

NSW Nationals vow to fight to reclaim seat of Orange

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By Joanna Woodburn



PHOTO: The Shooters Party's Philip Donato wins the by-election for the state seat of Orange (By Joanna Woodburn)

The Nationals in NSW says it is confident it can win back the seat of Orange at the next state election, after losing the electorate to the Shooters Party.

The Shooters, Farmers and Fishers' Philip Donato has won the by-election, beating the Nationals' candidate Scott Barrett by 50 votes after a re-count.

The Nationals suffered a major swing against the party, primarily because of its support for forced council amalgamations and the now aborted decision to ban the greyhound racing industry.

The State Director Nathan Quigley said the party would spend the next few years working to restore trust with people of the Orange electorate.

He said he believed it was possible before the 2019 state election.

"I think it will be," Mr Quigley said.

"I think there's an element of giving the government a good kick in the pants in this decision which is fair enough.

"The voters have a right to do so and we should listen.

"But I think if we put forward a good candidate and deliver for this area over the next couple of years, we'll be in good stead to take this seat back in 2019."

The party's candidate Scott Barrett said while the Shooters did a great job to take the electorate, other parties and candidates waged a relentless campaign encouraging voters to put the Nationals last on the ballot paper.

"Which meant it was purely about that and unfortunately not about things that could be delivered for the central west," Mr Barrett said.

"Not taking anything away from Philip Donato. Phil is a pretty good guy.

"We tried really hard to run a positive campaign.

"I'm happy that that's the plan we went with and stuck with and I wouldn't changed that given that option again."

The Shooters' Philip Donato said the forced merger of the Orange, Cabonne and Blayney councils and a fair result for the local greyhound industry were his priorities when he entered State Parliament.

He said he would also ensure the Coalition's by-election promises would become a reality while he was the state MP.

"I'll be making representations going forward from this week onwards to the relevant ministers and getting a timeline of when they're going to deliver those promises.

"Because win, lose or draw this seat they're still in government and they should honour those commitments they made," Mr Donato said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-22/nsw-nationals-regroup-after-orange-by-election-loss/8044696?section=nsw>