

Overall swing:  
2.5% to A.L.P.

Notable Swings to Labor:

Flinders (V.)	11.6%
LaTrobe (V.)	10.2%
Henty (V.)	9.0%
Holt (V.)	8.7%
Farrer (N.S.W.)	8.7%

Notable Swings to Liberal-C.P.

Stirling (W.A.)	8.8%
Fremantle (W.A.)	6.1%
Capricornia (Q.)	6.0%
Dawson (Q.)	6.0%
Hindmarsh (S.A.)	5.8%

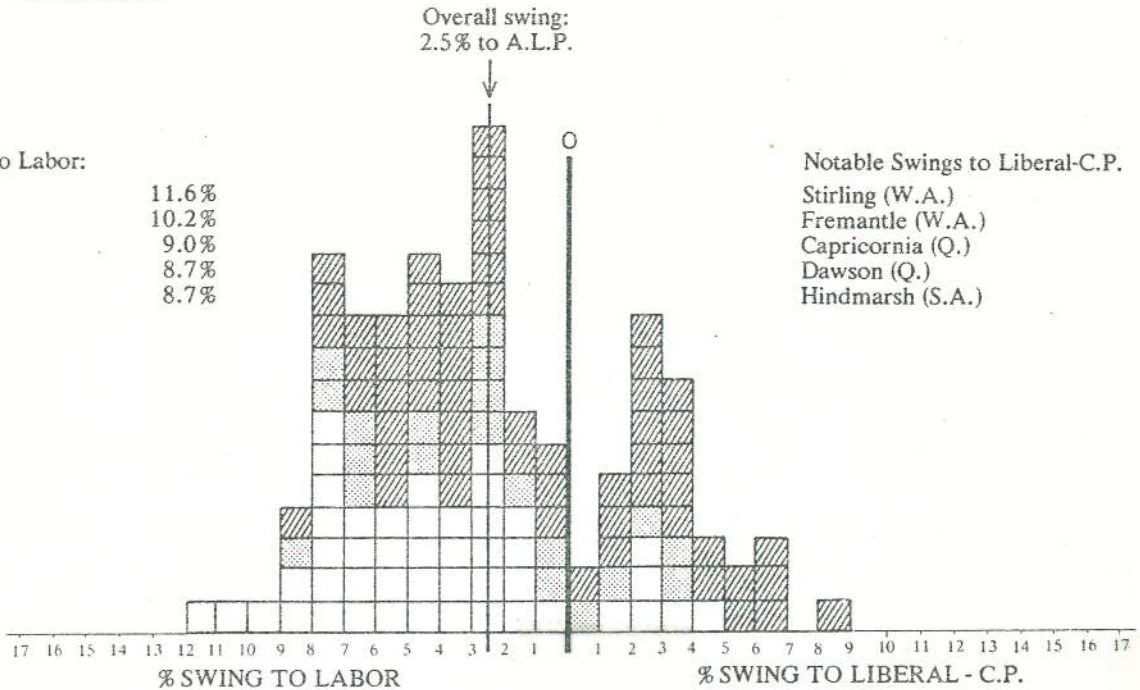


Figure 6.5

THE RANGE OF SWING, 1974

LIBERAL C.P. A.L.P.

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat *before* the 1974 election. (Tangney shown as Labor-held).

Overall swing:  
1.0% to Lib.-C.P.

Notable Swings to Labor:

Melbourne (V.)	6.7%
Hotham (V.)	4.8%
Perth (W.A.)	4.7%
Batman (V.)	4.6%
Maribyrnong (V.)	4.3%

Notable Swings to Liberal-C.P.

