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The Presidentialisation of Australian Politics? Kevin Rudd's Leadership of the Australian Labor Party

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The presidentialisation debate centres on the question of whether contemporary political leaders are more powerful than their predecessors. This article applies the presidentialisation thesis of Poguntke and Webb (2005) to the period in which Kevin Rudd led the federal parliamentary Labor Party in Australia. Their model identifies three distinct faces of presidentialisation: the executive face, the party face and the electoral face. This article argues that the evidence of presidentialisation under Rudd's leadership is mixed. The most compelling evidence is reflected in how Rudd interacted with the Labor Party, rather than his interaction with the executive or impact on voting behaviour.

Keywords: Australian politics; political leadership; political parties; presidentialisation

Introduction

The parameters framing the debate about whether Australian political leaders are becoming more powerful have changed in the past decade. Instead of discussing the question of cabinet versus prime ministerial government, the debate has focused on the merits of the presidentialisation thesis. Poguntke and Webb (2005) proposed one of the more systematic versions of this thesis. At the heart of their model is the idea of inherent tension between political parties and leaders. Poguntke and Webb's (2005) model and the presidentialisation thesis more broadly have been criticised of late, with Dowding (2012, 1) calling for the thesis 'to be expunged from political science vocabulary'.

According to Dowding (2012, 2), 'the forces identified as presidentialization are better seen as personalisation of politics'. He contends that any centralisation of decision-making within the executive entails a shift away from 'presidentialism'. He argues that any power that prime ministers have accrued makes them less, not more, like the president of the United States (US) because prime ministers have always been more powerful than presidents. This article agrees with much that Dowding (2012, 2) has to say on changes in liberal democracies. Dowding

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acknowledges that there is evidence of centralisation, growth in institutional resources and a personalisation of politics. This article, however, contends that the presidentialisation thesis is not merely the personalisation thesis re-packaged.

Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny (2011, 21) demonstrated that the personalisation thesis does not sufficiently account for structural changes within the executive and within parties, both of which can enhance the capacity for leaders to dominate. Furthermore, Poguntke and Webb's (2005) presidentialisation thesis does not concern specific regime types, but an ideal type of presidential system. Their model is a work of comparative political analysis that moves the debate beyond a comparison of specific regime types. Poguntke and Webb (2005) achieved two things by using a comparative approach that increases the generalisability of the thesis.¹ They succeeded in broadening the debate, and increased the clarity of definition and conceptualisation. This article disputes Dowding's (2012, 16) argument that these changes (if there are any) in parties and the executive are not interconnected. One of Poguntke and Webb's (2005, 2012) achievements is to show that these factors need to be viewed collectively. Changes in one area can have profound implications in another. For instance, changes to the party can transform the way that leaders interact with their colleagues in government.

This article uses the model of Poguntke and Webb (2005) to examine presidentialisation in Australia. It analyses Kevin Rudd's leadership (2006–10) of the federal parliamentary Australian Labor Party (ALP). This case is worthy of examination because political parties in Australia are strong, highly disciplined and 'more than ever the key to understanding the polity' (Jaensch 2006, 24). I show that in the context of a highly organised and dominant party, there is evidence of presidentialisation during this period. This is most notable in the way that leaders interact with their parties, while in other areas the evidence is mixed.

The Presidentialisation Thesis

Modern debate about political leaders dominating their governments in the Westminster system can be traced to the 1960s in Britain and to the thesis of Mackintosh (1968) and Crossman (1963, 51) which declared that cabinet government was dead and prime ministerial government the orthodoxy. Concerns about the increasing power of leaders gave rise to a number of studies across Europe examining 'presidential'-like leaders within parliamentary systems. Foley (2000, 25), in *The British Presidency*, argued that leaders were more detached from their governments and parties than they had been in the past, and had become autonomous agents within the system. Foley's (2000) work was a systematic account of the British position, and it was not until Poguntke and Webb (2005) adopted a comparative politics framework that the presidentialisation thesis advanced beyond debates about indigenous idiosyncrasies to a discussion about the causal effects driving changes across democratic systems.

