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GetUp! in Election 2016

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GetUp! is a unique political organisation in Australian politics. Since their formation in mid-2005, they have accrued over 1 million members and fundraise about \$8 million annually in donations from mostly small donors. From the 2010 Australian election onwards, their high level of declared third-party political expenditure to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has placed them among an influential group of traditional Australian interest group organisations of business and unions (see Vromen and Coleman 2011). In 2016, they had their most successful election campaign so far, both in terms of member mobilisation and political impact. Yet, they do not construct themselves as just another insider-oriented interest group, but as a mass movement intent on progressive mass mobilisation. Their networked approach to online campaigning uses distinctive rapid response, repertoire switching. Members can pick and choose which campaigns they are active on, and some campaigns have been much more successful than others, ranging from issues such as electoral enrolment reform, abortion law reform, mental health policy, refugee rights, marriage equality, climate change, carbon tax, renewable energy, coal seam gas, higher education fees, Medicare charges and so on. They have also run dedicated national election campaigns in 2007, 2010, 2013, as well as several State election campaigns including the most recent elections in Victoria (VIC) and Queensland (QLD). However, the strategic approach GetUp! took in the 2016 election was a departure from

their previous election campaigns and risky. The risk-taking strategy that targeted right-wing Coalition politicians and relied heavily on the use of Facebook seemed to work.

GetUp! has always claimed to be a progressive, social movement-oriented organisation, and was established purposefully in 2005 by young activists Jeremy Heimans, David Madden and Amanda Tattersall as a counterpoint to the Liberal–National Coalition government’s majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Since 2005, it has grown in size and political influence, and also been (unsuccessfully) referred to the AEC several times for acting as an associated entity of the Labor Party. Correspondingly, it has also been accused of being an arm of the Australian Greens when its policy scorecards handed out on successive election days favoured their policy agenda (Milne 2010). It is simplistic to interpret or analyse GetUp!, a third-party organisation, in partisan terms. Yet, as shall be shown below, they generate most attention when they are involved in more traditional forms of electoral campaigning, than when they campaign on their broader post-material issue-driven agenda. This tension and reconciliation between their political and movement mobilisation role, and subsequent political and social influence, is explored and reflected on in the 2016 election context.

GetUp!’s pioneering of digital tactics for participation has also been important in Australia. They have routinised the use of online petitions and mass email sending (see Sheppard 2015), introduced microdonation fundraising to political campaign work inspired by the 2008 and 2012 Obama campaigns in the USA, and have used Facebook to communicate core messages and drive interaction and mobilisation. Yet, it is not only the novel digital campaigning tactics that GetUp! uses that makes them distinct among Australian political organisations. It is also their commitment to a theory of change strategy with its use of storytelling that has had a significant influence on established and emerging political organisations in Australia. A core part of the GetUp! effect has been to focus on shaping and changing political narratives through novel communications and personalised conversations (see Vromen 2017). Using new data from interviews and social media analysis, this chapter outlines GetUp!’s 2016 election campaign through a focus on their policy agenda, their political strategy and campaign tactics, particularly their use of Facebook and videos, as well as their use of phone banks and local

actions. It also discusses the media attention they generated, and ongoing political debates, as well as surmising their effectiveness and their future as a significant political organisation in Australia.

Election policy agenda

GetUp! as a campaigning organisation is structured around three campaign areas: climate change, economic fairness and human rights. They regularly survey their membership to identify and prioritise which issues and policy debates within these three areas they ought to focus their campaign work on. Early in 2016, they identified the following four campaign priorities for the 2016 election:

1. climate change and renewables
2. hard-right politicians
3. multinational tax
4. healthcare and hospitals.

This agenda emerged from a number of previous campaigns and events. Climate change is routinely the most important issue identified by their membership in GetUp!'s pre-election Vision survey. GetUp! had originally planned their campaign around 2016 being the 'climate election'. They had found in general Facebook analytics that climate change was also popular and topical with their base. GetUp! was also committed to including economic fairness, predominantly hospitals (rather than Medicare) as a main focus. Very little of their pre-election campaign planning focused on their high-profile campaign on human rights issues that included refugees, detention centres and same-sex marriage. During the campaign itself, they found that some climate issues broke through, such as the Great Barrier Reef and renewables, but not significantly, and their election campaign strategy became much more tightly focused on the other three areas, especially on local issues in conservative electorates.

