The Victorian election is just days away and the campaigning is reaching a final crescendo. Both the Labor and Liberal parties are saturating the local airwaves with advertisements.

All of the polls point to a Labor victory at this stage. But what are the key marginal seats most likely to determine who holds power in Victoria for the next four years?

Wendouree

Margin: held by Labor, but it is now a notionally Liberal seat by 0.1%, adjusted for redistribution.

Wendouree, formerly known as Ballarat West, covers Ballarat’s central business district and the area to the north of the regional centre. Following the redistribution, the Labor-voting suburb of Sebastopol was lost, making the seat notionally Liberal by 0.1%. Wendouree is held by Labor’s Sharon Knight.

Wendouree has long been a crucial political battleground and is one of the few regional seats that Labor has been able to claim. In 1999, the seat of Ballarat West helped Labor leader Steve Bracks assume the premiership. Knight’s Liberal opponent is Craig Coltman, who is back to challenge again after running in 2010. Despite it being a tight contest, the feeling in Ballarat is that transport, youth unemployment and education have been overlooked by the current Liberal-National government.

Prediction: Knight holds the seat.

Monbulk

Margin: held by Labor, but it is now a notionally Liberal seat by 1.1%, adjusted for redistribution.

Monbulk consists of Dandenong Range and outer eastern suburbs including Olinda, Tecoma, Kalorama, Montrose, Mt Dandenong, Sassafras, Monbulk, Upwey, Ferny Creek, Selby, Macclesfield, Menzies Creek and parts of Kilsyth and Mooroolbark. Lost to Monbulk in the redistribution were The Basin and sections of Bayswater and Boronia.

Since 2002, the seat has been held by current deputy opposition leader James Merlino. However, the redistribution has made the seat notionally Liberal based on the 2010 count. Merlino’s opponents include Liberal candidate Mark Verschuur and the Greens’ Michael Clarke.

Local issues will be especially important in this contest. The grassroots anti-McDonald’s campaign in Tecoma gripped the electorate in recent years and garnered widespread media attention. The anti-development sentiment in Monbulk will likely aid Merlino.

Prediction: Merlino will hold the seat by a slightly larger margin.

Albert Park

Margin: held by Labor by 0.9%, adjusted for redistribution.

Albert Park is a diverse and rapidly changing electorate. It includes the suburbs of St Kilda, St Kilda West, Middle Park, Albert Park, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Southbank. The electorate, created in 1889, is a largely affluent district that contains isolated pockets of social and economic disadvantage.

As a result of population growth in Albert Park, the district boundary shrank by two square kilometres in the latest redistribution. Elwood and parts of St Kilda have been lost and consequently Labor’s 2.1% margin has fallen to
just 0.9%. Incumbent Labor MP Martin Foley retained the seat in 2010 despite trailing by more than 8% after the first preference count.

For Foley to hang onto the seat, he must again rely on a strong preference flow from Greens voters. His opponents include Liberal Shannon Eeles, the Greens’ David Collis and celebrity rocker Tex Perkins, who is standing as an independent. Perkins is campaigning for the restoration of the Palais Theatre in St Kilda and has directed his supporters to vote for Foley after Labor committed A$13.4 million to save the iconic venue.

Prediction: Foley will retain the seat.

St Kilda’s iconic Palais Theatre is a key election issue in the seat of Albert Park. AAP/Joe Castro

Carrum

Margin: held by the Liberals by 0.3%, adjusted for redistribution.

Carrum includes the southeast Melbourne suburbs of Carrum, Carrum Downs, Bonbeach, Patterson Lakes, Skye, Sandhurst and almost all of Seaford. The electorate has lost the increasingly affluent areas of Aspendale, Mordialloc, Chelsea and Edithvale.

In 2010, Liberal candidate Donna Bauer defeated Labor’s Jenny Lindell with a significant 8.7% swing. It was only the second time in the last 45 years that the Liberal Party had scored a victory in the district. This was a key Liberal gain and helped to oust the Brumby Labor government. The redistribution has turned the seat into one of the tightest contests in Victoria with the margin falling from 2% to just 0.3%.

It will require a herculean effort from Bauer, who has battled cancer this year, to hold the seat for the Liberals. Labor candidate Sonya Kilkenny, a commercial lawyer for the ANZ Bank who stood for the federal seat of Dunkley at the 2013 federal election, has run a strong, well-resourced local campaign.

Prediction: This is a tight two-horse race that Kilkenny will win.

South Barwon

Margin: held by the Liberals by 4.9%, adjusted for redistribution.

The South Barwon electorate includes the southern tip of Geelong and also the Surf Coast Council region. Bells Beach, Jan Juc and Torquay straddle the southern area of the district while Moriac, Mount Moriac, Barrabool and Gnarwarre rest to the north.

South Barwon is traditionally a Liberal district and is held by Liberal MP Andrew Katos. The Labor candidate is Andy Richards. Greens candidate Lisa Ashdowne will likely claim nearly 10% of the vote and her preference flow will make the seat a tight contest. South Barwon is crucial to the Liberal cause and must be held if the Napthine government has any hope of retaining office.

Prediction: Liberal hold.