PM surprises with September election announcement

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Abstract
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Prime Minister Julia Gillard has announced the date of the 2013 election, with Australia to go to the ballot box on September 14. Ms Gillard today told the National Press Club the move would give certainty…

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Interviewed

1. **Geoffrey Robinson**

   Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Deakin University

2. **Gregory Melleuish**

   Associate Professor, School of History and Politics at University of Wollongong
Prime Minister Julia Gillard says calling the election now will enable a focus on policies rather than “petty politics”. AAP/Alan Porritt

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has announced the date of the 2013 election, with Australia to go to the ballot box on September 14.

Ms Gillard today told the National Press Club the move would give certainty, and she hoped it would create an environment in which the nation’s eyes were more easily focused on policies and not “petty politics”.

The move, while unusual, is a good one, said Geoffrey Robinson, Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Deakin University.

“Any government benefits by more scrutiny being placed on the opposition and this removes in the media that easy topic of election date speculation,” Dr Robinson said.

“It’s an example of the government wanting to set the agenda, which is something it has struggled to do since Tony Abbott became leader of the opposition.”

Ms Gillard said not everything about the tenor and temperature of debate this year was in her control.
“But I can act to clear away the carry-on that comes with speculation about when the election will be held,” she said.

However Gregory Melleuish, Associate Professor in the School of History and Politics at University of Wollongong said the move would deliver “the longest election campaign in the nation’s history”.

Professor Melleuish said the focus was now on strategies to win the election rather than strategies to benefit the country.

“This isn’t about taking things away from the election and getting on with good government, it’s about turning it into an ongoing election campaign.”

Dr Robinson said long election campaigns were usually favoured by governments in trouble, but that history showed it didn’t usually make much difference to the end result.