

SE OTHER TOWNS
HD **Tamworth resident and councillor Mark Rodda writes**
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Tamworth resident and councillor Mark Rodda writes to say that the rise of Dubbo MP Troy Grant is the perfect opportunity for the NSW National Party to renew itself and to rethink its support of electricity privatisation.

The exciting announcement of member for Dubbo Troy Grant being elected unopposed as the new leader of the NSW Nationals is a great feat considering he is a first-term MP and, of course, previously resided in our region in his younger years.

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I am hopeful this represents a great change for the people of rural NSW.

Given Troy Grant's previous commitment to rural NSW, I am hopeful he will revisit The Nationals support of Mike Baird's electricity privatisation agenda prior to the March 2015 State election.

An agenda that is deeply unpopular with the voters of many rural NSW electorates including Dubbo, Tamworth, Barwon, Northern Tablelands, Upper Hunter, Bathurst and elsewhere.

This agenda will guarantee electricity prices will rise, hurting Troy's rural constituency.

An agenda that will slash by half, government revenues (approximately \$1.5 **billion**) from electricity distributors, putting at risk government programs in rural NSW and hurting Troy's rural constituency.

An agenda that will ensure State government taxes rise hurting Troy's rural constituency.

An agenda that will ensure government services will be cut ensuring NSW State public servants like nurses, teachers and police will also be cut, made redundant or not replaced, hurting Troy's rural constituency and harming the economy of rural NSW which relies in part on income from sustainable government jobs.

This agenda will make rural NSW a less attractive place to reside and of course hurt Troy's rural constituency.

It's the reason rural NSW has lost another rural electorate, Murray-Darling.

The Mike Baird electricity privatisation agenda will ensure every Transgrid job in rural NSW is at risk, including 65 workers in Tamworth and will also set in motion the future demise of Essential **Energy** jobs.

We know the privatisation plans may only benefit Mike Baird's big business friends in the city, or indeed a state-owned enterprise of the People's Republic of **China**, where half of all the state's electricity distribution revenue will go.

We know there are better ways to raise funds for much needed infrastructure projects such as issuing Waratah **Bonds** or drawing loans, just as previous NSW state governments did.

Joe Hockey's Asset Recycling Fund stalled in the Senate is certainly not the answer. The policy is a pup, best not to take it to the state election.

Leadership renewal is an opportunity to remould a party which has been tarnished by its unfettered support for its major city centric political partner and for being associated with a dozen or so Liberal MP's accused of breaching state political donation laws and which undermined the major point of difference between the government and the ALP opposition with its myriad of corrupt ALP politicians yet to face charges.

The party has also lost some gloss for its support of big **mining** companies over our farmers and not delivering the bounty to rural NSW areas with extractive industries as the Western Australian Nationals Royalties for Regions policy does.

The people of rural NSW want their representatives to understand the pain that privatisation policies inflict on them and how this puts at risk the future of rural NSW.

Many people are right to feel disillusioned. After 3.5 years, this needs to be urgently addressed, as does the reason why the government has suffered a massive 11 per cent swing against it since the last State election.

Such a swing will put at risk a number of Nationals held seats. After the next state election it will be clear that the state government will have to rely on every vote it can get from Nationals MP's in both houses.

I have always been conservative, hence my opposition to Mike Baird's privatisation agenda.

It will harm rural NSW and so I look forward to new Nationals leader Troy Grant standing up for rural NSW and fixing some of these issues.

I am reminded that you have to stand for something or you'll fall for anything. This is my mantra.

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