Poguntke and Webb (2005) based their model on what they perceived as the three distinct faces of presidentialisation: the executive face, the party face and the electoral face. They noted that each of these 'revolves around the tension between political

¹Karvonen (2010) has criticised the thesis for lack of comparability between data sets. Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny (2011) have rebutted these criticisms.

parties and individual leaders' (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 7). The executive face, while interrelated with the party face, is specifically focused on how leaders interact with their governments. Central to this is any growth in the formal powers of leaders, as well as evidence of autonomous decision-making. In Poguntke and Webb's (2005, 9) terms: 'While partified government means governing through parties, presidentialized government implies governing past parties.'

When examining the party face, Poguntke and Webb (2005, 9) were looking for a 'shift in intra-party power to the benefit of the leader'. This shift may be related to the third face, the electoral face, in which the leader appeals beyond the party to the electorate for a support base. Typically, this would result from structural changes to the party, which give leaders more formal powers, or from a concentration of power and resources in the office of the leader (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 9). The electoral face has three central components: campaign style, media focus and voting behaviour. Campaign style concerns the question of whether there has been a growing emphasis on leadership appeals in election campaigns. Media focus examines whether the media is focusing more on leaders than previously, and voting behaviour examines whether leaders are becoming more important in the choices of voters (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 10). This article uses this framework to examine presidentialisation in the Australian context.

The Case Study

Kevin Rudd became leader of the federal parliamentary Labor Party at a time when its fortunes were on the rise. In November 2006, Labor was ahead in the two-party-preferred vote (51–49 per cent), and two months later its lead had increased further (55–45 per cent) (Newspoll 2006, 2007a). Rudd rose after building a public profile from 2001 onwards due to appearances on the morning television show, *Sunrise* (Jackman 2008, 30–3; Macklin 2007, 5). This was not Rudd's only vehicle for self-promotion, however, and he became a frequent contributor in the print media. In October 2006, he wrote the first of his essays for *The Monthly* magazine, titled 'Faith in Politics' (Rudd 2006a). He followed this up in November with 'Howard's Brutopia' (Rudd 2006b). The diversity of exposure led Dyrenfurth and Bongiorno (2011, 187) to observe that: 'Rudd seemed to have both the battlers and the chattering classes covered.' Throughout 2007, Labor was comfortably ahead in the polls despite the Coalition government's attempts to wedge Labor on climate change and Indigenous affairs. The government's efforts to discredit the Your Rights at Work campaign by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) – developed to oppose the unpopular Work Choices industrial relations legislation – also failed. On 24 November 2007, Rudd became Australia's 26th prime minister.

The Rudd leadership period, which lasted until June 2010, provides an informative case study through which to examine presidentialisation. Rudd was often accused, during and after his period of leadership, of being autocratic (Kelly 2009, 1; Stuart 2010, 263). Moreover, the spectacular fashion in which he was removed from office connects with a central tenet of the thesis. Namely, that in presidentialised systems, candidates who possess electoral appeal but little support within their parties may increase in number (Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny 2011, 9). The following sections examine the Rudd leadership period using Poguntke and Webb's (2005) model of presidentialisation. This begins with an examination of the executive face.

The Executive Face

As soon as Rudd took office, it was clear that he knew how he wanted his government to run (Stuart 2010, 9–16). This meant positioning himself at the centre of decision-making, involving himself in the minutiae of policymaking and controlling the agenda. The level of autonomy that he possessed has been widely criticised. For instance, it has been claimed that Rudd was the most powerful prime minister in Australian history (Stewart 2009, 14), and that he was introducing a new brand of governance to Australia (Kelly 2009, 1; Robert Ray cited in Taylor and Uren 2010, 147; Stewart 2009, 12). According to David Marr, a biographer of Rudd, one of the more widely publicised examples of his micro-management was the way that cabinet interacted with decisions of the Strategic Priorities and Budget Committee (SPBC). Marr (2010, 68) reported that cabinet ministers were allowed to look at a folder that contained the decisions of the committee, but the folder could not be taken out of the room.