The choice to construct a campaign storyline around the 'hard-right' section of the federal government had its roots in both the prime ministership of Tony Abbott, including his failed austerity Budget in 2014, and the change in prime minister to the more moderate Malcolm Turnbull. During the January 2015 Queensland State election, GetUp! had already successfully campaigned against conservative national policy

agendas on climate change and economic issues, yet when Turnbull was made leader of the Coalition, GetUp!'s membership wanted the organisation to find conciliatory ways to work with the new leadership group for progressive policy change. From this there emerged a different storyline, where Turnbull was being held to account for undue influence by the conservative arm, the 'hard-right' of the government, who were discursively represented as maintaining disproportionate power over the government's policy agenda. This was a significant shift in GetUp!'s narrative approach to adversarial politics via the focus on individual MPs that members loved to hate; hard-right MPs were constructed as roadblocks and local campaign plans were made to unseat them. The other two policy areas, of underspending on core resources such as hospitals and tax avoidance by the most powerful multinational corporations, were woven into this story of out-of-touch politicians beholden to conservative interests. The campaign messaging and subsequent strategy revolved around 'put the Coalition last' on election day.

Strategy and campaign priorities

GetUp!'s political strategy is analysed here in terms of the policy agendas, and their hybrid political tactics of hyper-local campaign work coupled with digital communications, centred on Facebook and video production. GetUp! articulated their election policy agenda as an extension of their interests in creating a progressive Australian policy context, and as responsive to their members' concerns. There is a long history of both progressive and conservative single-issue advocacy organisations using Australian elections to rate and compare party policies on relevant issues. This includes organisations as diverse as the Australian Christian Lobby, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Women's Electoral Lobby (Sawer, Abjorensen and Larkin 2009).

GetUp! published a comparative party policy survey related to three of their campaign areas:

1. climate change, renewables and the Great Barrier Reef (along nine policy issues)
2. hospitals and Medicare (four issues)
3. political donations (three issues).

GetUp! used a similar policy evaluation process to that used during the 2016 election for online voter advice applications such as the ABC's Vote Compass and Fairfax's Your Vote. That is, parties were rated as being for, against or uncommitted on each policy issue based on their published policy and election campaign statements, as well as a follow-up survey where parties had the right of reply to how they had been rated. GetUp! compared 10 parties, but the four more conservative parties did not respond to GetUp! via their post-rating survey. They then used this policy evaluation data to inform their local seat and Senate with how-to-vote materials. Figure 18.1 is GetUp's comparison of the parties on four core issues to do with health policy, especially hospitals, Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. It shows that the two government parties were not rated as likely to change policy, while most other parties were.

While traditionally most of GetUp!'s research and policy analysis for their campaigns is undertaken in-house by their campaigning staff, their economic fairness campaign team commissioned an academic research report on multinational tax avoidance that was released just before the federal government's May 2016 Budget. The main findings were about technology and pharmaceutical companies taking their profits offshore and minimising their tax in Australia (McClure, Lanis and Govendir 2016). The report was completed by accounting academics from the University of Technology Sydney and is densely written and technical, thus unlikely to be read closely by GetUp! activists or supporters. It did, however, receive extensive legacy media coverage in both broadsheet newspapers and public broadcasting (e.g. Aston 2016).¹ GetUp! followed up the report launch with the production and dissemination of two 30-second television ads (Christensen 2016) that focused on how missing taxes from large corporations led to a diminution of public services, such as schools and hospitals. As will be shown below, this topic had high salience among GetUp!'s engaged supporters on Facebook.

1 Legacy media is used here to refer to traditional and well-established newspaper and broadcast media brands, as opposed to new, born-digital media brands.

HOSPITALS & MEDICARE	AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY GetUp rating, based on research and policy survey response	LIBERAL PARTY GetUp rating, based on research. We did not receive a policy survey response.	THE NATIONAL PARTY GetUp rating, based on research. We did not receive a policy survey response.	THE GREENS GetUp rating, based on research and policy survey response.	NICK XENOPHON TEAM GetUp rating, based on research and policy survey response.
	X	X	X	✓	✓
	✓	X	X	✓	✓
	✓	X	X	✓	✓
	✓	X	X	✓	✓
Will you support reversing the full \$57 billion in Abbott-era cuts to local hospitals?					
Will you support fully reversing Abbott-era hospitals cuts to 2020?					
Will you support reversing the Medicare rebate Indexation freeze?					
Will you commit to not increasing Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme copayments beyond Indexation?					
	GLEN LAZARUS TEAM GetUp rating, based on research and policy survey response	RICKY MUIR - AMEP GetUp rating, based on research and policy survey response	THE SEX PARTY GetUp rating, based on research and policy survey response	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS GetUp rating, based on research. We did not receive a policy survey response.	FAMILY FIRST GetUp rating, based on research. We did not receive a policy survey response.
	✓	✓	✓	?	?
	✓	✓	✓	?	?
	✓	✓	?	?	?
	✓	✓	?	?	?
Will you support reversing the full \$57 billion in Abbott-era cuts to local hospitals?					
Will you support fully reversing Abbott-era hospitals cuts to 2020?					
Will you support reversing the Medicare rebate Indexation freeze?					
Will you commit to not increasing Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme copayments beyond Indexation?					

