



# **WESTERN SYDNEY DECIDES**

## **FEDERAL ELECTION 2025**



**CENTRE FOR  
WESTERN SYDNEY**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that its campuses occupy their traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Eora, Dharawal (also referred to as Tharawal) and Wiradjuri peoples and thanks them for their support of its work in their lands (Western Sydney and beyond).

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FEDERAL ELECTION 2025**  
A CENTRE FOR WESTERN SYDNEY  
ISSUES PAPER



**CENTRE FOR  
WESTERN SYDNEY**

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March 2025

**SUGGESTED CITATION:**

Marks, A. & Nance, T. (2025), Western Sydney  
Decides: Federal Election 2025  
Centre for Western Sydney



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## SPECIAL REPORT

MARCH 2025

# WESTERN SYDNEY DECIDES

PROFESSOR ANDY MARKS & TOM NANCE

Produced by the Centre for Western Sydney, this special report shows how Australia's fastest growing, most diverse, and politically contested region will shape the 2025 Federal election.

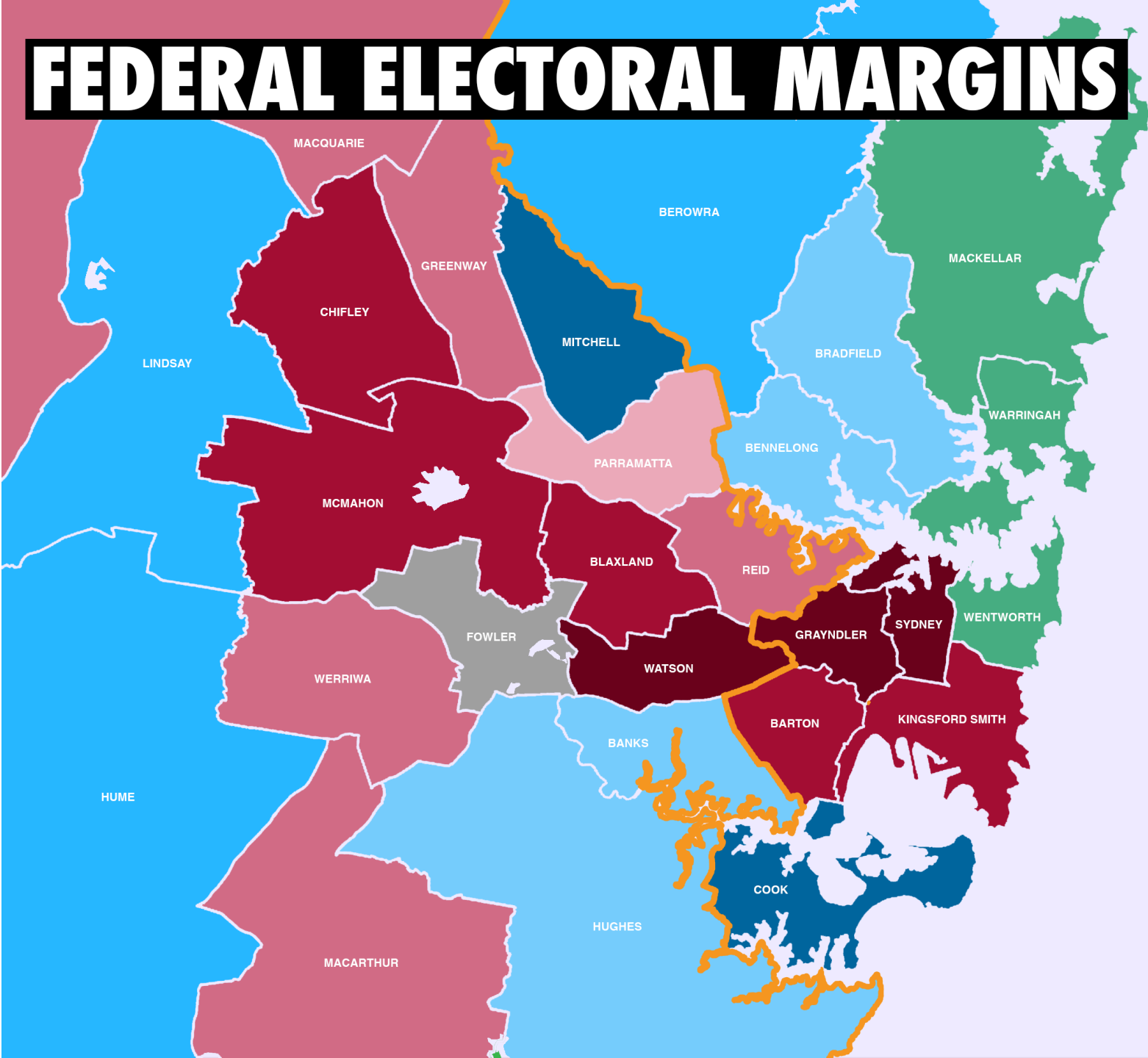
### KEY POINTS

- 1 About 10 per cent of votes in the election will come from Western Sydney, yet many voters in the region feel that they are not receiving their fair share of government funding and services.
- 2 Werriwa, retained by Labor at the last poll, nevertheless has been broadly trending Liberal since the 2010 election and is at risk for Labor.
- 3 For some voters, a \$1 billion rail corridor commitment for Southwestern Sydney that does not see a millimetre of track laid will be met with cynicism.
- 4 The saying, "all politics is local" applies strongly to Western Sydney, where local issues, like housing shortages or inflation, can feel very different depending on which part of the region they are experienced.
