

# Mike Baird's leadership tested from within party over greyhound racing ban

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**New South Wales Premier Mike Baird has experienced a stunning drop in popularity as the public and many of his colleagues turn against him over his decision to ban greyhound racing.**



VIDEO: Mike Baird's leadership is being tested over greyhound racing ban (7.30)

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Key points:

- NSW Premier Mike Baird has slumped in the polls
- His ban on greyhound racing is facing strong opposition
- Growing push from National Party to have ban overturned

Late last year he was the most popular politician in the country, offering hope to an electorate weary after years of corruption in NSW politics.



**VIDEO:** Alan Jones says Mike Baird has gone "from choir boy to dictator". (ABC News)

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**But the greyhound issue, along with Sydney's contentious lockout laws and a series of forced council amalgamations, have raised questions about his political future.**

Last week's Newspoll showed his satisfaction rating fell from 60 per cent to 39 per cent in the last nine months. It is the largest drop of any premier in the history of Newspoll and those closest to him say they know why.

In an extraordinary move, Upper House Liberal MP Peter Phelps has criticised his own party and questioned Mr Baird's decisions.

"The idea that you can just tell people what we're going to be doing without any consultation, or without any reasonable consultation or reasonable effort to get buy in, is a bad look," Mr Phelps told 7.30.

"It's not a political strategy which works well with the Australian people."

"Mike, he's like concrete: very fluid once the thing is being created, but once it is set, it's set irredeemably and that's the way it is."

"I'm not sure that never changing your views makes for good leadership."

Powerful Sydney broadcaster Alan Jones has been scathing of Mr Baird's leadership style.

"This bloke seems unprepared to change, he's stubborn," Jones told 7.30.

"You've got now half the ministry opposed to the greyhound ban. I mean they'll talk to anyone who'll listen. But the bloke comes in and says 'you must support me'."

## Nationals threatening to spill

Mick Hindmarsh has been breeding and training greyhounds for more than a decade. It is a sport he loves and it provides his family's only income.

"We've invested all our life into this and it was going to be my life until I retired," he told 7.30 at a greyhound race in Grafton, on the NSW far north coast.

He has no idea what he will do once the industry is banned next year.

"I'll be broke, that's what it comes down to. I'll have no income," Mr Hindmarsh said.

"There's going to be thousands of people out of jobs. I thought the Liberals were all for small business and jobs and growth."

The NSW Nationals are now threatening to spill their leader if the greyhound ban is not reversed.

Mr Baird's own ministers and backbenchers are leaking information revealing the disunity.

Nationals MP Chris Gulaptis put his political future on the line when he crossed the floor and voted against his own Government's legislation.

"I would say to Cabinet you do need to listen to the backbench, the backbench is on the ground. And Cabinet is stuck in Sydney more often than not, and we do get to hear exactly what the grassroots are telling us, and they told me that this was not a good decision," Mr Gulaptis said.

*"As Nationals we don't ban an industry, we nurture it, we try to make it survive."*

"We don't cull regional jobs, and I think that's really what's at the heart of the angst within the community."

The growing push from the Nationals to have the legislation overturned will be played out next week.

If Mr Baird refuses to back down his own political future is in doubt.

## 'What you see is what you get'

Before politics, Mr Baird was a banker and studied for a year to become an Anglican minister.

But former NSW premier Nick Greiner believes Mr Baird found his calling in parliament.



PHOTO: [Former NSW premier Nick Greiner says Mike Baird's authenticity is rare in politics.](#) (ABC News)

"He's got a very strong personal set of beliefs, set of convictions, both about policy and I think to a degree about morality and my sense is what you see is what you get," Mr Greiner said.

"It's not as if he's trying to say different things to different groups, which is what many or most political leaders on both sides tend to do.

"He tends to stick up for what we believe in and to advocate it and that's presumably his greatest strength and in some ways a weakness.

"I think authenticity is difficult. It's not something you can go to the corner shop and buy and I think even his worst critics would have to say he's got courage and authenticity."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-06/nsw-premier-mike-bairds-leadership-tested-over-greyhound-ban/7910300?section=nsw>