

# Gillard hangs on, but her uneasy coalition may have stormy waters ahead – Australian Federal election update

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In August, [Patrick Dunleavy](#) blogged that [every key 'Westminster model' country now had a hung Parliament](#), following Australia's election. With a referendum on introducing the Alternative Vote for House of Commons elections due in May 2011, and the coalition government due to announce plans for replacing the House of Lords with a PR-elected chamber in January, there is a real prospect that Britain's future constitutional and electoral arrangements may look thoroughly Australian in their design. [Chris Gilson](#) presents an update on post-coalition forming developments 'down under'.



Back in September, after a week of post-election uncertainty much akin to our own in May, the incumbent Labor Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard announced that she would be forming a minority government. The government now comprises 72 Labor MPs, 1 Green MP and 3 independent MPs, on which support for the government hinges as there are 74 MPs in opposition. The House is elected using the Alternative Vote (AV) system (for more information please see our [Simple guide to voting systems](#)), which is the system to be proposed for the UK in a referendum next May. We have updated our earlier table to reflect the final result:

## House of Representatives final election outcome

Party	<a href="#">Edit</a>		
	% votes	Seats	% seats
Australian Labor Party	38.5	72	49.7
Liberal/National party	43.2	72	48
The Greens	11.8	1	0.7
Country Liberal Party	0.3	1	0.7
Independent	2.5	4	2.7
Other parties	4.1	0	0
Totals	100	150	100

The coalition is a boon for the Australian Green party with (like the UK this year) their first seat in the lower house. As the third largest party in parliament, they will be able to use their influence, and Gillard is expected to press forward with environmental reforms, also hoping to erase the electorate's memory of her predecessor Kevin Rudd who failed to proceed with promised carbon trading legislation. To the surprise of some, Gillard has let Rudd back into government, with a [cabinet post](#) as Foreign Minister – a position in which he may be able to exercise some power, with his previous experience as a diplomat being one of his main assets.

What will be interesting to see will be how Labor holds together this ['rainbow coalition'](#). While the Greens can be relied on for support, the three rural, independent MPs in the new government have widely differing priorities, and may only support Gillard's government in matters of confidence and supply. One of the independents, Rob Oakeshott, has [declined a cabinet posting](#) as regional development Minister, which will ensure that he remains independent of the government in policy terms.

## Senate final election outcome



	won	cent	won	cent	won	cent	won	cent	won	cent	won	cent
New South Wales	3	39	2	36.6	1	10.7	0	0.9	0	0.8	0	12
Victoria	2	34.4	2	37.8	1	14.7	0	2.6	1	2.3	0	8.2
Queensland	3	41.5	2	29.4	1	12.8	0	3.4	0	0.5	0	12
Western Australia	3	43	2	29.7	1	14	0	1.1	0	0.8	0	11
South Australia	3	37.3	2	38.3	1	13.3	0	4.1	0	0.7	0	6.5
Tasmania	2	33.1	3	41.5	1	20.3	0	1.2	0	0.5	0	3.4
ACT	1	33.7	1	41.3	0	23.2	0	0	0	0	0	1.8
Northern Territory	1	40.9	1	34.6	0	13.6	0	0	0	0	0	10
Total	18		15		6		0		1		0	

The Australian senate results under STV are of special interest in the UK – the STV system is also widely recommended for the UK in replacing the House of Lords ([click here for more details](#)).

As in the UK, Australia's politicians have little prior experience of coalition government. With so little difference between the number of government and opposition MPs, Julia Gillard will no doubt be watching the UK's progress with interest.