- 5 In the context of rising housing and cost of living expenses, Western Sydney households earning an income that once guaranteed home ownership in the region have all but given up on the dream.
- 6 The humanitarian crisis and conflict in Gaza, Lebanon and surrounds has become a focal point for some community movements in Western Sydney.

# FEDERAL ELECTORAL MARGINS

Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
[www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws)

## New Two Party Preferred Margins by Division



Bennelong	0.04%	Jerome Laxale	Greenway	7.9%	Michelle Rowland
Fowler	1.1%	Dai Le	Warringah	9.4%	Zali Steggall
Mackellar	2.2%	Sophie Scamps	Macarthur	9.8%	Mike Freelander
Bradfield	2.5%	Paul Fletcher	McMahon	10.5%	Chris Bowen
Banks	2.6%	David Coleman	Mitchell	10.5%	Alex Hawke
Hughes	3.5%	Jenny Ware	Cook	11.6%	Simon Kennedy
Parramatta	3.7%	Andrew Charlton	Barton	12.0%	Linda Burney
Reid	5.2%	Sally Sitou	Blaxland	13.0%	Jason Clare
Werriwa	5.3%	Anne Stanley	Kingsford Smith	13.3%	Matt Thistlethwaite
Lindsay	6.1%	Melissa McIntosh	Chifley	13.6%	Ed Husic
Macquarie	6.3%	Susan Templeman	Watson	15.2%	Tony Burke
Wentworth	6.8%	Allegra Spender	Sydney	16.5%	Tanya Plibersek
Hume	6.9%	Angus Taylor	Grayndler	17.3%	Anthony Albanese
Berowra	7.6%	Julian Leeser			

0% - 5%	6% - 10%	11% - 15%	> 15%	Teal
Marginal	Fairly Safe	Safe	Very Safe	Independent



## WESTERN SYDNEY DECIDES: FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

# INEQUITY AND VOLATILITY

Elections are won and lost in Western Sydney. That hasn't changed, over recent decades, even in the face of global health, political and economic upheavals.

Comprising 10 per cent of the Australian population, the political influence of Sydney's west continues to deepen in line with the region's rapid population growth. Despite its scale, and its influence, Western Sydney does not receive 10 per cent of government funding, an unfairness uncovered in the Centre for Western Sydney's Unlimited Potential (2024) economic plan.