Figure 18.1. GetUp! analysis: Where do the parties stand on issues?

Source. GetUp! (2016a), used with permission.

Hybrid interdependency between local campaigning and digital technologies

However, focusing on only GetUp!'s policy agenda, lobbying and media work misunderstands the premise of the organisation. GetUp! is best analysed and understood as a hybrid campaigning organisation: it uses both insider- and outsider-oriented interest group strategies and tactics for engaging political elites, its membership and the mass public. It is also hybrid in that it simultaneously uses both offline, on-the-ground fieldwork—which in this campaign they referred to as their 'hyper-local campaigning' work—with digital tactics.² Increasingly, all kinds of political organisations find it necessary to run both fieldwork and digital campaigns, yet GetUp! is part of a small group of 'born-digital' organisations that have reframed their approach to all dimensions of campaigning, including membership, fundraising and tactics. This distinction between traditional political organisation and hybrid campaigning organisations is often purposefully ignored in political and media debate as traditional organisations, such as political parties and legacy media, still set the agenda. For example, GetUp!'s campaign was praised in the conservative legacy media for transcending their digital work to undertake targeted fieldwork: 'under boss Paul Oosting GetUp! has moved from an outpost of generic online grievances into carefully targeted countryside campaigns' (Albrechtsen 2016). This summation misunderstands both the narrative-based campaigning work they do and how their campaign work is still primarily built on digital forms of political engagement and organising.

GetUp! has pioneered the use of digital tools for campaigning in Australia, starting from mass emails and online petitioning over 10 years ago, to the use of campaigning system software like NationBuilder, and recently leading the way in using Facebook in a targeted way. David Karpf (2017) points out that online campaigning organisations share a culture of digital testing and listening that means a constant monitoring of an array of data collected from social media engagement rates, member response to calls to action in emails, to profiling volunteers and activists. He argues that a 'culture of testing creates feedback loops that help analytic activists learn, innovate, adapt, and evolve within a fast-changing hybrid media

2 On the growth of this kind of political phenomena, see Chadwick (2013); Chadwick and Dennis (2016); Karpf (2012, 2017); Vromen (2017).

system' (ibid.: 2). In addition to public-facing social media, GetUp! used the following powerful campaigning tools and databases to organise, test and listen for their digital and local fieldwork campaigns:

- NationBuilder: a content management system that links data on members, social media and fundraising.
- Tijuana: a highly secure central system of record, storing tens of millions of online actions, including raising more than \$30 million for GetUp!'s campaigns.
- ControlShift: a campaigning tool that hosts local efforts of national GetUp! campaigns and trains new recruits in how to run and win local campaigns.
- Turf or Walk List: a purpose-built tool that allows volunteers to generate maps of more than 60,000 specially selected blocks across Australia (Smith and Redrup 2016).

GetUp!'s 'hyper-local' campaigning

The main part of GetUp!'s campaign was the discursive and strategic focus on 20 lower house electorates with 'hard-right' members of parliament. In the end, eight of these electorates voted out their conservative MP; several others received a swing against them of up to 5–6 per cent, thus more than the general 3.5 per cent swing against the Coalition in the election (see Raue, Chapter 7, this volume). GetUp! ran field operations using local organising tactics in four electorates: Bass (Tasmania (TAS)), New England (NSW), Dixon (QLD) and Dawson (QLD). They also moved in and out of other local electorates when opportunities arose. Called 'hyper-local' campaigning, this strategy was coordinated via GetUp!'s Sydney office with a paid lead organiser and organising teams in each electorate focusing on locally identified issues, especially local hospitals. Using a strategy that was different from previous campaigns, the 2016 election was mainly focused on lower house seats, and not to any large extent on the Senate, as voting was judged harder to influence in the more volatile double-dissolution context. However, late in the campaign, GetUp! sent text messages to south-eastern Queensland voters about the risks of Pauline Hanson and One Nation.

