

ETHNIC RECRUITMENT OR ETHNIC BRANCH STACKING? FACTIONALISM AND ETHNICITY IN THE VICTORIAN ALP

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Despite some attempts by the National Executive to diminish it, ethnic branch stacking is still a fact of life in the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party. The practice is well accepted within the state branch organisation. Stackers (referred to by insiders as 'ethnic warlords') are admired for their practical skills and the people they recruit (stacks) play an important part in the preselection of candidates.

The author has devised a statistical indicator of branch stacking. This shows that the practice is widespread in at least nine of the federal electorates in Victoria.

'If my faction does it, it's active recruitment. If the Socialist Left does it, it's branch stacking.' So said Bill Kardamitsis in 1992 when he was a Labor Unity (Right) faction candidate seeking to win votes in the Australian Labor Party (ALP) preselection plebiscite of party members for the by-election then soon to be held for the federal seat of Wills. The by-election became necessary when Bob Hawke, the Member for that electorate, resigned his seat after being deposed as Prime Minister by Paul Keating.

For the first time in thirty-eight years Wills electorate ALP members in 1992 would vote directly for their preferred candidate in a membership plebiscite of party members. ALP preselection ballots, the former term for membership plebiscite, were abandoned when the party split along religious lines in 1955. A majority of Catholic members, largely of Irish descent, left the ALP to become members of the anti-Communist Democratic Labor Party. The ALP that continued in existence in Victoria was controlled by a state Central Executive, essentially authoritarian, leftist and bigoted. The Executive was itself responsible for preselections from 1955 to 1970, and had as its twin chief aims the maintenance of a party ideologically pure and

free from control by Catholics. The Executive grew in its rigidity after 1965 when Bill Hartley became party boss as State Secretary. Only minimal rank and file participation was allowed in party affairs. A change in the structure of the party after the overthrow of Hartley by a Federal Executive *coup d'etat* in 1970 resulted in the adoption of new party rules.

These new rules meant that, from 1971 to 1992 the party membership voted for a local panel of twenty members in each electorate who, combined with a central panel of thirty members elected by the ALP State Conference, would preselect the party's Victorian House of Representatives candidates.¹ This collegiate system, an indirect system of preselection, operated until the promulgation of revised rules in 1992. ALP members, with a qualification that they be paid-up members of the party for not less than twelve months, now vote directly for a candidate seeking party preselection for their electorate, not indirectly for a member of a local panel. A central panel still applies; the vote of a 100 member Public Office Selection Committee elected by State Conference, but the central panel weighting is equal to that of the local plebiscite in determining the choice of party candidate, rather than

the sixty per cent that had applied previously. The new rules seek to encourage greater local membership participation in the selection of party candidates. A popular local candidate can claim a mandate based on a local victory that is difficult for the central panel to overturn. That is the theory. Kardamitsis was the first to put it to the test.

Kardamitsis was a popular local candidate among ALP members in the Wills electorate, yet he was not the preferred candidate for many Wills ALP members of old Australian or British (Anglo) stock in his Right faction. Support from Greek-ethnic ALP members ensured his plebiscite majority. There was a Greek ALP branch in Wills (Wills Central).² Recruitment of ethnic Greeks into this branch provided Kardamitsis with much of his vote, along with support from some pliable Greeks who normally voted for Socialist Left faction candidates in internal party ballots. He polled less well on the central panel, but his local mandate was confirmed. The deliberate abstention of certain Socialist Left faction members (including former Victorian ALP State President George Crawford) ensured his preselection success over Northcote Councillor Phillip Bain. In the ensuing by-election for the seat of Wills an Independent candidate, local football identity Phil Cleary, defeated Kardamitsis.