Elections are no different, with Western Sydney not even close to receiving a per capita share (or 10 per cent) of election campaign funding pledges. That gap does not correlate with the centrality of the region to the political fortunes of both major parties.

**“This Centre for Western Sydney report, Western Sydney Decides, is the story of how inequitable politics impacts the region’s voting behaviours.”**

Understanding how Western Sydney decides who will form national government, is partially an historical exercise. It requires analysis of voting trends over recent elections. This study is also an exercise in predicting the future. As the nation's youngest and most culturally diverse region, Sydney's West is a snapshot of Australia's future. How Western Sydney decides at this election will be a window to elections over coming decades.



## WESTERN SYDNEY DECIDES: FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

# GOING THE DISTANCE

One of the quirks of Federal politics is the onus on the government of the day to decide the timing of the election.

Often this results in a game of “electoral chicken”, with the Prime Minister of the day reading the tea leaves to choose an advantageous window of opportunities in a bid to secure re-election.

There were whispers from pundits as early as last year that the Labor Government might call the election in line with any announcements of rate cuts from the Reserve Bank of Australia. A rate cut eventuated in February, however while Labor would have had a carefully considered strategy, the timing of the 2025 election was largely decided by a natural disaster instead.

**“The Labor government has been forced to go the distance and hold the election in May, however polling indicates that voters may not have come on the journey with them.”**

The Albanese government has struggled to maintain momentum during its first term. Swept to power amidst disillusionment with the Coalition and former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Labor government was dealt a body blow by the defeat of the Voice Referendum. Since then, rising inflationary pressures, housing shortages and challenges with immigration have prevented Labor from finding the clear air required for their messaging to cut through.



## WESTERN SYDNEY DECIDES: FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

# AT BREAKING POINT

For a brief moment during the last Federal election in 2022, the price of bread took centre stage.

The fact that former Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, didn't know the cost of a household staple was portrayed as a sign that he was out of touch with constituents struggling with cost of living issues.

**“Cost of living was a difficult issue for families in the last election—for many, it is insurmountable this time around.”**

Households are desperately looking to the government for answers. Cautious of driving inflation, both parties have refrained from committing to direct cash handouts for relief. Instead, they are hoping a suite of other policies can ease the pressure on families across the nation.

The Labor government's significant investment in road and rail infrastructure, alongside Medicare, was meant to provide them with much-needed political momentum. In a case of copycat politics, the Coalition matched the commitment within 24 hours. By contrast, measures proposed in the budget demonstrated clear divergence, with Labor promising tax cuts and the Coalition tying its political fortunes to a 12 month halving of the fuel excise.

For many people, this issue comes back to the price of bread. Grocery prices are a significant pressure, and if either party can provide a clear solution, it would generate political goodwill and offer practical relief at a time when so many are struggling.



# A DISTANT DREAM

Centred on home ownership, financial security and family life, the Great Australian Dream has been a significant feature of the nation's lexicon since World War II.

A fundamental social contract between the nation and its people, it was expected that if someone was prepared to work hard that this way of life would be within reach.

**“In the context of rising housing and cost of living expenses, households earning an income that once guaranteed this lifestyle have all but given up on the dream.”**

Households with primary earners between the ages of 25 and 50 are facing unprecedented significant economic pressure, whether they have managed to get a foot on the rung of the property ladder or not. An age bracket that historically benefitted from the nation's comparative social mobility and high quality of life now finds itself with ever-increasing difficulties to join and maintain their position in the country's middle-class.

All eyes have been on the government and opposition as they have articulated their policy positions in relation to cost of living, housing affordability and immigration. These issues will define the election, which for many will be viewed as a referendum on which party they believe can help them seize their slice of the Great Australian Dream.