The most time-intensive and expensive part of GetUp!'s campaign was organising phone banking by 3,700 GetUp! members and volunteers to have scripted, persuasive conversations with over 40,000 voters in marginal seats (GetUp! 2016b). Despite original plans, door knocking was not used extensively as it was considered too resource intensive; other local tactics used included community stalls, leaflet drops, paid billboard and cinema advertising. In addition, petitions on local services were delivered and how-to-vote cards were distributed on election day. In 2016, very little television advertising was used as it was too expensive and untargeted in contrast with paid Facebook advertising. The exceptions were a few ads on Sky News, and in local television stations in Launceston and New England. On election day itself, 3,020 GetUp! members handed out 1.1 million how-to-vote cards across 500 polling booths in marginal seats (GetUp! 2016b). The use of how-to-vote cards was a first for GetUp!. In the 2007, 2010 and 2013 elections, they devised scorecards that compared the parties contesting the election on GetUp!'s main campaign issues. In 2016, in line with their shift towards focusing on conservative MPs and electorates, they designed how-to-vote cards that distributed preferences to a range of progressive parties but purposefully asked voters to 'put the Liberals last' (Karp 2016). Each targeted electorate had tailored how-to-vote cards highlighting a major local campaign issue. Figure 18.2 from the South Australian electorate of Mayo, which the sitting Liberal MP Jamie Briggs lost, focuses on hospital funding.

While the main indicators of campaign success were the reach of their materials and messages, as well as seats either changing hands or a reduced vote share for targeted MPs, GetUp! also commissioned polling in several of their targeted seats and found that there was increased recognition of who GetUp! was after the election, and what they stood for.

LOWER HOUSE: MAYO

VOTE TO SAVE OUR HOSPITALS

THE LIBERALS WILL CUT \$54 BILLION FROM HOSPITALS OVER THE NEXT DECADE.

Doctors warn that Coalition health cuts will lead to more deaths in emergency and see you pay more for visits to your GP^{1,2}. Below are parties committed to fully restoring hospital funding to 2020 and unfreezing the Medicare rebate.

Here are parties committed to protecting Medicare and fully restoring hospital funding to 2020



Xenophon



Labor



Greens

**BALLOT PAPER
DIVISION OF MAYO**

- 3 DALLIMORE, Glen
AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
- 1 SHARKIE, Rebekha
NICK KENOPHON TEAM
- 4 DZIVINSKI, Luke
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
- 2 DANIELL, Nathan
THE GREENS
- 5 BRIGGS, Jamie
LIBERAL
- 6 HICKS, Bruce
FAMILY FIRST

OR

**BALLOT PAPER
DIVISION OF MAYO**

- 1 DALLIMORE, Glen
AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
- 2 SHARKIE, Rebekha
NICK KENOPHON TEAM
- 4 DZIVINSKI, Luke
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
- 3 DANIELL, Nathan
THE GREENS
- 5 BRIGGS, Jamie
LIBERAL
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THE GREENS
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- 6 HICKS, Bruce
FAMILY FIRST

¹ Funding cuts undermining public hospital emergency department targets, Australian Medical Association, 2016

² Your Medicare rebates have been frozen - fast facts, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, 2016

GetUp! is a campaigning community of over one million Australians working towards a fair, thriving and just Australia led by the values and hopes of everyday people. To determine who appears on this how to vote card, parties and candidates in contention were researched and surveyed for their position on thirty three policy areas. For more information and the full results of the survey go to: getup.org.au/vote

Remember to number every box in the lower house. Authorised by Paul Oosting, 14/338 Pitt St, Sydney 2000

GetUp!

Figure 18.2. GetUp! – How to vote in Mayo

Source. GetUp! (2016a), used with permission.

