Scott Morrison is targeting migrant communities critical to his re-election in a bid to seize on Bill Shorten’s fast-to-track refugee medical transfers to Australia, as the government ramps up pressure on Labor in a move drawing comparisons to John Howard’s Tampa moment.

As a new opinion poll last night showed the Opposition Leader has been badly punished after backing independent Kerryn Phelps’ controversial medevac bill, the Prime Minister tapped into voters’ concerns, releasing an opinion piece written in leading immigration, Mandarin, Arabic and Korean, for community newspapers.

“Our plan is straightforward,” Mr Morrison wrote in his article entitled “One Plan for Keeping Australians Safe and Secure.”

“Keep our economy strong to provide the surest foundations for our security. Defend Australia with a record investment of over $200 billion in our nation’s defence capability over the next decade. Continue to protect our borders with proven policies that work, and not changing them.”

The move came as the government received a poll bounce to 48 per cent within striking distance of Labor after spending a week attacking Mr Shorten over border protection, with the Coalition trailing by 51 to 49 per cent.

An Ipsos poll released by Channel Nine last night showed a dramatic drop in support for Labor—which was leading the Coalition by 54 to 46 per cent in December—and that Mr Morrison was preferred by voters as prime minister over Mr Shorten by a margin of 48 to 38 per cent.

Grantham Morris, a former chief of staff to John Howard, last night said Mr Morrison had been given an opportunity to make gains on border protection, just as the Howard government was given during the Tampa crisis in 2001 when it refused permission for a boat carrying more than 6000 refugees to enter Australia.

“There is a link between the Labor, Greens and independent-backed medical analysts and ‘Tampa because both gave the prime minister the opportunity to look strong on national security and immigration at the mid-term stage will not come to this country,’ he said.

“Bill Shorten has made a rare political mistake. There is no doubt the refugee question has cut

PM backs business reform, avoids split

EXCLUSIVE

JOE KELLY

Labor and the Greens have accused Scott Morrison of losing control of the national agenda as parliament resumes, with the Prime Minister preparing to wage a battle on three fronts.

The move risks being viewed as a capital punishment to his 2019 campaign. Morrison’s chief of staff to lose control of the government. As parliament resumes, the Prime Minister has to stop the Prime Minister will seek to capitalise on Labor’s border protection record as parliament resumes for the last sitting week. Before the April 2 budget claim on the opposition and the Greens, the government has lost control of the House of Representatives.

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No one who attempts an illegal boat journey to Australia will ever be allowed to settle here

SCOTT MORRISON

February 17, 2019

We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.

JOHN HOWARD

October 28, 2001

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Double tax hit for near retirees

EXCLUSIVE

SIMON BENSÖN

NATIONAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

More than half a million Australians approaching retirement could suffer a double tax hit to their savings plans under Labor’s policy to axe franking credit refunds and curb negative gearing.

More than 40 per cent of the 13 million people who already claim tax deductions on their rental properties are between 45 and 59. Australian Taxation Office figures show.

The government said it would axe a major retirement savings tax cut, which are relied on by 900,000 Australians and mainly those in retirement.

Josh Frydenberg plans to reverse the government’s campaign against Labor’s tax plans with a property industry roundtable on Tuesday to be held, hosted by the Property Council of Australia.

The council warned against any changes to negative gearing or capital gains tax, claiming the risk was too great, considering the current cycle in the housing market.

The Treasurer will use the roundtable to muster support among industry groups, which the Master Builders Association and the Real Estate Institute of Australia.

The government’s analysis of the 2015-16ATO tax data was being done by the Treasury, which had already finished its work.