

Maguire's refusal to resign is an insult to everyone in NSW

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The decision by disgraced NSW MP Daryl Maguire [to remain in his seat of Wagga Wagga](#) is an insult to his electorate, to his former Liberal Party colleagues and to the people of NSW. Once again, we see a politician advancing private interests ahead of the public good. When will this stop? When will the majority of decent people in our Parliament take a stand on behalf of the people they represent?



NSW MP Daryl Maguire leaves the ICAC on Friday. Photo: Erik Anderson

Representative democracy is based on a powerful idea. Instead of sending mere delegates to do our bidding, we elect men and women whose judgement can be relied upon to advance the public interest. Maguire's appearance before the ICAC – and the evidence presented there – leave no doubt as to the quality of his character and judgment.

I do not know Maguire. He may possess a number of virtues as a human being – perhaps he is a loyal friend, a loving family man, a person genuinely concerned for the welfare of others. None of this matters. The essential requirements for holding elected office in a representative democracy have been trashed. As such, every person living within the electorate of Wagga

Wagga has been effectively disenfranchised. They are, today, without a legitimate representative.

Maguire says that he is staying put out of a concern to spare the state the cost of a byelection. This position is indefensible. We all know that democracy only comes at a cost. Democracy is messy and inefficient – if you want clean and efficient, then look to dictatorship. However, the costs are those we choose to bear as the price paid for our right to determine the shape and character of our governments.

The genius of democracy is that governments are answerable to us, the governed. It is patronising in the extreme to think that we should be "spared" the chance to choose an effective representative. It's like having to live with a gangrenous limb. The pain of its removal is something we must bear for the sake of the whole.

Maguire's decision demands a response from every member of the NSW Parliament – without exception. This is not because his conduct is, of itself, uniquely inappropriate. Rather, Maguire is tainted by the stain of all those who have come before him – not least Labor's Eddie Obeid. It is Maguire's unhappy lot to be at the end of a very long rope. But there he is, spoiled and dangling – and the fact that he cannot see this is proof of the problem he exemplifies.

The NSW Parliament must act. Its members should apply both formal and informal sanctions. [If Labor does not succeed in its attempt to oust Mr Maguire from the NSW Parliament](#), then no party should accept Mr Maguire's vote. No party should accept Maguire's vote. No member should associate with him in either public or private. He should eat alone in the Parliamentary Dining Room. He should be shunned – not as an exemplary personal punishment but as an unambiguous sign to the community that Maguire no longer has substantive legitimacy in the eyes of his peers.

It's about time that our politicians set aside partisan politics and rallied behind some minimal sense of decency in public life. They should not hide behind the rules or shrug off responsibility to the media or the electorate. It's true the people will ultimately decide – but let that come after our elected representatives have shown a bit of ethical backbone. Labor's move against Maguire may be politically self-serving. Many observers of politics will default to cynicism born out of hard experience. Or are we turning a corner? On this occasion, is some measure of principle at play?

Reading what I have written, I am tempted to feel a measure of pity for Maguire – should he experience the lonely fate of those who suffer ostracism and public shame. However, my greater concern is reserved for the people – once again betrayed by a politician who invokes the public interest in order to save himself. The rank hypocrisy of it all. I say, enough.

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<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/maguire-s-refusal-to-resign-is-an-insult-to-everyone-in-nsw-20180718-p4zs7f.html>

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