Digital campaigning: Election videos

The use of well-designed, easily shareable videos to launch or promote campaigns has been a stable part of GetUp!'s repertoire since early in their history. Kjerstin Thorson and her colleagues (2013: 425) noted the increased production and circulation of videos by social movement actors being used to promote a shared collective identity, share information and promote a particular movement trajectory. GetUp! uses short videos for all of these movement meaning-making reasons but, as is apt for a hybrid actor, also to capture news and policymakers' attention, especially by crowd-funding particular videos to become television advertisements. Video production and sharing came of age during the 2010 federal election campaign when GetUp! published eight videos on YouTube that received a total 549,000 views. This was a significant number of views for a small number of videos. In comparison, there were only 256,000 total views for the Australian Labor Party incumbent government's 59 videos (Chen 2012). In 2010, GetUp! took one video that targeted the Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's conservatism to prime time commercial television spots, this was also partially funded by the large \$1 million donation from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (Vromen and Coleman 2011). In the 2016 election campaign period, GetUp! published 23 videos on their dedicated YouTube page that received a total of only 167,000 views. Four videos had over 15,000 views: three on multinational corporations' tax avoidance, and one on youth electoral enrolment. Clearly, YouTube has diminished as a novel and distinct site for member and voter engagement. GetUp! supporters were more likely to be watching videos shared via Facebook, as highlighted below. GetUp! claim that their election-made videos were watched 5.25 million times (GetUp! 2016b: 17), but there is little detailing of how they were accessed across social media platforms and television.

Digital campaigning: Facebook

As noted earlier, the 2016 election was not 'the climate change election' for GetUp!. Instead, it was actually 'the Facebook election'. GetUp!'s extensive use of Facebook, both via content on their own Facebook page, as well as the extensive use of paid and targeted Facebook advertising, was a powerful tool throughout the campaign. GetUp! claimed that their use of these digital marketing techniques was inspired by the hybrid digital campaigns

run by Bernie Sanders in the US and Justin Trudeau in Canada (GetUp! 2016b). The Facebook platform itself is seldom analysed as a campaigning and mobilising tool used by advocacy organisations. In the recent digital politics and movements literature, there is an over-reliance on platforms that are mainly public facing and where the application programming interface can be accessed to create more complete datasets; thus, a focus on Twitter and distributed petitioning sites. Yet, most ordinary citizens are still much more likely to use Facebook, and various studies consistently show that it is the leading social media platform for accessing everyday information on news and politics (Reuters Institute 2015; Vromen et al. 2016). It is possible, however, to focus on public or community Facebook pages (see e.g. Larsson 2016). GetUp! has around 400,000 followers on its Facebook page, and the organisation has deliberately tried to increase this community over time, with many of their campaigners involved as interactive participants in Facebook-based conversations and subsequent calls to action (see Vromen 2017).

During the election campaign, GetUp! created 274 Facebook posts on their public page from their campaign launch post on 14 April until a post on the final Senate election outcome on 11 August. They referred to this campaign work as their ‘organic’ use of Facebook. I collected these public posts into a database using Netvizz software and subsequently coded and analysed the posts with the highest levels of engagement from GetUp!’s Facebook community.

Of these 274 posts:

- 38 per cent were an ordinary status update with a photo or meme
- 33 per cent of posts had a GetUp!-created short 30–40 second video as the post, and another 7 per cent had an animated gif in the post
- 20 per cent of posts linked to articles in online legacy media, mostly either the *Guardian* or Fairfax newspapers (the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* or the *Canberra Times*).

Facebook use by political organisations needs to drive supporter engagement, and the creation of shareable memes, infographics and short videos is core to how GetUp! approaches it. Facebook, like Instagram and Snapchat, is now more a visual than text-based medium, though commenting affordances make it more interactive. It is also notable that one in five GetUp! posts was a link to a new article in left-of-centre media, generally reinforcing the post’s point. This count may have been higher

as GetUp! often used the first comment after the main post/status update to post a link to a news article about the topic being discussed (I did not manually code these instances). Yet, it is the level of engagement with a post that drives the use of Facebook to help GetUp! spread their political messages and get supporters involved in their campaigning work. I found that:

- 10 per cent of posts had over 10,000 people engage with them (engagement comprises the sum of likes/reactions, shares and comments on a post), with an average of 4,571 people engaging with any election post.
- There was a total 378,000 shares and 656,000 likes for GetUp!'s 274 Facebook posts. This is more engagement than the major parties were receiving on Facebook: the ALP received 312,000 shares, the Liberal Party 119,000 and the Greens 102,000 (Smith and Redrup 2016).

Data on actual reach (the number of people who saw the post) is not available through Netvizz, but even if a simple estimate of reach is applied, the election led to substantial Facebook engagement for GetUp!. That is, the average post with 4,571 publicly visible engagements (likes/shares/comments) could have 200 friends view it (the median number of Facebook friends a user has, see Smith 2014) leading to nearly a further million views, and this does not even include the original 400,000 GetUp! Facebook supporters who may have viewed but not publicly engaged with a post.

