

# Premier Mike Baird critical to state Liberal's chances of holding on to power?

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NSW Premier Mike Baird showed his support for sitting member Craig Laundy at Burwood Public School in the seat of Reid and is critical to the Liberals holding on to power in NSW.

**SATURDAY'S election result means if Premier Mike Baird were to head off into the sunset before the next state election, the Libs will definitely lose in 2019 or be forced into a hung parliament.**

Look at the seats in Western Sydney at risk now in a state poll: Penrith (6.2 per cent) and Mulgoa (9.7 per cent). Swings in the federal poll out west were between 6 and 12 per cent.

You can already kiss East Hills goodbye — with a 0.5 per cent margin and the scandal that has hit MP Glenn Brookes there — and Seven Hills, on 7.7 per cent, could also easily fall.

In the east, Coogee has to be in doubt, with a margin of just 3 per cent.

The federal government suffered a 5 per cent swing against it in Kingsford Smith and there appears genuine upset over big fig trees being ripped up for the \$2 billion light rail project.

Given the swing in Eden-Monaro federally, you would be worried if you were Minister John Barilaro in Monaro, with his 2.6 per cent margin.

Paterson and other Hunter federal seats are firmly in the grip of Labor now, so let's also give away Upper Hunter (2.3 per cent). Lismore went within 200 votes of being lost to the Greens last time and with popular local MP Thomas George retiring, it will also probably fall. Tweed (3.2 per cent) would probably go too.

Given the Coalition has 54 seats and Labor 34, if you lose those nine seats you have a parliament of Coalition 45, Labor 41-42 and independents-Greens on 5-6. A hung parliament.

Bear in mind, too, that federal and state elections will both be in 2019. Bad news for political parties dividing their money up and flogging themselves to run two campaigns.

The timing will also be bad for Baird if we have a federal Coalition minority government not travelling well because voters waiting with their baseball bats will have a crack at the state government before they get to vote federally.

There are whispers around that Baird's council amalgamations agenda did not help Malcolm Turnbull. Baird loyalists argue this is not true because there were swings to the Coalition in contentious areas such as Hunters Hill and Ashfield.

Certainly a decision not to upgrade Nepean Hospital now cost the feds Lindsay.

Tellingly, a big Labor scare campaign failed in the last state poll partly because Baird had a clear agenda and went out on the attack with TV ads prosecuting his power privatisation.

This time with Medicare, you got the feeling Turnbull was not "agile" enough. The government was hurt by the 2014 Budget's attempted \$5 co-payment for GP visits — more proof, like the carbon tax and Anna Bligh's Queensland electricity sale, that you must reveal your agenda at an election or suffer the consequences next time.

But, says one NSW Liberal insider of last year's state election: "When we're thrown the mother of all scare campaigns we didn't ignore it, we took it on headfirst." TV ads ran in the final fortnight of the state campaign with Baird pointing out how leasing the poles and wires would pay for roads, rail, hospitals and schools.

The same NSW insider says Turnbull and his team mismanaged things: "What about the anti-GST campaign in 1998, what about the poles and wires scare campaign? If someone says you're going to privatise Medicare, you go out half an hour later and say 'He's a liar, I'm not'."

Baird believes Turnbull should have run with the plan to increase GST to 15 per cent to fund tax cuts and the future health funding gap so that he had a clear agenda.



*Premier Baird believes PM Malcolm Turnbull should have raised the GST to 15 per cent.  
Picture: Braden Fastier*

I'm not convinced that would have worked but Baird's view is, now more than ever, you have to have an agenda or you get punished. Turns out he is a bit more politically agile than Malcolm Turnbull.

But 2019 will be a challenge and the big projects the government needs to finish and open by then, such as the North West Metro and WestConnex, have their deadlines very close to the next state poll. Plus Baird has to make sure electricity prices do not rise over the next three years or blame will, rightly or wrongly, be sheeted home to his privatisation.

The risk for the government is that they build everything and then Labor gets into power and reaps all of the rewards.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/premier-mike-baird-critical-to-state-liberals-chances-of-holding-on-to-power/news-story/4297931104c00ae924f7e5c55d4eecf8>