Canberra (A.C.T.)	9.6%
Wilmot (T.)	9.1%
Leichhardt (Q.)	8.0%
Forrest (W.A.)	7.8%
Oxley (Q.)	7.8%

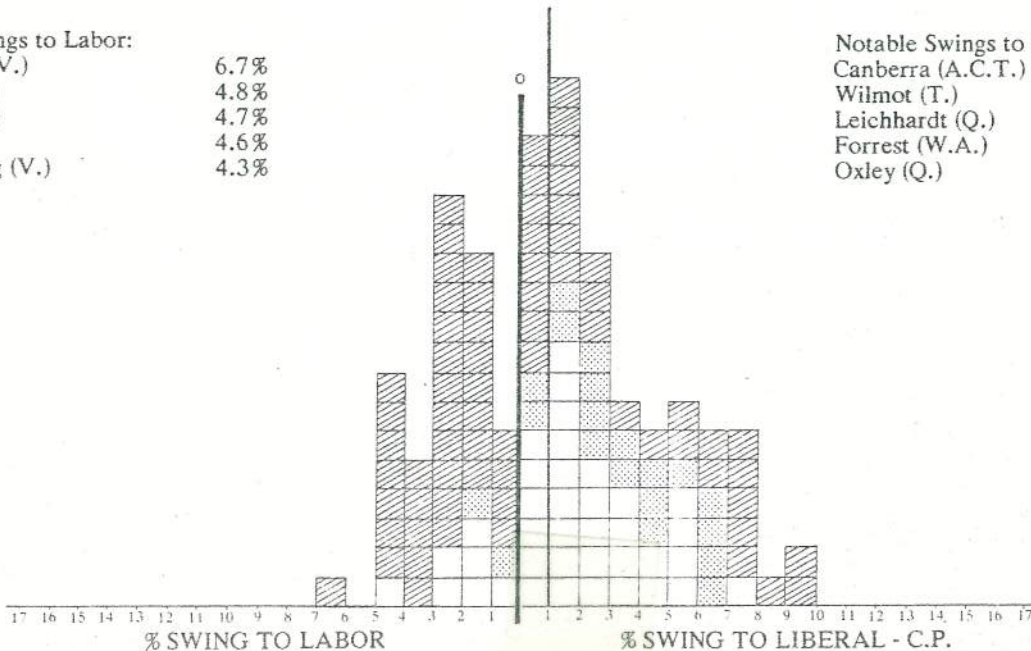


Figure 6.6

### THE RANGE OF SWING 1975

Liberal  NCP  Labor 

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat *before* the 1975 election. (Bass shown as Liberal-held. The swing figure in Bass is 1975 general election compared with 1974 general election.)

