

Angus Taylor backs calls for democratisation of NSW Liberal Party

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Rising Coalition star Angus Taylor says the Liberal Party is at risk of losing government federally and in NSW if it does not embrace democratisation, warning the behaviour of party powerbrokers is preventing effective policy formulation and electoral success.

Backing previous calls by former prime ministers John Howard and Tony Abbott, the Hume MP has used a speech to the Sydney Institute on Tuesday to call for plebiscite preselection votes in all seats in the short to medium term, and guaranteed plebiscites in all marginal seats in time for the next state and federal polls.



Hume MP and Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation Angus Taylor
Photo: Rob Homer

After surviving a factional challenge to his own preselection before the July 2 election and being stymied in attempts to set up a Liberal branch in Cowra, the Assistant Cities Minister said Liberal powerbrokers resisting democratisation within the party were fighting a proxy battle for factional control.

"In a couple of years at both state and federal level, we are heading into elections for third terms," Mr Taylor said.

"Our stocks are not what they were. We cannot wait for a couple of plebiscite pilots in two or three seats prior to the next elections, as is the current limp-wristed plan."



Tony Abbott is among those calling for reform within the NSW Liberal Party. Photo: Andrew Meares

Warning of a new divide between the insiders and outsiders of Australian politics, Mr Taylor said seats were lost in NSW because of a "Brexit phenomenon", characterised by increasing cynicism of politicians and the political class.

He said the party recorded swings against it in seats with higher numbers of CBD-based workers, including Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's seat of Wentworth, and seats formerly held by Bronwyn Bishop and Joe Hockey.

Smaller swings were recorded in seats with fewer CBD workers.

Calling for moves to prevent phone canvassing and text messages, such as Labor's successful "Mediscare" campaign, considered crucial to the Coalition's near collapse, Mr Taylor said the ALP made better use of on-the-ground organising and volunteers.

The Liberal Party's brand "was now firmly in the insiders' club", Mr Taylor said.

"The perception is that we are the establishment, the elite. We are perceived as self-serving and arrogant.

"We are the ones who make promises and do not deliver. We do not share in the frustrations of ordinary people."

As the party begins a review of its disastrous federal election result, Mr Taylor said focus should be given to why some voters queued for hours on election day, how best to mobilise Liberal volunteers and for more assertive campaign infrastructure to be developed.

"Democratisation will energise the base, it can bring in new members, it can bring new branches, it will ensure branch members get right behind their candidates and barrack for them in their communities.

"It will, beyond a shadow of a doubt, improve our ground game," Mr Taylor said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/angus-taylor-backs-calls-for-democratisation-of-nsw-liberal-party-20160906-gr9vze.html>