

Council independents line up to run against north Sydney Liberals

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A mayor and a former mayor in Sydney's lower north are hoping community disquiet about development and infrastructure will propel them into State Parliament in March.

Richard Quinn, a former mayor of Hunters Hill Council, quit the Liberal Party last month and will run against Planning Minister Anthony Roberts for the seat of Lane Cove. Mosman mayor Carolyn Corrigan will challenge Liberal backbencher Felicity Wilson for North Shore.



Mosman Mayor Carolyn Corrigan will run for the seat of North Shore. CREDIT: EDWINA PICKLES

"The community wants an advocate in Parliament," said Mr Quinn, who as mayor between 2012 and 2017 opposed the state government's push to forcibly merge councils.

"At the moment we've got a government advocate in the community. The whole thing needs to be flipped over."

Mr Quinn faces an uphill battle contesting Lane Cove, won by Mr Roberts by 68 per cent to 32 per cent on a two-party preferred basis in 2015.



"Community wants an advocate.": Richard Quinn. CREDIT: JACKY GHOSSEIN

But he said he was moved to quit the Liberal Party and stand as an independent by a sense it was impossible to influence the party through membership.

"It seems to have no impact through the party channels. I'm at the point now of frustration, I and others, certainly in this community we feel like we've got to take another approach, shall we say, to get the message across."

Mr Quinn intends to work with Cr Corrigan, who he has known since childhood.

When Cr Corrigan ran against Ms Wilson at a byelection for North Shore in 2017, losing by about 45 per cent to 55 per cent on a two-party preferred basis.

"There is such a disquiet in the community," Cr Corrigan said.

"Communities have been really asked to take a massive amount of development, in some areas. Mosman hasn't, but let me tell you North Sydney definitely has."

Both candidates nominated an overly complicated planning system, in which local planning controls could easily be over-ridden by state policies or rezoning requests, as a major issue.

Cr Corrigan said North Shore, where Ms Wilson has fought a gruelling Liberal pre-selection battle against Tim James, was "very winnable".

"It is definitely a good time to run."

Cr Corrigan is a clinical nurse, while Mr Quinn works as the director of advancement at St Joseph's College.

The school is proposing a large new \$38 million gym and sporting complex. The proposed development has been strongly opposed by Hunters Hill Council, and the Hunters Hill Trust. The Trust said the proposal fails to observe the council's

heritage objective "for reasons of its scale, lack of setback ... and lack of compatibility with both the existing college buildings, and the neighbourhood."



NSW Minister for Planning, Anthony Roberts, won Lane Cove in 2015 by 68 per cent to 32 per cent on a two-party preferred basis. CREDIT: LOUISE KENNERLEY

Asked about the project, Mr Quinn said he was not a spokesman for the development, but that the College had indicated it was willing to respond to community concerns. "It is still not approved, and it is a work in progress."



North Shore MP Felicity Wilson will face an independent challenger. CREDIT: JAMES ALCOCK

Mr Roberts said his commitment to the electorate “speaks for itself”.

“Let me make it quite clear that a vote for an independent is a vote for Labor ... and Labor has said Hunters Hill and Lane Cove needs more development,” Mr Roberts said.

The deputy mayor of Hunters Hill, Ben Collins, said Mr Quinn's development concerns were "a bit rich" in light of his work on the school proposal.

"He says he's anti-development and he's trying to build a basketball stadium in a conservation zone."

In a statement, the headmaster of St Joseph's said the proposal was being reviewed to address height and setback concerns.

Jacob Saulwick is City Editor at The Sydney Morning Herald.

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