

# Bitter tensions escalate as harassment complaint lodged against Upper House MP

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A Liberal Party branch president has made a harassment complaint to the NSW Nationals against an Upper House MP as recriminations over the damaging Wagga Wagga byelection loss continue.

The complaint follows bitter tensions between the parties, and especially between Upper House Liberal MP Matthew Mason-Cox and his colleague, the Nationals MP Wes Fang.



*Matthew Mason-Cox accused the Nationals of helping Joe McGirr defeat the government. CREDIT: DANIEL MUNOZ*

After the humiliating byelection loss, which saw the seat slip out of the Liberal Party's grip for the first time in 60 years, Mr Mason-Cox accused the Nationals of [helping independent Joe McGirr defeat the government](#).

The Nationals had been desperate to run in the seat but the Liberals refused to allow that to happen, and went on to suffer a swing of more than 20 per cent against them.

The NSW Nationals leader, John Barilaro, has maintained there was no directive from the party to campaign for Dr McGirr but because the Nationals was a "grassroots" party, members were free to do as they chose.

"There are disgruntled party members. Local members of the National Party are more than likely supporting and handing out for an independent," Mr Barilaro said just days before the byelection.

Mr Fang, who lives in Wagga, fired back at Mr Mason-Cox's claims of treachery, and sent a text to him saying: "If I hear you are spreading false rumours about me again, I will f---ing well come after you."



*Nationals MP Wes Fang stands by his comments. CREDIT: TWITTER: WES FANG*

He also called him a "c---" and a "pr--k".

Mr Fang later told News Corp that he stood by his comments and confirmed the text to Mr Mason-Cox. He said, "That's because a) he's a c---; and b) everything I said was true."

The complaint, sent to the head office of the Nationals on the weekend by Wagga branch president Colin Taggart, said Mr Fang's behaviour "clearly contravenes the National Party harassment policy".

The complaint said Mr Taggart was "concerned that this sort of behaviour is condoned and supported by the National Party".

"I and many others believe the continued public support by the National Party of WF [Wes Fang] will make him feel empowered and enabled to threaten and bully others – he has the support and enjoys the favour of the leadership team of which he is a member as Deputy Whip," Mr Taggart's complaint said.

"If there is no public criticism of Wes Fang's foul and abusive tirade – no withdrawal or apology – it will be perceived that this is an acceptable standard of behaviour within the National Party leadership team.

"National Party candidates throughout NSW in March and federally here in the Riverina will be forced to defend that."

The Liberals have agreed they will not contest Wagga in March, leaving the Nationals free to do so.

In a statement, Mr Fang said: "Colin Taggart has unsuccessfully been pursuing the issue for a number of weeks. More recently, he has been harassing myself and others for four straight days on social media.

"This level of obsession is unhealthy and I have genuine concerns for his welfare."

Mr Mason-Cox was not available for comment and the National Party confirmed it had received the complaint but would not comment further.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/bitter-tensions-escalate-as-harassment-complaint-lodged-against-upper-house-mp-20181029-p50cpg.html>