There are also reports that Rudd and the other members of the SPBC – Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner and Treasurer Wayne Swan – marginalised cabinet (Kelly 2009, 1; Taylor and Uren 2010, 83). It is claimed that cabinet submissions were only circulated the day before meetings, and that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was becoming the choke point for all government decisions (Marr 2010, 68; Stewart 2009, 16; Stuart 2010, 167–68). The SPBC centralised decision-making in both initiating the stimulus packages during the Global Financial Crisis and abandoning the Emissions Trading Scheme (Marr 2010, 80; Stuart 2010, 68–70; Taylor and Uren 2010, 41–83). The pre-eminence of a particular committee certainly was not new, especially when one considers the elevated position of the Expenditure Review Committee during the prime ministership of Bob Hawke. It appears, however, that Rudd was sidelining cabinet more than even Hawke had done. The SPBC and Rudd were deciding government policy, and cabinet was becoming little more than a rubber stamp (Grattan 2010, 1; Stewart 2009, 14; Taylor 2010).

Rudd must shoulder much of the blame for the centralisation that occurred during his time as prime minister, and he has admitted that he made mistakes (Coorey 2011). Nonetheless, prime ministers are ultimately accountable to their parties and leaders in the Australian system cannot be expected to transcend existing institutions. Some of these institutions, namely caucus and cabinet, failed to act when they were being marginalised (Oakes 2010a, 50; 2010b, 10). Instead of warning the prime minister early in his tenure – as Hawke was warned during the 1985 controversy about US missile tests in Australian waters, and Whitlam was warned when he wanted to split the ministry into inner and outer groupings – the caucus allowed Rudd to continue on unchecked until it finally ‘issued an overdue reminder of its enormous potential power in June 2010’ (Dyrenfurth and Bongiorno 2011, 193). As much as Rudd may have wished to be an autonomous actor and unilaterally dominate his government, this was never possible, and no formal or structural change occurred. Rudd's dominance in the executive face, as understood by Poguntke and Webb (2005), was entirely conditional.

Notwithstanding this outcome, it is also true that decision-making has become further centralised due to an increasing concentration of resources around the prime minister (Department of Finance 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Stuart 2010, 167–68; Tiernan 2007). Australian prime ministers are in a more powerful

position than British prime ministers. For example, they receive centralised advice through the PMO and Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and access a variety of resources that would be the envy of their British counterparts (Tiernan and Weller 2010, 11). What prime ministers can actually achieve with this greater centralisation and pluralisation of advice is, however, contested (Rhodes, Wanna and Weller 2006, 86–97). Nonetheless, the evidence indicates that leaders, within the institutional parameters of a parliamentary democracy have gained greater capacity to centralise decision-making. This opportunity was already available when Rudd became prime minister. The issue that cuts to the core of the Rudd period is the way that Rudd interacted with the Labor Party because parties are supposed to be the ultimate constraint on prime ministers. Yet, the capacity of parties to constrain leaders has been eroded by a variety of factors, including, for the Labor Party, the decline of strong intra-party institutions. The capacity of leaders to dominate has been structurally enhanced by the increasing concentration of power in the hands of party elites.

The Party Face

In a continuation of what happened under previous leaders, it was soon apparent during the Rudd period that the parliamentary leadership intended to bypass and/or dominate the internal institutions of the party. Central to this was the zeal of the parliamentary leadership for controlling outcomes and how events were perceived in the media. When Rudd took over the leadership, he outlined immediately that he would not be tied down by a rule established in 1905 that stated that caucus alone had the right to pick the front bench (Hartcher 2009, 146; Jackman 2008, 92–3). According to Jackman (2008, 92–3), ‘Kevin basically told the faction leaders, I know there is a rule in place, but I’ll have who I like, thank you.’ The decision was reported as a major change in thinking for the party (*The Australian* 2006; Franklin 2007, 3; Karvelas 2007; *The Mercury* 2007).

The reality, however, was very different to that portrayed in the media. It was clear that Rudd was still dealing with factional leaders despite what he said publicly (Hartcher 2009, 145–46; Stuart 2010, 69). When the initial plan for the ministry was drawn up, the Right faction was significantly under-represented. After Rudd consulted factional leaders, the ministry was re-drawn to better reflect the makeup of the caucus. John Faulkner from the Left and Robert Ray from the Right advised Rudd that it was not wise to declare war simultaneously on the Right faction and its union supporters (Hartcher 2009, 146–47; Stewart 2009, 17). The one area in which many would assume evidence of greater leadership control is in fact the one area where this was not the case. Indeed, Lindsay Tanner (author interview 2010), Bob McMullan (author interview 2010), Gary Gray (author interview 2010) and Chris Evans (author interview 2010) all agree that the change made very little difference to who was selected.² The leader will always have to confront the weighing up of various state and factional interests.