The Kardamitsis pre-selection victory is a good illustration of ethnic recruitment or ethnic branch stacking, depending on your factional position. Branch stacking is the recruitment of a sufficiently large number of party members to influence internal party elections.³ It is a badge of honour, not a derogatory term, to refer to someone in the ALP as a branch stacker. If you are a good stacker you are a good political operator. In particular, stacking

aims to influence the result of party preselections for parliamentary candidates.⁴ It is a time honoured ALP tradition, generally practised in the safest ALP electorates. Members from particular religious or ethnic groups are generally involved. The first recorded instance in Victoria, in 1916 in the inner-Melbourne Labor heartland suburb of Richmond, involved local Irish political machines.⁵ Not all stacking is ethnically or religiously based. But it is the most successful. Irish-Catholic machines operated in inner Melbourne until as recently as the nineteen-fifties with an organisation that would probably rival the Democratic Party machines of Tammany Hall in New York City and Cook County in Chicago, at least when these American machines were at their prime. Other ethnic groups are now carrying on the tradition established by Irish-descended Catholics in pre-1955 Melbourne.

Ethnic branch stacking involves recruitment from, but not exclusively by, members of particular ethnic groups. Stacking has as its sole purpose that of influencing party votes. It is not about policy or ideology or vision. It is purely about numbers. Stackers, people who enlist new members in the ALP, are frequently power-brokers within ethnic communities. Almost all known current stackers are first-generation immigrants to Australia. Stackers are able to promise potential recruits that they will most likely share in many benefits if they join the party. This can include access to parliamentarians or municipal Councillors, assistance in dealings with the bureaucracy, and help in finding employment. Many stackers find paid employment themselves in party or party related activities. Some are elected to municipal or parliamentary positions.

Party members recruited by a stacker are known as stacks (not by the more correct term 'stackee'). Stacks are largely (but not totally) recruited from within a particular community. Increasingly stackers are being referred to as 'ethnic warlords'. Members who join as stacks frequently do so because they owe some allegiance to a particular warlord. Stacks may be members of a church, a soccer club, or an ethnic brotherhood. Some are clients of an ethnic businessman. Stackers are almost always male. There are only two female recruiters known to the writer, in the Calwell and Batman electorates.

Stacks, then, owe primary loyalty to the warlord. The warlord will look after the interests of his or her stacks, and must ensure that they attend at least a minimum number of branch meetings. He (or she) will ensure that stacks' party membership fees are paid by the required date to ensure that they retain eligibility to vote in internal party elections. Frequently stacks will find that a stacker has arranged for payment of their membership fees if they have been tardy in responding to party requests that they pay their dues on time. This practice is now a breach of party rules, but new rules will not change party culture. Rules in the ALP are never an obstacle to the maintenance of such traditional party practices.

It is a popular view that seats in parliament can be bought by recruiting ALP members. Pre-selection success, then, is the justification for stacking. If a stacker has enough influence within the party a Victorian lower house parliamentary seat can be bought by paying sufficient Victorian ALP annual membership dues. The minimum rate for these dues is \$23.00 (plus ten per cent Goods and Services Tax after 1 July 2000), the

concessional rate payable by pensioners and low income earners. That would represent payment of \$2,300 per 100 stacks, a figure that is not tax deductible. The popular view is generally unfounded. Mere stacking will never be sufficient by itself. A stacker must have support from, or be part of, a major faction as well. Factions control the central panel, which accounts for half of the votes needed to win any preselection. Stacking can have its rewards, and the factions of course know this. All factions are involved in rounding up numbers to vote in preselections, and stacking will always have its place while membership ballots are part of any preselection process. As picturesquely put by Ian Baker, former Minister for Agriculture in the Kirner Labor Government and former Member for Sunshine in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, people who engage in ethnic stacking are 'numbers thugs'.⁶ Baker left the ALP after losing preselection, contesting his seat as an Independent. Uruguayan born ALP candidate Telmo Languiller defeated him. Membership recruitment by supporters of Languiller, largely among Latin Americans, played a significant part in his preselection plebiscite victory.

Branch stacking is not limited to the ALP. It probably occurs in all mass political parties, at least to some extent, where members in local party branches participate in the selection of parliamentary candidates. There are several known instances in the Victorian Liberal Party. In 1966 Irish-descended Catholics, who may a decade earlier have been voters for the ALP, infiltrated the Flinders federal electorate and were responsible for the preselection of Phillip Lynch, Federal Treasurer under Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Some Anglo stacking occurred in the Goldstein federal electorate in 1989

by opponents of sitting member Ian McPhee, Immigration Minister in the Fraser government. Monash University Politics Professor David Kemp, currently a Minister in the Howard government, defeated McPhee. The most recent case, in the Victorian Legislative Assembly seat of Bulleen in 1999, involved supporters of Greek-ethnic Nick Kotsiris, who defeated sitting Member David Perrin for pre-selection and is now the Liberal Member for the electorate. His branch-member supporters at the local level were clearly recruited for pre-selection purposes in the best ALP tradition.⁷ The practice has also spread to other states. In Queensland a threat developed in 1999 to the pre-selection of Defence Minister John Moore from Taiwanese-ethnic stacks into local branches within his electorate, but pressure from the State organisation appears to have reduced the likelihood of a challenge.

