

# Body language experts pick PM, hands down

## Presentation

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Bill Shorten's persona may be Prime Minister Scott Morrison's best weapon to save the election, according to body language experts and executive coaches who scored the first leaders' debate.

Despite voters at the head-to-head debate handing Mr Shorten the victory, the experts scored Mr Morrison ahead but warned both the "cranky bear" and "court jester" have work to do before a second debate on Friday.

"From the opening on, Mr Morrison won hands down," corporate speaking coach Louise Mahler said.

"His quick-response answers, his listening, his open face, his gesturing all surpassed Mr Shorten by kilometres. The closing highlighted this most clearly."

The expert said Mr Morrison showed his nerves in his opening address, pulling his coat in tight as a nervous twitch and audibly breathing in, a sign of a closed throat, which is common in stressful situations.

But by the end, Mr Morrison spoke

with rhythm and meaning and gestured clearly, widely and congruently.

"The nerves were gone and the breath flowed with ease," she said.

She gave Mr Morrison points for showing restraint with his lack of response to Mr Shorten's "have you finished?" quip.

In contrast, she blasted Mr Shorten's "primary school debater" reading style delivered in a monotone, his tight mouth and clenched cheeks and his cringeworthy line "thanking everybody for listening", repeated twice.

Body language and speech expert Michael Kelly scored it more closely.

He awarded Mr Morrison 7.5 and Mr Shorten 7 out of 10 based on who appeared the more competent, inspiring, forward-looking and calm-under-pressure leader of state.

He agreed Mr Morrison's best moments included his closing remarks, due to a measured genuine delivery packaged in an open, middle close structure which conveyed the feeling of speaking one on one with the audience.

Mr Morrison's worst moments were sniping and interrupting Mr Shorten during the last half of the debate, he



Prime Minister Scott Morrison shears a sheep at Dubbo last weekend.

said. He scored Mr Shorten's opening just 6 out of 10, after starting with a lifeless voice and shifting to a phoney rote delivery.

"It was as if he was reading someone else's script and trying to impose gravity because he couldn't generate it himself," Mr Kelly said.

He said Mr Shorten's worst moments were his opening, scolding the female journalist who suggested he look at Mr Morrison and his smirk.

Ms Mahler said both leaders needed to do better with their body language after starting awkwardly with their hands in their crutches.

The experts agreed Mr Morrison also had the edge on the hustings where he has seemed relaxed and kept any perception of arrogance in check.

Mr Morrison, dubbed a "court jester" by Mr Shorten, needs to avoid the smirking facial expression he often displays and avoid appearing too 'jocular', Mr Kelly said.

Ms Mahler said Mr Morrison's major challenges were speaking too fast, appearing unco-ordinated and over-coming a "dorky arrogance", exacerbated by having his glasses on the end of his nose and closing his mouth tightly with the edges down.

But Mr Shorten, who Mr Morrison has dubbed "cranky bear", has even bigger problems, with Ms Mahler complaining he goes into punching stance, with his body twisted to the right and his head darting forward.

She warned Mr Shorten changed state too quickly from the kind, caring Bill into aggressive attack.

She said both leaders need to be more consistent in style and behaviour, display a slow onset smile, symmetry of body and facial expressions, controlled breath, a forwards nod and direct, controlled and soft eye contact.