**Overall Swing:**  
7.4% to Lib-NCP

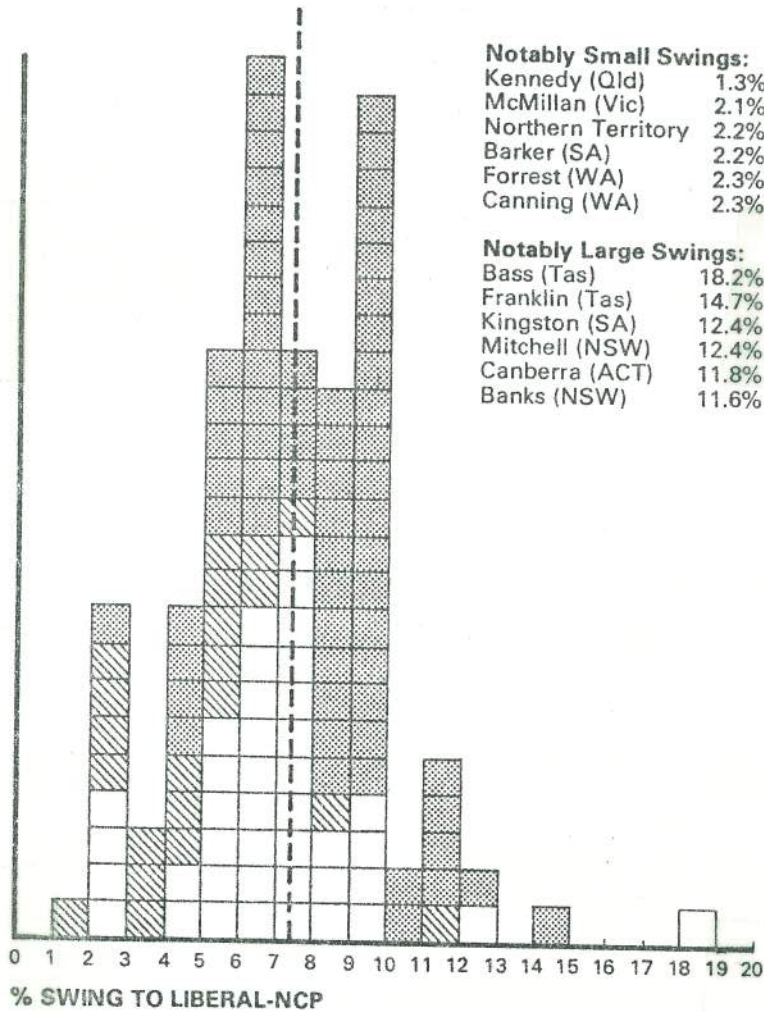


Figure 6.7

### THE RANGE OF SWING 1977

Liberal  NCP  Labor 

Each square is one division. The party shown is the one holding the seat *before* the 1977 election except for Riverina, Parramatta, Dundas and Fadden which are shown according to the party which won them in 1977.

**Overall Swing:**  
1.1% to Labor

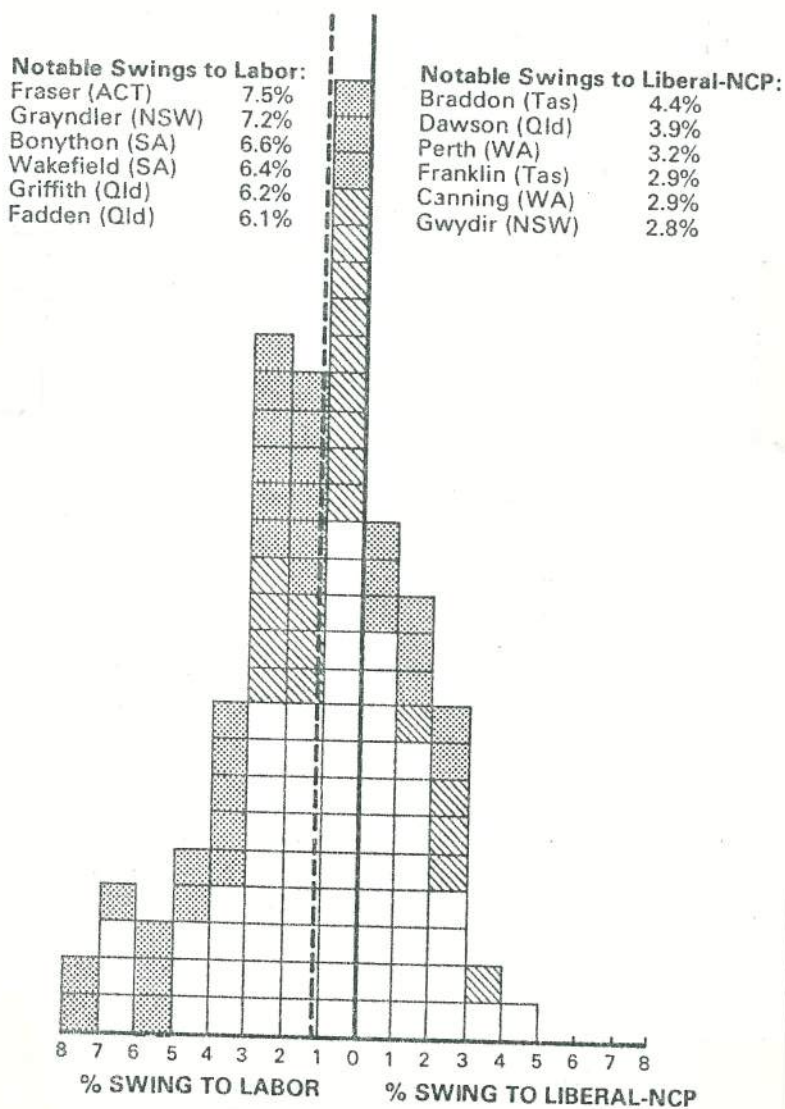


Figure 6.8



while some such as 1975 and 1977 are high (leptokurtic). In addition some of the curves are skewed either the left (positive skewness) such as in 1972, or to the right (negative skewness) such as in 1963.