FEDERAL ELECTORATES — THE BASIS OF PARTY ORGANISATION IN THE VICTORIAN ALP

Federal electorates are used for organisational purposes by the Victorian ALP. Party members living in a federal electorate are collectively known as a Federal Electorate Assembly (FEA). FEAs rarely meet as a body. Those party members in an FEA eligible to vote in internal party elections, other than at the local branch level, are known as voting members. As well as having the right to vote in pre-selection plebiscites, FEA voting members elect 180 out of the 450 delegates to State Conference, the major policy-making organ of the party in Victoria. The remaining 270 delegates are elected by trade unions affiliated to the party. State Conference then elects the 100 member Public Office Selection

Committee, or central panel, by proportional representation, from among its members. The central panel, important in all contested pre-selections, will accurately reflect the factional makeup of State Conference. The implications of this for stacking at the local level are clear. Supporters of a faction or an alliance of factions with, say, fifty-five per cent of the vote on the central panel will need just over forty-five per cent of the vote in a local plebiscite to be successful in a pre-selection.

AN INDICATOR OF STACKING ON A FEDERAL ELECTORATE BASIS

Membership recruitment in the ALP takes place within individual branches, but the fact that stacking is taking place would not normally be obvious from an examination of individual branch membership records. Only a sudden increase in the membership of an individual branch would suggest the presence of stacking activity, but this activity is not obvious as stackers generally operate with some finesse. Party records do, however, provide a means by which stacking activity is discoverable. Comparative figures for party membership in individual federal electorates are the best indicator of heavy recruitment, or stacking. It is to be expected that federal electorates with the highest party vote would be those with the highest FEA membership, on the assumption that such electorates would have a higher number of committed party activists. An examination of the available figures shows that this is not the case. Table 1 lists the Federal electorates in Victoria, ranked by the number of voting members of the ALP in each electorate as a percentage of the primary votes for the ALP (FEA) in each electorate in 1998. As predicted, there is no clear association between the two-party-preferred Labor vote and this ranking.

Table 1: Victorian ALP Federal vote and party membership

Federal Electorate	1999 FEA Voting Members	1998 Federal Election	1998 Federal Election	FEA Voting Members as a % of the 1998 Federal Election
	Actual Number	2PP%	Primary Vote	Primary Vote
Holt	1,053	65.11	44,172	2.38
Melbourne Ports	616	55.83	32,849	1.88
Batman	885	76.43	53,034	1.67
Melbourne	761	71.80	45,958	1.66
Maribyrnong	797	72.05	48,458	1.64
Calwell	635	68.97	50,022	1.27
Jagajaga	400	55.91	38,842	1.03
Wills	520	70.96	50,507	1.03
McMillan	230	50.57	27,995	0.82
Gellibrand	481	75.91	61,443	0.78
Scullin	388	71.84	52,320	0.74
Hotham	322	63.59	46,107	0.70
Lalor	308	69.82	46,374	0.66
Higgins	159	40.38	24,852	0.64
Deakin	185	48.07	30,079	0.62
Isaacs	214	56.40	35,604	0.60
Burke	217	57.61	36,516	0.59
Corio	224	61.36	38,608	0.58
Chisholm	192	52.08	33,275	0.58
Goldstein	150	41.85	26,980	0.56
Bendigo	185	53.47	33,483	0.55
Dunkley	163	47.96	29,755	0.55
Kooyong	126	38.61	23,107	0.55
Latrobe	151	49.01	27,733	0.54
Ballarat	161	47.23	31,232	0.52
Indi	110	39.90	21,572	0.51
Corangamite	121	45.50	26,923	0.45
Wannon	107	42.56	23,897	0.45
Flinders	122	46.27	28,874	0.42
Gippsland	76	41.17	19,438	0.39
McEwen	117	48.95	30,350	0.39
Casey	93	45.13	24,732	0.38
Menzies	76	44.60	24,812	0.31
Aston	91	45.76	30,689	0.30
Mallee	43	30.63	16,471	0.26
Murray	32	27.94	16,061	0.20
Total	10,907	53.46	1,271,289	0.86

2PP stands for two-party preferred vote.

