

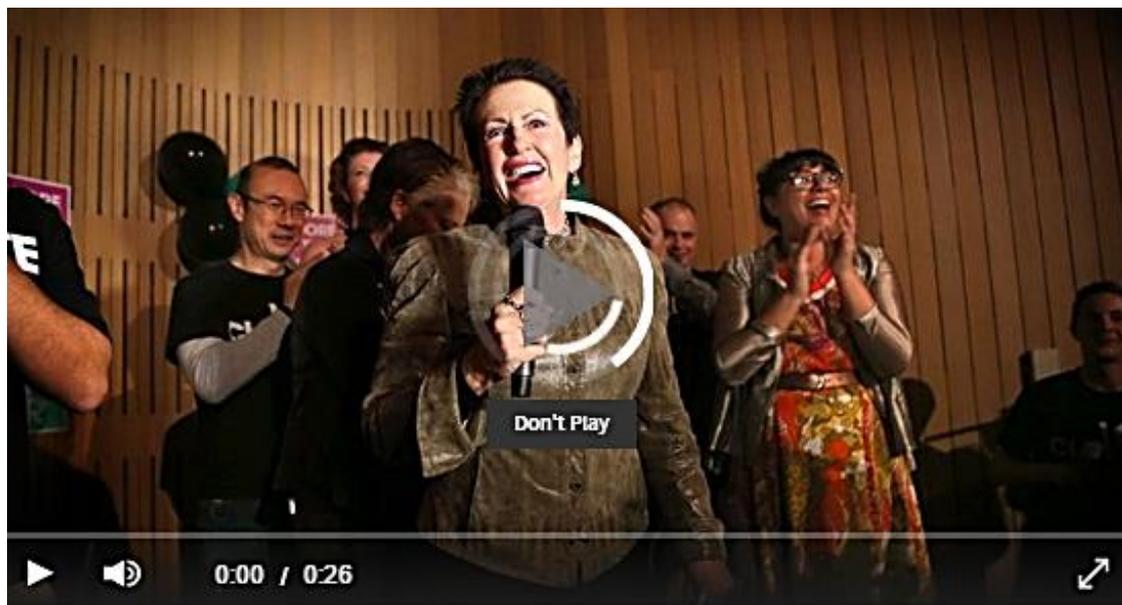
Backlash for Baird in council votes in western Sydney and regional NSW

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The state Labor Party spent Sunday enjoying a string of strong results in council elections across outer-suburban Sydney and in regional NSW, partly attributed to a broad backlash against the Baird government.

With many councils not holding elections until next year, those that did go to the polls tended to swing away from Liberal candidates, providing a fillip for Labor leader Luke Foley.



Clover Moore claims another election victory

The Sydney Lord Mayor celebrates a record fourth term in office. (Video courtesy ABC News 24)

"If you draw an arc in a clockwise direction, from Sutherland, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, the Blue Mountains, Penrith and Blacktown - that is seven councils on the southern and western fringe of Sydney with strong movements to Labor in all of them," Mr Foley said.

"If these results ... were replicated at the state election, the Coalition would be wiped from office."

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NSW Premier Mike Baird gives the State Of The Region Address at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse. Photo: Kate Geraghty

With counting still taking place on Sunday, Labor's Wendy Waller looked to be in a strong position to win the mayoralty of Liverpool. The party's Karen McKeown was also likely to retain the mayoralty of Penrith.

The party won polling booths in Kings Langley in Blacktown for the first time since 1999. It was also on track to win seven spots on Sutherland Shire Council for the first time since 1991.

A senior Liberal said both local and state issues had played a factor in the council results.

The Liberal said voters in the Sutherland Shire were concerned about the Baird government's greyhound racing ban. Mr Foley agreed the ban was an issue in polling booths in Penrith and Blacktown, as was anger about the state of Nepean Hospital.

In a sign of the divisiveness of the greyhound issue within the Coalition, federal Nationals leader Barnaby Joyce [told the ABC's Insiders program](#) local government results contained a stern lesson.

"Be careful of your core constituency, they bite," Mr Joyce said.

"I just think that the greyhound decision has not been accepted in many areas, and it's probably good that the local government election is out of the way. It's a cathartic mechanism to deal with it in some form," he said.

The Greens, meanwhile, were potentially on track for an upset win in Shoalhaven. The party was hopeful their candidate, Amanda Findley, would claim the mayor's job from high-profile Liberal candidate Joanna Gash, a former MP.

The party was also celebrating gaining councillors in Campbelltown, the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury.

Labor was confident of winning the mayoralty of Lismore.

A spokesman for the Premier, Mike Baird, said voters distinguished between local, state and federal issues.

"Results were variable, but there was a predictable easing of support for the Liberal ticket in some areas following the record highs of 2012," the spokesman said.

"The NSW Government is very proud of the massive program it is undertaking right across our state to improve our roads, public transport, hospitals and schools," he said.

"We will always listen to the concerns of the community as we continue to build infrastructure and improve services across NSW."

Tim Ayers, NSW Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union said a recent ReachTEL poll revealed the Baird government is in deep trouble in some regions.

"The local government elections proved it," he said.

"It's a big vote against the government in blue-collar and regional communities."

A ReachTEL poll commissioned by the AMWU last week showed that seats including Penrith – a symbol of Coalition popularity in western Sydney at the 2011 state election that brought it to power - were at serious risk of falling to Labor.

The polling suggests NSW trade and sports minister Stuart Ayres will have a fight on his hands in the 2019 state election to retain his seat of Penrith which he holds on a 6.2 per cent margin.

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