

Byelection result irrelevant as Nationals look to regain trust: Grant

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DAVE NEIL



A MATTER OF TRUST: Former NSW Nationals leader and deputy premier Troy Grant. Photo: SMH

FORMER NSW Nationals leader Troy Grant says the outcome of Monday's byelection is largely immaterial to his party as they try to "regain the trust of the voters".

Last week Mr Grant resigned his party leadership – ending his tenure as the state's deputy premier in the process – as the dramatic swing against the Nationals in the Orange electorate became obvious.

Mr Grant said even if his party's candidate Scott Barrett did manage to overcome the 55-vote advantage enjoyed by Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party's Philip Donato's in the course of Monday's recount, there would still be an important political lesson for his colleagues.

"It'll probably be a 50-vote margin, but it doesn't matter what the result is regarding numbers," Mr Grant said.

“The reality is a clear message has been sent. And now it's up to the party to regain the trust of the voters.

“We've heard that message and we will respond.”

The member for Dubbo acknowledged the impact the Coalition's controversial policy on enforced council amalgamations had on both the byelection's outcome and his own political fortunes.

“The mergers were a big part of the vote against us and the vote in Cabonne very much reflected their opposition to the mergers,” Mr Grant said of voter reaction to the proposed union of Orange, Blayney and Cabonne shires.

“It was a sizable swing and the community's reasons for why they didn't vote for us I've acknowledged and resigned the leadership in response to that.”

But he stopped short of making any assurances of a repeal of merger policy.

“The [council mergers] decision is in the courts. The government will make their decision once the court decision is handed down,” he said.

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