

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian's report card after one year in the job

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PHOTO: [New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian has had her work cut out in the first 12 months in the state's top job.](#) (AAP: Paul Miller)

Premier Gladys Berejiklian had her work cut out for her when she took over the top job one year ago, and it shows in her performance so far.

She has needed to neutralise a number of thorny policy headaches inherited from Mike Baird, stamp her authority on a freshly reshuffled Cabinet and sell herself to voters.

So, with less than 14 months to go until voters give their own assessment, let's take a look at the Premier's report card for the past 12 months.

Policy backflips

Grade: A-

They may not have been pretty, but Ms Berejiklian has managed to take the sting out of a number of issues with a series of swift policy reversals, which dominated her first six months in office.

By walking away from any more forced council mergers, Ms Berejiklian avoided a potentially humiliating High Court battle, helped dampen red hot anger against the Nationals in the bush and narrowly managed to avoid losing seats in a series of critical by-elections including blue ribbon Liberal seats, like North Shore.

There have also been backflips on the plan to introduce a levy to fund the state's emergency services and plans to build a number of hospitals as public private partnerships.

Of course, the political gymnastics have meant the Premier runs the risk of coming across as someone willing to backdown on policy at the sniff of trouble.

But because of the quagmire these areas had become for this government, many of the reversals were necessary to give it clean air and clear the decks to try to sell its achievements.

Housing affordability

Grade: B



PHOTO: [Sydney real estate is among the most expensive in the world.](#) (ABC News: Nic MacBean)

Upon becoming Premier, Ms Berejiklian almost immediately declared housing affordability as one of the key areas she wanted to address.

This was a risky move in a red hot market and initially the Premier was dogged by questions about whether she thought her federal counterparts should axe negative gearing.

But in the lead up to the budget she announced a significant package of changes, including stamp duty waivers for first home buyers.

While figures show large numbers of first homebuyers taking up the offer, the Premier's biggest gift in this area is that the heat has now come out of the market anyway, meaning Sydney exorbitant property prices are no longer making daily headlines.

The tricky thing for the Premier will be if there is an extended slump in prices.

Factional wrangling

Grade: C

This has been a difficult area for Ms Berejiklian.

When she reshuffled the Cabinet on becoming Premier, she was criticised for rewarding her allies in her own moderate faction and giving away other key positions to shore up the crucial support of the right faction.

The divisions sparked were highlighted in an explosive email which Liberal MP Catherine Cusack sent, accusing the Premier of being "offensive" for suggesting her frontbench had been appointed on merit.

Since then her Cabinet has been plagued by leaks and Ms Berejiklian is also faced with the task of keeping a lid on the broader factional power struggle that has been rumbling along in the NSW Liberal Party.

In addition, she's saddled with an occasionally treacherous Deputy Premier in Nationals Leader John Barilaro, who has shown a willingness to openly slam his own government's policies in the media and even called for Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to resign.

Undoing the 'Mike Baird Effect'

Grade: A



PHOTO: [Then-NSW premier Mike Baird announced his resignation to a packed press conference at the beginning of 2017.](#) (ABC News: Antoinette Lattouf)

While Ms Berejiklian is still an unknown quantity to many voters, perhaps one of the best things she has going for her is that she is not Mike Baird.

While "Magic Mike" was once the most popular Premier in the country, he ended his tenure as a polarising figure who could not seem to catch a break in the court of public opinion, no matter which way he turned.

So far Ms Berejiklian has mostly managed to avoid the sort of venom from tabloids and social media keyboard warriors that her predecessor attracted.

She may lack the natural magnetism of Mr Baird, but voters seem yet to make up their mind about Ms Berejiklian, which she may be able to use to her advantage if she can blitz the next 14 months.

However in the age of personality politics, the notoriously private Premier may also find she needs to reveal a little more of herself to win them over.

Polls

Grade: F

While most of the polls since Ms Berejiklian took over have not held dire news for the Premier, the leadership switch never delivered any real bounce for her party.

The real worry for the Coalition is that a Guardian Essential poll in January showed that the Labor Opposition has now pulled in front 51-49.

Government MPs fear the poll results suggest a looming voter backlash against its two billion-dollar stadiums plan, which Opposition Leader Luke Foley has been quick to exploit and is likely to hammer home until election day.

MPs also believe that dislike of Mr Turnbull's federal Coalition government is affecting the NSW poll results, and are desperately hoping a federal election will be called before the next state election to give voters a chance to vent their anger at a Commonwealth level.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-22/nsw-premier-gladys-berejiklian-report-card-after-one-year/9350484>