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How Tasmania's Labor Party Could Govern Despite Historic Election Loss

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Despite the Tasmanian Labor Party's worst-ever election result in 2025, with a primary vote of just 26%, it remains in contention to form a minority government by negotiating with a progressive crossbench. This article explores how Labor, led by Dean Winter, could leverage Tasmania's hung parliament to secure power, despite its electoral setback.

The 19 July 2025 Tasmanian state election delivered a hung parliament, with the Liberal Party, led by Premier Jeremy Rockliff, securing 14 seats—short of the 18 needed for a majority. Labor, formally the Australian Labor Party (ALP), won just nine seats, marking its lowest primary vote since 1903. Yet the proportional Hare-Clark electoral system, which encourages coalition-building, keeps Labor in the game. The crossbench, comprising five Greens and up to five independents, holds the balance of power. Most of these crossbenchers lean progressive, aligning more naturally with Labor's platform than the Liberals' agenda.

Labor's path to government hinges on securing crossbench support, particularly from the Greens and independents like Kristie Johnston, Craig Garland, and Peter George. "We are ready to work collaboratively in the best interest of Tasmanians," said Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff, signalling openness to negotiations (ABC News, 20 July 2025). However, Dean Winter has ruled out a formal deal with the Greens, insisting Labor won't compromise its policies. Instead, Labor could pursue confidence and supply agreements with independents, who oppose key Liberal projects such as the proposed Hobart stadium. This strategy avoids diluting Labor's platform while potentially securing the numbers needed to govern.

The Liberals face challenges in corralling a left-leaning crossbench, especially given their support for controversial projects like the stadium, which eight of ten crossbenchers oppose. If Rockliff fails to form a stable government, Labor could step in as a "plan B," as Winter hinted: "If the Liberals are unable to form a government, another election is not an option" (The Guardian, 20 July 2025). Labor's gamble to trigger the election via a no-confidence motion backfired electorally, but its

willingness to negotiate could still see it govern. Tasmania's history of minority governments, such as the 1989 Labor–Greens Accord, suggests this outcome is plausible, though it risks perceptions of illegitimacy given Labor's weak mandate.