²Lindsay Tanner was Finance Minister in the Rudd Government. Bob McMullan is a former National Secretary and minister in the Keating government. Gary Gray is a former National Secretary and in 2012 became Special Minister of State in the Gillard government. Chris Evans was a minister in the Rudd and Gillard governments and leader of the Australian Labor Party in the Senate.

More substantial evidence of presidentialisation is found in the control that the leadership exerted over the national conference and pre-selections. In the period of Rudd's leadership, there were two national conferences. Both were criticised for being stage-managed and 'politically safe' (Schubert and Murphy 2007, 4). The most controversial aspect of the 2007 National Conference was the decision to give Labor's head office the power to intervene in pre-selection battles. Farr (2007, 13) reported that some delegates viewed this decision as 'another example of the party bosses abusing their power'. The conference resolution noted that since the election was only months away and to maximise the chances of success, the conference gives the National Executive 'specific authority to pre-select candidates in the House of Representatives for the 2007 federal election' (ALP National Platform and Constitution 2007). The resolution also noted that this would only apply to 2007 federal pre-selections and that this process would be applied exclusively to New South Wales (NSW) or where 'application is sought by the Administrative Committee of another State or Territory Branch, and only in those seats where the National Executive Committee has unanimously agreed upon a process to select a candidate' (ALP National Platform and Constitution 2007).

In reality, the application of the policy was much wider than initially envisaged. At least 10 seats in NSW alone had their candidates chosen by the National Executive (Coorey and Humphries 2007). The process also continued for pre-selections for the 2010 poll and it was discovered that the National Executive was not using any motion passed at the 2007 National Conference, but was instead using the plenary powers under Section 7(f) in the ALP Constitution (Rodney Cavalier, former NSW Labor minister, email correspondence with author, 15 February 2012). These powers, which had been used very rarely until 2007, were now being used extensively to decide candidates for pre-selection in NSW as well as Queensland (*ALP Southern Highlands Newsletter* 2010; Maddison 2010). Rodney Cavalier argued that the leadership group has 'presumed to determine pre-selections for any seat that Labor has a chance of winning wherever the local membership might select a candidate unacceptable to that group' (Cavalier 2010, 185; see also Faulkner 2011, 8). Cavalier added of Rudd that: 'No previous Labor Leader has so casually but consistently used the National Executive to impose his will in candidate selection' (email correspondence with author, 28 April 2010).

This increasingly elite-driven domination of the party was also apparent at the 2009 National Conference, which was described as the most 'carefully stage managed ALP Conference ever' (Keane 2009) and 'pre-approved water torture' (Crook 2009). At the heart of these criticisms was the way decisions were handled. Few formal votes were taken as a 'Government appointed four-man troubleshooting team' was employed to intervene when any of the 400 delegates strayed from the script and shifted from a program which had already been vetted by the PMO (Stewart 2009, 16; see also Cavalier 2010, 184; Crabb 2009). Hence, the evidence of presidentialisation in the party face is clear based on Poguntke and Webb's (2005) model. In the electoral face, however, the evidence is more ambiguous.

The Electoral Face

Scholars have frequently commented that leaders have dominated campaigns and become more presidential (Weller and Young 2000, 163), and that prime ministers have acted in a presidential manner during elections (Lloyd 1992, 132). When

considering the electoral face using Poguntke and Webb's (2005) model, three factors need to be examined: campaign style, media focus and voting behaviour. The campaign style of the one election that Rudd contested as leader was deeply personalised and extended well beyond the actual campaign. According to Williams (2008, 108), throughout 2007, both major parties engaged in the 'long faux campaign'.

Labor focused on marketing Rudd as soon as he became leader with the release of two television commercials. The first, often referred to as the Eumundi ad, showed Rudd talking about the education of children, and the second was an attempt by the Party to brand Rudd as an 'economic conservative' (Hartcher 2009, 175; see also Stuart 2010, 34). In August 2007, the ALP launched its 'Kevin07' marketing blitz with t-shirts, websites and blogging from Rudd in the form of his 'KMAIL' (Jackman 2008, 159). The approach, intended to link up with the Party's 'New Leadership' theme, focused on attracting young voters. Rudd's appearances on FM radio and youth television programs, as well as the use of *YouTube*, *MySpace* and *Facebook*, were meant to provide clear contrasts with the government and, in particular, the ageing Prime Minister, John Howard (Crook 2009, 2; Gibson and McAllister 2011; Megalogenis 2008, 326–30; Van Onselen and Senior 2008, 172–73).