FEA stands for Federal Electorate Assembly. An FEA consists of all ALP members in a Federal Electorate who are eligible to vote in internal party elections.

The indicator used is a comparison of the number of 1999 ALP voting members in an FEA as a proportion of the actual ALP primary vote at the 1998 federal elections in that electorate. The three

electorates with the highest proportions—Holt, Melbourne Ports, and Batman — are good examples of Federal electorate stacking.

This method, while the best available indicator of stacking, is not infallible. The presence of a high profile non-labor candidate with normally Labor sympathies (for example Phil Cleary in Wills at the 1996 federal election) drawing primary votes away from the ALP could suggest higher stacking than is really the case. The presence of an ALP two-party preferred vote considerably higher than the ALP primary vote will suggest that the appearance of stacking may not be the reality in such a case.

Another qualification is the fact that ALP members who have only joined the Party in the previous twelve months are not regarded as voting members. The Party does not provide a figure for such members, but the lack of this information will not invalidate the analysis, for the very reason that such members are not FEA voting members. It is doubtful that the 'twelve month' rule would exclude more than eight or nine per cent of ALP members from voting in FEA elections. It would be a waste of money for a stacker to pay membership subscriptions for members who did not renew their memberships after the twelve months to become voting FEA members. Some such recent stacks will of course leave an FEA, some will die, and some will decide that they no longer wish to support a stacker.

FEDERAL ELECTORATE STACKING — THE TOP THREE ELECTORATES Holt

Holt, with 1053 voting members for the 1999 FEA elections, has Victoria's highest ALP membership. It is also the most heavily recruited, or stacked, electorate in Victoria. Holt was held by former federal Foreign Minister and Attorney General Gareth Evans until his

recent resignation, and is based on outer-Melbourne Dandenong, an area with a high working class and ethnic population.

The electorate is named after former Liberal Prime Minister Harold Holt, who died in office in 1967. It has not been a consistently Labor area. Liberal Len Reid won the seat when it was created in 1969, which he held for one parliamentary term until his defeat in 1972. Liberal William Yates, a one-time Conservative member of the United Kingdom House of Commons, held the seat from 1975 until 1980. Holt is now a safe Labor electorate, but it ranks only eleventh out of the nineteen Victorian ALP electorates in the House of Representatives in terms of two-party preferred vote. The high Labor vote at the 7 November 1999 by-election won by Anthony Byrnes largely resulted from the fact that the Liberal Party did not contest the poll. The Labor vote in this by-election approached eighty per cent of the total valid votes cast in the electorate after a notional distribution of all but the top two candidates. This vote would not be repeated at a general election contested by a Liberal candidate.

Out of the 44,172 primary ALP votes in Holt at the 1998 federal elections, 2.38 per cent are actual ALP voting members with FEA voting rights. A good reason for stacking may have been the likelihood that the sitting member, Evans, was going to resign from parliament during the current sitting. This, as we now know, occurred. The Keysborough (Turkish) branch with 125 members and the Dandenong East (Greek) branch with 79 members, which together is about a fifth of the total ALP voting membership, were both significant players in the pre-selection of Byrnes for Holt. In Holt it is likely that there are more Turkish members than from any other non-Anglo ethnic group, but probably not a majority.

There is also a significant Latin-American membership and some Cambodian membership.

Melbourne Ports

Melbourne Ports ranks second in terms of FEA members as a percentage of the 1998 primary Labor vote, but it ranks sixth in terms of the actual number of FEA members. Five federal electorates have more ALP voting members than Melbourne Ports. Out of 32,849 primary votes in the electorate at the 1998 federal elections 616, or 1.88 per cent, are from ALP voting members. Melbourne Ports is unique in being the only Victorian FEA with a high Jewish membership.