This sort of variation however is just what we would expect in a real-life situation.

In summary, then, swings across Australian electorates should best be interpreted in terms of normal statistical distribution theory, instead of the less-appropriate mean or median figures.

\* \* \*

It is in this context that we must consider marginal seats. Marginal seats are normally defined as those electorates which in the preceding election recorded ALP 2PP votes of between 44 and 56 percent.

In 1980 Labor's performance across marginal Government seats was low compared to our mean national swing of 4.2 percent and lower still compared to the pro-Labor swings in fairly safe Labor or fairly safe non-Labor seats. These figures are listed below in table 6.2.

SEATS	PRO-LABOR SWING
42 safe Govt.	4.3%
21 fairly safe Govt.	5.5%
24 marginal Govt.	3.9%
11 marginal ALP	4.5%
9 fairly safe ALP	6.4%
18 safe ALP	2.2%

TABLE 6.2

If the ALP in 1980 had won the 6.4 percent swing it obtained



in its fairly safe ALP seats in marginal Government seats (where the swing was only 3.9 percent) then Labor would have won Government.

We can conclude from table 6.2 that marginal Government seats are significantly different in terms of their political behaviour when compared to either the national mean or safe seats. (In 1980 the swings in marginal Government seats were negatively skewed in favour of the non-Labor parties.)

We can also conclude from table 6.2 that an understanding and exploitation of these differences is fundamental to the success or otherwise of Labor's 1983 campaign.

What is the nature of the differences between our marginal 1983 seats and the national means? Are these differences due simply to variations in the concentrations of the pro-Labor and anti-Labor groups or are there other more significant demographic factors which separate marginal seats from the rest of the electorate?

The earlier work infers that Labor's major problem in 1983 is getting back the support on a national level of the 30-44 year olds who in the sixties and seventies comprised the major long-run volatile group. This group provided the demographic base of the Labor Government in 1972 and 1974. It swung away from Labor in 1975 and 1977 and remained neutral in 1980.

The earlier work also infers that this group is concentrated in the 1983 marginal seats.

However the only way to be sure of this and to isolate other distinguishing characteristics of the marginal seats is to complete some sort of rigorous demographic analysis.

This is the subject matter of the current project.

Methodology: What would be the most efficient swing (MES)

for the ALP in 1983? The answer is the swing which would gain Labor no votes at all (necessarily) in non-marginal seats, but which would gain just the required amount of swing, and no more in marginal Government seats.

In this fashion Labor could win 24 of the most marginal Government seats with disproportionate swings totalling only 33,500 votes.

If we add these votes and seats to the 1980 figures and assume no net swings in non-marginal seats, then Labor could win 75 seats with just over 50 percent of the national preferred vote.

To arrive at these figures I took the Parliamentary Legislative Research Service's calculations of the 2PP swings required to lose all Government marginal seats needing less than a 2.9 percent swing.

I added 0.1 percent to each of these figures and then calculated the absolute numbers of votes involved.

The remaining 101 seats were ignored for the purposes of this exercise. Any swing concentrated in marginal seats will obviously have some spill-over in practice in all other seats. The positive effect of this spill-over would be more than enough to retain all marginal Labor seats. (The 0.1 percent was added to the Research Service's figures to allow for a margin of error and to bring these figures closer to the 2PP figures used by Malcolm Mackerras. In fact this appears to be the calculation employed by Mr. Mackerras for almost all of his own figures for marginal seats).

The most efficient swings for all seats are set out below in table 6.3.

