

## **Kev's in denial, Julia's a lady in waiting**

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A lot of us seem to be changing our minds. Last week I said it was Kevin's to lose, and like many of my thoughts, it wasn't an original one. Now I'm trying to figure out how he can win it.

In his own party the banshees have started screaming and he may not even survive as ALP leader in the run-up to the election, which would be suicide for Labor, which we are being reminded yet again is actually an umbrella group for a bunch of smaller parties that hate each others' guts.

So a lot of us are standing around slack-jawed, wondering how it got to this when it actually was happening all along. Many people in the party didn't particularly like Kevin but were happy to hang onto his coat tails as long as he looked like he was leading them to the promised land. Which he did. Once.

Unfortunately in that line of work, once is never enough. Enough is never enough, and Kevin ran out of it ahead of schedule. Like the rest of us, he didn't seem to notice, although the opinion polls show we're now about three weeks ahead of him. You can only glean so much from a poll of 400 people, but when all of them are telling you they won't vote Labor this year, you can hit on some conclusions, such as the ALP is dead meat in Western Australia.

It's hard to believe they wouldn't win a single seat, but six months ago it also would have been hard to believe Kevin Rudd would be worried about job opportunities.

The Prime Minister's not winning any beauty contests either on his own turf, Queensland, but the real beauty of it is that he acts as though nothing is happening. Well, he does.

Last week he tried to threaten everybody with the idea of Tony Abbott becoming prime minister, except this is getting less threatening every day. Tony isn't the worry. The worry is the guy who gave us the minerals tax before he or anybody else around him figured out it was going to put Australia on the crap list of any investors who wanted to stop doing efficient business in quick coal and iron ore.

Tony didn't come up with the flunkie on global warming (he said the plan was hash from the outset) and Tony wasn't the one who dreamed up roofing insulation and school make-work construction to save the country from the global monetary crisis. Instead, Kevin wants to tax to death the one business that did.

There's nothing wrong with mining tax reform, as long as it's not robbery. Gerry Harvey, executive chairman of Harvey Norman, was probably one of the more kind of the critics when he said the Rudd government had handled the mining tax like 'bloody amateurs'. You can bet there are a lot of people in Kevin's own party who have a more colourful description, especially if they're worried about their re-election chances in September or October.

While the ABC television news (they completely ignored it Sunday night as it was really hitting the fan) and broadsheets in general don't want the story, it's got ahead of them. Kevin himself seems to be, to use the popular term, in denial. He either doesn't realise the mining tax was the final straw or hasn't noticed half his own party is ready to run him out of town. He seems more out of touch than a David Bowie comeback tour. The polls have seldom shown somebody bombing as quickly as Kevin has, but he acts as though his tea is still just a bit too hot.

To give him credit, he's probably blowing his cork behind the scenes, but publicly he's Cool Hand Luke. OK, a little on the wimpy side but you get the idea.

Today is his chance to show some flash at the caucus meeting. You keep hearing the job is Julia Gillard's for the asking, but outwardly she's showing about as much interest as the new Mr T has in becoming a Clairol girl.

You never know exactly what is going on in these characters' heads, though, and my bet is she'd jump at the chance if Key continues to implode. He's showing a talent for that and Julia may drop the hard-to-get act if this goes on much longer.