

Foley declares 'a mood for change' after byelection swings against Liberals

SMH 9 April 2017

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Opposition leader Luke Foley has declared there is "a mood for change" in NSW after large swings against the government in byelections in the blue ribbon Liberal seats of North Shore and Manly and a swing towards Labor in Gosford.



Premier Gladys Berejiklian (centre) congratulates North Shore and Manly candidates Felicity Wilson and James Griffin following Saturday's by-elections. Photo: James Alcock

In Manly, there was a 24.7 per cent primary vote swing against Liberal candidate James Griffin, while in North Shore the primary vote swing against Liberal candidate Felicity Wilson was 15.4 per cent.

Labor held onto Gosford following the retirement of Kathy Smith due to health reasons, with an eleven per cent primary vote swing towards its candidate Liesl Tesch.

Asked on Sunday what message the government will take from the results, Premier Gladys Berejiklian said "the community has given us their trust but they expect us to listen to their concerns.



New member for Gosford Liesel Tesch joins NSW State Opposition Leader Luke Foley to celebrate yesterday's successful by-election. Photo: James Alcock

"I think they are a reflection of what people do and don't like about a government over the course of six years," she said.

"We're in the [middle] of our second term. This is an opportunity for people to talk to you about things they perhaps wanted you to do differently".

Opponents of forced council amalgamations had used the byelections to highlight the issue and urge a vote against the government.

But there were also damaging revelations about each Liberal candidate.

Fairfax Media revealed [Ms Wilson signed an incorrect statutory declaration](#) about how long she has lived in the electorate and [Mr Griffin was a director of a company a liquidator said may have traded while insolvent](#).

Questions were also raised about Mr Griffin's [role in a bungled development of Manly Oval](#) while he was deputy mayor.

Mr Foley said he was "delighted" by the Gosford result.

"The Premier has to accept some responsibility here for the brutal judgments people have made against her and her government in three state seats," he said.

He said byelection results in Orange, Wollongong and Canterbury last November showed people felt the government "has to change direction".

The Nationals lost Orange to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and Labor retained Wollongong and Canterbury with a swing towards it.

"Well they've changed the Premier but they haven't changed the direction of the government," Mr Foley said.

Asked if the byelection results gave him confidence that Labor could win in 2019, Mr Foley responded: "We take nothing for granted. There is a mood for change, but we have a lot of work to do".

A poll published last week showed the Coalition leading Labor 51 to 49 per cent on a two-party-preferred basis.

The Manly and North Shore byelections were called following decisions by former Premier Mike Baird and former health minister Jillian Skinner to quit politics.

In Gosford, Labor's Kathy Smith retired for health reasons.

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/foley-declares-a-mood-for-change-after-byelection-swings-against-liberals-20170409-gvh5uu.html>