No.	Marginal Seats	2PP Swing to win	Marginal seats by State
1	Barton	0.5	N.S.W. = 6
2	Calare	1.8	
3	Eden Monaro	2.9	
4	Lowe	1.2	
5	Phillip	0.7	
6	Riverina	0.6	
7	Bendigo	1.4	VIC. = 4
8	Casey	2.0	
9	Chisholm	2.2	
10	Deakin	2.4	
11	Bowman	1.3	QLD. = 5
12	Dawson	2.5	
13	Herbert	1.0	
14	Leichhardt	1.2	
15	Fadden	1.6	
16	Kingston	0.3	S.A. = 1
17	Canning	1.9	W.A. = 4
18	Moore	2.8	
19	Perth	1.1	
20	Stirling	2.0	
21	Denison	2.1	TAS. = 3
22	Franklin	2.7	
23	Wilmot	0.2	
24	N.T.	1.3	TER. = 1

TABLE 6.3



The MES figures for the 24 seats in table 6.3 were then run as a separate computer-based correlational analysis incorporating the 142 demographic and political variables used in projects four and five.

This was the reverse process of the post-election analyses used in projects one to five, where correlations were calculated for actual observed swings.

In project six we are taking an ideal theorised swing (the MES) - and then seeing what combination of demographic variables could produce it.

Using this methodology it is possible to measure and evaluate not just the demographic variations in the total sample of key marginal seats, but also the political significance of the variations within the sample itself.

The results: These are presented in the form of pearson correlation tables. A large positive pearson correlation for any demographic variable indicates that the variable is very important for Labor's 1983 campaign - a large negative correlation indicates the reverse.

<u>AGE GROUPS</u>													
	18- 19	20- 24	25- 29	30- 34	35- 39	40- 44	45- 49	50- 54	55- 59	60- 64	65- 69	70- 74	75+
MALES	+28	-05	00	+20	+38	+51	+14	-19	-27	-29	-22	-22	-32
FEMALES	+13	-06	+11	+28	+45	+46	00	-15	-23	-29	-27	-27	-26

TABLE 6.4

(AGE correlations x 100)

The age correlations shown in table 6.4 reveal a strong bias in the key seats towards the volatile age groups 30-44.



There is also a smaller bias towards first-time voters aged 18-19.

The positive correlations for males and females aged 35-44 are among the strongest for the current project and confirm the importance for Labor in 1983 of winning back the level of support it held in the early seventies from this age group.

OCCUPATION GROUPS											
	PROF	ADMIN	CLER	SALES	FARM	MINE	TRANSP	CRAFT	SERV	ARMY	ORS
MALES	-21	+20	+07	+07	+05	-21	+01	-14	-13	-12	-21
FEMALES	00	-13	+04	+23	+04	-06	-17	-18	+07	+01	-14

TABLE 6.5

(OCCUPATION correlations x 100)

Table 6.5 reveals the weak bias in the key seats towards any major occupational groups. The marginal bias towards the anti-Labor male Administrative workers and female sales workers is what we could have expected from the marginal anti-Labor nature of the key seats.

There is a correspondingly-weak bias against miners in table 6.5 which I find a little surprising.

In summary, the 1983 campaign need play no occupational favourites - to the extent to which the campaign is targetted on key seats. The occupational component of the 1983 campaign therefore could more usefully be based on criteria dealing with long-run volatility, the Australian Democrat voters and long-run drifts to the ALP.

FEMALE WORKERS	NEVER MARRIED	NOW MARRIED	SEP/WIDOWED/DIVORCED
CORRELATIONS	-22	+27	-32

TABLE 6.6

(FEMALE WORKERS correlations x 100)

Table 6.6 shows the marital status of the female workforce, confirming the importance for Labor in 1983 of winning continued increasing support from married female workers.

	INCOME GROUPS \$'000s										
	<3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9 - 12	12- 15	15- 18	18+
MALES	-22	-21	-11	-15	-28	-22	-15	+16	+30	+33	+39
FEMALES	+13	+09	-01	-27	-25	-10	-01	+14	+29	+34	+30
FAMILIES	-38	-21	-24	-26	-36	-34	-11	+23	+20	+19	+34

TABLE 6.7

(INCOME GROUPS correlations x 100)

The income groups in table 6.7 show a weak bias towards the low-income females (a link with the female sales workers in table 6.5).

