

NSW Nationals meet to elect new leader

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THE new leader of the NSW Nationals, John Barilaro, has vowed to strengthen the party's reputation after its humiliating showing at the Orange by-election.



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THE new leader of the NSW Nationals, John Barilaro, has vowed to strengthen the party's reputation after its humiliating showing at the Orange by-election.

“I am proud of what the NSW Nationals have achieved so far, building the hospitals, roads and schools our communities need to keep them strong, but I

know there is much more work to do to regain the trust and rebuild the reputation of the NSW Nationals as proud representatives of regional NSW in Australia's oldest Parliament," Mr Barilaro said in a statement.

The Monaro MP was elected unopposed at a party room meeting today following the dramatic resignation of predecessor Troy Grant.



Elected unopposed: John Barilaro will replace Troy Grant as NSW Nationals leader.

Niall Blair was also elected deputy leader in a ballot against Andrew Fraser after Education Minister Adrian Piccoli stepped down from the position yesterday.

The leadership team chose to resign after the party suffered an unprecedented 34 per cent primary vote swing against it in the once-safe electorate.

Mr Barilaro paid tribute to Mr Grant on Tuesday and thanked him for his "tireless work for the party as leader, for his professional and caring approach to the role and his friendship along the way".

"I promise to bring the same passion, drive and work ethic to this role just as I have done so working for my electorate, the Monaro, and cabinet portfolios," he said.

Unrest within the Nationals' had been swirling for months as Mr Grant was criticised for his backing of the now-scrapped greyhounds racing ban.

Mr Grant was due to face a spill motion at the party room meeting but pulled the trigger yesterday, saying his decision to quit would give the coalition government a chance to “pause and reset”.

Mr Grant is a close friend of his successor and became the godfather to Mr Barilaro’s daughter last month.

Mr Barilaro is now in charge of the Skills, Small Business and Regional Development portfolios, while Mr Blair is Minister for Primary Industries, Lands and Water.

The Nationals’ changes will trigger a cabinet reshuffle but it’s not yet known if that will happen before the end of the year.

The once-safe seat of Orange meanwhile still hangs in the balance but Shooters Fishers and Farmers candidate Phil Donato is on track to win with the latest count, putting him ahead of the Nationals’ Scott Barrett.

<http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/news/politics/nsw-nationals-meet-to-elect-new-leader/news-story/a21ea52a2923f7b6b26f43a856e9eab3>