

Shooters, Fishers and Farmers party claim first seat in NSW Lower House after Orange re-count

ABC News 21 Nov 2016
Joanna Woodburn

Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party has won the NSW seat of Orange after the Nationals called for a re-count.



PHOTO: [Philip Donato is the first Shooters, Fishers and Farmers member to be elected in the NSW Lower House.](#) (ABC News: Luke Wong)

The Shooters' candidate Philip Donato beat Scott Barrett, from the Nationals, by 50 votes.

His victory ended the Nationals' 69-year stranglehold on the regional electorate.

It took more than a week of counting, and re-counting, preferences in the nail-biting race.

On Friday, after the final distribution of preferences, the Shooters had won by 55 votes, [but the Nationals called for a re-count.](#)

RELATED STORY: [Troy Grant: A rapid rise and even faster decline](#)

RELATED STORY: [Nationals granted re-count in nail-biting Orange by-election](#)

RELATED STORY: [What's going on inside the NSW Nationals?](#)

Key points:

- Shooters, Fishers and Farmers claim first Lower House seat in NSW
- They won Orange by 50 votes
- The Nationals had held the seat for 69 years

[View image on Twitter](#)



[Joanna Woodburn](#) @JoannaWoodburn Can barely fit all the EC staff & scrutineers in a photo today @ the #Orange by-elex @ABCCentralWest @abcnewsSydney
1:45 PM - 21 Nov 2016

Mr Donato won the seat despite receiving only about 23 per cent of first preferences.

ABC election analyst Antony Green tweeted: "I'm sure Orange has been won with the lowest first preference vote for winning candidate under optional preferential voting in NSW."

ABC Election Coverage

- [Orange by-election results](#)
- [Results by booth](#)
- [Antony Green's commentary](#)

Mr Donato said he was "deeply humbled and honoured" to win the seat.

"It feels quite amazing, it's been a long, drawn-out process and we've had to be patient and wait for the process to take its due course," he said.

["I sincerely appreciate all the people in the community and all the support I've received."](#)

After the final distribution of preferences on Thursday, the Nationals had been ahead by 65 votes, but when it was discovered a bundle of votes had been incorrectly attributed to Mr Barrett, the Shooters hit the front.

"It's been an emotional rollercoaster to be honest," Mr Donato said.

Seat changes hands after unprecedented swing

The Nationals had held the seat by more than 20 per cent before the by-election, held on Saturday November 19, [but voters abandoned the party.](#)

The Baird Government's [proposed ban on greyhound racing](#) — which it has since backed down on — and council amalgamations were seen as key issues that contributed to the massive swing against the Nationals, who say they will spend the next three years trying to reconnect with voters in the area.

Mr Barrett congratulated Mr Donato on his victory.

"I worked very hard for this and there was a lot of things that I wanted to do and felt that I could do for the Central West, so of course it's disappointing," Mr Barrett said.

"It was certainly a lot closer than anyone expected."

The Nationals' state director Nathan Quigley said the recount provided closure for the party.

["It's time for the National Party now to re-group, what we've done to bring us to this point and make sure that we deliver for Orange and the surrounding areas for the next couple of years," Mr Quigley said.](#)

Many locals were angry about plans for the councils of Cabonne and Blayney to amalgamate with Orange.

Radio kingpins Alan Jones and Ray Hadley — fierce critics of the greyhound ban — told listeners to put the Nationals last, and both hosts had been in Orange in the lead-up to the by-election.

The seat of Orange became vacant when former MP Andrew Gee resigned to run for Federal Parliament earlier this year.



PHOTO: [Scott Barrett \(L\)](#) and [Philip Donato](#) were all smiles on the day of the [re-count](#). (ABC News: Joanna Woodburn)

The electorate had not changed hands since the end of World War II, and its margin was one of the state's biggest.

While the result was unclear until today, the devastating swing against the Nationals prompted party leader and NSW's then deputy premier [Troy Grant to resign from his position last week](#).

The deputy party leader Adrian Piccoli also resigned. [John Barilaro was elected leader](#), while Primary Industries Minister Niall Blair was chosen to be his deputy.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-21/orange-by-election-won-by-shooters,-fishers-and-farmers-party/8043658?section=nsw>