

# Nationals in open warfare as Troy Grant faces leadership coup

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Senior NSW Nationals are in open warfare over the party's leadership, with Skills Minister John Barilaro understood to be doing the numbers on a possible challenge to Troy Grant following a horror Orange byelection result.

Mr Grant faces a motion to spill the leadership at a party room meeting on Tuesday, to be put by veteran Nationals MP Andrew Fraser who told Fairfax Media on Sunday the Deputy Premier should "just walk away".



Baird confirms backdown on greyhound racing ban  
NSW Premier Mike Baird announces the NSW greyhound industry will be given "one final chance" under a new regime.

Meanwhile, another senior Nationals MP, Kevin Humphries launched a scathing attack on Mr Grant and his leadership group of Education Minister Adrian Piccoli and Roads Minister Duncan Gay.

Mr Humphries warned that if Mr Grant didn't accept the need for a change in party direction "he would struggle to stay as leader" and slammed him, Mr Piccoli and Mr Gay as being "out of their depth".

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- [Grant facing leadership spill as Nationals tell him to 'walk away'](#)

But Mr Piccoli, who is deputy Nationals leader and would most likely lose his job in a successful coup, hit back.

He attacked Mr Humphries' track record as a minister and dismissed Mr Fraser's planned spill motion. "It won't get up; they don't have the numbers," he said.

The Nationals suffered a 35 per cent swing against them on the primary vote in the byelection on Saturday, described by ABC election analyst Antony Green as "the biggest first preference change in NSW byelection history".

As counting continued on Sunday, a predicted two-candidate preferred result by Mr Green based on projected preference flows had Shooters, Fishers and Farmers candidate Philip Donato beating the Nationals' Scott Barrett by 51.6 per cent to 48.4 per cent.



Standing down: Deputy Premier Troy Grant. Photo: Jessica Hromas

Labor preferenced the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers in the contest.

Mr Fraser, the member for Coffs Harbour, said he would move the spill motion because, under Mr Grant, the party had stopped listening to its constituents.

He argued Mr Grant, who was elected to Parliament in 2011, suffered from "a lack of political experience".

"As far as I'm concerned we've got to get back to tin tacks - listening to our constituents, not just dictating to them," he said.



Skills Minister John Barilaro is understood to be doing the numbers on a possible challenge to Troy Grant. Photo: Louise Kennerley

Mr Humphries, the member for Barwon, branded the party's poor showing in Orange a "wake-up call" for Mr Grant.

He said the byelection result was not about a single issue such as the decision to shut down the greyhound industry - later reversed - or council amalgamations in the area.

"There's a disconnect and inexperience among the leadership," he said.

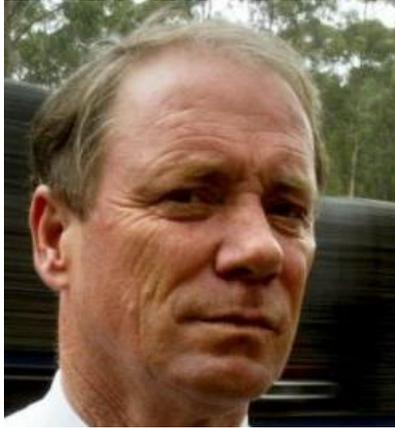
"Reforms in general have been very difficult and the Nationals have not been able to present a clear way forward over the next five to 10 years".

He said Nationals MPs Katrina Hodgkinson and Chris Gulaptis, who crossed the floor with him on the vote to shut down the greyhound industry "took responsibility for their actions" and were demoted as parliamentary secretaries as a result.

"The leader and one or two others should be doing the same thing," he said.

"If there's not radical change and an acceptance that it's not a one-off, if he doesn't want to accept that and take advice he would struggle to stay as leader," Mr Humphries said of Mr Grant.

However, Mr Piccoli pointed out that Mr Humphries was lands and water minister and "couldn't deliver" outcomes on core Nationals issues such as an overhaul of native vegetation laws or water reform.



Nationals MP Andrew Fraser.



Nationals MP Kevin Humphries.

"Now we've got native vegetation legislation [in the Parliament] this week and we're close to sorting out the Murray Darling basin plan," Mr Piccoli said.

"Since Troy's been leader we've moved an enormous way towards achieving them." (Mr Humphries pointed out he had land and water for only six months and never had carriage of native vegetation.)

Mr Piccoli said that "good government isn't perfect government. But I'd say the fundamentals around health, education, roads and jobs are very, very good."

He noted that, at the 2015 state election under the current Nationals leadership group, the party won 18 of the 20 seats it contested.

Mr Grant said that, while the final byelection result was not known, "the count so far delivers a strong message".

"The message for Macquarie Street is clear: Government is there to support communities and, otherwise, should just get out of people's lives."

Mr Barilaro did not respond to a request for comment.

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