Winning the fight – Maitland hospital privatisation stopped

The Labor movement has won a massive victory against the Liberal National Government’s attempts to privatise five public hospitals in Wyong, Goulburn, Shellharbour, Bowral and Maitland.

The Maitland Hospital campaign is a significant loss for the Premier, who only recently stated there would be no more backflips under her leadership.

“I’M OVERJOYED, I FEEL EVEN BETTER THAN WHEN I WON THE ELECTION FOR THE SEAT OF MAITLAND.” – Jenny Aitchison MP

The Government had refused to rule out privatising the new Maitland hospital since it was first announced in 2011. Even as late as 30 November 2017, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter declared that a PPP with a Not-for-profit private provider was a done deal.

Labor worked with Unions NSW, the HSU, the NSWNMA and ASMOF on the seven year campaign of rallies, door knocking, letter boxing, shopping centre stalls, railway stations, community information forums.

The new Maitland Hospital will be a legacy for future generations that our great movement can be proud of. The fight was empowering for our communities and showed the Government that we will not let our health system be privatised by stealth. Thank you! We could not have won without you!
Importance of campaigning in the country

The recent by-elections in Orange, Cootamundra and Murray saw the Nationals suffer huge swings against them. They even lost Orange for the first time in nearly 70 years.

For those living in rural and regional NSW, the 2019 State Election can’t come fast enough and it’s not hard to see why. The Nationals sold out rural and regional NSW on forced council amalgamations. They banned greyhound racing and announced the privatisation of five regionals hospitals. They privatised our electricity network resulting in the loss of hundreds of jobs. As a result, country people must now wait three times longer to have power restored in a blackout.

To top it off the Liberals and Nationals announced they would spend $2.5 billion to knock down and rebuild two stadiums in city instead of addressing things critical failures like regional school maintenance backlogs and hospital waiting times.

Labor will always prioritise rural and regional schools and hospitals over stadiums in Sydney. And only Labor will invest 100% of the money from the transfer of the Snowy Hydro Scheme to the federal government in regional NSW – the Nationals will only commit to 30%.

So the question is, can the votes in the country determine the outcome of the election? The answer is a resounding ‘Yes’!

So here’s what’s happening. Country Labor already has amazing candidates in the field fighting for the change their constituents so desperately need - candidates including Bryce Wilson in Monaro and David Keegan in Myall Lakes. Additional candidates will be preselected in coming months.

We will also be rolling out a schedule of Campaign Insight one day training courses for regional areas to ensure all our members and volunteers are equipped with the latest campaign techniques.

It’s going to be an amazing year for Country Labor.

We look forward to fighting.

Kaila Murnain
GENERAL SECRETARY

If you have an event you would like to promote to other Country Labor members please email it to jay@nswlabor.org.au
Country people don’t ask for much, I know in my local area of Cessnock my friends just want access to quality healthcare, a good education for their kids and a decent job. Unfortunately, government decision making is often centred around the city. They’re typically made in the city by those who live in the city. They simply don’t take into account the needs of country people.

We’ve all heard the saying - ‘out of sight, out of mind’. Well meaning inner city elites often have absolutely no line of sight to regional areas. What that typically means is that they will advocate for policies or the closure of industries without considering the detrimental impact these policies might have in the country.

This isn’t good enough. Populist slogans about saving one thing or another - that don’t tell the full story and that don’t measure the impact on regional families and youth, must be rejected.

History shows us, we cannot win government in NSW or Nationally without winning country seats. With state and federal elections in the near future now is the time we need to be standing up and protecting these jobs or we risk losing the support of these communities all together.

The occasional push for direct election preselection in the Party can disadvantage underrepresented regional areas. About one third of all NSW party members live across 3 federal seats in the inner city, so if you were running for direct election preselection who would you campaign to? Obviously you’d cater your ideas to the largest and most accessible group of voters – the inner city. It’s this what will hurt country towns.

I have always believed our state conference provides the best balance for selecting our state-wide representatives. It joins delegates from our valued trade union movement with an even mix of rank and file delegates from across the state – Ballina SEC sends the same number of delegates as Balmain SEC and Calare FEC sends the same number of delegates as Sydney FEC.

It’s this method that has ensured we have been able to elect fantastic Country Labor representatives like Sue West, Christine Robertson and Mick Veitch. And it’s this method that has ensured our party’s policy has allowed us to remain relevant to country voters and take the fight up to the Liberals and Nationals. And it’s only this method that will see us return to government again!

Jay Suvaal
NSW COUNTRY ORGANISER
It really was a beautiful Cooma summer morning as Party Vice President Tara Moriarty and I set up for the regular Sunday morning markets.

And that vibe continued through the day as community members drifted over to the ‘Country Labor’ tree to discuss their hopes for the area and their disappointment with the State and Federal Liberal/ National Governments.

The Sunday was one week shy of the anniversary of Barilaro and Berejiklian announcing their Cabinet in Queanbeyan in front of protests over forced Council mergers. One year on, the community of Monaro is no happier. People came over to sign our petition calling on investment in Schools & Hospitals rather than Stadiums, raised the challenges of the merged local council, frustration of privatisation and the decline in our skills and TAFE systems.

A bit over a year out from the next State election the contrast in our priorities verves the Liberal National’s priorities could not be starker. The Country Labor team on the ground talking schools, health, renewables and skills contrasted against a the Deputy Premier backing stadiums, nuclear power, forced mergers, privatisation, cuts to job and TAFE.

It was great to have Tara join my campaign for Monaro. Not only is she the Secretary of the Liquor and Hospitality Division of United Voice, but she is a Queanbeyan local. Her mum lives in Jerrabomberra, around the corner from me. She went to school in Queanbeyan and she knows the local issues.

If you have not already, sign up for the fight in Country NSW at www.countrylabor.com.au or call 1800 503 035.

Bryce Wilson
COUNTRY LABOR CANDIDATE FOR MONARO | CHAIR OF COUNTRY LABOR

Little Labor must put drought reform policy back on national policy agenda

Former Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce did nothing to progress drought policy since the last intergovernmental agreement between the Commonwealth and the States.

Abolishing the COAG Standing Committee on Primary Industries was one of Barnaby Joyce’s first acts as Agriculture Minister and since then no initiatives have been forthcoming.

“FARMERS IN BARNABY JOYCE’S OWN ELECTORATE ARE NOW SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS.”
– Joel Fitzgibbon MP

The closest Barnaby Joyce got to a drought policy was his Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) pork barrel which is stalled in the Senate. The RIC is to be located in Orange where the Nationals lost a State seat for the first time in 69 years.

It’s time for new Agriculture Minister David Littleproud to step up.