

Support for Mike Baird's government collapses: exclusive poll

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A run of controversial policy decisions and hospital scandals has seen support for the NSW government crash to leave Labor and the Coalition neck and neck almost 18 months after Premier Mike Baird's 2015 election victory.



A narrow majority of NSW voters said Opposition Leader Luke Foley would do a better job than Premier Mike Baird (pictured). Photo: Janie Barrett

An exclusive poll conducted for Fairfax Media shows support for Labor and the Coalition at 50–50 on a two-party preferred basis, using preference flows from the 2015 election.

This is a swing away from the government of about four percentage points from the 2015 result which delivered it a second term.

If applied as a uniform swing it would not be enough for Labor to win the next election in 2019 but could bring it tantalisingly close to forming minority government with crossbench support.

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The Coalition's primary vote was recorded at 39.4 per cent, Labor's at 34.9 per cent, the Greens at 8 per cent, others at 9.6 per cent, with 8.1 per cent undecided.

In an extraordinary result, a narrow majority of NSW voters said Opposition leader Luke Foley would make a better premier than Mr Baird.

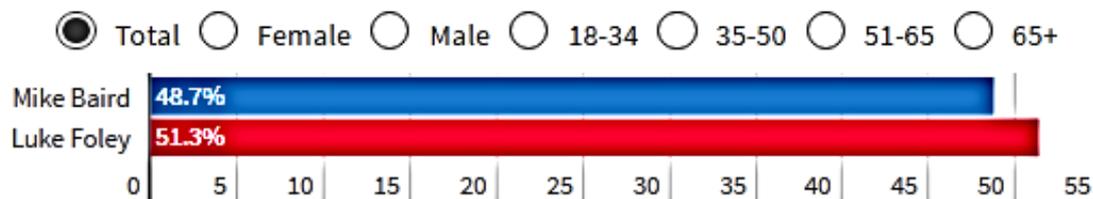
Just over half the voters surveyed – 51.3 per cent – said Mr Foley would make a better premier compared with Mr Baird's 48.7 per cent.

This is a significant turnaround from the findings of a Fairfax-Ipsos poll shortly before the March 2015 election which had Mr Baird streets ahead of Mr Foley as preferred premier by 56 to 27 per cent.

NSW PREMIER

ReachTEL/Fairfax survey question by voter gender and age:

Who of the following do you think would make the better Premier?



Source: ReachTEL poll 25 Aug 2016, 1609 respondents.

It caps a difficult week for Mr Baird who fractured a vertebrae in his lower back last weekend after a fall at his Manly home.

However, in some good news for the government the poll also shows there is majority support for its decision to shut down the NSW greyhound racing industry from July 1 next year.

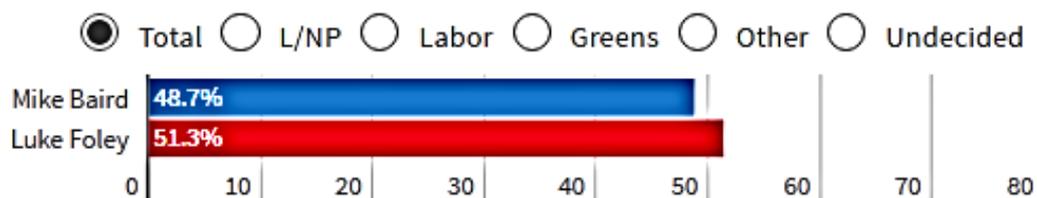
About 51 per cent voiced support or strong support for the ban, compared with 31.4 per cent who said they either oppose or strongly oppose the decision and 17.6 per cent undecided.

The ReachTEL poll of 1609 NSW voters, with a margin of error of 2.8 per cent, was taken on Thursday night at the end of a tumultuous period for the Baird government.

NSW PREMIER

ReachTEL/Fairfax survey question by political party supported:

Who of the following do you think would make the better Premier?



Source: ReachTEL poll 25 Aug 2016, 1609 respondents.

Mr Baird has been fighting the greyhound industry over the ban. Three Nationals MPs crossed the floor to vote against the legislation over concerns it will devastate regional communities. Mr Foley has promised to overturn the ban if he is elected in 2019.

Elsewhere the government has been forced to defend the NSW health system and reject calls for Health Minister Jillian Skinner to resign.

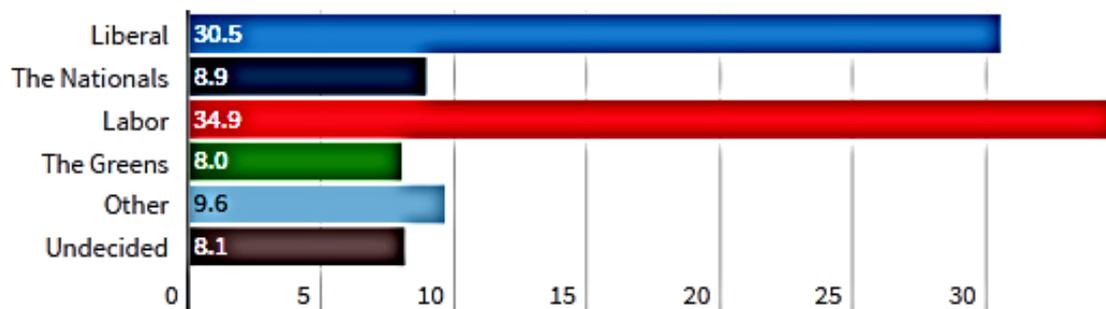
This followed a chemotherapy underdosing scandal at St Vincents Hospital and a newborn baby dying and another suffering brain damage at Bankstown-Lidcombe hospital after being given nitrous oxide instead of oxygen.

Mr Baird and Finance Minister Dominic Perrottet have come under fire over the treatment of homeowners having their properties compulsorily acquired for infrastructure projects such as the \$16.8 billion WestConnex motorway.

PREFERENCE VOTE

ReachTEL/Fairfax survey question:

If a state election were to be held today, which of the following would receive your first preference vote?



Source: ReachTEL poll 25 Aug 2016, 1609 respondents.

In another blow, federal Treasurer Scott Morrison temporarily derailed the NSW government's part privatisation of electricity distributor Ausgrid over concerns that Chinese buyers would be contrary to the national interest.

The results come days before the Independent Commission Against Corruption is due to deliver its long-anticipated report into Operation Spicer on Tuesday.

The inquiry investigated Liberal Party rorting of donations laws before the March 2011 election which swept the Coalition to power after 16 years.

Ten Liberal MPs moved to the crossbench and two resigned from Parliament over evidence given at the inquiry.

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/support-for-baird-government-collapses-20160826-gr1x3y.html>