Named after its locality, the electorate has been held since federation by the ALP. Clyde Holding, first elected as its member at the 1977 federal elections and a former Opposition Leader in Victoria, retired at the 1998 elections. Melbourne Ports includes the traditionally Labor but now more middle-class bayside areas of Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Albert Park, as well as parts of middle-class St Kilda, but it also includes parts of the traditionally Liberal voting area of Caulfield and high-status Liberal-voting South Yarra. The seat is no longer a safe one for the ALP, thanks largely to gentrification, and the two party preferred ALP vote in 1998 was 55.83 per cent. In terms of the ALP two-party preferred vote in Victoria the electorate ranks sixteenth out of nineteen. It would be vulnerable to the Coalition parties if there were a heavy swing in Victoria against the ALP.

The Caulfield branch in Melbourne Ports has 244 members, slightly more than a third of the total FEA membership. A number of residents at the Montefiore Homes for the Aged were at one time recruited into the Caulfield branch. A number of current members

are from Eastern European Jewish backgrounds. Melbourne Ports has some Latin-American members, but whether these are significant enough to affect the outcome of a pre-selection is hard to determine.

Michael Danby, the sitting member for Melbourne Ports, won a bitterly contested preselection plebiscite against fellow Right faction member and Australian Council of Trade Unions official Tim Pallas in 1998. Danby, a one-time student activist, also served as editor of the *Australia-Israel Review*. Socialist Left members in Melbourne Ports, including many secular Jews, supported Pallas. A number of younger Right faction members aligned with the Network group, a youth sub-faction, supported Pallas, but a large majority from that faction supported Danby. Pallas won by a slight majority, about fifty-two per cent of the total vote in the plebiscite, but withdrew his nomination for preselection after an overwhelming majority of central panel members from the Right faction supported Danby, who was subsequently elected unopposed. A number of Socialist Left members, angry at the result, challenged Danby's preselection at the party's Disputes Tribunal. The challenge was unsuccessful on the grounds that a candidate had not objected to the final result of the preselection.

Batman

Batman, a federal electorate with a long record of ethnic branch stacking, is also the subject of significant academic writing.⁸ The electorate ranks third in terms of FEA members as a proportion of the ALP primary vote in 1998. It ranks second in terms of the actual number of ALP voting members in 1999. Batman had Victoria's highest ALP two-party preferred vote in 1998 at 76.43 per cent.

Named after John Batman, sometimes referred to as the founder of Melbourne in 1834 and not, as some local Turks claim, after a city in Eastern Turkey, the electorate is represented in federal parliament by frontbencher Martin Ferguson. Of the 53,034 ALP primary voters at the 1998 federal elections in Batman 885 or 1.67 per cent were actual ALP members. Batman is the heartland of Victorian ethnic politics. It includes the areas of Preston, Reservoir and Northcote. All of these are traditional working-class Labor areas, but the southern or Northcote part of the electorate has become gentrified, with rising property values and some movement into that part of the electorate (and ALP branches) of Anglo middle-class professionals. There are significant numbers of Greeks, Lebanese, Filipinos and recently Chinese and Indians. Batman ALP members were denied a vote in a party plebiscite in 1995 when the ALP National Executive drafted Martin Ferguson. Ethnic recruits were important in the 1998 preselection for the Northcote electorate in the Victorian Legislative Assembly won by high-profile Australian Broadcasting Commission television presenter Mary Delahunty. Allies of Theo Theophanous, upper house parliamentary member in the area, are important recruiters of ALP members in Batman.

Concerned at the reputation of Batman for branch stacking, Martin Ferguson told local journalist Alison Dean⁹ in February 2000 that he hoped his electorate would be free of stacking allegations by the time of the next federal election. This would occur by the strict implementation of recommendations of the Dreyfus Report¹⁰ adopted by the Victorian ALP which place restrictions on the ability of stackers to renew membership applications without the personal signature of the member. It is

not in the interests of a local member who is a key frontbencher for his electorate to be the subject of media publicity about branch stacking. Whether such allegations continued to be made in the future will depend on the intensity with which preselections for safe ALP state parliamentary seats located wholly or partly within the Batman boundaries are conducted in the immediate future.

