

Business

## Upmarket welcome for the workers' warriors

MARGIN CALL WITH WILL GLASGOW & CHRISTINE LACY

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He's on track to be our next prime minister, but Labor leader Bill Shorten is still shy about tucking his knees under the table of Australia's richest family.

Just over six weeks from the federal election, Shorten last night entered the billionaire Pratt family's historic mansion Raheen via the secret stable doors, a laneway entrance normally reserved for deliveries.

Maybe the leader of the worker's party thought it was the tradesman's entrance? For Shorten, it was a return to the Melbourne home of the billionaire family's matriarch Jeanne Pratt, her son Anthony Pratt and his wife Claudine, after a long absence.

The politician was previously a frequent guest via his first marriage to Debbie Beale, a goddaughter to Jeanne and her late husband Richard Pratt.

But last night Shorten was back in the Pratt fold, with the doors to their Kew home Raheen thrown open for a left-of-centre political fundraiser featuring a powerful clutch of Melbourne business types. Amazing how the sniff of victory can pull a crowd, even at \$5000 a head.

While their leader didn't want to be photographed, his deputy Tanya Plibersek arrived through Raheen's imposing main gates to be greeted by her packaging hosts at the arched front door. Very civilised.

Almost Treasurer Chris Bowen, who has become quite chummy with Anthony Pratt of late, had slipped inside much earlier.

Their Labor colleague Claire O'Neill had a bumpier entree. The shadow minister for financial services (a gig she is expected to lose when Katy Gallagher returns to the senate) and her VW family wagon were turned back at the Pratt's threshold and directed to a car park on the street. Retiring Member for Melbourne Ports Michael Danby also drove himself in his Ford Territory.

Rich-lister businessman Peter Scanlon was in for the night, as was former Tennis Australia chair Harold Mitchell and one-time Packer lieutenant and now Ellerston Capital chief Ashok Jacob.

Former Telstra chair Bob Mansfield and leading Melbourne lawyer **Mark Leibler**, both at Prime Minister Scott Morrison's fundraiser at Raheen a fortnight ago, were back to play the other side, as was rich-lister and Jeanne's son-in-law Raphael Geminder.

Former Victorian premier and industry super fund CBUS chair Steve Bracks came in a heavily tinted car with driver. Will Shorten soon make his New York dreams come true?

Outgoing Member for Lilley and Labor national president Wayne Swan, looking tanned and relaxed, was in bright and early, as was Member for Isaac Mark Dreyfus and Shorten's good friend and now senator for Victoria Kimberley Kitching, who Margin Call awarded best dressed on the night in a classic navy wrap dress.

Howard's way Meanwhile in the Harbour City, Liberals travelled from far and wide to The Star to drop their knee before party deity John Howard at the Sydney Institute's 30th black tie dinner.

The NSW Liberals' new hero Gladys Berejiklian was also feted after her [YouTube](#)-supported victory over the weekend.

Honestly, to go by the mood of the 900 assembled guests at Sydney Institute director Gerard Henderson's marquee event, you would hardly guess the sons and daughters of Robert Menzies are on track for a stonking defeat at the May election.

NSW Liberal president Philip Ruddock had more than just Berejiklian's victory to be happy about. Ruddock — and his suddenly vindicated strategist, NSW Liberal director Chris Stone — had as their guest billionaire Ros Packer.

They'll hope Berejiklian's victory inspires some Packer generosity to help out with their imminent showdown with Bill Shorten's Labor.

Liberals were everywhere, as expected with the night's keynote being given by Howard (who turns 80 in July).

There was premier-turned-NAB contender Mike Baird with Crown director Helen Coonan (a former Howard minister) and Mirvac CEO Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz, employer of Baird's uncommonly decent former chief of staff Bay Warburton.

Over on the Allens table were Foreign Minister Marise Payne and her much discussed Berejiklian minister partner Stuart Ayres (aka "the stadium strategist").

Tim Wilson, one of the great hopes of the Moderates, was up from Victoria. Tony Abbott excused himself from his life or death battle to hold Warringah to attend as guest of The Star's chair John O'Neill, a fellow rugby union man.

Berejiklian was on the head table, next to former [SBS](#) boss Michael Ebeid, now an executive at the dinner's key sponsor [Telstra](#), and ABC director Joe Gersh (who is also on the Sydney Institute board).

Acting ABC managing director David Anderson, the man most likely to be appointed by Gersh and the now Ita Buttross-chaired Aunty board, was also along, with ABC star Annabelle Crabb (who would make a superb replacement of Barrie Cassidy as Insiders host). Prime Minister Scott Morrison sent his apologies. The PM was over in Perth, ahead of the billionaire Stokes' Telethon. Also missing was James Ashby, who as we now know is the [National Rifle Association's](#) secret agent in Australia. Ashby's been along at the Sydney Institute annual dinner in recent years. Uncharacteristic for **Pauline Hanson**'s right hand man to miss a night on the sauce.

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