# A BATTLEGROUND FOR GOVERNMENT

Once seen as a one-party region, Western Sydney will play a crucial role in determining the fate of the Albanese government.

If Labor holds its seats, it will go a long way toward ensuring that they do not become the first one-term federal government since 1931. But if Western Sydney swings, it could provide the momentum Peter Dutton needs to be swept into power.

Certain seats in Western Sydney will be central to deciding the Albanese government's fate.

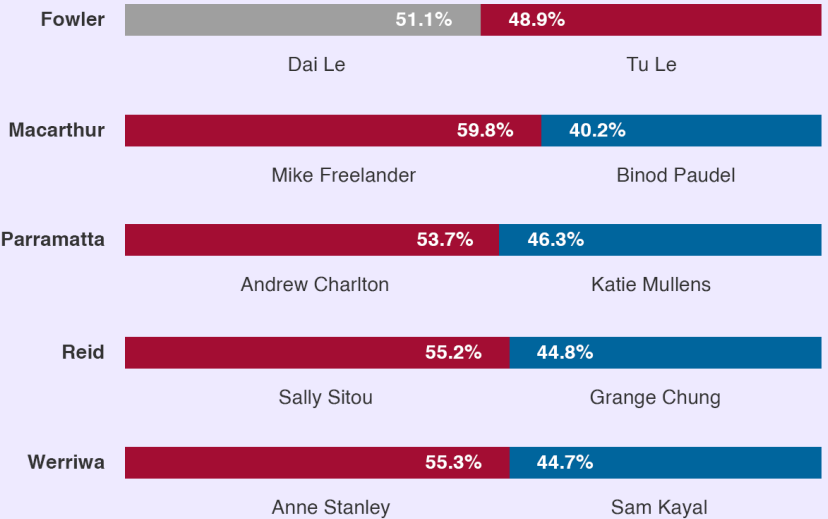
**“Werriwa, retained by Labor at the last poll, nevertheless has been broadly trending Liberal since the 2010 election and is at risk for Labor.”**

The outer Western Sydney electorate of Macquarie will provide a snapshot of national trends, given it encompasses Liberal strongholds across the Hawkesbury, with Labor and the Greens holding sway in mid and upper locales (respectively) of the Blue Mountains.

# BATTLEGROUND ELECTORATES

Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
[www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws)

## Seats to watch in Western Sydney





## WESTERN SYDNEY DECIDES: FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

# THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

On election night, party strategists will be closely watching tallies from South West Sydney. Once a safe Labor stronghold, this notably young and culturally diverse subregion could be a focal point for an electoral wipeout.

Werriwa and Macarthur contain a significant portion of southwest Sydney's mortgage belt. This voting bloc, reeling from consecutive interest rate rises, will be critical in deciding the election.

**“Any significant investment commitments Labor has made in these electorates has been quickly matched by the Coalition.”**

In Macarthur, frustration has grown over the lack of rail linkages to Western Sydney Airport, with residents fearing they will miss out the economic and social dividends it will bring.

The Albanese government's decision, matched by the Opposition, to set aside \$1 billion for land acquisition to support a rail corridor in this space is a prudent move, and may neutralise criticisms regarding underinvestment in connecting infrastructure. For some voters, however, a \$1 billion rail corridor commitment that does not see a millimetre of track laid will be met with cynicism.

Relentless advocacy for upgrades to 15th Avenue in the Werriwa electorate paid off, with a \$1 billion commitment announced by the Labor government. Again, bipartisan support for the measure may thwart the local Labor MP Anne Stanley's search for momentum.

It remains to be seen whether this will be enough for Labor to retain these seats. Traditionally, Werriwa and Macarthur's margins of 5.3% and 9.8% respectively would be considered safe, but in times of increased voter volatility, the Coalition will believe they have a real chance.



