

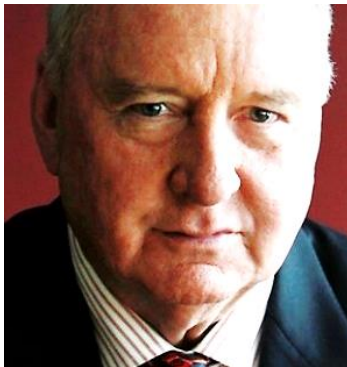
By-elections show Liberals on the nose Statewide

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Confusion & lies lead to Liberal win, despite monster swing

BY OUR CIVIC ROUNDSMAN

Voter confusion about preferences, lies told by a Liberal candidate and a huge informal vote of around 20 per cent have all been blamed for a narrow win for Liberal Felicity Wilson in the former blue ribbon seat of North Shore.



Leading radio commentator Alan Jones AO Save Our Councils Phil Jenkyn OAM

One in five eligible voters failed to attend polling booths in North Shore where 2GB radio personality Alan Jones accused Ms Wilson of the criminal offence of lying on a statutory declaration about her links to the electorate.

Save Hunters Hill Coalition spokesman Phil Jenkyn OAM said the loss of preferences could have denied a win to second placed anti-merger candidate Carolyn Corrigan (Independent) who is appealing the election result.

Mr Jenkyn said the Liberals had deliberately targeted voters over preferences with the aim of damaging the Corrigan campaign.

“The Liberal Party handed out how-to-vote cards saying just “Vote 1 Liberal” and had posters at polling places saying “You Can Just Vote 1” with no reference to the Liberal Party having authorised the posters,” Mr Jenkyn said.

“Information on how preferences can impact on an election and what optional preferential voting really means was not adequate at this by election and there was confusion amongst voters on election day.

“It is clear that an increased number of voters exercising their right to give preferences and to vote could have resulted in this seat now being in the hands of an independent.”

The Liberals result was all the more appalling given that many traditional Liberal voters have so little faith in the system they didn't bother to vote at all.



Liberal candidate Felicity Wilson



Independent Carolyn Corrigan

“In North Shore the Liberal candidate Felicity Wilson received after distribution of preferences a vote of 36 per cent of the total number enrolled but over 20 per cent of those enrolled to vote did not vote at all,” Mr Jenkyn said.

“After the distribution of the preferences that did flow, the swing against the Liberals in North Shore was 16.5 per cent.”

On a two party preferred basis the vote for Independent Carolyn Corrigan was 45 per cent and the vote for Liberal Felicity Wilson was 55 per cent, although Ms Wilson only received around 43 per cent of primary votes.

The Hunters Hill based Coalition said the North Shore result puts Lane Cove Liberal Anthony Roberts MP “on notice” he could lose his seat due to anger over forced mergers, with a swing of around 25 per cent needed to oust him.

This swing could be achieved due to a huge anti-Liberal backlash in Hunters Hill, where an independent survey recently revealed that more than 80 per cent of ratepayers oppose the Liberals proposed forced merger with Ryde.

“It should also be noted that the Government issued the writs for the North Shore by-election on March 17 for a three week campaign with election day in school holidays and it spent a large amount of money on this by-election,” Mr Jenkyn said.

Mr Jenkyn attributes the huge swing against the Liberals to anger over forced mergers although Premier Gladys Berejiklian blamed other local issues.

Opposition Leader Luke Foley – who spoke of a monster swing against the Liberals – attributed it to Gladys Berejiklian’s unpopularity.

Alan Jones said Premier Berejiklian made a mistake in hugging Ms Wilson after her controversial win although some Liberal sources have told The Weekly Times the pro-merger Premier’s close involvement in the Wilson campaign was a liability for Ms Wilson.

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