ETHNICITY AND STACKED ELECTORATES

A comparison of non-Anglo membership with high ALP voting memberships for FEA election purposes is revealing. Any electorate with more than one FEA member per hundred primary Labor votes has probably experienced a significant level of branch stacking. Table 1 shows that nine electorates meet this cut-off and, in seven of these there is significant non-Anglo membership. All are metropolitan and all, except Melbourne Ports, are safe ALP electorates. Jaga Jaga and Bruce, the electorates without a significant non-Anglo membership, are marginally safe rather than safe Labor electorates. Gellibrand, a safe Labor electorate in Melbourne's western suburbs with a significant Vietnamese and Macedonian ALP membership, is below the one per cent threshold, with only 0.78 ALP voting members per 100 ALP primary voters. This in great part results from a 17.9 per cent decline in ALP voting membership in this electorate between 1997 and 1999, from 586 to 481 voting ALP members. A possible explanation for this decline may be that the new federal member, Nicola Roxon, and those state members in the area with all or part of their seats lying within the Gellibrand federal electorate boundaries, are unlikely to face a pre-selection contest in the foreseeable future.

FACTIONS AND STACKING

A comparative examination of Victorian ALP membership figures certainly suggests that membership recruitment in some electorates is being carried on with considerable zeal. The figures alone are inadequate to suggest an explanation. Local knowledge can usually suggest a reason. High levels of membership rarely come from enthusiastic recruiters who are 'true believers' in the party like Mormon missionaries or Jehovah's Witnesses are in respect of their religion. Local party members, almost always from an ethnic background, are generally involved, but the impetus for recruiting is not always at the electorate level. It is important to examine the presence of elements within the party structure that stand to gain most from ethnic recruitment. Much of the stimulus for this recruitment comes from Victorian Labor factions.

The influence of factions is not always negative. No doubt without factions there would be less stacking, but the party would not know how to cope in a factionless environment. Factions provide an environment in which stacking can be managed. Party rules ensure that the will of the factions will almost always predominate. Factional control of the central panel probably keeps stacking under some degree of control. A stacker with no factional affiliation would need to win 98 per-cent of the votes in a pre-selection plebiscite and the votes of the two non-aligned members of the central panel to theoretically make non-factional stacking a productive exercise. In other words the chances of non-factional stacking are non-existent.

The operation of Victorian ALP preselection rules, giving equal weight to the central panel and the local plebiscite, will ensure that factions will be equally

as important as individual stackers in deciding the party's choice of candidate.

LIMITS TO BRANCH STACKING

Ethnic branch stacking is usually the subject of much media and party debate. There is even a network of rank and file members, ALP Members for Democratic Change, convened by Melbourne Ports branch member Marlene Campbell, which opposes stacking. The network claims supporters in 28 FEAs, and acts as a lobby group inside the ALP, seeking to keep the party honest by reducing the incidence of stacking and trying to allow ordinary members rather than the factions to have the final say in determining preselections. It may have influenced federal leader Kim Beazley, who is currently proposing national rules that would make branch stacking more difficult. It is difficult, however, for the National Executive to impose rules on a State party organisation that will be uniformly applied. Proposals emanating from the office of the national leadership are little more than window-dressing.

Rule changes usually follow media publicity. The 1993 article by Ernest Healy¹¹ in *People and Place*, which described ethnic stacks of several hundred party members, contributed to such changes in 1994, placing limits on the number of new members who could be admitted to the party at any one branch meeting. The new rules did reduce stacking, but did not eliminate it. Perhaps the major consequence of the reform was not envisaged by the party's factional powerbrokers. It caused a decline in the use of ethnic branches for stacking purposes. With only ten new members generally allowed to be admitted at any single branch meeting, warlords will use a number of different branches to place their recruits. Ethnic stacks are now more

frequently than not recruited into English-language mainstream branches (which are the overwhelming majority of branches).