When the 2007 election campaign proper was finally called, the government's tactics were clear. It believed a long campaign would test Rudd's discipline and endurance (Hartcher 2009, 241–42). The campaign, however, which lasted six weeks, mirrored much of the rest of the year, with climate change and the Work Choices legislation being central. At the campaign launch on 14 November, two days following the Coalition's launch, Labor and Rudd again promoted their 'economic conservatism' by pledging to stop the 'reckless spending' (Williams 2008, 117). While the Coalition focused on traditional electioneering techniques in the print media, the Labor Party pushed the boundaries of its campaign into new areas. In the final week of the campaign, Rudd appeared on the youth television program *Rove*, further highlighting the differences in age between the leaders. This was complemented by the use of skywriting and text messaging, as well as sending out 300,000 DVDs that featured Rudd (Jackman 2008, 193). These techniques, combined with the use of new media, accentuated the deeply personalised campaign of the Labor Party.

When examining the media focus element of the electoral face, the key is to examine whether 'media coverage of politics focuses more on leaders' (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 345). In particular, 'growing emphasis on leadership appeals in election campaigning' should be noticeable (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 10). Throughout 2007, it was clear that since the Australian economy was still strong, the perceived ability to maintain this strength would be a central issue. The focus of the media was developed within this framework, with the key issues being water, climate change, interest rates and the Work Choices legislation (Younane 2008, 62). When the ALP launched its 'Kevin07' campaign, and with the ACTU's Your Rights At Work campaign continuing, there appeared to be little chance of exposure for other key actors. Goot's (2008, 102–06) study of the coverage of candidates demonstrates this. Rudd's level of coverage was roughly double that of his colleagues in the shadow cabinet across all mediums. This is largely consistent with the literature on other campaigns, and highlights the emphasis placed on leaders by major parties and the mainstream media during Australia's federal election campaigns (Lloyd 1992, 110–37; Walter and Strangio 2007, 54–63).

The third element of the electoral face is leader effects on voting behaviour. Regarding the 2007 election, it appears that the 'Rudd factor' was initially

overstated (Williams 2008, 123). Several studies have shown that leadership was not a key factor in the 2007 election result. The Liberal Party's own research suggested that 'the three principal reasons for the Howard Government's defeat were the Prime Minister's long incumbency, the Government's position on climate change, and *Work Choices*' (Hartcher 2009, 148). The ACTU produced figures which showed that '*Work Choices* was driving 8 per cent of Coalition voters to the Labor camp, while only 1 per cent were going the other way' (cited in Megalogenis 2008, 340).

Browne and Watson (2008, 5), who conducted an exit poll to find out which issues mattered most to voters, discovered that: 'Those voters who felt leadership to be very important ... were only about one quarter as likely to vote ALP, compared with LNP' (see also Newspoll 2007b). Though Rudd was personally more popular than Howard, the evidence suggests that policies, rather than Rudd's leadership, were central to the victory. Rudd's leadership provided enough stability so that concerns previously held about the Labor Party were sufficiently negated and voters could shift their vote without fearing any radical departure from the status quo. Nonetheless, this did not translate directly into a personal impact on voting behaviour. This adds weight to McAllister's (2007, 3) argument that during elections, leaders clearly matter but usually less than is often supposed.

The electoral face of Rudd's leadership highlights the contingent nature of leader effects in the presidentialisation thesis. Parties and the media are focusing more on leaders, but the direct impact on voting behaviour remains less than what might be expected. Rudd's effect on voting was to neutralise the scare campaigns and negative publicity often associated with Labor Party leaders. In essence, support for Rudd during the election was 'soft' support as it was based more on dislike of the alternative rather than new policies, with some notable exceptions. Put simply, it was the union movement, not the Labor Party, that was central to the 2007 victory. The electoral face of presidentialisation for the Rudd period shows how personalised the election campaign became. It also shows a disparity between the strategies of the parties and voters, who were still predominantly voting on issues rather than personalities.