There is also a strong bias in favour of high-income males, females and families earning more than \$9,000 a year in 1976. This represents \$14,400 and over on today's CPI figures (for the third quarter of 1981).

Families earning \$9,000 to \$15,000 in 1976 were also pro-Labor and pro-Democrat in 1980.

QUALIFICATIONS	DEGREE HOLDERS	DIPLOMA S	TECHNICIAN'S CERTIFICATE	TRADE CERTIFICATE	NO QUALS
CORRELATIONS	+04	+37	+20	+03	00

TABLE 6.8

(QUALIFICATIONS correlations x 100)

Table 6.8 shows a strong bias in the key seats towards the group of diplomates and a weaker bias towards persons with

technician's certificates. Both of these groups are pro-Democrat, anti-Labor and marginally volatile.

HOUSING	HOME OWNERS	HOME BUYERS	PUBLIC TENANTS	PRIVATE TENANTS
CORRELATIONS	-16	+28	+25	-32

HOUSING	MONTHLY MORTGAGE < \$99	MONTHLY MORTGAGE \$100-149	MONTHLY MORTGAGE \$150-199	MONTHLY MORTGAGE \$200+	WEEKLY RENT \$0-29
CORRELATIONS	+03	+22	+05	-23	+02

TABLE 6.9

(HOUSING correlations x 100)

Table 6.9 shows results which correlate with the age-group results in table 6.4 in that home-buyers are again shown to be a key group for Labor in 1983. Home-buyers comprise a pro-Labor group which is strongly linked with the Australian Democrats and the long-run volatile voters; the group swung marginally to Labor in 1980 and provided the electoral base for the 1972 and 1974 Labor Governments.

The key home-buyers mortgage group in the marginal Government seats is the group of home-buyers paying \$100 to \$149 a month (\$160 to \$240 on today's CPI figures). This was a non-aligned group in 1977 which swung strongly to Labor in 1980.

The more "up-market" group of home-buyers paying \$150 to \$199 monthly mortgages in 1976 was relatively neutral in terms of its disproportionate location in key seats. However this group is marginally pro-Labor and pro-Democrat. For these reasons, this should also be a key target group for 1983.

Table 6.9 also shows that the key long-run volatile pro-Labor group of public housing tenants is located disproportionately



in the key Government seats Labor has to win in 1983 to form a Government. For these reasons, this group should also join the list of target housing groups in 1983.

PENSIONS	AGED PSRS	WIDOWS PSRS	WAR/REPAT PSRS	SUPER-ANNUANTS	UNEMP PSRS	TOTAL PSRS
CORRELATIONS	-32	+14	-03	-07	-11	-26

TABLE 6.10

(PENSIONS correlations x 100)

Pensions are an issue which won't win Labor many votes in 1983 (the group is very stable). Even if Labor's vote did rise among pensioners in 1983, table 6.10 shows that this would not win any key seats. For these reasons, any campaign promises pitched at this low-income anti-Labor group (anti-Labor except for widows and unemployed persons) would represent a waste of campaign resources if these promises were made at the expense of other key groups, such as home-buyers.

FAMILIES	HEAD ONLY	HEAD & SPOUSE	HEAD & SPOUSE + KIDS	NO CHILDREN FAMILIES	ONE-CHILD FAMILIES
CORRELATIONS	-33	-35	+33	-33	-37

FAMILIES	TWO-CHILD FAMILIES	THREE-CHILD FAMILIES	FOUR+ CHILD FAMILIES	PERSONS AGED 0-4	KIDS 0-5 MINDED
CORRELATIONS	+06	+52	+14	+23	-24

TABLE 6.11

(FAMILIES correlations x 100)



Table 6.11 shows the family-related component of the key 1983 seats.

The age group table 6.4 infers, and table 6.11 confirms, that the key family status group in 1983 is the group comprising a husband and spouse and children, especially families with children aged 0-4 years.

The strong bias towards three-child families is interesting.

