

'Arrogantly ignored': Right-wing Liberals hit back at Ruddock 'unity' ticket

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The right-wing faction pushing for democratic reform within the New South Wales branch of the Liberal party has smacked down a proposal fielded in the media to install the former immigration minister Philip Ruddock as president, saying it is "rigged" to deny members their right to vote in preselections to decide political candidates.



Former immigration minister Philip Ruddock wants to be the NSW Liberal party's president but his candidacy is being flatly rejected internally. Photo: Nick Moir

Right-wing figures Senator Jim Molan and Walter Villatora emailed members late on Thursday night to say that [a media report suggesting Mr Ruddock had been endorsed by both factions](#) was wrong and an attempt by the party's wets to water down the democratic reforms, approved by the membership last year.

"We had no knowledge of this and have had nothing to do with its derivation," said Mr Villatora and Senator Molan.

"Apparently the so-called unity ticket is designed to achieve some kind of "peace" so that the Liberal Party can win at the State and Federal level in the coming elections. But compromising to this extent is unlikely to bring the peace we all want, because it goes against the members' wishes at Rosehill. How can you have peace by ignoring the members' wishes?"

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"This is dangerously rushed and devoid of critical detail. How can anyone agree to this? Those who want democratic reform have compromised twice before and have

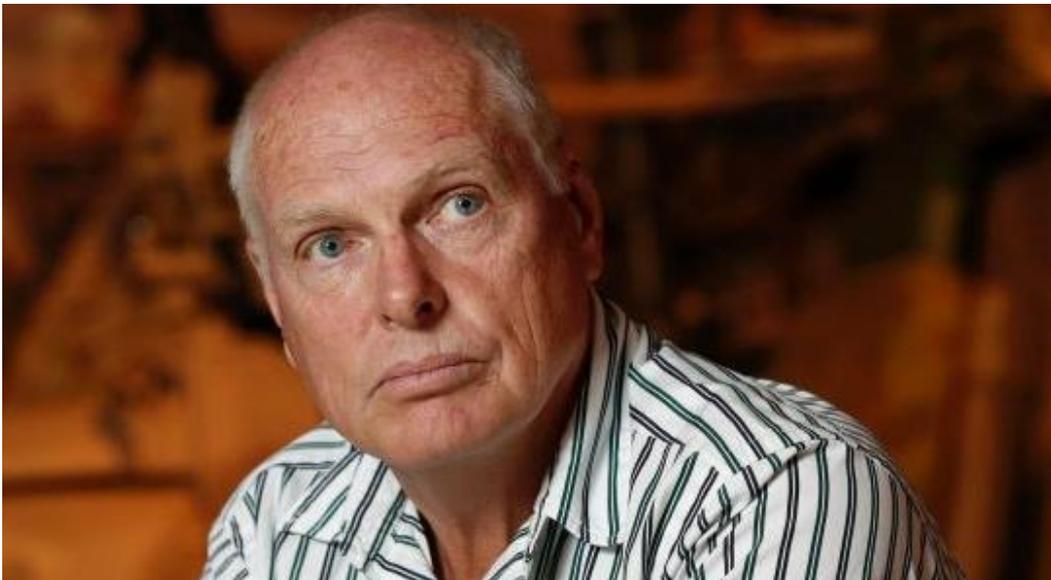
been screwed on both occasions. There can be no compromise, especially when the details of a deal are not even known by those supposedly making the deal."

Further, the email said the Ruddock unity ticket would be a stitch-up, with the state executive to consist of six conservatives, four from the "centre right" and nine from the "left".

"This might represent the compromised delegate distribution between factions after a decade of domination by the lobbyist left, but it does not represent how you voted at Rosehill," the email said. "Regrettably, this is not the road to peace and victory in the next elections."

Last year, [the NSW branch voted to give members a single vote on preselections](#), bringing into line with branches across the country which decide candidates via member votes rather than the party machinery.

The then-called Warringah motion, named after the electorate represented by former prime minister Tony Abbott who pushed the change, is criticised by the left in the NSW Liberals because they say the membership will favour socially conservative candidates who they fear will not be as electable as candidates from the moderate wing.



The email from Senator Jim Molan's said "those who want democratic reform have compromised twice before and have been screwed on both occasions". Photo: Jeffrey Chan

But backers said the current method of choosing candidates, via a delegate system, led to candidates being selected from the dominant moderate faction and gave members no reason to join or stay in the party. They also warned that without reform, the party could split, [sparking a flight of members to Cory Bernardi's Australian Conservatives](#) or Pauline Hanson's One Nation party.

Senator Molan and Mr Villatora said the Ruddock-ticket was in violation of the Rosehill Resolution - the name replacing the Warringah motion.



Former prime minister Tony Abbott pushed to give the NSW branch members a single vote on preselections. The then-called Warringah motion, named after his electorate, is criticised by the left in the NSW Liberals. Photo: AAP

"Your efforts are being arrogantly ignored...the party is rigging this to ignore their members clearly stated wishes. We have a simple message: We can win this and win full democratic reform."

The email urged members to vote for a ticket headed by Philip Argy, Walter Villatora, Jo Gash, Dallas McInerney and Rhondda Vanzella and not Mr Ruddock. It also singled out former prime ministers John Howard, Mr Abbott and the sitting MP Angus Taylor as ongoing supporters of their campaign.



Backers of choosing candidates via a delegate system warned that without reform, the Liberal party could split, sparking a flight of members to Cory Bernardi's Australian Conservatives. Photo: Jessica Hromas

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/arrogantly-ignored-rightwing-liberals-hit-back-at-ruddock-unity-ticket-20180118-h0ko6b.html>