Party factions have been clear winners from ethnic recruitment. They have of necessity rewarded members of particular ethnic groups. The factions themselves are in large part responsible for the substantial representation of non-Anglo male ethnics among Labor parliamentarians and municipal Councillors endorsed under the ALP banner in Victoria. The factions have not rewarded non-Anglo females to the same extent. While feminist influence has ensured rule changes that provide for the preselection of a proportion of female candidates, only the factions can ensure that this rule will be applied. The factions as a consequence are primarily responsible for the historically high proportion of women among ALP candidates for public office, but few are from a non-Anglo ethnic background.

Presently ethnically-based stacking was the key factor in the preselection of at least two ALP women in the Victorian parliament. Mary Delahunty, the current Minister for Education in the Bracks Labor government, was the beneficiary of Greek and Lebanese recruits allied to

former Victorian upper house Leader Theo Theophanous. Jenny Mikakos owed her upper house preselection to recruits from a number of backgrounds, including Greeks, Lebanese and Indians, as well as Filipinos allied to Preston state lower house Member Michael Leighton.

The operation of the Victorian ALP pre-selection rules, the equal weighting given to the central panel and the local plebiscite in determining candidate selection, will always ensure that the factions will be as important as individual stackers and stacks in deciding the party's choice of candidate. The factions may never be able to prevent stacking. Nor is it likely that party rules will ever prevent it. The factions have an obligation to the wider party to ensure that ALP supporters are able to vote for the best candidate the party is able to preselect. These supporters are not necessarily members of the party. At present some may be only potential supporters, but their votes count — especially in marginal electorates. The factions have a responsibility to the party to ensure that they do not support stacking for the mere sake of factional gain. But the likelihood is that they will continue to put factional interests first.

References

- ¹ Slightly different numbers applied for Victorian State lower house and municipal preselections, with a slight majority of central panel over local panel members. For the federal Senate and the state upper house the central panel itself conducted preselections without the benefit of any local panel.
- ² Overt ethnic branches were first established in the Victorian ALP in 1975, and comprise members from a particular ethnic group. Meetings are normally conducted in the community language of the ethnic group concerned. The first ethnic branches to be established were the Italian-speaking Croxton branch and the Greek-speaking Westgarth branch.
- ³ The term is presently achieving a wider application. In September 1999 it was applied to the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church, where disaffected Church members without political affiliations claimed a 'branch stack' of new members secured a majority for a particular group in internal Church elections.
- ⁴ Branch stacking sometimes has as its objective the influence of municipal preselections, but the ALP in Victoria no longer endorses candidates for more than about 7 to 10 of Victoria's 78 local government Councils. Branch stacking has been claimed in the safe Liberal federal electorate of Higgins, with the sole purpose of removing a delegate to State Conference, barrister Diane Anderson, who is considered a thorn in the side of the party leadership and an outspoken critic of party policies.
- ⁵ See J. McCalman, *Struggletown. Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900-1965*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984, p. 100.

- ⁶ Television interview, 'Labor Seats for Sale', Cover Story (Reporter: Paul Ransley), Channel 9 Sunday Program, 5 September 1999 (for transcript see <http://sunday.ninemsn.com.au>).
- ⁷ K. Owen, 'Liberals oust MP. Former Kennett aide gets the party's nod', *Herald Sun*, 12 August 1999, p. 9
- ⁸ E. Healy, 'Ethnic ALP Branches – the Balkanisation of Labor', *People and Place*, vol.1, no.4, 1993, pp. 37-43 and 'Ethnic ALP Branches – The Balkanisation of Labor Revisited', *People and Place*, vol. 3 no. 3, 1995, pp. 48-54, and T.Theophanous, 'Greeks in Australian Politics', in A. Kapardis and A. Tamis (Eds.), *Afstraliotes Hellenes: Greeks in Australia*, River Seine, Melbourne, 1988,pp. 231-244.
- ⁹ A. Dean, 'Ferguson acts on "stacking" claims', *Metro News*, 16 Feb. 200, p. 5
- ¹⁰ M. Dreyfus, *Panel of Review 1998*, Australian Labor Party (Victorian branch). Mark Dreyfus conducted a review into the operations of the ALP's Victorian Branch, parts of which, including new Rules that place additional obstacles in the way of stackers, were adopted by the Victorian ALP conference at Monash University Clayton on 12 Dec. 1998.
- ¹¹ Healy, 1993, op.cit.