Conclusion

By using Poguntke and Webb's (2005) model, some evidence of presidentialisation in all of the three faces can be identified during the Rudd leadership period. Poguntke and Webb, however, were specifically interested in structural changes. In the executive face, it is clear that centralised policymaking, through the SPBC in particular, had been strengthened, as was the marginalisation of cabinet and the caucus. Yet, these trends were heavily dependent on the style of the leader rather than any structural changes. In contrast, a trend is emerging of increasing resources in and around the PMO, and even those who advocate the core-executive thesis over presidentialisation acknowledge this fact (Holland 2002, 15; Rhodes, Wanna and Weller 2006, 95).³ In the party face, Rudd's leadership is almost uniquely consistent with what Poguntke and Webb (2005, 9) described as the logic of presidentialisation:

³While the core-executive and presidentialisation theses differ regarding the constraints on prime ministers, Bennister (2007, 328) has argued that 'many characteristics overlap: they are not mutually exclusive'.

It is likely that leaders who base their leadership on such contingent claims to a personalised mandate will seek to consolidate their leadership by enhancing their control of the party machinery, not least through appropriate statutory changes which give them more direct power over the party.

Tellingly, they noted that this may be risky and provoke the middle-level strata of the party: 'While they may have been prepared to accept leadership domination as long as it was contingent on (the promise of) electoral appeal, they are likely to resent the formalisation of such power' (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 9). In the end, Rudd, who Faulkner (cited in Stewart 2009, 17) argued was as 'dominant as any Labor leader we've seen since the birth of the modern Labor party under Whitlam', solely had electoral appeal on which to base his leadership.

In the electoral face, the 'Kevin07' campaign showed the extent to which election campaigns can become personalised. Yet, the evidence suggests that Rudd had little direct impact on voters shifting towards the ALP. Nonetheless, Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny's (2011, 8) argument about Blair – that while he might not have had a direct impact on voters' decisions, it is unlikely New Labour would have been as warmly embraced without him – may also be true of Rudd. Their argument that 'it is extremely difficult statistically to untangle the strict causality in the relationship between party images and leadership images' applies not only to the Rudd period, but to the Australian context generally (Webb, Poguntke and Kolodny 2011, 8).

Poguntke and Webb (2005) argued that they were looking for leaders enjoying an increase in resources as well as an increase in autonomy from their parties, within the executive. Also, they were looking for any sign of electoral processes becoming increasingly leadership centred. During the Rudd period, the most compelling signs of growing autonomy and resources were in the party face. This was most apparent in the changing dynamic between the parliamentary leadership and the rank-and-file membership, most visibly in how the national conference was conducted and how candidates were pre-selected. While the changing nature of the ALP has been written about extensively in the last 20 years (Jaensch 1989; Thompson 1999), Poguntke and Webb's model provides a barometer against which to measure these changes. The changes that allowed the Labor leadership to wriggle free of the internal constraints of the party can be traced to Whitlam and were accentuated under Hawke, but it is clear that these were heightened further during the Rudd period.

The executive face of presidentialisation in Australia may not reveal as much as in other systems because Australian prime ministers have always enjoyed institutional advantages that British prime ministers, for example, have not. The party face of the presidentialisation thesis is consistent with other studies that have highlighted the increasing dominance of leaders in the major parties. This is where Poguntke and Webb's framework is at its strongest in the Australian context. In the electoral face, the model is useful in highlighting the extent to which both the media and parties focus on leaders during election campaigns. Unfortunately, the inability to show definitively the impact that leaders have on voters weakens any conclusions that can be drawn in this aspect of the presidentialisation thesis.

Poguntke and Webb's model of presidentialisation is one of the more systematic explanations of a thesis that is often viewed with a degree of scepticism. The framework they have created, which allows for comparative analysis, takes the thesis beyond the usual debates about single case studies and allows macro-level analysis

of the changes in democratic polities to be conducted. The evidence from this case study adds to the literature on presidentialisation by supporting much of Poguntke and Webb's thesis. While only representing a short period of time, it highlights how the logic of presidentialisation is identifiable in Australia. There appears to be a disconnect between the political class (parties and the media) on the one hand, and voters on the other. Poguntke and Webb (2011, 27) rightly argued that a leader's impact on voting behaviour may lie 'further back in the funnel of causality'. While Bean and McAllister (2009, 215) have gone some way to remedying this deficit in the literature, further research is required.

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