

Voting Labor on Saturday is best for the Northern Territory as Bill Shorten looks likely to become our new Prime Minister

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SATURDAY is a crucial day for the Northern Territory.

For many Territorians, this Federal Election has been a long time coming.

For much of the past three years we have seen the federal Coalition Government at war with the Territory Labor Government.

Adding to this problem, it has been difficult for the NT to get any traction federally because our only two MPs in the lower house of Parliament in Canberra — Luke Gosling and Warren Snowdon — are opposition Labor backbenchers.

Our sole Coalition representative in Canberra, retiring Senator Nigel Scullion, has used many of his media releases and media commitments during the past two years to attack the Gunner Government.

While much of the criticism has been justified, this political tactic has stifled the Territory's reputation in Canberra.

During its two terms in office, the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government has largely failed to deliver for the Territory.

The shocking levels of abuse and neglect of Aboriginal children wasn't even on their radar until this newspaper led a relentless campaign on the issue, eventually leading to then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visiting Tennant Creek.



The controversial NT News front page from last year

Since he has taken over as PM, Morrison has shown little to no interest in this issue which seriously threatens the future prosperity of the Northern Territory and Australia.

In the Coalition's past two terms in office, little progress has been made on Closing The Gap targets for indigenous Territorians.

These are important issues that need fixing with a Prime Minister leading from the front, working closely with the Territory Government.

The Coalition's much-touted Northern Australia agenda has led to little in the way of infrastructure and jobs for Territorians over the past six years, predominantly because it was the brainchild of ousted prime minister Tony Abbott.

The Coalition's Northern Australia failure highlights how the Territory has been a victim of their disunity and revolving door of PMs in the past six years.

Scott Morrison and Malcolm Turnbull two days before Turnbull was rolled as PM Morrison, like Scullion, has not been willing to put politics aside and has led the charge of negativity against the Gunner Government at the expense of working with them for a brighter future for Territorians.

When Cyclone Marcus brought an Australian capital city to its knees in March last year, Bill Shorten jumped on the first plane he could to see the devastation across Darwin.

Turnbull, who at the time was badly advised by his senior staff about the seriousness of the damage, didn't even turn up.

During the past three years, Shorten and his senior team have shown a far greater interest in the Territory's future than Morrison and his Coalition colleagues.

The polls are pointing to Shorten becoming our new Prime Minister on Saturday night.

Despite a tightening in the polls in recent weeks, it is highly likely Labor will form a majority government.

At a time when the Territory is at a significant crossroads with record levels of debt and a declining population, we can't afford the next three years to be like the past three years.

This is why Territorians should vote for Labor's Luke Gosling and Warren Snowdon to retain their seats of Solomon and Lingiari.

Labor Senator Malarndirri McCarthy will ensure at least three out of the four politicians representing the Territory in Canberra will be within the government's inner circle.

Many Territorians will rightly want to punish Labor for the performance of the Gunner Government, however, they need to think carefully about what a protest vote could mean for the Territory at a federal level.

The CLP's candidates in both seats, Kathy Ganley in Solomon and Jacinta Price in Lingiari, are unknown quantities and too much of a risk to vote into federal parliament at such a critical time for the Territory.

CLP candidate for Lingiari Jacinta Price and CLP candidate for Solomon Kathy Ganley, with PM Scott Morrison in Darwin, are too much of a risk to vote into Federal Parliament

Both have yet to prove the qualities required to be a federal representative of the Northern Territory.

It is highly likely a vote for Ganley and Price is a vote for two inexperienced opposition backbenchers.

Snowdon, barring a two-year hiatus, has represented the Territory in federal parliament since 1987.

Gosling has served a three-year apprenticeship as an opposition backbencher and expectations on him to deliver for Darwin and Palmerston will be much higher if he is re-elected alongside a Shorten Government.

Labor Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, Lingiari MP Warren Snowdon, Bill Shorten, Solomon MP Luke Gosling and WA Senator Pat Dodson during a visit to the Territory

If Shorten does become Prime Minister and Gosling and Snowdon retain their seats, this newspaper — as we have done for more than six decades — will be relentless in holding them accountable on their promises for the Territory.

They have promised better schools and better hospitals. They have promised a fair go for everyone. They have promised money for Kakadu quickly.

They have promised to invest heavily in tourism, make Northern Australia more of a focus and to develop our onshore gas industry. They have promised a new spotlight on issues affecting our indigenous people.

One of Shorten's first acts, if he is elected Prime Minister, should be to deliver a new and robust population plan to move more people out of the choking larger capital cities and into regional areas of Australia, including the Territory.

A Shorten Government would work far more effectively with the Gunner Government, benefiting Territorians immediately.

Economically, Shorten and treasurer-in-waiting Chris Bowen should not be judged on what previous federal Labor governments have delivered.

Their economic policies have come under intense scrutiny but only time will tell whether or not these policies will lead to a better Northern Territory and better Australia.

Shorten and Labor deserve a chance to lead our nation for the next three years, giving the Territory the best chance to prosper at such a crucial time.

If you don't want the next three years to be a lost opportunity for the Territory, it is important you vote Labor in Saturday's Federal Election.