

Northland by-election
What message was sent? What message will
be taken?

Hugo Group panels
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How bad a loss?

- First by-election loss by an incumbent government since the 1985 Timaru by-election
 - Labour amazed to win in 1984 vs Northland a safe National seat
- Turnout: 63.2% vs 79.2% on election night 2014
- Nats proportion: 39.9% vs 48.8 % (11,347 vs 17,412) – 1/3 of Nat voters swapped to NZ First
- Labour: 4.6% vs 16.5% (1,315 vs 5,913) – 3/4 Labour swapped
- NZ First: 53.9% vs 12.7% (15,359 vs 4,546)
- 6065 Nat + 4,598 Lab = 10,663 = 4,696 NZ First

Lessons learnt or relearnt

- Naked bribery is dangerous
- Pick your candidate early and from a more populous part of the electorate
- Steven Joyce is not omnipotent
 - Viz iPredict's repositioning of Paula Bennett as the more likely Key successor
- By-elections are opportunities to protest
- Third term governments start to look tired
- So what?

Tipping point?

- The media and the left are calling it that
- Conversation has changed – who will replace Key?
- Party discipline cracking
 - » Blame being apportioned anonymously
- But too early to say
- First post by-election poll important
 - » National still at 46.5% in last Roy Morgan
- Some angst in Labour – has Little let Peters become National's new friend?

The govt can still govern, but reform is blunted

- Clear majority on confidence and supply
- Whether or not NZ First takes a 12 seat, 61 votes are needed to pass legislation
- Maori and United Future parties have more leverage
- Position essentially the same as 2011-14, albeit a psychological blow to lose election night advantage
- No appetite at this stage to deal with NZ First except opportunistically

RMA reform

- A message may have been sent, but the govt gets to define what that message is
- PM has spoken about “tearing up” RMA reforms
 - This is more symbolic than real
 - Merging S6&7 was already all but dead
 - » PM’s comments refer only to that
- Options intact to:
 - » Include urban design, infrastructure, quake risk, housing in S7
 - » Pursue economic development objectives through NPS’s and NES’s (King Salmon judgement)

But far from simple

- Placing additional economic elements in S7 still makes them subordinate to S6 environmental priorities
- NPS's may be helpful, but:
 - All existing NPS's would require review and potential rewrites
 - New NPS's require either boards of inquiry or ministerial direction
- In other words, political battles continue
- Smoke signals this weekend from blue-greens?