Table 18.1 summarises my analysis of the top 24 Facebook posts that had over 10,000 individual engagements, listed in chronological order of appearance during the election campaign. First, the majority of these posts had original GetUp! video content. While most of their campaign issues are represented in this list, it was clearly the focus on hard-right politicians that attracted consistently high levels of supporter engagement, closely followed by multinational corporations (MNCs) and tax avoidance. Only nine of 24 posts contained an 'ask' or 'call to action' for followers (usually in the first comment on the post). GetUp! told me about the high success of their calls for donations for advertising, and to the campaign generally, on the back of their hard-right politicians campaign, especially that which centred on the member for Dickson and Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton. For example, they raised \$200,000 quickly to run an advertisement focusing on Dutton, \$40,000 of which was directly from Facebook.

Table 18.1. Getup!'s 2016 Facebook posts with over 10,000 engagements, April–July 2016

Election topic	Date (2016)	Video Views	Engagement	Ask
Innovation	18 April	241,000	11,642	n/a
MNCs	26 April	648,000	23,605	vote on ad for tv
Health	9 May	n/a	11,586	share cuts map
Climate change	15 May	n/a	10,960	n/a
Hard-right politicians	18 May	n/a	22,544	n/a
Hard-right politicians	19 May	1,200,000	39,828	donation
Hard-right politicians	20 May	n/a	13,037	donation
Health	23 May	313,000	10,385	n/a
Indigenous human rights	26 May	n/a	29,837	n/a
Climate change	27 May	n/a	17,262	n/a
MNCs	30 May	255,000	10,945	n/a
Hard-right politicians	10 June	n/a	10,746	n/a
Barrier reef	10 June	n/a	13,808	n/a
Health	14 June	486,000	12,059	n/a
Economic fairness	15 June	470,000	17,578	n/a
Hard-right politicians	16 June	235,000	10,809	donation
Climate change	18 June	n/a	16,964	election rally
Climate change	20 June	247,000	12,906	donation
Climate change	21 June	310,000	13,777	donation
Senate vote	28 June	547,000	10,615	Senate vote
MNCs	29 June	848,000	25,236	n/a
Hard-right politicians	4 July	n/a	10,257	n/a
Hard-right politicians	6 July	n/a	15,087	n/a
Health	8 July	n/a	17,301	n/a

Source. Compiled by author from content analysis of GetUp! Australia's Facebook Page.

I also analysed these top posts to better understand what kinds of engagements were contributing to their success within the GetUp! Facebook public page. Table 18.2 lists the top posts from the highest number of shares to the lowest and compares the proportion of engagement—that is, shares with comments. Here it is clearer that the most shareable content came from GetUp!'s economic fairness campaign on MNCs, health and hospitals, and the economy generally; with their

climate change campaign also featuring. Claims are made of the potential for Facebook to move beyond being a substitute media and broadcast-only site to produce political conversation and interaction. Yet, as can be seen here, only a small proportion of the overall engagement is actually comments being made. There was an average of 300 comments per post for all 254 election posts, and an average of 790 comments for the subset of the 24 most popular posts; with two hard-right politicians' posts focused on Peter Dutton posted in mid-May attracting the most debate (around 2,200 comments). This suggests that the successful political use of Facebook is multifaceted: sharing and liking are important as they promote core messages and ideas into a larger networked community; whereas commenting and active debate within the GetUp! community provides incentives for mobilisation, particularly fundraising and donations for campaign work.

Table 18.2. Facebook election posts with highest engagement – shares and comments

Issue	Date (2016)	Shares (%)	Comments (%)
MNCs	29 June	71	2
MNCs	26 April	64	2
Health	23 May	59	3
Economic fairness	15 June	54	4
Climate change	27 May	53	4
Senate vote	28 June	50	4
Health	8 July	45	5
Health	9 May	44	3
Climate change	21 June	44	5
MNCs	30 May	37	3
Hard-right politicians	16 June	37	4
Climate change	20 June	35	4
Indigenous human rights	26 May	32	4
Hard-right politicians	19 May	30	5
Hard-right politicians	20 May	30	6
Hard-right politicians	10 June	27	12
Barrier reef	10 June	24	5
Health	14 June	22	5
Innovation	18 April	22	5
Climate change	15 May	22	3

Issue	Date (2016)	Shares (%)	Comments (%)
Hard-right politicians	18 May	22	10
Hard-right politicians	6 July	17	8
Climate change	18 June	9	3
Hard-right politicians	4 July	7	11

Source. Compiled by author from content analysis of GetUp! Australia's Facebook Page.