The correlation matrix shows that three-child families are positively linked with the older volatile age groups, female sales workers, married women workers, low-income females, children aged 0-4 years, families with two or more cars and the Australian-born protestant (rural) groups. (A more detailed description is provided on page 70 of project four.)

Three-child families comprise a key target group in 1983 as the positive correlation for this group of .52 is the largest in the current project - and the group swung markedly to Labor in 1980.

TRANSPORT/ MOBILITY	NO CAR	ONE CAR	TWO CARS	THREE + CARS	PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS
CORRELATIONS	-36	-32	+41	+26	-06

TRANSPORT/ MOBILITY	NOT IN HOME 1976	NOT IN HOME 1975	NOT IN HOME 1971
CORRELATIONS	00	-03	+10

TABLE 6.12

(TRANSPORT/MOBILITY correlations x 100)

Table 6.12 shows the newly-developing, outer-urban bias in the sample of key seats, with a strong up-market/rural bias towards persons with two or more cars. Two-car families are

an anti-Labor, pro-Democrat group, while three-plus car families are an anti-Labor, anti-Democrat and pro-Country Party group.

Table 6.12 also shows a slight bias towards persons who (in 1976) had moved into their homes within the preceding five years.

ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	O'SEAS- BORN	AUST- BORN	UK & EIRE	CENTRAL EUROPE	EASTERN EUROPE	SOUTHERN EUROPE
CORRELATION	-06	+06	+08	+02	-15	-18

ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	ASIA	CATHOLIC	C. OF E.	NO RELIGION NOT STATED	UNITING & LUTHERAN
CORRELATION	-14	00	+15	+06	-17

TABLE 6.13

(ETHNICITY/RELIGION correlations x 100)

Table 6.13 shows that the key seats are relatively neutral in terms of ethnicity and religion, with a slight bias towards the Church of England/No religion group, Australian-born persons and persons born in the UK.

POLITICAL	1977 ALP 2PP	1980 ALP 2PP	1977-80 ALP SWING	1980 AUST. DEMOCRAT
CORRELATION	-40	-33	+24	+13

TABLE 6.14

(POLITICAL correlations x 100)

Table 6.14 shows that the group of key seats are negatively correlated with Labor's 1977 and 1980 voters, and positively correlated with the 1980 pro-Labor swing and the 1980 Democrat voters.

In order to win Government in 1983 Labor therefore has to wage a campaign essentially different from that required to retain the support of pro-Labor groups.

Table 6.14 shows that a 1983 campaign aimed simply at increasing Labor's share of seats by increasing Labor's base "blue-collar" vote would be doomed to failure. This sort of campaign cannot hope to win marginal Government seats for Labor.

Table 6.14 indicates Labor was at least partly on the right track with its 1977-80 swing. However, in the absence of another major national pro-Labor swing in 1983, Labor strategists must formulate a campaign aimed at producing a correlation of at least .50 between the 1980-83 swing and the 1983 key seats.

This requires an interpretation of the current key seat results in the light of earlier information dealing with long-run volatility, long-run drifts in support for and against the ALP between 1966 and 1980, and the 1980 Democrat voters. This will be discussed in project seven.

The key seat summary is as follows:

AGE: 18-19, 30-44.

OCCUPATION: Male Administrative, Female Sales.

FEMALE WORKERS: Married female workers.

INCOME: Males, Females and Families earning more than \$9,000 a year in 1976 (\$14,400 on today's CPI figures), plus very low-income females.

QUALIFICATIONS: Persons with Diplomas and Technicians' Certificates.

HOUSING: Home buyers, especially those paying monthly mortgages in 1976 of \$100 to \$149 a month (\$160 to \$240 a month on today's CPI figures). Public Housing tenants.

FAMILY STATUS: Families with children, especially those with children aged 0-4 and those with three children.

TRANSPORT: Families with two or more cars.

ETHNICITY/RELIGION: Slight bias towards persons born in Australia and in the UK, those of the Church of England faith and those with no religion.

POLITICAL: 1977-80 pro-Labor swingers and 1980 Australian Democrat voters.