

## ORANGE BY-ELECTION 12 NOV 2016 – THE SOCC REPORT

### FORCED COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS MAJOR ISSUE IN HISTORIC SWING AGAINST THE BAIRD GOVERNMENT

#### 1. MASSIVE SWING

There was a massive first preference swing against the Baird Government of 34% in the [Orange By-election](#) held 12 November 2016. According to the ABC election analyst Antony Green this is the biggest swing in NSW by-election history.



*SOCC volunteers at election booths in Orange – No Forced Amalgamations – Put Nats Last*

#### 2. MAJOR ISSUE – FORCED AMALGAMATIONS

a) The major issue in the by-election was forced council amalgamations. Cabonne Shire lies within the Orange State electorate and the Baird Government is determined to forcibly merge it with Orange City Council. The Cabonne community strongly opposes this action for many good reasons and its council is taking court action to try to stop it.

The Government's ban on the greyhound industry with the resultant backflip was another issue. Both issues highlight the Government's dictatorial approach to communities, the failure to genuinely listen and an inability to make well informed decisions.

b) A number of National Party MPs have stated that the three issues that swung the election against them were leadership, council amalgamations and greyhounds – [7News](#) 13 Nov 16. This was conceded by the National's leader Troy Grant when he resigned [Central Western Daily](#) 20 Nov 16.

c) Political parties that fought the election all said that the major issue was forced council amalgamations – [Luke Foley](#) (Labor), [David Shoebridge](#) (The Greens), and [Phil Donato](#) (Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party) who won the election.

d) The NSW Local Government association ([LGNSW](#)) and Save Our Councils Coalition ([SOCC](#)) are of the view that the state-wide issue of forced mergers was the critical factor. This is supported by the large swings against the Liberal/National Party in the recent NSW local council elections.

e) Media coverage has acknowledged that forced council amalgamations was a significant issue – [The Guardian](#) 14 Nov 16 and [SMH](#) 19 Nov 16.



[7News Video](#) Sydney 13 Nov 16.  
*Record swing against Nationals in Orange.*



[Prime7 Video](#) Central West 15 Nov 16.  
*Baird will not change forced amalgamations.*

f) Alan Jones AO, leading radio commentator, spoke at the SOCC Orange By-election [Rally](#) on 8 Nov and broadcast from Orange with Ray Hadley prior to the election. He predicted a large swing and its reasons - forced amalgamations and greyhounds being the major ones along with Baird not listening.

g) Significant Federal Liberal Party and National Party members have made it clear that the lesson from the Orange By-election is that a political party which treats voters as mugs and won't listen is in deep trouble – [Tony Abbott](#) (former Liberal PM) and [Barnaby Joyce](#) (National Party Deputy PM).

### **3. BAIRD IN DENIAL**

Since the By-election, both the Nationals new leader and Premier Baird have said they will listen, but have shown no genuine signs of doing so. On the Monday after the election Baird re-affirmed that the decision had already been made to force through amalgamations [SMH](#) 14 Nov 16. While the Nationals new leader has now visited Orange no commitment has been made to withdraw the forced amalgamation of Cabonne Shire.

### **4. DE-AMALGAMATION**

The Labor Party, The Greens, the Christian Democrats and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party all promised at the SOCC Orange By-election [Rally](#) outside Parliament House on 8 Nov 2016 that communities whose councils had been forcibly amalgamated by the Baird Government would be allowed on a change of government to have binding plebiscites to allow de-amalgamation. These political parties have for over a year been publicly committed to this position.



*'[Missing Mike Video](#)' – Luke Foley asking Baird why he was nowhere to be seen in Orange.*

## **5. BAIRD MUST BACK OFF NOW**

- a) It is highly likely that the NSW Liberal/National Government will be thrown out of office in 2019.
- b) Communities across NSW are demanding that Baird back off now over forced amalgamations [Central Western Daily](#) 15 Nov 16. These communities include [Cabonne](#) and [Cootamundra](#).
- c) All Baird appointed administrators and forced council mergers must be withdrawn. Merger proposals before the Courts must also be withdrawn.
- d) If the NSW Liberal/National Government does not withdraw its forced amalgamations and its policy, it faces a continuous wide-spread community revolt across NSW that will inevitably lead to its defeat in the 2019 State election and the de-merging of councils after plebiscites.

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Save Our Councils Coalition (SOCC)

<https://www.facebook.com/saveourcouncils>

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