

# Barilaro's call for Turnbull's resignation reflects rising NSW panic

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NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro's [extraordinary full frontal attack on Malcolm Turnbull](#) reflects a rising panic in the ranks of his state colleagues about the knock-on effect of an increasingly unpopular federal Coalition government.



*Turnbull is the problem: Barilaro  
In an extraordinary spray, the NSW Deputy Premier has called on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to step aside.*

Shortly after agreeing with 2GB's Alan Jones on Friday morning that the Prime Minister should "step down" to give Australians "a Christmas gift", the NSW Nationals leader revealed his motivation.

"At this rate the baseball bats will be taken to a state government well before the federal election and that would be a travesty for the people of NSW and this nation," he said.

The prospect of Mr Turnbull not calling a federal election before the NSW government must go to the polls in March 2019 opens the way for the electorate to vent its frustration over an unpopular Coalition government.

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One senior Liberal confirmed it is "a genuine concern" being discussed at a party level as the Turnbull government falls further behind Bill Shorten's opposition in the opinion polls.

Of particular concern to Mr Barilaro will be the looming threat of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and Pauline Hanson's One Nation in regional NSW.

It's a fear that will be particularly acute in Mr Barilaro's own seat of Monaro, which he holds on an uncomfortably thin margin of 2.5 per cent.

"Every now and again a Nat leader has to differentiate themselves from the Liberal Party," the senior Liberal said.

"I'm not going to be critical of him for that. I understand his frustration."

But another senior Liberal told Fairfax Media the intervention was "stupid".

"Disunity is death," he said.

"I think we should be as united as possible. Sure, we have things we disagree on. But I don't think it helps the Coalition in publicly condemning a Prime Minister. I can't believe he did it."

A third NSW Liberal said: "It's just appalling that he would openly attack and undermine the Prime Minister, one of his own colleagues."

NSW Nationals MP and former minister Kevin Humphries said Mr Barilaro's comments were "not helpful".

"I can understand why he's frustrated, but I think it's inappropriate for someone at that level to call on the Prime Minister to stand down," Mr Humphries said.

"If I was unhappy with Mr Barilaro's performance I would talk to Mr Barilaro. It's just a shock jock response."

Mr Turnbull responded by accusing Mr Barilaro of "trying to ingratiate himself with Alan Jones".

Former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce - who is contesting a byelection in his old seat of New England on Saturday after resigning from Parliament over the dual citizenship issue and hoping to be returned as federal National leader - did not welcome the comments.

"The worst possible insult in politics is you've done something unhelpful, worse than drowning a dog, worse than murder," he reportedly told *Guardian Australia*. "This is definitely in the category of very unhelpful".

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian issued a statement, saying: "Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has my full and absolute support.

"Mr Barilaro has expressed a personal view which I do not share.

"Mr Barilaro is well aware of my position.



*NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro says there is no federal leadership. Photo: Wolter Peeters*

"I look forward to continuing to work with the Turnbull Coalition Government to deliver a better quality of life for the people of NSW.

"Bill Shorten's Labor Party is the biggest risk to our nation's future."

In his interview with Jones, Mr Barilaro cited his anger at Mr Turnbull's comment that federal issues played no part in last weekend's Queensland election, which has left Labor Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk poised to retain government.

The Liberal National Party's vote was plundered by One Nation which polled an average primary vote of almost 14 per cent across the 61 seats in which it fielded candidates.

"What really got up my goat ... was to hear the Prime Minister of this nation turn around and say there were no federal issues that affected the state government at the state election," Mr Barilaro said.

"I mean, that's just a joke."

Mr Barilaro said the comment was "completely out of touch" and "clearly ... the federal issues were impacting on the way state voters were voting in the state election".

"For my mind it just showed there is no leadership," he said.

One of the senior Liberals noted that it was not unusual for a Nationals leader to have a swing at the Liberals.

One factor that led to former Nationals leader Troy Grant being deposed by Mr Barilaro following the party's loss as last year's Orange state byelection was the perception he did not stand up to the Liberals and then premier Mike Baird.

The call for Mr Turnbull to step down came a day after Mr Barilaro attacked the roll-out of the Berejiklian government's container deposit scheme overseen by Liberal Environment Minister Gabrielle Upton, declaring it had been "botched".

"I think he's got a touch of the Barnabys," the Liberal said in reference to Mr Joyce.

But the second senior Liberal source said that, while he "accepts" the concern about federal issues playing in the NSW election, he backs the strength of the Berejiklian government.

"I think our government can be completely distinct from their government in terms of financial management, stability and delivery," the source said.

"We're not facing an election tomorrow. We're 15 months away.

"People need to relax a little and worry about doing their jobs rather than worrying about how other people are doing theirs."

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/barilaros-call-for-turnbulls-resignation-reflects-rising-nsw-panic-20171130-qzwwia.html>