Chris Wallace, *How to Win an Election* (Sydney: NewSouth Press, 2020), xiv + 145pp. Paperback. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-1-7422-3687-2.

In 2019, federal elections were held in Australia and Canada and in both countries the incumbent Liberal Party was victorious. The key difference is that the Liberals in Canada are the main centre-left, social democratic party whereas the Liberals in Australia are the main centre-right, conservative party. Canadian polls predicted a tight race, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau managed to retain power in a hung parliament. His Australian counterpart, Bill Shorten, led the Labor Party to a narrow defeat despite consistent polling suggesting he would win. The following year, Aotearoa New Zealand's Labour Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, not only retained power but greatly increased her party's vote.

One of the key questions in Chris Wallace's new book, *How to Win an Election*, is why Australia's social democratic party bucked this international trend and seemingly snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. The Labor Party had been consistently in the lead in the polls, although, as Wallace argues there was too much focus on the two-party preferred vote and not enough on the primary vote. Still, the governing Liberals were fractured, had changed leaders twice since 2013, and it was widely expected that Shorten would be the next prime minister. Wallace calls the 2019 result an 'unnecessary election loss' (xiv) and offers her book as a best practice guide, specifically for Australian Labor but also for other social democratic parties and moderate conservative parties who wish to avoid similar defeats in the future.

Wallace's book is intentionally short and direct, the kind of thing a disgruntled Labor MP might read over a weekend while contemplating another three years in opposition. The book is pitched as a return to basics for a party which has lost its way and is divided into ten neat chapters, which each serve as an election winning lesson. Wallace intentionally omits lengthy mediations on moral issues or ideology. The result is that her ten points shine all the brighter.

How to Win an Election uses sporting analogies to great effect. The shadow treasurer is likened to the ruck in an Australian Rules Football team, while crafting alternative policies is compared to negotiating a crafty bowler in a cricket test. Wallace makes the point that professional football teams have a whole organisation built around on-field success. After every game, a team of experts will pore over the minute details of the game and the performance of each individual. Political parties (not to mention the mainstream media) too often focus only on the leader and contentious issues of the day. Labor's official review of the 2019 loss focussed strongly on Bill Shorten's unpopularity. Wallace encourages Labor to consider the whole front bench. Shadow treasurer, Chris Bowen is used as an example of a talented player who was 'in the wrong position' (21).

The sporting analogy is useful, but it also has limits. Wallace is right when she argues Labor would be more effective if it were run with the flexibility of a professional sports team. Not only the leader but every member of the team should have their performance regularly analysed and should be moved to the position that best suits their talents. The difficulty when applying this to politics, especially the internal politics of the Labor Party, is that key positions are often determined by factional power plays and the support of various unions rather than individual performance. There is no equivalence to this in Australian sport and no underperforming ruck could rely on their factional backers to secure a spot in the team.

Wallace understands this, of course, but insists that the ultimate prize of winning government (or a premiership flag to continue the analogy) should be enough incentive to make difficult decisions. A Labor Party that values winning more than factional rivalries would only be possible through a dramatic change of culture, yet as Wallace notes, the word 'culture' only appears once in the lengthy campaign review.

Wallace offers many important lessons, but will Labor be willing to listen? Some inside the party have argued that the 2019 campaign had too many populist left causes, but Wallace cautions, 'there is no point winning back regional working-class voters...if it is at the expense of urban seats surrendered to the Greens' (126).

Wallace's book is timely, and the Labor Party should consider its ten lessons. Although aimed at Australian Labor, it is relevant to social democratic parties around the world and to citizens interested in how elections are fought and won.

Benjamin T. Jones, Central Queensland University