Yet, focusing on posts on GetUp!'s public Facebook page alone is only part of why this was considered 'the Facebook election' for GetUp!. Over 1,400 pieces of content, which included Facebook information posts and short videos, were paid for and shared by GetUp! over the election campaign, and were targeted at 29 of Australia's most marginal lower house seats. In sum, GetUp!'s targeted digital advertising program reached 830,000 voters in these electorates (GetUp! 2016b). Most of these posts appeared as sponsored advertising in the Facebook newsfeeds of voters in targeted marginal electorates; several were also translated into Chinese, Arabic and Vietnamese. However, these Facebook posts are impossible to retrace through Netvizz software. I was told by GetUp! that one of their more popular posts was about Launceston Hospital funding, which was targeted at voters in the electorate of Bass in TAS. It used a specially made short video of one of the hospital's doctors talking to camera, urging voters to 'put the Liberals last'. GetUp! saw this as a wholly different audience, and crafted messages that would not necessarily resonate with their members but were aimed at swinging voters. These ads focused more on economic fairness and hospital funding in particular, and not on climate change. GetUp! paid for their ads to appear in the Facebook newsfeeds of commercial media and celebrities. This kind of personalised digital advertising as political campaigning is not sufficiently understood and analysed in either the Australian political context, or in the burgeoning international research literature.

Media attention to GetUp! during and after the campaign

Thus far I have argued that GetUp!'s novel use of digital and hyper-local campaigning for member and supporter mobilisation, and message sharing, contributed to a successful 2016 election campaign. However, political and legacy media attention also matter to cement their ongoing place as an influential Australian interest group. In their own campaign

analysis, GetUp! discursively utilised legacy media attention and, pointedly, complaints about GetUp!'s tactics from targeted Liberal Party politicians such as Andrew Nikolic as evidence of their success (GetUp! 2016b). I analysed 42 news media articles where GetUp! was mentioned in the headline or lead paragraph, collected via the global news database Factiva, and published in major Australian news publications, with the addition of articles published online on *ABC News* and in the Australian edition of the *Guardian*. Most were published after 2 July, election day 2016, and 25 of the 42 articles (60 per cent) were published in News Corp newspapers, 14 in the *Australian* alone. Many of these went beyond news reporting and were negative about GetUp!'s campaign. In 2010, I analysed 150 articles on GetUp!'s election campaign, 115 of which were primarily focused on GetUp!.. This is a significant decrease in legacy media attention for their election campaign work, and I argued that the notable decline in attention from a high point in 2010–12 was due to their novelty having worn off, and evidence of their mainstreaming as a core interest group in Australia (Vromen 2017: 106).

The 42 articles were published between GetUp!'s campaign launch event in Sydney on 30 April and late October. Overall, 65 per cent of the 2016 articles were neutral or positive, but a sizeable third were negative. In analysis of GetUp!'s 2010 election campaign, we found that only 10 per cent were negative, and 76 per cent did not label the political stance of the organisation (Vromen and Coleman 2011). The increased negative reporting from News Corp is well recognised by GetUp!, and it only actively concerns them when newspapers such as the *Australian* agenda set for other media, such as the ABC. While significant campaigning energy is spent on social media, GetUp! also employs a media relations expert who sends out daily media releases and cultivates networked relationships with sympathetic journalists. This is an acknowledgement of both the need to receive positive stories in the legacy media that their members access, such as the ABC, but it is also cognisance of the fact that when campaigns and issues reach the legacy media it also draws the attention of political elites. In 2016, the vast majority (70 per cent) of articles labelled GetUp! as either left-leaning or progressive, with another 20 per cent linking them with the Labor Party. I also coded the label used in each article to place GetUp! as a political organisation: 52 per cent labelled them as an activist group and 31 per cent as lobbyists or advocates. Negative articles were much more likely to call them an 'activist group', which was used pejoratively to frame GetUp! as less legitimate within the electoral campaign context. Further, all positive newspaper articles

quoted either Paul Oosting, GetUp!'s National Director, or another core campaigner directly; whereas half of the negative articles did not quote anyone from GetUp!.