# RISING STARS, FADING FORTUNES?

**Politics is a team sport. This means that sometimes, even strong individual performances can be overshadowed by the overall performance of the party, particularly the fortunes of the leader.**

Andrew Charlton and Sally Sitou, the members for Parramatta and Reid, respectively, will be acutely aware of this. Seen as rising stars within the party, they have quietly established themselves as first-term MPs, building connections and goodwill on the ground.

**“Despite their individual efforts, they now find themselves fighting for their political survival.”**

Memories of Charlton being a parachute candidate at the last election have long faded. He has become a fierce advocate for his constituents, meeting the community where they are and fighting on their behalf. He faces Liberal candidate Katie Mullens, who will be hoping that the experience she gained from her unsuccessful state parliament run will deliver the swing she needs.

Sitou also faces challenges in securing re-election, facing off against Liberal candidate Grange Chung. Cost-of-living pressures have hit her constituents harder than in most electorates, and voters will be carefully evaluating which party can best improve their lives.



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# INDEPENDENTS' DAY

Many eyebrows were raised across the nation when Dai Le mounted a successful independent campaign in the seat of Fowler during the 2022 election.

Labor's decision to parachute Kristina Keneally into the seat backfired spectacularly, wiping out a significant margin as traditional Labor voters turned their backs on the party.

**"Tu Le, the candidate who was overlooked last time, is now given the opportunity to bring the seat back into Labor's hands."**

The challenge will be much greater this time. Already a fixture in the Fairfield local government area, Dai Le has embedded herself across Fowler and has been a fierce advocate for her electorate.

Rather than coming from a position of strength, Labor is now the underdog. Tu Le will need to rely on strong messaging around traditional Labor strengths—such as Medicare—to get over the line.

The saying, "all politics is local" applies strongly to Western Sydney, where local issues can feel very different depending on which part of the region they are experienced in. On nearly every occasion she has addressed parliament during the current term, Dai Le has spoken about how national policy or legislative issues impact her electorate. This differs from the Teal independents who apply a wider lens to issues like climate, integrity and equity in politics.

The humanitarian crisis and conflict in Gaza, Lebanon and surrounds has become a focal point for some community movements in Western Sydney. Social media and family links makes the impact of these events immediate and distressing for many. The impact of geopolitics on voter behaviour is, however, difficult to gauge. How those issues will be weighted in the context of wider social and economic factors remains to be seen.



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# CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN

In the 2019 federal election, only a handful of votes decided the winner in Macquarie. The seat is once again finely poised in the lead-up to the 2025 federal election.

Straddling the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury local government areas, the contrast in voting patterns within this electorate is stark.

**“Victory for either side will rest on their ability to convince the growing cohort of aspirational voters that they have what it takes to govern.”**

The Coalition’s selection of Mike Creed as their candidate appears to be a sensible one. Already a councillor in Hawkesbury, they will be hoping to draw on his track record reputation as a lifelong resident to swing votes their way.

Labor’s Susan Templeman made gains in the Hawkesbury at the last election, which enabled her to increase her margin to 6.3%. She will be working hard in the lead-up to the election to demonstrate her ability to fight for local communities, particularly in the Hawkesbury region.

The idea that Labor can square this seat away is unrealistic. It is an electorate that will test the party’s ability to capture the centre, or what used to be called ‘middle Australia’. The outcome in Macquarie, like the rest of Western Sydney, will reveal whether the centre in Australia still holds, or even exists.



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## About the Centre for Western Sydney

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**WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY** is the only university in NSW with a legislated commitment to conduct research that meets the needs of Western Sydney communities. Fulfilling this unique mandate for research, the University established the Centre for Western Sydney in 2014.

Combining world-class research expertise with frank and fearless advocacy on issues of importance to Western Sydney, the work of the Centre for Western Sydney is guided by its ambition for a thriving Western Sydney that is understood and respected for its strengths and contributions regionally, nationally, and internationally. Delivered through a strong politics of listening, the Centre aims to drive informed dialogue and action in the region.



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