Table 18.3 shows which election campaign issues were mentioned: 43 per cent mentioned the campaign against hard-right politicians, and the second-largest category was commentary or mention of GetUp!'s general approach to the election campaign. The other campaign issues of health and Medicare, the Great Barrier Reef, renewables and climate change, and tax paid by MNCs received much less attention. This was similar to 2010 when the media largely focused on GetUp!'s most traditional campaign issue and action: successfully taking a case to the High Court over voter enrolment (Vromen and Coleman 2011). The contrast in framing and reception of campaign issues on Facebook versus legacy media is illustrative of the importance of analysis of the hybrid media and information-sharing systems that voters now use.

Table 18.3. Reportage of election campaign issues

Campaign issue	Percentage of 42 articles
Hard-right politicians	34
Barrier reef/Climate change	10
Hard-right politicians <i>and</i> reef or climate	9
General campaign	21
Health	7
Multinationals tax	7
Other	7

Source. Compiled by author using content analysis of articles from Factiva database.

Table 18.4 shows what kind of campaign tactics were discussed in the set of articles. Similarly, the more traditional actions of handing out how-to-vote cards on election day at polling booths, donating and raising money and, to a smaller extent, door knocking are those most likely to be highlighted by the media. Much less attention is given to the crowd-sourced actions that, over its 11-year history, have come to distinguish GetUp!: online petitioning, social media campaigning and local actions and stunts, including purchasing billboards and television advertising. Even more important is that the most time- and labour-intensive tactic that GetUp! used in 2016 was phone banking and persuasive conversations with undecided voters, but this is barely recognised by the media reportage.

Table 18.4. Reportage of election campaign tactics

Tactic	Percentage of 42 articles*
Election-day actions	29
Donating and raising money	26
Door knocking/conversations	17
Advertising or billboards	14
Online petitions and social media	10
Phone calls	8
Local actions	7

*Adds to more than 100 per cent as articles are counted more than once if more than one tactic was mentioned

Source. Compiled by author using content analysis of articles from Factiva database.

Conclusion

GetUp! fundraised and spent at least \$3 million during the 2016 election campaign. This is a significant amount for a mid-sized third-party organisation, but is less than the Australian Council of Trade Unions who were estimated to have fundraised between \$10–20 million for their election campaign (Bramston 2016; Peetz, Chapter 23, this volume). GetUp! also spent less on television or newspaper advertising than in previous elections, instead focusing on the combination of phone banking, Facebook campaigning and advertising and hyper-local campaigning work. The ‘Facebook election’ campaign and subsequent success for GetUp! were important watershed moments, suggesting that comprehensive digital strategies will remain important campaign terrain for other Australian political actors in the future. Indeed, many of the in-depth legacy media articles written about GetUp! after the election praised their tactics and urged others from all sides of politics to emulate them. This included Cory Bernardi’s call for a conservative version of GetUp! to revive his earlier attempt at starting CanDo after the 2010 election, and leaders within business lobbying organisations, such as the Business Council of Australia, suggesting they had much to learn (Ryan 2016). Yet, GetUp!’s (2016b) assessment of their campaign success in terms of mobilisation and campaigning analytics also needs further unpacking. Are these just ‘vanity metrics’ (Karpf 2017: 131), rather than real indicators

of campaign success and political change? Karpf suggests that we need to think more about what the new data analytics turn means, and whether it leads to sustainable political organisation and citizen politicisation:

The simplest online interactions tend to be the ones that are most amenable to analytics. Tracking clicks and shares is easy. Tracking conversations is a bit trickier. Tracking online-to-offline participation is still quite hard. Tracking impacts on elite decision makers is nearly impossible. The more complex the task, the fewer people will engage in it and the more variables you need to simultaneously account for (ibid.: 22).

The reality of the post-election political context is also increasingly important as there has been a renewed focus on trying to use institutional mechanisms, such as donations and third-party campaigning law, to constrain GetUp!'s future involvement in election campaigns. The focus during GetUp!'s testimony to the federal Joint Standing Committee on Election Matters (JSCEM 2016) was mainly on their use of how-to-vote cards that were seen as too partisan, and questioning the transparency of their donations and funding base. This was not unexpected as GetUp! themselves released a report in time for the JSCEM hearing called *Dark Money* (Edwards 2016), which used detailed research to question political-party donations and called for more transparency. It seems that the Australian institutionalised electoral context remains 'politics as usual', and has not yet come to grips with the meaning and challenges from a new focus on hybrid campaigning underpinned by hyper-local actions and social media mobilisation and advertising.

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